The Cooperative Classroom: Scaffolding EFL Elementary Learners’ English Literacies Through the Picture Word Inductive Model – the Journey of Three Teachers in Taiwan

by

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Doctor of Philosophy 2011
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Abstract

Children in Taiwan start their English classes in grade three. As they progress through the grades, they generally do not demonstrate high English proficiency. In addition, they also gradually lose their interest in learning English (“Education Minister,” 2009). To respond to the problem of achievement and motivation related to learning English, the Picture Word Inductive Model and Cooperative Learning were integrated as an alternative approach to the current instructional method in order to more effectively improve the Taiwanese elementary learners’ English literacy and highly motivate their interest in acquiring a foreign language. The focus of this study was to discover the participating teachers’ and students’ perspectives toward this new teaching approach and to understand the difficulties they encounter during the process of initiating and implementing an educational change.

This eleven-month qualitative study involved three elementary English teachers and their 71 students from grades 4, 5 and 6 as participants. The data were collected through field notes from onsite classroom observations, teachers’ weekly reflective journals, in-class video recordings, and transcripts of teachers’ monthly meetings and personal interviews with the participants. Although one teacher and her students had to withdraw from the study because of intense pressure from school authorities and parents, the results of this study indicate that the remaining teachers and students highly recommended implementing this alternative approach in English classes and believed that this new way of teaching not only helped students become more
autonomous and responsible for their own learning, but also provided them with more opportunities to interact with their peers.

Although having doubts about this new approach at the beginning of the study and encountering difficulties during the process of implementation, the two teachers reported that their students’ English vocabulary had increased and they were able to compose meaningful English paragraphs as a result of this non-traditional strategy. The students also revealed that their motivation toward learning English had improved. Furthermore, the results show that support from school authorities and parents is essential to the initiation and maintenance of a change in education settings.
This research would never have been possible without the support of many people involved in this study. First of all, I would like to thank my thesis supervisor, Dr. Barrie Bennett, for his wisdom and guidance in leading me through all the phases of my study. His patience, support, inspiration, and supervision from the preliminary stages through to the final steps enabled me to develop an understanding of the subject and clear up any confusion during the process of the investigation. Without his continuing but subtle ‘pushing’ and considerable encouragement, I could not have finished my doctoral studies in just three years and three months.

My gratitude also goes to the professors (Dr. David Booth, Dr. Linda Cameron, Dr. Sarfaroz Niyozov, and Dr. Peter Gouzouasis) on my oral examination committee. Their selfless support and constructive suggestions pointed to directions for my future research. Their probing but thoughtful questions enabled me to re-examine my research through different lenses.

In addition, I would also like to thank the teachers involved in this research: Mrs. Judy Chang, Mrs. Sharon Chen, Miss Sandra Wei, and Miss Erica Lin. Without their cooperation and enthusiasm, the study might have lead nowhere. I also want to thank the school administrators and homeroom teachers participating in this study. Their assistance and understanding allowed me to finish my data collection smoothly.

I would also like to show my gratitude to my friend, Bill Jeffery, who helped me clarify my thoughts and provided suggestions for me to edit my dissertation. Without his patience and intelligence, I might still be lost at sea, overwhelmed by confusing grammar and word choices.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends in Taiwan for their consistent love, support and encouragement. Although they were not by my side during the time I was working
on this study, they always provided me with their support through emails and phone calls. Their understanding and reassurance kept me focused, allowing me to reach my goal.
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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

Research findings (Astorga, 1999; Calhoun, 1999; Clay, 2001; Joyce, Calhoun, & Hopkins, 2002) show that the development of visual perception is crucial to children’s literacy acquisition, and inductive reasoning would cultivate learners’ ability to generalize a pattern in order to raise their awareness of the nature of language. Unfortunately, the current language teaching approach in Taiwan neither enhances students’ visual perception nor develops their inductive reasoning. In order to address this issue of becoming literate and motivating interest toward learning, an alternative student-centered approach should be considered in English classes in Taiwan to replace or at least augment the current teacher-centered approach. That said, it will be definitely challenging to select an appropriate alternative approach that teachers, who usually adopt a more teacher-centered model devoid of social interaction, would be willing to accept.

Although other approaches to literacy development (the Phonetic approach, the Whole Language approach, and Language Experience approach) exist, Calhoun’s (1999) Picture Word Inductive Model (PWIM), derived from the tradition of Language Experience approach with the addition of concept formation and attainment models of teaching, is a strategy that Taiwanese teachers would accept given their current, more teacher-directed approach. It would allow them to employ a more constructivist approach to teaching while still having a sense of control in the classroom. In any change effort the context informs the innovations selected.

The Picture Word Inductive Model is a teacher-facilitated process, in which teachers lead children to discover words from a picture, increase the number of words in their sight-reading and writing vocabularies, formulate phonetic and structural principles, and finally apply
observation and logical thinking analysis to their reading and writing (Calhoun, 1999; Joyce, Calhoun, & Hopkins, 2002). Through their interaction with and guidance from peers and the teacher, learners not only develop their language literacy but also strengthen their personal socialization, which affects their motivation to learn. In addition, Cooperative Learning is a process designed for learners to collectively construct knowledge. It facilitates students working with peers to discuss and interact with each other in order to achieve a shared learning goal (Johnson & Johnson, 1991; Slavin, 1994). Many research findings (Johnson & Johnson, 1993; Johnson, Johnson, & Taylor, 1993; Law, 2008; Roseth, Johnson, & Johnson, 2008; Shaaban, 2006; Slavin, 1994) prove that, when properly implemented, Cooperative Learning strategies can be effective in improving students’ academic performance. Working with peers or classmates could also promote students’ motivation and decrease their anxiety toward learning.

Even though the Picture Word Inductive Model and Cooperative Learning strategies have been used in classrooms in English-speaking countries for many years and have been proved to be effective in fostering learners’ literacy and promoting students’ motivation toward language learning (Calhoun, 1999; Johnson & Johnson, 1991, 1994; Law, 2008; Roseth, Johnson, & Johnson, 2008; Shaaban, 2006; Slavin, 1994; Swartzendruber, 2007), this study will be the first to merge the Picture Word Inductive Model with the five basic elements of effective group work in EFL classrooms in Taiwan to help children become literate in English. Therefore, this research is designed to propose a possible alternative teaching approach to the current instructional method in order to more effectively improve the Taiwanese elementary learners’ English literacy and highly motivate their interest in acquiring a foreign language. Given that this new teaching approach is being introduced in Taiwan for the first time and benefits in students’ learning from a new way of teaching are likely to occur only when both teachers and students are at least at the routine level of use (Hall & Hord, 2006), the purpose of this qualitative research is not to
investigate the impact of this new approach on students’ tests results. Instead, it aims to illuminate the journey made by the three teachers to learn and implement this non-traditional teaching strategy in three elementary schools in Taiwan, and to determine how this new teaching approach affects students’ motivation for learning English.

**Statement of the Research Questions**

Given that the purpose of this research is to introduce a new teaching approach for English instructors in Taiwan, the focus of this study will be on the training of the teachers, their implementation of the Picture Word Inductive Model coupled with Cooperative Learning, and the perspectives of the teachers and the students in the participating classes. Specifically, this research involves the investigation of the following research questions.

1. What do the Taiwanese elementary English teachers participating in this study claim are the strengths and weaknesses of the application of the PWIM merged with Cooperative Learning in their English classes?
2. To what extent do the teachers involved in the study believe that merging the Picture Word Inductive Model with Cooperative Learning has an effect on students’ English literacy?
3. How do the teachers’ concerns change as they make a shift to an alternative approach to student learning?
4. What kinds of problems or difficulties do the teachers encounter and how do they deal with them while implementing this alternative approach in their classes?
5. What do Taiwanese elementary school students involved in this study feel and think about learning English through the combined strategies of the PWIM and Cooperative Learning?
6. What effect does merging these two approaches have on students’ motivation for learning
**Background**

Recently, in order to foster national competitiveness, the government and educators in Taiwan initiated curricular and instructional reforms in elementary and secondary school education with an increased emphasis on learning English. Back in 1996, the Taipei government first engaged in educational reform by requiring elementary teachers to begin teaching English to students in grade three and higher. In 2002, English was incorporated as a required course from the first grade up (Taipei City Government, 2009). In 2004, the Ministry of Education also declared that students in all elementary schools in Taiwan needed to learn English as a foreign language from the third grade (Ministry of Education in Taiwan, 2004). That said, given that English is a foreign language and is not widely spoken in Taiwan, children, in fact, do not spend as many hours per week learning English as they do to acquire Mandarin, their native language. In the elementary school curriculum, children have an English class two days every week, forty minutes per class.

Having taught English in Taiwan for over ten years and having conducted workshops on language instruction, I had many opportunities to interact with English teachers working in elementary and secondary schools. Through the conversations with those English teachers, I realized that a gap exists between teachers’ instructional philosophies and students’ learning expectations. Most teachers in Taiwan tend to apply the same teaching methods used by their own teachers (Shannon, 2006). They believe that given an instructional approach which focuses on memorization which has been used widely in Taiwan for decades will be effective with the next generation (Chen & Feng, 1999; Daly, 2008). In addition, many teachers always complain that, because of the heavy teaching load and administrative work, they do not have enough time
to prepare for the courses, much less attend teacher-training workshops. Given they have 22 classes to teach per week, a myriad of assignments to mark, numerous meetings to attend, and school activities in which they are expected to participate, teachers feel less energetic or ambitious to try out something new. Unfortunately, many teachers in Taiwan seem to ‘teach for tests,’ instead of cultivating students’ critical and independent thinking. Although making an effort to impart a core of grammatical knowledge to learners, most teachers are not successful in expanding their instructional repertoire to cope with student diversity and satisfy the needs of students (Kao, 2006). Moreover, even though required to attend workshops to improve their teaching methods, teachers seldom apply what they learn in their own classrooms. Although few teachers are changing their methods, the attitudes of students toward their learning are definitely shifting. For example, while working as a mentor in a university in Taiwan, I had a chance to talk with students about their views on the language learning environment and their interactions with their teachers. Many students complained that they are not motivated while learning English in class. They sit and constantly take notes. The only interaction with teachers happens when students are asked to answer questions. Students study English mainly because it is a required subject and they need to pass it in order to move onto the next grade. They do not find learning English interesting because it is a mechanical process – a constant cycle of lecturing and rote learning (Chen & Feng, 1999). Do teachers in Taiwan really understand students’ needs and the ways to help them to enjoy learning a foreign language? The answer is definitely, “No.”

Five years ago, while conducting a workshop for teachers in an elementary school in Taipei, Taiwan, I had the opportunity to identify the instructional methods elementary English teachers apply in their classrooms. Also, through conversations with colleagues and teachers at various conferences, I started to realize that translation is still inevitable during the teaching process in most English classes, even though a communication-based teaching curriculum is strongly
recommended by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan. Given that English is not widely spoken in Taiwan, the Ministry of Education proposed hiring native English speakers as teachers to create a “whole English” immersion environment in class in order to help children learn a foreign language in the same way as they acquired their mother tongue (“A Lot to Learn about Teaching English,” 2003). That said, those unemployed Taiwanese English teachers who are well trained in language teaching feel that they are being deprived of job opportunities when the government hires foreign teachers. Though teachers try to use English extensively in their teaching, most of them still rely on translation partly because of their educational background, which means that they may not have the ability to speak English fluently, but mostly because of the frustration they feel when most children in class fail to understand the language. Gradually, teachers return to a focus on translation (Shannon, 2006).

One of the objectives in the elementary curricular guidelines established by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan is to create a more enjoyable and less stressful learning atmosphere for children to acquire a foreign language (Ministry of Education, 2004). To achieve this goal, most teachers apply games in their classes to help students enjoy learning a language. Although using games in class is not part of what might be termed a “traditional” teaching approach, this innovation of using games is not proving to be effective in helping students acquire skills in English. Most elementary English teachers put too much emphasis on the amount of time spent playing games, rather than on the quality of the games as learning activities. When I conducted classroom demonstrations and taught *Principles of English Instruction for Children* to pre-school and elementary teachers, the audience was always eager to know what games they could apply in their classes. Many researchers and educators (Bettoil, 2001; Hadfield, 1984; Huyen & Nga, 2003) agree that the application of educational games could be helpful to create a relaxing and interesting learning environment in class. Nonetheless, many teachers in Taiwan tend to put too
much emphasis on the enjoyment aspect of games, rather than on the game’s pedagogical value in language instruction. During a 40-minute class, teachers would likely use half of the instructional time playing games. Excluding the time for taking attendance and assigning homework, teachers really do not have much time to model the lessons and check for students’ understanding. Consequently, most elementary English teachers reveal that the application of games in class does not positively help children improve their English proficiency (Hsu, 2005).

As a language teacher, I have an obligation to help children not only acquire the knowledge and skills in the English language, but also to enjoy the learning process. As a teacher trainer, I am also eager to understand the difficulties most teachers encounter in their classes and to figure out ways to assist those instructors to overcome problems in order to teach more effectively.

**Rationale**

Taiwan is in the process of internationalizing itself by encouraging all its citizens to learn English. Part of this process requires elementary schools to incorporate English as a required subject into the third-grade curriculum and that of subsequent grades; the current level of proficiency in English in high school graduates, however, falls far short of the government’s hopes. In fact, more and more children in Taiwan start to give up on their English study after encountering difficulties in learning a foreign language (“Education Minister Told to Improve Primary School English Teaching,” 2009). The previous statement suggests that perhaps English teaching is not being effectively implemented in elementary schools at lower levels. Although the optimal time for children to begin learning English still remains debatable, the shortage of qualified teachers and identifying effective teaching methods are the major issues in Taiwan.

Interestingly, English has been taught in Taiwan for years, yet the shortage of qualified and experienced teachers has always been a serious problem. After the Ministry of Education in
Taiwan mandated English lessons for elementary school children in the third grade, more English teachers were suddenly needed. The resulting conundrum was that most of the well-trained English teachers prefer to stay in metropolitan areas. The majority of schools in the countryside do not have enough well-qualified English teachers. Consequently, a huge discrepancy exists in English proficiency between students in big cities and those in the countryside, and the gap continues to widen (“Time to Bridge the Education Gap,” 2008). Even though the government has tried to improve the situation and solve the shortage of teachers by allowing schools to hire native English speakers to teach the language, not all of them are effective. Some of them are not English majors; others may be college graduates without teaching experience. As a result, children are not highly motivated to learn English, or even worse, start to lose their interest and then finally give up learning the language.

Upon graduation from Grade 12, students in Taiwan are expected to achieve a high level of proficiency in English in order to pass the intermediate level of the criterion-referenced General English Proficiency Test, which is designed by The Language Training and Testing Center in Taiwan. Unfortunately, they do not generally demonstrate high degrees of English proficiency in the Joint College Entrance Exams. In 2005, for example, 13.26% of the 160,490 examinees received a mark of zero in their English composition tests (College Entrance Examination Center, 2005). In 2009, there are still more than 20,000 senior high school graduates who got zero in their English composition in the year’s general certificate of secondary education tests (“Education Minister Told to Improve Primary School English Teaching,” 2009). The percentage and numbers again suggest, that in Taiwan, English teaching is not effective in schools and the current teaching approach fails to improve students’ foreign language acquisition. Through past teaching experience in Taiwan, I found that most English classrooms still exhibit the characteristics of Freire’s (2000) “narrative education” in which
[t]he teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable. Or else he expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of the students. His task is to ‘fill’ the students with the contents of his narration -- contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance. Words are emptied of their concreteness and become a hollow, alienated, and alienating verbosity. (p. 71)

Students in Taiwan are not educated to think independently but to absorb completely, without any objections to what teachers have taught. Kao (2006) indicates, “… though making great efforts to teach English in the classroom, teachers [in Taiwan] often neglect one more important duty – helping students to ultimately become independent learners” (p. 8). Schools are simply institutes where teachers represent a symbol of ‘authority’, and learners passively rely on their teachers for further directions in learning. Most students in Taiwan still learn in the environment of “traditional education” (Dewey, 1998) or “transmission position” (Miller & Seller, 1990), which involves transmitting the past to the new generation. Dewey (1998) stated that, in traditional education,

… the attitude of pupils must, upon the whole, be one of docility, receptivity, and obedience. Books, especially textbooks, are the chief representatives of the lore and wisdom of the past, while teachers are the [only] organs through which pupils are brought into effective connection with the materials. (p. 3)

Holding the same perspective, Ashton-Warner (1963) also posits that “[t]here’s no occasion whatever for the early imposition of a dead reading, a dead vocabulary…. It’s like a frame over a young tree making it grow in an unnatural shape” (p. 95). Unfortunately, the teaching and
learning process in most Taiwanese classrooms still reflects the philosophies of traditional education.

Through years of teaching experience and conversation with colleagues, I’ve come to realize that most teachers in Taiwan cling to the traditional conservative teaching methods: they are resistant to changing their teaching methods and are reluctant to accept new ideas. Shannon (2006) says,

> [g]iven that focus of traditional education in Taiwan on rote learning and recitation, the introduction of new methods of teaching and learning is something that many teachers -- especially older ones -- might be uncomfortable with. Such practices may be a cultural step that many senior teachers are unwilling to take too quickly. (p. 8)

Instead of expanding students’ minds and cultivating them to think critically, most teachers in Taiwan still stay in the ‘transmission position’ (Miller & Seller, 1990) by merely imposing what they know from earlier generations onto their students and by “deposit[ing] content into the empty heads of learners” (Freire, 2004, p. 83). Similar to the Paleolithic education professors described in Benjamin’s Saber-Tooth Curriculum (1939), most teachers continue to apply the same teaching methods because of laziness or ignorance. They are inherently conservative with respect to change; they are content with stability and the status quo. This tendency will certainly influence their acceptance or lack of acceptance of a new teaching strategy. Recognizing the weakness in Chinese educational practice, Dewey pointed out that “[i]nherent tendencies to fear the new and unfamiliar and to shy away from difficulty and criticism characterize conservative societies” (Wang, 2007, p. 20). As a result, most Taiwanese students lose their abilities to reason. They might be good at memorizing ‘knowledge’ and getting high marks on examinations, but they have difficulty applying what they learn in their daily lives. The worst result is that students
adhere to old learning strategies (e.g., learning by rote, memorization) and resist new helpful study methods. Hence, in spite of the fact that they might be able to benefit from trying a non-traditional learning approach, most students still cling to the current way – learning individually by rote.

In addition, students in Taiwan, nowadays, are still in a highly competition-oriented learning environment where they are looking for superiority at the expense of others. In order to enter reputable academic institutions for further study, students have to take both the general certificate of secondary education tests and Joint College Entrance Examinations. The admission openings are fixed and limited and proficiency on entrance examinations is basically norm-referenced, not criterion-referenced. Therefore, in most cases, students pretend that they have not prepared well enough for the examinations in order to lessen their peers’ vigilance. In such a learning environment, only negative interdependence exists among students; one will certainly obtain the learning goal if the other fails to accomplish his or her learning tasks. Because of the pressure inherent in the educational system in Taiwan, students are reluctant to learn morality and personal values that could help them grow mentally, but are eager to acquire skills and techniques that would help them get high marks on the examinations.

To help students perform well on the exams, most Taiwanese English teachers adopt a teacher-centered Grammar-Translation approach by simply translating English text into learners’ native language (Mandarin) and focusing on the *memorization* of grammar rules. In these teacher-centered classrooms, the purpose of learning a language – to communicate with people – is ignored. Dewey (1998) shares that when teachers are the only agents of conveying knowledge and when students are passive learners, “the gulf between the mature or adult products and the experience and abilities of the young is so wide that the very situation forbids much active participation by pupils in the development of what is taught” (p. 4). Furthermore, in this passive
learning environment, Taiwanese students seldom have opportunities to learn from their peers. Even though students periodically work in groups on a project, they either mostly focus on their own learning, or totally rely on the most intelligent or diligent member in the team to finish the assignment, because the group work is not structured effectively. As a result, many Taiwanese students are not able to cooperate with others. Even worse, they are not highly motivated to learn English and remain illiterate in English after having studied the language for nearly ten years. Currently, affecting Taiwanese students’ motivation toward learning English and improving students’ English literacy have become essential issues for educators in Taiwan.

**Significance of the Study**

Learning English is essential for Taiwanese students not only because English is an international language, but also because English is essential in most aspects of the Taiwan society. As revealed earlier, the government in Taiwan does try to internationalize itself by encouraging all the citizens to learn English, regulating English as a subject in civil service tests and incorporating English as a required course in the curriculum starting in grade three. That said, these policies and actions are counterproductive and more and more children in Taiwan do not really enjoy acquiring English as a foreign language. While studying the Picture Word Inductive Model and Cooperative Learning, I have come to perceive several potential benefits in implementing this non-traditional teaching approach for Taiwanese children in their English acquisition by merging these two teaching methods. Therefore, this research study is important as it introduces a new teaching approach that might enhance the current teaching method in Taiwan to help learners develop their inductive thinking ability and acquire English literacy more effectively. In addition, by depicting the participating teachers’ efforts in trying to learn and implement this non-traditional method in their classes, the research presents potential readers
with a picture of what school teachers might encounter and/or benefit from when they try to apply a new form of pedagogy in their classrooms. More than that, the contribution of this research is that it serves as a model to expand this approach for teaching English as a foreign language in other countries in order to help children learn English more efficiently and joyfully.

The Structure of the study

The first chapter of this thesis started with the purpose and the research questions of this study. Following that, a discussion of the current educational situation in Taiwan was presented. It also explored the problems in foreign language teaching in Taiwan that prompted this study. The second chapter focuses on the related literature review on children’s language literacy development and acquisition. Four major areas are discussed: (1) theories and studies of teaching English as a foreign language; (2) effectiveness of the Picture Word Inductive Model in enhancing children’s reading/writing development; (3) research into Cooperative Learning as a way of promoting language development and learning motivation; and (4) the possibility of adopting change in school systems. Chapter three explains the research methodology of this study. The participants (teachers and students), the materials used in the participating classes, the design of this study, the procedure of the experiment, and the process of data collection are fully discussed. Chapter four provides an analysis of the data collection and presents the results of this study. Those data are collected from my onsite notes and video recordings of classroom observations, the participating teachers’ weekly reflective journals, the transcripts of teachers’ monthly meetings, and the teachers’ and students’ personal interview transcripts. The data is analyzed and interpreted, and the findings of the study are also discussed in this chapter. The last chapter (Chapter five) presents a summary and conclusion of the study. The implications and suggestions for teachers who are interested in implementing a different instructional approach in
their classes are provided. This chapter also contains a discussion of the limitations of this study and provides suggestions for future, related research.
Chapter Two

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Interestingly, although early childhood educators believe that the development of children’s language and literacy is inextricably intertwined from birth, the reasons why remain a mystery. As early as 1915, Dewey wrote in *Schools of Tomorrow*,

[i]f we want, then, to find out how education takes place most successfully, let us go to the experiences of children where learning is a necessity, and not to the practices of the schools where it is largely an adornment, a superfluity and even an unwelcome imposition. (p. 2)

Dewey believed that children’s learning begins long before they go to school and happens naturally. During this period, they not only develop a remarkable knowledge of oral language, but also acquire considerable awareness of written language. Neuman and Roskos (1993) explain, “From children’s natural, ongoing encounters with oral language, they develop expectations of how language might operate in a different form, like written language. Children’s independent attempts to ‘read’ books, for example, enhance their understanding of how writing works” (p. 27). That quotation suggests that children’s language acquisition is a continuous process in which their language evolves and develops gradually through time.

As stated earlier, this qualitative research is designed to propose an alternative teaching approach that combines the Picture Word Inductive Model and Cooperative Learning to the current teacher-centered instructional methods in Taiwan in order to help elementary school students acquire their English reading-writing literacy more effectively. In addition, this study also illuminates the teachers’ efforts to learn and implement this approach in their classes. This
chapter mainly explores four key important issues related to children’s language acquisition through a selection of reviewed literature. Four major areas are discussed in this chapter: (1) English as a second/foreign language acquisition, (2) the effectiveness of the Picture Word Inductive Model, (3) the application of cooperative learning as a classroom-based instruction, and (4) the implementation of change in the educational system. This chapter starts with a focus on the issues and factors that interact to impact children’s ESL (English as a second language) /EFL (English as a foreign language) acquisition. It presents a discussion of the social, pedagogical and other factors that influence the development of children’s ESL/EFL acquisition. The second part of this chapter contains an exploration of the effectiveness of Calhoun’s Picture Word Inductive Model. It starts with the theoretical background of this model and shifts to a discussion of the implementation of this model in promoting children’s reading and writing development.

The third part presents the essence of Cooperative Learning in scaffolding and recasting EFL learners’ literacy proficiency and elaborates on the historical roots of cooperative learning and the essential basic elements of effective group work. It also contains an examination of the role of cooperative learning in shaping children’s language in classroom-based instruction. The last part of this chapter presents an argument for the possibility of adopting change in school systems. Starting with the discussion of Freire’s words about change, this section contains an explanation of the possible difficulties and obstacles when change takes place. It also involves a discussion of Hall and Hord’s (2006) Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) to illuminate the stages of concern that individuals need to go through when change is adopted. Finally, the chapter provides a detailed description of the levels of use people experience when they practice change.
**English as a Second/Foreign language acquisition**

One common belief is that children acquire their native languages without making distinctive efforts. Research findings (Ellis, 2008; Levine & McCloskey, 2009; Melzi & Ely, 2009; Penfield & Robers, 1959) show that, by the age of five, children have acquired an extensive storehouse of words and are able to produce nearly-adult-like sentences. That said, children’s second or foreign language acquisition might be a completely different story. Unlike acquiring their mother tongues subconsciously, children need to learn their second language consciously through a series of instructions (Ellis, 2008; Krashen, 1981; Levine & McCloskey, 2009). Though a few researchers (Ellis, 2008; Nicolas & Lightbown, 2008) make a distinction between ‘child second language acquisition’ which usually occurs before the age of 4, and ‘adult second language acquisition,’ after the age 7, the term “second language” is generally applied to any language other than a person’s first language. In this sense, second language acquisition implies the conscious process of learning another language after the acquisition of one’s mother tongue. Even so, second language acquisition differs from foreign language acquisition, despite the fact that both terms refer to learning a language other than one’s mother language. Unlike second language learners, foreign language learners often lack access to linguistic input from native speakers and seldom have chances to use that target language in their daily life. Ellis (2008) indicates that second language usually plays an “institutional and social role” (p. 6) in the society where both that language and the mother tongue are a means of communication but foreign language mostly occurs in a setting where that language is not widely spoken and it is only learned at schools. Similarly, Garcia Mayo and Garcia Lecumberri (2003) also explain that learners in second language settings “ha[ve] access to the L2 not only in the classroom but in the world in which [they are] daily immersed,” whereas those in foreign language situations “ha[ve] access to the input provided in the classroom and little else” (p. vii).
Although a distinction exists between second and foreign language acquisition, researchers (Ellis, 2008; Gebhard, 2006) believe that the processes of acquiring a second or a foreign language are similar but not necessarily identical. Ellis (2008) posits that:

[t]he distinction between second and foreign language learning is best treated as a socio-linguistic one rather than a psycholinguistic one. That is, for the time being at least, we need to keep an open mind as to whether the learning processes found in each are the same or different. (p. 6)

The quotation points out the importance of language input and social interaction in determining learners’ success in second/foreign language acquisition. Similar to first language acquisition, children’s second/foreign language acquisition is also driven by their innate mechanisms interacting with the language environment. The interaction between speakers and listeners, in fact, is an influential factor in children’s language(s) acquisition, no matter whether they are immersed in the language environment naturally or in a school-based instructional setting.

Five Hypotheses about Second/Foreign Language Acquisition

People (children or adults) usually possess linguistic competence in their native language before they start to learn another language. While attempting to learn a second or foreign language, individuals undergo a process similar to that which they undergo in acquiring their first language. Extending Chomsky’s cognitive theory of Universal Grammar, which implies that many principles of grammar are shared by all languages and are thought to be innate to humans (Johnson, 2004), Krashen (1981) believed that children would construct a series of their own grammatical rules through a process of hypotheses testing when they are learning a language other than their native one. This process of hypotheses testing helps children create and develop
grammatical rules for the new language in a way that is similar to their first language (Levine & McCloskey, 2009). Explaining children’s second language acquisition as a natural process and emphasizing communication as the primary goal of language teaching, Krashen (1981) has developed five hypotheses that have shed light on classroom instruction for English language learners. These five hypotheses in his ‘Natural Approach’ are the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the input hypothesis, the affective filter hypothesis, and the monitor hypothesis.

The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis. Krashen indicates that a distinctive difference exists between language acquisition and language learning. Acquisition of a language is a subconscious process in which an individual is not aware, whereas learning a language implies a conscious process in which one is attempting to understand and gain competency with grammar. Complementing the ideas of Krashen (1981), Levine and McCloskey (2009) suggest that children acquire their first language without paying much attention to “grammatical forms and instead concentrate on understanding and communicating meaningful messages” (p. 9). They interact with one another meaningfully in the target language and focus on meaning rather than linguistic form. On the other hand, learning a language is an instruction-based process, during which children are taught the linguistic form of the target language. Children are more likely involved in consciously memorizing the rules of grammar and often error correction is involved. Krashen believes that “knowledge about the formal properties of a second language … does not lead to acquisition. In contrast to acquisition, learning requires the formal teaching of grammatical rules and structures” (Johnson, 2004, p. 47). Unfortunately, as mentioned earlier, students in Taiwan still ‘learn’ English by memorizing grammatical rules, instead of ‘acquiring’ the language as a form of communication.
The Natural Order Hypothesis. When children learn a language other than their native one, they acquire the ‘grammatical rules’ in predictable sequence. They have to go through a series of common transitional stages in moving toward the target language forms. According to Krashen, learners are supposed to pick up certain properties of the linguistic rules before they move on to the next level. For instance, when learning English grammatical rules, children or second-language adult learners will master the progressive –ing ending and plural –s form much earlier before they can acquire the regular verb past tense, or the third person singular –s. Echoing Chomsky’s Universal Grammar, Krashen subscribes to the hypothesis that learners’ second language is acquired in a certain order (Johnson, 2004). Johnson (2004) further elaborates Krashen’s ‘natural order hypothesis’ by indicating that, “[i]f there is a natural order of acquisition, there must be a mechanism that processes the incoming information according to an innate, universal, and rule-governed system” (p. 47). Though research findings point out that learners’ first language might have some influence on their second language learning (Levine & McCloskey, 2009), Krashen affirms that the natural order of acquiring the grammatical rules will not be affected by teaching instruction; in fact, this natural order of acquiring language properties transcends age, learners’ native language, the target language, or the conditions under which the second language is being learned.

The Input Hypothesis. The Input Hypothesis is based on the proposal that languages can be acquired only when learners understand and comprehend the received messages. That said, in order for children to learn something, the linguistic input should be slightly above their current comprehension level. Elaborating on Krashen’s perspectives on language input, Levin and McCloskey (2009) indicate, “the best input (i) is language that is understood by the learner but is a little beyond the learner’s current understanding or competence [which is operationalized as
i+1” (p. 10). Learners obtain comprehensible input through listening to oral language that interlocutors (teachers/instructors) direct to them and through reading written texts that surround them. Holding similar assumption as Vygotsky, Krashen emphasizes the important role of interlocutors in second language acquisition because they would provide comprehensible and meaningful input for learners. He believes that the mechanisms of second language learning are similar to those of first language acquisition; children learn the language grammar by being exposed to the language that is initiated and directed by parents or adults. Krashen also indicates that the natural order of language development proceeds when second language learners try to comprehend the language input that contains structures a bit beyond their current level of linguistic competence (Johnson, 2004). In fact, both the Picture Word Inductive Model and Cooperative Learning share the same underlying assumptions as Krashen’s Input Hypothesis. Calhoun’s (1999) Picture Word Inductive Model is a teacher-directed approach where teachers as interlocutors facilitate students’ learning process and help them eventually become independent learners. Similarly, in a Cooperative Learning environment, adult guidance or collaboration with more capable peers promote students’ intellectual growth (Slavin, 1995).

**The Affective Filter Hypothesis.** Though comprehensible input is a necessary condition for learners to acquire their second/foreign language, Krashen points out that learners also need to be receptive in order to be successful in language learning. To be receptive, students need to be in a learning environment with low-anxiety and high-motivation. Krashen terms the obstacle between a learner and language input as the ‘affective filter.’ He defines the affective filter as “a mental block that prevents acquirers from fully utilizing the comprehensible input they receive for language acquisition” (as cited in Johnson, 2004, p. 48). When the affective filter is on, negative emotional responses will occur, which will cause high learning anxiety and low self-
Esteem and motivation. On the contrary, when the filter is off, it will reduce stress, make learners become receptive to the language input and increase the chance that they acquire a language subconsciously. Only when learners feel less anxious and are highly motivated will their learning mechanisms efficiently process the comprehensible input and be more likely to successfully master the language. In a Cooperative Learning class, students have lower anxiety and feel more comfortable with learning, while working with their peers (Chen, 1999; Ghaith, 2003; Johnson & Johnson, 1991, 1994, 2003; Roseth et al., 2008; Slavin, 1994, 1995).

The Monitor Hypothesis. The Monitor Hypothesis accounts for the operation of the learned knowledge. Krashen asserts that the primary goal of language acquisition is not the memorization of linguistic rules, but communication (Levine & McCloskey, 2009). Whereas ‘learning’ represents a conscious study of linguistic form, ‘acquisition’ helps learners to produce natural, fluent communicative speech. Krashen points out, “Our ability to produce utterances in another language comes from our acquired competence, from our subconscious knowledge. Learning, conscious knowledge, serves only as an editor, or Monitor. We appeal to learning to make corrections, to change the output of the acquired system…” (as cited in Johnson, 2004, p. 47). This Monitor, a reflective process, helps learners examine their communication and correct minor errors; however, in order to access this reflective process, Krashen indicates that learners must have sufficient time to apply the learned competence and must be knowledgeable about grammatical rules (Johnson, 2004; Levine & McCloskey, 2009).

Krashen’s hypotheses shed light on second/foreign language acquisition and also have a great impact on language teaching. His belief directs educators and classroom teachers’ attention to the primary goal of language acquisition – communication. By creating a learning environment
with low-anxiety but with high-motivation, teachers direct children to acquire the language subconsciously and accelerate their development of language acquisition.

Factors Affecting the Outcome of Second/Foreign Language Acquisition

Over the past half-century, hundreds of studies were conducted to investigate the process of children acquiring second languages. The findings of those studies (Ellis, 2008; Garcia Mayo & Garcia Lecumberri, 2003; Philp et al., 2008) indicate that various factors play an important role in determining the success of children’s second/foreign language acquisition. In general, these factors can be categorized into the sociolinguistic aspect (the external factors) and the psycholinguistic aspect (the internal factors). The studies on learner-external factors aim to figure out the importance of language input, social interaction and pedagogies on the process of children acquiring a second language, whereas research on learner-internal factors primarily focuses on children’s internal mechanisms of constructing the information they get from the input and incorporating it into their mental system.

Language Input. Children are not expected to talk right after birth. Before children can acquire a language, they need to be immersed in the language environment for a certain period of time, actively engage in the ‘pool of talk,’ figure out the meaning and construct their own grammatical rules, interact with the sources of language around them, and finally be confident enough to use (speak) the language. Second/foreign language learners will go through a similar process before they can master the target language. Exposure to the target language is essential for the development of learners’ second/foreign language acquisition. As discussed earlier, Krashen emphasizes the importance of comprehensive input that learners process for meaning and that provides information to be learned (Ortega, 2009). That said, unlike the first language
environment that possesses abundant and frequent linguistic sources, the resources in a second/foreign language setting are usually limited. The second/foreign language input may be limited in a transmission-type classroom setting where teachers are the only provider of linguistic information. In a school where learners’ first language is spoken, students are rarely provided the chance to speak in their second/foreign language and the comprehensible input is also reduced. Without abundant language input, children can hardly learn a second language as effectively as they acquire their first language (Levine & McCloskey, 2009). In a class where this new approach that merges the PWIM with Cooperative Learning is implemented, learners have more chances to interact with both their teacher and their peers. Through the guidance from and interaction with their teacher and classmates, students are actively engaged in the language learning process and gradually construct their knowledge of the target language.

**Interaction.** Researchers (Ellis, 1997, 2008; Kirsch, 2008; Ortega, 2009) believe that to acquire a language, learners need to be exposed to the language environment and engage in verbal interaction with others so that they are able to practice the new words or linguistic structures in an actual context. Supporting Krashen’s proposal that language input must be comprehensible for language learners and learning only occurs through comprehension, Michael Long, in the early 1980s, extended the concept and proposed that one needs to be involved in the interaction in order to receive the comprehensible and attainable language input. In her *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*, Ortega (2009) interprets Long’s interaction hypothesis and points out that “… the best kind of comprehensible input learners can hope to obtain is input that has been interactionally modified, in other words, adjusted after receiving some signal that the interlocutor needs some help in order to fully understand the message” (p. 61). During the process of interaction with the interlocutor (teacher or peers), the negotiation for
meaning takes place and the conveyed messages are modified or even simplified in order to make the meaning more comprehensible for the learners. This negotiation for meaning is defined by Ellis (1997) as “the interactive work that takes place between speakers when some misunderstanding occurs” (as cited in Kirsch, 2008, p. 43). Negotiation for meaning is crucial to effective interaction in the language setting and it is also important for the development of learners’ second/foreign language acquisition. Pica, Lincoln-Porter, Paninos, and Linnell (1996) conclude that “[a]s teachers ask language learners to work together on communication tasks, they can be confident that the interaction can assist L2 learning…. Learners may be reassured that their participation in communication tasks with other learners is not linguistically harmful” (p. 80). Cooperative learning activities, such as small group work, provide an excellent opportunity for learners to be engaged in interaction with the others and also increase learners’ motivation. Levine & McCloskey (2009) point out that when students are put in groups and work on two-way interactive tasks that involve information exchange, they “engage in a higher quantity of language practice, produce a broader range of language functions, greater grammatical accuracy, frequent corrections, and more negotiation of meaning than those classes that are conducted by a teacher” (p. 11). Ortega (2009) also affirms that “[i]nteractional modifications have the potential to bring about comprehension in a more individualized or learner-contingent fashion, with repetitions and redundancies rather than simplification” (p. 62). Hence, the speaker-listener interaction is essential to second/foreign language development because it not only makes the linguistic input more comprehensible, but it also helps language learners demonstrate their output in an actual context.

**Pedagogical Effects.** Clearly, the pedagogy or approaches applied in the classrooms will have certain impact on students’ learning achievement. Proper selection of teaching methods will
increase the chance for learners to be successful in language learning. In addition, Krashen’s affective filter hypothesis implies that language learners will do better in an environment with low anxiety and high self-esteem; the choice of teaching methods will decide the atmosphere of the learning environment. Consensus is that no ‘one perfect method’ meets different students’ various needs. Mitchell and Miles (1998) indicate that “teaching is an art as well as a science… teachers ‘read’ and ‘interpret’ the changing dynamics of the learning context from moment to moment, and take what seem to them to be appropriate contingent actions, in the light of largely implicit, proceduralized pedagogic knowledge” (as cited in Kirsch, 2008, p. 49). Nonetheless, research has indicated that the traditional teaching approaches that restrict lesson content to grammar rules and vocabulary teaching are not likely to successfully develop either learners’ correct pronunciation or communicative skills, and the teacher-centered classrooms do not promote students’ interest and motivation (Kirsch, 2008). Even though the perfect teaching method does not exist, the success of a particular teaching approach entirely relies on the students, the teachers, and the learning context. In general, to promote students’ learning outcomes, successful teaching should incorporate learners’ culture and experience in lessons; create a safe and comfortable learning atmosphere; promote cooperation among learners; provide comprehensible language input; respect learners’ various needs; and foster individual autonomy (Kirsch, 2008; Levine & McCloskey, 2009). Although the PWIM is a teacher-directed approach, it is designed “to help students develop as independent learners and as independent readers and to foster confidence based on knowledge that they secure for themselves as learners” (Calhoun, 1999, p. 30). When the PWIM is merged with Cooperative Learning, the chance for students to interact and cooperate with their peers is increased, a safe and comfortable learning atmosphere is created, and then their anxiety toward learning is lowered.
Age. Most researchers are eager to find out the role of age in determining the success of learners’ second/foreign language acquisition. According to the Critical Period Hypothesis, children will do better in learning a second/foreign language than adults. The Critical Period Hypothesis suggests that there is an optimal period of time before puberty for children to easily acquire a language, with enough and adequate stimuli. After this period, language acquisition seems to be harder and less successful (Kirsch, 2008; Lenneberg, 1967 mentioned in Ortega, 2009; Penfield & Roberts, 1959). Penfield and Roberts indicate that “[b]efore the age of nine to twelve, a child is a specialist in learning to speak. At that age he can learn two or three languages as easily as one…. Remember that for the purposes of learning languages, the human brain becomes progressively stiff and rigid after the age of nine” (p. 235-236). The hypothesis proposes that human brains are pre-programmed to attend to language experience early in life; before this period, learners are more likely to be successful in their language achievement. Based on a review of a range of research findings, Kirsch (2008) points out that the studies into the Critical Period Hypothesis in relation to language learning are inconclusive and indicates that earlier is not necessarily better. Levine and McCloskey (2009) also confirm that children’s cognitive ability develops with age. As it develops, it reaches a point which is optimal for second language learning. They explain,

…the cognitive level of school-age children is much higher than that of an infant. Thus, higher cognitive abilities can facilitate language-learning experience in school. If the ELL [English Language Learner] has already acquired a first language and can read and write in that first language, the transition to a second language will be much smoother and more efficient. The ability to read in one language is an asset when learning to read in another. (p. 15)
That said, age is still a key factor that affects the acquisition of native-like pronunciation and syntactic structures. Adult learners are more likely to have a L1 (first language) accent when they learn a second/foreign language because they are more settled in the pronunciation of their native language. In other words, the massive previous experience with their first language affects the way adults learn a second/foreign language. Ortega (2009) concludes that,

[i]n terms of L2 [second language] ultimate attainment, most learners who begin acquiring the L2 before a certain age, typically before puberty, will develop levels of morphosyntactic and phonological competence that are very close to those of native speakers of that language. Post-pubertal learners, however, are not likely to perform in the native speaker range, and this holds true regardless of the number of years they have resided in the L2 environment. (p. 28-29)

Although researchers continue to debate about whether or not an early start is beneficial for learners in terms of their success in language acquisition, Kirsch (2008) concludes that an early start in second/foreign language learning can improve learners’ communication skills, promote their positive learning attitude, and develop their metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness, assuming that the instructional program and system are sound, and no discontinuity exists between one level of education and the next.

Motivation. Motivation is mostly understood as a will or desire to activate or energize certain behaviors. In the realm of second language acquisition, motivation usually refers to “the desire to initiate L2 [second language] learning and the effort employed to sustain it” (Ortega, 2009, p. 168). Recently, motivation is believed to involve personal effort, enjoyment, and the investment that one makes in language learning. The truly motivated individuals will put much
effort into learning, enjoy the learning process, and have a strong desire to succeed in mastering the language (Gardner, 2001). Because of varied purposes or intentions, motivation can be divided into different types. *Integrative motivation* is the most researched one and is believed to be the highest and most facilitative form of motivation (Gardner, 2001). Integrativeness is defined by Gardner (2001) as “a genuine interest in learning the second language in order to come closer to the other language community” (p. 5). When individuals have high integrativeness, contribute enough effort, and embrace a positive attitude toward the learning situation, they are integratively motivated. Gardner (2001) indicates that integratively motivated learners are likely to achieve native-like second language competence.

Of course, not every language learner wants to think and behave like the L2 speaker, nor has a cultural interest in the L2 community. Some people learn a second/foreign language for more practical reasons, such as getting a good job or pursuing a higher level of education. This type of motivation is *instrumental motivation*, characterized by the desire to obtain a more practical or concrete goal from the learning of a second/foreign language (Hudson, 2000). For learners with instrumental motivation, their purpose of learning a second/foreign language is more utilitarian. Although both integrative and instrumental motivations are important in determining the success of learners’ second/foreign language acquisition, integrative motivation maintains the long-term success of second/foreign language learning (Ellis, 2008; Gardner, 2001). Unfortunately, most students usually tend to be instrumentally motivated when learning a second/foreign language (Norris-Holt, 2001). Even though integrative motivation is often linked to the successful acquisition of second/foreign language, Brown (2000) points out most learners usually apply a combination of both types of motivations when learning a language other than their native one.
Depending if the desire to learn a second/foreign language is initiated by self-interest or a means-end, motivation can also be categorized into intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. Ortega (2009) explains that,

[w]hen individuals engage in behaviour that they understand as self-initiated by choice and largely sustained by inherent enjoyment in the activity, they are said to be intrinsically motivated…. When individuals construe their behaviour as structured by a means-end, pragmatic-instrumental causation that is imposed from the outside, their sense of self-causation and autonomy is low, if present at all, and they are said to be extrinsically motivated. (p. 176)

In other words, intrinsically motivated behaviours are more self-determined and are initiated by self-satisfaction; on the contrary, extrinsically motivated behaviours are more instrumentally oriented and are externally regulated actions. Intrinsic motivation is more related to Gardner’s integrative motivation because both lead to the satisfaction of the individual’s innate psychological needs for competence and autonomy, and likely result in high-quality learning. Extrinsic motivation is considered to be the type of motivation less likely to lead to success because behaviours are performed for some separate consequence, without anything to do with the second language itself. Importantly, however, undergoing the processes of internalization and integration, extrinsically motivated behaviours can become more self-determined (Ortega, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

**Individual Differences.** For years, researchers and educators have been seeking the answer to the question why some language learners do better than the others. In general, people do not differ in their cognitive abilities; however, they do have different ways of perceiving and
processing the information (Ortega, 2009). Individuals have different cognitive styles or learning styles which they use to acquire the information or specific skills taught in class. Cognitive or learning styles refer to the unique characteristics of one’s perceiving and storing information from the environment. Brown (2000) states that “the way we learn things in general and the way we attack a problem seem to hinge on a rather amorphous link” (p. 113) and this link is referred to as cognitive style. In contrast, learning style is regarded as “cognitive, affective, and physiological traits that are relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment” (Keefe, 1979, p. 4). Various learning styles have certain positive or negative influences on learners’ learning outcomes. Tolerance for ambiguity, reflectivity and impulsivity, visual and auditory styles are some examples of learning styles. As a matter of fact, there may be learning styles still unknown or not yet examined.

For example, Field Dependence/Field Independence tendency describes how the surrounding perceptual field influences the way people perceive, acquire and comprehend information. Apparently, the ways that the field independent learners and field dependent learners perceive and understand knowledge are rather different. The learners with extreme field dependence are so much influenced by the surrounding environment that they cannot distinguish separate elements from the whole. On the contrary, those with extreme field independence tend not to be influenced by the whole environment, and they are so analytical that they can easily separate the elements hidden in the whole. Furthermore, those field dependent learners tend to be more socially oriented; they love to work, cooperate with, and interact with others, and they need clear directions and instruction from peers and teachers to help them make a judgment and accomplish the learning tasks by receiving feedback from others. Field independent learners are socially-detached and task-oriented. They focus on the learning tasks rather than the people around them. These statements are supported by research. The study conducted by Johnson, Prior
and Artuso (2000) concludes that field dependent L2 learners possess higher communicative abilities, while the results of Stanfield and Hansen’s (1983) experiment point out that field independent learners perform much better in second language test performance, especially those involving analytic abilities.

The Picture Word Inductive Model and Improving Learners’ Literacy

For the past few decades, researchers and educators have been striving to develop optimal approaches to facilitate learners’ literacy. This section starts with a discussion of important fundamentals of children’s literacy development. Then it elaborates on the essence of Calhoun’s (1999) Picture Word Inductive Model and its implementation in promoting children’s literacy proficiency. Many researchers (Clay, 1991, 2001; Galda, Cullinan, & Strickland, 1993, 1997; Teale & Sulzby, 1989) conclude that children’s literacy learning should not be regarded simply as the development of a cognitive skill, but as a complex ongoing process that involves social interaction, linguistic awareness and psychological growth. Teale and Sulzby (1989) propose that to portray young children as literacy learners, one needs to recognize five characteristics of children’s literacy learning: (1) literacy development begins long before children receive formal instruction; (2) literacy learning is purposeful and is a part of the larger learning system; (3) children’s reading and writing abilities develop concurrently and interrelatedly; (4) children develop their literacy proficiency though active engagement; and (5) adult scaffolding accelerates children’s literacy development.

Synthesizing those findings of various educators and researchers in their Language, Literacy and the Child, Galda, Cullinan, and Strickland (1993; 1997) summarize that six important fundamentals need to be considered while attempting to illuminate the natural development of children’s literacy.
First, children’s literacy learning begins in infancy and keeps on going. Children start their first encounter with reading and writing long before they enter pre-kindergarten or kindergarten with classroom-based instructions (Clay, 1991). In fact, beginning with infancy, young children explore and examine the signs and printed information that surround them, and then construct their own knowledge through these observations and interaction with adults. Vygotsky (1998) believes that children’s adventure of language learning is triggered by the social language environment around them, and he proposes that an infant starts to learn the meaning of signs through interaction with adults. “No matter what happens to the infant, he is always in a situation connected with the care giving of adults…. Thus, the first contact of the child with reality … is wholly and completely socially mediated” (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 215). Teale and Sulzby (1989) also point out, “… children come in contact with written language as parents place soft alphabet blocks in their environments or read them books. These early contacts with print can be thought of as the beginning of a lifelong process of learning to read and write” (p. 3). While exploring the new information that is brought to them, children apply their existing but limited knowledge to the situation and try to make sense of it. Also, through the interaction with and support from more competent peers and adults, children can gradually operate with a higher level of skill to understand the print that surrounds them.

Second, children’s literacy and oral language develop at the same time. Instead of being considered as a prerequisite for literacy development, children’s oral language fluency in fact co-exists with their literacy ability and accelerates the growth of four language skills. Though educators have believed that strong oral proficiency will facilitate the growth of literacy, it cannot be denied that children’s reading experience also has a great impact on their oral language development. While communicating with adults, children always make the connection between what they have heard or seen and what they are reading. Clearly, for young children, “the
language arts mutually reinforce one another in development” (Teale & Sulzby, 1989, p. 4); that is, children’s oral language proficiency influences their development in reading and their writing proficiency is enhanced by their reading comprehension.

Third, children have a strong desire to engage in learning about literacy. Children do not passively absorb everything they are taught like a sponge. On the contrary, they are active learners and are eager to engage during the process of acquiring literacy. Children experience literacy learning in their daily lives through many purposeful activities. When encountering new written information, children will form and test hypotheses to try to figure out how the written form works. While doing this, they attempt to determine the differences between drawing and writing; “to understand the meanings, structures, and cadences of written language; to learn the symbols of writings; and to sort out the relationships between these symbols and the sounds of oral language” (Teale & Sulzby, 1989, p. 4). Similarly, Clay (1991) also points out, “As children search for meaning in print they are able to notice new things about words or print or messages, constructively linking these to other things they know” (p. 319). This obviously indicates that while developing their literacy children are in fact active learners, as well as, constructors of understanding.

Fourth, literacy learning is a developmental process. Children search for strategies and ways to understand their day-to-day experience. In general, most children reveal the similar patterns of acquiring reading-and-writing proficiency; however, their strategies of understanding information might differ from one child to the next and would also vary through the passing of time. Before children enter the classroom, they are already equipped to be able to learn language in their own ways. Clay (1991) points out that,

… [b]efore the child comes to school he has already learned how to learn by making responses and getting feedback about its appropriateness. He has developed a complex
differentiated internal representation of his world. He had strategies for remembering, grouping, problem-solving. He has constructed a complex system of language rules which enable him to understand and produce the sentences of his language. He builds these rules by a process that is still not very well understood but his language learning is innovative and rule-governed. (p. 319)

Without question, children have their own ways to explore and interpret the meaning existing in their environment and that adults help to facilitate the developmental process.

Fifth, storybook reading with adults plays a positive role in improving children’s literacy development. While sharing and reading storybooks with their children, parents inevitably turn the words and images in the books into questions about print (Talyor & Strickland, 1986). When interacting with parents, children in fact learn more than they do by themselves because their parents help them achieve the goal of the activity – reading and improving literacy. This parent-child interaction indeed plays an important part in accelerating children’s literacy growth. Teale and Sulzby (1989) confirm, “Interactive storybook readings between adults and children have powerful effects on the children’s literacy development and lead to independent reenactment of books” (p. 5). They further point out that “… adult scaffolding of the activity is an important means of promoting literacy learning in young children and of establishing independent reading and writing habits” (p. 5). Not only do adults help children recognize that the ‘characters’ and ‘words’ provide children with materials to speak, but also reinforce the concept that the print does carry ‘meaning.’

Sixth, literacy learning is intimately connected to cultural background and family experiences. While exposed to a world rich in different forms of print, such as visual images, signs, and television advertisements, children’s first literacy learning always starts from contact
with their family. Long before they receive school instruction, children develop a certain level of literacy ability through experiencing those examples of print in their environment even though these preschool learning experiences will be different from one family to the next and from one culture to the next. The awareness and understanding about this print world that children gain are largely the result of their daily experiences and interactions with their family (Galda, Cullinan, & Strickland, 1993).

Those six points indicate that children’s literacy growth begins to germinate long before they enter schools and that it is a complex, ongoing developmental process that involves the intersection of visual-auditory engagement and social interaction.

**Language Learning as a Social Interaction**

As indicated in the previous section, adult and peer interactions play an important role in determining children’s language acquisition (Clay, 1991; Philp, Mackey, & Oliver, 2008; Piaget, 1974; Vygotsky, 1998). In the first couple of years, a child’s learning a language is entirely dependent on what people say to him/her, how much they talk to him/her and how often the conversations take place. Adults, in fact, model the language patterns which children follow, imitate and then use to generate the language structures and rules by themselves (Clay, 1991). Similarly, Galda, Cullinan, and Strickland (1993) confirm that a social, child-centered environment is essential for children’s language development. They explain, “[adults] talk with … the child and seem to sense the child’s need to be an active participant, demanding feedback and shared control. Language is informally demonstrated by adults who interact with the child and give help when needed” (p. 32). Clay (1991) also points out that,

[p]arents who are not child-centered will spend less time expanding their child’s speech. This would leave the child to struggle with the rules of English language from the
haphazard flow of difficult speech around him. When adults speak with children they usually adapt or simplify their language but their conversation among themselves is more complex in construction. From this the child may find it more difficult to find the critical components of language which make his utterances meaningful to others. Children need frequent opportunities to test the rules of the language they are discovering. These opportunities arise on many occasions because children like to hold an adult’s attention with a little conversation about the spontaneous activities they engage in. (p. 70)

Calhoun’s Picture Word Inductive Model, in fact, provides children with opportunities to interact with the adults and peers. Derived from the traditional Language Experience Approach, the Picture Word Inductive Model is a constructive, instructional method that is designed to promote learners’ literacy. Explicitly, Calhoun (1990) defines the PWIM as “an inquiry-oriented language arts strategy that uses pictures containing familiar objects and actions to elicit words from children’s listening and speaking vocabularies” (p. 21). Working with classes, small groups, or even individuals, teachers facilitate pupils’ “inquiry about words, adding words to their sight-reading and writing vocabularies, discovering phonetic and structural principles, and using observation and analysis in their study of reading and writing” (p. 21). This leads to students constructing their own sentences and eventually paragraphs and stories related to work they have generated.

Through their interaction with and guidance from their peers and the teacher, learners develop and acquire their language naturally. This concept is consistent with Vygotsky’s theory of the “zone of proximal development [which] focuses on the role of the adult as social interlocutor who is also a representative of society” (Glassman, 2001, p. 4). Vygotsky (1998) points out the importance of adults in children’s language development by emphasizing the
interaction between the child and the language in his/her environment. Philp, Mackey and Oliver (2008) also suggest the importance of peer interaction in assisting children to develop their language by explaining that

[un]like adult-child relations, peers tend to be relatively equal in their interactions, and their seeking of mutuality, particularly within friendship groupings, is reflected in their language use. This is not to say that peers do not engage in power positioning -- much the reverse; because peers are relatively equal in power, negotiation of position becomes an important element in their interaction. This in turn contributes to shaping the role of peers in a child’s second language acquisition, particularly in relation to the potential of peers to serve as teachers. (p. 13)

They further elaborate that,

[w]hile adults, caregivers, and teachers may provide more scaffolding and recasting of a child learner’s language, and while they may work harder to support and negotiate language, a child’s peers appear to provide contexts for practice. Further, children are active in their own development; they often choose roles for themselves, for their peers, and for those adults with whom they have relationships. (p. 14)

With the assistance of the teacher and their peers, learners are able to gradually incorporate knowledge about written language into their mental repertoire. This scaffolded instruction in which teachers, working with children around a literacy task, provide support as the learners are in need and withdraw the assistance as learners become able to function independently, has been proved to be effective in improving ESL students English proficiency (Watts-Taffe & Truscott, 2000).
Language Learning as a Natural Development

The natural development of children’s language acquisition happens in sequential order: from oral language (listening and speaking) to written language (reading and writing). Children need to be immersed in a language environment and to listen to language extensively before they can speak. Galda, Cullinan and Strickland (1993) confirm that “[c]hildren, immersed in this ‘sea of talk,’ actively construct their own rule-governed, meaningful language” (p. 31). They further explain that, although children’s literacy development begins at birth, “the period before formal instruction in reading and writing is viewed as a time for getting children ready for ‘real’ literacy experiences through systematic instruction in a variety of discrete prereading and prewriting skills” (p. 77). Obviously, children’s oral language proficiency is significantly related to their growth in reading and also to the development of their writing. Strong oral proficiency is the basis for the development of literacy (Teale & Sulzby, 1989). Based on the same teaching philosophy, the process and the structure of the PWIM mirror the natural development of language in children. The model helps children connect their oral language to written forms.

While the teacher helps children to identify the items by spelling the words out, they witness the process in which the oral form of the language is turned into a written one. This process supports the transition from oral (listening/speaking) language to written (reading/writing) language. Building on learners’ knowledge of listening and speaking, the model facilitates further expansion of their communication repertoire by promoting literacy development. Calhoun (1999) mentions, “The PWIM is designed to enable students to be immediately successful as language learners in the formal school setting and to immerse them in how language works” (p. 25). She further explains that,

[a] major principle of the model is to build on children’s growing storehouse of spoken and understood words and syntactic forms and facilitate the transition to writing and reading.
Most children want to make sense of the language around them and they eagerly engage in unlocking its mysteries. A corollary principle of the PWIM is that the approach respects the children’s language development: their words are used and their ability to make connections is central to the learning process and the model. (p. 26)

As a result of students listening to words, saying the words repeatedly, and communicating with their peers and instructors, learning is encouraged. That process enhances learners’ recognition of language and enlarges their mental dictionary, a process that is essential for the subsequent development of reading and writing.

**Vocabulary Learning Through Pictures**

Vocabulary plays an important role in determining if the learner is an effective reader. To be fluent in reading, children are required to have a large lexicon. The more words they possess, the more fluent they may become. Newman (2006) explains that “children who acquire a substantial vocabulary are often able to think more deeply, express themselves better and actually learn new things more quickly” (as cited in Wong, 2009, p. 13). Pictures are one way to elicit words and help learners enlarge their lexicon. Pictures and signs can be seen everywhere in our daily environment. Picture albums, symbols and posters on the street – all of these are “memories of life experiences and feelings recaptured through nonverbal means” (Burmark, 2002, p. 7). Those visual images convey certain information and are now considered a means of communication. To be considered as literate, one has not only to possess the ability to read and write, but also to process both meanings conveyed or hidden between text and images in the pictures (Burmark, 2002; Comacchio, 2006). Sinatra (1986) comments that “[p]ictures, films, and illustrations strive to capture the immediate, the concrete[,] to make information more readily
available than by coding it in a written language form” (p. 158). Duchastel (1978) also posits that pictures serve three functions in texts: to attract and motivate readers’ attention, to illustrate what cannot be described, and to facilitate recall and memory (as cited in Sinatra, 1986). According to Gardner’s (1993) theory of multiple intelligence, while most traditional instruction focuses only on promoting learners’ linguistic (words), logical-Mathematical (number) and intrapersonal (self) intelligences, students would achieve a better performance level if additional intelligences (interpersonal, visual-spatial, musical, bodily kinesthetic, and naturalist) are involved. Gardner (1993) describes spatial intelligence as “the capacities to perceive the visual world accurately, to perform transformations and modifications upon one’s initial perceptions, and to be able to re-create aspects of one’s visual experience, even in the absence of relevant physical stimuli” (p. 173). Research (Pavio, 1986; Piro, 2002; Rakes, 1999; Sinatra, 1986) has shown that the use of visual images is effective in helping learners memorize linguistic texts. After analyzing and examining some research findings, Gardner (1993) concludes that spatial intelligence, one of the many types of intelligence, should be treated as equal in importance because it, as well as linguistic intelligence, “seem[s] able to proceed in relatively independent or complementary fashion” (p. 179).

Echoing Gardner’s theory, Pavio (1986) posits his “dual coding theory” and indicates that visual and verbal information are processed and decoded separately in different areas of brain. When the same information is presented in two different forms (verbal and visual), not only does the left hemisphere of the brain become active to decode the linguistic labels, but the right hemisphere also starts to interpret the visual representation. This dual coding process then will improve learning performance because the visual and linguistic information do not compete with each other. Supporting Pavio’s dual coding theory, Rakes (1999) affirms that
When individuals were asked to look at and remember verbal information, two regions in the brain’s verbal domain – the left hemisphere – became active. When presented with visual information, the right hemisphere lit up. Given this information, the use of visuals in instructional materials takes on a larger dimension than when simply thought of as decorative supplements to text. The use of visuals with text can provide that dual code that can, in turn, increase comprehension. (p. 14)

That said, individuals’ perception and interpretation of the same picture or visual image might be varied, depending on their prior knowledge, their intent and life experiences. Unless the readers were really in the setting or experienced exactly the same event, they would never know the full story represented the picture (Burmark, 2002). Sinatra (1986) also mentions that “[v]iewer experience and intent coupled with the picture organization influence the verbal and written language that will be used to explicate a viewed experience.” She further elaborates that “[l]anguage is brought to the sequences by the individual perceiver. Picture sequences provoke both convergent and divergent thinking dependent upon the experience and intent of the perceiver” (p. 159). For instance, a picture of a snow scene will make less sense for individuals from a place where it never snows. They might be able to describe the picture on the surface level; however, they are likely to have a hard time figuring out the deeper symbolic content of the image because they cannot relate the scene to their actual life experience. Similarly, when watching a new film made by a familiar director, the reviewers, because of prior experience and encounters with the director, would likely have presuppositions and predictions about the new movie. They also very probably will engage a high level of analysis in order to penetrate deep into the meanings and messages conveyed in the movie.
Picture books are possibly children’s first experience with literacy. In fact, the meanings of the pictures rely entirely not only on the sequences of the images but also on the imagination and interpretation of the readers. Whitehead (2004) mentions that

[t]he apparent simplicity of picture books is, paradoxically, the source of the considerable demands they place on the reader. Reading picture books might be likened to ‘authoring’ or creating a story. The very lack of text means that a picture book is rich in narrative spaces that must be filled in by the readers. Successful creative reading of this kind demands sensitive interpretations of the story possibilities in the pictures as well as the text, if any.
(p. 139)

When children are exposed to pictures, they become active readers and interpret the illustrations by using their imaginations. They have to search for clues from the pictures to identify the characters and the themes. By applying careful analysis and examination, children predict the events implied in the images and sequence the pictures in order to create a vivid story.

The Picture Word Inductive Model acknowledges the significant role of visual images in developing children’s literacy. Encouraging deconstruction and interpretation of a selected picture, the PWIM supports the notion that one can read and communicate through visual images (Calhoun, 1999; Wong, 2009). In PWIM, pictures serve as important stimuli for relating learners’ life experience to their language learning in the classroom. Pictures play a significant role in children’s literacy development because the images and illustrations not only lead children to encounter a different genre of literature but also prepare them for literacy (Whitehead, 2004). Both Calhoun (1999) and Astorga (1999) indicate that pictures provide students with concrete referents for learning new words, phrases and sentences. Astorga (1999) points out that “the presence of pictures … can facilitate the decoding process by making the language of the story
not only meaningful but also memorable” (p. 213). Children are presented with pictures and, through students’ recognition of the objects and actions in the pictures, teachers help children add to their store of vocabulary. Yet, not just any picture will do. In fact, the pictures should depict scenes or items with which students are familiar. To understand the images and even predict the next event to create a narrative, children need to incorporate their existing knowledge and life experiences in ‘reading’ the pictures. Whitehead (2004) points out that “[b]ecause picture book readers must do so much to make the stories mean something, young readers usually create connections between the books and their own lives and experiences” (p. 140). She further concludes that “[l]inks with [picture] books extend children’s creative ‘supposings’ and these new sets of possibilities enrich the children’s individual storying and ensure that even more expectations and successful predictions are brought to bear on subsequent book encounters” (p. 141). Talyor and Stickland (1989) also note that “children benefit when we establish literacy in the social and cultural contexts of their everyday lives…. We cannot replace family life with classroom experiences, but we can recognize the legitimacy of children’s social existence and use it as a basis for curriculum and instruction” (as cited in Galda, Cullinan, & Strickland, 1993, p. 24). Exposing and discussing the familiar cultural themes in fact motivates children’s interest in learning (Reeves, 2009). Recognizing objects and activities from their daily life in pictures, children can practice using the words and phrases that are already in their naturally-developed mental dictionary. Calhoun posits that “the connections between the children’s language and the items and actions in the picture support the transition from oral (listened to and spoken) language to written (read and written) languages” (p. 27). Her proposal coincides with the view of Piro (2002) who reveals that “by looking at pictures to determine how they communicate and elaborate a story’s message, children make a smooth transition from image to language” (p. 128).
With the assistance of the teacher, children build up considerable sight vocabularies that are essential for their literacy acquisition.

**Thinking Inductively**

The PWIM is designed to utilize children’s innate thinking tendency: reasoning inductively. Children are “natural conceptualizers” (Joyce, Well, & Calhoun, 2004). From birth, children explore and know the world by classify things in the environment, comparing and contrasting them. When children first see a cat and a dog, for instance, they can notice the difference between the two animals. When seeing two cats or more, they will discover that those cats have similar characteristics and others which are different, though they are all cats. Specifically, comparing and contrasting objects, events, or emotions helps children attend to a concept, understand the concept and develop their knowledge. In a traditional classroom, students are taught deductively by applying a rule or formula to examples; however, the inductive model cultivates learners’ ability to generalize a pattern from various data and facts. When teachers arrange the learning environment and design tasks for children to form and use concepts effectively, children’s natural conceptualizing tendency will be amplified, and their inductive thinking ability would also be developed consciously.

Induction is manifested when “the student constructs knowledge and then tests that knowledge through experience and against the knowledge of experts” (Joyce, Calhoun, & Hopkins, 2002, p. 43). Inductive reasoning is a way to discover regularities through the two processes of comparison: identification of similarities and differences. Inductive reasoning involves three different processes: discrimination (perceiving the similar and different relations), generalization (perceiving the similar characteristics) and formulation (forming the systems or regularities). By examining similarities and differences, learners are going through a cognitive
process, which enables them to discover regularities. Bennett and Rolheiser (2001), in their text
*Beyond Monet: The Artful Science of Instructional Integration*, summarize that the inductive
thinking process (1) assists learners to make sense of a large amount of information by breaking
it into meaningful pieces and figuring out the relationships between/among them; (2) helps
students understand or refine their understanding of a concept; and (3) provides teachers with
chances to attend to different learning styles and intellectual strengths. Lauth and Wiedl (1989)
also conclude that “the training of inductive thinking brings about improvements of complex
cognitive abilities which are both significant and relevant for learning at school” (p. 194). The
inductive approach not only fosters children’s attention to logical thinking but also raises their
awareness of the nature of language and knowledge. In their *Models of Learning: Tools for
Teaching*, Joyce, Calhoun, and Hopkins (2002) clarify the role of the inductive model in the
classroom.

The inductive model causes students to collect information and examine it closely, to
organize it into concepts and to learn to manipulate those concepts. Used regularly, this
strategy increases students’ abilities to form concepts efficiently and increases the range of
perspectives from which they can view information. (p. 42)

They further indicate that “complex inquiry-orientated models of instruction have turned out to
be the best educational medicine for students who start school slowly or, later, have the poorest
learning histories” (p. 49). If students are taught regularly to think inductively, they will be able
to use many sources of data and examine the information from all different aspects. Clearly,
training children to think inductively can help them discover the essence of concepts by
themselves, thus promoting their intellectual growth. Calhoun (1999) proposes that,
[t]he PWIM enables them [learners] to build generalizations that form the basis of structural and phonetic analysis. And it respects their ability to think. Thus, a major principle of the model is that students have the capability to make generalizations that can help them to master the conventions of language. (p. 21-22)

Instead of asking students to memorize the rules as teachers in Taiwan do, the PWIM encourages students to classify the words and to establish their own rules, which they can then implement to decode and to intuit the meaning of new and unfamiliar words. The more frequently learners use the model, the stronger their concepts of language will be, and the more easily their language literacy will be promoted.

**Connections Between Reading and Writing**

Reading and writing provide access to literacy. Children start to explore the world in print very early. Their curiosity about the environment around them turns into the desire to communicate. They first learn to communicate through oral language, which eventually triggers the development of their reading and writing proficiency. According to Anderson’s schema theory (1984), both reading comprehension and composition writing are an interactive process. Schema (or schemata) refers to “highly organized, generic knowledge structures composed of slots or placeholders for each component” (Kitao, 1989, p. 2). It emphasizes that learners’ prior knowledge is essential for the comprehension of new information, as well as, the construction of messages for communication. One type of schema is *event schema*, or called *script*, which refers to certain information about some stereotypical event or ordinary experience in our daily lives. For instance, the schema or script for going to a supermarket would include information about shopping lists, different sections of food, price tags on the items, paying for bills, and so on. The
event schema would also contain the information that there might be a shopping list; that there must be some male or female cashiers; that the food items will have a price tag on them; that different types of food will be stored or displayed in different sections. Based on the schema or script knowledge, shoppers will know what to expect or what might happen when they go to a supermarket. Similarly, while reading a text, learners will relate the previously-learned knowledge existing in their mental corpus to the text, reconstruct the meanings in the text, and then add these constructs to schemata in their memory. Going through the same process, students retrieve, coordinate and structure the information in their memory, and then compose texts for the purpose of communication with their intended readers. Heller (1995) in her Reading-Writing Connections points out that ‘script knowledge’ is an important source of previous knowledge that already exists in memory. Children rely on these daily experiences to make sense of the texts they read and write.

 Uribe and Nathenson-Mejia (2008) believe that language instruction should start with something with which learners are familiar. They indicate, “Finding a familiar theme for students to work on... allows teachers to immerse students in a comfortable concept” (p. 98). In the PWIM, teachers use students’ existing knowledge and experiences to facilitate the development of their literacy. In Teaching Beginning Reading and Writing, Calhoun (1999) states, “[i]n using the PWIM, we [teachers] engage students in using all aspects of the language system and their prior knowledge. We want them to integrate their knowledge and use it to expedite their language learning” (p. 55). She also points out that,

[t]hroughout the picture word inductive model, students experience the association of oral language with written language -- they see it happening, see their words and ideas (words, phrases, and sentences) appear in print. The symbolic associations begin to be understood: pictures represent real things, words represent real things, sentences and longer examples
of writing may represent stories and reality seen by oneself and by others. The PWIM is designed so that students use the speaking, writing, and reading connection and the reading and writing connection continuously as they participate. (p. 55-56)

By presenting pictures of scenes and objects which students are familiar with and helping them ‘shake out’ not only the obvious words connected to the items in the pictures, but also the inferable or predictable vocabularies related to the pictures, teachers assist learners in retrieving their prior knowledge or the ‘script knowledge’ from their memory. Wong (2009) states that “[while the PWIM is undergoing,] [t]he process of eliciting the words and spelling the words alone brings awareness to the letters in the word and connection between the spoken words onto written text” (p. 9). When spelling out and writing down these words on the picture word chart, instructors lead children into the primary stage of writing. With the assistance of teachers and peers, children start to write short sentences and later longer ones about the pictures, after they become more familiar with this mode of instruction. Gradually, these sentences will be stored in students’ memory and eventually become a part of their prior knowledge, which will be implemented to analyze new reading and writing of texts (Calhoun, 1999).

In addition, while discussing and selecting proper titles for the pictures, teachers lead students into a metacognitive process. Flavelle (1976) defines ‘metacognition’ as “one’s knowledge concerning one’s own cognitive processes and products or anything related to them” (as cited in Heller, 1995, p. 209). Paris and Winograd (1990) also emphasize that “[m]etacognition provides students with the knowledge and confidence to manage their own learning and to be inquisitive and zealous in their pursuits” (as cited in Wong, 2009, p. 15). To think or behave metacognitively requires children to express what they know or what they do not know about a subject. When elaborating the notion that learning is strategic, Galda, Cullinan, and
Strickland (1993) also point out, “Effective learners are involved in what they are doing, feel responsible for the success (or failure) of what they are doing, and think about what they are doing (metacognition) in order to plan and monitor their use of strategies” (p. 11). Their discussion indicates that metacognition is essential to language learners’ literacy development. The Picture Word Inductive Model evokes children’s metacognitive process because it requires “both the students and the teacher to be aware of their own knowledge, to monitor their understanding, to challenge their knowledge of a concept, and to build a new understanding” (p. 14). During the process of selecting a proper title for the given picture, the teacher leads children to communicate effectively by helping them think about which title is most comprehensive and interesting to the audience; what the chosen title implies; which sentences go with the title; and which sentences go with other sentences. When composing the paragraphs, children undergo the metacognitive thinking process and use the connection between reading and writing as they “think about what they want to share, what they most want the reader to know, and how to help the reader to get this information” (Calhoun, 1999, p. 30). Through repeated exposure in a variety of contexts, children can develop as independent learners and readers, and their confidence toward learning can also be fostered, so that they can apply their knowledge to interpreting new text in print. Given time, children make progress and their literacy steadily improves.

**The Process of the PWIM in Class**

The PWIM, although teacher facilitated, is a constructivist strategy and has proved to be an effective instructional tool to help children acquire vocabulary and facilitate language literacy (Swartzendruber, 2007). This inductive instructional method begins with a picture or a photograph of familiar scenes and everyday objects, which serves as the content of a lesson. Under the guidance of the teacher, students identify the items in the picture and ‘shake out’ the
words to describe the picture. These include the obvious, but also inferences, predictions and emotions that students find in the picture. Teachers then label the identified part of the picture by drawing a line to connect the identified object to the word. Teachers encourage learners’ awareness of the identified words by spelling and saying them out loud, asking students to spell and say the words, and reviewing the student created word charts. Later, with the assistance of teachers and their peers, children are involved in several activities, such as dividing the words into categories based on different phonetic or structural properties, creating a proper title that identifies the main idea of the picture, and developing sentences or paragraphs about the picture. Through the repetition of these activities during the PWIM cycle, learners acquire more vocabulary, progress in their language development, and build up the reading and writing connection, reaching the important final goal: to improve literacy in reading and writing.

Though designed primarily for whole class instruction, the Picture Word Inductive Model can also be applied to small group instruction and to tutorial sessions. In fact, the model supports the idea of developing the class into a “cooperative learning community inquiring into reading, writing and their [students’] own thought processes” (Calhoun, 1999, p. 74). The goal of the PWIM conforms to what Langer (1986) believes when he indicates that “language learning is ultimately an interactive process, that cognitive factors are influenced by context, and that they, in turn, affect the meanings that are produced” (as cited in Calhoun, 1999, p. 74). Through interacting with their peers and teachers, students can not only improve their language skills, but also achieve their ultimate goal: learning language to communicate. This approach is currently being increasingly applied in the Thames Valley District School Board in London, Ontario, as well as the York Region District School Board in Ontario.
Learning Together in a Cooperative Learning Classroom

Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) studies on ‘flow’ indicate that relations with the others form one of the main factors that have a serious impact on the quality of life. He believes that human beings are “biologically programmed to find other human beings the most important objects in the world” (p. 164). The quality and the happiness of our life entirely depend on our relationship with the other people around us. School is the ideal place for learning how to get along with people because it is a microcosm of society where people from different backgrounds and cultures learn to co-exist. Criticizing the traditional schools where learning does not mean “finding out about the things around [the children] or about what was going on in other parts of the world, [but] reviewing the achievements of the past, [and] learning to read the dead language” (p. 166), Dewey (1915) proposed that education should help the child to adapt himself to other individuals in the whole communities and to work with the others together successfully. He criticizes traditional school education by pointing out that the only measure for success is competition, “… a comparison of results in the recitation or in the examination to see which child has succeeded in getting ahead of others in storing up, in accumulating, the maximum of information” (1956, p. 15). Similarly, Vygotsky suggests that, through social interactions with others in cooperative activities, people develop their sense of self (Glassman, 2001). Apparently, interacting and working with one another is one learning process necessary for human beings to evolve mentally and intellectually. As discussed previously, interactions with adults and peers play an important role in children’s language development (Ellis, 2008; Galda et al., 1993, 1997; Philp et al., 2008). Logically, schools should be places where children learn to socialize and work together cooperatively with their peers. Dewey (1956) posits that school should be a reflection of society where each one does his own portion of work faithfully and cooperates with others. In his perspective, progressive education should promote the value that “[h]elping
others … is simply an aid in setting free the powers and furthering the impulse of the one helped. A spirit of free communication, of interchange of ideas, suggestions, results, both successes and failures of previous experiences, becomes the dominating note of the recitation” (p. 16). In fact, a long history of research shows that learners are able to benefit intellectually and emotionally from working with their peers (Johnson & Johnson, 1991; Johnson, Johnson, & Taylor, 1993; Johnson, Johnson, & Stanne, 2000; Roseth, Johnson, & Johnson, 2008; Slavin, 1994, 1995).

Believing that “[c]ooperation is an inescapable fact of life” and that people have a ‘cooperation imperative’ to search for “opportunities to operate jointly with others to achieve mutual goals” (p. 6), Johnson and Johnson (1991) propose that teachers are encouraged to apply Cooperative Learning strategies in their classrooms to promote students’ attitudes toward learning, self-esteem, and academic performance by arranging children in small groups to work cooperatively and interdependently and to accomplish a shared learning task.

Cooperative Learning is promoted under certain assumptions. First, the synergy generated in a cooperative setting will bring out more positive motivation than individual or competitive environments do. Working cooperatively will increase the connectedness among people, and positive energy will also be produced. Second, cooperation will reduce the alienation and loneliness among people and help them build up positive relationships. Third, interacting with others and receiving different perspectives or opinions nurture personal cognitive and intellectual development. Last, working with others will help people increase their self-esteem and also relieve their anxiety.

**Theoretical Roots of Cooperative Learning**

Like most instructional approaches and methods, Cooperative Learning also has a long history and broad theoretical background. Much research (Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Slavin,
1995) has been done to investigate the principles and develop the theories that support the superiority of cooperation and interaction in intellectual development. In general, Cooperative Learning can be traced back to three different theories: Social interdependence theory, Cognitive-developmental theory, and Motivational theory.

**Social Interdependence Theory.** Social interdependence theorists propose that one’s interactions with others would impact one’s goals. Lewin’s (1935) ‘group dynamics’ explains that within any group all members are interdependent, while later Deutsch (1949a) extends that to the understanding that inter-dependence could be positive, negative, or nonexistent, and that cooperative learning occurs when positive interdependence takes place (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1994; Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1998; Myers, 1993). Positive interdependence appears when everyone in the same group believes that his/her success completely relies on the other group members to also achieve their goals. Everyone in the same group will benefit from the efforts contributed by each member. In this cooperative learning classroom, “a student who tries hard, attends class regularly, and helps others to learn is praised and encouraged by groupmates…” (Slavin, 1995, p. 17). Contrarily, the negative interdependence occurs in a competitive environment in which one’s success will increase the chances of the others’ failure. In the learning environment with negative interdependence, those students with higher academic performance are mostly given bad nicknames, such as ‘nerds’ or ‘teachers’ pets’ (Slavin, 1995). When students are put in an individualized learning environment, there will be no interdependence or interaction among them. Each one is assigned an individual learning goal, works at it at his/her own pace, and has to be responsible for his/her own learning achievement which is unrelated to the others’ performance. In other words, in this environment, each one is encouraged to simply focus on his/her own self-interest without paying any attention to the
Concisely, Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (1994) conclude in their *The New Circles of Learning* that

> [p]ositive interdependence (cooperation) results in promotive interaction as individuals encourage and facilitate each other’s efforts. Negative interdependence (competition) typically results in oppositional interaction as individuals discourage and obstruct each other’s efforts to achieve. In the absence of interdependence (individualistic efforts) there is no interaction as individuals work independently. (p. 14)

**Cognitive-Developmental Theory.** Whereas social interdependence theory focuses on the importance of positive interdependence in the success of cooperative learning, cognitive-developmental theory emphasizes the effects of working together on language development. As discussed earlier, language development is a process of social interaction. Rooted in this perspective, the developmental theorists, Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, believe that children’s cognitive growth relies on cooperation and interaction with others. Vygotsky indicates that, instead of occurring naturally, children’s cognitive growth is dependent on certain types of social interaction, such as educational activities in class (Glassman, 2001). Vygotsky describes the *zone of proximal development* as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (as cited in Slavin, 1995, p. 17). Below he further (1978) elaborates the notion of the zone of proximal.

The [zone of the proximal development] defines those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow but are currently in an embryonic state. These functions could be termed ‘buds’ or ‘flowers’ of development rather than the ‘fruits’ of development. The actual developmental level characterizes mental
development retrospectively, while the [zone of the proximal development] characterizes mental development prospectively…. The [zone of the proximal development] permits us to delineate the child’s immediate future and his dynamic developmental state, allowing not only for what already has been achieved developmentally but also for what is in the course of maturing. (As cited in Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 266-267)

In his view, guidance from the adults (teachers) and cooperation with peers would in fact promote children’s intellectual growth. Vygotsky (1998) explains the effects of cooperation on children as follows.

What the child can do today in cooperation and with guidance, tomorrow he will be able to do independently. This means that by ascertaining the child’s potentials when he works in cooperation, we ascertain in this way the area of maturing intellectual functions that in the near stage of development must bear fruit and, consequently, be transferred to the level of actual mental development of the child. (p. 202)

He believes that cooperation with their peers would accelerate the internal development of children’s mental maturation.

Similarly, Piaget (1975) believes that peer interaction and cooperation, in his words, play a “liberating and constructive role” in children’s intellectual development. From his point of view, cooperation is necessary because it can not only free the child from being constrained in the world of his/her parents, but also cultivate in him the ability to perceive “the element of uncertainty and search in adult thought” (p. 409). He continues to indicate that [i]t is idle, again, to try and transform the child’s mind from outside, when his own taste for active research and his desire for cooperation suffice to ensure a normal intellectual
development. The adult must therefore be a collaborator and not a master, from this double point of view, moral and rational. But conversely, it would be unwise to rely upon biological “nature” alone to ensure the dual progress of conscience and intelligence, when we realize to what extent all moral and all logical norms are the result of cooperation. Let us therefore try to create in the school a place where individual experimentation and reflection carried out in common come to each other’s aid and balance one another. (1975, p. 412)

He also suggests that during cooperation with others positive socio-cognitive conflict occurs and is followed by one’s ‘cognitive disequilibrium,’ which in turn stimulates cognitive development (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1998). In his *The Language and Thought of the Child*, Piaget (1974) demonstrates the true dialogues which occur when children collaborate and listen to the other person’s point of view. Interactions with others move children from the egocentrism of the early stages of life in which they confine themselves to their own point of view to the stage of cooperation where they listen to and understand others’ opinions. When a child tries to explain himself/herself during the interaction and collaboration with others, “…there is, after all, an effort to adapt oneself to the external world, an effort to objectify, and, one might almost say, to depersonalize one’s thought” (p. 239). It is, in fact, a process of cognitive development.

Related to the developmental theorists, cognitive theorists posit that, for learners to retain the information in their memory and incorporate it into the existing knowledge in their mental structure, a process of restructuring and elaborating materials must be involved (Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Slavin, 1995). Discussing the concept of scaffolding in language acquisition, Donato (1994) indicates that “… in social interaction a knowledgeable participant can create, by means of speech, supportive conditions in which the novice can participate in, and extend, current
skills and knowledge to higher levels of competence” (p. 40). Baloche (1998) also states that information can be processed and transferred into memory by oral rehearsal (repeating the information), semantic organization (restructuring the information), and elaboration (incorporating new and old information). While giving a verbal explanation of the information or materials to their collaborator, students have entered a cognitive restructuring process. During this process, they will have to re-organize and also internalize the information they have known before s/he could explain it to the others. By repeating these re-structuring and explaining procedures, learners can become more familiar with what they have learned. This assumption is proved by Slavin’s (1995) explanation that “[s]tudies of behaviours within groups that relate most to achievement gains consistently show that students who give each other elaborated explanations (and, less consistently, those who receive such explanations) are the students who learn the most in cooperative learning” (p. 42).

Holding a similar point of view as the cognitive theorists, controversy theorists believe that learners participating in cooperation might be confronted with disagreements, a situation which creates conflict among group members. To reach an agreement or a shared conclusion, learners need to engage in “deliberate discourse” by discussing the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed opinions (Johnson & Johnson, 1997; Johnson et al., 1994). Johnson et al. (1994) indicate that “[c]ontroversy theorists posit that being confronted with opposing points of view creates uncertainty, or conceptual conflict, which, in turn, creates a reconceptualization and an information search that results in a more refined and thoughtful conclusion” (p. 14). During the process of reaching an agreed conclusion or action, learners, in fact, reconceptualize the issue by synthesizing and integrating the different information and perspectives from all parties.
Motivational Theory. Opposed to Social interdependence and Cognitive-development theorists, the Motivational theorists aim to figure out the answer to the question: “What makes the group perform better?” They focus on the impact of reinforcement or rewards on group performance. Skinner (1953) posits that human behaviors are decided by the consequences of events. Desired behaviours can be maintained by positive reinforcement (reward), while unwanted actions can be avoided by negative reinforcement (punishment). Given that not everyone is likely to cooperate or work with others, in order to shape the cooperative behaviours or actions in a group, positive reinforcement or incentive is the key. Slavin (1995) also emphasizes that group performance will be promoted and motivated by some incentives, such as group rewards. This statement is affirmed by Johnson et al. (1998), who explain that “[c]ooperative learning is designed to provide incentives for the members of a group to participate in the group’s effort” (p.29). Csikszentmihalyi (1994) also confirms that, no matter what the original motivation is, people will not do or will continue to do certain activities unless they receive extrinsic rewards or unless external benefits/punishments intervene. Motivational theorists underscore the importance of positive reinforcement or incentive in promoting cooperation in group performance.

Social interdependence and Cognitive-development theorists confirm that children’s cognitive performance and achievement will be highly promoted when they are working with their peers, whereas the motivational theorists believe that positive reinforcement (e.g. praise, reward) can be a means to motivate cooperative behaviours in a group. Besides the three theories mentioned above, other researchers also put a great emphasis on the importance of cooperation and interaction in human society. In his Multiple Intelligences, Gardner (1993) defines ‘interpersonal intelligence’ as the capacity “to notice distinctions among others; in particular, contrasts in their moods, temperaments, motivations, and intentions” (p. 23). He indicates that
well-developed interpersonal intelligence gives people the ability to affect others by understanding others and is also a substantial component in success. In *Extraordinary Minds*, Gardner’s (1997) discussion about the four forms of extraordinariness (Master, Maker, Introspector, and Influencer) shows that the results of integrating other intelligences (musical, bodily-kinesthetic, logical-mathematical, spatial, intrapersonal) with interpersonal intelligence will be tremendous. Despite being gifted in different types of intelligences and presenting different domains of accomplishment, all four types of extraordinariness share the same strength: the ability to understand individuals (interpersonal intelligence). Csikszentmihalyi (1994) also indicates that “[c]ompetition is the thread that runs through evolution. Life forms displace one another on the stage of history, depending on their success in taking energy from the environment and transforming it for their own purpose” (p. 21). He suggests that, through cooperation, all species have found ways to increase their chances of survival. In his theory about creativity, Csikszentmihalyi (1996) posits that social interaction is essential to promote children’s intellectual development and creative abilities. He also finds that social interaction will increase teenagers’ level of happiness dramatically, while being alone will make adolescents sad and passive (Asakawa & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). All these research findings and statements affirm the importance and benefits of collaboration and interaction with others.

**Essential Components of Cooperative Learning**

Cooperative Learning is never just a seat arrangement or merely asking students to sit together and work on the same project. It also never occurs when one student in the group finishes all the group work and the others just sign their names on the group project. Johnson and Johnson (1994) explain Cooperative Learning as the action of “working together to accomplish shared goals” (p. 3). Similarly, Slavin (1994) defines Cooperative Learning as “an instructional
method in which students work together in a small group to help each other learn” (p. 284). Clearly, Cooperative Learning refers to a learning process in which children work with their peers and obtain knowledge to achieve a shared learning goal. That said, according to Johnson and Johnson (1991), Cooperative Learning can be successful only when five basic elements are included in small group interaction. They are Positive Interdependence, Promotive/Face-to-Face Interaction, Individual Accountability/Personal Responsibility, Interpersonal/Small group Collaborative Skills, and Group Processing.

Positive Interdependence. Positive interdependence exists only when learners realize that their success occurs only if their group members also succeed in their learning goals. Once positive interdependence has been created, then cooperation follows. In that case, one will not only learn the materials but also motivate or help one’s teammates to learn. “We sink or swim together” is the golden rule. To reach the goal, everyone in the same group has to help each other and to solve every difficulty and problem together. Hence, the success of the group is ensured only if each member in the group succeeds. In order to create positive interdependence among students in the classrooms, some methods are recommended (Bennett and Rolheiser, 2001; Johnson & Johnson, 1993, 2009; Kagan, 1994; Slavin, 1995;).

a. Positive goal interdependence: Students can accomplish their learning goals only if their group members also accomplish theirs. “Providing a clear and meaningful task or goal is one of the most important attributes or characteristics of effective group work” (Bennett and Rolheiser, 2001, p. 152). Group goals can motivate team members to help and encourage each other to contribute their maximum effort to make the group successful and to create greater productivity (Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Slavin, 1995).
b. Positive reward interdependence: Every group member has the same reward when the whole team attains its group goal. Teachers provide a joint reward to students when they accomplish their learning task. For example, if all of the group members get above eighty-five points on the exam, then all of them could gain five points as a bonus. To get the five extra points, one will do his or her best to accomplish the goal and also encourage or help his or her group members to do the job well.

c. Positive task interdependence (also called Sequence Positive Interdependence): The teacher divides the labor into different parts and each student gets only part of the task. Each member in the same team has to first complete his/her own part of the work and then put everyone’s individual effort together in order to finish the goal.

d. Positive resource interdependence: In this case, students get only a part of the information or material for the learning task. To accomplish their learning goal, students have to pool their resources.

e. Positive role interdependence: A teacher assigns students into different complementary and necessary roles, such as, note-taker, encourager, and checker. Those specific responsibilities are required for the completion of the learning task.

Of course, other ways exist to create positive interdependence among students. When positive interdependence is created, cooperation will follow and students’ academic achievement will be improved and attained gradually.

**Promotive/Face-to-face Interaction.** A traditional classroom often has little to no interaction between teacher/students or students/students. In this learning environment, students
take less responsibility for their own learning because what they have to do is listen quietly and take notes. In a Cooperative Learning classroom, however, students are encouraged to interact with their teammates or classmates. The positive interdependence results in promotive interaction among students. In a promotive interaction scenario, group members encourage and facilitate each other’s efforts to accomplish the learning task, as well as, to transfer skills acquired from teachers to one’s group members (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Once teachers set up the group goal, students have to work together to accomplish the learning task. Importantly, however, students are likely to have off-task conversation; they could be engaged in free chatting that is not related to the learning task. Having off-task conversation can hardly help students develop their learning abilities. Hence, teachers have to make sure that students always have on-task interaction.

**Individual Accountability/ Personal Responsibility.** Putnam (1993) mentions, “Insisting on individual accountability discourages coasting or hitchhiking, in which one or a few of the students do the bulk of the work and the others take a free ride” (p. 17). In a Cooperative Learning environment, everyone in the same group has his or her own responsibility to accomplish the group goal. Free riders or hitchhikers are not allowed. Bennett and Rolheiser (2001) mention, “[in a cooperative learning environment,] if a student can hide, or hitchhike off the efforts of others, or take over and do all the work, then the group will not function effectively” (p. 151). Therefore, the essence of cooperative learning is promoting students to work together with their classmates to accomplish a task. If one or more students neglect individual, personal responsibilities and let others complete the learning task by themselves, it is no longer cooperative learning. Thousand, Villa, and Nevin (1994) also indicate, “[t]he natural consequence of structuring cooperative education teams is the introduction of additional eyes into the learning environment and opportunities for team members to observe and assess one another
relative to their agreed-upon planning, teaching, monitoring, and evaluation responsibilities” (p. 64). By sharing personal responsibility, students ensure that everyone has a job to do, and no one will hitchhike during the learning period.

**Interpersonal/Small Group Collaborative Skills**\(^1\). To make the team work well, each member has to work together cooperatively as part of a real team, but sometimes disagreements or conflicts surface. When a disagreement or conflict exists, one has to persuade one’s group members to solve those problems. In this case, proper collaborative skills are important because they can lead individual team members into becoming a truly cooperative group. That said, not everyone effectively applies collaborative skills or likes to socialize with others. Some students might be too shy to express their thoughts. To make cooperative learning work effectively, basic collaborative skills, such as ways to negotiate, to persuade others, to respect different opinions, and to listen to others, should be taught in advance to ensure that a positive interaction exists among students. The most important skill is that students have to be taught how to deal with conflict. They need to be taught to view conflict as an opportunity for change and a way to accept different perspectives. Furthermore, they need to learn how to manage their feelings in order to reach agreement. Johnson and Johnson (1994) conclude that “the more socially skillful students are, and the more attention teachers pay to teaching and rewarding the use of collaborative skills, the higher the achievement that can be expected within cooperative learning groups” (p. 32). When taught proper collaborative skills, students will start to trust their group members and communicate with each other accurately. Then the cooperation can begin and students’ learning achievement will start to improve.

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\(^1\) Collaborative Skills is the label used to encapsulate social skills, communication skills and critical thinking skills.
**Group Processing.** Group processing is a process by which students reflect on their behaviors and performance, when cooperative learning is on-going, to decide which behavior is helpful and worth practicing another time and which is unhelpful and should be eliminated. Bennett and Rolheiser (2001) comment that “[group] processing refers to reflection, and assessing the group’s efforts both in terms of their academic and collaborative interaction….Without it, groups do not develop as effectively over time which negatively impacts social and academic learning” (p. 151). The purpose of group processing is to encourage students to consider what they need to improve during the cooperative learning period and how they could do better next time. During group processing, students try to examine themselves critically to evaluate how well they have done on the learning task, through the process of providing and receiving constructive feedback. Teachers could conduct two kinds of group processing: small-group processing and whole-class processing (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). In small-group processing, students only discuss with their group members their own evaluation and figure out solutions for a better performance next time. As well, teachers could conduct whole-class processing by describing their observations of the class, reinforcing good behaviors, and indicating any undesired ones that should not appear another time.

The five basic components are crucial to the success of cooperative learning in the classroom. Teachers should realize the importance of these five components and follow the principles closely before they apply Cooperative Learning in their classrooms. Following these principles is particularly important when the PWIM is merged with students working in small cooperative groups.
Pitfalls of Implementing Cooperative Learning in Class

As indicated previously, cooperative learning can be successful only if the five basic elements (positive interdependence, promotive/face-to-face interaction, individual accountability, collaborative skills, and group processing) are included in each cooperative-learning-structured lesson. However, the problems associated with the implementation of this cooperative learning method mostly result from inclusion and maintenance of the five key elements in class (Kessler, 2004).

(1) Existence of Negative Interdependence in Groups: “Sink or swim together” is always the essential philosophy that should be shared by all members in the same group. Though Johnson and Johnson (1991) propose several ways to maintain positive interdependence in groups: materials interdependence, information interdependence, and interdependence from outside enemies, in practice it is difficult for teachers to make sure that students who are used to traditional competitive learning conditions commit fully to learning and supporting their group members in the process of learning (Kessler, 2004).

(2) The ‘free-rider’ effect: When the cooperative learning activity is not well constructed, free riders are likely to appear during group work; that is, the task is completely accomplished by the smartest or the most hardworking student in the team. Sometimes the students who are considered less skillful or intelligent are likely to be ignored in the group. Slavin (1995) mentions that “[t]he free-rider effect is most likely to occur when the group has a single task, as when they are asked to hand in a single report, complete a single worksheet, or produce one project” (p. 19). Baloche (1998) also indicates that “students should never view cooperative learning as an opportunity to ‘goof off’ or contribute less than their best” (p. 190), given that the success of the group relies on the efforts of every member of the same team.
(3) Off-task Interaction: Johnson et al. (1988) emphasize that cooperative learning is an “interaction pattern and verbal interchange among students” (p.1:10) and at times students have off-task interactions with their team members during the cooperative learning process. In order to monitor and observe students’ behaviours, teachers have to walk around among groups to increase on-task discussion with their peers. Constantly moving around the class also makes it more difficult for teachers to focus only on one group and to find out whether learners have on-task or off-task interactions with their peers. Those off-task interactions interfere with the learners’ acquisition of academic knowledge (Pate-Clevenger et al., 2008).

(4) Assessment of Group Work: In a cooperative learning classroom, teachers always have trouble grading students’ teamwork. To address this problem, Johnson and Johnson (1991) do propose ways to evaluate group work, although two of them seem to be problematic: group score on a single project and random selection of one member’s paper to score. Giving a group score on a team project is actually not fair since it cannot reflect individual efforts and contributions. Kagan and Kagan (1998) conclude, “If we [teachers] assign students a project and grade the project so that each student on the team receives the same grade, based on the quality of the project, we violate the principle of individual accountability” (p. 111). They continue, “Group grades are simply unfair. Two identical students -- [who are in different groups but who are] identical with regard to their ability, effort, and performance -- will receive different grades, depending on who their teammates happen to be” (p. 112). In all fairness, teachers need to give a score that not only represents the group performance, but also accurately reflects individual work. In addition, scoring the paper of one member in a team randomly will be definitely unfair. Vermette (1998) observes that “[t]he system makes many students howl negatively, especially when this system is first introduced…. It can create bitterness and dissension as well, something the novice user of cooperative learning really does not need” (p. 117).
Effectiveness of Cooperative Learning Approach in the Classroom

Research findings show that, when properly implemented, Cooperative Learning is effective in improving both learners’ academic performance and their affective attitude toward learning. For example, the results of the research done by Yang and Liu (2005) show that Cooperative Learning helped the thirty-one elementary school students master the computer skills to be learned and had a positive impact on attitudes toward learning and on group interaction. Similarly, Ghaith’s study (2003) concludes that fifty-six EFL high school learners’ English reading achievement was significantly promoted after ten weeks of instruction using the Cooperative Learning model in class. In an experiment conducted by Johnson, Johnson, and Taylor (1993), thirty-four high-ability students were assigned into either a cooperative learning or an individualistic learning environment and were taught the same science lessons in six 55-minute instructional sessions. The research findings reveal that high-ability learners in a cooperative learning environment perform better than their counterparts in an individualistic learning situation on recall and higher level of reasoning measures. To investigate the effect of Cooperative Learning on learners’ academic success, Wilson-Jones and Caston (2004) conducted an interview with 16 African American grade three male students. The results of the interviews show Cooperative Learning enhances significantly students’ desire to learn and eventually promotes these participants’ academic achievement.

Several studies were done to investigate the effect of Cooperative Learning on the improvement of learners’ literacy development. Synthesizing many research findings on English language learners’ literacy development, Huebner (2009) points out that small-group instruction can enhance “sustained improvement in student achievement – especially if the groups focus on explicit, interactive instruction in the core areas of literacy” (p. 90). Similarly, Larson (2009) also reveals, “While working collaboratively in response to the literature, students established a
community of inquiry in which their sundry literature prompts elicited divergent responses inspired by multiple opinions and diverse perspectives” (p. 646). The Cooperative Learning environment encourages students to engage in discussion deeply, share their various opinions, and also consider carefully others’ different thoughts, in order to enrich their knowledge.

Whisnant (2006) carried out research in elementary schools with Hispanic English learners to determine which specific instructional strategy increases students’ literacy achievement. The results show that Cooperative Learning is rated by elementary teachers as a very effective strategy to improve Hispanic English learners’ literacy success. In addition, Morrow (1997) conducted a study to determine the impact of a cooperative literacy program on grade 1 to grade 3 students’ literacy achievement. The researcher points out that students under the instruction of cooperative learning perform significantly better than their counterparts on tests of reading comprehension, story telling and rewriting. Similarly, the experiment done by Rojas-Drummond, Hernandez, Velez, and Villagran (1998) also concludes that students’ development of self-regulatory strategies for functional literacy (comprehending, producing, and learning from the text) is effectively improved using the instructional method of Cooperative Learning. The findings of Jacob et al. (1996) affirm positively that in a cooperative learning environment learners have a wide range of chances to acquire academic English by providing assistance to and receiving assistance from peers. Exposed to ‘lexical and conceptual explorations and homonymic word associations’ (p. 253) students used the language they acquired not only to help themselves, but also to contribute more to their groups. The findings of the study conducted by Ortiz, Johnson and Johnson (1996) about the influence of positive goal and resource interdependence on individual performance indicate that students in conditions with positive goal interdependence perform better than those in an environment without positive goal interdependence. Furthermore, Nevin, Polewski, and Skieber (1984) also proved that the use of a Cooperative Learning approach
helped low-achieving tenth-grade students to earn better scores in decimals tasks than they had before and also to exhibit positive interactions with their peers.

Besides the positive effect on learners’ academic performance, the Cooperative Learning approach has also been shown to be effective in promoting students’ relationships with their peers. The study done by Johnson and Johnson (1985) indicates that interpersonal attraction, social acceptability, and self-esteem between handicapped and non-handicapped students are positively promoted when cooperative learning strategies are used continually. The findings of the experiment conducted by Ellison, Boykin, Tyler, and Dilihunt (2005) investigating learners’ learning preferences show that most elementary school students prefer cooperative learning to competitive and individualistic learning. Roseth, Johnson, and Johnson (2008) also carried out research, the results of which show that more positive peer relationships happen in cooperative rather than competitive or individualistic settings. Cooperative Learning strategies make use of students’ different ethnic backgrounds and varying levels of abilities to enhance intergroup relations (Slavin, 1995).

Several studies also report that students are highly motivated toward learning and are willing to put more effort into accomplishing learning tasks when they are working in groups. Luo (1998) conducted a self-report survey, the results of which show that cooperative learning may significantly reduce students’ anxiety and also promote their motivation in learning English. The findings of the research done by Yang and Liu (2005) hold a positive view of integrating Cooperative Learning strategies in computer curricula because they help promote students’ learning attitude toward mastery of computer competence and skills. Shaaban (2006) concludes that students in a cooperative learning environment were highly motivated to read and their perception of the value of reading was also improved. In addition, the research done by Ciani et al. (2008) further affirms that students tend to be more motivated to perform on learning tasks
when they realize that their peers are committed to the group and willing to contribute their individual accountability.

**Implementing Change in Educational Settings**

The focus of this research is to bring out a change to the current English teaching in Taiwanese elementary schools by initiating a new way of literacy teaching and then to ascertain perspectives from the participating teachers and students on this proposed approach. In early 1960s, carrying out literacy experiments in which illiterate Brazilian adult workers were taught to read and write, Freire not only experienced the obstacles of implementing innovations, but also realized that people could prepare and participate in programs to change the society (Shor & Freire, 1987). Freire (2004) begins *Pedagogy of Indignation* with a discussion of the inevitability of change by pointing out that ‘change’ is indispensable to a culture or history. Human beings can be a ‘presence’ in the world only when they realize their commitment to actively engage and intervene in the world and then transform it into a better one. Education is an essential tool to make a human being become present in the world. Like Freire’s belief that education involves change, Benjamin’s (1939/2004) *Saber-Tooth Curriculum*, a satire of curricula in the 1930’s that can be applied to today’s educational system, also indirectly implies that educational practice should be evolving, given that the world evolves. Curriculum should not be designed and evaluated based only on teachers’ knowledge and experience, but should be developed to equip students with what they need, at the very least, to adequately survive, or, optimally, to excel in life. Unfortunately, as mentioned in Chapter One, nowadays many teachers in Taiwan, like the Paleolithic education professors, are resistant to changing their teaching strategies and are reluctant to accept new curricula. Even if they incorporate new lessons or textbooks into their classes, they still cling to the same teaching methods, satirized by the Real-
Tiger School and the School of Creative Fish-Grabbing. The teacher’s responsibility is to do more than express and convey traditional and perhaps outmoded knowledge and experiences in class. As revealed in *Ethical Standards for Teachers* (n.d.) established by the Board of Teacher Registration in Queensland, teachers must “commit [themselves] to ongoing professional learning [and] continually improve [their] teaching and learning strategies.” Teachers have to face the reality that one day their curriculum will be a ‘saber-tooth’ one; therefore, as professionals they need to continually review and revise their pedagogies and also maintain their enthusiasm for teaching.

While addressing a speech at a conference in February, 1997, Freire (2007) encouraged the audience by indicating that change is possible, though it is difficult. He believes what makes us human beings is the ability to recognize what is possible and to try to make it happen. He further elaborates that “[o]nly the beings that have become, through their long experience in the world, able to signify the world are capable of changing the world and are incapable of not changing” (2007, p. 82). That said, change would not happen just in ‘the blink of an eye’; it would not be achieved only by a one-time announcement. In fact, change is a continuously ongoing process. It is time consuming but it is definitely possible to accomplish. At the end of his speech, Freire (2007) affirms that

> [t]he moment we invent a language, and the social production of that language, change is possible. Evidently, change is subjected to difficulties. There is no doubt about that. That is, change is not arbitrary; you do not change because you want to, nor do you always change in the direction you dream of. What is necessary to know is that change is not individual; it is social, with an individual dimension. But change is possible! (p. 86)
Change indeed implies growth and improvement; that said, change also brings up resistance: “a slow motion response to meet agreements or even a complete refusal to cooperate with change” (O’Connor, 1993, p. 30). As an old saying goes, “Old habits die hard.” Interestingly, even though people are aware of the benefits that innovation might bring, they still have doubts about change and are not willing to take action. In a school setting, teachers may believe that change in an educational practice might benefit students in their learning and intellectual growth, yet will still cling to their existing practice. Given that this doctoral research initiates a new way of literacy teaching in elementary schools in Taiwan, the participating teachers’ fear of and resistance to changing their current approaches are expectable and understandable.

**Reasons for Resistance to Change**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, most teachers are conservative with respect to change; they are content with stability and the status quo and tend to resist different and new environments. This tendency will certainly influence their acceptance of adjusting their instructional approach and adopting a new teaching strategy. Unsurprisingly, people tend to reject adjustment and alteration. Evans (1996) mentions that “[w]e know that life requires us to adapt, and we sometimes long for a change in our circumstances or in the way others treat us, but for the most part we cling reflexively and tenaciously to things as they are” (p. 25). He further elaborates his ideas by summarizing Peter Marris’s (1986) work that

[i]n virtually every significant transition of any kind, acceptance and adjustment prove far more difficult than anticipated for all concerned: whether a change is planned or unplanned, personal or professional, welcome or unwelcome; whether we take the perspective of reformers or their targets, of people or organizations, ‘the response is characteristically ambivalent.’ (p. 26)
Clearly, most people feel uncertain and unsafe when they are required to experience change because “[c]hange of any kind … upsets the pattern we are accustomed to and thrusts us into new roles, new relationships, and new perceptions, challenging the way we cope with life” (Evans, p. 27). In school, new policies or innovative ways of teaching are difficult to apply or introduce mainly because of teachers’ fear of change. While dialoguing with Freire on liberating pedagogy, Shor (1987) indicates that,

[The teachers] worry about being fired if they practice emancipating education instead of transfer-of-knowledge pedagogy. They speak about the risks to their careers if they express opposition ideology, if they engage in opposition politics in their institutions. They also fear the awkwardness of relearning their profession in front of their students. Teachers want to feel expert, so the need to recreate ourselves on the job is intimidating to many.

(p. 53)

That said, resistance to change provides teachers or school authorities who are planning to implement change in educational settings with essential issues to consider. To make the change happen, people should realize why they are resistant to change. Specifically, resistance to change might arouse the fear of loss and incompetence, and also create uncertainty and conflict in either individuals or organizations (Evans, 1996; Hall & Hord, 2006; O’Connor, 1993). Appropriate interventions are required in order to reduce those concerns and resistance toward the implementation of change.

First, change and conflict are inexorable – they are a relentless and constant part of life. Certainly, most people seem to be content with stability and the status quo. They are inherently conservative with respect to change and tend to resist different and new environments because an adjustment needs effort, which always comes with pain and discomfort. The anticipated pain of
the transition seems to be more immediate than the distant destination that is supposed to be desirable. Change is always uncomfortable and stressful because it takes time and effort in order to get used to the new. Evans (1996) reveals that “[i]t is now axiomatic that the greater the degree of change one faces … the more likely one is to develop physical or psychological symptoms of stress (p. 27). In this case, in order to avoid any kind of discomfort or stress, people are likely to actively sabotage the effort to change. O’Connor (1993) points out that ‘the Saboteur’ will … undermine change while pretending to support it. Some are motivated simply by a wish to minimize disruption and discomfort. They believe that by verbally supporting the change and then doing nothing, the initiative will go away. There are others who have a more sinister motive. These individuals intend to sabotage the company or an individual’s plans for their own gain. (p. 32)

People are resistant to change because they feel a certain degree of unease and discomfort when being required to adjust to a new policy or environment. The transitional period between now and the final change might seem to be uncomfortable and also might take time to adjust to, though it is inevitable and necessary while change takes place. Hall and Hord (2006) confirm that “... change is painful, and … this pain must be endured as a natural part of the change process… [however,] [i]f the process is facilitated well, change can be fun, and it certainly does not have to hurt or even be dreaded” (p. 13-14). Of course, people will certainly feel frustrated and will grieve over what is being lost during the change process. The change facilitators then have to try to reduce the pain as much as possible and help the resistors go through the process.

Second, change implies a sense of loss. Teachers who are resistant to change are mostly content with the situation they are in. Therefore, when they are asked to change, they feel a sense of loss because they have to give up something they are comfortable with and adjust themselves
to something they are not familiar with. When change takes place, “[a] major part of our world stops making sense; continuity is disrupted; our connections can no longer be counted on. Virtually nothing is more painful or more threatening to our basic security, our very ability to understand and cope with things” (Evans, 1996, p. 29). In all scenarios, people try to avoid having such experiences. In addition, change may be more difficult for older people than for younger people. Evans (1996) proposes that “[t]he longer we live, the more events and experiences we incorporate into our structure. The larger that structure, the more difficult it is to revise; the more profound the changes we are forced to make in it, the greater the loss we experience” (p. 30). That also explains why it is difficult to persuade the elderly to change their habits or give up possessions that may appear worthless to others because they have already become a part of their life and memory and cannot be eliminated easily. Similarly, when a new policy or a new teaching strategy is introduced in schools, it may be mostly senior teachers who will oppose to the plan because they are worried that their identity or authority might be negatively affected.

Third, change brings up individual incompetence. The implementation of innovation or change sometimes challenges individual competence. O’Connor (1993) posits that “those who resist change have the good of the company at heart. Their cautious stance is based on a wish to conserve present levels of success” (p. 35). In reality, many teachers have applied their way of teaching for years. They know exactly what their responsibilities are, they are familiar with the routines, and they are confident in completing their tasks. Although those teachers might not enjoy the same teaching routines, they are able to perform it successfully. But when they are asked to teach another subject or change their ways of teaching, their level of confidence is shaken, by fear of failure. Evans (1996) also points out that “[a]lterations in practices, procedures, and routines hamper people’s ability to perform their jobs confidently and
successfully, making them feel inadequate and insecure, especially if they have exercised their skills in a particular way for a long time” (p. 32). He further elaborates,

[i]t is important to note that one need not suffer a frontal attack to feel an acute challenge to one’s competence and confidence. The threat occurs not only if a principal condemns a teacher’s methods as outmoded and inadequate, for example, but simply if he endorses and supports a new and different approach. This alone is enough to redefine proficiency. Each of us constructs an occupational identity based on the accumulated wisdom – drawn from our own experience, that of colleagues, and lessons from predecessors – about how to perform jobs. Change often discredits this experience and learning, challenging our purposes and identities and devaluing our skills. (p. 33)

The quotation shares that most people, especially teachers, are hesitant about changing or adopting something new because change may threaten their confidence and may appear to devalue their competence. Most teachers, senior ones in particular, are confident in their own ways of teaching resulting from a combination of wisdom and years of experience. Innovations and change then sound like an indirect negative criticism of their competence. Clearly, senior teachers are hard to convince and are more likely to be resistant to any change.

Fourth, change arouses uncertainty. Hall and Hord (2006) claim that resistance to change comes from uncertainty about the new. People who encounter change may have “serious questions about whether the change will really be an improvement. This questioning may be due to limited understanding about the new, or it may be based in solid reasoning and evidence” (p. 13). People implement innovations or change because they believe that improvement will be achieved over time; however, no one can provide complete assurance that the results will definitely be better than the current situation. Disagreement about the feasibility of
accomplishing the goal might exist after change has been initiated. In addition, Evans (1996) also quotes Bolman and Deal’s (1991) words that while change is in progress,

… people no longer know what their duties are, how to relate to others, or who has the authority to make decisions. The structural benefits of clarity, predictability, and rationality are replaced with confusion, loss of control, and the belief that politics rather than policies are now governing everyday behavior. (p. 34)

Most people seems to be used to their own routines and that they are content with the status quo; they do the things that are meaningful to them. But, when they are required to change and do something entirely different, questions and doubts might be raised, which lead them to lose the directions they used to follow, and consequently they become confused and distressed. Although the plans for change might sound wonderful and beneficial, people, without proper instructions or guidance, are mostly left wondering what they need to do. So change mostly arouses doubt and uncertainty that in turn lead to distress and upset.

Last, change creates conflicts. From the perspective of reformers, innovations and change are supposed to be good and beneficial to everyone involved. That said, during the process of implementing change, friction and conflict are very likely to appear between the authorities and the employees because their individual perspectives about change differ. After analyzing people’s behaviours toward the implementation of change, O’Connor (1993) concludes employees might behave as “the Protesters” who believe that their resistance to change in fact does not benefit themselves, but the company itself. When Protesters exist, conflict or friction appears. Evans (1996) says that “[c]hange almost always generates friction, both between individuals and between groups, because it invariably produces winners and losers, especially at first” (p. 35). He continues by explaining that “[o]ften, staff see change as something imposed by administrators
for their own purposes and that complicates classroom life. This is particularly true in schools where there is a history of distrust between the faculty and the administration” (p. 36). This researcher recalls an incident that happened a few years ago during his teaching at a college. At a regular faculty meeting, a new textbook selected by the chairman was assigned to be used in the freshmen English course. For years, teachers have had the freedom to choose any textbooks that they believed appropriate for their classes. Although some teachers chose to be obedient in order not to offend the chairman, others were against the change because they did not think that book was suitable and they suspected that the policy only benefited the publisher. As might be predicted, conflict and friction surfaced among the faculty, and serious arguments ensued. Unfortunately, the chairman was not wise enough to take proper action to ease the friction and the change turned out to be a failure. Evans (1996) indicates that “… trying to quash or simply smooth away the very real differences innovation provokes is counter-productive: it neither resolves the conflicts nor enhances innovation. It simply drives issues underground, where they are likely to enhance divisiveness and hamper change” (p. 37).

Stages of ‘Concerns’ about Change in the Concerns-Based Adoption Model

People tend to have certain concerns when they are encountering the challenges of change and alteration. Given that the proposed teaching approach in this doctoral research is the first to be introduced in elementary schools in Taiwan, inevitably the participating teachers will have worries and concerns about implementing the new way of teaching in their classes. To analyze the teachers’ concerns and their levels of use, Hall and Hord’s (2006) Concerns-Based Adoption Model is applied in this research. Hall, George and Rutherford (1979) define concern as “[t]he composite representation of the feelings, preoccupation, thought, and consideration given to a particular issue or task” (as cited in Hall & Hord, 2006). Individuals may experience different
levels or natures of concern, depending on their knowledge, background and expertise. Those concerns might have impact on people’s behaviours positively and then spontaneously help them become successful in the use of innovations. Contrarily, concerns might also affect people negatively and later lead them to be resistant to change. Analyzing her student teachers’ concerns about an introductory course on educational psychology, Frances Fuller (1969) proposed the individuals’ concerns would move through four different levels (unrelated, self, task, and impact) and subsequently concluded that people’s background and experience, in fact, have a great effect on their levels of concern (as mentioned in Hall & Hord, 2006).

According to Fuller’s hypothesis, those student teachers with no direct teaching experience are likely to have unrelated concerns, which are more about themselves as a student, rather than a teacher. Self concerns tend to appear when student teachers just start their teaching. On this level, the student teachers do have concerns somehow related to teaching, mainly focusing on themselves though, rather than on the act of teaching or the needs of children. That said, when teaching actually becomes part of the student teachers’ life, task concerns soon materialize. At this point, student teachers are mainly concerned about teaching itself, from grading to lecturing in class. The last level is impact concerns. When reaching this level, the concerns mostly focus on the relationship between teachers and students. At this stage teachers aim to know how to improve their teaching, how to satisfy students’ various needs, and how to help children learn better and more effectively.

Hall and Hord (2006) indicate that the same types of concerns show up when people undergo the process of innovation and change. Incorporating Fuller’s four levels of concerns, Hall and Hord (2006) expand and identify seven categories of concerns that appear while change is taking place. The first stage is Awareness, corresponding to Fuller’s unrelated concern. During this stage, individuals are informed of the innovation or change; however, they show no or little
interest in or involvement with the innovation. People at the awareness stage generally do not care if they might benefit from the implementation of the innovation. Refining Fuller’s self concerns, Hall and Hord point out that there should be two different components to self concerns: Informational and Personal. At the Informational stage, people are generally informed about the innovation and also show interests in learning more about it. They want to know more details about the innovation. In an educational setting, for example, teachers are concerned about what effects the innovation will have on their learners and how it can be implemented in their lessons. On the other hand, people at the Personal stage tend to be concerned more about themselves in relation to the innovation. They are concerned about whether or not they will be able to apply the innovation, whether or not they can meet the demand to make the change successful, and whether or not they can benefit from the use of innovation. All of these three aspects concerns, which they have about themselves in relation to the innovation, will be involved.

With regard to Fuller’s Task concerns, Hall and Hord developed a new category: Management. When individuals enter the stage of Management, they are concerned mostly with the process and tasks of implementing the innovation. They are mainly concerned with how they can be sure that the change is applied efficiently, what they need to make the innovation well organized and well managed and what resources and information they can get to make the change work.

Hall and Hord expand Fuller’s Impact concerns into three stages: Consequence, Collaboration, and Refocusing. Though still having different focuses, the overall concern of these three stages is always with ‘improving the impact of the innovation on clients/students” (Hall & Hord, 2006, p. 140). When people move into the Consequence stage, the concern shifts the focus onto the clients (students in the school setting), instead of the adopters themselves. The individuals mainly focus on what impact the innovation will have on the clients, how well the
clients will perform after the implementation of the innovation, and whether any change will need to be made to improve the clients’ outcomes. At the stage of *Collaboration*, the focus is on cooperation with colleagues regarding the use of innovation. In the previous stages, people apply the innovation by themselves. Their perspective is more individual and narrow. They have used the innovation and should experience its impact, but they do not know the other perspectives of their colleagues. Therefore, when they move to this stage, people want to find the answer to the question, “The new policy or system is working fine, but how do others do it?” They want to know different opinions and examine feedback from their colleagues.

The final stage is *Refocusing*. When reaching this stage, individuals should have practiced the innovation for a period of time and realized its impact on themselves, as well as on the clients. At this point, people are thinking what else they can do to make the innovation better, or whether there is another, better alternative or replacement for the existing innovation. At this stage, individuals will expand their thinking and examine the existing form of innovation by incorporating the perspectives of others in order to create or develop an alternative that is possibly better, although moving to this higher stage of concern takes time.

In general, the three lower stages (*Awareness, Informational, and Personal*) are more focused on the executers of the innovation themselves. The middle level (*Management*) is more about the mastery of the tasks and activities during the implementation of the innovation. The higher three stages (*Consequence, Collaboration, and Refocusing*) mainly focus on the impact of the innovation on the clients/students. That said, Hall and Hord (2006) suggest that the flow of concern may not move consistently in one direction. If the change is properly initiated and facilitated, it is very possible that concerns will move from self to task, then eventually to the impact stage. Contrarily, if the innovations are not properly introduced and facilitated effectively, and if more changes are initiated but none is fully implemented, concerns are likely not to
progress forward to the final impact stage. The employees (teachers at school) might even return to self concerns. In addition, people may also have concerns at more than one stage at the same time, depending on their background, knowledge and experience. For instance, a novice teacher might be concerned more about how to survive during the process of change (stage of self concerns), while senior staff are likely to express concerns not only about the task of using the innovation (stage of task concerns), but also about its influence on the their students (stage of impact concerns).

Levels of ‘Use’ of the Innovations and Its Application in Education

Change is unlikely to happen quickly or easily; on the contrary, it is a complicated process that can only be achieved through a series of continuous actions and effort. Given that the participating teachers are introduced to this new teaching approach for the first time, they will surely take time to adjust to change and to move from non-users to users. Hall and Hord (2006) comment that change is definitely not a singular event, but an ongoing process “through which people and organizations move as they gradually come to understand and become skilled and competent in the use of new ways” (p. 4). Similarly, Evans (1996) also mentions that, although being resistant is a typical human behaviour, people do change, but “most of these changes are slow, incremental, often barely perceptible; they are rarely rapid, formal, or overt – and they are almost never sought” (p. 25). As discussed in a previous section people will experience different stages of concern when the change or innovations are introduced and implemented. At the same time, they also will go through different levels of use. To clarify, stages of concern focus on the emotional and affective side of change, whereas levels of use mainly deal with individuals’ behaviours when change takes place (Hall & Hord, 2006).
According to Hall and Hord (2006), when innovations are implemented, people will exhibit different behaviours and actions in dealing with the change. It also takes time for the individual to switch from a nonuser to a user. Nonusers can be categorized into three different levels: Nonuse, Orientation, and Preparation. When the users have none or little knowledge about the innovations, when they have no intention of being involved in the change or when they do not take any action to move forward with the innovation, they are at the level of Nonuse. After acquiring information and knowledge related to the innovation, the users move to the stage of Orientation. At this level, even though not making any major decision about whether they are going to implement the change, the implementers are moving toward to it and taking actions to learn and analyze the value and benefits of the innovation for themselves and the system, by joining information sessions, examining printed materials, or discussing the innovation with co-workers. Once the potential users have made the decision to apply the new proposed program or innovation, they are reaching the level of Preparation. Although use has not yet started, the individuals have the intention to use the innovation and also try to prepare themselves for the first time use by getting the materials or appliances needed for the implementation of the change.

After people start to apply the new proposed program in their workplace, classroom, or other setting, they are considered to be a user of the innovation. Depending on degrees, use can be divided into four different levels: Mechanical, Routine/Refinement, Integration, and Renewal. That said, not every person will follow through the complete sequence of those levels of use; people might skip one or two levels, and then move on to the next level. In addition, the levels of use are also not a straight-line hierarchy; in fact, each level of use is independent of the other.

When the users are actively involved in the innovation in their workplace, they are reaching the level of Mechanical use. At this level, people are trying to master the use of the innovation and are also endeavouring to make it work effectively in their workplace by planning in advance,
adapting the materials, and becoming familiar with the procedures of the change. After using the innovation for a sufficient period of time, the implementers may reach the next level: Routine or Refinement. At the level of Routine or Refinement, the users have already mastered the use of the innovation and usually do not need to spend a lot of time planning the procedures in advance. Nevertheless, the distinction between the level of Routine and that of Refinement is the stabilization of the implementation. At the level of Routine use, people are comfortable with the way they are doing things and tend not to make any adaptations or changes in their use of the innovation. In other words, they have set up a regular and stable way of using the innovation. On the other hand, when they have reached the level of Refinement use, they not only master the procedures of the innovation, but also tend to make some adaptations in order to meet the clients’ needs. At this level, the users will begin to reflect on and assess the use of the innovation to see whether or not it works well to benefit the clients. The benefits to the clients are the main concern for the users at this level and are the prime motivation in deciding if any change is necessary.

In order to reach the level of Integration use, cooperation is the key. At this level, actions are taken and adaptations made in the use of innovation through the collaboration between two or more users. In order to benefit the clients or students in a school setting, two implementers or more will share their thoughts and then cooperate with each other to carry out the adaptations in their use of the innovation. At this level, no significant or major change to or adaptation of the use of the innovation itself exists. The last level of use is Renewal. Similar to the level of Integration use, change and adaptations are involved in the level of Renewal use. At this level, the users are seeking means or methods to modify or even replace the innovation in a significant way. A change can be a major one or a combination of small adaptations, which lead to a significant change. No matter what changes are made, the intention is based on the potential benefits for clients.
In summary, both Stages of Concerns and Levels of Use need to be taken into consideration when change or innovation takes place in the workplace. As discussed earlier, Stages of Concerns are based on the implementers’ psychological state, whereas Levels of Use are noticeable behaviours exhibited when there are massive changes. Given that this research deals with the implementation of a considerably new teaching approach in Taiwan, both the psychological feelings and overt behaviours of participants are presented and analyzed.
Table 2-1: Stages of Concerns about the Innovation and their Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Refocusing</strong></td>
<td>The users will expand their thinking and examine the existing form of innovation by incorporating the perspectives from others to create or develop a better alternative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaboration</strong></td>
<td>The users figure out how their colleagues deal with the change and then cooperate with them regarding use of the innovation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consequence</strong></td>
<td>The users focus on what impact the innovation will have on clients, how well clients perform after the implementation of the innovation, and whether any change needs to be made to improve clients’ outcomes effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management</strong></td>
<td>The users are concerned with how they can be sure that the change is applied efficiently, what they need to make the innovation well organized and managed and what resources and information they can get to make the change work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal</strong></td>
<td>The users are concerned if they are able to apply the innovation, if they can meet the demands to make the change successful, and if they can benefit from the use of the innovation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informational</strong></td>
<td>The users are generally informed about the innovation and also show some interest in learning more about it. They want to know more details about the innovation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Awareness</strong></td>
<td>The individuals are informed about the innovation or change; however, they show no or little interest in or involvement with the innovation.</td>
</tr>
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Table 2-2: Levels of Use about the Innovation and their Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Expression</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Users</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renewal</td>
<td>The users are seeking means or methods to modify or even replace the innovation in a significant way. It can be a major change or the combination of small adaptations that lead to a significant change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>To benefit the clients or students in a school setting, two users or more will share their thoughts and then cooperate with each other to carry out the adaptations in their use of the innovation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refinement</td>
<td>The users will begin to reflect and assess the use of the innovation to see whether or not it works well to benefit clients.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routine</td>
<td>The users are comfortable with the way they are doing things now and tend not to make any adaptations or changes to the use of the innovation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanical Use</td>
<td>The users are trying to master the use of the innovation and are also endeavouring to make it work effectively in their workplace by planning in advance, adapting the materials, and becoming familiar with the procedures of the change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nonusers</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>The users have the intention of implementing the change and also try to prepare themselves for the first time use of the innovation by getting the needed materials or appliances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>The users are taking action to learn and analyze the value and benefits of the innovation for themselves and the system by joining information sessions, examining printed materials, or discussing the innovation with co-workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonuse</td>
<td>The users have no intention of becoming involved in the change and no action is taken to move forward with the innovation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Chapter Three

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The beginning of this chapter first presents a discussion of the participants (both the three teachers and their students) and the recruiting process. It also contains an exploration of the teaching material used in each participating class and the details about the three phases of this research. Given that this study is an example of qualitative research, I also discuss my role as a researcher/a participant-observer and the bias that might possibly affect the ways I conduct classroom observations and data analysis. Finally, both the theories affecting my onsite classroom observation and the criteria for evaluating my work are also presented.

Given that Morse (2002) indicates that “[b]y using more than one [research] method within a research study, we are able to obtain a more complete picture of human behavior and experience” (as cited in Mertens, 2005, p. 293), the idea of conducting a mixed-methods research was my first intention when trying to design my doctoral study. Mixed methods research not only provides sufficient quantitative information to describe a large number of people, but also offers qualitatively different perspectives on the study topic (Creswell, 2002). Gall, Gall, and Borg (1999) also reveal that “researchers who use a combination of both types of methods [qualitative and quantitative] can give the fullest picture of the nature of educational phenomena” (p. 15).

Bearing these concerns in mind, I first intended to ‘prove’ that this new teaching approach, which merges the Picture Word Inductive Model with Cooperative Learning, would significantly improve Taiwanese students’ English literacy. Given that the effectiveness of the instructor might have a huge effect on children’s learning performance and well-chosen teachers might produce significant increases in student test scores simply because they are strong teachers, I believed that
a mixed-methods research was not an ideal choice for my study. Therefore, I re-framed my research design and turned it into a qualitative investigation. The focus of this qualitative research is to investigate what the participating Taiwanese elementary English teachers and students claim are the strengths and weaknesses of the application of the PWIM merged with Cooperative Learning in their English classes and to what extent the teachers believe that this new way of teaching has an effect on students’ English literacy. In addition, the purpose of the study is also to present an examination of whether or not the teachers’ concerns change as they make a shift to an alternative approach to student learning. The study also contains a discussion of the difficulties that the teachers encounter and the ways they deal with those problems while implementing this alternative approach in their classes. Finally, the study’s purpose is to determine how this new teaching approach affects students’ motivation for learning English.

Participants

After conversations with Taiwanese secondary school English teachers, I realized that most secondary students in Taiwan are still facing strong pressure due to the competitive nature of the educational culture. The fact that secondary school students in Taiwan have to be well-prepared to be successful in the standardized tests for a high level of education made me switch my research direction to focus on the elementary level. As stated in Chapter One, in most areas in Taiwan, starting from grade 3, elementary school students are required to study English as a foreign language. But children in Taipei are in fact starting their English learning in their first grade. Given this research focusing on initiating and implementing a new way of English teaching in Taiwan, it would be appropriate to apply this method in elementary schools because elementary students are not yet experiencing the pressure of studying for higher education. And tangentially, the Picture Word Inductive Model is designed to teach beginning reading and
writing to younger children (Calhoun, 1999). Therefore, elementary English teachers and their students were chosen as the participants for this study.

**Teacher Participants**

To explore what elementary English teachers and elementary students in Taiwan claim are the strengths and weaknesses of the application of the PWIM in a Cooperative Learning English class, this research involved three elementary English teachers in three different elementary schools (two public schools and one private). The recruiting process for the participating teachers in this study was quite challenging. As mentioned in Chapter One, most teachers in Taiwan are resistant to changing their teaching approaches; they tend to cling to their own teaching methods and it is hard to persuade them to move out of their comfort zone (Shannon, 2006). In order to find participants for this study, I sought some advice from a former colleague who is now working for a public elementary school in Taipei, Taiwan. Given that teachers in the classroom serve not only as important language source providers, who demonstrates the target language, but also an interlocutor who communicates and interacts with students, involving English teachers who are well experienced, fluent in the target language, and willing to explore a new way of teaching is important. Therefore, in this study, the teachers were recruited based on three main criteria: their English language ability, their knowledge about language acquisition, and their enthusiasm for exploring new teaching strategies. Another criterion was that the teachers, who participated in this study, must speak both Mandarin and English fluently and to be from either a Linguistic or English teaching background. This means they would be familiar with second/foreign language development and could relate to language difficulties children might have when learning English as a foreign language. Furthermore, these three elementary teachers
must be willing to cooperate with the researcher to try out a new teaching model for the purpose of seeing this teaching module’s impact on their students.

During the recruiting process, I realized that convincing teachers in Taiwan to experiment with new ways of teaching is a challenge. When interacting with potential English teachers, I found that most of them were afraid of being observed in the classrooms because they would feel that they were being judged or criticized, even though I had fully explained that this research does not focus on their teaching skills, but rather their perspectives on this new approach. Some teachers refused to be involved in the project because of heavy workloads. With the help of my former colleague, I finally located three elementary English teachers who were willing to participate in this study. All three teachers are from different educational backgrounds and teach in different elementary schools, but they are experienced in teaching children English and were excited to explore this new approach on their students. Although selecting experienced teachers in this study might seem to be introducing a bias, it was, in fact, a wise decision. If these three experienced teachers, who already demonstrated a more extensive repertoire of methods for teaching English in Taiwan, struggled to apply this new approach and felt it did not work, then the chance of other teachers implementing this approach successfully would be zero. Hence, three experienced elementary English teachers were chosen as participants in this study. In order to avoid any possible negative consequences to the teacher participants and the schools involved in this study, pseudonyms were used.

Sandra. Sandra was an experienced teacher and had been teaching English to children for approximately 10 years. Though having a B.A. and a M.A. in Spanish, she started teaching English at a language institute in Taiwan in 1992. She also worked as a teacher trainer to help other elementary English teachers become successful in their classes. From 2004, she worked as
an English teacher in a public elementary school in Taipei, Taiwan. My first impression of her was that she possessed an analytical mind and knew what her students want. I could feel her enthusiasm toward teaching and her eagerness to explore new ways of teaching to help her students become more literate in English. As asked about what strategies or approaches she usually applies in her classes, she wrote on the profile, “For lower graders, I use TPR (Total Physical Response Approach), picture books, props and realia to motivate them to learn English. For higher graders, I most frequently use the communicative approach. Sometimes, we do role plays and I try to introduce some basic grammar rules to enhance their skills in order to pass the English tests” (personal communication, June 24, 2009). Clearly, she varied her teaching strategies to meet different needs of students at different ages. She also emphasized the importance of Phonics because it facilitates children’s innate ability to develop skills of word recognition and pronunciation (personal communication, June 24, 2009). As I chatted with her about the problems or difficulties she encountered during the teaching at school, she pointed out that it was difficult to satisfy the diverse learning needs in the multilevel classroom when she had to teach twenty-one classes per week. “Some [children] are excellent in English [but] some hate English and can’t write from A to Z correctly,” she notes (personal communication, June 24, 2009). With these concerns in mind, she hoped that this new teaching approach might be a solution to the problems in her classes.

**Mandy.** Mandy was an enthusiastic English teacher who had been teaching English in an elementary school for seven years. With her M.A. in Applied Linguistics from a university in England, Mandy was familiar with theories of language acquisition and with instructional approaches to teaching English language learners. With years of studying and living in an English speaking country, she understood the cultural shock and language resistance that children
might have when they were learning a language other than their mother tongue. To motivate children’s positive learning attitude toward learning English, Mandy used various teaching strategies in her class (personal communication, September 1, 2009). She believed that “one of teachers’ responsibilities is to help children recognize their own abilities and enhance their self-confidence and self-esteem in order to promote their learning interests and attitude” (personal communication, September 1, 2009). She found out that most students are passive and tend to be dependent in learning. She was enthusiastic to learn some new teaching strategies or approaches that might help to increase her students’ interests in learning English. When I discussed with her the implementation of the Picture Word Inductive Model merged with Cooperative Learning in her class, she was excited about cultivating students’ sense of cooperation because most of them do not know how to work with their peers. Nonetheless, she had some doubts about the effectiveness of the Picture Word Inductive Model. The doubts were raised partly because it was a new way of teaching and because she had no idea about the impact of inductive thinking on students, given that children were taught deductively (personal communication, August 10, 2009). Though with some unresolved doubts, Mandy was still willing to try out this new approach and see how it would work in her class.

**Ellen.** Ellen was the youngest of the three participating teachers. She just received her M.A. in Instructional Technology and Media in New York two years ago and thus was her first year to work as a full-time English teacher at a private elementary school in Taipei, Taiwan. Being a newcomer in the private school in fact affected her decision about adopting new teaching approaches. Though young, Ellen was relatively well experienced in teaching. For years, she had been teaching English to children in a kindergarten and in several language schools. My first impression of her was that she was energetic and she was eager to devote herself to helping her
students grow intellectually. Like the other two teachers, Ellen also applied various teaching strategies in her classes. She said, “Depending on the content of the textbook, I will use different methods or materials which include the direct method, situational language teaching, the audio-lingual method, total physical response, rhymes or songs” (personal communication, September 25, 2009). Interestingly, the textbooks were the main factor that she took into consideration when selecting certain teaching approaches, whereas the other two teachers put more emphasis on students’ various needs. That also explained why she suffered a lot while the research was going (more details are discussed in the following chapters). She believed that promoting children’s positive learning motivation was the key to help them learn English successfully, but the language-learning gap between students from different socio-economic backgrounds remained the problem that most affected her teaching in class (personal communication, September 25, 2009).

**Student Participants**

Given that English is a required course in the elementary school curriculum in Taiwan, students who take English classes taught by these three English teachers would also be the participants in this study. In each elementary school, eighteen to thirty-one children took part in this study, as participants (for a total of seventy-one students). All of the students participating in this study are non-English speakers and have been learning English for at least two years and have been introduced to the concepts of English sentence formation. The focus of this research is not to compare the student participants’ academic performance before and after the PWIM coupled with Cooperative Learning as an instructional method; therefore, the selection of students was not confined to a certain grade. In this study, the student participants were from
three different grades: grades four, five and six. In order to protect the anonymity of the students involved in this research, the participating classes are named Classes A, B, and C.

**Class A.** Students in the class A are fourth graders in a public elementary school located in the center of Taipei. Children in this elementary school are mostly from middle or upper-class families. Thirty-one 10-year-old children are in this mixed-gender class. Due to the policy announced by the Taipei City government that English has to be included in the first grade curriculum, they have been learning English for three years and some of them might even attend cram schools for more English lessons after school. These cram schools are considered private language schools where students study English, often with an English native speaker as teacher. In public elementary schools, children receive only two English classes of forty minutes each per week. As the English teacher for Class A, Sandra described her students as active and cooperative. “They [students] are active. They can cooperate with their teammates very well. They hand in their homework on time. They love to share what they know with the others” (personal communication, September 24, 2009). More than that, these children are obedient and follow classrooms rules. The students’ respectful behaviour makes it easier for Sandra manage the class when implementing the new instructional method.

**Class B.** Children in this class are fifth graders in a private elementary school in the center of Taipei city. Unlike students attending public schools, those in private schools are mostly from upper-class families because the tuition is at least twenty times more expensive than it is in public elementary schools. The structure of this class is also different from the other two in the public schools. In this private school, children are put into different levels to learn English based on their performance on standardized tests. This class is for students who test as more advanced
than others in the same grade. Therefore, students in this mixed-gender class are expected to be smarter and with a higher level of English proficiency (personal communication, August 31, 2009). There are eighteen children in this class and all of them have been leaning English at least since first grade (four years). In addition, unlike public elementary school students who receive only two 40-minute English classes per week, children at this private school have more English classes every week; they have six 40-minute English classes every week. More than that, two English teachers (one is a native speaker of English and the other, a Taiwanese teacher of English) teach the same class and split the teaching hours in half. As the Taiwanese teacher of English for this class, Ellen commented that most of the children in this class were active and were willing to cooperate, though one-third of them were considerably quieter than the others (personal communication, September 25, 2009).

**Class C.** Children in Class C are the oldest; they are sixth graders in a small public elementary school located at a remote, small community in Taipei County, Taiwan. The residents in this community are mostly aboriginal Taiwanese people who generally belong to the working class and are not highly educated. Children in this elementary school start to learn English at grade three; therefore, those in Class C have been learning English for at least three years (two 40-minute classes per week). Twenty-two children are in this mixed-gender class. As mentioned in Chapter One, a huge discrepancy in English proficiency exists between students in big cities and those in the countryside (‘‘Time to Bridge the Education Gap,’’ 2008). Even though children in Class C are in the sixth grade, they generally do not perform well in English, compared with other children entering elementary schools in Taipei City. Mandy, the English teacher for Class C, points out that her class is a mixed-level one and that a huge language learning-gap exists among students. She explains that ‘‘some children in this class have a positive learning attitude; however,
some display no interests in learning English. The fact that these children are from different socio-economic backgrounds affects their learning attitude and also results in a huge discrepancy in their academic performance” (personal communication, September 24, 2009). Although exhibiting different learning attitudes, children in Class C are generally active and interested in novelty.

**Materials**

Choosing proper pictures or photographs is essential to the success of the Picture Word Inductive Model. Calhoun (1999) indicates that “[t]he right pictures are tangible, concrete and attractive, and they provide an excellent stimulus for common work in language development” (p. 67). She further points out that “[u]sing pictures or photographs that are easily understandable and accessible to your students helps them to be immediately and personally successful in visually reading the picture” (p. 68). That said, in this study, the teachers were, of necessity, restricted to pictures and photographs in the textbooks chosen by the schools. In an elementary school in Taiwan, there are usually five to six classes, even more, in the same grade, and all the students in the same grade need to take the same mid-term and final examinations. If teachers were to use different instructional materials with the subjects of this research than are used with those students not involved in this study, the unique teaching materials selected for the PWIM/Cooperative Learning classes would affect the academic performance of those students on the mid-terms and finals. Therefore, in order not to violate the participants’ rights, the pictures or photographs in the textbooks chosen by the schools were implemented as the materials in the participating classes. That said, I worked to make sure that the chosen pictures or photographs were culturally appropriate and easy for students to understand. Extra pictures or photographs might also be used if necessary.
In this study, given that the participating students were from three different elementary schools, three different English textbooks were used in these three classes. The textbook used in Sharon’s class is *Longman English* (Book 7), a twelve-level program designed and written specially for elementary school-age children in Taiwan. In Class B, *Hello, Darbie!* (Book 7) is the English textbook. It is published by a local publisher in Taiwan; therefore, it is designed mainly to meet the specific needs of Taiwanese children who are learning English. Both textbooks try to integrate Western with Eastern cultures by presenting famous English tales, festivals and cultural events, such as Christmas, Easter, the Moon Festival, and the Chinese Lunar New Year. Different from the other two textbooks designed mainly for Taiwanese children, the book used in Class C has been introduced from Singapore. *My Pals Are Here!* is also a twelve-level program that prepares young English language learners to meet the challenge of the future. Because English is an official language in Singapore, the content of this textbook is considerably more difficult, and may in fact be too advanced for children in Taiwan where English is a foreign language.

Though these three textbooks are from different publishers, all of them have similar layouts and are all in full color, and attractively designed and illustrated. All three textbooks are written based on a communicative approach and designed to improve children’s four skills of English proficiency. Dealing with diverse themes and drawing vocabulary from various subjects, all three textbooks provide children with a chance for cross-curriculum learning. The units are organized around themes that are relevant and that appeal to the interests of children. Each unit starts with one to four vivid pictures, which reflect the main topic of the lesson. Following that are different sections for vocabulary, sentence/grammar drills, a short conversation or reading passage, activities/exercises, phonics practice, and a song/chant. As mentioned earlier, all the students in the same grade from the same school need to take the same mid-term and final examinations.
Therefore, in order not to affect the academic performance of those students involved in this study on the mid-terms and finals, the three participating teachers are supposed to teach every lessons in each unit of the textbook.

**Researcher’s Position**

In this qualitative study, my multiple roles as a researcher, as well as, a consultant and an observer, were crystal clear to all participants. Both teachers and students realized that they were involved in the study and would be observed. As a researcher, I wanted to know whether or not this new way of teaching was applicable in elementary school English classes in an English-as-a-Foreign-Language learning environment, and whether or not elementary English teachers believe this approach has positive impact on their students. At the same time, as a consultant, I provided my opinions and knowledge to help the participating teachers solve the problems or difficulties they encountered in their teaching. To determine how the participating teachers applied the teaching method in their classes and how students reacted toward this learning process, I, instead of being involved in teaching directly, worked as an *overt participant-observer* in this research. Merriam (1998) points out that as a participant-observer, “[t]he researcher’s observer activities are known to the group; participation in the group is definitely secondary to the role of information gatherer” (p. 101). Fraenkel and Wallen (2009) also indicate that, when a researcher acts as an overt participant-observer, his role is easily identified and the subjects/participants realize that they are being studied; “he [the researcher] participates fully in the activities of the group being studied, but also makes it clear that he is doing research” (p. 441). Note that I realized that my status as observer would have a certain influence, either positive or negative, on what was being observed. In response, Merriam (1998) points out that,
In traditional models of research, the ideal is to be as objective and detached as possible so as not to “contaminate” the study. However, in qualitative research where the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection, subjectivity and interaction are assumed. The interdependency between the observer and the observed may bring about changes in both parties’ behaviors…. At the very least, participants who know they are being observed will tend to behave in socially acceptable ways and present themselves in a favorable manner. Further, participants will regulate their behavior in reaction to even subtle forms of feedback from the observer – as when notes are taken or behavior is attended to in a particular fashion. Finally, the mere presence of the observer in the setting can affect the climate of the setting, often effecting a more formal atmosphere than is usually the case.

(p. 103-104)

In an attempt to decrease the negative impact as much as possible and to get the participants comfortable with my presence in the class, I attended every class for two and a half months. Bernard suggests, when the researcher stays around long enough to get people used to the observer’s presence, “people [eventually] just get plain tired of trying to manage your impression and they act naturally. In research, the trick is to catch a glimpse of people in their natural activities before they see you coming on the scene – before they have a chance to modify their behavior” (as cited in Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009, p. 443). With my frequent presence in the classroom, the participants would feel more comfortable and eventually act as naturally as they had before the observation began.
Research Procedures

As stated as the beginning of this chapter, this research focused on the three teachers’ training and their implementation of this new way of teaching, which combines the Picture Word Inductive Model and Cooperative Learning strategies. This qualitative, narrative investigation presents the participants’ (both the instructors and the students) perspectives on this approach and of the strategies the instructors applied to deal with the problems/difficulties they encountered when implementing the method in their actual classes. This study further involves an examination as to whether or not the teachers’ concerns change as they make a shift to an alternative approach to student learning. Finally, the research also contains a discussion of the effect that this new teaching approach has on students’ motivation for learning English. In order to work out the answers to these questions, this study consists of the following three phases.

First Phase: June 8th, 10th, and 11th, 2009 – Workshop and Classroom Demonstration

To equip the participating teachers with knowledge and understanding of this teaching approach, the first phase involved a workshop. Although the plan was to conduct a workshop on each of two consecutive days, getting all three participating teachers together was possible because they work for different elementary schools in different areas. To solve this issue, I went to the three elementary schools involved in this study on June 8th, 10th, and 11th, 2009 respectively and did three individual workshops for the three teachers instead. In the workshop, I first explained and modeled the Picture Word Inductive Model and the Johnsons’ Five Basic Elements of effective group work. Given that this was the first use of the Picture Word Inductive Model in Taiwan, the teachers were introduced to the steps in this teaching model and were provided with tips for choosing proper pictures or photographs for use in class. The researcher
further defined the essence of Cooperative Learning and its effectiveness in improving children’s learning performance.

To inform the teachers about how cooperative learning could be applied in their class when they were using the PWIM, I also introduced them to some cooperative learning activities. Those cooperative learning activities that were introduced during the workshop were Think-Pair-Share, Four corners, Inside/Outside Circles, Place Mat and Graffiti (Bennett & Rolheiser, 2001; Bennett, Rolheiser, & Stevahn, 1991).

1. Think-Pair-Share, proposed by Kagan (1990), is a less complex cooperative learning activity in which two partners privately think about a question or an issue, and then discuss their opinions and responses with one another.

2. Also proposed by Kagan (1990), Four Corners is an activity for learners to choose and discuss an issue from a different angle or dimension. This activity starts with posting different dimensions of a topic in different corners in the classroom. In response to the teacher’s question about the issue selected for discussion, students choose a particular dimension, move to that corner, and discuss their reasons with the others in the same corner.

3. Inside/Outside Circles is another activity that can initiate dialogues between students. Students are placed into two circles – one circle within the other, and each student on the outside circle is facing another in the inside circle. It is a great way for children to think about the question asked by the teacher and exchange responses with another.

4. Place Mat is a cooperative learning activity in which “groups of students [work] both alone and together around a single piece of paper to simultaneously involve all members” (Bennett & Rolheiser, 2001, p. 172). The teacher prepares a piece of chart paper for each group. The paper with a central square is divided into pieces based on
the number of students in the same group. Each member in the same team has a pen and a place in the paper to write out his/her ideas spontaneously in response to the topic or issue introduced by the teacher. Team members then share their ideas with each other and then put their conclusion reached by consensus in the central square, and finally share it with the class.

(5) Similar to Place Mat, Graffiti is also an activity that encourages and initiates students’ creative brainstorming. It first starts by putting students into groups and providing each group with a piece of paper with the topic in the centre. Students have time to think about the topic and then simultaneously write their ideas down on the paper. They then go up and visit each of the other groups to gather various ideas. After finishing the tour, students go back to their original group and write down the new ideas they have encountered. When finished, students have the collective perspectives of the class.

Following that, a classroom demonstration occurred to demonstrate how the teachers could adopt the PWIM merged with Cooperative Learning activities in their English classrooms. After the classroom demonstration, I had a short meeting with all three teachers individually to explain the PWIM and Cooperative Learning procedures again, to answer any questions, and to address any concerns that they might have. During these meetings, I found that all three teachers were interested in trying this method in their classes, but they were also worried that the pictures in the textbooks might be dull or not attractive enough for students and they might not have enough time to complete the entire process of this teaching method (personal communication, June 11th, 2009). After I provided possible solutions to solve the problems, they were convinced and said that they would try their best to implement this model in their classes.
Second Phase: September 1st, 2009 – January 17th, 2010 – Practicing Implementing the Alternative Model

Phase two was designed to respond to the time it would take for the teachers in Taiwan to shift their thinking and teaching strategies to an alternative form of pedagogy. In Implementing change: Patterns, principles, and potholes, Hall and Hord (2006) indicate that “[i]t is not appropriate to assume that a first-time user will be at Level III Mechanical Use” (p. 161). They further point out that “… in order for an entire organization or macrosystem to change, the individual members will need time and appropriate interventions to move beyond these non-use levels” (p. 162). Therefore, in order to help the three participating teachers move from non-users to at least mechanical users, during the second phase (September 1st, 2009 to January 17th, 2010), they practiced implementing the Picture Word Inductive Model merged with Cooperative Learning strategies in their English classes for four and a half months in order to familiarize themselves and their students with the procedures of the alternative teaching approach. Bennett (1987; 1995) emphasizes the dramatic effects of on-going peer coaching and cooperation among colleagues on the transfer of learning for teacher training practice. Hence, during this period, the three teachers were also required to work as a group and have a regular informal meeting once a month to share their ideas and solve the problems they were encountering in their classes. They decided to get together the first Tuesday of every month and each meeting would last from 40 to 60 minutes, depending on how the discussion went. The teachers’ discussion and conversations at each meeting were tape-recorded and transcribed as part of the data for this research. In addition, during this period, I did not appear in the classrooms to do observations because the teachers were still practicing this approach, but I did work as a consultant to keep providing the teachers with assistance and coaching through emails, telephone calls, and on-line discussion whenever needed. The record of all emails, phone calls and on-line discussion were also transcribed.
In order to provide more assistance to help the teachers familiarize themselves with this new way of teaching, the teachers were also encouraged to video once every month a lesson from the class in which they were applying the PWIM integrated with the Cooperative Learning strategies. In November 2009, I went back to Taiwan again to discuss the videotapes with the teachers and to provide suggestions for improvement. Given that it was difficult to get the three teachers together during the weekdays, I, again, had individual informal meetings with the three teachers on November 9th, 10th, and 12th. Each meeting lasted approximately one and a half hours. During the meetings, the teachers shared the videotapes and their thoughts of applying this teaching method in their classes. I also tried to provide my opinions to help them deal with the problems they had in class. I could tell that both Sandra and Mandy were fully involved in this new way of teaching and started to see the impact on their students. Ellen, on the other hand, seemed to suffer pressure from the school authorities and from children’s parents, forcing her to switch back to her previous teaching approach (details are discussed in the following chapters).

Third Phase: February 16th – April 30th, 2010 – Classroom Observations and Data Collection

To investigate how the participating teachers implemented this new way of teaching which combines the PWIM with Cooperative Learning in their classes and whether students’ motivation for learning English increases as a result of this alternative approach, the last phase of the study required an additional three months. Because of the one-month winter vacation, the elementary schools started again in mid February 2010. Following this date, the teachers continued to apply the Picture Word Inductive Model merged with Cooperative Learning activities in their English classes. In *Conceptualizing and Proposing Qualitative Research*, Schram (2006) indicates, “Amount of participation is a factor of time in the field; more involvement requires more time.
More time and more involvement likely translate into greater familiarity and trust between the researchers and participants in the setting” (p. 124). The quotation informs us that the more time the researcher spends with the participants, the better the relationship will be between the researchers and the participants. That relationship means the findings will be more convincing and accurate. Therefore, to find out how the teachers implement the PWIM in a cooperative learning classroom situation, I also devoted two and a half months of extensive classroom observations in the classes involved in this study.

As mentioned in Chapter One, elementary school students in Taiwan only have an English class two days every week, forty minutes per class. I, as a participant-observer, attended each weekly class, so that children were familiar with my presence in class and the Hawthorne effect, which postulates that people improve an aspect of their behaviour simply in response to the fact that they are being studied, was less likely to happen (Cook, 1967; McCarney et al., 2007). During the last meeting with Mandy in November 2009, she indicated that this teaching approach would run more smoothly and effectively if the two weekly classes were on the same day (personal communication, November 12th, 2009). With the help of the classroom teacher and the school authority, they decided to put the two weekly classes together on the same day to see whether or not there was a change in impact on students’ English learning. Unfortunately, I could not conduct classroom observations in Ellen’s class because of the pressure from school authorities and children’s parents. Given that she was the new teacher in her school, I did not want my study to jeopardize her job. Therefore, I only conducted onsite classroom observations in the other two teachers’ classes. The observations focused on the student-student interaction and students-teacher interaction.

Furthermore, in order to capture what really happened in the classrooms, I also videotaped once every month in the classes where this alternative teaching approach was implemented. In
order to minimize the disruption to the on-going teaching activities in the class, students were informed that the videos were just a record for this study and they did not need to pay attention to the process. In addition, to get as much as information about their thoughts on this teaching approach, the participating teachers were encouraged to write reflective journals once a week to reveal their opinions about applying the PWIM, as well as Cooperative Learning activities, in their classes and their observations of the effects on the students.

At the end of the study, I conducted one personal interview with the teachers and the students in the participating classes. Given that English is not widely spoken in Taiwan, the interviews were conducted in Mandarin and I transcribed and translated the interviews into English. I spent three hours interviewing the three teachers: one hour for each teacher separately. The interview with the teachers aimed to ascertain their opinions on the strengths and the weaknesses of merging the Picture Word Inductive Model with Cooperative Learning. It further explored to what extent the teachers believe this alternative teaching strategy has an effect on students’ English literacy. Teachers were also encouraged to present the problems they encountered when applying this alternative teaching approach and the strategies they adopted to deal with the difficulties. As for the interview with the learners in participating classes, students were encouraged to express what they felt about learning English through this alternative approach and whether or not their interests in English had been positively motivated. In order not to interrupt the progress of students’ regular daily class schedule, I went to the elementary schools involved in this study to conduct the personal interviews with students during their pre-class early morning study period. Every participating student was interviewed for approximately 10 to 15 minutes (the amount of time for the interview depended on how well each one expressed his/her opinions). By analyzing the teachers’ reflective journals and the personal interviews with the instructors and the children, I could also determine if the teachers’ concerns changed as they
made a shift to an alternative approach to student learning. Through examining and interpreting the field notes collected in the classrooms, I explored how Taiwanese children’s interest in learning English could be stimulated and how their English literacy could be fostered by employing the PWIM incorporated with Cooperative Learning strategies.

**Ethical Issues in this Study**

Wallace and Louden (2000) posit that “ethical issues are complex, as complex as the nature of human relationship themselves. Each case is different, calling for different solutions depending on the personal convictions of the participants” (p. 142). In this research, two main ethical issues needed to be addressed: anonymity and ethics of care. In order to protect the participants’ identities and avoid any possible negative consequences to them (both the instructor and the students) and the schools involved in this study, pseudonyms were used. Both teacher and student participants were not required to reveal their personal information during individual interviews. The data from personal interviews and classroom observations were aggregated. No schools, teachers or students would be identified in any final report or publications. Furthermore, principals were provided with an information letter and parents or guardians of students in participating classes were also provided with a consent form. No data were collected until principals at all participating schools had permitted the research to take place in their schools.

The other issue dealt with ethics of care: do no harm to the participants. In all scenarios, all participants should be treated with respect and should be assured that they will not suffer from any physical or psychological harm (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). In order to protect their rights, the participating teachers were introduced to the procedures of this alternative approach and their responsibilities during this research. I also explained to them what my role was in this study and how I would help them during this research study. The teachers were also informed that they
would be interviewed at the end of the study to express their perspectives on this teaching approach to students’ English learning.

Given that the school policy in Taiwan does not allow parental choice of classes, the students in the participating teachers’ classes are automatically included in the research but they can decline to be interviewed. That said, the researcher indicated the success of this alternative approach in Ontario, Canada, in the parental informed consent document and also made it clear that this study would just provide students with another approach to learning English. Students would definitely not be harmed in any way as a result of this study. At the very first class in the first semester of the school year, teachers were required to explain to the students that they were going to learn English through a new learning approach merging the Picture Word Inductive Model with Cooperative Learning. They explained that this teaching model was designed to help students improve their English literacy. The teachers also told the students in the participating classes that they would be interviewed by the researcher at the end of the study. That said, students might be worried that they might not perform well during the interviews. Merriam (1998) points out that,

[i]nterviewing – whether it is highly structured with predetermined questions or semistructured and open-ended – carries with it both risks and benefits to the informants. Respondents may feel their privacy has been invaded, they may be embarrassed by certain questions, and they may tell things they had never intended to reveal. (p. 214)

Therefore, the teachers explained that the interview was not a test and the students were not being graded. They were simply being asked to express their opinions truthfully and honestly about this new learning approach. During the interview, students were not asked to reveal their names.
Before the researcher conducted the interviews, students were also informed that they did not need to take the interview if they did not want to. They could do their homework instead.

In addition, when I met with one of the school principals to explain my research, he was worried about that the possible unhappy relation between researchers and those people who either work or study in schools. Simon (2001) indicates that “[s]chool teachers and administrators have found academic writing about schools to be remarkably unrelated to their concerns, published in dissertations and journals never intended for their use” (p. 47). Given that the data collected from personals interviews were audio-taped and transcribed, the participating teachers were informed that they would be provided with an opportunity to review the transcripts and make any changes before I would start to do any data analysis. I assured both teachers and students involved in this study that both the Picture Word Inductive Model and Cooperative Learning are established models used successfully in classrooms where English is taught as a first language.

Although the participating teachers and students found this alternative teaching/learning approach quite innovative and different from the current instructional method, this project provided the teachers with training in a new alternative teaching approach to current instructional methods and hopefully it would help Taiwanese elementary school students improve their English literacy. As well, they would gain knowledge in the area of children’s literacy that they could utilize in their professional development. Students also experienced a different way of learning English and had more chances to interact and learn from their peers, instead of learning individually by themselves.

**Influences of Theories on My Classroom Observations**

As discussed in the literature review, for the past few decades, researchers and educators have been striving to develop optimal methods and strategies to facilitate learners’ literacy. Galda,
Cullinan, and Strickland (1993) point out that six important fundamentals need to be considered while attempting to illuminate the natural development of children’s literacy.

(1) Children’s literacy learning begins from infancy and continues indefinitely.

(2) Literacy and oral language develop at the same time.

(3) Children have a strong desire to engage in learning about literacy.

(4) Literacy learning is a developmental process.

(5) Storybook reading plays a positive role in improving children’s literacy development.

(6) Literacy learning is intimately connected to cultural background and family experiences.

(p. 74-76)

Those six points indicate that children’s literacy growth is a complex, ongoing learning process that involves not only the development of individuals’ brain patterns but also social interaction.

As the Picture Word Inductive Model is designed to promote learners’ literacy and learning motivation and Cooperative learning provides effective ways to increase the interactions between students, I wondered whether or not the principles of this approach complied with the six basics mentioned above. Therefore, as I observed the classroom, I focused on whether the following key issues in fostering learners’ literacy would still remain in place.

(1) Connection between literacy and oral language – How does the teacher make use of children’s oral language as part of their over-all literacy learning? What connections are made between learners’ oral language and their literacy learning?

(2) Learners’ desire to learn – Are the class activities designed to promote children’s desire to learn English? Do the materials used in class attract students’ attention?

(3) Implemented materials – Are the pictures that are used in class relevant to students’ cultural background? Do the pictures contain daily routines that are related to learners’
family experience? Are the items or actions in the pictures easy for children to identify?

(4) Learners’ interaction – Is the classroom a student-centered one? Are the class activities designed to provide chances for children to interact with their peers?

I was interested, in short, in figuring out the role of theories on the development of children’s literacy in the Picture Word Inductive Model by observing the interactions between the teacher and the students in the classroom. As I watched the classroom interactions unfold, I wanted to know if the instructors were able to reflect the literacy fundamentals about how children acquire English language proficiency by adopting this new approach to teaching.

**Form of Presentation and Research Bias**

In order to let readers fully experience what really happened in the classroom where the Picture Word Inductive Model merged with Cooperative Learning was applied, I adopted a narrative form, the impressionist tale, to describe what I had seen and heard while conducting classroom observations. Van Maanen (1988) points out, “[t]he idea is to draw an audience into an unfamiliar story world and allow it, as far as possible, to see, hear, and feel as the fieldworker saw, heard, and felt. Such tales seek to imaginatively place the audience in the fieldwork situation...” (p. 103). Through vivid and honest descriptions of the classroom setting, characters, and dialogues, I intended to inventively put my audience inside the classrooms and let them experience the whole teaching process for themselves.

Without a doubt, qualitative narrative work has often been questioned around the issue of authenticity and research biases. Merriam (1998) points out that

[s]ince the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection, data have been filtered through his or her particular theoretical position and biases. Deciding what is important –
what should or should not be attended to when collecting and analyzing data – is almost always up to the investigator. Sometimes these biases are not readily apparent to the researcher. Nor are there practical guidelines for all the situations a researcher might face. (p. 216)

Wallace and Louden (2000) also mention, “[t]he idea that truth claims are ‘circumscribed by the character and prejudices of the narrator’ brings to narrative research the problem of authenticity. Given the narrator’s voice is implicated in truth claims, readers are entitled to know something about the authenticity of the narrator’s voice” (p. 9). Clearly, as a researcher, I might not pay much attention to what I would consider unrelated and trivial dialogues. Rather, I might select and capture only those classroom interactions and conversations that would illustrate my argument and theme. Not wanting overly elaborate descriptions or plot details in my narrative, I have attempted to objectively recreate the essence of what transpired in the classroom, and I believe that readers will be better able to recognize the authenticity of the story as a result.

Having been an English teacher for thirteen years, I might likely involve my own teaching experience and personal bias in interpreting the data collected from the classrooms. Much research affirms that researchers are inevitably influenced by their own beliefs, assumptions and experience. Simon (2001) indicates,

[t]he researcher is inevitably influenced by his or her assumptions, allegiances, and life experiences. There is no possibility of ‘controlling’ for these personal factors. Indeed, some theorists posit that there is no reason to control for them; they can be a wellspring of insight. Shulamit Reinharz argues that, at the least, “Research reports should contain a vivid description of the experience of researching. In these reports the value positions of the researcher should be faced squarely and addressed fully.” (p. 44)
Wallace and Louden (1997) also point out that,

> [n]o method, no matter how clearly it is represented in a Handbook, can free researchers from their preconceptions or deliver them an incontestable truth. No method can free researchers from having to account for the constructions of reality they make as they follow any research method and produce a written account of the interpretations they make. 

What we need is more writing about teaching that is aware of its own epistemological preconceptions, and more writing that is fresh, challenging, and strikes its readers as authentic; what we need less of is strictures about method that attempt to regulate qualitative inquiry by standards developed in imitation of quantitative research. (p. 320)

Although no best solution or guideline exists for dealing with biases in research, Crandall suggests “There is simply no ethical alternative to being as nonbiased, accurate, honest as is humanly possible in all phases of research. In planning, conducting, analyzing, and reporting his work the scientist should strive for accuracy, and whenever possible, methodological controls should be built in to help” (as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 216). Being aware of this, I revealed my own teaching position and experience of researching when examining the collected data, but still tried to be objective and accurate when retelling the events in the classrooms. The readers should judge for themselves whether these early experiences would limit or enhance my ability to understand and interpret the events I describe.

**Suggested Criteria for Evaluating this Research**

As validity, reliability and generalizability are usually applied to assess the effects of scientific research, different terms are required to evaluate qualitative work. In their *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) suggest three sets of criteria that could be
adopted to evaluate qualitative narrative studies: legitimation (Is the work trustworthy and telling something true?); representation (Are the text and description accessible and understandable?); and praxis (Is it possible for the research findings to change the world?). Similarly, Mulholland and Wallace (2003) also suggest three criteria: ‘strength’ that “provide[s] evidence of thoroughness and fairness”; ‘sharing’ that “allows the reader to experience vicariously the world of the participants”; and ‘service’ that provides chances for the reader to construct knowledge from reading the narratives in order to make the world different (p. 5).

Given that this research was conducted to present how the Picture Word Inductive Model in conjunction with Cooperative Learning was implemented in ESL elementary classrooms to help learners improve their English literary and further to reveal the participants’ perspectives on the strengths and weakness of this new way of teaching, the study not only contains a vivid description of what really happened in the classrooms for the readers to relate to, but the research findings also enhance knowledge for researchers, participants and readers. Therefore, I apply all three criteria – the legitimation/‘strength’, the representation/‘sharing’ and the praxis/‘service’ – to evaluate my narrative study.

Mulholland and Wallace (2003) summarize that, in order to pursue the truthfulness of the data, “considerable time spent in the field, use of multiple data sources, participants sharing in the interpretative process, presence of researcher’s voice, documentation of researcher subjectivity, interpretations subject to outsider audit, and discussion of limitation of the study” (p. 7-8) should be included to evaluate a study. The narrative I present in the following chapters grows out of the three-month intensive onsite classroom observations, video recordings, and personal interviews with the participating teachers and students. To figure out whether or not my study attends to the strength criteria, the readers should judge if the participants’ voices are clearly heard in my narratives, and if my voice as researcher is also revealed as I describe the context.
In order for the readers to relate to and connect the narrative to their own experiences, Denzin (1994) indicates that the text should be a ‘thick description’ that “gives the context of an experience, states the intentions and meanings that organise the experience, and reveals the experience as a process” (as cited in Mulholland & Wallace, 2003, p. 8). Hence, when evaluating the results of my research, readers should decide whether or not they are persuaded by the narratives presented in this study and whether or not they can recognize that the descriptions match their own experience and those they have read about in other texts.

Furthermore, in order to achieve the service criteria, “[t]he text needs to be a social experience in which the researcher assists others to construct knowledge by describing a case in such a way that the reader makes useful comparisons” (Mulholland & Wallace, 2003, p. 9). Therefore, my qualitative narrative should provide opportunities for knowledge construction about the essence of this new instructional approach by encouraging further analysis of the onsite observations which show how this method is used in actual teaching situations and of personal interviews to give a picture of what problems or difficulties English teachers might encounter when change is implemented.
Chapter Four

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study is to propose an alternative teaching approach which combines the Picture Word Inductive Model with Cooperative Learning strategies for elementary teachers in Taiwan to better improve their students’ English literacy proficiency and to promote their motivation toward learning English. The focus of the study is the training for and implementation of this new way of teaching in order to obtain both teacher and student participants’ perspectives on this alternative approach. Three Taiwanese elementary English teachers and their students were involved in this study as participants. They started practicing this alternative teaching approach in the first week of September, 2009; unfortunately, after three months, one of the three participating teachers had to withdraw from this research because of the intensive pressure and concerns about the new method expressed by school authorities and her students’ parents.

This chapter contains an analysis of the collected data in response to the research questions of this study. The data were collected through field notes from onsite classroom observations, teachers’ weekly reflective journals, transcripts of teachers’ monthly meetings, in-class video recordings, and transcripts of personal interviews with both teachers and students. This chapter begins with a discussion of the six research questions of this research: (1) What do the Taiwanese elementary English teachers participating in this study claim are the strengths and weaknesses of the application of the PWIM merged with Cooperative Learning in their English classes? (2) To what extent do the teachers involved in the study believe that merging the Picture Word Inductive Model with Cooperative Learning has an effect on students’ English literacy? (3) How do the
teachers’ concerns change as they make a shift to an alternative approach to student learning? (4) What kinds of problems or difficulties do the teachers encounter and how do they deal with them while implementing this alternative approach in their classes? (5) What do Taiwanese elementary school students involved in this study feel and think about learning English through the combined strategies of the PWIM and Cooperative Learning? and (6) What effect does merging these two approaches have on students’ motivation for learning English?

The second part of this chapter focuses on my observations in two classrooms where this alternative approach is applied. I present detailed depictions of how the two participating teachers are applying this non-traditional teaching method in their classes and how teacher-students and student-student interactions are unfolding. I also discuss several important issues I recognized during my onsite observations about introducing a new way of teaching to teach English in elementary schools in Taiwan.

Given that this study initiates a change in an educational setting, several factors would influence the success of implementation and attitudes of school authorities and parents toward the innovation is one of those key factors. Therefore, in the last part of this chapter, I explain the pressure and concerns that the teacher who withdrew from this study encountered while she was implementing this new way of teaching in her class. Through the analysis of the data collected from the intensive online dialogues and personal interviews with her, I present the pressure from school authorities and students’ parents that affected her choice of teaching strategies. Scenarios about the school and parental pressure that the teacher encountered are also presented to exemplify why her concerns shifted and why she decided to withdraw from the study.
Research Question #1: What do the Taiwanese elementary English teachers participating in this study claim are the strengths and weaknesses of the application of the PWIM merged with Cooperative Learning in their English classes?

After eleven months of practicing implementing this new way of teaching in their classes, both teachers (Sandra and Mandy) realized the essence of this alternative model and perceived several pros and cons in using it in their fourth and sixth grade English classes. For years, the classrooms in Taiwan have tended to be teacher-oriented and competitive. Teachers decide and control what students have to learn and serious competition exists among students. In these classrooms, a complete student-centered approach is not likely to be appreciated. As mentioned in Chapter One, this new way of teaching combines a teacher-directed constructive model (the PWIM) with a learner-centered approach (Cooperative Learning). The PWIM encourages teachers to supervise the children’s learning process and also enables students to control their own path of learning. Instead of memorizing the words listed in each unit of the textbook, students have the opportunity to decide the vocabulary they want to learn by ‘shaking out’ the words from a picture.

Engaging in group discussions, students shook out more words than the teacher expected (Sandra, Personal interview, April 27, 2010). At the same time, providing necessary assistance and instructions for students to complete their tasks, teachers still retained control of children’s learning. For instance, both Sandra and Mandy would collect students’ written sentences and revise them before class, so that students could discuss the correct sentences with their group mates in order to compose a well-organized short paragraph. During the final interview, Sandra points out,

I still think that I have control of students’ learning. For example, I could give suggestions or cross out inappropriate vocabulary on the word-list created by students. I could revise
their sentences and paragraphs to decide whether or not they are appropriate. I could choose which criterion to use when putting students into groups, and I could also select proper activities in class. Therefore, I still supervise the whole learning process. On the other hand, students also control their own learning. During the process of discussing with their peers, shaking out the words, composing sentences and putting them into paragraphs, students can decide how to do it and what to present…. Each group would come up with different ideas and different paragraphs. All show that they are responsible for their own learning. (Sandra, Personal interview, April 27, 2010)

Calhoun (1999) shares that “[a]t any time during the lesson, even when the initial word list is being generated, the teacher can comment on compound words, punctuation marks, sentence structure, and whatever else seems appropriate” (p. 59). Calhoun further indicates, “[t]he wonderful thing about the PWIM is that students generate part of the curriculums: It’s their words, their phrases, their sentences, and their paragraphs that form the content of picture word inductive lessons” (p. 86). Hence, while the PWIM is merged with Cooperative Learning, teachers’ desire to supervise the learning process is satisfied and students’ autonomy in learning is also achieved.

Given that this new approach is designed to improve EFL learners’ English literacy proficiency, both Sandra and Mandy are positive that their students’ English vocabulary has increased as a result of this teaching method (Mandy, personal interview, April 27, 2010; Sandra, personal interview, April 27, 2010). Their belief is consistent with the results of Swartzendruber’s (2007) quasi-experimental study which shares that learners’ vocabulary acquisition is significantly facilitated during the instruction of the PWIM. Engaging in small group discussion, students in my study shake out a great number of words, which they might or
might not have learned before, from the picture. Due to the limitation of their English proficiency, most students discussed the picture with their peers in Chinese; yet, with assistance from their teachers, their classmates and dictionaries, they came up with words to describe the pictures and added those words to their word-lists. Although students could not contribute every word they pulled out to the shared word list because of the time limit in class, they could always keep their words generated from the small group discussion in their own storehouse of words for future reference (Sandra, Reflective journal, September 29, 2009). Identifying the items and “shaking out” the words from the pictures show how much students already know about the language they are learning and also serve to have students actively participate in shaping their knowledge (Calhoun, 1999).

Besides the fact that students’ vocabulary has been increased, this alternative teaching approach also encourages them to compose sentences and paragraphs in English. Having taught English in elementary schools for years, both Sandra and Mandy mainly focused on improving students’ English oral proficiency and promoting their motivation toward learning English. Although both teachers had tried to include writing in their curriculum, the results were not successful; most students could only copy or imitate the texts, instead of putting their own ideas in writing. But after applying this new way of teaching in their classes, both Sandra and Mandy were amazed that as a result of working and discussing with their peers, students were capable of composing sentences and even putting those sentences into a well-organized paragraphs. Mandy comments that the new approach combining the PWIM with Cooperative Learning is a systematic teaching strategy, which encourages students to work with and help their peers. When this method was implemented in class, she found that the learning atmosphere was comfortable and relaxed, and through cooperation with their peers, students were able to analyze the language material they discussed in their groups and with the class, and then compose a well-organized
paragraph, something which the current traditional teaching approaches have failed to do (Mandy, Reflective journal, April 13, 2010). In her fourth-grade class, Sandra was also pleased that her students were able to analyze the meanings of and the relationships among sentences and then arrange them into a meaningful paragraph to describe the picture (Sandra, Reflective journal, March 18, 2010).

What both teachers observed from their students relates to one focus of the PWIM: ‘Students as Writers,’ a focus that is achieved by cultivating their ability to become “increasingly skillful at gathering information from current knowledge, observations, and external resources, organizing this information, determining the main ideas to present to the readers in prose” (Calhoun, 1999, p. 54). Even though students made several grammatical errors or had incorrect word choices, it is a huge step for them to express their ideas through writing in English.

Both teachers also noticed that students enjoyed working with their peers. They were really engaged in small group discussions with their teammates and also loved to help each other to learn. Before the study began, both teachers were introduced to the basic elements of Cooperative Learning and also informed of the effectiveness of heterogeneous groups. Bearing the concepts in mind, Sandra grouped her students based on their academic achievement, whereas Mandy let students find their own teammates, though she did make several changes so that the groups would be heterogeneous. Both Sandra and Mandy agreed that students enjoyed working with their peers because it was quite different from those students’ previous learning experience: listening to teachers’ lectures. The group work afforded students the opportunity to pool ideas and provide each other with feedback. Mandy puts this in her journal: “When students were assigned to work on the task with their peers as a group, even those with lower academic achievement would engage in discussion actively” (Mandy, Reflective journal, April 13, 2010). Similarly, Sandra also mentions that her students enjoyed learning through small group discussions. Given that she
put her students into heterogeneous groups, students with higher academic achievement, in fact, could lead those low achievers to work on the task together (Sandra, Reflective journal, September 29, 2009). During my nearly three-month onsite classroom observations, I found that students enjoyed discussing and working with their teammates on a group task. Below is one of my onsite fieldnotes:

*It was the second hour of Mandy’s class. A title was chosen for the picture that students had worked on last time. Now they were assigned to four small groups and were asked to work as a group to compose sentences to describe the picture. Walking around to see how each group worked, I noticed most students were really engaged in discussion. Group 4 caught my attention. This group was composed of five boys and one girl and most of them were low academic achievers. However, during the discussion, each one in this group shared his or her ideas and tried to put those thoughts into a sentence. I thought to myself, “Though they did make grammatical mistakes when writing sentences in English, they really helped each other and worked hard to accomplish the task. That is what cooperation is.”* (Onsite fieldnotes, March 10, 2010)

A similar situation also occurred in Sandra’s classroom where the high academic achievers in the group would provide assistance to guide their teammates who were low achievers in order to finish the shared learning goal. For example, during one group discussion, I noticed a boy in one group started to explain the text in Chinese to make sure that the rest of the teammates understood it, so that they could complete the group task successfully (Onsite fieldnotes, March 18, 2010). Interestingly, with clear instructions and appropriate groupings, even fourth and sixth graders were able to work with and help their peers to learn. This alternative approach also
promoted cooperation among students, one consistent criterion that all successful literacy programs share. Galda, Cullinan, and Strickland (1993) explain,

> [t]he collaborative nature of these successful literate environments reflects the importance of the community in which children learn. Because the teachers valued the contributions of individual children, seeing in each of them strengths that they could contribute to the classroom community, the children valued themselves and each other. Competition was not a part of these classrooms; collaboration was. This atmosphere allowed children to practice their literacy strategies and skills in an environment that was safe and supportive, one in which they felt free to take the risks necessary for learning. This atmosphere allowed children to learn from themselves and from each other, as well as from the teacher. (p. 138)

The quotation informs us that the key factor for a successful literacy program is educating learners to value the essence of cooperation. The teachers’ reflective journals and the notes of my onsite observations all show that the participating students enjoyed working with each other and also benefited during the process of cooperation.

Sandra also commented that students benefit from sharing as a result of this new way of teaching. From her observations of her students, she concluded that their interest and curiosity were motivated when they found out that each group generated different paragraphs, although they were working on the same language materials. Through sharing with their teammates and the whole class, students could be aware of different perspectives and opinions that are essential for their own learning progress. In his *Five Minds for the Future*, Gardner (2007) proposes that one of the five minds that are crucial for people to deal with the unexpected future is ‘the respectful mind’, which refers to the awareness of and appreciation for differences among human beings. He further explains that “[i]t is evident that organizations and communities work more
effectively when the individuals within them seek to understand one another (despite their differences), to help one another, and to work together for common goals” (p. 117). This alternative approach creates for students a nurturing and joyful learning environment where they are able to cultivate a ‘respectful mind’ by recognizing the differences among groups and appreciating the values of learning from their peers’ different perspectives.

Moreover, after having implemented this non-traditional teaching approach in class for eleven months, both teachers discovered that this approach helped promote students’ learning interest and motivation to acquire English, especially their low academic achievers. During the interview, Mandy pointed out that low achievers in her class started to have a more positive attitude toward learning English and also to feel better about themselves. They became more focused in class and would pay more attention to the teacher and their teammates when they were assigned to group work (Mandy, Personal interview, April 27, 2010). Bennett and Rolheiser (2001) point out that creating a positive feeling tone is a way to increase the chance that learners will be positively motivated; to achieve this, teachers should make the lessons a positive and pleasant learning experience. Cooperative Learning is actually one strategy to increase students’ learning motivation. Putting students in a cooperative learning environment helps create an encouraging and safe learning environment. Baloche (1998) shares that “[c]ooperative settings generate a feeling of connectedness that produces considerable positive energy and high levels of motivation. When students describe their experiences with cooperative discussion, they tend to be quite animated” (p. 5). In addition, Johnson and Johnson (1997) also indicate that believing they are in control of or have certain influence over their own behaviours would promote people’s feelings of success. Similarly, only when students are able to be responsible for their own learning will they become active learners and their motivation to learn be promoted. Contrarily, in the classrooms where the traditional lecture approach is adopted, students are passive learners
and they have no control of their learning. “When an instructor decides what material will be presented and how it will be presented without letting learners have any influence over the decision, learners will experience psychological failure, no matter how entertaining the presentation is” (Johnson & Johnson, 1997, p. 59). Although still somewhat teacher-directed, this new way of teaching creates a more encouraging learning atmosphere, as well as, providing students the opportunity to be in control of their learning process. Therefore, students in this learning environment would be motivated toward learning and be willing to continue to learn the subject.

Last but not least, one characteristic of this alternative approach which is different from the current traditional teaching approaches is that it introduces an inductive thinking strategy. When first introduced to inductive thinking, both the participating teachers felt a bit lost because when students, they were taught by the deductive approach, and, after they started their teaching, they used the same deductive approach in their classes. They were taught to believe that the deductive approach (teachers explain rules and students apply the rules to examples) is the ‘effective’ and ‘only’ way to teach language. After starting to implement the inductive activities to help students classify phonics, words, and even sentences, both teachers found that their children enjoyed inductive activities. Sandra said good things about applying inductive activities in class because students really benefited from analyzing the vocabulary and then putting words into different groups. All students, be they high or low achievers, would figure out their own criteria to classify words. They compared and contrasted the words and then formed the concepts based on their criteria. “I was surprised by students’ work. Those with low academic achievement also did well when they were asked to do inductive activities. Given that there is no ‘correct’ or ‘only’ way to classify words, all students focused on their own way of thinking and really did a great job” (Sandra, Personal interview, November 9, 2009). One of the goals of this model is to help
students possess the ability to “learn the attributes that define a concept… and [to be able to] distinguish those from other attributes that are important but do not define the concept” (Calhoun, 1999, p. 110). Similarly, Mandy’s sixth-grade students also enjoyed working on inductive activities. That said, her students seemed to stop thinking for themselves, which prevents them from being ‘creative’ in classifying words. Most of them put words into different categories based on the meanings of the words or the numbers of letters, instead of analyzing the words’ structures or grammatical functions. But inductive activities did greatly promote students’ willingness to participate in learning, especially for those low academic achievers (Mandy, Reflective journal, April 27, 2010). In addition, both teachers believed that an inductive thinking strategy had a positive effect on students’ learning. Sandra shared her previous experiences with using inductive thinking to help herself formulate the phonics rules. She agreed that students were able to easily memorize the rules or patterns when they figured them out by themselves (Monthly meeting, March 30, 2010).

That said, not everything Sandra and Mandy commented on with respect to this non-traditional teaching approach is positive. In fact, both of them found several challenges with this method when implementing it in their classes, and which might have stopped them from continuing to use it in class. First, both Sandra and Mandy mentioned that not every section of each unit in the textbook could be introduced by using this approach. As discussed in Chapter Two, pictures in this model serve as an important stimulus to attract children’ attention, as well as the main teaching material for students to study and identify items within. Yet, in Taiwanese English classrooms, teachers who teach at the same grade have to use the same textbook in their classes, given that all students from the same grade have to take the same standardized tests to evaluate their learning performance. Both participating teachers found that a couple of sections, such as songs/rhymes and short paragraphs, were difficult to teach by using the PWIM. In this
case, they had to switch back to their previous teaching strategy (Grammar-translation approach or Audio-lingual method) in order to proceed. As long as a consensus exists not to use a textbook, a picture could be used as the main teaching material in class. But, it also increases teachers’ workload because they have to design their own teaching materials. That’s why all teachers in Taiwan prefer to use one or more textbooks in class (Sandra, Personal interview, April 27, 2010). Although pictures in each unit could be used to help children shake out the words and compose sentences, teachers in this study had a hard time connecting the outcome of students’ discussion with the rest of the lesson (Monthly meeting, January 5, 2010). Therefore, both teachers believed that this new way of teaching could be used as the main teaching strategy in class to introduce vocabulary and also provide the opportunity for students to write in English. But other minor teaching strategies, such as the Grammar-translation approach or the Audio-lingual method, might also need to be applied in class in order to ensure that students would be able to pass standardized tests.

Furthermore, both teachers commented that practicing the full sequence of this new approach was in fact time-consuming. The time issue was a problem from the point that both teachers first applied this alternative approach in their classes in September, 2009. When first introduced to this new way of teaching, both teachers considered that this method was very systematic. In addition, they also found every step and the overall sequence equally clear. They were interested in trying it out in their classes; however, at the same time, they were also worried about whether or not they had enough time to practice every aspect and whether or not the time issue might jeopardize their efforts in implementing this model. Calhoun (1999) suggests that the full sequence of the PWIM might take from three days to two months; “the richness of the picture, the age and language development of the students, and the language objectives of the teachers” would determine the length of units/lessons. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the participating
students have only two separate English classes every week, forty minutes per class. Given that students in the same grade would have to write the same standardized examinations to have their learning performance evaluated, it would be challenging for the three teachers to teach all the required units in the textbook by practicing every stage of this teaching approach. At their second monthly meeting, both teachers mentioned that the shortage of class hours prevented them from going through the whole sequence of this teaching approach. Mandy also claimed that it would probably take two classes to finish one stage, but she was expected to teach a unit of the textbook within 8 classes (Monthly meeting, November 3, 2009). Given the teachers were nonusers at the beginning of the study, it did take time for the participating teachers to become familiar with the sequence of the teaching approach and then become mechanical users. Besides, due to the pressure of preparing students for their standardized exams, teachers had to cram all the lectures into one or two classes because students’ group work occupied too much of the class time. Therefore, both teachers found it difficult to practice the full sequence of this alternative approach (Monthly meeting, November 3, 2009; December 1, 2009).

In addition, the participating teachers were concerned about the evaluation of students’ academic performance when this alternative approach is adopted in class. This approach does not come with a standardized way to evaluate learners’ academic performance. As discussed in Chapter One, the Grammar-translation approach has been applied in English classrooms for years, so students’ learning achievement is usually evaluated based on their performance on spelling, translating the target language to their native one, and answering grammar questions. Students’ performance on standardized tests is the reference for teachers to see whether or not children have acquired what they are supposed to learn and whether or not the teaching strategies are effective. After implementing this new way of teaching in their classes, the participating teachers were eager to know how their students achieve as a result of this approach, but they do not know
which tools to use to measure students’ learning performance. Given that this alternative approach combines the PWIM and Cooperative Learning, how to evaluate students’ academic performance still remains unsolved. Are the traditional standardized tests effective in evaluating students’ learning achievement? Should students be evaluated by how well they work with their peers? Should teachers evaluate children’s literacy proficiency or learning attitude? Is there a suitable way to evaluate learners’ academic performance? All these questions still worry the teachers in this study (Mandy, Reflective journal, March 30, 2010).

Last, seat arrangement was also one of the cons that the participating teachers deal with when implementing this new alternative approach in their classes. Most Taiwanese classrooms are still in a traditional configuration; that is, students sit in rows. This new way of teaching involves cooperative learning activities, such as group discussions; hence, setting up the environment to make it easier for students to communicate with their group members face to face is very important. McCabe and Rhoades (1990) propose, “how your room is arranged, where the furniture is placed and where student groups work are important factors in designing and conducting cooperative learning. A little bit of planning goes a long way in reducing chaos and providing an organized ‘set’ for your class” (p. 235). Although rearranging the classroom setting for the purpose of effective teaching is allowed, teachers tend not to do it because it is time consuming and they have to restore the original arrangement of desks for the next class. Given that each class lasts only forty minutes, teachers are content with the traditional setting, instead of ‘wasting’ time rearranging the classroom. Also, this repeated rearrangement of furniture might result in a classroom which is perceived as messy by the school authorities who consider that classrooms should be clean and neat. In this study, Sandra’s fourth grade students had two separate weekly classes in two different places: their homeroom and the English classroom. The homeroom was arranged in a more traditional way because the other teachers who used this room
expected that students would sit in rows, whereas grouping the desks/chairs in the English classroom was not an issue for the teachers who might use this room, so the seat arrangement there was more flexible. Therefore, when teaching in their homeroom, Sandra had no choice but to switch back to a traditional teacher-centered approach because students could not move their desks/chairs group discussions or other cooperative learning activities. Sandra’s fourth-grade students could only have their English class in the English classroom once every week because the room was shared by all students in the same school (Sandra, Personal interview, November 9, 2009). Hence, the application of this new way of teaching was restricted by the seat arrangement in the students’ homeroom.

Both teachers recognized the benefits of this new way of teaching and also experienced its effect on their students’ English literacy development. At the last monthly meeting, although several difficulties still needed to be overcome and solved, both teachers indicated that they would implement this new approach with their next-year students because they believed that the children would enjoy learning English through this method of instruction (Monthly meeting, April 28, 2010).

**Research Question #2: To what extent do the teachers involved in the study believe that merging the Picture Word Inductive Model with Cooperative Learning has an effect on students’ English literacy?**

After eleven months of trying out and implementing the alternative approach that merges the PWIM with Cooperative Learning, the teachers in the study have overcome their doubts about this method and started to experience its effect on their students’ English literacy development. As mentioned in Chapter Three, I had meetings with the three teachers individually in June 2009, to explain the procedures of this new teaching approach and to conduct a classroom
demonstration to show how they could apply it in their classes. Given that this is their first time applying this method in their classes, all three teachers, unsurprisingly, had their own concerns and doubts. At the beginning of the research, three teachers volunteered to participate in this study and also showed great interest in learning a new teaching approach to help their student improve their English learning proficiency; they were aware of the changes and were interested in the details of the innovation. All three teachers were experienced in teaching English in Taiwan; they have applied various teaching approaches to meet their students’ different needs. Nevertheless, they had not yet found a suitable teaching approach which could help their students improve their four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) at the same time. The curriculum guidelines proposed by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan indicate that English teachers in elementary schools should focus on cultivating children’s interest in learning English and also help them acquire basic, daily conversation skills in English. Following the guidelines but experiencing pressure about students’ passing standardized examinations, the three teachers often applied activities prescribed by the Communicative Approach, as well as games, to promote students’ learning interest in English, and at the same time they also used the traditional Grammar-Translation approach to explain grammatical rules, so that students were able to pass tests. Sandra, the fourth-grade teacher, said,

[t]he Communicative approach is the main teaching strategy I applied in my class because it was the focus of my thesis when I was working on my Master’s degree. I would also use TPR [Totally Physical Response] to arouse students’ interest or the Grammar-translation approach to explain grammatical rules. But I still don’t know how to help students improve their reading and writing skills. (Sandra, Personal interview, April 27, 2010)
When they were introduced to this alternative teaching approach which combined the PWIM (a literacy strategy) with Cooperative Learning (Socially-interactive approach), they expressed their interest in learning how this method could help improve their students’ literacy proficiency and also increase chances for children to practice their speaking and listening abilities. Mandy, the sixth-grade teacher, revealed in her reflective journal that she had been looking for an effective teaching strategy to help her students to become actively engaged in English writing, so that they would fully participate in the learning process rather than just imitate sentences from the textbooks. Although she tried to encourage students to write short English paragraphs, she felt frustrated when they fell short of her expectations and, even worse, children lost their interests in learning English. Hence, she was eager to know whether or not this new way of teaching could be effective in improving students’ literacy proficiency or at least encouraging them to try writing in English (Mandy, Reflective journal, April 13, 2010).

Working as a fifth-grade teacher at a private elementary school for the first time, Ellen was more familiar with the teaching in cram schools. In cram schools, she was allowed to apply various teaching methods to help children learn English in a mostly English-speaking environment, but her choice of teaching approaches was determined by the content of the textbooks. During the personal interview, she shared her experience of using an inductive thinking strategy to help her students regulate rules of English phonics in cram schools, although she never thought of applying it to improve children’s English literacy proficiency. When she was told about this project of applying a new way of teaching, she believed that this alternative approach might work for her students because they were in an advanced-level class and should be capable of helping each other learn (Ellen, personal interview, November 10, 2009).

Unfortunately, she withdrew from this study after four months because of the intense pressure
from school authorities and parents. The pressure she felt will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.

All three teachers believed that students’ vocabulary could be increased when this alternative teaching approach was implemented, given that they had similar teaching experiences using pictures or photographs in class to introduce children to new vocabulary or review what they had learned. That said, the teachers were uncertain about the effectiveness of this alternative approach in improving children’s reading and, more importantly, writing proficiency and also questioned their own ability to meet the demands of the innovation. Although Mandy was willing to try different approaches, under the pressure of teaching all of the content in the textbook, she had to apply a teaching method that would ensure students understood the vocabulary, grammatical rules and paragraphs involved in each lesson. Mandy expressed her concern after my classroom demonstration.

As a teacher, I always make sure that what I do in class will definitely benefit my students. The effectiveness of students’ learning performance decides which teaching method I apply in my class. This new way of teaching sounds interesting and I really want to give it a try, but I just don’t know if it will work on my students to improve their reading and writing abilities. That is my biggest concern. (Personal communication, June 11, 2009)

Her concern was definitely understandable because students’ performance on standardized examinations still remains one of the key factors in evaluating their learning achievement and the efficacy of the instructional methodology (“Too many tests in Taiwan,” Chen, 2008). Similarly, Sandra pointed out that she sometimes would use a big poster provided by the publisher as a stimulus to attract students’ attention. Her own experience showed that big pictures could get her students’ attention and also expand their English word banks. Although the model used in this
study supplied a more systematic approach to the follow-up teaching after identifying words from a picture/poster, she was still not quite convinced that this new way of teaching would have a great effect on her students’ literacy performance (Sandra, Personal interview, June 8, 2009; April 27, 2010).

Besides their doubts about the effectiveness of this alternative approach on students’ literacy development, the three teachers also did not understand how an inductive thinking approach would determine children’s learning performance. For years, standardized tests have been implemented in schools to evaluate students’ academic progress, and teachers need to prepare their students to do well on the examinations by helping them memorize grammar rules. In most English classrooms in Taiwan, English grammar rules are usually introduced through the deductive approach by listing all the rules and then asking students to apply those rules to examples (Chen, 2007). Unsurprisingly, the three English teachers had always adopted the deductive approach to help their students learn English grammar. They felt uncomfortable with and uncertain about switching from the conventional deductive approach to that of inductive thinking. During a chat on the telephone, Mandy expressed her concern about the inductive approach. Due to her unfamiliarity with an inductive thinking approach, she felt that she might not be able to implement it in class properly and her students might also not benefit from her teaching (Personal communication, August 10, 2009). Her worry was to be expected as “[c]hange immediately threatens people’s sense of competence, frustrating their wish to feel effective and valuable” (Evans, 1996, p. 32).

The concerns and doubts were gradually replaced by surprise and excitement. Although one teacher withdrew from this study because of pressure from the school, the remaining two teachers were surprised by their students’ progress in their academic performance as a result of this new way of teaching, an improvement which dispelled any doubts they may still have had about this
non-traditional approach. When asked if they noticed the effect of this approach on their students’ learning performance, both teachers agreed that those who possessed low academic achievement performed much better on their examinations than they had before this alternative method was implemented. Students who possessed higher academic achievement always do well on the standardized tests, no matter which teaching strategy was applied in class, but lower achievers as well showed obvious improvement to their learning performances and attitudes. During the personal interview at the end of this study, Mandy commented that this teaching approach did have a positive effect on students’ learning performance. She talked about her three students who used to show no interest in learning English and always failed their mid-term and final exams.\(^2\)

She said,

> [i]n the past, they had not been interested in any subjects, let alone in learning English. They always get a failing grade in my class. However, after I started to implement this new way of teaching in class, I noticed a great change in them. They have become more focused and pay more attention in class. They have a more positive attitude toward learning, care more about their own academic performance, and participate in group activities more actively. (Mandy, Personal interview, April 27, 2010)

Although no measurement tool with measurable reliability and validity has been applied to evaluate students’ learning performance in this study, Mandy did see students’ progress in their performance on their school examinations. She was pleasantly surprised that none of the students failed their recent mid-term examination. Though many other factors should be considered before

\(^2\) In Taiwan, elementary school students who fail their mid-term or final examinations are allowed to take the same tests until they pass them, so that they can be promoted to the next grade, instead of repeating the same grade.
a final conclusion can be drawn, Mandy still believes that this alternative approach somehow does help students improve their academic performance.

In her fourth-grade class, Sandra also experienced the same surprise and excitement. She explained during the personal interview that compared with other children in the same grade, her students learned more English vocabulary through shaking out the words from the pictures with their teammates (Sandra, Personal interview, April 27, 2010). After she had implemented this approach in her class for four months, she also noticed that the academic performance of those students with lower achievement was improved. She put her findings in her reflective journal:

When I was calculating students’ final term grades at the end of last semester, I was surprised to discover that the children with lower academic achievement in fact did better than they used to do. I am not sure if it is the result of this new way of teaching. I still need time to continue my observations of my students. (Sandra, Reflective journal, February 25, 2010)

Although she was also worried that her students were not exposed to an English-speaking learning environment, because they mostly use Mandarin to communicate and discuss with their teammates when they are working on a task as a group, Sandra believed that this new way of teaching had a positive effect on students’ academic performance. She was amazed that her fourth grade students were able to compose complete sentences and put them into meaningful paragraphs. In addition, given that Sandra was also teaching another fourth-grade class in which she used a traditional teaching approach, she wanted to compare the performance of students from both classes to see whether or not there was any difference. She found that students who learn English through this new alternative approach did much better on their standardized tests. The results amazed her and led her to believe that merging the PWIM with Cooperative Learning
really affects students’ academic performance in a positive way (Sandra, Personal interview, April 27, 2010).

What both teachers observed with their sixth and fourth-grade students is consistent with the findings of Wong’s (2009) research, which indicates that the PWIM is effective in improving her kindergarten students’ academic performance in letter identification, phonetic/phonemic awareness, syllable reorganization, and oral language proficiency. Although many factors may contribute to students’ improvement in academic performance, the choice of teaching strategy is certainly an important one. Through the repetition of reviewing words and sentences, students broaden their inner storehouse of knowledge that would be used in their reading and writing experiences (Calhoun, 1999). Moreover, cooperating and negotiating with their peers, students are engaging in a cognitive developmental process, which stimulates their ability to learn, understand and solve problems (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1994). Calhoun (1999) shares that, within each class, students’ language development will vary as well will their confidence in participating. Given time, many experiences with the model, and a nurturing and joyous learning environment, most students – not just the quickest or most language agile students – make good progress as readers and writers. (p. 30)

Even though no solid statistics existed to show the participating students’ progress in their academic performance, both Sandra and Mandy observed a change in their students. Their students were more engaged in learning activities; they showed positive attitudes toward learning English; they had more confidence in themselves; they did better on their examinations; and, most importantly, they really enjoyed English class (Monthly meeting, April 28, 2010).
Research Question #3: How do the teachers’ concerns change as they make a shift to an alternative approach to student learning?

As discussed in an earlier section, the three participating teachers volunteered to join this study and were interested in learning a new way of teaching that might be more effective in improving Taiwanese elementary school students’ English literacy proficiency. At the beginning of this study, they were nonusers of PWIM and Cooperative Learning. They went through the Level of Orientation by expressing their interest in knowing more about this alternative approach and also attending the workshop to learn about it, and then they moved directly to the Level of Preparation by designing lesson plans and preparing themselves for the initial use of this approach in their classes. At the same time, skipping the stage of Awareness, the teachers went directly through the stage of Informational and moved on to the Personal stage of Hall and Hord’s (2006) Stages of Concerns. They were not resistant to the change; in fact, they believed that they needed to change their current teaching strategies in order to help students learn English effectively; however, they still had doubts about whether or not they could effectively implement this method and whether or not it really could work in their classes because both they and their students were still at the stage of nonusers and were not familiar with the teaching/learning procedures. From September 2009, the teachers started to help their students learn English through this new approach. During this period, I received emails or messages from the teachers about whether or not what they were doing was correct. What they put in their reflective journals indicates that they were concerned about whether or not they would be able to carry out the change properly: “This is a new way of learning for students and they seem to like it…. But now I have to think about how to help children compose sentences by using the words they’ve generated” (Mandy, Reflective journal, September 10, 2009); “My students felt excited while working on the activities, but I felt frustrated…. I’m worried about whether or not I am able to
direct students to select a proper title and generate sentences to describe it” (Sandra, Reflective journal, September 29, 2009). Mandy revealed at the last personal interview that she felt like she was learning three different strategies (using a picture as a stimulus, doing inductive activities, and applying a cooperative learning strategy) at the same time, given that she was not familiar with any of them; therefore, she was not confident about applying new strategies and kept worrying whether or not she had practiced this new way of teaching correctly (Mandy, Personal interview, April 27, 2010). Their concerns are consistent with what Evans (1996) suggests when he notes that “[c]hange immediately threatens people’s sense of competence, frustrating their wish to feel effective and valuable” (p. 32). The teachers in my study lacked confidence and felt vulnerable.

That said, their concerns started to change over the several months after this alternative approach was implemented. The teachers gradually became more familiar with the procedures of this method, although they sometimes could not complete the full sequence of steps in this model and had to modify it a bit because of the shortage of classroom teaching time. The time issue will be discussed more fully in the next section. During my onsite observations in the classrooms, both teachers appropriately implemented this new way of teaching and students were also comfortable with learning English through this approach. During this period, both teachers and students became at least Mechanical users of this approach. Given that both teachers are well-experienced in teaching, I believe that they might also have moved to the Level of Routine because they had already established regular ways of using this new method of teaching in their classes (Monthly meeting, April 28, 2010). During the last personal interviews, both teachers claimed that they had somehow mastered the innovation and its use. They were familiar with the teaching sequence of this approach and did not need to spend much time preparing lesson plans in advance. Sandra explains, “I have no problem using this approach now and know exactly what
I need to do when I start to teach a new lesson. I believe students also feel the same way. Now I’m more concerned about how to promote group cooperation and improve their performance” (Sandra, Personal interview, April 27, 2010). Similarly, Mandy also showed more confidence in implementing this approach in her class and would apply it again with next year’s students: “I’ve experienced the essence of this alternative approach and I found it useful for promoting students’ positive learning attitude which also helps them improve their learning performance…. I will implement this approach next year in my fifth grade class and see how it will work on them” (Mandy, Personal interview, April 27, 2010).

Furthermore, in their ongoing reflective journals, both teachers expressed fewer worries about applying this approach, while recording more observations about how students did when working in teams: “… children have done the same learning activities many times last semester, so most of them did well on the task, though a few students were complaining about individual teammates who weren’t engaging actively in discussion…” (Sandra, Reflective journal, March 4, 2010); “… most of the students were really engaged in the activity. Students… had great discussions with their teammates. I was touched when I saw Peter [pseudonym] working hard to check words in the dictionary and providing his opinions… I think his positive learning attitude is being promoted…” (Mandy, Reflective journal, April 9, 2010). The excerpts from teachers’ reflective journals indicate that teachers’ concerns have also shifted from the Personal stage to the Consequence stage. They are not questioning their roles in the change any more and believe that they are able to handle this new instructional strategy. They mainly focus on their students now. Whether or not their students can benefit from this new way of teaching and how to promote children’s learning outcomes are now the participating teachers’ major concerns about the implementation of this alternative approach. They both agreed that they would continue to
adopt this innovative method in their current classes and even use it with next year’s classes to see its effect on different students.

**Research Question #4: What kinds of problems or difficulties do the teachers encounter and how do they deal with them while implementing this alternative approach in their classes?**

As discussed earlier, the time issue and the pressure to cover the content in the textbook have always been problems for the teachers in this study. Given that it is the first time for the teachers to learn and implement this new alternative approach in their classes, taking time to move to mechanical users from nonusers is to be expected (Hall & Hord, 2006). During the first month of implementing this approach, because of being unfamiliar with it, all three teachers spent much time preparing lesson plans before class. But, when they tried to follow the lesson plans in their classes, they found that the shortage of time frustrated them. According to the schedule at school, a semester lasts approximately twenty weeks. Excluding two weeks for conducting the mid-term and final examinations, teachers only have eighteen weeks to teach six units of the textbook. In this case, teachers need to teach three units in nine weeks before students have their mid-term examinations. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the students in this study have only two English classes per week, forty minutes per class. The time is really limited for teachers to incorporate many learning activities in class. Given that both teachers and students were unfamiliar with the procedures of this alternative teaching approach, each activity in fact occupied too much time in class. Mandy mentioned in one of the monthly meetings that it would take almost an entire period for students to shake out the words and discuss with their teammates because they still did not know how to work with each other. She even spent two to three periods teaching her students how to cooperate and discuss with their classmates. “My students need to
be trained about how to work with their peers because they always work by themselves. When I first put them into groups and asked them to discuss with their teammates, they were just confused and didn’t know what to do. I was disappointed because their performance didn’t reach my expectation” (Monthly meeting, September 29, 2009). Ellen also encountered the problem of controlling time in her class. Her students had no problems generating words from a picture, but they came up with too many words. After Ellen helped students to identify each word by connecting a line from the word to the item in the picture, the period was over and they had to wait a couple of days before they had another class to continue the learning activity. Practicing each move of this model takes too much time, and the three teachers have no time to teach the rest of lessons that would be tested on students’ mid-term examinations. In order to catch up, teachers have no choice but to give up a couple of learning activities and switch back to their previous teaching strategies to cram the rest of the lessons into two or three classes. Therefore, the time issue, the discontinuity between two classes, and the pressure of teaching all the units in a textbook are the first obstacles that teachers had to overcome.

Unfortunately, the discontinuity between classes cannot be solved\(^3\). Given that the class schedule is fixed for the entire academic year and it could not be changed, the students in this study still have two separate English classes every week. The choice of which textbook to use is decided by all English teachers in the same grade; therefore, the teachers in this study could do nothing to reduce the amount of their teaching load. Fortunately, in order to solve the time issue and make sure that students could practice every stage of this alternative approach, the three teachers came up with a solution. A big picture chosen from each unit in the textbook was still used as a main stimulus for students to ‘shake out’ the words. But, instead of spending time

\(^3\) An exception is made by the administrator in one school to reschedule the two periods of the class back to back in order to facilitate this research project. But this rescheduling usually will not be allowed in most schools.
observing the picture and recognizing the items right in class, students were asked to preview the picture at home and write down any words in either English or Chinese to describe the picture before they came to class. When children were in class, they shared their own lists of words and discussed them with their peers. The children’s preview at home, in fact, saved much time in class, so teachers had more time to implement other learning activities or help students review the lesson they had learned (Monthly meeting, September 29, 2009). Mandy also used a timer to make sure that students finished their task on time. She would also demonstrate or guide students through the small group discussions. In addition, instead of letting students do inductive activities in class, Sandra assigned them as homework. She asked her students to categorize words into different groups based on their own analysis. Next time when they came to class, they would share their ideas with both their teammates and the whole class (Sandra, Reflective journal, March 11, 2010). By doing so, students still experienced the opportunity to think inductively, but the activity did not compete with the teachers’ lecture time in class. In order to generate sentences and paragraphs, both teachers assigned homework for their students, asking them to compose three sentences to describe the picture by incorporating the words they had identified. Students would be given time to share and discuss their sentences with their teammates in class. Mandy would let students discuss their own sentences in a group first. When students shared the sentences with the class, Mandy would correct their sentences before she put them on the blackboard, and then led the class to read through the sentences (Fieldnotes, March 15, 2010). But Sandra would collect and correct students’ sentences before the class and then put them on a piece of paper, so that children would discuss all the sentences with their teammates before they generated paragraphs (Sandra, Reflective journal, March 18, 2010). No matter which strategy they applied to solve the time problem, the teachers still had time to prepare students for the
standardized examinations, and students also had the opportunity to experience every aspect of this alternative approach to help facilitate their English literacy development.

Besides the time issue, the participating teachers also found that the pictures in the textbook were not always suitable for attracting children’s attention and to engaging them in discussion. As discussed in Chapter Two, selecting the right pictures is important for the success of this alternative approach. Teachers should select pictures that are “tangible, concrete, and attractive, and [that] provide an excellent stimulus for common work in language development” (Calhoun, 1999, p. 67). Although the pictures in each unit of the textbook are culturally appropriate, they are considered dull and boring by students. Sandra encountered this problem when she first applied this approach in her class. The picture in the unit one seems to be simplistic because it contains only two clowns wearing colorful clothes. Being unable to find other pictures, Sandra still tried to use it as a stimulus and expected that students could generate appropriate words that might be used to talk about the topic of the unit. The results were disappointing because students only came up with simple words that they already knew, and none of them was related to the unit (Sandra, Reflective journal, September 29, 2010). That said, the lack of richness of a picture is not the only problem that teachers encountered; contrarily, a picture with too many details also causes trouble in class. Ellen found that the picture she used was too complicated and students identified too many words, with the result that she did not know how to lead children to do inductive activities.

Through emails, online interaction and regular monthly meetings, the teachers figured out solutions to solve the picture issue. After the experience of a boring picture in class, Sandra, in her following classes, was more careful about selecting proper pictures. She would make sure that those pictures were vivid and concrete enough for students to generate words and sentences. She would not necessarily apply the main picture in each unit; instead, she sometimes
photocopied other pictures that had a similar theme and used them to attract students’ attention and to stimulate their discussion. In my fieldnotes, I wrote down: “Given that the main picture of unit 3 seemed not to be appropriate, Sandra told her students that they were not going to preview that one at home; she chose another one instead. I believe that Sandra put thought into selecting appropriate pictures before they were used in class” (Fieldnotes, April 20, 2010). My notes indicate that the teacher did realize the importance of choosing the right picture and would evaluate its appropriateness before she applied it in class. In addition, I suggested that when those pictures which were too complicated and too detailed were used in class, students should be asked to focus on only a section of the picture, or certain items that shared the same quality. For instance, a picture of a scene in a fast food restaurant was used in Sandra’s fourth grade class. Before students started to share their words with their teammates, Sandra told them not to pick up the words they had learned in previous units, but to focus on the items that appear in a fast food restaurant or the new words they want to learn (Fieldnotes, April 22, 2010). By doing so, teachers could help students narrow their lists of words and also train children to become more focused when they are engaged in observation and analysis.

Students’ frequent off-task interactions and the free-rider effects are also problems that the teachers in this study encountered when they implemented this new way of teaching in their classes. Given that this new way of teaching combines the PWIM and Cooperative Learning, most of the time students were asked to work on a task as a group. Although students were introduced to the basic elements of Cooperative Learning and the skills necessary to work with their peers, when they were put in groups and worked on the task, off-task interactions sometimes appeared and the free-rider situation arose. In order to monitor and observe students’ behaviours, teachers had to walk around among groups to increase on-task discussion with their peers. Constantly moving around the classroom also made it more difficult for teachers to focus only on
one group and to find out whether learners have on-task or off-task interactions with their peers. Those off-task interactions interfered with the learners’ acquisition of academic knowledge (Pate-Clevenger et al., 2008). Although children showed that they enjoyed small-group discussions with their peers, teachers could not always determine if students were really engaged in teamwork or were just excited about chatting with friends. The nature and quality of students’ interaction reflects on their group work. The work presented by those students who really focused on discussion with their teammates was much better than that presented by those who were just chatting and gossiping about their leisure time (Mandy, Reflective journal, April 9, 2010).

During my time in both classes observing how the two teachers applied this approach in a classroom setting, I noticed that students easily veered off-task, chatting with their teammates when they were not under their teachers’ supervision. Here is one observation I recorded:

_Honestly, I don’t think today’s class ran smoothly. While students were put into groups to ‘shake out’ the words from the picture, a boy from group three fell asleep during the activity. Some didn’t pay much attention to the group discussion but kept chatting with their teammates. I wondered to myself, “Is this the reason why most teachers in Taiwan do not like to put students into groups to work on a task?”_ (Mandy’s class, Fieldnotes, March 23, 2010)

A similar scenario also happened in Sandra’s fourth-grade class:

_It’s the second weekly class and students were assigned into groups to shake out the words from the picture of unit 2. Sandra announced that they would be evaluated by the number of words each group came up with. Unsurprisingly, most students were engaging in group discussion in order to ‘win’ the competition. While I was wandering among groups and observing children’s discussion, the interaction in group 4 caught my attention. It was a_
group with three boys and three girls. Obviously, the girls took all the responsibility by discussing with each other and writing down the words; contrarily, the boys were just chatting and playing around. Though the boys stopped when Sandra was nearby, they went back to chatting with each other when Sandra went to another group. (Sandra’s class, Fieldnotes, March 25, 2010)

One key attribute of successful Cooperative Learning is individual accountability. If this is not encouraged, Cooperative Learning is almost guaranteed to be a failure. To ensure that each group member is individually accountable for a fair share of the group work, the group size should be small, ideally from 2 to 4 (Baloche, 1998; Johnsohn & Johnson, 1997; Vermette, 1998). The larger the size of the group is, the more likely social loafing will occur. In both Sandra’s and Mandy’s classes, students were put in groups of six. Obviously, the group size was too big and students could easily neglect their responsibilities by ‘hiding’ behind the more capable group members and ‘hitchhiking’ on their teammates’ work. Therefore, when students become social loafers, off-task behaviours occur. In addition, these off-task interactions are also hard to avoid when teachers have to move around constantly to provide their assistance and to make sure that the group discussion goes well. Both teachers mentioned during one monthly meeting that they were not sure whether the reason that their students enjoyed group discussions was that they loved to work with their peers or just that they had the opportunity to chat with their friends (Monthly meeting, March 30, 2010).

When putting their students into small groups, both teachers grouped them heterogeneously and expected that the high academic achievers in each group would help or at least motivate their teammates to learn. Nevertheless, both teachers found that the task was sometimes completely accomplished by the smartest or the most hardworking student(s) in the team, and those who are
considered less skillful or intelligent were likely to be ignored in the group. In this case, the rest of the team members hitch-hiked on the work of the others (Monthly meeting, November 3, 2010). Slavin (1995) mentions that “[t]he free-rider effect is most likely to occur when the group has a single task, as when they are asked to hand in a single report, complete a single worksheet, or produce one project” (p. 19). Because students were asked to present their discussion as a group, the free-rider effect arose frequently. Furthermore, for years, students in Taiwan have been in a very competitive learning environment and tend to be competitive. When they are put into groups, competition exists among groups. Although ‘outside enemy interdependence’\(^4\) can increase positive interdependence among team members, the groups tend to compete with each other. In order to do better than the other groups or not to be weighed down by any weaker group members, those students with higher academic performance are likely to complete the task by themselves, instead of sharing the work with their teammates. “[It really takes time to train students to work with each other cooperatively, given that they’ve learned individually for years” (Mandy, Reflective journal, September 22, 2009).

In order to avoid off-task interactions, the teachers in this study believe that students need to be taught how to work with each other cooperatively before they are assigned to group work. But it takes considerable time for students to truly understand the importance of cooperation. Given that this study lasted for only eleven months, many students have captured the essence of working with their peers, although some are still treating group work as a chance to chat with their friends in class. Yet, the teachers believe that, after children have received proper training and have worked as a group for a longer period of time, they will come to realize the benefits of cooperation and they should appear less likely to have off-task interactions while doing team

\(^4\) Outside enemy interdependence means that each group strives to perform better than the other groups and is proposed by Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (1994) as a way to ensure that positive interdependence exists within groups.
work (Monthly meeting, April 28, 2010). Furthermore, to deal with the “diffusion of responsibility” (Slavin, 1995) or “social loafing” situations (Johnson & Johnson, 1994), individual accountability must be structured into the cooperative learning activities. As discussed in Chapter Two, individual accountability exists when every member in the same group contributes his or her efforts fairly to help accomplish the shared team goal. Individual accountability is critical to the success of Cooperative Learning and is also the key to ensuring that every student in the same group benefits from working cooperatively with each other. When individual accountability disappears in group work, students will easily ‘hitchhike’ on the work of their teammates. In order to ensure that individual accountability exists as a strategy for reducing the chance of social loafing, educators (Bennett & Rolheiser, 2001; Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1993, Slavin 1995) emphasize the importance of keeping the group size small. The smaller the group size is, the more easily students are able to interact and work with their teammates, and the more likely the team work will be a success. The social loafing problem can also be solved by assigning students a part of the whole task, letting students be responsible for their own learning on their individual tests, or having students explain what they have learned to someone else (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1994; Slavin, 1995). After getting suggestions from me though emails and from other teachers at the monthly meetings, the three teachers came up with solutions to solve the free-rider problem. In Sandra’s class, students were first assigned to different roles, such as leader, chief of discipline, and note taker, before they started to work on the group task. Because all students have to take a mid-term examination individually, they need to make sure that they put enough effort into their learning (Fieldnotes, March 4, 2010). In Mandy’s class, students were asked to preview the picture at home and share their work with their teammates. After their small-group discussion, children would be randomly picked to move to another group and share their group conclusion. In order to explain their ideas to their peers in
other groups, students have to focus on the task and make sure that they have learned what they are supposed to (Fieldnotes, March 2, 2010). Both teachers tried to eliminate the diffusion of responsibility by assigning children different roles and giving them individual tests; although sometimes a few students still hitchhiked on the group work, most of the time the teamwork paid off.

The last difficulty that the teachers encountered is the pressure of catching up in order to prepare students for the standardized tests. As discussed in Chapter One, students in Taiwan have to take standardized tests to evaluate their academic performance. Although students in this study enjoy learning English through this alternative approach, they still need to take standardized tests to make sure that they have acquired prescribed knowledge. The participating teachers claimed that to complete the full sequence of this approach and apply cooperative learning activities really took too much time, and they still had to teach all the required units, so that students would be able to do well on their examinations. That dilemma really puts much stress on teachers. Mandy mentioned that, without the pressure of catching up for the exams, she and her students really enjoyed the learning activities in this approach (Mandy, Reflective journal, October 23, 2009). Sandra also claimed that sometimes she was worried if she would have enough time to finish all the steps of this method and also prepare students for their mid-term and final examinations (Sandra, Reflective journal, September 29, 2009). The pressure of preparing students for standardized tests does distress teachers greatly, although it is not directly related to this new way of teaching.

Both Sandra and Mandy tried to come up with solutions to deal with the problem of the shortage of classroom teaching time, even though, during the process of this study, they would sometimes switch back to their previous teacher-centered approaches and cram all the lessons into a couple of hours in order to prepare their students for the tests. Sandra believed that students
would benefit a lot from learning through this alternative approach, which is completely different from their previous learning experience. To keep using this approach and also to confront the pressure of students’ standardized tests, Sandra decided to cut down the number of the learning activities that she planned to do, so that children had more time to work with their peers and she also had time to help them review the lessons for their mid-term and final examinations (Fieldnotes, March 18, 2010). Mandy applied a different strategy. She would try to control the time for each learning activity by using a timer, so that students would not waste time chatting with their classmates. Yet, when she found that she would not have enough time to finish all the required lessons, she had no choice but to make those lessons her first priority because she had to be certain that students would be able to do well on the tests. After covering all the lessons, if she still had time left, she would then let students work in small groups and discuss the pictures again (Mandy, Reflective journal, October 16, 2010). Obviously, the pressure of preparing students for the standardized tests largely determines which teaching strategy teachers would use in their classes. This pressure is also the reason that causes one of the three participating teachers to withdraw from this study.

Given that it is their first time to learn and implement this new way of teaching in their classes, the teachers in this study encountered several problems and difficulties, which might have stopped them from trying out this approach. Through sharing their problems with and receiving comments and suggestions from each other and from me at the regular monthly meetings, the teachers came up with solutions for dealing with those problems. Although they sometimes switched back to their previous traditional teaching strategies, the teachers still tried to complete the full sequence of this approach in order to let their students experience a new way of learning English.
Research Question #5: What do Taiwanese elementary school students involved in this study feel and think about learning English through the combined strategies of the PWIM and Cooperative Learning?

After eleven months of learning English through the approach merging the PWIM and Cooperative Learning, the majority of the students in this study have positive opinions about its effect on their learning experience. As mentioned in Chapter Three, one of the three participating teachers, as well as her students, had to withdraw from this study because she received intense pressure from the school authorities and children’s parents. Because of her withdrawal, I conducted classroom observations only in two other classes and also interviewed a total of 54 students. Although a few students in this study lacked interest and motivation in learning English in the past, all of them found this new way of teaching interesting and fun. Analyzing the teachers and the students’ personal interviews, I discovered that all of them have similar perspectives toward this non-traditional teaching approach. The results of students’ personal interviews show that they believe this alternative approach (1) increases the opportunity for them to be autonomous in learning; (2) creates a relaxing and less stressful atmosphere for learning English; (3) provides the chance to interact and work with their peers; and (4) finally supplies them with different sources for learning.

Although the participating students might not be able to fully elaborate their ideas because of being nervous or mentally immature, their first response to the question seeking their opinions on this alternative approach is that they feel excited and have fun in class. Mostly importantly, they have control over their own learning. They comment that this approach is totally different from the teaching strategies that their teachers applied in the past. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the participating students have been learning English at least two years; some of them started learning English at the kindergarten level, whereas others had their first English learning
experience when they were third graders. According to the students’ responses, lecturing about English grammar rules and then explaining paragraphs in Mandarin is the most common teaching strategy that their teachers used in the classroom in the past. Students usually sat quietly and listened to the lecture. The interaction mostly occurred between the teacher and the students, and children were supposed to acquire whatever the teacher determined they had to learn. Therefore, children are passive learners; they just absorb the knowledge passively from the teacher. When this new way of teaching started to be implemented in class, children experienced being autonomous in their learning. Instead of learning only the vocabulary listed in the textbook, students in fact chose the words they wanted to learn through identifying the words from a picture when working with their peers as a group. The participating students have more power and authority to decide what they want to learn because the vocabulary, sentences and paragraphs are generated through cooperation with the teacher and their classmates. “This approach is very different from the ways that my teacher used in the past. Now we need to work as a group to identify words from a picture ourselves. We can learn more English words and even use them in sentences” (Student 5, Personal interview, March 29, 2010); “Teachers in the past taught only the words in the textbooks. When learning English through this approach, we identify the words and check their meanings and spelling by ourselves. Through sharing with my teammates, I learn more different words (Student 47, Personal interview, April 8, 2010). Students’ responses show that they are responsible for their own learning during the learning process, instead of passively relying on teachers’ lectures. This finding is consistent with what Thomson (1998) has suggested when she writes that “[c]ooperative learning experiences, in contrast with teacher-centered learning experiences, foster autonomous learning, while skills of autonomous learning support successful participation in cooperative learning opportunities. It seems feasible to aim to gain skills in both autonomy and cooperation while increasing interaction among learners” (p. 570).
Engaged cooperatively in literacy activities involved in the PWIM, children share and learn from each other by working together to identify words from a picture and generate sentences and even paragraphs. The interaction and group sharing in fact help children become more autonomous in learning. Rendon (1995) points out that the group interaction would help individuals develop their own learning processes and through sharing in teams, children acquire not only the language skills they are supposed to learn, but also, most importantly, social skills, which are essential to autonomous learning. Johnson and Johnson (1997) also propose that being involved in cooperative experiences significantly promotes personal ego strength, self-confidence, independence and autonomy. Similarly, Izumi-Taylor (2008) indicates that autonomous children not only “make their own decisions by considering the needs and wishes of others”, but also “show initiative, empathy, cooperation, and problem-solving skills” (p. 76). Thomson (1998) proposes that skills of autonomous learning do not come automatically until students have been learned and practiced for a certain period of time. Although the students in this study might not have become completely autonomous learners yet, they have experienced the process of having some control in their own learning and have started to be more responsible for their learning performance.

In addition, all of the participating students agree that the learning atmosphere in the classroom where this alternative teaching approach is used is more relaxing and less stressful. Many children indicate that they were put in a stressful and boring learning environment in the past. As described earlier, most students’ learning experiences are mostly dominated by teacher-centered learning activities. Sitting still and listening to teachers lecture is the typical learning experience for most students in this study, although games and activities are sometimes used in class to promote children’ learning motivation. Many students reveal during the interviews that they felt stressed in the past because they had to memorize the vocabulary and grammar rules
listed in the textbooks in order to pass their quizzes and examinations: “… the English class used
to be dull and boring. The teacher just taught us what was on the textbook” (Student 17, Personal
interview, March 29, 2010); “We used to sit still and listen to teachers’ lectures. It was really
boring” (Student 49, Personal interview, April 8, 2010); and “In the past, we were very passive in
learning…. we were not allowed to talk to our classmates…” (Student 12, Personal interview,
March 29, 2010). With no control over their own learning, children feel stressed and frustrated, a
feeling which results in students’ low intrinsic motivation and eventually giving up learning
English. Contrarily, when the PWIM merged with Cooperative Learning is implemented in class,
the learning environment becomes more student-centered. Given that students have never learned
English through this methodology, they felt excited and interested when working with their peers
to ‘shake out’ words from a picture and put them into different categories. The participating
teachers and I were worried that children would find this teaching approach fun and interesting
just because it was a new learning strategy for them, and they might lose their interests after this
method was not new to them anymore. Surprisingly, when I conducted onsite classroom
observation, I found that students were still really engaged in the learning activities after this new
way of teaching had been adopted for months. I put this in my fieldnotes:

[d]uring the twenty-minute discussion, most students really enjoyed sharing their ideas with
their teammates…. It’s amazing that each group came up with a long list of words. When
being asked to share their words with the rest of the class, all students were eager to come
to the front and identify the words from the picture…. (Fieldnotes, March 4, 2010).

Children seem to really enjoy this new way of learning English. During the personal interviews,
students reveal that they find this new approach creates a more relaxing and less stressful learning
atmosphere for them: “I enjoy learning English through this approach. The atmosphere in class is
more interesting and relaxing. The class used to be dull and tense” (Student 17, Personal interview, March 29, 2010); “This teaching approach is very different. The lessons are not dull at all, and I have more chance to interact with my classmates” (Student 37, Personal interview, April 8, 2010); and “Learning English is more fun for me now and I don’t feel so stressed” (Student 52, Personal interview, April 8, 2010). Instead of listening to teachers’ lecture all the time, children participate in literacy activities that they have never experienced, such as shaking out the words, categorizing words inductively, selecting titles, and generating sentences and paragraphs. Through working with their classmates, children feel more relaxed and secure because they can get help and support from their peers whenever needed. Johnson and Johnson (1997) claim that cooperative experiences provide greater task-oriented and personal social support, which “tends to promote achievement and productivity, physical health, psychological health, and successful coping with stress and adversity” (p. 109). Although the pressure from tests is still on because students still have to take quizzes and examinations, with the positive peer support through the learning process, children value themselves more positively and have higher self-esteem and confidence to deal with the stress of learning.

Furthermore, one characteristic that the participating students found quite different about this alternative approach is that they are encouraged to interact and discuss with their peers. As mentioned earlier, students in this study have long been in a teacher-centered learning environment where teachers dominate the children’s learning process and where interaction among students is not encouraged. Children seldom have a chance to interact with their classmates because of the competitive learning atmosphere existing in the classroom. Seeking help from the peers might be seen as a sign of failure. Discussing with their peers is not likely to take place in class and the interaction mainly happens between the teacher and the students (Students 12 & 22, March 29, 2010). Given that this new way of teaching merges the PWIM and
Cooperative Learning, children are always assigned to work with their peers in order to reach a shared team goal. While working on the team task, children are highly encouraged to discuss and interact with their peers. Through negotiating and sharing different perspectives with their teammates, children not only help their peers to learn, but also incorporate what they learn with what they have known in their mind (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1994). The participating student’s responses during the personal interviews indicate that working with their peers has a positive effect on their learning performance and they enjoy sharing and learning different ideas through interacting with their teammates: “I think learning English through this method is fun. I can interact with my peers…. In the past, there was no interaction between me and my classmates in class, but now I can work with my friends and learn more vocabulary” (Student 22, Personal interview, March 29, 2010); “I enjoy learning English through this approach and I also love to discuss with my classmates. I can interact with them and ask for help when I have some problems. In the past, we seldom had any chance to talk and share with our classmates” (Student 24, Personal interview, April 8, 2010); and “I think this method provides a good chance for me to know and get along with some classmates whom I seldom spend time with” (Student 49, Personal interview, April 8, 2010). Those responses show that children really enjoy interacting with their classmates in class and also truly understand the purpose of cooperation with their peers – to share and learn from each other. The implementation of this alternative teaching approach in class in fact shifts the classroom setting from a traditional one to a more cooperative one; this shift also implies that the classroom structure moves away from one-way transmission of information and becomes a safe and relaxing learning environment where children are encouraged to mutually transfer information on equal terms (Thomson, 1998).

Finally, students comment that this new way of teaching/learning provides them with more sources to learn about English. In their past learning experience in a teacher-centered classroom,
children were mostly passive, sitting still and absorbing, like a sponge, whatever the teacher lectured. That said, in the classroom where the PWIM merges with Cooperative Learning, the teacher’s role shift from the traditional textbook/information-giver to the language/knowledge-facilitator while students also turn from the passive learners into more independent language explorers who share their opinions, cherish different perspectives from others, and take responsibility for their own learning. Several sixth-grade students reveal their thoughts about learning from their teammates when they are engaged in cooperative learning activities: “I can learn more, different vocabulary, not just those words in the textbook. I really enjoy working with my peers so that I can ask them for help. I can also gain different perspectives from my classmates and share with them what I think” (Student 17, Personal interview, March 29, 2010); “I love working and discussing with my friends. They help me understand more and also learn from different perspectives. Although I seldom provide my opinions because sometimes I really don’t know what to say, I do learn a lot from my teammates” (Student 19, Personal interview, March 29, 2010). Even the fourth-grade children in this study also indicate that they benefit from working with and learning from their peers: “… learning English becomes much easier for me. I’d never had group discussion with my peers before, so I think this strategy is quite different. I enjoy interacting with my classmates and learning from each other” (Student 41, Personal interview, April 8, 2010); “… I can gain different perspectives from my friends and share mine with them…” (Student 47, Personal interview, April 8, 2010); and “… the approach is very different. Now I can learn a variety of words. I like working with my classmates to learn words that I never knew before. I also enjoy exchanging different ideas with the friends in my group” (Student 53, Personal interview, April 8, 2010). During my stay in the classrooms, I also notice that, when children have problems figuring out the spelling of words, or generating sentences to describe a picture, they would ask for help from their teammates before they turn to their teachers
for assistance (Fieldnotes, March 16; March 25; April 9, 2010). With the teacher’s guidance throughout the literacy activities of the PWIM, students are able to develop “the foundation of cognizant control of language and of standard written communication” (Calhoun, 1999, p. 59); meanwhile, through sharing their perspectives with and learning from the peers, children not only explore the language they are learning to experience how it works, but also equip themselves with social skills that are essential in their future learning. Eventually, the discussions and commentaries from both the teachers and their peers will become the language material that shows up in children’s individual learning performance and lead them to master the language.

Given that this alternative approach is quite different from the traditional teacher-centered methods that were widely used in classrooms, not every student was actively engaged in the teaching procedure when they first started learning English through the PWIM merged with Cooperative Learning. Those low achievers in class found it difficult to ‘shake out’ words from a picture because of their limited English proficiency. A couple of students described how they felt at the very beginning: “I found it very difficult to identify words from a picture because I don’t know many English words. I felt inferior to my teammates because I didn’t provide many ideas when working with them” (Student 7, Personal interview, March 29, 2010); “My English is poor, so I didn’t understand much at the beginning. I always needed my classmates to help me” (Student 4, Personal interview, March 29, 2010); and “I seldom provided my ideas because I really did not know what to say. So I usually kept silent and listened to the discussion of my teammates” (Student 19, Personal interview, March 29, 2010). Many children also indicate that generating sentences to describe a picture is still difficult for them (Students 1, 2, 4 & 12, Personal interview, March 29, 2010; Students 28, 32, & 49, Personal interview, April 8, 2010). In children’s past learning experience, teachers mostly focus on learners’ English oral proficiency by providing learning activities to practice the dialogues or sentence drills on the textbooks.
Although at times they are asked to work on written assignments, students mostly reduplicate the sentences or passages on the textbook, instead of composing sentences or paragraphs from what they have learned in class. Therefore, when children are asked to generate sentences to describe a picture in which they have identified words, they still encounter some difficulties putting their ideas into complete, grammatically-correct sentences. It also explains why most students entirely rely on assistance from their teachers and teammates when they are working on generating sentences to describe the theme/title selected by the whole class.

In addition, being in a competitive learning environment for years also makes it difficult for children to truly work with their peers when they are asked to work on a group task for the first time. A student revealed that she was not used to work with her peers because in the past discussing with and asking for help from her classmates was not allowed; therefore, she felt a bit confused and did not know how to cooperate with her teammates at first (Student 12, Personal interview, March 29, 2010). The teacher’s reflective journal also indicates the same problem. Mandy writes in her journal that many students were not really focused when working on a group task: “I spent half of the class explaining the essence of cooperation to them again; they then seemed to understand the purpose of working together and started to focus on the task” (Mandy, Reflective journal, September 10, 2009). Given that students were nonusers of this alternative teaching approach at the very beginning of this study and given that they were not familiar with the teaching procedures, it would definitely take them plenty of time to experiment and practice before they could adopt this new strategy to learn English (Hall & Hord, 2006). No doubt that the participating students, as first time users, felt uneasy and confused when this approach was first implemented in class: “I found it very difficult when my teacher first used this approach in class because I couldn’t understand what I needed to do” (Student 7, Personal interview, March 29, 2010); “At the beginning, I was annoyed because we had more homework to do…” (Student 26,
Personal interview, April 9, 2010). After this approach has been implemented in class for a couple of months, children have become mechanical users and even those low English achievers have started to experience the benefit of working with their peers: “… with the help from my teammates, I found learning English is interesting, and I could also learn more vocabulary and even write sentences in English” (Student 7, Personal interview, March 29, 2010); and “At first, I didn’t know how to work with my peers and was not getting used to this approach. But now I enjoy it and also love to discuss and interact with my classmates” (Student 12, Personal interview, March 29, 2010).

That said, a couple of children complain about the group work, when most students in this study enjoy working with their peers. A student describes her negative experience of working with her teammates:

I really don’t like to work with my teammates. Sometimes we have quarrels or arguments when we work on the group task. Besides, the boys in my group did not participate actively in the group discussion; they just fool around. Then the other girls and I have to finish the task by ourselves. That’s why I don’t like to do teamwork; I would rather do it on my own. (Student 31, Personal interview, April 8, 2010)

She revealed that she didn’t report this to teacher; instead she finished the task without the full participation of all group members. This student’s complaint is consistent with what the participating teachers have observed in their classes: children hitchhiked on the task in a group. Children are likely to hitchhike on group work when the whole group is asked to work on a single task (Slavin, 1995). I also noticed the same situation while doing classroom observation. Here is how I put it in my note,
… in group six, some children are complaining about one teammate who doesn’t contribute much to finish the group task. When it is his turn to speak, he always repeats what his fellows have already said, or just simply tells the group that he has nothing to add to the list. I am wondering whether or not this student has previewed the lesson at home. Perhaps deep down he just doesn’t like to participate in the group work.

(Fieldnotes, March 4, 2010)

As discussed in Chapter Two, positive interdependence and individual accountability are two essential elements for the success of cooperative learning (Bennett & Rolheiser, 2001; Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Slavin, 1995). Given that students in this study seldom had opportunities to work with their peers in the past, they might not know how to discuss with their teammates effectively. Although the teachers did teach and demonstrate how to finish the group task before students started to work with their peers, it definitely takes time for children to get used to engaging in group work. Although this alternative has been implemented in class for a semester before I conducted onsite classroom observations, obviously, students still need more time to be able to work as a group effectively. Unless children really understand the essence of Cooperative Learning and know how to work effectively with their peers, the off-task interaction and free-rider effect are hard to avoid.

Even though complaints about students’ working as a group exist, most students in this study still hold a positive attitude toward this new way of teaching. They consider this alternative approach fun and interesting. They enjoy shaking out words from a picture and eventually generate sentences and paragraphs to describe it. The students also recognize that they become more independent and autonomous in learning English. Most importantly, they realize that they
could benefit from their peers by working with their classmates and encouraging each other to learn.

**Research Question #6: What effect does merging these two approaches have on students’ motivation for learning English?**

The analysis of the interviews indicates that all students affirm that this alternative approach merging the PWIM and Cooperative Learning more or less has a positive effect on improving their motivation for learning English. As discussed previously, most students in this study commented that learning English had previously been boring and difficult because of the teaching strategies their teachers used in class. Below are two excerpts from students’ interviews.

I didn’t like learning English in the past because I didn’t understand anything in class. I couldn’t get help from anyone. But after the teacher implemented this method, I enjoy learning English now. Whenever I encountered something I didn’t understand, I could ask for help from my teammates and they would explain things to me. So I feel happier and have started to love English. (Student 3, Personal interview, March 29, 2010)

I found learning English was boring and difficult because I had to learn by rote. It’s difficult to memorize those phonetic rules and English vocabulary. But now I enjoy working with my friends to learn English. I love discussing with my teammates and they are able to help me whenever I need help. (Student 2, Personal interview, March 29, 2010)

Their words inform us that learning English was not an enjoyable experience for a few students who did not get enough support from teachers and peers to help them solve the problems they encountered, thus reducing their interest and motivation toward learning English. The excerpts
above also confirm what Krashen (as cited in Levine & McCloskey, 2009) proposed about second/foreign language learning: Children need to be exposed to an environment with low learning anxiety, high self-esteem, and high motivation, in order to successfully master the language.

In the past, the participating students were put in a stressful learning environment with little interaction with their peers (Student 5, Personal interview, March 29, 2010; Student 49, Personal interview, April 8, 2010); they had to memorize lessons by rote and had quizzes every week. They in fact enjoy interacting with their peers in class, but they are not allowed to do so in a traditional teacher-centered environment. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) emphasized the importance of being socialized.

Of the things that frighten us, the fear of being left out of the flow of human interaction is certainly one of the worst. There is no question that we are social animals; only in the company of other people do we feel complete…. The person ignored grows gradually depressed, and soon begins to doubt his or her very existence. (p. 165)

His statement explains the reason why children would find learning English boring and difficult and why they would eventually give up learning when they are put in a teacher-centered environment with no social interaction and no mutual support from their peers.

That said, when implementing this alternative approach which combines the PWIM with Cooperative Learning, teachers create a joyful and supportive environment for children to learn English. After this new way of teaching was implemented, all students in this study claimed that they enjoyed learning English through this approach and that their learning motivation was also positively promoted, although most of them could not fully elaborate their opinions because of their age and mental maturity. Their responses are consistent with what educators (Baloche, 1998;
Johnson & Johnson, 1997) have proposed: Cooperation generates a sense of belongingness and promotes positive motivation while competition undermines motivation for learning. According to the analysis of their responses during the personal interviews, the participating students point out four major characteristics of this approach that contribute to the positive promotion of their motivation toward learning English: (1) a less stressed learning environment; (2) a more fun and interesting learning atmosphere; (3) more positive interaction between students; and (4) more opportunities and resources to learn.

The participating students indicate that the learning environment is less stressful than it was. The classroom used to be very competitive and stressful because they were forced to memorize all the vocabulary and grammar rules in order to pass the quizzes and examinations (Student 17, Personal interview, March 29, 2010; Students 24, 29, & 49, Personal interview, April 8, 2010). The stress resulting from competition with others makes students consider English a boring subject that comes with endless oral drills and written practices. But, in the learning environment where this alternative approach is implemented, the students feel more relaxed because they do not need to sit still and listen quietly to teachers’ lectures as they used to do. They can talk with their peers and share different perspectives with each other, and they do not need to worry about competition because they know they would always have help and support from their teammates. The participating students comment about learning English through this approach: “I didn’t enjoy English classes because they are boring and stressful. But now I enjoy learning English because I love working with my friends” (Student 17, Personal interview, March 29, 2010). “When studying in a cram school, I always feel stressed because we have to learn English by rote and teachers would give us tests every week. But [teacher Sandra’s class] is relaxing and there is no pressure” (Student 35, Personal interview, April 8, 2010). Children can get more social support from their peers and teachers when the PWIM merges with Cooperative Learning.
Working together cooperatively, in fact, provides greater personal social support that “tends to promote achievement and productivity, physical health, psychological health, and successful coping with stress and adversity” (Johnson & Johnson, 1997, p. 109). These benefits result in students feeling less stressed when learning in a cooperative environment.

In addition, students comment that their motivation toward learning English is increased because they are put in an environment with a pleasant and interesting learning atmosphere. They used to be in a teacher-centered environment where they sat in rows and listened to teachers’ lectures. Children feel bored in this type of class because all they are asked to do is practice sentence drills and do the exercises (Student 1 and 3, Personal interview, March 29, 2010; Student 49, Personal interview, April 8, 2010). On the contrary, while examining and identifying the words from a picture with their teammates, children are experiencing an educational game that not only broadens their literacy allowing them to learn more about the world but also develops their observational and research skills, which are useful for their future studies, careers and life (Calhoun, 1999). Given that students have never worked with their peers to engage in shaking the words out from a picture, they found the activity interesting and exciting and it did attract children’s attention in class. That also explains why their motivation is positively promoted.

Moreover, more positive interaction among teammates in the same group creates a sense of connection and belongingness, which is absent in teacher-centered classrooms. The participating students mentioned that working and interacting with their friends in class increase the motivation for them to learn English. With help from their teammates, learning English seems to be easier because students could always get support and feedback from their peers (Students 5, 6, 17 & 20, Personal interview, March 29, 2010; Student 32, Personal interview, April 8, 2010). Furthermore, the positive interaction would result in positive peer relationships, which have an
important effect on students’ social and cognitive development (Johnson & Johnson, 1997). Baloche (1998) suggests that, “[w]hen children and adolescents experience the kinds of constructive peer relationships that are facilitated by well-designed cooperative learning environments, they tend to develop positive attitudes…. They are more positive about the subject matter” (p. 7). Therefore, in the learning environment where the PWIM meets Cooperative Learning, children feel included and develop more positive peer relationships that promote their motivation and also increase the focus on academic learning.

Finally, learning from both teachers and their peers provides more opportunities to explore the English language. Unlike the traditional classroom where teachers are the only source of knowledge, merging the PWIM and Cooperative Learning creates a learning environment where teachers and students work together to decide what they want to learn and children work with each other to finish their learning tasks. This alternative approach promotes students’ learning autonomy by allowing them to work with their peers and learn from each other. During the interviews, several students indicate that working with their peers makes them enjoy learning English and want to learn more (Student 16, 17 & 20, Personal interview, March 29, 2010; Student 32, Personal interview, April 8, 2010). In reflecting her own experience with this alternative approach, one student said, “I enjoy learning English through this new approach. When working with the teammates, we can shake out many different words, and I can also learn a great deal from other students. Now I enjoy learning English very much and I am also eager to explore more” (Student 41, Personal interview, April 8, 2010). The student’s words are consistent with the ultimate goal of the PWIM: to help students enjoy inquiring individually and cooperatively into language to discover how it works (Calhoun, 1999).

The discussion above shows that the participating students’ motivation toward learning English is highly promoted as a result of this new way of teaching. When the PWIM meets with
Cooperative Learning, the learning atmosphere is joyful and less stressful, positive peer interaction is promoted, and opportunities to explore the language are also increased.

**Observations in Taiwanese English Classrooms**

In order to discover how the remaining two teachers in this study applied this non-traditional approach which combines the PWIM and Cooperative Learning in their elementary English classes, from February 15 to April 30, 2010 I attended each weekly class in both schools to conduct onsite classroom observations. The time I stayed onsite in each class is listed in Appendix One. Given that this approach had already been tested in both classes for a couple of months, the teachers and their students are familiar with the teaching procedures. My classroom observations focused on how teachers use this approach to help their students acquire English literacy and how children work with their peers during the group activities. In this section, I reconstruct the scenarios that happened in the classrooms during my onsite observations and then discuss the four issues about implementing this alternative approach merging the PWIM and Cooperative Learning in elementary schools in Taiwan. The first scenario deals with the reward system to promote learners’ motivation. Promoting students’ learning interest and motivation has long been a difficult task for teachers and also remains an important factor for teachers to consider when they are selecting proper teaching strategies in class. Given that the main purpose of this research is to initiate a change in an educational setting and discover the participants’ reaction to and opinions about the innovation, whether or not this alternative approach will promote students’ learning motivation is definitely one of the key factors that determines teachers’ acceptance of the change. Although an on-going argument about the application of extrinsic rewards to promote positive learning exists, giving rewards/praise still remains a common strategy that teachers use to increase students’ self-confidence and learning motivation.
Therefore, in the first scenario, I recreate the scenario of the participating class and then discuss the issues of the application of extrinsic rewards in class where this alternative approach is adopted.

In the second scenario, I discuss the role of students’ mother tongue in foreign language learning. As mentioned in Chapter One, the Grammar-Translation approach is still widely used in English classes in Taiwan and students’ native language is inevitable in class because it is the language they use to communicate in daily life. Obviously, the role of students’ native language in class might be an important factor that teachers would consider when a new method of teaching is introduced. Hence, my onsite classroom observations also focused on how the participating teachers treat learners’ native language (Mandarin) in class where this alternative approach is adopted.

Third scenario involves the issue of grouping students in class. Because this new approach combines the PWIM and Cooperative Learning, group activities are adopted frequently when this new way of teaching is used. To ensure that students benefit greatly from working with their peers, forming small groups in class is essential because it is the key element to make sure that individual accountability, which contributes to the success of Cooperative Learning, exists during the process of group work. Hence, in this scenario, I unfold how small groups were formed in the participating classes and discuss the issues of grouping students in class. Finally, the fourth scenario concerns with skills of framing questions in class. The implementation of the PWIM with Cooperative Learning aims to create a safe and comfortable learning environment for students. The skills of framing questions need to be considered because teachers could easily put students into situations where those students would experience embarrassment and anxiety when questions are not properly framed. Therefore, the scenario is reconstructed to present how the
participating teachers framed questions in their classes. All these four issues above need to be considered when a new way of teaching is initiated and implemented in class.

**Classroom Scenario One: The Students Who Got an A+ Will Get Three Stickers!**

*Today is the first of the two weekly classes and I am sitting in the back observing Sandra’s fourth grade class again. Last week, Sandra had students generate a short paragraph from the sentences they came up with and today they are supposed to talk about the paragraphs created by each group. Because today students have their English in their homeroom, they sit in rows. The English teacher student assistant announces, “Stand up. Bow.” Students say, “Good afternoon, Teacher Sandra.” “Good afternoon, class,” Sandra responds. She continues, “Today we are going to discuss the paragraphs you did in the last class and we’ll choose the best one as a model. Before that, please get your homework back. Those who got an A+ will get three stickers and two for an A.” The students get their homework back and those who get an A+ are excited; on the contrary, those who don’t get any stickers seem to be a bit upset.*

*After students get the stickers they earned, Sandra posts the paragraphs done by students in the last class on the blackboard. She says, “I’ll read each paragraph and please listen carefully. Later, I’ll ask your opinions and we’ll choose the best one as a model.” After she reads through one paragraph, she asks, “Class, what do you think of this one?” One student replies, “The paragraph sounds weird. It has no ending.” Sandra says, “Very good. Any other comment?” Another student says, “It has too many similar sentences.” “Good job.” Ten minutes later, the class reaches a conclusion. Sandra says, “Excellent job, everyone. The paragraph done by Group Two will be the model for this unit. The sentences are well put together. The order of the first two sentences should be switched but the ending*
is well done.” Sandra then gives every student a copy of that paragraph, “Please attach this paragraph to your exercise book. Now let’s read it out loud.” She leads students to read through the paragraph loudly.

While I am observing the class, I can’t help but wonder about the reward system in Taiwanese classrooms. Do students work hard because they really enjoy learning or do they simply do it to get some extra reward (stickers in this case)? Do rewards really promote students’ learning interests and motivation? Is it ethical to praise the best group in front of the whole class? Does a teacher accidentally label students by rewarding them in public? I decide to talk to Sandra after the class to see what she thinks about my concerns. (Fieldnotes, Sandra’s class, March 23, 2010)

In the scenario, Sandra rewards students with stickers for their better performance. Having a short chat with Sandra after the class, I found that she believes extrinsic rewards should help increase children’s learning motivation. For years, the application of extrinsic rewards for contributing positively to students’ learning motivation and for promoting on-task behaviours in class has been a highly controversial issue. Several reward-focused systems, such as getting extra points on final scores, free stickers and stationery for better academic performance, have long been implemented in schools in Taiwan. Most teachers in Taiwan believe that rewards and punishment still serve as effective reinforcements in shaping students’ behaviours. From her observation, Sandra told me that rewards seem to work on her students, though she is not sure whether or not their motivation toward learning is positively promoted (Fieldnotes, March 23, 2010). While such techniques have been advocated for years in order to promote and increase children’s intrinsic motivation toward learning, many educators (Bloom, 2009; Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001; Reineke, Sonsteng, & Gartrell, 2008) propose that extrinsic rewards might in fact
undermine learners’ intrinsic motivation. Although a proper, individualized reward system does temporarily sustain learners’ on-task behaviours and academic productivity (Pfiffner, Rosen, & O’Leary, 1985), children often lose their motivation altogether. Rewards seem to be a means to make sure that students finish their tasks; they do not generally promote learners’ intrinsic motivation toward academic learning. Bloom (2009) points out that rewards become less effective when they are given in order to elicit better work. Once teachers stop giving the rewards, students’ performance will fall back to its original level. Meanwhile, pupils who fail to meet the standard necessary for a reward will risk losing their motivation altogether.

A similar conclusion is reached by Deci, Koestner, and Ryan (2001) who conducted a meta-analysis of the role of extrinsic rewards in improving learners’ intrinsic motivation. The results of their study indicate that tangible rewards (including material and symbolic rewards), which are frequently used as motivators to control people’s behaviours, will significantly undermine children’s intrinsic motivation. “… the age-effect analyses indicates that, although tangible rewards may control immediate behaviors, they have negative consequences for subsequent interest, persistence, and preference for challenge, especially for children” (p. 10). Extrinsic rewards are considered as a bribe to motivate children to finish a task; once the bribe is gone or students are not interested in it, they will not exhibit the behaviours that adults expect them to do. Bloom (2009) indicates that when students rely on a bribe for motivation to finish their learning task, they would expect a reward every time when their teachers assign them a new task.

Reineke, Sonsteng and Gartrell (2008) also reveal that “[i]n classrooms where teachers systematically reward and punish, children learn to behave for external and tangible rewards, such as stickers, stars, and smiley faces, rather than for intrinsic satisfaction” (p. 89), but what teachers need to do is create a welcome and caring learning environment for children to “act on
and sustain their natural desire to find out about the world and themselves in it (mastery motivation)” (p. 93). The obvious conclusion is that rewards as reinforcement for a desired behaviour will not increase children’s desire to learn, but rather diminish, in the long run, their natural motivation to learn.

Possessing different perspectives, a few researchers point out that the application of rewards does not generally have pervasive negative effects on students’ intrinsic motivation. The research done by Pfiffner, Rosen, and O’Leary (1985) concludes that a combination of verbal and tangible rewards results in children’s rates of on-task behaviours staying high and stable. Cameron, Bankdo, and Pierce (2001) also conducted a meta-analysis of the effects of rewards on students’ intrinsic motivation. They conclude that rewards generally do not decrease learner’s motivation to accomplish a task. In fact, they believe that rewards can be used to increase learners’ performance on low-interest academic activities, with verbal rewards, such as praise and positive feedback, increasing learners’ interest and performance, while tangible and expected rewards have somewhat negative effects on high-interest tasks. Obviously, the role of rewards in improving learners’ intrinsic motivation remains an unresolved issue. Cultivating children’s long-term and intrinsic motivation for continued learning is still a goal for teachers to achieve.

This scenario also reveals an ethical issue in class: should teachers give praise and comments on students’ performance publicly, based on their intelligence or efforts? In the scenario, Sandra praised the great achievement of students in Group Two and also used their paragraph as a model for the whole class. For years, most teachers and parents have believed that praise is a good way to improve children’s motivation and also boost their self-esteem. Teachers and parents are advised to be generous with praise and praise their students/children as much as possible. Although praise may enhance children’s intrinsic motivation and increase their desire to perform a task (Cameron & Pierce, 1994), recent research shows that praise for children’s
intelligence in fact would result in negative outcomes. Under certain conditions, praise might result in pressure and even pose a threat to recipients. Hitz and Driscoll (1989) summarize the study done by Mayer (1979) and indicate, “… praise led recipients to have low expectations of success at difficult tasks, which in turn decreased the persistence and performance intensity at the task” (para. 4). Praise for children’s intelligence and ability may cause them stress by suggesting there are high expectations for students to excel at their next task. Fear of failure might make student are less willing to take challenges and attempt difficult tasks in order to avoid negative evaluations. Similarly, synthesizing the findings of six studies, Mueller and Dweck (1998) also conclude that teachers’ praise for intelligence or ability ends up undermining children’s motivation and academic performance. Praising children’s intelligence when they perform will make them focus on receiving high scores in order to prove that they are smart. Mueller and Dweck further point out that “… educators who praise for ability may teach children that intelligence is a stable trait that is reflected in and can be easily read from performance” (p. 34). If children carry this lesson away, then they may believe that poor performance results from low intelligence. Once they fail or do not perform well, their self-confidence and self-esteem might be negatively affected.

Meanwhile, many teachers believe in the myth that praising children publicly has the benefit of inspiring other students to follow by example. That said, praising publicly in fact indicates teachers’ intention to control students’ behaviours by nudging the children in the group to conform. Hitz and Driscoll (1989) point out, “[e]ven young children who may not be able to articulate their frustration with such blatant manipulation may show their resentment by defiantly refusing to conform or by imitating the ‘misbehaving’ child” (para. 9). Recent research also indicates that not every child likes to be praised in public. Burnett (2001) conducted a study to investigate elementary school students’ preference for teacher praise. She concludes that most
elementary school students wanted to be praised privately for their efforts in accomplishing tasks; only 31% of the participants have a preference for public praise. In addition, praising students publicly and setting them up as ‘good examples’ might inadvertently lead to labeling them as ‘smart students’, distinguishing them from the rest of the children. Mueller and Dweck (1998) share that,

… when children are so labeled [as intelligent or skilled], some may become overly concerned with justifying that label and less concerned with meeting challenges that enhance their skills. They may also begin to react more poorly to setbacks because they worry that mistakes, confusions, or failures mean that they do not deserve to be labeled as gifted. (p. 50)

The literature illustrates that, if not properly addressed, praise might undermine children’s motivation and have a negative effect on their academic performance. An ethical teacher needs to create an atmosphere of respect and kindness in the classroom. Praise for intelligence, which is intended to boost students’ learning motivation, might end up having a negative impact on children when they are not well-prepared for setbacks. Teachers should think twice before they give praise to children for a job well-done.

Classroom Scenario Two: Class, What Does This Word Mean in Chinese?

*It is the second weekly class and children are put into six groups in the English classroom. Before the class stars, Sandra is taking attendance to check if everyone is present. Sandra says, “Let’s review the words you and your teammates identified in the last class. Repeat after me. B-O-W-T-I-E, bowtie.” “B-O-W-T-I-E, bowtie.” Sandra asks,*
“What does this word mean in Chinese?” “Ling-jie,” students reply in Chinese. “Very good. Mustache, M-U-S-T-A-C-H-E, mustache.” “M-U-S-T-A-C-H-E, mustache, Hu-tiz,” students repeat after Sandra and also give its Chinese translation. Sandra leads students to review the rest of the words through the same procedure. Students are asked to translate every word into Chinese. I can’t help but wonder to myself, ‘Why does Sandra ask children to translate each word? Is translation a good way to check students’ understanding? Doesn’t the line connecting the item in the picture with the English word provide the best ‘translation’ for children?’

Given that students have classified words into different categories as their homework, they are given three minutes to share their ideas with their teammates and then select the best criterion for putting the words into categories. “Now number 1 in each group please go to the next group and share your group’s idea with them,” Sandra says. The children who are chosen are excited yet also confused when they go to the other groups. After they share their ideas, they go back to their original teammates. “Does anyone want to share their group’s decision with the class?” “We put ‘doll, teddy bear, robot, and yo-yo’ in a group because all of them are toys,” one student replies. Another child says, “Bowtie, socks, and watch are the things that you can wear.” “Excellent, you all did a great job,” Sandra comments on their performance. The class ends with students sharing their group ideas with the class. I realize that Sandra uses more Chinese than English in her class. Is it better to create an English-speaking environment for children to learn English? What should be the role of children’s first language in the classroom? Do teachers have to rely on translation to make sure that students understand the lessons? I think it’s time for Sandra and me to have a little chat. (Fieldnotes, Sandra’s class, March 11, 2010)
The scenario addresses the issue of the role that children’s native language plays in foreign language learning. During the chat after class, Sandra told me that she used more English in class in her first year of teaching in elementary school. She was ambitious at that time and wished to create an English-speaking environment for children. But, she felt frustrated when she found out that her children did not understand the lessons in class. She was facing a dilemma of using only English to help children learn the language to parallel the way they acquire their first language, or using mostly Chinese to make sure that students fully understand the lessons. Finally Sandra chose the latter because translation is the way to check her students’ understanding and make sure they would perform well on standardized tests. A similar scenario also took place in Mandy’s class. Given that most children in her class are low achievers in English, she is afraid that they would lose their learning interest if they do not understand her lessons. Hence, she tends to translate English texts into students’ native language (Mandarin) and also use it to explain the grammar rules contained in the text. Obviously, translation is a common technique for both Sandra and Mandy to check students’ understanding.

For years, translation in foreign language teaching/learning has been a controversial issue. The application of translation in class is criticized because it does not provide opportunities for learners to practice their oral proficiency in the target language (Howatt, 1984). Newson (1998) also points out that, when translation is used in class, students refuse to think in the target language and language interference⁵ is likely to happen. While conducting onsite observations in both teachers’ classrooms, I did notice that children tend to translate their ideas directly from Mandarin into English; therefore, they would produce sentences, such as, “The giant is lie on the beach” and “Mulan and her mother are listen music” (Fieldnotes, March 16, 2010). Although a

⁵ Language interference is the effect of learners' first language on their production of the target language they are learning. The effect can be on any aspect of language: grammar, vocabulary, accent, and spelling, and it is most often discussed as a source of errors.
few educators are against the application of translation as a main teaching strategy in foreign language teaching, several researchers (Liao, 2002; Naiman et al., 1978; O’Malley et al., 1985) propose that translation is an inevitable process for foreign language learners to acquire the target language. Naiman et al. (1978) point out that translation is one of the strategies that ‘good language learners’ apply when they master a foreign language. They translate the target language into their mother tongue and then compare the differences between the two. Shiyab and Abdullateef (2001) also argue that, despite the controversy of using translation in teaching foreign language, translation can be a useful and essential means to help learners master the target language. They further explain that using translations consciously and systematically in fact helps learners to monitor their own code switching during the process of learning a foreign language.

Similarly, Chellappean’s (1991) study also suggests that translation can help second language learners be sensitive to differences in language systems (both their first language and the target one) and then assist them in acquiring and deploying the second language. Although acknowledging that translation is mostly connected to teacher-centered instructions, boring lessons, and emphasis on acquisition of accurate linguistic forms rather than learners’ oral proficiency, Cook (2007) proposes three reasons to support translation as useful in language teaching: “cognitively, as an aid to language acquisition; pedagogically, as a motivating factor; and functionally, as a needed skill” (p. 398). Therefore, children’s first language should not necessarily be banned from the classroom, and teachers should view translation from learners’ mother tongue to the target language as one of the strategies that assist students to acquire a foreign language.
Classroom Scenario Three: Form Yourselves into a Group of Six!

It’s 9:30 in the morning and it’s the second weekly period in Sandra’s fourth grade class. In the last class, Sandra told me that she usually puts students into different groups once every month, so that they could work with different children. She wanted to group her students again but this time she would let them decide whom they want to work with. I’m eager to know how it will go today. After students sit still, Sandra announces, “Today I will put you into groups again. But this time I want you to decide whom you want to work with. So form yourselves into a group of six and then come to me to tell me who your teammates are.” Students are very excited because they can choose their own teammates this time. I can tell that some students already know whom they want to work with. “Now go find your teammates and sit with them.” After Sandra finishes, students start to put themselves into groups of six. Some students find their teammates very quickly; however, I also notice that some boys just sit there because they don’t know whom to choose as their teammates.

“Who do they think they are? They are really obnoxious!” a boy complains when he is rejected by some boys because they don’t want him to be in their group. In fact, I’m not surprised to see some students left out. Sandra tries to help the rest of the students put themselves into groups. A boy complains to Sandra and says, “I don’t want to work with them. They do not know anything. Our group will definitely lose.” Sandra replies, “This is the chance to show your generosity by helping your teammates learn and I’m sure they will also do their best.” She tries to calm him down. After twenty minutes, finally all students are in groups and they start to generate words from a picture with their teammates. I can’t help but wonder if it is a good idea to let students form their own groups. Is it better for teachers to assign students into groups? What should a teacher do when students are
complaining about being grouped with certain classmates? (Fieldnotes, Sandra’s class, April 22, 2010)

The scenario above demonstrates why student structured groups are least recommended, especially when the students are not skilled in group work. Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (1994) comment that “[s]tudent-selected groups are often homogeneous … [and] also tend to have less on-task behavior” (p. 38-39). High-achieving students often work together while various minority students are forced to be in the same group because they are usually left out of other groups. The scenario also explains a difficult situation that teachers might encounter when they ask students to put themselves into groups: What should teachers do when certain students are left out of a group, and when children are complaining about their teammates? Mandy also encountered a similar event when she put her students into small groups: One girl complained about being assigned to a group with five boys. Teachers should be careful when dealing with this situation because they do not want to hurt their students’ feelings. In fact, forming small groups in the classroom for learning activities is definitely an ethical dilemma. Which students should be in the same group and which ones should be separated? How many students should be included in a group? Which criterion should be followed when forming small groups in class? Should groups be homogenous or heterogeneous? Teachers should consider these questions first before they apply a cooperative learning strategy in their classes, given that one obligation for any teacher is to create a learning environment that promotes students’ intellectual well-being. Students are likely to feel uncomfortable and annoyed when they work with someone they do not know well or are not fond of. In The Ethical Teacher, Campbell (2003) claims that,

[a]nother common pedagogical strategy, small group work, is morally laden, given that the process of determining group membership necessitates some kind of selection among
individual students. The ethical teacher must make academically and morally sound decisions about how groups are formed and how individuals within a group context should be evaluated. Issues of fairness and care need to be considered. (p. 27)

Therefore, it is imperative that teachers need to create a fair and caring learning environment in their classes. Campbell (2003) also points out,

[t]he ethical teacher’s will to create a respectful and kind climate in the classroom is, in itself, a moral intention, not only because of what it contributes to the overall ongoing moral education of students, but also because it implicitly has the effect of protecting students in the immediate context of classroom and school life. (p. 51)

For example, instead of being upset with the student who complained about being matched up with low achievers, Sandra encouraged that student to help his teammates. Mandy also told the girl that she could learn different things from working with boys. Forming small groups can be a good opportunity for teachers to demonstrate to students some essential values, such as inclusion, respect, and collaboration. For example, when someone is left out of a group, teachers could model the value of respect and ask students to imagine how they would feel if they were in the other child’s position. Teachers could also show care and respect by talking privately to the students who are not happy with the teammates they work with, and explaining how they can benefit from working with different people. This view is similar to Campbell’s (2003) argument that “[o]ften instantaneous, seemingly involuntary, the actions and reactions of teacher send subtle messages to students about how they are thought of as people, not simply learners” (p.28). In addition, participating actively in deciding which criterion should be applied when forming small groups also helps children learn to be responsible.
Even though no perfect criterion exists for grouping in class, one thing is clear: Teachers should be careful with random assignment to groups until the students have the requisite skills to function effectively when working with any students in the class. Among various grouping criteria, teacher-structured heterogeneous groups have proved to be more effective. Stahl (1994) points out, “students [in heterogeneous groups] tend to interact and learn in ways that rarely are found in other instructional strategies” (p. 13). Johnson and Johnson (1989) also indicate that “[h]eterogeneity among individuals leads to potential controversy, and to more diverse interaction patterns and resources for achievement and problem-solving” (p. 101). Furthermore, the size of groups also affects the success of group performance because individual accountability can be much easier to achieve when the group size is small. Therefore, it is wise to keep group size small. In the scenario, groups of six in the classroom were too big, which resulted in students’ social loafing during the process of group work. Many researchers (Baloche, 1998; Johnson & Johnson, 1997; Johnson, Johnson, Holubec, 1994; Slavin, 1995; Vermette, 1998) recommend that the ideal group size should be two to four because the large group size will endanger the functioning of the team. Johnson and Johnson (1997) explain that “[t]he larger the size of the group, the smaller the percentage of individuals contributing to its efforts and the more anonymous members feel, which often leads to less task involvement and sense of responsibility for the team’s success” (p. 520). Similarly, Baloche (1998) points out that “[i]nsuring that everyone has a chance to speak, stays on task, understands the material, and agrees with the group’s decisions becomes increasingly difficult as group size increases” (p. 212). Large groups are rarely successful, unless group members are well trained in interpersonal and cooperative social skills. Therefore, ethical teachers not only need to figure out what might be the proper grouping criterion to apply in their classes and make sure that students are not likely to get hurt
during the process of forming groups, but also need to keep the group size small to ensure every
member can contribute his or her efforts fairly to the success of the team work.

**Classroom Scenario Four: Any Volunteer?**

It’s 8:40 in the morning and I am in Mandy’s sixth grade class. As usual, I’m sitting
in the back and observing. Last week, students had shaken out words from the picture for
unit 2; therefore, today they will move on to generate sentences to describe the picture.

“Good morning, class!” Mandy greets her students. “Good morning, teacher Mandy!”
Mandy says, “Last week, you did a good job and came up with words from the picture.
Now I need a volunteer to lead the class to read through the words. Any volunteer?” The
whole class is silent; I could hear a pin drop. Why doesn’t anyone want to volunteer? Are
they too shy to do it? Perhaps they are just not ready yet. “No one wants to volunteer? Well,
number twenty-two?” Mandy says a number randomly. The girl who has been picked
comes to the front and reads the words one by one. The rest of the students repeat after her.

“Very good. Number sixteen?” Mandy says another number and another girl comes to the
front to lead the whole class to read through the words again. I notice that some children
still keep their mouths shut while others are repeating the words.

After reviewing the words with the class, Mandy asks, “What season is it now?”
Some students answer, “It’s spring.” “How do you feel in spring?” Students don’t know
how to respond. Recognizing that students have no response, Mandy asks again, “Well, do
you feel cool or hot?” Then some students answer, “Cool.” “How about summer? How do
you feel in summer?” “It’s hot!” Mandy introduces ‘warm’ and ‘cold’ to describe the
weather in fall and winter. Mandy then announces, “Now you have three minutes to discuss
with your teammates ideas for categorizing these words into groups.” Because she explains
the procedure in English, I can see that most students are confused and do not know what
to do. Mandy explains the activity again and asks one student, “Joyce, can you explain to
the class in Chinese?” The girl then explains the instructions in Chinese and the students
start to work in groups and put the words into different groups. Ding! Ding! Ding! The
school bell rings and it is time for the break. “Next hour, I’ll ask some students to share
their ideas with the class. So be prepared for it. Now take a break!” (Fieldnotes, Mandy’s
class, March 30, 2010)

While doing onsite classroom observations, I noticed that, like most teachers, both Sandra
and Mandy randomly picked students to answer the questions right after they were posed. After a
discussion with them about framing questions in class, both Sandra and Mandy admitted that they
had never thought about this issue. They ‘assumed’ that children should be ready to answer the
questions if they have paid attention. The two teachers also believed that children would
definitely feel stressed and would hope that they would not be picked to answer the questions
when they were not ready (Monthly meeting, March 30, 2010). In fact, the skills of framing
questions are essential in the learning environment where the PWIM and Cooperative Learning
are merged, given that this new way of teaching aims to provide students a safe and less stressful
learning environment. Requiring students to answer questions without giving them enough time
to think increases their anxiety toward learning. Bennett and Rolheiser (2001) share that “[w]hen
framing questions and randomly selecting students to respond, we [teachers] are in fact asking
them to possibly fail in front of their peers without their having a say in whether or not they wish
to respond” (p. 69). Ethical teachers need to create a safe and comfortable learning environment
for children, instead of possibly leaving them open to embarrassment in public. Wigle (1999) also
indicates that, given a limited time to process an answer, students would either answer with the
first thing that comes to mind without thinking about their response thoroughly, or choose not to respond at all. Also, teachers in fact lose a great opportunity to engage children in a higher-level of thinking.

To confront this issue, giving enough “wait time” is a way to allow children to be ready before they answer any questions. Wait time refers to not only the time that students need to think after a question has been posed and after they are asked to respond to the question, but also the time needed to encourage children to continue thinking after someone has answered the question (Bennett & Rolheiser, 2001). In order to successfully apply the approach that merges the PWIM with Cooperative Learning in class, teachers need to establish a comfortable and safe learning climate. Calhoun (1999) points out that, before students are able to be responsible for thinking independently and applying the knowledge they learn, they “need time to think, listen, and build on ideas and on things they’ve learned from previous lessons” (p. 72). Hence, teachers should provide enough thinking time for children to observe the picture before children are ready to answer questions and share their ideas with the class. Then teachers can help children become more confident in their natural learning ability. In addition, one aspect of applying Cooperative Learning strategies in class is to create a secure and unthreatening learning environment for students. Given enough ‘wait time’ to think and rephrase their answers before they respond to a question, children would feel safer and experience less anxiety in the classroom. In addition, assigning students into small groups to work with peers helps achieve the goal of creating a safe learning climate in class. Asking students to share their responses with their partners or the one sitting next to them before they share them with the entire class might make them feel more secure and comfortable.

Furthermore, in the scenario, there might have been several reasons why children did not respond to Mandy’s question: perhaps they did not understand the question; perhaps they really
did not know how to answer the question; perhaps they did not hear the question because they did not pay attention; or perhaps they were not ready to answer the question. Teachers need to think about how to respond to students’ responses. Bennett and Rolheiser (2001) point out, “[g]iven that feedback motivates students to continue learning, the teacher’s ability to respond appropriately to a student’s efforts will influence whether or not the student wishes to continue being involved in the process of learning” (p. 65). Hence, teachers’ responses will definitely influence their students’ motivation to learn. In the scenario above, instead of being dismayed at the students’ lack of response, Mandy recognized that children might not understand her question, so she rephrased the question and then got the response she wanted.

Teachers need to know how to frame questions properly because questioning is not simply a way to check students’ understanding; it should also “actively involve all students in the learning process; encourage all students to make an effort to prepare a response; allow adequate wait time for cognitive processing; and facilitate opportunities for students to engage in higher-level thinking” (Wigle, 1999, p. 63). After a question is posed, children should get enough wait time to think about the answer, to be able to share and rephrase their answers with their group members, and then to respond publicly when they feel comfortable and are well prepared.

**School and Parental Pressure**

As mentioned in Chapter One, most teachers in Taiwan tend to be conservative toward new ways of teaching and are resistant to changing their teacher-oriented instructional approaches with which they are comfortable (Shannon, 2006). Given that the teachers still cling to their own ways of teaching, it is definitely challenging to select a proper alternative teaching approach and persuade elementary English teachers, who usually adopt a more teacher-centered model devoid of social interaction, to implement it in their English classes. Although teachers might be open to
accepting new ideas or training to equip themselves with more effective teaching strategies, several factors, such as the effects of standardized testing, pressure from school authorities and different concerns from students’ parents, might in fact stop teachers from adopting new ways of teaching in their classes (Brody & Nagel, 2004; Sapon-Shevin, 2004). As mentioned in Chapter Three, three elementary school English teachers in Taiwan participated in this study. Unfortunately, one teacher who teaches in a private elementary school decided to withdraw from the study after three months because of the intense pressure from school authorities and the students’ parents. Therefore, this section focuses on the discussion of school and parental pressure, the factor that stopped the participating teacher from implementing this alternative approach and led to her decision to switch back to her previous teacher-centered approach. These scenarios are recreated based on the transcripts of the teacher’s personal interview.

**Scenario One: Parental Concerns about the Innovative Teaching Approach**

*It was the Tuesday morning and I [Ellen] was on my way to school. When I got to the teachers’ shared office, I saw a man standing by the door waiting for someone. Without a second thought, I went directly to my seat. Then one of my colleagues came to me and said, “Ellen, there is a student’s parent outside waiting for you. He wants to have a chat with you.” Wondering what the parent’s intention was, I put down my bag and went out to greet him. “I’m Ellen. My colleague told me that you’re looking for me. How may I help you?”*  

“Hi, I’m the father of a student in your class. I’m a bit concerned about the teaching strategies you applied in your class.” “I’m implementing a new way of teaching to see whether or not students’ motivation toward learning English would be promoted and whether or not there is positive effect on their English literacy proficiency,” I explained to the father. To my surprise, he then responded, “Those kids are fifth-graders now. I believe
that promoting their learning interests or motivation is not the most important thing. There is nothing you can do to motivate them to learn English if they still are not interested in English by the fifth grade. I think that you’re wasting your time doing activities to motivate their learning interests. What you need to do now is lecture in class and help students master English grammar rules, so that they can succeed on their tests. It’s also important for students to master English phonetic symbols, instead of applying Phonics in class. Only if children are familiar with every phonetic symbol, will they be able to check the dictionary when they don’t know the correct pronunciation of an English word.”

To not irritate the parent, I tried to calm him down and said, “I still think it’s important to help students enjoy learning English and promote their learning motivation, so I applied Cooperative Learning activities in class. When in groups, children have more chances to interact with and learn from their peers.” “I think you’re wasting students’ time putting them into groups and asking them to discuss with their classmates. I used to work as a teacher too and I believe that only irresponsible teachers who want to make easy money would put students into groups and ask them to discuss with each other. When I was teaching, I would never allow students to talk to each other. I always kept lecturing about what I know to the whole class, so that students could learn more.” I suddenly realized that this parent preferred the traditional teacher-centered teaching approach and he was resistant to new ideas and innovative teaching approaches. He continued, “I sent my child to a private elementary school because I don’t want him to participate in any tutoring lessons after school. If my son doesn’t do well on the tests, then my wife will certainly send him to cram schools to improve his academic performance.” I tried to calm him down and then replied, “I know what your concerns are. The teaching approach I applied in my class is an alternative teaching approach. I hope that my students will not just memorize what I
teach them. I intend to help them become more independent and develop their critical thinking abilities. By and by, they will be able to construct English sentences by themselves, instead of memorizing every sentence in the textbook. Most students in Taiwan aren’t able to write English well. Given that the kids in my class are put in the advanced level in the same grade, I really want to help them improve their English proficiency by using this new way of teaching.” I could tell that I hadn’t persuaded the parent because he was still skeptical that this alternative teaching method would really help students improve their English reading and writing abilities. “I still don’t think that you should put students in groups and ask them to discuss with their peers. You should control the class and your job is to instill your knowledge into your students.” The ringing bell told me that I had to go to my class. After thanking the parent and telling him that I would think about what he said, I got my book and walked toward to my class. But I kept thinking, “Should I keep on using the approach because I think it might work on my students, or should I go back to the traditional teacher-centered method in order to please the parent?” I still didn’t have any answers when I got to the class.

The scenario above shows the dilemma that Ellen encountered when she tried applying this alternative teaching approach in her fifth-grade class. Most parents, especially those who were schooled in the traditional system, expect that their children will do well on tests, given that the educational environment in Taiwan still remains a competitive one. Education in Taiwan is, in fact, greatly influenced by the ancient Chinese imperial examination, which was so competitive that students at that time had to start to prepare for the examinations at a very early age, work extremely hard and compete against each other. In his China’s Examination Hell, Miyazaki (1976) mentions,
[n]o generalization can be made about the intensity of competition among students during the district examination, since this varied from place to place. As a preliminary test, the district examination was intended to eliminate as many candidates as possible and to pass only the number that would be close to the final school quota. In very general terms, about four times the number of candidates wanted in the final quota were passed in the district examinations; half of these were retained in the prefectural examination; and again half of these were passed in the qualifying examination… Since, however, all candidates faced a series of difficult examinations in the future, it was an advantage for them to experience severe competition from the very start of their education. (p. 24-25)

Obviously students in ancient imperial China were in an extremely competitive learning environment. In order to survive in the imperial examination system, learners had to compete against their fellows and would not be willing to cooperate with each other because their success depended, in part, on the others’ failure. Although the Chinese imperial examination has been abolished for years, the legacy of this competitive educational system still remains and is deeply rooted in the value system of later generations. In fact, a similar examination procedure modeled on the older imperial examination was developed in Taiwan. Like learners in ancient China, students in Taiwan are still in a highly competition-oriented learning environment where they are looking for superiority at the expense of others. Although they don’t need to write imperial civil service examinations, students have to take both High School and Joint College Entrance Examinations in order to enter reputable academic institutions, for further study. The admission openings are fixed and limited, and proficiency on entrance examinations is basically norm-referenced, not criterion-referenced. Realizing the serious problem existing for years, the previous dean of Academic Sinica in Taiwan once criticized the educational system in Taiwan
because it emphasizes too much success on examinations, instead of encouraging students’
creative thinking and promoting their motivation (Chang, 2004). Unfortunately, in Taiwan most
parents, especially those who send their children to private schools, still believe in the myth that
entering a reputable academic school will bring their children a brighter future, even though the
current mayor in Taipei warns that the emphasis on passing examinations might decrease
students’ desire to learn (Yu, 2010).

In order to be well prepared for standardized examinations, many children in Taiwan are
sent to private elementary schools because of their parents’ high expectations. Even though the
tuition for entering a private elementary school is significantly higher than that of a public one,
most parents are still eager to have their children educated in a prestigious private school because
they believe that the learning environment is better, the faculty are professional and children are
able to develop their global awareness and English proficiency (Hsu, 2006). Nowadays, parents
are expected to be actively involved in school activities and contribute to children’s education as
parent volunteers. That said, parents in private schools expect more from school authorities and
the teachers, given that they spend more money for their children’s education. Addi-Raccah and
Arviv-Elyashiv (2008) point out that “[p]arents’ empowerment is further endorsed and
encouraged by the market ideology and consumer orientations that penetrate into schools. In this
regard, parents have influence on educational reforms although they are not formal partners in
policy-making processes” (p. 395). During the interview with Ellen, I found that, in a private
elementary school, parents exert pressure that dictates which teaching methods are used and
which teachers the school continues to employ because student tuition is the main income stream
for the institution. Ellen said in one of the interviews,

“[i]n this elementary school, parents’ opinions are very influential and strong in the areas of
the development and adoption of school policies. The school authorities would like to
please the parents so that their children will stay. That ‘the customers (parents) are always right’ is practiced. Teachers will be in big trouble if they are reported to the school authorities for irritating parents or using corporal punishment on students. Therefore, sometimes teachers have to change their teaching approaches in order to please the parents” (Ellen, Personal interview, February 26, 2010).

Most students in this private school are from wealthy families. These affluent parents have a certain measure of power over school policies and personnel because they have access to the resources and networks that enable them to get whatever they want, such as teachers’ employment. When being asked to comment on the issue of parental pressure in school, Ellen put it this way,

… the main stress is from the students’ parents. When they are not satisfied, parents will first go to the school authorities to complain, and then the school administrators will come to us [teachers] and require us to explain and solve the problems. Basically, if we’ve carried out our responsibilities, then the school authorities shouldn’t complain about anything. But, if any parent complains to the school authorities, then we teachers will suffer a lot of pressure. (Ellen, Personal interview, February 26, 2010)

In this teaching environment, teachers find it difficult to carry out their own teaching philosophy when a conflict exists between them and the parents. The pressure from parents turns out to be an important factor that seriously interferes in teachers’ decisions to adopt a new way of teaching in their classes and needs to be dealt with in order to ensure the successful implementation of innovations. Furthermore, the parent-teacher rivalry takes place when the two parties have
different perspectives toward children’s education. Synthesizing related research findings, Addi-Raccah & Arviv-Elyashiv (2008) explain,

[parents have a more enduring commitment to the child and greater affective involvement and are naturally more concerned for the well-being of their individual child. Teachers concentrate more on pedagogic knowledge and skills and are responsible for the children as a group. Because they are experts in education, teachers tend to think that they merit more power in school than parents. With their different concerns for the children, teachers and parents have often been described as enemies, rivaling over what is best for the children’s education. As the spheres of influence of family and school come to overlap more, the increase in parent empowerment may intensify parent-teacher rivalry. (p. 397)

As mentioned earlier, parents have more power than the school administrators in private schools. Unfortunately, in the rivalry between teachers and children’s parents, teachers tend to be the victims. In order to protect themselves and not to engage in unfriendly confrontations, teachers usually give in and try to please the parents by adjusting their teaching approaches.

Furthermore, in every school, standardized tests are usually implemented to evaluate students’ learning performance, the results of which are often taken as a measure of teachers’ efficacy as educators. Many parents consider that the teachers’ responsibility is to instill in students the knowledge and skills that can help them pass these tests. They might also wonder if children educated with innovative teaching strategies will be able to make it in a competitive world. In addition, for those schools with a good reputation for academic excellence, it is important that teachers do their best to help students successfully pass standardized testing and go on to higher learning. Therefore, the focus on standardized testing may discourage teachers from using cooperative learning as a classroom strategy. The need to cover every lesson in the
textbook and to help students become well prepared for the tests may make teachers abandon their beliefs. The research done by Brody and Nagel (2004) implies that “… emphasis on standardized testing as measures for benchmarks have been devastating to the progressive practices including the use of cooperative learning in the schools” (p. 41). Sapon-Shevin (2004) also explains,

[i]f teachers are judged on the ways in which their teaching strategies resemble testing strategies, they will not feel supported to engage in cooperative learning. When teachers feel under the gun, fearing for their jobs and their reputations, then their willingness to broaden their pedagogical repertoire is sharply diminished. When student achievement will be measured by multiple-choice questions on standardized tests and those tests are directly linked to rigid, lock-stepped curricula, the chances that teachers will develop exciting, participatory, cooperative learning projects and activities will be decreased as well. (p. 207)

These pressures will definitely make it more difficult for teachers to try out a new approach, such as the PWIM and Cooperative Learning, and to maintain its principles and the practice in the classroom when the purpose of education is considered to lie in students’ successful achievement on standardized examinations.

In addition to the pressure of parents’ expectations for their children’s academic performance, the scenario also underscores the stereotype about teachers in Taiwan. In Chinese culture⁶, teachers represent an image of both ‘authority’ and ‘source of knowledge.’” Children who come to school are supposed to acquire knowledge from their teachers. The parent in the

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⁶ Although governed by two different independent political systems and inhabiting two different areas, people in Mainland China and Taiwan are originally descended from the same ancestors and also share the same culture and values. Therefore, in this study, the Chinese culture in fact represents the cultural values and attitudes shared by people in both Mainland China and Taiwan.
scenario strongly disagrees with the idea that students would learn from each other by working with their classmates. Ellen explained that the parent was against Cooperative Learning activities because he insisted that children should learn from their teachers, not from their peers (Ellen, Personal interview, November 10, 2009). On the contrary, when the PWIM is merged with Cooperative Learning, learners are required to work with their peers, learn from each other, and help each other solve the problems they encounter during the learning processes; teachers are not the only ‘information giver.’ This idea is quite contrary to traditional learning in Chinese culture. Parents would wonder what their children could learn from their peers and would also be suspicious if they could get correct information from their classmates in this competitive learning environment. This situation might explain why Ellen had difficulties implementing this alternative teaching approach in her class and then decided to switch back to more teacher-centered strategies.

**Scenario Two: Conflicts Between School Policies and Teachers’ Teaching Philosophy**

*I [Ellen] have been told that some parents kept complaining about the foreign teacher who shares the half teaching load with me in the same class. I wondered what she has done to irritate the parents and to cause these complaints. Then the coordinator of the English program came to me, with something in her hand. “Why don’t you take a look at this letter?” she said to me. Having no idea what the letter contained, I asked, “What is it about?” “It’s from a parent of a child in your class, and she is complaining about the foreign teacher. Now the school authorities are also concerned about this problem.” I read the letter that showed the parent’s anger and annoyance. The parent complained that the foreign teacher had poor classroom management skills and she couldn’t control the class. The parent revealed in her letter that students should keep silent and listen to the teachers’
lecture in the class, instead of chatting with their classmates and making noise. I doubted that sitting in class silently implied students were really focused on learning. The coordinator then said, “it is not the first time that we received a complaint about the foreign teacher. Last time another parent also complained that the teacher did not help students become familiar with English grammar.” Hearing what the coordinator said, I couldn’t help but worry whether or not I would also receive complaints from parents if I kept applying this new teaching approach in my class. Should I go back to traditional teacher-oriented teaching methods to please parents and school authorities or should I be faithful to my own teaching philosophy?

The scenario above shows that the dilemmas which may arise out of implementing a new way of teaching also appear when teachers’ beliefs are in conflict with what school authorities expect from students: being disciplined and well-behaved. Campbell (2003) indicates, “In practice, however, issues of administration and leadership… and issues of teaching… may conflict and reveal significant challenges to the ethical dimensions of schooling” (p. 249). Teachers usually experience anxiety when tensions and dilemmas arise from the routine practice in school. In a traditional teacher-centered classroom, students are required to keep silent in class because, for administrators, learning occurs only when the room is quiet. Contrarily, in the learning environment where this new teaching approach is implemented, learners are encouraged to discuss and exchange information with their group members when shaking out the words from a picture and generating sentences and paragraphs. They learn and acquire knowledge by talking and sharing with their classmates. The situation is obviously inconsistent with school policies. As a matter of fact, one of the other teachers also mentioned a similar scenario that happened in her
first year of teaching in elementary school. When asked about school administrators’ perspectives on classroom management, Sandra, one of the three participating teachers, reveals that,

[t]he first time when I taught English in this elementary school, I wanted to promote students’ motivation by creating a fun learning environment. Therefore, I used games and activities in class. Then the class seemed to be noisy because children were having fun. The homeroom teacher came to close the door. I was surprised but she explained that while it’s great that children were having fun learning English, she was afraid that other teachers in adjacent classrooms would come to complain about the noise. Also, school administrators still believed a class should be quiet and orderly. From that moment on, I knew that I had to make an adjustment to my teaching strategies. (Sandra, Personal interview, April 27, 2010)

Obviously, the two teachers’ reflections illustrate the frustration that they encounter when their teaching practices go against school policies. In elementary schools, teaching strategies tend to be more traditional and teacher-centered; students usually sit still and keep silent to listen to their teachers’ lectures. The effectiveness of teaching approaches is judged by how well behaved students are in class. When a class is noisy and out of control, the teacher would be considered incapable of managing her classes (Sandra, Personal interview, April 28, 2010). Sandra’s words explain why parents would complain about the foreign teacher in Ellen’s class.

Given that it was Ellen’s first year teaching in this private elementary school, she suffered more stress and frustration. “I wish that I could focus on my teaching without worrying about the chores, responsibilities and restrictions that are imposed by the school authorities” (Ellen, Personal interview, February 26, 2010). Ellen was suffering from an ethical dilemma of either conforming to the school administrators’ policies to keep her students quiet and well-behaved in class, or following her own teaching philosophy to create a joyful yet somewhat noisy learning
environment. To avoid personal difficulty and not to get into trouble or irritate school authorities, Ellen withdrew from the study and switched back to the previous teacher-centered approaches. Her response is consistent with what Campbell (1996) has called ‘Suspending Morality’: “… a teacher may be seen to ‘go along’ with the collective ethic without necessarily believing it to be right” (p. 156). She continues by explaining that some people suspend their morality by justifying the ethical situation in terms of their own values to preserve their personal integrity, and “[o]thers may seek to retain such integrity by engaging in covert subversion in which they protect themselves from trouble while doing, as much as they believe possible, what they deem to be right” (p. 156). Admitting that her selection of teaching strategies in class was restricted by school policies, unfortunately she had an obligation to do whatever the administrators had assigned her to do. During my interview with her, I sensed her strong sense of obligation to make sure that her students would benefit from her teaching and also perform well on their examinations. She explains, “… I care more about my teaching and responsibilities. I always focus on my students’ learning performance, ... I have to make sure that I’ve carried out my responsibility and that students do learn something in my class” (Ellen, Personal interview, February 26, 2010). That said, with the continued pressure from the parents and without the back-up from the school administrators, Ellen could not continue to practice implementing this alternative teaching strategy in her class, instead switching back to her previous teacher-centered grammar-translation approach.

Hall and Hord (2006) indicate that change should be a team effort. Cooperation is the key to the successful implementation of change. Even though the three participating teachers worked as a group and had regular monthly meetings to discuss and help each other to deal with their problems and difficulties they encountered in their classes, Ellen did not get much support in her school. During my onsite observation in both Sandra’s and Mandy’s classes, I noticed that the
homeroom teachers in their classes also contributed much effort to help implement the new method of teaching. They collected students’ homework in advance, they managed the class, and they even helped students review the lessons they had learned in class. The administrator in Mandy’s school also agreed to reschedule two periods of classes back to back to make sure this new way of teaching would run smoothly. Unfortunately, unlike the other two participating teachers who had full support from the homeroom teachers in both classes and also from school authorities, Ellen seemed to be initiating a change all by herself. She claims that the homeroom teacher did not provide any assistance because of her own teaching load (Ellen, Personal interview, November 10, 2009). That situation also added to the obstacles which she encountered when she tried to apply this alternative approach. This result complies with what Hall and Hord (2006) have suggested when they write that the innovation could be successful long-term only with the support of the administration of the organization or, in this case, school,

… although the ‘bottom’ [the teachers or employees] may be able to launch and sustain an innovative effort for several years, if administrators do not engage in on-going active support it is more than likely that the change effort will die…. Administrators also have to secure the necessary infrastructure changes and long-term resource supports if use of an innovation is to continue indefinitely… policymakers need to design polices that legitimize the infrastructure changes and innovative practices and encourage the continued use of the innovation. (p. 11)

Although Ellen remains interested in implementing a new way of teaching that she believes to have a positive effect on her students, without strong support from school administrators from the very beginning, she could hardly launch the change in her class, not to mention sustain it to the end. Therefore, her withdrawal from this study is understandable.
Summary

This chapter presented an analysis of the collected data in response to the six research questions of this study. The research questions focused on investigating the participating teachers’ and students’ perspectives on this new way of teaching, the changes to teachers’ concerns about this alternative approach, the difficulties the teachers encountered when implementing the approach in class, and its impact on children’s learning motivation. Even though one participating teacher and her students had to withdraw from the study because of intense pressure from school authorities and students’ parents, the results of this study indicate that the remaining teachers and students highly recommended implementing this new way of teaching in English classes because it provides children with chances to interact and cooperate with their peers, helps them become more independent and autonomous learners, introduces them to inductive thinking and improves their English literacy proficiency. Although having doubts about this alternative teaching approach at the beginning of the study, the two teachers were impressed by the fact that the students’ English vocabulary was increased and they were able to generate sentences and compose a meaningful paragraph in English as a result of this non-traditional strategy. Furthermore, teachers saw its positive effect on improving low English achievers’ learning motivation, and students also agreed that their interest in and motivation toward learning English were highly promoted.

In addition, four scenarios were reconstructed in this chapter as a basis for a discussion of the four important issues about teaching English in elementary schools in Taiwan: the use of a reward system to promote children’s learning motivation, the role of learner’s native language in class, grouping students in class, and skills of framing questions. The last part of this chapter presented a discussion of the intense pressure from school authorities and parents that led one of the three participating teachers to withdraw from this study.
The next chapter presents the conclusions of this study. Suggestions for teachers who intend to implement a new way of teaching in their classrooms are provided. A discussion of the limitations of this study and recommendations for further research are also presented.
Chapter Five

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This qualitative research focused on the implementation of an alternative teaching approach, which combined the Picture Word Inductive Model with Cooperative Learning in three Taiwanese elementary classrooms. The rationale was to improve the elementary learners’ English literacy and increase their interest in acquiring a foreign language. The main foci of this study were on the training of teachers and their implementation of this new way of teaching in order to investigate the strengths and the weakness of the methodology identified by the participating teachers and students, the change of concerns when teachers switched from a teacher-centered approach to a more student-centered one, the difficulties they encountered and the solutions they came up with when using this non-traditional method in class, and its impact on their students’ learning motivation. This chapter starts with a discussion of the findings of this research and then provides suggestions for teachers who are or will be adopting a new way of teaching in their classes. Furthermore, the limitations of this qualitative research are also discussed and following that recommendations are made for researchers who are likely to conduct similar studies in the near future. Finally, I provide my self-reflections as a researcher.

Summary and Findings

This new method for developing literacy which merges Calhoun’s (1999) Picture Word Inductive Model with Cooperative Learning was implemented in Taiwanese elementary English classes for the first time. During the eleven months from June 2009 to April 2010, three Taiwanese elementary school English teachers received teaching training, worked as a team, and
practiced applying this alternative approach in their classes to try to help their students improve their English literacy proficiency and to promote their positive learning attitude toward studying English. Although one of the three teachers had to withdraw from this study in order not to upset school authorities and students’ parents who tend to be conservative about new teaching strategies, the two remaining teachers affirmed that this new approach had a positive effect on their students’ English literacy proficiency, especially for low achievers. According to their observations, teachers noticed a dramatic change in the behaviours of English low achievers in class. Those students became more focused and more willing to participate in learning activities while working with their classmates on a team task. Although no statistics were compiled to show the improvement to children’s English literacy proficiency, the teachers reported that their students’ English vocabulary had increased through this new approach. This new way of teaching provided students with more opportunities to express their ideas by generating sentences and paragraphs to describe pictures used in class. With the help of teachers and peers, the students were able to compose meaningful and well-structured sentences from the words they had identified and then extend the sentences into paragraphs, a result not easily achieved by using the teacher-centered approaches that both teachers had applied in their classes in the past.

In addition, the teachers’ concerns about implementing a new way of teaching shifted from the Personal stage to the Consequence stage after the innovation had been applied for a period time and teachers had become familiar with this alternative approach. Before the new approach was adopted in class, teachers were concerned more about their abilities to make the change happen in their classrooms. They also questioned the effectiveness of this approach, given that they still clung to the current teacher-centered teaching strategies. After they had tried out this new way of teaching in class for a certain period of time and had experienced its impact on their students, teachers no longer questioned their roles in the change and believed that they were able
to handle this new instructional strategy. Instead, they mainly focused on its effect on their students. Teachers cared more about how much their students could benefit from this new way of teaching and what else needed to be done in order to promote children’s learning outcomes as a result of the implementation of this alternative approach.

Furthermore, the participating teachers pointed out that this new teaching approach helped their students become more independent and autonomous learners, but at the same time, teachers did not lose their control; they still could supervise their students’ learning progress and provide assistance whenever needed. In the classroom where this new approach was applied, the teachers’ role switched from the only information giver to a language facilitator and encourager; they directed their students’ learning and also encouraged them to discover the language themselves. Instead of being passive in learning as a result of the traditional teacher-centered methods, through cooperation and interaction with their classmates, the students also had more control of what they wanted to learn and also became more responsible for their own learning.

Moreover, students also developed a positive learning attitude and their interest and motivation toward learning English were promoted as a result of this new way of teaching/learning. The classroom became more learner-centered after this new way of teaching had been implemented. Instead of sitting still and listening to teachers’ lectures as they did in the traditional teacher-centered classroom, the students enjoyed actively working with their peers to identify words from a picture and then to generate sentences and paragraphs to describe a selected theme. In this learning environment enhanced with respect and kindness, the students felt relaxed and comfortable while cooperating with classmates because the learning atmosphere was less stressful and more joyful.

The participating teachers found that this new approach had increased the opportunities for their students to interact with their classmates during the teaching/learning process. The students
also reported that in their previous traditional teacher-centered classrooms, the interaction mostly went from teacher to students. Contrarily, the interactions in the classroom once this new way of teaching was applied went not only from teachers to students but also from students to students. In order to cultivate cooperation among students, teachers regularly asked their students to work in small groups to identify the words, to classify words into different groups, to generate sentences and then to compose short paragraphs. Through cooperating and interacting with their peers, the students felt a sense of belonging; through sharing their own views, they learned different perspectives from each other and their cognitive intelligence was also developed.

Finally, although the three teachers were willing to implement a new way of teaching in their classes, the results of this study indicated that positive support from school authorities and parents was also key to making the change happen in an educational setting. Owing to the intense pressure from school authorities and students’ parents, one of the three teachers had to withdraw from the study and switched back to her previous teacher-centered approaches in order to please the parents and not to jeopardize her job. With the constant pressure of preparing her students for standardized tests but without positive support from school authorities and colleagues, that teacher chose to comply with what the administrators in her school suggested, although she believed that her students would benefit from this new approach. Fortunately, with support from school authorities and colleagues, the two remaining teachers could continue to implement this alternative approach and see its impact on their students. Clearly, support from school authorities and cooperation among colleagues contributes to the success of carrying out an innovation in an educational setting.

In spite of the difficulties they encountered when implementing this alternative approach in class, the two remaining teachers informed me that they wanted to continue to apply this new way of teaching in their next-year classes because they believed that their students did benefit
from participating in literacy activities designed using this approach. Their students had a more positive learning attitude and also realized the importance of cooperation with their peers. Most importantly, the students enjoyed learning English through this new approach because it had created a comfortable and less stressful learning environment. Their interest and motivation toward learning English had been positively promoted, factors which are essential for them to want to continue learning in the future.

**Implications of the Study**

The results of my research suggest that the students’ English vocabulary has increased and their learning motivation has been positively promoted as a result of merging the PWIM and Cooperative Learning. Most importantly, the students have more opportunities to interact with their peers and to learn the value of cooperation, which is essential to their future success in society. These findings of this study have theoretical and practical implications for teachers who are or will be carrying out a new approach in their classes.

*Shift to a New Way of Teaching:* The participating students revealed that the lessons were dull and boring in the traditional teacher-centered classroom where teachers lectured and children listened quietly. Nowadays students have different needs and find it difficult to sit still in class and absorb whatever teachers believe that children need to learn. Even young children have their own will and enjoy learning anything that really interests them. The students in my study enjoyed identifying words from a picture and then generating sentences and paragraphs to describe it. With guidance from the teachers and interaction with their peers, they were active in learning and deciding what they wanted to learn. Therefore, although more research needs to be done to verify the results of this study, teachers are encouraged to shift to this new, student-centered teaching
approach in their classes to see how it works for their students, instead of clinging to more teacher-centered strategies.

*Encourage Positive Interaction Among Learners:* Educators and researchers (Baloche, 1998; Galda, Cullinan, & Strickland, 1997; Johnson & Johnson, 1997; Yang & Liu, 2005) believe that positive interaction with peers helps learners develop their cognitive intelligence and also creates a safer and more relaxing learning environment for children to learn. The students in this study also claimed that they enjoyed discussions with their teammates as a way of sharing ideas with and learning more from exchanging different perspectives with each other, more than they did listening passively to teachers’ lectures. Cooperative Learning activities are effective strategies for implementing in class in order to increase the opportunity for learners to interact with their peers. For example, the activity, ‘think, pair, share’ (TPS) can be used after a question is posed. Students are given time to think about the answer to the question, and then are paired to discuss their answers so that they will be ready to share their thoughts with the class. Although TPS is a simple activity, students would have opportunities to get feedback from someone else and to confirm their ideas so that they would feel confident and be ready to answer the question publicly. Even though off-task chat might exist when students are working on a task as a group, once they truly understand that the purpose of working together is to help each other learn, they will contribute their individual efforts to the success of the group goal, and off-task interactions will appear less frequently. Students can also be evaluated individually to make sure that they focus on the tasks.

*Enhance Learners’ Individual Accountability:* As stated earlier, individual accountability is one of the five basic elements contributing to the success of Cooperative Learning. Without individual accountability, Cooperative Learning will turn into a situation where the less able students ignore their responsibilities and leave the task to be finished by their more capable
teammates. Several students in this study complained that they had to finish the group tasks by themselves due to their teammates’ lack of individual accountability. Therefore, teachers need to make sure that students realize the importance of personal contributions to the success of team achievement before they are put into small groups. Keeping the group size small is a way to ensure that individual accountability exists in group work. The smaller the group size is, the more easily students can interact with their peers, and the more likely individual contributions will occur. In addition, requiring individual students to present the group process or assigning students to explain what they have learned to each other verbally can ensure that students contribute their own efforts to the success of the group, and also provide them a way to restructure the information they learn and incorporate it to their existed cognitive knowledge (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1994; Slavin, 1995).

*Take Time to Make Change Happen:* Change is not just an event; it is a long-term process, which takes time to achieve (Hall & Hord, 2006). Teachers cannot possibly learn a new way of teaching and then implement it properly right away just after attending only one workshop. Moving from a non-user to at least a mechanical user takes time. “[C]hange is a process through which people and organizations move as they gradually come to understand and become skilled and competent in the use of new ways” (Hall & Hord, 2006, p. 4). This is why I did not want to examine tests results in this phase of the study. As stated earlier, Hord and Hall (2006) report that benefits in students learning are unlikely to occur until teachers and students are at least at the routine level of use. Given this is a study which represents a first attempt to shift teachers’ thinking and teaching, I did not want to risk the possibility of other Taiwanese educators arguing against this approach before it is more effectively implemented.

With assistance from each other, the teachers in this study had practiced implementing this alternative approach in class for a semester (four months) before they felt comfortable using it
regularly without checking the teaching procedures. Attending a workshop for proper training can be only the short-term goal. Onsite coaching and follow-up evaluation might accelerate the process. Hall and Hord (2006) also claim that a mistaken conclusion is made that the innovation does not work because no significant difference exists after the innovation has been implemented for a period time; it is simply because the innovation has not been applied for enough time and has not received proper support. Teachers need to understand that the implementation of change will not take place in a short period of time. Getting enough support from school administration and colleagues to work as a team is also essential for the change to occur and also accelerates the long-term process. Therefore, teachers are advised to give enough time to initiate the change and also get proper support to implement and maintain the change.

*Explain the Essence of Cooperation:* Social loafing is likely to occur in group work when individual accountability does not exist. Students would contribute their efforts to the success of the group only when they truly understand the essence of cooperation. Therefore, teachers should explain to their students the concepts of cooperation and the importance of individual accountability. Students need to be taught how to work with each other and what to do to help their teammates learn before they join in cooperative learning activities. Students might not be willing to work with their classmates because of their different learning styles. Learners with an extreme Field Independent tendency (FI) are a typical example. Research findings (Chen, 1992; Wilborn, 1981) suggest that field independent learners tend to be socially-detached and prefer to work individually. That said, once students realize the essence and the inevitability of cooperation, they will surely be open to this new learning strategy and fewer off-task interactions will occur and more positive interdependence with their group members will exist within the group.

*Practice What We Preach:* As stated earlier, building a learning atmosphere of trust, mutual respect and kindness for children is one of the teachers’ ethical responsibilities. And tangentially,
cooperative learning is considered an effective approach to achieve that goal. As a key part of a more cooperative approach, teachers should model Cooperative Learning for students to follow by working as a team with their colleagues; they should practice what they preach (Coke, 2005). Many teacher educators (Hamburger and Moore, 1997; Joseph, 2003; Strike, 1995) emphasize the importance of creating a forum for teachers to reflect on themselves regularly, to share their experiences with their colleagues, and to help them better understand their roles as moral agents. Joseph (2003) indicates, “For teachers, reflection – as a critical examination of their own moral orientation, practice and relationships with children – must take place habitually” (p. 17). Hence, faculty meetings should be held regularly. During these meetings, cooperative learning should be adopted, not only because “regular participation in cooperative problem-solving groups can enhance teachers’ ability to use cooperative learning in their classrooms with students”, but also because it will help teachers achieve another long-term goal: changing the school’s culture from a traditional competitive one to a cooperative one (Ellis, 1998, p. 254). Once the faculty reach a consensus on cooperation, collegial conflicts will be reduced. This idea is consistent with the findings of Sockett and LePage’s (2002) research that, through collaboration, teachers begin to value and develop relationships with their colleagues. Slavin and Madden (1994) also indicate that cooperative learning could serve as a vehicle to reform a school’s educational philosophy. Through cooperation, teachers and administrators can develop trust and caring relationships that would help school reform and create a harmonious environment and atmosphere. Having more teachers involved in this approach would make it easier for teachers with respect to parent concerns. This is explained more specifically in the next paragraph.

Search Positive Support from School Authorities and Parents: Hall and Hord (2006) suggest that the change in an organization or a school will take place only when everyone involved starts to embrace the change. To achieve a long-term change successfully,
administrators should be involved to maintain the change. Furthermore, with their active participation in school activities and affairs, parents recently have come to be regarded as informal partners in school decision-making (Addi-Raccah & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2008). In order to help accomplish educational reforms, parents should also be involved and provide their support. Therefore, when teachers intend to try out a new approach different from the methods that administrators and parents are familiar with, searching for support from both is a wise decision. Parent visitation days may be a good time to introduce a new teaching approach to school authorities and parents. Through discussion and active interaction with school authorities and parents, teachers can explain what the new approach is, how students can benefit from it, and how it is going to be implemented in class. Getting support from both school authorities and parents will help teachers carry out the innovation and avoid any unnecessary difficulties and pressure.

**Limitations of the Study**

A new way of teaching for elementary school English teachers in Taiwan to improve their students’ English literacy and their learning motivation was introduced in this qualitative research/study. As part of this research, a number of factors impact on the results of this study. First, the number of the participating teachers and students is limited. Given the difficulties of recruiting qualified teachers who were willing to participate in a research study to learn a new way of teaching, only three teachers were involved at the beginning of this study. Due to the withdrawal of one teacher and the students in her class, only two remaining teachers and their fifty-four students completed the entire study. Although the results of this study indicate that the teachers and their students possess a positive attitude toward the impact of this alternative approach on their academic performance and learning motivation, this finding does not allow a
generalization to other classrooms. As mentioned earlier, given that this research is a qualitative case study, I had to admit that I might likely involve my own teaching experiences and personal bias in interpreting the collected data. Borg and Gall (1983) share,

[t]he case study method…, ethnography…, and some methods of historical research involve a strong subjective element. In each method the personal framework of the researcher is a strong determinant of what he or she will discover about the phenomena under investigation. The case study researcher sacrifices generalizability – one of the hallmarks of positivistic science – for an in-depth understanding of a single instance of the phenomena under investigation. (p. 26-27)

Therefore, the results of this study might vary if more teachers and students in more schools had been involved.

Second, Calhoun’s Picture Word Inductive Model is proposed to be applied on a daily basis in order to help children develop their literacy proficiency. That said, in my research, this alternative approach could not be used daily due to the schedule of English classes in each school involved in this study. The students had only two forty-minute-periods of English every week. This is the reason why the participating teachers claimed that the shortage of time in class was a major difficulty for them in implementing this new way of teaching and in finishing every literacy activity designed for this approach. If the teachers in this study had been able to implement this alternative approach on a daily basis, they would have had more time to conduct each literacy activity in class and also to observe more about the changes in their students in terms of their literacy development, academic performance, and learning motivation. They might have developed different perspectives on the implementation of this alternative approach in improving learners’ English literacy proficiency.
Third, teachers need to practice using a new teaching strategy for a long period of time before they can move from a nonuser to a mechanical user (Hord & Hall, 2006). The teachers in this study had practiced implementing this alternative approach in their classes for about four months; however, with the busy school schedule and limited teaching hours, a variety of cooperative learning activities was not incorporated in class when the teachers were adopting the PWIM and students were engaged in small group discussion. Before they used this new way of teaching in class, they were taught a number of cooperative learning activities. Given that both the PWIM and Cooperative Learning were new strategies for them, the teachers might need more time to be able to incorporate both PWIM and Cooperative Learning successfully into their teaching. Hence, if the teachers in this study had had more time to practice before I came to their classes to conduct classroom observations, their perspectives about this new way of teaching might have been different and the change in their students might also have been more obvious.

Finally, the implementation of this alternative approach was also restricted by the setting of the classrooms. As discussed in Chapter Four, the students’ homeroom was arranged in a more traditional way; that is, the students sat in rows. Rearranging seats for group work was not feasible because the teachers who taught in the same classroom expected the seats to be in rows. In order to make it easier for them to engage in group activities, once every week one participating teacher’s students were allowed to have their English class in a shared special classroom where the seats could be rearranged for the purpose of teaching. But when students were having their English classes in their homeroom, group activities could not be implemented. The more opportunities students had to participate in group activities, the more often they could interact with their peers and the more likely they would understand the essence of cooperation, the essential factor for success in their learning performance. Therefore, the results of this study
might be different if the setting of students’ classrooms was more suited to cooperative learning activities.

Both the PWIM and Cooperative Learning have the potential to help children enjoy learning English and also improve their English literacy proficiency. The data of my research indicate that the teachers and students highly recommend implementing this new approach in Taiwanese elementary English classes because they have experienced its potential to improve children’s literacy abilities and have also perceived its impact on learners’ positive motivation. That said, in order to verify these findings of my study, further research is needed in the future.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

Given that future research is needed, these suggestions might form the basis for future inquiry.

*Methodological Issues:* Given that my doctoral study is a qualitative one, the results of my research are mostly based on the personal interviews of the participating teachers and students, as well as my fieldnotes from onsite classroom observations. Although the results of my study show that the teachers have noticed a change in students’ academic performance and their positive learning motivation, no statistics were gathered to support that a significant difference in learners’ literacy proficiency before and after the study existed, nor an effect size for this ‘new’ approach. Even though several studies (Calhoun, 1999; Swartzendruber, 2007; Wong, 2009) have been done to verify the effectiveness of the PWIM on improving learners’ literacy proficiency and although Cooperative Learning has been proven to be essential in promoting children’s positive learning motivation (Galda, Cullinan, & Strickland, 1997; Johnson & Johnson, 2003; Johnson, Johnson, & Stanne, 2000; Slavin, 1995), my study is the first to merge these two teaching/learning approaches to investigate their combined impact on children’s foreign language
learning. In order to generalize the results to a larger population, a well-designed quantitative study needs to be carried out. A number of factors need to be considered before a quantitative study is conducted. For example, teachers need to be well-trained and given enough time to practice using this approach in order to become routine or higher users before the research takes place in a real classroom setting. Besides, this approach would ideally be used on a daily basis in order to maximize improvements in learners’ literacy proficiency and development. McCabe and Rhoades (1990) emphasize the importance of the seat arrangement in the success of learners’ effective communication with their teammates while cooperative learning activities are being implemented in class. The traditional arrangement of desks in rows will increase obstacles when students share and discuss with their team members. Therefore, the classroom setting should enhance students’ interaction with their peers and facilitate group work on a team project.

Broadening Scale of the Study: The findings of my study indicate that this alternative approach might be recommended cautiously for introduction into a few more Taiwanese elementary English classes to help students develop their literacy ability and promote their learning motivation. Given that only two teachers in two different schools completed the entire study, future research could broaden the scale of the study by inviting more teachers in more schools to participate in order for researchers to investigate whether or not this expanded group of teachers would develop the same positive feelings about this new way of teaching. For example, the research might start with one school and with an invitation to all the teachers who teach the same subject at the same level in that school to be involved. Due to the need for cooperation among colleagues in achieving faculty development and creating an environment of mutual respect, teachers, working at the same school, could more easily find time to get together and work as a team to share their ideas and help each other deal with problems. Then, more teachers in more schools can be involved in follow-up research to find out whether or not the other
variables, such as the area where the school is located, the age of teachers/students, and children’s learning levels, will influence the implementation of a new way of teaching. Future researchers can also investigate the possibility of implementing this alternative teaching approach in teaching other non-language school subjects, such as social studies and health education. Although the PWIM is designed to help children develop their literacy ability, an interesting area for future investigation is to understand whether or not merging the PWIM and Cooperative Learning could better promote children’s learning attitude and performance in non-language subjects than teacher-centered lectures would.

Investigating the Impact on Learners’ Native Language: The claim made by Calhoun (1996) is that the PWIM could be implemented for children K-12 to help them develop the foundations of literacy proficiency. In my study, the PWIM was merged with Cooperative Learning and was used in grades 4 and 6 to help students improve their English reading and writing abilities and their learning motivation. As mentioned in Chapter One, students in Taiwan learn English as a foreign language. Even though the students could only experience learning English at school because English is not widely spoken in Taiwan, the participating teachers, from their observations, reported that this approach had a positive effect on increasing their students’ English vocabulary and promoting their motivation toward learning English. Given that the results of this study show that this new way of teaching has a positive impact on Taiwanese students’ foreign language learning (English in this case), the impact of this new approach on children’s native language (Mandarin) learning would be an interesting area to explore. The basic principle of this teaching approach lies in the assumption that children acquire their first language literacy proficiency long before they come to school. With the guidance of the teachers and interaction with their peers, children develop their literacy ability while identifying items from a picture and generating sentences and paragraphs to describe the picture. Although Mandarin is an
ideographic language, which is different from English, an alphabetic language, the inductive thinking strategy could still be used to guide students to categorize Chinese characters based on their radicals. Furthermore, discussing with their peers in their native language may arouse children’s deeper thinking, which is essential for their mastery of any language. Future efforts might be directed at understanding how this alternative approach can accelerate the learning process of Taiwanese students in acquiring their native language and how cooperating with their peers can help children value their own ideas and respect others’ different perspectives.

Examining the Roles of School Administrators and Parents in Implementation of Change:

The results of this study indicate that the support of school authorities and students’ parents is one of the key factors in the success of the implementation of a new teaching approach. In the absence of that support, teachers could hardly initiate a change in their classrooms successfully. That also explains why one of the three teachers in this study decided to withdraw and switch back to her previous teaching strategies. Also, recently, parents are expected to have influence over school decision-making and to actively participate in school activities. With the penetrations of market ideology and consumer orientations into schools, parents even have certain influence on educational reforms (Addi-Raccah & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2008). Therefore, future research could be designed to investigate the roles of school authorities and parents in teachers’ decisions about adopting a new way of teaching. What are the attitudes of school authorities and parents on teachers’ shift to a non-traditional instructional approach? How will these attitudes affect teachers’ decisions when they believe students will benefit from a new way of teaching? How will teachers deal with the difficulties caused by school administrators and parents during the process of initiating a change in an educational setting?
Self-reflection

As a naive researcher, I went through many stages in order to complete my doctoral study. Designing this study, recruiting the potential subjects, training the participating teachers, practicing implementing this alternative approach in class, conducting onsite classroom observations, doing personal interviews, analyzing collected data, and finishing the dissertation took me nearly one and a half years. During the process of conducting this research, I, as well as the participating teachers, learned more about this alternative approach. Although much research had been done to investigate the effectiveness of Calhoun’s Picture Word Inductive Model and Cooperative Learning on learners’ academic progress, I was not sure whether or not the participating teachers would accept this new way of teaching and whether or not this alternative approach would work on elementary school students in Taiwan to help them improve their English literacy proficiency. Therefore, I was a researcher and also a learner myself when conducting my study.

While helping the participating teachers become familiar with the teaching procedures of this approach, I had an opportunity to demonstrate the method by involving their students. I experienced the potentials of its impact on children and observed that they really enjoyed working with their peers to participate in literacy learning activities. During the period that I conducted onsite classroom observations, the participating teachers and I came to perceive concrete changes in the children: they enjoyed learning English more; they were able to generate sentences and paragraphs in English; and most importantly, they realized that they could learn from their peers through cooperation with them. Even though my study was not designed to prove that this new way of teaching was better than teacher-centered strategies or other teaching methods, I believe that this alternative approach could be introduced to other teachers in Taiwan to help their student enjoy learning languages or other academic subjects.
Although I had read extensive literature about the impact of the PWIM and Cooperative Learning on children’s language learning before conducting the research, my study was the first time I had the opportunity to ‘play’ with this new approach in actual classes. I had to admit that I should have been more cautious in every step involved in the study. For example, I should have reminded the participating teachers about keeping the size of cooperative learning groups small to ensure that individual accountability existed when students were working with their peers. But, with the experience of conducting this research, I have learned more about this new approach. These lessons and experiences would be helpful for me to design and conduct future follow-up research.

I tried to control all factors that might affect the results of this study; nevertheless, things did not always happen as I had expected. The withdrawal of one participating teacher from this study because of the intense pressure from school authorities is one of the examples. She could not get enough support from her school for her to continue trying this new way of teaching. Given that this research is to investigate the possibility of introducing a new alternative teaching approach in Taiwanese elementary schools, if I could do this research again, I would work with several teachers who work at the same school, instead of trying it out with three teachers in three different schools. Cooperation among teachers is essential for the success of the transfer/training process (Bennett, 1995); working alone makes it difficult for a teacher to initiate a change in an educational setting. In my research, the three teachers worked in three different schools. Although they did have regular monthly meetings to share and help each other deal with the problems they encountered in their individual classes, not being in the same school made it difficult for them to get continual support from each other. If they had worked in the same school, they would have had more opportunities to share their opinions more often and to provide each other with mutual assistance whenever they had problems.
Furthermore, during the period that the three participating teachers were practicing using this alternative approach in their classes, I met the teachers once every two months and also provided them with assistance through emails and online chatting. That said, the time difference between Taiwan and Canada meant that they could not get instant support from me. During my stay in their classrooms, I could give some suggestions or comments to solve their problems right after class. They claimed during the personal interviews that they benefited more from this instant support. Therefore, if I had to do this study again, in order to help them more easily become familiar with this new teaching method, I would visit their classes while they were practicing implementing this approach and provide necessary assistance on site, whenever needed.

In addition, the more often I might appear in the classroom, the less stressed children would feel and the more naturally they would behave. If students were less aware of my presence because they were used to my being in the classrooms, the more authentic the behaviour which I observed might be.

The withdrawal of the one participating teacher who works for a private school indicates that the culture in private schools tends to be more conservative because of the intense pressure from parents regarding standardized tests. Given that the teaching approach proposed in this study is completely new in Taiwan, teachers’ concerns and doubts about the effectiveness of this new approach in helping students pass their standardized tests are understandable, especially for those teachers in private schools where improving children’s academic performance is their major task. Therefore, if I had to do this research again, I would first work with teachers who work at public elementary schools where school culture tends to be more open to new teaching strategies. After I got more positive feedback and responses about the effectiveness of this alternative approach from teachers in public schools, I would then introduce this new way of teaching to those in private schools. With more positive research findings about the impact of this
approach on children’s learning performance, school authorities and parents from private schools might be more willing to embrace a change in teaching approaches.

The advice that I might give to other graduate students who might conduct their research and initiate a change in an educational setting is that they need to make sure that the participating teachers fully understand what the research is about and what benefits they and/or their students might experience as a result of the research. Participants will not be fully committed to any research unless they really understand how their lives will be changed as a result of their involvement in a study. While the research is ongoing, participants would surely encounter many difficulties and problems, especially when they are not familiar with the teaching approaches. They will be eager to have someone clarify problems and help them find solutions for situations about which they are puzzled. Therefore, instant assistance from and regular meetings with the researcher are important. In my research, I constantly contacted the participating teachers through emails and online chatting in order to make sure that they were able to solve the problems they encountered in their individual classes. In addition, school administrators should also be involved in order to provide further assistance, which is essential to the success of a study. In my study, without assistance from the school authorities in both elementary schools, I would not have been able to conduct my onsite classroom observations and personal interviews with the students. In one of the two schools in my study, an administrator even rescheduled timetables to put two separate periods of a class together on the same day in order to make sure that this new way of teaching ran smoothly. One final piece of advice: Be prepared for any unexpected problems and situations during the research. I did not expect that one participating teacher would have to withdraw from my study and switch back to her previous teaching strategies because of the pressure from her school. It turned out that I could not conduct observations in her class and obtain her students’ opinions on this teaching approach. At the suggestion of my thesis advisor, I
saw this as an opportunity to explore the intense pressure that this private elementary school teacher had experienced and was able to incorporate this analysis into my dissertation. ‘The crisis was a chance for a positive change’; I thought the teacher’s withdrawal would ruin my research, but it turned out that the withdrawal makes my study more interesting because it showed that not every teacher was ready for a change and a new, non-traditional teaching approach might not initially be accepted when it is first introduced. That is what I did not expect. What I also learned from doing my doctoral research is that whether or not the results of the study are consistent with what I might have expected, it is still my research; I put my efforts into and persevered with it, in spite of all the ups and downs.
References


Appendix 1 - The researcher’s timetables of onsite classroom observations

Sandra’s Class: two periods of English class per week (two days a week and forty minutes per period)

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<td>April 29</td>
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Mandy’s Class: two back-to-back periods of English class per week (one day a week and forty minutes per period)

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Appendix 2 - Questions for the Participating Students During Personal Interviews

1. How long have you been learning English?

2. According to your overall experience, do you enjoy learning English?

3. In your past learning experience, please describe what kind of problems/difficulties you encountered when learning English?

4. According to your experience, can you describe how your teacher(s) teach English?

5. Describe how you felt when you learned English through the Picture Word Inductive Model merged with Cooperative Learning for the first time?

6. How is this approach different from the strategies that your teacher(s) used in the past?

7. What do you think of working with your classmates while learning English?

8. What kind of problems/difficulties did you encounter when you learned English through this alternative approach?

9. Do you enjoy learning English through this alternative approach?

10. What impact do you think this approach has on improving your interest and motivation in learning English?

11. Do you wish that your teacher would continue to apply this approach in class?
**Appendix 3 - Questions for the Participating Teachers During Personal Interviews**

1. How long have you been teaching English in elementary schools?
2. In your opinions, what is important to help children learn English?
3. What kind of teaching strategies do you usually apply when teaching English in elementary schools?
4. Before you apply this alternative approach merging the Picture Word Inductive Model with Cooperative Learning in your class, what do you think of this strategy? Do you think it will work on your students?
5. How did you feel when you first applied the Picture Word Inductive Model with Cooperative Learning in your class?
6. How did your students react when they first learned English through this alternative approach?
7. What kind of problems/difficulties did you encounter when you used this alternative teaching approach in your class? How did you deal with the problems?
8. According to your observations, what effects does this alternative teaching approach make on students’ learning performance?
9. After applying this approach for several months, what do you think of this teaching strategy now?
10. Do you think this alternative approach works on your students?
11. What impact did you see this approach has on improving your students’ interest and motivation in learning English?
12. Would you keep implementing this teaching approach with your future students?
Appendix 4 - Pictures Used in Classes in this Research
Do you like art?
I can teach you.
What subject do you like?
I like PE.
But PE is for boys.
I don't. Mulan, do you like music?
No, I don't. They are hard work.
What subject is for girls?
Chinese.
Do you like music?
No, thanks.
Mulan likes PE.
My Favorite Season

Is Winter

Brrr... It's cold.

I don't like winter.

Then what's your favorite season, Han?

My favorite season is spring.

Of course, it's winter now.

I like it.
Appendix 5 - Students’ work

Date: 40434 Annie Good!

顏色 開頭是母音 開頭是母音

green eyes floor gang

pink orange finger body

purple adj far tall

blue purple pink short finger

orange green blue red red

yellow orange tall yellow

gray fat yellow balloons

red thin gray boy purple
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40411 Steven

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Date: 10/6

40423 Jasmine

body

body

adjectives

noun

color

pink

cheek

thin

grass

grey

finger

tall

phone

red

eyes

fat

tree

yellow

chin

short

star

purple

knee

pants

orange

eyebrow

boy

green

hair

wall

blue

ears

gong

Good!
Mulan and her mother are in the market. A man is playing the zither. Mulan and her mother are listening to the music. But Mulan doesn't like playing the zither. A lady is doing some needlework. But Mulan doesn't like art. So her mother needs to know what subject she likes. Mulan is doing martial arts. Her mother is very surprised because she only likes PE.
Mulan likes PE. She doesn't like play zither. She likes martial arts. The boss sales vegetable.

There is somebody in the needlework. The Somebody carries something. Mulan and her mother discuss something.

Mulan and her mother listen music. Mulan doesn't like needlework.
Mulan doesn’t like music or art.

So her mother needs to know what subject she likes.

After her mother’s question.

But Mulan liked what she supposed to like. Her mother is very surprised, because she only likes PE.
1. The baby is doing some needlework.
2. The man plays a sitar.
3. The orange on the man's hand.
4. The vegetables on the table.
5. Mulan doesn't like to eat.
6. The mango looks very good to eat.
7. Mulan is doing the martial arts.
8. The old man carries a bucket of water.
9. There are four horses.
10. Mulan takes a cabbage; she carries a basket of vegetables.
11. The End.
12. Весна пришла.