Going against the grain: an autoethnography of a one-teacher private English language teaching institution in Taiwan

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British Council's Master's Dissertation Awards 2023
Commendation

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Dissertation submitted to University of Nottingham in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

March 2022

Word count: 16,490

Acknowledgements

A dissertation is the culmination of months of lonely study, research and writing; however, it is not a solo endeavour. There are people that I need to thank – everyone on the University of Nottingham's TESOL team, especially my dissertation supervisor Dr Xin Gao without whom this dissertation would not have been possible and Dr Jane Evison for having the faith in me to support my application for this Master's degree. I must also thank my family – my wife, Wendy, who shared with me much of my teaching journey as did my sons, Ashley and Blake, who 'attended' my *buxiban* from the day they were born and for whom it was their childhood playground.

Abstract

Through the use of autoethnography this dissertation researches how my own teaching experiences in private language teaching organizations in Taiwan (*buxibans*) shaped my own understanding of teaching in and the managing of such organizations – a career that later culminated in the establishing of my own *buxiban*. A series of teaching anecdotes are analyzed through grounded theory and thematic coding in order to explore this commercial education industry in Taiwan – an industry that is dominated by franchises. It looks at how different teaching organizations navigate the often-contradictory goals of education, commercial success and parents, and at relationships between stakeholders. Findings indicate that despite many differences in the operation of my *buxiban* and franchises, there are more similarities than I previously believed, and that 'trust', or the lack of it, is at the heart of relationships between stakeholders, but that large disparities exist in how that trust is established.

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List of abbreviations

ELT   English language teaching

LTO   Language teaching organization

NEST   Native English-speaking teacher

NNEST   Non-native English-speaking teacher

CLT   Communicative language teaching

GEPT   (Taiwan's) General English Proficiency Test

PET   (Cambridge) Preliminary English Test

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background and goals of this dissertation

Twenty-five years ago, I arrived in Taiwan to teach English. I had neither qualifications for nor experience of doing so. I am now writing this dissertation at the end of my teaching career looking back on it in hindsight – a twenty-five-year journey of teaching in the raw that encompassed the path from 'backpacker teacher' through 'competency' to 'manager' and ending in 'school owner'. It is this journey that this dissertation will explore through autoethnography.

Teaching was my life's work; however, during the process there was no time or opportunity to step back and assess how I arrived at where I was and why I made the teaching, management and ownership decisions that I did. This dissertation is the opportunity to correct this.

The goal of this dissertation is to research my teaching experiences, that is to explore how they shaped my understanding of English language teaching (ELT) in private language teaching organizations (LTOs) in Taiwan – shadow education institutions locally known as *buxibans (*補習班) – and an industry that is dominated by franchises within the English language teaching market (Chang F.R., 2019). 'Going against the grain' in this dissertation's title reflects that my *buxiban* was not the norm and often did not operate in the way that was expected of such *buxibans*.

1.2 Significant contextual information

1.2.1 English language education in Taiwan

It is common for English language instruction in Taiwan to commence during pre-school kindergarten. Following kindergarten, and from the age of six, Taiwan has twelve years of national education – six years of elementary school (1st – 6th grade), three years of junior high school (7th – 9th grade) and three years of senior high school (10th – 12th grade) (Primary and Junior High School Act, 2016; Senior High School Act, 2016). English has been included in the junior and senior high school curriculums since the establishment of compulsory education in

1968 (Lin and Byram, 2016). It was introduced into the elementary school curriculum between 2001 and 2005 – initially from 5th grade and later extended to 3rd grade (ibid.).

The junior high school English syllabus is largely input-based, sequenced grammar and exam orientated while the elementary school syllabus is more communicative. These differences in pedagogy have led to unhelpful tension during transition (ibid.). Recently the Ministry of Education has attempted to reduce this tension and the focus on grammatical structures and accuracy in the junior/senior-high-school syllabi, and improve students' listening and speaking skills (Chang F.R., 2019). There has also been an attempt to loosen college entrance criteria by not only evaluating students by high stakes summative examinations (Jheng, 2015); however, English remains the only foreign language that is included in formal education and is still used in a gatekeeping role for higher education (Chang C.H., 2019).

1.2.2 Explaining *Buxibans* focused on English language teaching in Taiwan

In addition to formal education, the majority of Taiwanese students will experience attending *buxibans* while growing up (Liu, 2012) – a large part of which is focused on English language instruction. It is not easy to obtain accurate data on these types of teaching institutions due to their varied, and sometimes unofficial, nature (Bray, 2010). Jheng (2017 cited in Chang F.R., 2019) reports the number of *buxibans* in Taiwan primarily focusing on English teaching as increasing from 3,478 in 2008 to 4,549 in 2017. Chi (2017, cited in Chang F.R, 2019) puts the Taiwanese *buxiban* market for English language instruction at around two billion US dollars annually. In line with mainstream education, *buxibans* for elementary-school-aged students primarily focus on communicative English skills while *buxibans* for junior-high-school-aged students largely focus on exam preparation.

Of *buxibans* that primarily focus on English instruction, Chang F.R. (2019) reports that around 70% are franchises. However, it is my observation that this proportion is much higher when considering *buxibans* focused on elementary-school-aged students and much lower for higher age-groups. When one thinks of franchises, it is likely that fast-food restaurants such as McDonald's or KFC come mind. These franchises may appear ubiquitous; however, in reality they only account for around 7% of the eating-out market in the UK (Statista, 2021). In

comparison, the scale of franchise *buxibans* at at least 70% of the market gives a sense of their market penetration, ubiquity and the challenges of competing with them.

The response of governments to shadow education varies from country to country and over time. Four patterns of government response is suggested by Bray (2006): ignore, prohibit, regulate and encourage. Government policy in Taiwan on *buxibans* has moved from ignoring to its current policy of regulation (Zhan 2013 cited in Zhan 2014).

1.3 Research questions

This dissertation will explore how my experiences of working at both franchise and independent *buxibans* led to the decisions I made regarding the operation of my own *buxiban* in the second half of my career.

It will examine two research questions:

1. What were the teaching/managing experiences that led to the strategies and practices of my English-language-teaching *buxiban* in Taiwan?
2. What is the nature of relationships between stakeholders (owners, parents and teachers) within English language *buxibans* in Taiwan?

1.4 Dissertation structure

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 critically evaluates the relevant literature relating to the themes that emerged from the research. Chapter 3 describes the research process that was undertaken. Chapter 4 describes the process of data analysis that identified the important themes that became the core of this dissertation. Chapter 5 presents the findings from the research and discusses them in relation to relevant literature, my *buxiban* and the wider English language teaching industry in Taiwan. Chapter 6 attempts to link the findings and discussion to the research questions in order to reach some conclusions. It also looks back at the research process itself and what I have learnt from the experience. Finally, there are four appendixes of research data.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter will present relevant literature on the organization and operations of private LTOs. It looks at the literature on the subjects of teacher beliefs; the role of parents in education; Native English-Speaking Teachers (NESTs) and Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs); organization of the classroom and its learners; and English language teaching methodology and assessment. Finally, it will briefly consider connections between these topics.

2.1 Teacher beliefs

Beliefs have a strong influence on how teachers approach their teaching (Borg, 1998), either positively or negatively (Barcelos and Kalaja, 2011), and they are likely deeply engrained (Pajares, 1992). Beliefs were once seen "as being based on strong factual support and open to change through rational explanation or persuasion" (Dörnyei and Ryan, 2015, p.186); however, this is now viewed as far too simplistic. Since the turn of the century beliefs are thought to be far more complex, dynamic systems that are context dependent and sometimes contradictory (Barcelos and Kalaja, 2011).

Beliefs are social in nature and need to be understood in relation to context (Mercer, 2011). How beliefs interact with context is a common theme in the literature They are the products of the particular culture, the context (Horwitz, 1999) and significant others (Navarro and Thornton, 2011). Barcelos and Kalaja (2011) note that which belief manifests itself and when can be context dependent.

Referring to beliefs as 'teacher cognition', Borg (2003) argues that what teachers do emerges from what they 'think, know and believe' which are the results of their own personal learning experiences, teacher training, personal teaching experiences and the context (Figure 2.1). Classroom practices exist in a symbiotic relationship with teacher cognition (Foss and Kleinsasser, 1996), and although professional training does affect this cognition, prior beliefs established from personal learning experience continue to influence cognition throughout a teaching career while context determines the extent to which teachers are able to implement instruction according to this cognition (Borg, 2003).

Extensive experience of
classrooms which defines early
cognitions and shapes teachers'
perceptions of initial training.

May affect existing cognitions
although especially when
unacknowledged, these may limit
its impact.

Schooling → **Professional Coursework**

Beliefs, knowledge,
theories, attitudes,
images, assumptions,
metaphors,
conceptions,
perspectives.

**TEACHER
COGNITION**

About teaching,
teachers, learning,
students, subject
matter, curricula,
materials, instructional
activities, self.

Contextual Factors → **Classroom Practice**
including practice teaching

Influence practice either by
modifying cognitions or else
directly, in which case
incongruence between cognition
and practice may result.

Defined by the interaction of
cognitions and contextual factors. In
turn, classroom experience influences
cognitions unconsciously and/or
through conscious reflection.
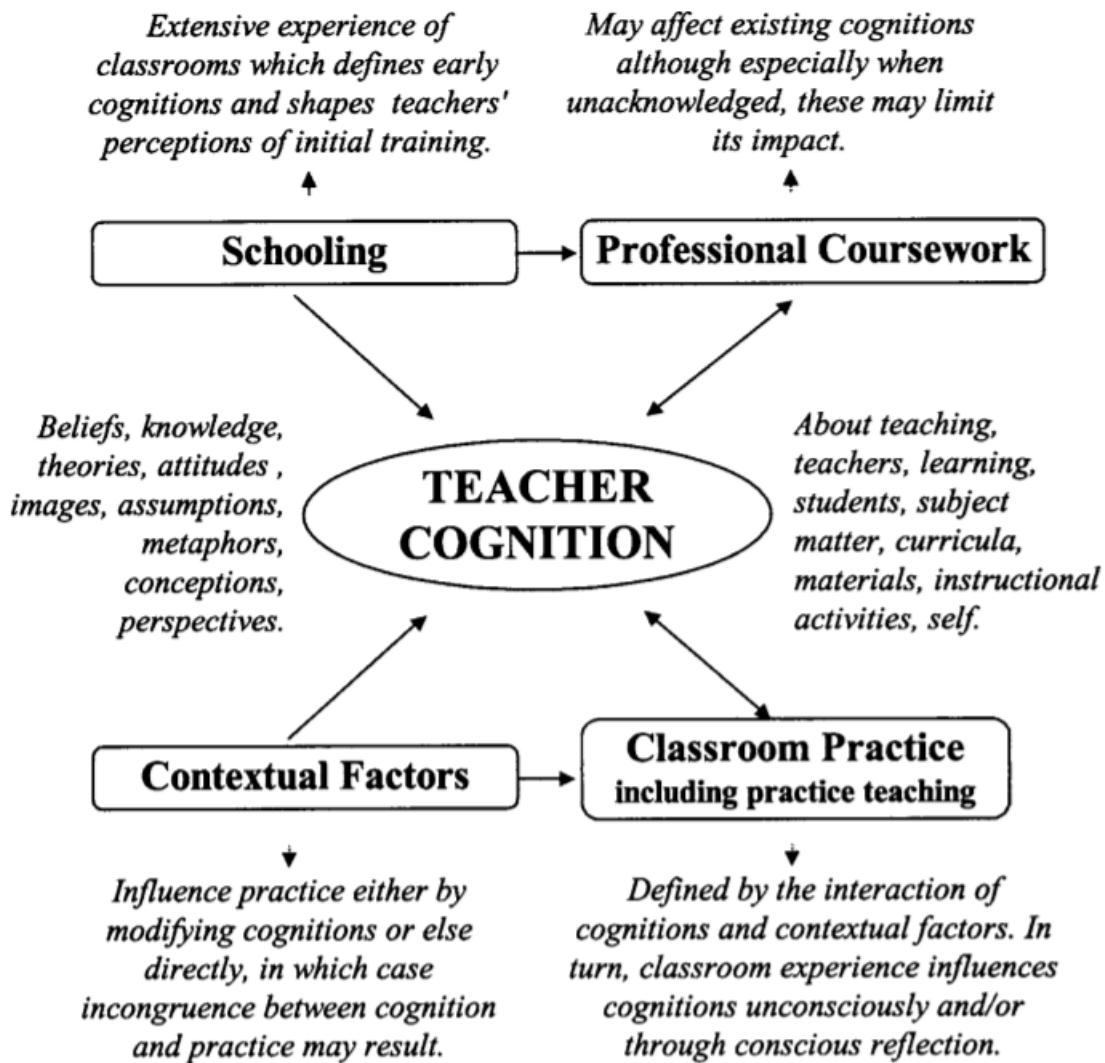
Figure 2.1: Teacher cognition   (Borg, 1997 cited in Borg 2003, p.82)

It is Borg's concepts of the influences of teacher cognition – that what teachers believe and what
they do in the classroom is the result of their own personal learning experiences and training,
interacting with the context in which they operate – that underpin the ideas expressed in this
dissertation.

2.2 Management in private LTOs

Private LTOs are educational services within a commercial context and as such face unique issues as their students are also their clients (Walker, 2010). This commercial relationship makes the exact role, or combination of roles, of students hard to define. "Are they [students] raw materials in the process of being converted into finished products; are they co-participants with teachers in a process of discovery and growth; are they consumers of a service provided by the school; or are they something else?" (White, Martin, Stimson and Hodge, 1991, p.8).

It is the goals and values of the LTO that define the LTO-student relationship; however, goals for private LTOs are not as easy to define as for other commercial organizations and these goals are often "vague, value loaded and open to debate…cannot be quantified and…their importance lies in long-term rather than short-term effects" (ibid, p.166). Goals should be focused on such things as raising standards and positive outcomes for learners, not prioritizing the number of students and profits (White, Hockley, Jansen and Laughner, 2008). It is also important that everyone within the organization is aware of and shares the goals of the LTO and that this alignment in values and goals extends to an LTO's clientele – its parents and students (ibid.).

Success for private LTOs requires clarity about what it is doing and why it exists. This necessitates not only a clear set of goals, but also a strategy of how it is going to reach them, as well as committed, motivated and loyal staff who understand the strategy and share the goals (ibid.). Private LTOs also require understanding of the importance that marketing has on achieving goals. When considering marketing and how potential clients view the LTO, the key question should be "[W]hy should customers buy our service rather than those of the competition?" (White et al., 1991, p.197).

Management of a typical private LTO is likely to follow a top-down, hierarchical structure with the owner at the top and passing through a couple layers of academic/teacher managers before reaching the teachers. There is also likely to be a second, disconnected administrative branch. This type of organization is illustrated in the organigram (Figure 2.2). The limitation of this type of organization is that there is no direct line of communication between the two principal customer-facing departments: teachers and receptionists (White et al., 2008). An alternative inverted organigram (Figure 2.3) that better underlines the importance of these customer-facing

employees rather than the importance of managers, whose role it should be to support, not simply oversee teachers, is suggested by Garratt (2000).
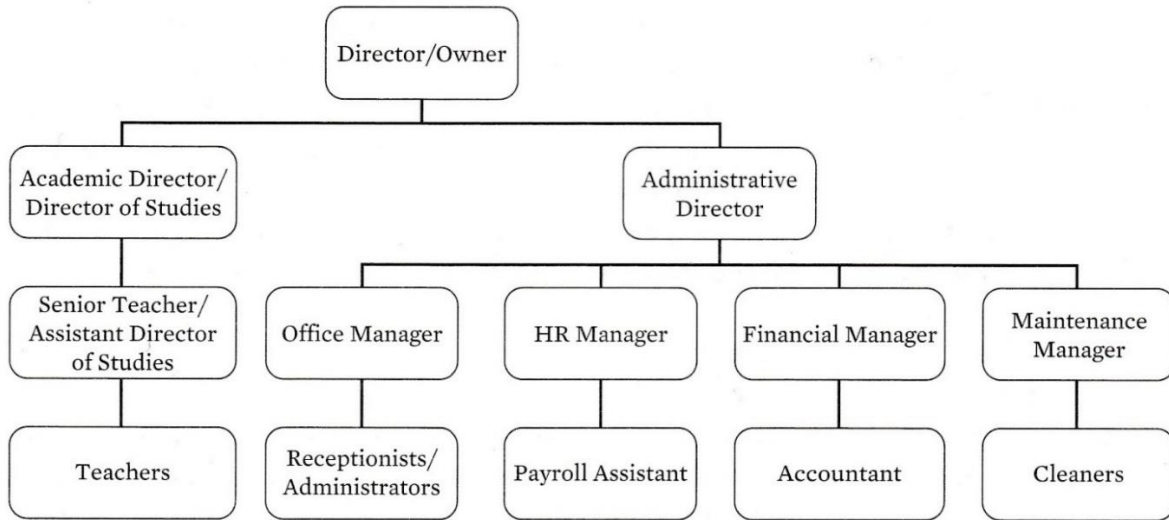
Figure 2.2: Typical LTO organigram   (White et al., 2008, p.26)
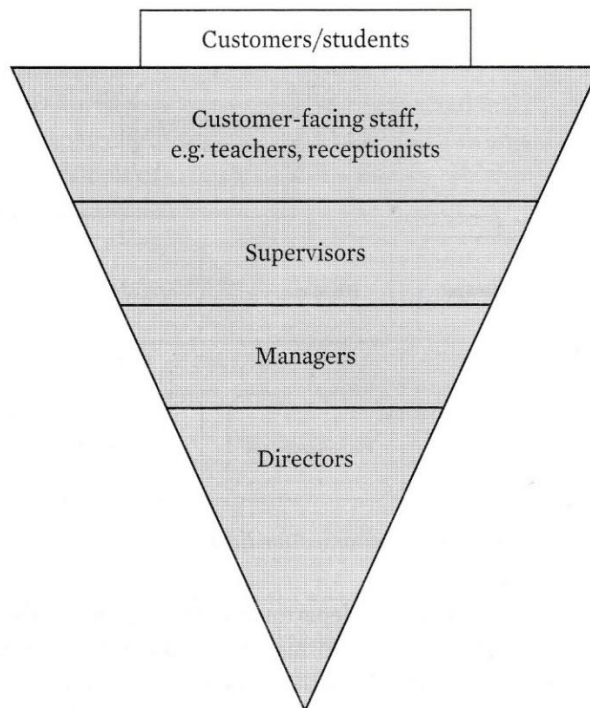
Figure 2.3: Inverted organigram   (White et al. 2008, p28)

The structure of a private LTO is likely to evolve during its life-cycle starting out more organic and becoming more mechanistic and formalized over time as it develops (White et al., 2008). This does not mean that LTOs should not develop and change. They need to embrace change when required while staying focused on what it is they want to achieve (Everard, Morris and Wilson, 2004). Smaller private LTOs may also be more capable than larger more formalized organizations at finding a niche in the market and exploiting it (Murgatroyd and Morgan, 1992).

As with any other commercial organization, LTOs require managers. It is often assumed that there is a natural career progression from teacher to manager, and this is the tack taken by White et al. (2008), although Bennett, Crawford and Cartwright (2003) report that despite this natural career progression, it is not uncommon for teachers to feel ill-prepared and untrained for promotion to positions of management.

2.3 Role of parents

2.3.1 Parent-teacher relationship

"When two elephants fight, the grass suffers" – Walker-Dalhouse and Dalhouse (2009) use this African proverb in their paper of the same name to communicate the importance of the parent/teacher relationship in the young learners' classroom, or perhaps to emphasize the possible negative consequences when goals, expectations and understanding of second language acquisition are not aligned. Despite awareness of the importance of this relationship, how to interact and work effectively with parents is often largely overlooked in teacher training courses (Linse, 2011). It is therefore of little surprise that it is often anecdotally reported that teachers find dealing with parents to be one of the most challenging aspects and unexpected duties of being a teacher (Linse, van Vlack and Bladas, 2014).

The problem is that there is surprisingly little published literature on working effectively with parents (University of Nottingham, 2022). Cooperation with and encouraging the involvement of parents is important (Brewster, Ellis and Girard, 2002; Linse, van Vlack and Bladas, 2014), but exactly what this means in practice is largely left rather vague (Linse, 2011).

It should also be noted that parents are not one homogeneous group. There is a whole spectrum of parents from the pushy parent who forgets that teachers are responsible for more than just their child to the uninvolved parent (Linse et al., 2014). This can result in parents placing unrealistic or even competing demands on teachers (Linse, 2011).

2.3.2 Role of parents in private LTOs

There are many differing potential roles for parents in LTOs. Bridges (1994) notes a number of, sometimes competing roles, or combinations of roles, that parents play including the puzzled bystander, the supporter, the partner, the co-educator and the customer. In private LTOs, it is unavoidable that the role of parents includes 'customers'; however, there is a wide range of parents from different backgrounds not all of whom possess the necessary experience, information and understanding to make informed decisions in this role (Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe, 1995). It is therefore not easy to define what the exact role of parents is (Linse, 2011).

Despite this, parents are likely to hold strong views on how language education should be implemented (Brewster et al., 2002), and they possess much power (Linse, 2011), especially in their selection of private LTOs. Satisfying their sometimes-competing demands and maintaining their continued patronage can be problematic, especially as parents often have little understanding of the issues relating to second language education (Brewster et al., 2002).

2.4 NESTs and NNESTs

2.4.1 NEST – NNEST dichotomy

The idea of the linguistic superiority of the native language speaker is most closely associated with the work of Chomsky (1965). Non-native language teachers are more likely to be defined by what they aren't (native speakers) than what they are (Davies, 2004). However, for the last couple of decades, not only has this negative way of thinking, but also the very idea of a clearly defined NEST – NNEST dichotomy been severely academically challenged and become increasingly unsustainable (Canagarajah, 2012; Moussu and Llurda , 2008). It is now better

understood that variations of knowledge and language use within the two language groups is so large as to make a clear NEST – NNEST dichotomy meaningless.

The value of NESTs is that they have more experience of authentic language (Chun, 2014), especially in respect to pronunciation, vocabulary, idiomatic expression and Western culture (Pae, 2017). On the other hand, NNESTs often have greater understanding of grammar and the advantage of having been through the process of learning English themselves (Chun, 2014) making them ideal role models (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011). They may also share a common language with their students and be more culturally aware of how local students learn (Chang, 2016).

Despite all this, especially in the public's mind (Chang, 2016), the dichotomy remains a "remarkably resilient concept… [that] is still part of the bedrock of transnationalized ELT" (Leung, 2005, p.128) – in effect the dichotomy still exists because the public believes it to be there and ELT practices sustain this belief. A consequence of this is that a power imbalance between the two teaching communities exists that works for the interest of inner circle countries (those countries where English is spoken as a native language) and its teachers (Kachru, 1996).

2.4.2 NESTs in Taiwan and the East Asian context

Published research is inconclusive as to the public's views on who is best placed to deliver English language instruction - results from Chun's (2014) research into students' views in Korea indicated no preference for either NESTs or NNESTs with understanding that both have their strengths and weakness; whereas, Colmenero and Lasagabaster's (2020) research into parents indicated a general preference for NESTs. Ambivalence as to the value of NESTS may be partially explained by there being a wide variety of NESTs – from the 'backpacker' type itinerant English teacher to career NESTs who may wish to distance themselves from the idea that their value lies exclusively with native-speaker status (Bailey and Evison, 2020). Government policy also influences the perception of NESTs with many East Asian countries, including Taiwan, introducing programs to increase the number of NESTs working in government schools (Chang, 2016).

The private ELT industry in Taiwan plays an important role in the non-academic, public perception and discourse on the subject of NESTs. The self-presentation on the websites of five of the most well-known English language franchise *buxibans* was researched by Chang F.R. (2019). She notes the use of visual imagery to convey the understanding to potential customers that the ideal English teacher is a young, white NEST – imagery that cannot be accidental. Meanwhile, Ruecker and Ives (2015) examined 59 websites recruiting NESTs for East Asian language schools. They found that the ideal candidate was "a young, white, enthusiastic native speaker of English from a stable list of inner-circle countries" (p.773). They go on to note that when recruiting these websites make minimal mention of teaching, but instead emphasize money, travel, adventure and exotic cultures. Both sets of websites help perpetuate the power imbalance between NESTs and NNESTs (Chang F.R., 2019) and help explain why NESTs automatically receive higher pay and more respect than NNESTs regardless of professionalism (Wu and Ke, 2009).

2.5 Organization of the classroom and learners

Multiple roles are expected of teachers along the continuum between controller and facilitator (Harmer, 1991). The facilitator leads learners in discovering meaning for themselves and does not teach in the traditional sense (Dörnyei, 2001); while the controller is a more traditional teacher-centred approach (Willis, 1981). Eastern teachers are more likely to see themselves as the controller in the classroom. Cheng and Dörnyei's (2007) research into Taiwanese teachers confirmed that they see themselves as leaders who need to project enthusiasm and promote a 'can-do-spirit' while maintaining group cohesion and norms. Regardless of how teachers view themselves, adaptability is required, as the teacher's role often changes during different stages of a lesson (Harmer, 1991).

Whether a controller or a facilitator, teachers need to maintain control of their classroom. "[I]f you can't effectively control your classroom, nothing will work as it should" (Linsin, 2015 p.1). Linsin is making the point that there is more to teaching than linguistic knowledge and teaching pedagogy. Effective teacher classroom practice requires good behaviour/discipline management (Klinton, Sammons, Day and Regan's (2011). Classrooms require clear rules that are defined

right at the start and clear consequences for rule breaking that are consistently and immediately followed through on (Linsin, 2015). Ur (1991) suggests that ideally issues should be dealt with quietly, but should a problem explode, it should be dealt with quickly, loudly and assertively.

Planning and organizing lessons are also important aspects of classroom management (Klinton et al., 2011). Preparations should include having more than is needed and that the plan should include timing, pace and sequencing in addition to lesson topic and material (Ur, 1991). There is also the need for on-the-spot decision making that can be more an art than a professional skill (McLennan, 1987). Establishing and maintaining classroom routines is also a sign of a well-run classroom (Linsin, 2015).

The micro-context of the classroom and LTO, and how learners relate to the teacher, the learner-group and the LTO also cannot be overlooked. Creation of a positive and supportive micro-context has important benefits for the problem-free and successful organization of a classroom. Dörnyei (1994) divided this learning-context into three components:

> 1: course-specific components concerning the syllabus, the teaching materials, the teaching method, and the learning tasks;
>
> 2: teacher-specific components concerning the teacher's personality, teaching style, feedback and relationship with the students;
>
> 3: group-specific components concerning the dynamics of the learning group.

> (Adapted from Dörnyei, 1994, p.277)

2.6 English language teaching methodology and assessment

Current language teaching methodology emphasizes communicative competence over grammatical and metalinguistic knowledge. This most commonly involves a task-based communicative syllabus (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). It is also now generally accepted that language instruction should take into account context and the goals of learning in addition to linguistic ability (Holliday, 1994); however, the relevance of much language acquisition theory

in the Asian context is open to debate. Research has often focused on Western-based, well resourced, small classes of well-motivated adult learners and this has little in common with the reality of teaching especially in Asia and/or developing nations with issues of resources, motivation, large class sizes (Richards and Rogers, 2014) and the pressure on teachers of high-stakes assessment (Green, 2014).

The place for, or the prohibition of, grammar instruction has long been a controversial issue in second/foreign language instruction theory (Ellis and Shintani, 2014). In the Asian context, syllabi are commonly grammar based and sequenced according to perceived levels of difficulty. Although it is now generally accepted that some form of grammar instruction is beneficial (Borg and Burns, 2008), research into the natural order hypothesis suggests that the sequence of grammar acquisition follows a predictable order that does not necessarily follow the order that it is taught (Lightbown and Spada, 2013).

A move to a more integrated approach to assessment and away from discrete-point testing of grammatical structures coincided with the establishment of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), as assessment in English language instruction moved into a 'post scientific era' (Fulcher, 2010). The importance of formal accuracy decreased as a more interaction-based approach was advocated that incorporated an understanding of authenticity, the social context and the purpose of discourse (Morrow, 1979). However, in the Asian context, high-stakes summative assessment is still the norm, especially knowledge of contextless grammatical-structures through multiple-choice questioning.

2.7 Concluding comments

This Literature Review has illustrated that there are many intersecting, often competing, aspects to the operation of private LTOs including the educational success of its learners and the financial success of the business. Some of these aspects are academically related such as teaching methodology and teacher/teaching beliefs – others are related to skills that are harder to quantify such as LTO management and classroom management skills, but there is also a third that is totally unrelated to either. It is the prevailing social discourse of the time and context such

as in the value attached to learning English and who is best qualified to perform that teaching, with the power to determine the answer to these questions often in the hands of parents.

This chapter has identified and introduced the important factors in the operation of a private LTO. The following chapter describes the research process that I undertook to better understand these factors as they related to my own personal experience of working in, managing and then owning such institutions.

Chapter 3: Research Design

This chapter introduces the autoethnographic approach to qualitative research in English language teaching. It explains why I have chosen autoethnography as an appropriate research instrument to answer my research questions. The chapter then goes on to describe my methods of data collection and ethical issues.

3.1 The autoethnographic approach

Autoethnography is the self (auto) research (graphy) of one's self within a context and culture (ethno). It is one of a number of different forms of ethnography that originated in early twentieth century anthropology, but that quickly established itself throughout the social sciences (Heigham and Sakui, 2009). In the 1980s, when a "crisis of confidence" overtook the social sciences, "scholars became increasingly troubled by social sciences ontological, epistemological, and axiological limitations" (Ellis and Bochner, 2000 cited in Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011 pp. 273-274), scholars began to consider what would happen if social sciences moved "closer to literature than to physics, if they proffered stories rather than theories" (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011, p.274). The idea of the detached observer reporting on human conduct was reassessed (Adams, Jones and Ellis, 2015). Autoethnography provided a possible solution (ibid.). It was seen as a natural consequence of this period (Loughran and Kitchen, 2019) and has now become established practice (Willis and Trondman, 2000) bringing a window into the inner life of the person (Denzin, 2013). It acknowledges the social construction of reality and also includes the perspectives of participants (Flick, 2011).

Culture is at the heart of all forms of ethnography – presenting, explaining and analyzing how culture relates to experience (Willis and Trondman, 2000) in order for both insiders and outsiders to better understand a culture's relational practices, common values and beliefs, and shared experiences (Ellis et al., 2011). "The ethnographer's goal is to provide a description and an interpretive-explanatory account of what people do in a setting (such as a classroom, neighborhood, or community), the outcome of their interactions, and the way they understand what they are doing" (Watson-Gegeo, 1988, p.576). A good example of this is Canagarajah's (2012) autoethnography exploring his own professional teaching identity in Sri Lanka and then

later in New York in an attempt to find ways to encourage the bridging of the gap in discourse and practice between different teaching communities.

Autoethnography is not without its critics. Critics contend that autoethnographers do not follow accepted conventions regarding hypothesizing, analyzing and theorizing (Ellis et al., 2011). The most vocal of critics, Sara Delamont, goes as far as to call autoethnographers "intellectually lazy" (Delamont, 2007). Willis and Trondman (2000) counter with what they call the "empiricist fallacy" that everyday life cannot be presented solely in abstract theoretical categories. They argue that it is through engagement with the real world that theoretical formulations combine to produce 'Ah ha' moments.

3.2 Rationale for choosing autoethnography

I am writing this autoethnography at the end of my teaching career with two goals in mind. The primary goal is to explore how my own teaching experiences shaped my understanding of ELT in *buxibans* in Taiwan firstly as a teacher, then as a manager and finally as an owner within the commercial ELT sector in Taiwan. This autoethnography is a personal experience narrative where I focus on my own life as the primary research subject.

The secondary goal of this autoethnography is to provide a window for others who may not be so familiar with the context to enter into a different cultural world. Autoethnography is a means to achieve this as it "seek[s] to produce aesthetic and evocative thick descriptions of personal and interpersonal experience" (Ellis et al., 2011, p.277) that deepen our ability to empathize with unfamiliar cultural practices (Ellis and Bochner, 2000).

I will look at what I actually did, which Jerolmack and Knan (2014) point out, despite not being able to provide definitive answers as to why an author acted as they did, is the advantage of autoethnography over other more traditional research tools such as the interview or questionnaire. This autoethnography does not contain the usual top-down research approach. It attempts what Willis and Trondman (2021) call for: a more human, bottom-up approach to research.

My aim is to create a connection with the reader through "narrative fidelity" and "emotional resonance" (Anderson, 2006). I was a complete member of the social world under study, which Anderson (2006) suggests confers the most compelling kind of "being there". This autoethnography attempts to accommodate the changing ideas for research that understand the limits of scientific knowledge and appreciate the personal narrative that include emotions, the aesthetic and social identities (Adams, Jones and Ellis, 2015). Researching oneself is, by its nature, subjective; however, "autoethnography is one of the approaches that acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters" (Ellis et al., 2011, p.274).

3.3 The autoethnographer and the *buxiban* in the study

I never planned on teaching as a career when I arrived in Taiwan in 1992. I arrived with little idea of what teaching entailed. All my understanding about teaching was based on my own moderately successful experiences of schooling in the UK. Based on these experiences of my own teachers, I had a model of what made a 'good' teacher: able and willing to explain things so that they made logical sense instead of simply being facts to be memorized; was or was taught in an interesting manner; didn't simply teach the lesson regardless of whether the students were listening or understood; and most importantly was able to control a class.

My own foreign language learning was a far from successful attempt to learn French in compulsory language lessons in secondary school. My language learning was possibly hampered by what would in all likelihood now be considered as mild dyslexia, but in 1970s UK primary education resulted in remedial reading lessons and a lifetime in difficulty spelling.

I had no understanding of teaching as a profession, preconceived ideas about what a teacher should be, the baggage of my own language learning difficulties, and a stereotyped image of East Asian learners as well-behaved rote memorizers, but also a willingness to do whatever I was asked.

For the first few years of my teaching career, I was employed at a number of *buxibans* almost all of which were franchises – especially franchise A, for which I worked at three different branches. I also had a large number of different tutoring jobs. I believe that during this phase of

my teaching career, my teaching experience was typical of that of most NESTs in this context at the time: 'winging it' with minimal teaching ability or training, and spending large amounts of time travelling between many small jobs that came and went. There was, however, one noticeable difference that would open many future doors – unlike most itinerant NESTs, I made an effort to learn Mandarin. It was also during this phase that I started to notice the differences in the experience of teaching at different *buxibans* – even those within the same franchise.

In the second phase of my teaching career, I only continued with two jobs – a part-time position at a bilingual kindergarten and a full-time position at an independent *buxiban*. During this time, I became much more integrated with the local community, and I also started to form my own ideas on how to teach and manage classes.

The independent *buxiban* that I worked at was a different to anything I had experienced before. It was teacher owned and very successful. It had a good reputation, developed its own teaching material and, unlike franchise *buxibans*, had only one teacher responsible for each class regardless of NEST or NNEST. This was the only *buxiban* that I experienced that valued students' attitude and achievements over enrollment numbers and that limited the influence of parents. The *buxiban's* syllabus had a strong focus on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and preparation for junior high school examinations; however, the owner hoped that I could add a more communicative element to the syllabus. It was at this *buxiban* that I started to understand mainstream English education and how it interacted with *buxibans*.

I continued to work at this independent *buxiban* for almost ten years. After around four years, I became the teaching supervisor responsible for the syllabus and assessment. Two years later I became the *buxiban's* manager. My experience as the manager of a *buxiban* was uncommon for a NEST. I was responsible for the hiring and managing of all teachers – both NEST and NNEST and when the owner spent increasingly long periods of time abroad, I had to deal with all aspects of the *buxiban* from parents to finances and premises.

It was after around twelve years of teaching and by now with a Taiwanese wife that the possibility of opening my own *buxiban* became viable. My *buxiban*, which is the subject of this study, opened in 2005. It was located in a medium sized city in central Taiwan and once established for a number of years had over two hundred part-time students enrolled aged between seven and fourteen years of age. The *buxiban* had a five-year syllabus that was not aligned with

mainstream education's English syllabi. The *buxiban* maintained an unusual class structure similar to that of mainstream education in that classes were divided into year-groups – new classes were only opened once a year in the summer. We (the *buxiban*) only accepted new students between 2nd and 4th grade (7 – 9 years old) and no student could enter at any point other than the first lesson of the first year.

The goal of the *buxiban* was to take a more balanced approach to English education than both mainstream education's continuing focus on standardized high-stakes summative exams and on many *buxibans*' focus on mirroring mainstream educations syllabi and on test preparation classes for Taiwan' General English Proficiency Test (GEPT). To this end, I prepared my own syllabus that focused on pronunciation, speaking and listening in the first year; reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary for three years; and then returning to speaking in the fifth year at the end of which all students sat Cambridge Preliminary English Test (PET). I taught all the classes myself while my close associate dealt with communication with parents, administration and make up lessons/tests. The *buxiban* placed a great emphasis on its students' behaviour and attitude to learning rather than academic achievement. For a more detailed description of the *buxiban's* structure and strategies see Appendix 3.

3.4 Research instrument

Following the advice of Denzin (1989), I chose anecdotes as the method of data collection. An anecdote is "a usually short narrative of an interesting, amusing, or biographical incident" (Merrian-Webster online dictionary, undated). Rather than relying on critical life experiences, "[p]ersonal experience narratives are more likely to be based on anecdotal, everyday, commonplace experiences" (Denzin, 1989, p.14). This means that a personal narrative does not rely on critical life experiences, but rather on multiple, small anecdotal experiences that may appear to have little meaning in isolation, but that meaning can be found when combined. It "is a strongly descriptive form that relies on narrative and expressive discourse" (Bochner and Ellis, 2016 cited in Seyyed-Abdolhami, 2018, p.81), and as the author has not gone through the experiences described in order to conduct the research, it is constructed retrospectively (Denzin, 1989). Anecdotes became the primary source of data for this research project.

3.5 Phases of data generation

Phase	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phrase 3	Phase 4
Data generated	Teaching experiences	Rules, strategies and practices of my *buxiban*	Timeline of my English language teaching employments	Reordering of the data
Aim	To compile data from memory.	To document the organizing, running and teaching of my *buxiban*.	To document the progression of my teaching career.	To present the data chronologically.
Form of data	Disconnected anecdotes	Semi-structured notes	Chronological list of employments	Ordered anecdotes
Examples	N/A	Appendix 3	Appendix 2	Appendix 1

Table 3.1: Phases of data generation.

In the first phase of data generation, I noted down many teaching experiences, especially those from my early teaching career, that still resonated with me today. These experiences were recorded in the form of a series of disconnected anecdotes. At this time, I made no attempt either to order them or to think about why they were important. In the second phase of data generation, I noted down what I considered to be important rules, strategies and practices relating to the organizing, running and teaching from my own *buxiban*, especially those that I believe differentiated my *buxiban* from the majority of others. In the third phase of data generation, I created a timeline of all my English language teaching employments. Bremmer (2020) advocates the use of timelines to assist in the reconstruction of memories, as memories trigger memories and so to more sought-after information (Reisburg, 2016). This timeline assisted me in adding more anecdotes that had been missed during the first phase of data generation. In the fourth phase of data generation, I reordered the data collected during the first phase of data generation. I reorganized it into approximate chronological order by using the timeline that was generated in phase three (see Table 3.1).

During each stage of data generation more experiences were continually added to the data in an ever-evolving circular process which continued during the later data analysis phase that will be described in Chapter 4 and the initial drafting of this autoethnography (Figure 3.1).
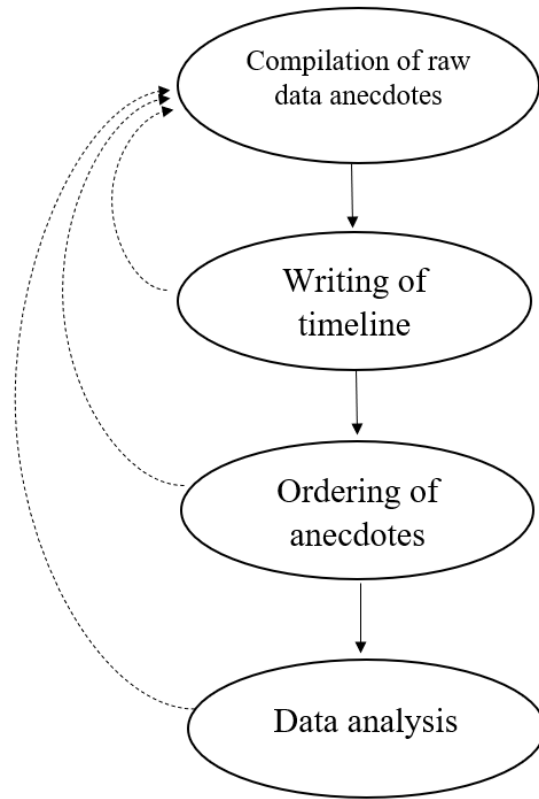
Figure 3.1: Flowchart of data generation.

3.6 Ethical considerations

All research that involves people interacting with other people has ethical dimensions (Stutchbury and Fox, 2009). It would be naïve to believe that this is not true for self-study in educational research (Loughran, 2019), as although focused on the self, it necessarily includes others within the contexts being described (Craig, 2019). These ethical considerations go further than simply anonymity for others, but also includes respect for them (Brandenburg and McDonough, 2019).

When writing this autoethnography, these ethical considerations have been vigorously maintained. In all phases of data generation neither any people nor any LTO is identified. To differentiate between different chains of franchise *buxibans* within the data, a letter of the alphabet has been used in order to demonstrate that it is the same chain. In other instances, a brief description of the type of institution or learning situation has been used in order to avoid

any possible identification. In addition, in the describing or discussing of others, respect for everyone concerned has been maintained. University of Nottingham ethical approval for this research project has been obtained.

Chapter 4: Analysis of coding

This chapter will demonstrate how the fifty-three codes were identified from the data and the process of their subsequent categorization into fifteen categories from which six themes emerged.

4.1 Data analysis

This autoethnography is typical of the most common form of autoethnography – subject reality (how events were experienced by the author) (Pavlenko, 2007). The suggested main analytical process in this type of autoethnography is content and thematic analysis in order to discover emerging themes, trends, patterns, or conceptual categories (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). This is achieved using a combination of grounded coding and thematic coding. Grounded coding is the application of grounded theory in which inductive reasoning is employed when examining the data so that ideas/concepts become apparent – these ideas/concepts are said to 'emerge' from the data (Urquhart, Lehmann and Myers, 2010).

The first step is to identify ideas/concepts within the data. These ideas/concepts are given a code to identify them within the data. The next step is to categorize the codes. Richards (2003) offers advice on how to achieve this including: being imaginative, not mechanistic; to stand back and be prepared to find alternative ways of looking at and organizing the data; and to look for connections, patterns and themes. Pavlenko (2007) points out that the advantage of this type of analysis is the sensitivity to recurrent motifs, but warns of its overreliance which may lead to the overlooking of important events that do not occur repeatedly. The final step is to look for emerging themes from within the categories.

4.1.1 Word cloud

All the data from the fourth phase of data generation was coded as brief descriptions of the underlying issues involved (see appendix 1). The result was fifty-three codes. These fifty-three codes were used to create a word cloud (Figure 4.1) in order to visually illustrate the relative frequency that codes appeared within the data and in that way assist later categorizing.
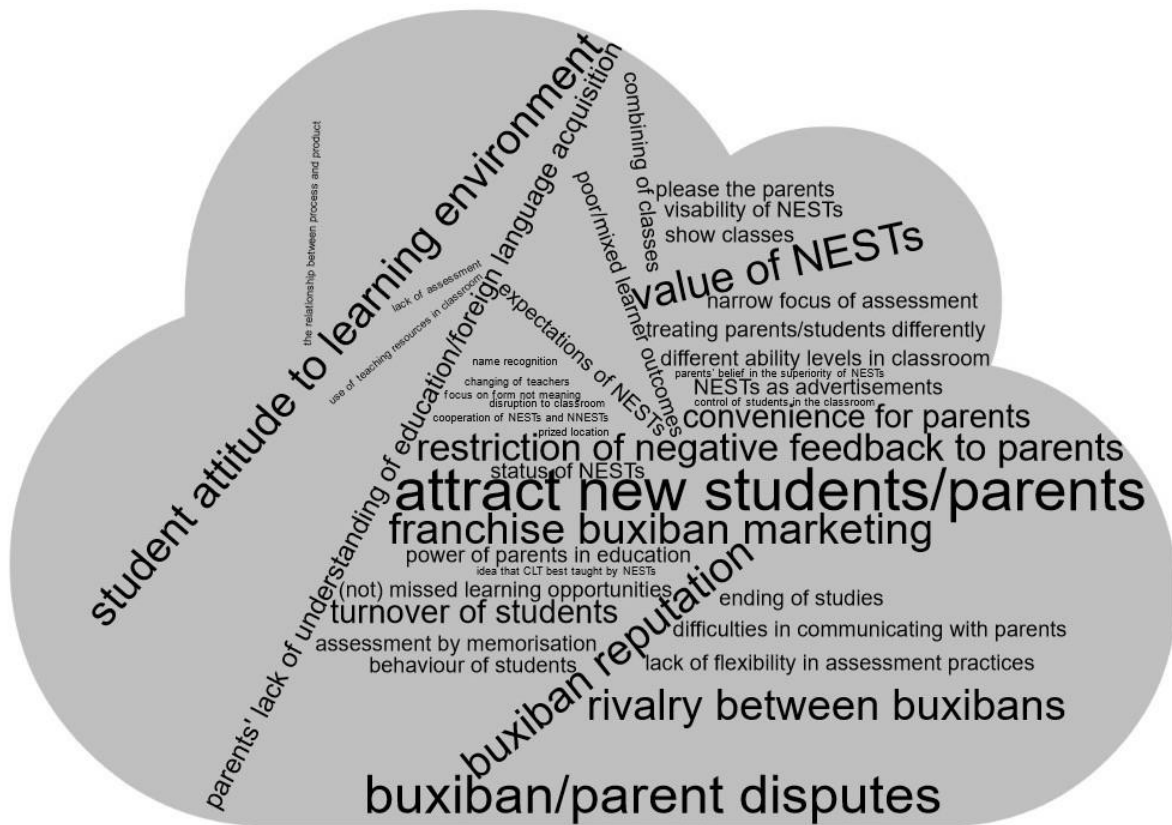
Figure 4.1: Word cloud of generated codes.

4.1.2 Categorizing and emerging themes

The next step was to categorize the fifty-three codes. I found that the codes could fit together in many ways and many codes could fit into multiple categories, and so in many cases, a subjective decision was required as to which category a code was most suitable for. Bearing in mind the advice of Pavlenko (2007), I did not overlook a category simply because it appeared to represent only a limited number of codes, and so when a code did not conveniently fit into any category, I allowed it its own category. The result was fifteen categories (Table 4.1).

Sample code	Category	Emerging theme
Smooth and risk averse operation	Running the *buxiban*	*Buxiban* management
Buxiban reputation	Promoting the *buxiban*	
Ending of studies	Values of *buxiban*	
Money not education as goal	Goals of *buxiban*	Misaligned goals
Varying goals of parents	Goals of parents	
Teacher/*buxiban* different goals	Goals of teachers	
Best interest of students	Goals of students	
Combining of classes	Classroom beyond the teacher's control	Organization of the classroom and learners
Control of students in the classroom	Classroom (partially) within the teacher's control	
Students' attitude to the learning situation	Students in the classroom	
Restricting of negative feedback to parents	Communication with parents	Relationship with parents
Power of parents in education	Role of parents	
Value of NESTs	Issues focused on NESTs	Role of NESTs
Lack of assessment	Assessment	Teaching methodology, practice and assessment
Idea that CLT best taught by NESTs	Teaching methodology	

Table 4.1: Sample codes, categories and emerging themes.

Having established the fifteen categories, I looked for the emerging themes within the categories. In a number of cases, categories clearly indicated an emerging theme such as the four categories related to 'goals' resulting in the theme of 'Misaligned goals'. In other cases, such as 'issues focused on NESTs', a theme was created specifically for the one category. In total six themes were established.

4.1.3 Second allocation of codes

Now that all the categories and themes had been established, I revisited all the codes and allowed them to be included into any of the other categories that they also related to. At this stage I used a different colour to represent each theme, so that when a code was added to an additional category, its colour would indicate which theme it originally belonged to (Table 4.2) and

appendix 4). These colours meant that relationships between different categories and themes became apparent.

Category: Promoting the *buxiban* (34)
Franchise *buxiban* marketing (9)
Buxiban reputation (8)
Name recognition (1)
Prized location (1)
Attract new parents (11)
NESTs as advertisements (2)
Visibility of NESTs (1)
Ideal that CLT best taught by NESTs (1)

Table 4.2: Sample of colours in second allocation of codes.

In order to demonstrate the number of codes allocated to each category and to highlight how that number changed after the second allocation of codes, a table was produced (see Table 5.1 in subchapter 5.6) ranking each theme according to how many codes it received. The interconnected nature of the themes after the second allocation was also visually illustrated by a flowchart (Figure 4.2).

Samples of common codes   **Categories**   **Emerging themes**

Money not education as goal → Goals of *buxiban*

Shortsighted goals →

Varying goals of parents → Goals of parents → Misaligned goals

Ending of studies →

Buxiban/teachers different goals → Goals of teachers

Best interests of students → Goals of students

Parents' lack of understanding… → Role of parents → Relationship with

Power of parents in education → parents

Attract new parents → Communication with parents

Restricting of negative feedback… →

Money not education as goal → Values of *buxiban*

Value of NESTs →

Attract new parents → Promoting the *buxiban* → *Buxiban* management

Buxiban reputation →

Shortsighted goals → Running the *buxiban*

Restricting of negative feedback →

Value of NESTs →

NESTs as advertisements → Issues focused on NESTs → Role of NESTs

Status of NESTs →

Turnover of students → Classroom beyond

Combining of classes → the teacher's control → Organization of the

Poor/mixed learner outcomes → Classroom (partially) → classroom and learners

(not) missed learning opportunities → within the teacher's control

Students attitude to the learning… → Students in the classroom

Behaviour of students →

Narrow focus of assessment → Assessment → Teaching methodology,

Assessment by memorization → practice and

Focus on form no meaning → Teaching methodology → assessment
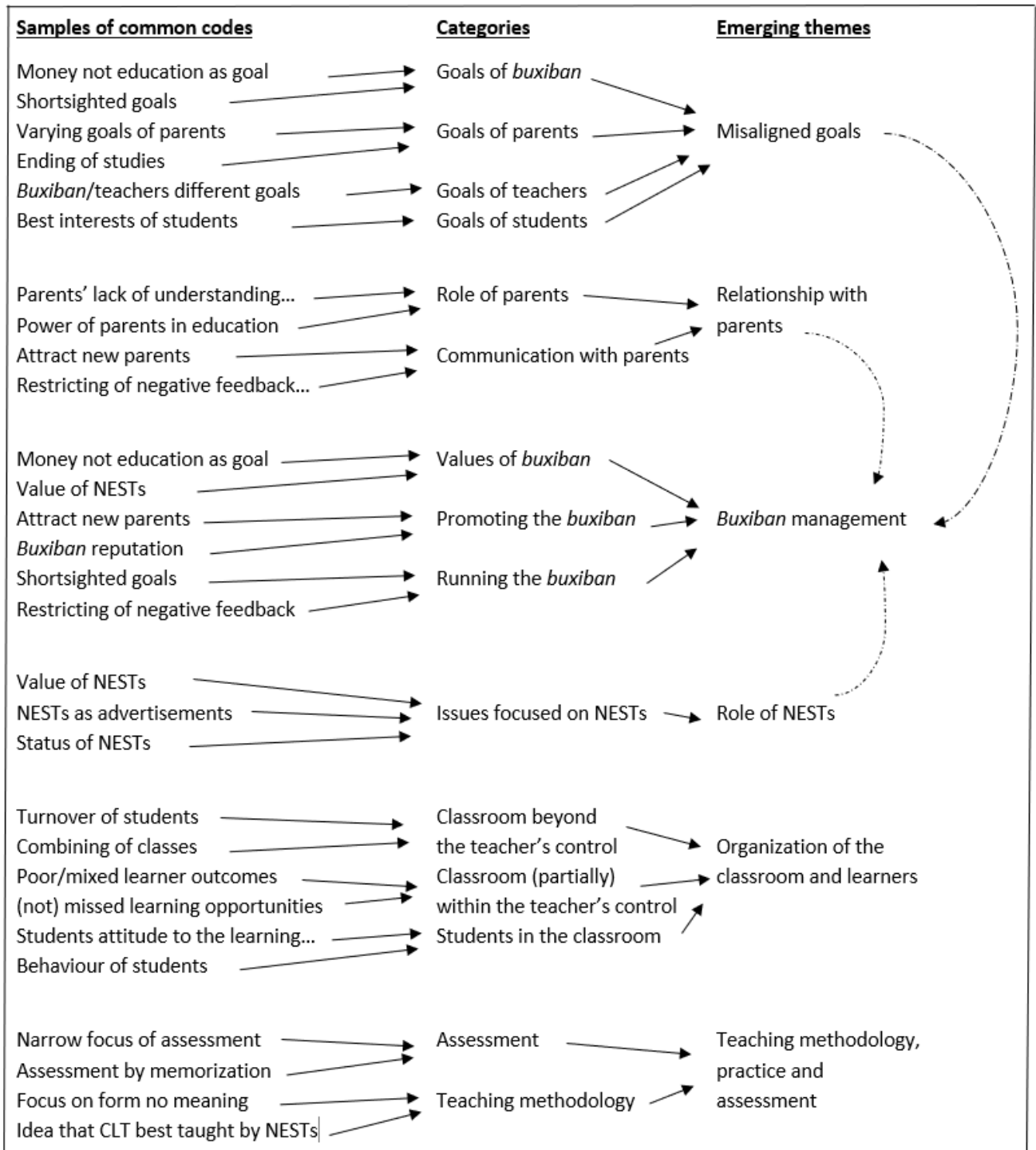
Idea that CLT best taught by NESTs →

Figure 4.2: Flowchart of codes, categories and themes.

4.1.4 Linking of data

In the final stage of data analysis, I linked the data generated in the second phase of data generation (on the running of my school) with possible experiences in the data from the first phase of data generation in order to identify possible relationships (see appendix 3). I also examined the data chronologically in order to illuminate teacher cognitive development, as recommended by Barkhuizen (2020), during my teaching career from a NEST to a manager and finally a *buxiban* owner.

4.2 Codes of '*Buxiban* management'

There were a number of codes that related to the running of *buxibans*. Upon examining them two types of code were apparent – one related to marketing and one the running of the business.

Codes such as 'franchise *buxiban* marketing' and 'name recognition' were easily categorized as 'promoting the *buxiban*'. This category received four codes during the initial allocation, and it considerably increased in size during the second allocation, particularly with the inclusion of 'attract new parents'.

The code 'smooth and risk averse operation' was the foundation for the second category – 'Running the *buxiban*'. This category was focused on codes related to the day-to-day operation of *buxibans*. This category was populated by only two codes in the initial allocation, but it is unique in additionally receiving codes from categories representing every other theme during the second allocation at which point it became the largest of all the categories.

After all other codes had been categorized, there remained one code – 'ending of studies' that was uncategorized. I decided to put it into an as yet unnamed category to observe what happened during the second allocation of codes. Four codes from 'Goals of *buxiban*' were identified as related, and it was only then that the name for this category became apparent – 'Values of *buxiban*', after which a further two codes were added from 'Issues focused on NESTs'.

It was from these three categories that the theme '*Buxiban* management' emerged. Table 4.3 demonstrates how the codes from both the initial and second allocation were assigned to

categories within this theme. A complete coloured list of all categorizations within all themes can be found in appendix 4.

Codes (initial allocation in red)	Categories	Theme
Rivalry between *buxibans* (4) Smooth and risk averse operation (4) Shortsighted goals (8) Restriction of negative feedback to parents (7) Parent/buxiban disputes (5) Expectations of NESTs (4) Keeping students as goal (2) Difficulties in communication with parents (2) Show classes (2) Combining of classes (2) Please the parents (2) The relationship between process and product (2) Lack of assessment (1) Changing of teachers (1) Disruption to classroom (1) Use of teaching resources (1)	Running of *buxiban*	*Buxiban* management
Franchise *buxiban* marketing (9) *Buxiban* reputation (8) Name recognition (1) Prized location (1) Attract new parents (11) NESTs as advertisements (2) Visibility of NESTs (1) Ideal that CLT best taught by NESTs (1)	Promoting the *buxiban*	
Ending of studies (2) Money not education as goal (15) Value of NESTs (4) Status of NESTs (2) Entertain not educate (2) Encouragement of misleading beliefs (1) Unrealistic goals (1)	Values of *buxiban*	

Table 4.3: Codes and categories within '*Buxiban* management' after the second allocation of codes (frequency within data in brackets).

4.3 Codes of 'Misaligned goals'

Many codes within the data referred to 'goals'. Codes such as 'money, not education as goal' and 'keeping students as goal'. These were categorized as 'Goals of *buxiban*'. There were also codes

within the data such as 'varying goals of parents'. These were separately categorized as 'Goals of parents'. After creating these two categories, I noticed two additional categories that I believed to be important 'Goals of teachers' and 'Goals of students' despite them only represented a limited number of codes.

It was only after the creation of these four categories that it became apparent that stakeholders often did not share common goals. This led to the establishment of the theme 'Misaligned goals' (Table 4.4). The theme was the third ranked after the initial allocation of codes and became the second ranked after the second allocation despite its percentage share remaining relatively unchanged. All three codes that were added during the second allocation of codes came from the theme '*Buxiban* management'.

Codes (initial allocation in green)	Categories	Theme
Money not education as goal (15) Shortsighted goals (8) Keeping students as goal (2) Entertain not educate (2) Encouragement of misleading beliefs (1) Misleading educational goals (1) Unrealistic goals (1) Franchise *buxiban* marketing (9) Smooth and risk averse operation (4)	Goals of *buxiban*	Misaligned goals
Parents/*buxiban* different goals (2) Varying goals of parents (1) Ending of studies (2)	Goals of parents	
Teachers/*buxiban* different goals (2)	Goals of teachers	
Best interest of students (2)	Goals of students	

Table 4.4: Codes and categories within 'Misaligned goals' after the second allocation of codes (frequency within data in brackets).

4.4 Codes of 'Role of NESTs'

A number of codes related to NESTs. Six were initially categorized as 'Issues focused on NESTs', and two more codes were added during the second allocation of codes (Table 4.5). This was an important category; however, it did not appear suitably related to any other category, so a new theme was created – 'Role of NESTs'. The theme had a strong relationship with the theme

'*Buxiban* management' with five of its six codes from the initial allocation added to that theme during the second allocation.

Codes (initial allocation in blue)	Categories	Theme
Value of NESTs (4) Expectations of NESTs (4) NESTs as advertisements (2) Status of NESTs (2) Visibility of NESTs (1) Cooperation of NESTs and NNESTs (1) Parents' belief in the superiority of NESTs (1) Idea that CLT best taught by NESTs (1)	Issues focused on NESTs	Role of NESTs

Table 4.5: Codes and categories within 'The role of NESTs' after the second allocation of codes (frequency within data in brackets).

4.5 Codes of 'Organization of the classroom and learners'

Ten codes from within the data were related to the organization of classes and the classroom. It was immediately apparent that there were two categories of codes. The first category was strongly related to *buxiban* management and were codes that affected how classes and classrooms were organized, but which individual teachers had little control over – such codes as 'combining of classes' and 'changing of teachers'. These were placed in the category 'Classroom beyond the teacher's control'. The second category were codes related to issues within the classroom that individual teachers had at least some control over – such codes as 'poor/mixed learner outcomes' and 'control of students in the classroom'. These codes formed the category 'Classroom (partially) within the teacher's control'. It was necessary to include 'partially' as it was important to acknowledge the limited power that individual teachers may have, even over decisions affecting their own classes.

There were also two codes that directly related to students in the classroom – 'students' attitude to the learning environment' and 'behaviour of students'. Although only two codes, they had a relatively high frequency of occurrence. It was not immediately apparent where these codes belonged, but after giving them their own category 'Students in the classroom', the common 'classroom' theme became apparent. Teachers have to manage their students as well as teach

them, and so together these three categories became the theme 'Organization of the classroom and learners' (Table 4.6).

There was a strong linking of codes between the categories of 'Classroom beyond the teacher's control' and 'Running the *buxiban*'. Five of the six codes in the former were allocated to the later during the second allocation of codes.

Codes (initial allocation in purple)	Categories	Theme
Turnover of students (3) Combining of classes (2) Show classes (2) Disruption to the classroom (1) Use of teaching resources (1) Changing of teachers (1)	Classroom beyond the teacher's control	Organization of the classroom and learners
Poor/mixed learner outcomes (8) (not) missed learning opportunities (4) Different ability levels in same class (2) Control of students in the classroom (2) Difficulties in communication with parents (2)	Classroom (partially) within the teacher's control	
Students' attitude to the learning environment (9) Behaviour of students (3)	Students in the classroom	

Table 4.6: Codes and categories within 'Organization of classroom and learners' after the second allocation of codes (frequency within data in brackets).

4.6 Codes of 'Relationship with parents'

'Parents' appeared in twelve codes. Two of these codes were concerning 'goals' and were already categorized under 'goals of parents. The remaining ten codes required separate categorizing.

Six of the codes related to the interaction between parents and *buxibans* and were therefore categorized 'Communication with parents'. These codes focused on the customer facing

portrayal that *buxibans* wish parents to see and their attempt to manage this relationship as represented by such codes as 'restricting of negative feedback to parents' and 'please the parents'.

The remaining four codes highlighted the fact that it is the parents that are ultimately in charge in this relationship as with the code 'power of parents'. However, this category is dominated by the code 'parents' lack of understanding of education/foreign language acquisition', which accounted for eleven of the nineteen codes within this category. These codes were categorized as 'Role of parents'. There is tension between the two categories and the naming of the theme 'Relationship with parents' is intended to encapsulate this (Table 4.7). No new codes were added to categories within this theme during the second allocation of codes.

Codes (initial allocation in orange)	Categories	Theme
Attract new parents (11) Restricting of negative feedback to parents (7) Parent/*buxiban* disputes (5) Treating parents/students differently (4) Please the parents (2) Difficulties in communication with parents (2)	Communication with parents	Relationship with parents
Parents' lack of understanding of education/foreign language acquisition (11) Power of parents in education (4) Convenience for parents (3) Parents' belief in the superiority of NESTs (1)	Role of parents	

Table 4.7: Codes and categories within 'The relationship with parents' after the second allocation of codes (frequency within data in brackets).

4.7 Codes of 'Teaching methodology, practice and assessment'

Only seven of the fifty-three codes directly referred to the actually teaching that occurs within *buxibans*. The majority of the seven codes such as 'narrow focus of assessment' and 'assessment by memorization' related to assessment and so formed that category. The other codes such as 'focus on form not meaning' related to methodology and were combined in the category 'Teaching methodology'. These two categories were then combined under the theme 'Teaching

methodology, practice and assessment'. The categories within this theme did not receive any additional codes during the second allocation (Table 4.8).

Codes (initial allocation in grey)	Categories	Theme
Narrow focus of assessments (2) Assessment by memorization (2) Lack of flexibility in assessment practices (2) Lack of assessment (1)	Assessment	Teaching methodology, practice and assessment
Relationship between process and product (2) Focus on form not meaning (1) Idea that CLT best taught by NESTs (1)	Teaching methodology	

Table 4.8: Codes and categories within 'Teaching methodology, practice and assessment' after the second allocation of codes (frequency within data in brackets).

4.8 Concluding comments

This chapter has described how the six themes were identified from within the research data. The following chapter will look at what can be learned from this analysis and then discuss those findings.

Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion

This chapter will present and discuss the findings from the data analysis phase of this research. It will present each of themes that emerged from the research and discuss them in conjunction with illustrative examples of the issue from the data anecdotes and relevant literature.

The chronological ordering of the data anecdotes revealed a three-phase pattern. In the first phase, many anecdotes are from my own point of view as a teacher and a NEST. In the second phase, anecdotes appear which are related to the students' perspectives and experiences. In the third phase, the majority of anecdotes relate to *buxibans*' point of view. My understanding and interpretation of events through these three phases demonstrated my expanding perspective from the self to others and finally to the teaching context as my own beliefs of both how language instruction should be conducted and my beliefs on how *buxibans* should be managed developed over time. It is these beliefs that form the basis for large parts of the following discussion.

This chapter will attempt to find not only links between the findings and literature in such areas as *buxiban* management and the roles and of parents and NESTs within *buxibans*, but also investigate connections between the themes – in particular the links between the four non-teaching related themes: '*Buxiban* management', 'Misaligned goals', 'Relationship with parents' and 'Role of Nests'; and the disconnected nature of the two teaching related themes: 'Organization of the classroom and learners' and 'Teaching methodology, practice and assessment'. The discussion will go beyond the interpretation of the findings and will present further thoughts that the findings have inspired as I look for insight into answers to the research questions.

5.1 Relationship with parents

The strong linking of codes from this theme with the theme of '*Buxiban* management' and the high ranking of both of these themes indicates the importance of this relationship, but the nature of those codes such as 'restricting of negative feedback' and 'power of parents in education' highlight that what should be a cooperative relationship (Brewster, Ellis and Girard, 2002) is, in practice, not a straight-forward relationship.

In light of the vagueness of practical ideas on how to achieve cooperation (Linse, 2011), I will propose some of my own. I posit that for true parental cooperation and an ideal power balance within it to be achieved then the most important facet is 'trust' – parental trust that the *buxiban* and its teachers know what they are doing, will achieve results and has the child's best interest as the core goal. It is my opinion that parents' need for possibly over-involvement often stems from a lack of trust – the idea that they may be missing out on something better and must remain vigilant for a new opportunity. The data in this research indicates that this lack of trust is despite, or possible because of, attempting to carefully manage the relationship.

> A student swore in class. I immediately told her to leave the classroom. I intended to leave her outside for a couple of minutes and then go and speak to her. Within 30 seconds the businesswoman franchise owner brought the student back in and said that her parents had paid money for her to attend and she cannot be told to leave the classroom.
> (Extract from data, Appendix 1, Anecdote 11)

From the above example, it is clear from the franchise owner's reaction that not only did she not trust the parents to understand the situation, but also did not expect them to trust the *buxiban* – the result was the shortsighted goal of 'risk averse operation' that valued keeping students above all else including educational goals. In my *buxiban*, we did not shy away from informing parents of negative feedback when necessary. We would simply inform parents about what happened and any consequences in a non-judgmental fashion. We would not debate what had happened, nor negotiate with parents. I believe that having the strength to handle situations in this way helped inspire trust.

The data also indicates that another important facet in achieving trust in my *buxiban* was through stability.

> *Buxibans* constantly recruited new students and there was a constant turnover of students resulting in the combining of classes for reasons other than learning.
> (Extract from data, Appendix 1, Anecdote 5)

> A common complaint from parents was over the changing of teachers. Teachers, especially NESTS, are often changed. I noticed that Taiwanese parents like to and sometimes expect to choose their child's teacher.
> (Extract from data, Appendix 1, Anecdote 22)

In my *buxiban*, teachers did not change, classes were not combined, every year-group completed the five-year course and every year-group achieved similar results. We also made it obvious at the beginning of studies that we were not going to attempt to accommodate differing demands of parents, even when this might result in losing students.

> The owner of this independent *buxiban* suddenly raised the tuition by a very large amount, but was unable to articulate any reason for doing so. Almost every parent was unhappy. Some left. Many stayed, but the reputation of the *buxiban* never recovered.
>
> (Extract from data, Appendix 1, Anecdote 29)

Trust is not easy to achieve, but as the above example illustrates, it is easy to lose when parents start to question a *buxiban*'s intentions. If trust can be achieved and maintained than parents are more than willing to take a step back and 'be along for the ride' rather than a 'back-seat driver'. Once true trust has been established, teachers can relax into their teaching role and parents into their role as overseer and strategic decision maker about their child's education.

Bridges (1994) notes the customer relationship between parents and schools where neither is bound to the other – the parent is free to leave and the school to recruit new students. We somewhat altered this dynamic in four ways: We never recruited new students in any way that affected current students, we set a limit on how long students could stay in our school, we did not attempt to persuade those that wished to leave not to do so, and we only recruited students for new classes once a year – once the classes were full, we did not accept anyone else until the next year.

> The most common dispute between parents and *buxibans* was over money when a student left and the parent asked for tuition to be returned. Often only a small amount of money was involved, but schools' insistence on keeping ever possible penny meant that even parents who were otherwise happy with the school left on a negative note.
>
> (Extract from data, Appendix 1, Anecdote 24)

We tried to reduce the above 'monetary considerations' from the dynamic by always refunding 100% of all outstanding tuition without question whenever a student left. In so doing, we not only avoided the most common dispute, but also removed (assuming that affordability was not an issue) the monetary considerations from the calculation of whether a learner would continue

to study every time tuition was due. In other *buxibans*, every semester's tuition of usually either three or six months required consideration as to whether circumstances were likely to change (government regulation meant that once studies had commenced very little tuition need ever be returned), whereas with our strategy the consideration was focused on the continued learning. Zhan (2014) makes exactly the same observation about the return of tuition. It is therefore all the more surprising that other *buxibans* did not realize the benefits of avoiding these disputes. It is possible that such a strategy may be hard to implement within the franchise-*buxiban* business model where every branch must adhere to the same rules and where many franchise owners focus primarily on the number of enrolled students and income generated. This is an example of the shortsighted goals that is another feature of the data.

5.2 Role of NESTs

It might be expected that codes relating to NESTs would be associated with linguistic value within the classroom through their experience of authentic language (Chun, 2014), but it is noteworthy that this is not the case. According to the data in this research, NESTs' value lay largely outside the classroom as important foci of attention, with less attention, value and expectations within the classroom. The emphasis being on the importance of NESTs' visible presence rather than what they actually do while present.

> I was asked to arrive early and to sit in the porch area as learners arrive in order to be seen by parents and act as an advertisement. I refused.
> (Extract from data, Appendix 1, Anecdote 20)

NESTs also play an important role in franchise *buxibans*' marketing.

> TV advertising for franchise *buxibans* for elementary-school aged learners emphasized 'fun' with catchphrases such as 'Easy English' – no effort required just spend time with a NEST and English acquisition will naturally occur.
> (Extract from data, Appendix 1, Anecdote 6)

This use of television advertisements not only supports the narrative that NESTs are superior to NNESTs, but also that CLT is best taught by NESTs. The result is that the two codes within the data for this theme that relate to teaching – 'parents' belief in the superiority of NESTs' and 'idea that CLT best taught by NESTs' – are in fact 'false narratives'.

As franchise *buxibans* exaggerate the importance of NESTs, it is vital that they have them present.

> My first 'teaching' experience in Taiwan was a 'show class' for the opening of a new franchise *buxiban* where they needed a NEST. A free English activity was set up with fun games and prizes with the aim of attracting new students.
>   (Extract from data, Appendix 1, Anecdote 1)

For the opening of new branches, it is so important that they have NESTs present that it doesn't even matter if the NESTs actually usually work for them or not.

There can be little doubt that franchise *buxibans* exploit their size and organizational ability in order to recruit NESTs directly from inner circle countries and then leverage this supply as a selling point. Independent *buxibans* are handicapped not only by being restricted to recruiting locally, but also by the itinerant type of NESTs that this is likely to involve. What is interesting about franchise *buxibans* is the contradictory narratives that are offered regarding NESTs. On the one hand, in Taiwan to prospective parents, franchise *buxibans* emphasis their size, number of branches, longstanding professionalism and foreign 'white' teachers (Chang F.R., 2019) – most of which are irrelevant factors in education. At the same time as recruiting NESTs from abroad while emphasizing the fun, exotic, pressure free, money-making adventure that does not require knowledge of teaching and even minimize mention of the actual teaching in advertisements (Reuecker and Ives, 2015).

It appears that franchise *buxibans* are, not only content with the common parental discourse that NESTs are superior to NNESTs, but even seek to perpetuate the myth. They may inadvertently be facilitated in this by government policy as the ministry of education also recruit NESTs for mainstream education. The nuance that government schools have higher entry requirements, and that they are recruiting NESTs, not because they are superior to NNESTs, but to alleviate a teacher shortage (Chang, 2016), is probably not understood by most parents. The ability to recruit sufficient NESTs and then, as illustrated in the findings, to place them in highly visible roles is undoubtably an important facet in explaining the dominant presence of franchise *buxibans*.

Parents qualification to make well informed decisions on their children's education has been questioned by Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe (1995). And in a situation where *buxibans* inevitably 'talk

up' the ability of their NESTs regardless of their background, most parents are also unlikely to be able to differentiate between 'backpacker' type NESTs and those with more professional qualities, especially when franchise *buxibans* prefer NESTs, as noted in the anecdote below, with neither prior experience nor local language skills – making communication between NESTs and the majority of parents impossible.

> Some franchises do not hire locally. They prefer new inexperienced recruits from abroad who do not have their own ideas rather than NESTs with prior teaching experience.
>
> (Extract from data, Appendix 1, Anecdote 10)

I do however have much sympathy for the situation that parents find themselves in. If I wished my child to learn a foreign language that I could not speak, and I was offered a choice of teachers between a native speaker of that language and a local teacher who had qualifications in that language, but who I was personally unable to assess, I would feel unqualified to make the decision. In such a scenario the safe choice is inevitably the native speaker.

This theme was the second lowest ranked of all the themes after the second allocation of codes. Considering the importance of NESTs to franchise *buxibans*, this is surprising. It would appear that although NESTs are crucial to franchise *buxibans*' operation, once there, their role is quite isolated from other aspects of *buxiban* operations.

I have to note here that I was undoubtably also a beneficiary of parental preference for NESTs. I liked to think that my school's success was based on my teaching ability; my understanding of mainstream education's systems and syllabi; and my ability to speak Mandarin and teach grammar in a similar way to a NNEST. However, it may well be that simply who I was was of considerably more importance than I previously acknowledged. If I were a NNEST, would it have been as easy to open my own *buxiban*? In this respect, some of the reasons for the success of my *buxiban* may have much in common with that of franchise *buxibans*.

5.3 Misaligned goals

This theme was ranked second after the second allocation of codes – illustrating its importance. The theme was dominated by the category of 'Goals of *buxiban*' with forty-three of its fifty-two codes and this category was dominated by codes with negative connotations such as 'money not education as goal' and 'shortsighted goals'. While it is interesting to note that both teachers and students may have individual goals that they do not share with other stakeholders, these were relatively small findings within the research data. The data indicates that of much greater importance is the potential differences in goals between *buxibans* and parents.

It cannot be assumed that *buxibans* and parents share the same simple goal – the successful education of the students. As noted in the Literature Review (see 2.2), goals of private LTOs are hard to define and open to interpretation (White, Martin, Stimson and Hodge, 1991).

> All buxibans had students that attained good results. The problem was not the achievement of the good students, but the lack of achievement of less able students. As long as their parents continued to pay their tuition, they remained in the classroom and their parents were unlikely to be informed.
> (Extract from data, Appendix 1, Anecdote 14)

> The only test was at the end of each semester. A big deal was made of the test which was ten oral questions tested one-to-one by the NEST. All ten question were the same for each student and printed at the back of the students' textbooks. It was almost impossible to fail.
> (Extract from data, Appendix 1, Anecdote 9)

Both anecdote 14 and anecdote 9 are good examples that illustrate differences in goals. The *buxiban*'s goal is to keep the students as long as possible and in order to achieve this attempt to control the narrative and restrict possibly negative feedback while on the other hand it can be assumed that parents' goals include their child making progress at language acquisition.

Parents are also not one homogenous group that share the same goals and ideas on how to achieve them.

> Another NEST recounted to me that his *buxiban* had failed because he couldn't please all the competing demands of parents.
> (Extract from data, Appendix 1, Anecdote 36)

It is therefore not surprising that when the relationship between parents/students and institutions becomes that of customers and service providers, and there is money involved, tensions arise in what should ideally be a cooperative endeavour. This is precisely what my research findings indicated.

Another good example of misaligned goals is how the ending of studies is arranged.

> *Buxiban* classes were often open ended and the owners weren't happy whenever learners left and always attempted to persuade learners not to leave. The inevitable result was that every parent/student had to eventually choose a time to leave and many left on an unhappy note, even often after many successful years at the institution.
>
> (Extract from data, Appendix 1, Anecdote 27)

Whenever the above situation arises there is tension in the relationship at a critical juncture. Through the coding of 'shortsighted goals' within the category of 'Goals of *buxiban*', there are indications that *buxibans* see parents as 'one-time customers'. I believe this to be very shortsighted. The reputation of a *buxiban* is far more important than a little extra income from keeping a student a little longer. It is my opinion that the ending of studies is as important a time as the commencement of studies. Manage it smoothly and happily, and a *buxiban* gains far more in long-term reputation than it loses in short-term income. Not applying pressure on parents to stay, but instead understanding parents' wishes as to what is best for their child also enhances the trust that was discussed in 5.1, aligns goals and enables open and honest communication with parents about plans for their child's studies.

Achieving more alignment in goals and honest communication with parents has the important effect of improving reputation. The research data highlighted the importance of reputation. Franchise *buxiban's* reputation was a corporate image that emanated from the central organization, not the individual franchisees. Whereas my *buxiban* did not rely on advertising, name recognition or forming strategic relationships with those we believed we could benefit from to recruit new students. We relied on local reputation and word of mouth. This may have been hard to initiate and required patience; however, once established meant that little effort needed to be spent on student recruitment and greater effort could be put into teaching.

Buxibans make money by having students enrolled, not by directly achieving educational results – results which are often subjective, hard to quantify and especially for elementary-school-aged students largely unknown. What mattered was not how much/well students were learning, but how much/well they appeared to be learning. Control of this narrative was important. Franchise *buxibans* rely on slick advertising, professional textbooks and standardized modern premises and equipment to create this image. This cannot be replicated by a small independent *buxiban*. However, a vision can still be created as to what students can achieve and how they will get there. I believe that we were able to successfully communicate this simple goal to parents and that that vision was a suitable substitute that allowed us to compete with franchises.

This sub-chapter has suggested that there are different ways for *buxibans* in the context to succeed. Franchise *buxibans*, with money as a goal, seek to make as much as they can from each student and then use membership of their franchise and its organizational ability to help replace that student. Whereas for independent *buxibans*, such as mine, reputation is more important in recruiting students and that reputation comes from closer alignment of goals with parents. However, when considering the creation of an image or vision of the eventual goal, my *buxiban* may have had much in common with franchise *buxibans*.

5.4 Teaching methodology, practice and assessment

The most striking aspect of this theme is the low number of codes that its categories represented with only seven codes that only occur a total of eleven times. The paucity of this data is a finding in itself. It was ranked last of all the themes after both the initial and second allocation of codes, emphasizing its disconnected nature from the other themes. For an industry that is based on teaching, this appears surprising. It is almost like the actual teaching is an after-thought rather than central to decision-making.

> Franchise *buxibans* have very well-organized syllabi with centrally and professionally prepared textbooks, teaching guides and lesson plans that often cannot be deviated from.
>
> <div align="right">(Extract from data, Appendix 1, Anecdote 30)</div>

The result is that individual branches of franchises do not have to devote much time and effort to organizing the teaching. This is especially important for NESTs who may be under the impression that the planning of lessons is not one of their responsibilities.

If one were to ask almost any franchise *buxiban* for elementary-school-aged students in Taiwan what their teaching methodology is, the answer would almost certainly be "communicative" – "we teach students to speak English", but very little detail of what that actually means. If pressed, a vague claim may be made that modern methodology supports that language acquisition takes place when a child is placed in an English-speaking environment, and that is the role of NESTs.

> Franchise *buxibans* encourage the perception what teaching skills are not really required for teaching CLT as it is focused on speaking and that current teaching methodology validates the importance of simply being exposed to English for language acquisition to take place.

> (Extract from data, Appendix 1, Anecdote 16)

It is my opinion that CLT, and parents lack of understanding of exactly what it is, is susceptible to exploitation by franchise *buxibans*. It allows franchise *buxibans* to reconcile the disconnect between the two opposing narratives as to the role of NESTs that was discussed in 5.2 – one presented to parents and the other to prospective NEST recruits.

At *buxibans* for older age groups of students – not so dominated by franchises – teaching methodology is practically nonexistent. *Buxibans* are largely exam preparation centres. In this respect my *buxiban* was an exception. We had both elementary and junior-high-school aged students, but we did not mirror either mainstream education's syllabus or exams, and at the end of studies we encouraged our students to sit an international English exam (Cambridge PET) rather than Taiwan's own and ubiquitously tested GEPT – assessments that were designed to correspond to stages of mainstream education and largely reflect its syllabi. My school believed that by teaching the course I had developed its students were able to successfully independently navigate mainstream education's English courses.

The syllabus I developed was a compromise. I did not teach using what would be considered a modern communication course through a task-based syllabus, nor did I teach a form-based, exam-focused syllabus typical in Taiwan for older age groups. I recognized that my students

were in Taiwan and had to live with, and thrive in an exam orientated educational system, but I also wished them to learn to use English to communicate both through speaking and writing. I also understood that they were attending my *buxiban* often after a long day at school, and were used to lessons that included both active and passive participation. During the main three-year block of the syllabus, lessons consisted of a combination of quiet periods of testing, form-focused instruction and communicative tasks that attempted to find a balance between the two extremes.

For elementary-school-aged students an analysis of assessment followed a similar route to that of methodology. The previously discussed anecdote 9 described how franchise *buxibans* appeared to deliberately limit assessment. It is my opinion that franchise *buxibans* conveniently portray CLT as being unsuitable for testing, and in this way 'legitimately' limit assessment and maintain control of the narrative that everyone is learning successfully. The irony is that once students reach junior high school the opposite is true and exam results become everything. This disconnect between stages of education has been widely noted (Lin and Byram, 2016). As with teaching methodology, I attempted to reach a compromise. I have always been impressed by the ability of most Taiwanese students to memorize – an ability I am lacking. This is often portrayed in Western literature as a negative at the expense of understanding (Tan, 2011). I have never seen it this way, and would instead describe it as an added bonus that should be utilized. I also realized that I only saw my students for a short time a couple of times a week, and so if they were to learn successfully, they must also study at home. By testing every lesson, I was able to both leverage students' ability to memorize and also to make sure they were preparing at home. However, my 'grammar' tests were also designed to be flexible and partially communicative as there was never a set answer. I tested more than I would have liked to, but it was a successful compromise that ensured all my students were at approximately the same level, prepared them for the later high-stakes exams of mainstream education and leveraged the abilities that they already possessed.

The classroom practices within my *buxiban* can be described as practical compromises that accommodated the local context. I have observed a number of NEST-owned *buxibans* that insisted on implementing Western only theory on how education should be conducted and appeared to, slightly arrogantly, believe that they were there to educate the locals. None were

very successful. The other successful NEST-owned *buxibans* that I have encountered all operated with a similar understanding of local context and needs.

5.5 Organization of the classroom and learners

This theme ranked second after the initial allocation of codes, but fell to fourth after the second despite a small increase in codes. The theme highlights how little influence teachers within franchise buzibans have over what happens in their classroom. Such previously discussed issues as the combining of classes (anecdote 5), the turnover of students (anecdote 5) and the changing of teachers (anecdote 22) all greatly affect the classroom and how teachers perform their duties, but have little control over. Even with issues that they do have some control over such as the behaviour of students, they are still constrained by the ideas of franchise owners who are often not from a teaching background. I good example of this is the previously discussed anecdote 11 regarding a student who swore in class.

As pointed out in the Literature Review (see 2.5), there is little agreement as to what good classroom management is and the role of the teacher can vary between that of controller and facilitator. I am in agreement with Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) that Taiwanese teachers usually see themselves as leaders in control of their classrooms. It may well be that limiting the power of teachers in franchise *buxibans* is another example of shortsighted goals that do not take full advantage of teachers' potential. In my *buxiban*, being both the teacher and the owner meant that everyone knew that what was decided in the classroom was final; whereas teachers in franchise *buxibans* have very limited power.

Planning and organization within the classroom were shown to be recurring themes of well managed classrooms in the Literature Review (see 2.5), as was teaching that followed routines. Here both my *buxiban* and franchise *buxibans* had a lot in common. Both had carefully prepared syllabi that were organized to the level of individual lessons. There may have been less flexibility in franchise *buxibans* to accommodate the unexpected, but both followed a preordained route that repeated similar routines each lesson.

It is regarding the behaviour and attitude of students to the learning situation, as described by Gardner (2009), that I believe there was a greater difference between my *buxiban* and franchise

buxibans. We did not tolerate bad behaviour from any of our students, regardless of how high an achiever a student was or who their parents were.

> Many *buxibans* targeted parents of certain professions such local school teachers. They believed that if they can attract a teacher, that teacher may then introduce their students.
>
> (Extract from data, Appendix 1, Anecdote 15)

It is true that all *buxibans* had students who attained good results (see previously discussed anecdote 14); however, another facet that I believe differentiated my *buxiban* from that of franchises was not the results of those students regarded as high achievers – in all likelihood these students would achieve good results wherever they studied. Instead, it is the achievement of the other students that I was more interested in. I ensured that all within my classroom achieved comparable results and most importantly all students knew what was expected of them. This was achieved by ensuring that all prepared and passed the tests each lesson, by keeping parents truthfully informed as to their child's progress and for those that struggled suggested (and possibly insisted on) what could be done to alleviate the problem – and importantly this was done from the student's perspective, not the *buxibans*, and could include suggesting that it was in the student's best interest to drop to a lower year-group or to presently not continue studying with us. To demonstrate our commitment to a student's best interest when a student dropped to a lower year-group, we would temporarily suspend payment of tuition.

It is interesting to consider my experience of a teaching seminar that I attended at the original first branch of a franchise where the franchises syllabus and teaching methods were developed.

> The seminar was held by NESTs. It was a completely different to my previous experience of this franchise. It had long-term, motivated, professional NESTs and well controlled and motivated learners with a positive attitude to learning.
>
> (Extract from data, Appendix 1, Anecdote 12)

I was surprised at the attitude of the students at this original branch. It was very different to anything I had encountered up to that point, but it was similar to what I later observed in the students at my *buxiban*. It is possible that the students' experiences were similar. I can speculate that both benefitted from a micro-context, as described by Dörnyei (1994) in the Literature Review (see 2.5), that was different to the experiences of many of their peers.

5.6 *Buxiban* management

Of the six themes this is undoubtably the most interesting and noteworthy, especially how its ranking increased during the second allocation of codes. After the initial allocation, the top two themes were 'Relationship with parents' and 'Management of the classroom'. However, they dropped to third and fourth respectively after the second allocation. In contrast, the third placed 'Misaligned goals' rose to second place, and the fourth placed '*Buxiban* management' rose to its dominant first place. '*Buxiban* management' was unique in receiving codes from categories representing every other theme during the second allocation. In total, an additional twenty-four codes were added resulting in thirty-one out of the entire fifty-three codes linking to this theme (Table 5.1). In comparison only a total of five codes were added to all the other categories of the other five themes. This was mainly a result of the number of codes additionally allocated from 'Misaligned goals', 'Relationship with parents' and 'Role of NESTs'. While the importance of the theme was not surprising, the unidirectional way that codes were allocated during the second allocation was not anticipated and established this theme's central position as the dominant theme that linked many of the themes together.

The findings suggest that a significant amount of time and effort goes into promoting franchise *buxibans*; the recruitment of both new students and NESTs; and the preparation of the syllabus and teaching manuals. These are all largely centrally managed endeavours that allow those that purchase a franchise to not necessarily require a teaching background. The result is large variations in management and teaching outcomes for *buxibans* even within different branches of the same franchise – as illustrated by my own experiences at different branches of franchise A. Franchise *buxibans* had better organization than most independent *buxibans*; however, in my experience the actual teaching and learner outcomes were remarkably similar. The key for independent *buxibans* was having a vision of what they wanted to achieve and having the syllabus and textbooks to achieve it. Simply buying textbooks from publishers' sales-teams that regularly visit independent *buxibans* would not lead to success and leave independent *buxibans* unable to compete with franchises.

Ranking 1st allocation	Theme	Number of codes 1st allocation	Percentage of codes 1st allocation	Number of codes after 2nd allocation	Percentage of codes after 2nd allocation	Ranking after 2nd allocation	Percentage change
1	Relationship with parents	50	28%	50	18%	3	-10%
2	Organization of the classroom and learners	38	21%	40	14%	4	-7%
3	Misaligned Goals	37	21%	52	19%	2	-2%
4	Buxiban management	29	16%	109	39%	1	+23%
5	The role of NESTs	14	8%	16	6%	5	-2%
6	Teaching methodology practice and assessment	11	6%	11	4%	6	-2%

Table 5.1: Numbers and frequency of codes within themes (counting each occurrence of a code).

Another aspect of the strength of the franchise buxiban model is in their recruitment of both students and NESTs. Their central organization can spend large amounts of money on marketing, especially on television advertisements. They are also able to set up overseas recruitment centres that recruit NESTs directly from their home countries. Independent *buxibans* cannot compete with either of these. Ling (2007) suggests that franchise *buxibans* may find it easier to recruit new students than to keep those that they already have. I suggest that this may also be true of their NESTs. Franchise *buxibans* provide little opportunities for career advancement and, as previously noted in anecdote 10, may even prefer less experienced NESTs. Few NESTs stay for much longer than a year or two, and putting effort into retaining them may produce little benefit. I posit that it is easier for franchises to recruit new NESTs, train them just enough to survive and then replace them when they leave than to attempt to have a more professional pool of NESTs.

Organizational structures of both franchise and most independent *buxibans* are a simplified version of that described by White et al. (2008) (Figure 2.2) that I agree suffer from limited

communication between the customer-facing teachers and receptionists. I believe that my *buxiban* unintentionally created a structure more in common with White, Hockley, Jansen and Laughner's inverted organigram (Figure 2.3) with the owner in a customer-facing role.

The owning of a *buxiban* by a businessperson owner who lacks understanding of teaching and learning can result in some bizarre management decisions.

> A rival *buxiban* (not a franchise) attempted to 'steal' an entire class of mine. The parents were offered a class at a fraction of the usual tuition. The plan was to enter the class for Taiwan's GEPT and use the results as an advertisement.
>   (Extract from data, Appendix 1, Anecdote 31)

In this example the owner believed that what he lacked was successful students and so the solution was to 'buy' some to act as advertisements; however, what was really lacking was the organization and teachers that would create successful students. The owner did not understand the link between the process of teaching and the product of successful learners, and quickly failed. This example was also facilitated by the result of a failure in management. The owner of the rival *buxiban* knew that there were many unhappy parents at the *buxiban* that I worked at as the tuition had just been unjustifiably raised as has already been discussed in relation to anecdote 29.

For me the progression from teacher to *buxiban* owner would not have been easy, and possibly impossible, without the middle step of managing a *buxiban*. My experience of *buxiban* management was uncommon, especially for a NEST, and this may explain why I have observed that many other NESTs struggle in establishing their own *buxibans* – they may understand the teaching side, but rarely do they understand *buxiban* management in the local context.

5.7 Re-thinking Borg's conceptualization of teacher cognition

My early teaching career was considerably different to that of most career teachers. I missed out on the usual step of teacher training between my own schooling and the commencement of practice. This means that my initial practice was especially influenced by my own schooling and learning experiences until I had enough teaching experience that I was able to reflect on. I therefore do not believe that the Borg's interpretation of teacher cognition that was summarized

in the Literature Review 2.1 (Figure 2.1) is an accurate representation of my experience. I believe that a better illustration of my own personal experience is Figure 5.1.

Extensive experience of classrooms which defined early cognitions and shaped my early perception of initial teaching experiences.

Affected existing cognitions either unconsciously or through conscious reflection, increasingly overtime, until an equilibriam with own schooling is reached.

Schooling → Practice teaching

Beliefs, knowledge theories, attitudes, images, assumtions, metaphors, concepts, perspectives.

Teacher cognition

About teaching, teachers, leaning, students, subject matter curricula, materials, instructional activities, self

Contextual factors → Interface → Classroom practices

Influence practice either by modifying cognitions or directly.

Acknowledgement that contextual factors and teacher cognition often require compromise in classroom practices.

The interaction of cognitions with contextual factors, syllabus and learning goals.

Figure 5.1: Adaptation of Borg's teacher cognition (Borg, 1997 cited in Borg 2003, p.82) (adaptations highlighted).

In Figure 5.1, I have removed Borg's 'Professional coursework' and replaced it with 'Practice teaching' – moving it from Borg's position as a subsection of 'Classroom practices'. This is in order to highlights the initial importance of my schooling and then the growing importance of experience from teaching practice until an equilibrium was reached between the two. I have also

altered Borg's diagram in one other respect. Borg suggests that context either modifies cognition or affects practice directly causing "incongruence between cognition and practice" (Borg, 1997 cited in Borg 2003, p.82). This seems to be a rather negative way of thinking. I have therefore added 'Interface' between 'Contextual factors' and 'Classroom practice'. 'Interface' recognizes that it may be necessary for teachers to acknowledge, understand and accept compromise between beliefs and teaching practice instead of expecting changes in beliefs. Borg appears to make the assumption that teachers were schooled in and now practise in the same context. This is unrealistic. Teachers, especially teachers of English as a foreign language, are likely to practise in a context other than that in which they were schooled, and such teachers are also likely to move between a number of different contexts during their teaching career. As noted in the Literature Review (2.1) beliefs are unlikely to adapt so fast (Pajares, 1992); therefore, in order to operate successfully, there needs to be an interface between contextual factors and classroom practice.

5.8 Concluding comments

This chapter has discussed the findings of this research project and has explored the links between my teaching experiences and the strategies of my *buxiban*. It has also uncovered links between the themes that emerged from this research while exploring my own cognitive development as a teacher. It has also established that there was a lot more in common between my *buxiban* and franchise *buxibans* than was anticipated. This contributes to providing answers to the research questions in the following chapter.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

This research project set out with two research questions – one exploring the origins for the strategies and practices of my *buxiban* and the second the nature of successful relationships between stakeholders. I had deemed the two questions as separate, but this research project suggests that there is much in common.

6.1 The research questions

6.1.1 First research question

First research question: What were the teaching/managing experiences that led to the strategies and practices of my English-language-teaching buxiban in Taiwan?

My *buxiban* was established very much with a rejection of the values and strategies of franchise *buxibans* in mind. Many of my *buxiban*'s strategies can be directly linked to my previous teaching/managing experiences – strategies such as the returning of tuition, never combining classes, not attempting to persuade students not to leave, and the behaviour and attitude that we expected of students. How I previously experienced these issues being handled often appeared to me to be not only shortsighted, but also illogical in all but the strictest business sense.

This research project has, however, led me to believe that in other ways the differences in practices between my *buxiban* and franchise *buxibans* were much more nuanced and maybe I had learnt more from working at them than I previously acknowledged:

- Both relied on NESTs.
- Both my *buxiban* and franchises benefitted from clear well-organized syllabi and text books that set out a clear pathway.
- Reputation was important for both my *buxiban* and for franchises, although the type of reputation and how it was generated was considerably different.
- Both shared in having, and being able to communicate, a vision of what could be achieved.

In many ways, franchise *buxibans* have more control over the macro-context, but my *buxiban* was more than able to make up for this with control of its micro-context as described by Dörnyei

(1994) (see 2.5) . It was able to succeed as it was small and slightly unique and had found a niche in the market much as that described by (Murgatroyd and Morgan, 1992). Had I wished to expand and open other branches., it would have inevitably become mechanistic and formalized as described by (White et al., 2008). It would have been impossible without sacrificing what made it successful – its learner outcomes, reputation, stable teacher and parental support.

Rather than only looking at the first research question solely from the perspective of individual learning experiences, it is beneficial to also look at how I reached the point that I was able to organize and run my own *buxiban* from a broader cognitive development perspective as discussed in 5.7 'Re-thinking Borg conceptualization of teacher cognition'. My journey from 'backpacker' teacher to *buxiban* owner had a number of steps without which I doubt I could have been successful. However, it was not my teaching experiences alone that led to the strategies of my school, the beliefs about teaching that I brought from my own schooling remain intact and my own shift after a couple of years in Taiwan from integration with the NEST community to integration with local society undoubtably also played a role in my understanding of the context.

6.1.2 Second research question

Second research question: What is the nature of relationships between stakeholders (owners, parents and teachers) within English language buxibans in Taiwan?

This dissertation has researched and discussed a number of different stakeholders who are involved with *buxibans* and has highlighted their often-differing goals:

- Business owners who often have little understanding of education and view a *buxiban* as a means to make money.
- Teachers (mainly NNESTs) who may feel powerless even within their own classroom.
- NESTs who are often in it for the money and exotic experience.
- Parents, who are not one homogenous group, who hold much power, but are often unqualified to make the decisions they must make.
- Students, for whose benefit *buxibans* should exist, but who often seem to be forgotten by this business of education.

Building a harmonious, constructive and successful relationship between all stakeholders for the benefit of all is not easy, but it is possible. All stakeholders need to trust each other, and this trust goes beyond the previously discussed lack of trust between parents and owners (see 5.1) – owners need to trust that their teachers know what they are doing and that sometimes issues arise that may result in losing students. Young learners know, understand and usually fulfill their role when they are in a safe, trusting environment where they know what is expected of them. Both parents and owners need to trust, and that trust has to be built by actions, not rhetoric.

How itinerant NESTs fit into this narrative is harder to establish, and may well be impossible to. NESTs are at the heart of franchise *buxibans*. They are central to how they operate, how they advertise and the face that they wish the public to see (Chang F.R., 2019) – without them it is hard to see how the franchise model would survive. However, for non-itinerant NESTs who wish to make a career of teaching, there is no reason why their role is any different to that of NNESTs.

From the perspective of my *buxiban*, the roles of stakeholders was considerably simplified – the owner, teacher and NEST were the same person which meant that the relationship of trust that needed to be established was that between *buxiban* and parents. That trust was established by a combination of strength – of clear principles that the *buxiban* stuck to – and stability – that the parents knew that what they had signed up to would be accomplished.

6.2 Research limitations

There are a number of limitations with narrative research. The most obvious issue is of biased data (Anderson, 2006) as it is, by its nature, a subjective, retrospective account of reality that has been reconstructed from memory, and memory suffers from distortions and memories of past events may be coloured simply by being viewed through the eyes of the present (Freeman, 2012). This bias is personal in nature, as in narrative enquiry the author is both the subject and the object in the matter with the result inevitably being a personal view (ibid.) with possible vested interests (Punch, 2009).

It is not only during the data generation phase of narrative research that limitations may occur, as not only will no two records of events ever be exactly the same, but also no two analyses of the same events will be either (Jackson, 1987 cited in Atkinson, 2011).

These limitations cannot be entirely avoided, but this does not mean that they can be overlooked. They are limitations that I have acknowledged and attempted to minimize during the data collection and data analysis phases of this research.

This research, its discussion and its conclusions are my opinions and should be considered with that in mind. It would have been useful and interesting if the views of some parents and former students could have been included in order to get the perspective of others. It would also have been fascinating to explore the beliefs of other NESTs who were also owners of *buxibans* in Taiwan to compare their experiences and how they organize their *buxibans* with my own. Unfortunately, this is beyond the scope of this research.

6.3 Concluding thoughts

'Going against the grain' in this dissertation's title was chosen in order to highlight that many of my ideas about teaching and management ran contrary to prevailing customs – the acceptance of the ubiquity and mediocrity of franchise *buxibans* and the impossibility of successfully competing with them other than by imitation. It was also a rejection of two extremes - local teaching customs of *buxiban* test-preparation classes and Western based theory of CLT that does not take local norms and context into consideration. This paper has shown that business success and successful learner outcome do not necessarily need to be in conflict and if carefully managed can even form a successful symbiotic relationship.

Theory, whether of teaching methodology, assessment practices or of learning, is still just theory until put into practice under the practical realities that all language teaching institutions have to work under. Likewise accepted wisdom on the running of private LTOs, does not mean that there are not alternatives. English teaching institutions need to find a balance between theory, beliefs, personal teaching/learning experience and context. Once that 'sweet spot' has been discovered, if one does, and sticks to, what one believes to be right then success can be achieved both for learners within the institution and for the institution as a business.

This paper does not advocate that the discussed method of *buxiban* management is the right method for other such *buxibans* to follow, nor that it would even be successful in a different

context or time. What it does show is that just because everyone else is doing it one way does not mean that there are not alternatives for those that dare to do what they believe in. What those alternatives are will undoubtably vary from context to context and over time.

Now at the end of my career, I wonder if many of the opportunities that I benefited from to learn and experience teaching 'in the raw' still exist for those starting on their NEST teaching career today. The 'wild west' of unregulated language schools employing the 'backpacker' teacher has largely disappeared from Taiwan. NESTs are now routinely employed in almost all mainstream government schools (at least in the cities), and *buxibans* now usually only hire 'legal' and at least minimally qualified NESTs. Standards of teaching may not be any higher, but standards of organization and adherence to regulations certainly are.

And on a closing note, during the writing of this dissertation, I have repeatedly found myself disappearing into the hidden autoethnographic worlds of a great diversity of English teaching practitioners from all over the world. It has been a journey as much through their teaching lives as it has been through mine. The overwhelming theme of all our stories has been that wherever we come from and whoever we are teaching, we are all faced with the same dilemma – how to do the best for both ourselves and our learners within the confines of our teaching context. I have learnt as much, if not more, from their narratives as from any academic textbook, as stories are something we remember long after we've turned the page – and that, in the end, is the power of autoethnography.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Data anecdotes (ordered)

1. (Job 1 (see Appendix 2)) My first ever 'teaching' experience in Taiwan was a 'show class' for a new franchise *buxiban* where they needed a NEST. Almost all elementary-school-age *buxibans* use this method to attract new parents and students where a free activity is set up with fun games and prizes with foreign teachers in attendance where the aim is to entertain potential students so that they say they want to go to this *buxiban*. These activities are very misleading as to what studying a language entails and may also lead to young learners associating foreign teachers as 'entertainers' instead of 'real' teachers.

   Codes – show classes, franchise *buxiban* marketing, value of NESTs, attract new parents, entertain not educate, shortsighted goals, misleading educational goals, money not education as goal, students' attitude to learning environment, parents' lack of understanding of foreign language acquisition

2. (Jobs 3,4,5,6,11 (see Appendix 2) and outside sources) Almost all *buxibans*, especially franchise *buxibans*) were on main streets – the most prized locations being directly opposite a mainstream-education school. These premises are the most expensive to buy/rent.

   Codes – franchise *buxiban* marketing, name recognition, prized locations, convenience for parents, buxiban reputation

3. (Jobs 3,4,5,11 (see Appendix 2) and outside sources) Almost every *buxiban* (both franchise and independent) I have seen would let potential learners sit in on a class and watch or attend the first lesson of a new class in order to persuade parents before they pay.

   Codes – franchise *buxiban* marketing, attract new parents, show classes, money not education as goal, disruption to classroom

4. (Jobs 3,4,5,11 (see Appendix 2) outside sources) I observed that every franchise *buxiban* and most independent *buxibans* teamed their NESTs with NNESTs with the NNESTs present in class the whole time even when the NESTs were teaching. NNESTs inevitably were responsible for the class and NESTs were relegated to the role of 'guest' teacher despite being paid more. NESTs had high status, high profiles, highly visible roles and were of high value to franchise *buxibans*, but expectations of their role in the classroom was not high.

   Codes – use of teaching resources in the classroom, cooperation between NESTs and NNESTs, status of NESTs, expectations of NESTs, visibility of NESTs

5. (Jobs 3,4,5,11 (see Appendix 2)) In almost every *buxiban* (both franchise and independent). I worked at there was a constant need to attract new students. Little thought was given to the management of classes. The idea was to get the learners in. If the class is not sustainable then it can be combined with another class later. If the learner already has some English ability than add the learner to an established class. The result was a constant turnover of students and the combining of classes for reasons other than learning.

   Codes – franchise *buxiban* marketing, attract new students, combining of classes, turnover of students, money not education as goal, mixed learner outcomes

6. (Outside sources) TV advertising for franchise *buxibans* for elementary-school aged learners emphasised 'fun' with catchphrases such as 'Easy English' – no effort required just spend time with a NEST and English acquisition will naturally occur. I found these adverts misleading to parents, disrespectful to teachers (especially NNESTs) and very unhelpful for the general understanding of English language teaching in Taiwan.

   Codes – value of NESTs, attracting parents, franchise *buxiban* marketing, parents' lack of understanding of foreign language acquisition, students' attitude to learning environment

7. (Jobs 3,4,5,6,11,12/17 (see Appendix 2) and outside sources) Every *buxiban* (franchised and independent) for elementary school aged learners that I have ever observed targeted 1st grade learners at the start of elementary school. They believed that attempting to enroll them at the first possible opportunity was the best chance to attract them. No thought was given as to whether this was in the best interests of the child or the best time for a learner to start learning English. Also if a student had learnt before a place would always be offered in an existing class. I have never witnessed any other *buxiban* refuse any learner who came through the door – a place would always be offered regardless of age, ability level or the student's attitude.

   Codes – franchise *buxiban* marketing, *buxiban*/parents different goals, best interest of students, attract new students, students' attitude to learning environment, parents' lack of understanding of foreign language acquisition

8. (Jobs 3,4,5,11,12/17 (see Appendix 2) and outside sources). Every *buxiban* (franchised and independent) I have seen set keeping students as long as possible as their main goal (after attracting students). It was very rare for parents to receive any negative feedback or bad news from a *buxiban* that could jeopardize the continued attendance of a student.

   Codes – keeping students as goal, restriction of negative feedback to parents

9. (Jobs 3,4,5,11 (see Appendix 2) and outside sources) In franchise *buxibans*, I noticed the near total lack of assessment. This should be surprising in an exam-oriented teaching culture. Any tests that there were were designed to be passed. For example, at franchise A the only test was at the end of each semester. A big deal was made of the test and a whole lesson given over to it. The test was ten oral questions tested one-to-one by the NEST. All ten questions were the same for each student and printed at the back of the students' textbooks. It was practically impossible to fail except deliberately. The lack of assessment was justified by CLT being unsuitable for testing and they didn't want to pressure the students. I viewed it as a convenience to avoid highlighting any lack of attainment, to avoid having to communicate any potentially negative feedback to parents and most importantly to keep students as long as possible.

    Codes – restriction of negative feedback to parents, lack of assessment, smooth and risk averse operation, money not education as goal

10. (Job 6 (see Appendix 2) and outside sources) Some franchises, especially franchise B, only hire locally when they are forced to (I was told this in an interview). They appear to much prefer inexperienced new recruits from abroad who do not have their own ideas than more experienced NESTs locally recruited.

    Codes – expectations of NESTs, smooth and risk averse operation

11. (Job 11 (see Appendix 2)) A student swears in class. I immediately tell her to leave the classroom. I intend to leave her outside for a couple of minutes and then go and speak to her. I was not even angry as it was not aimed at anyone, but I wanted the whole class to see the standard of behaviour I expected in my classroom. Within 30 seconds the businesswoman franchise owner brought the student back in and said that her parents had paid money for her to attend and she cannot be told to leave the classroom.

    Codes – behaviour of students, restriction of negative feedback to parents, parent/*buxiban* disputes, teacher/*buxiban* different goals, students' attitude to learning environment, shortsighted goals, missed learning opportunity, money not education as goal

12. (Job 11 (see Appendix 2)) I spent a day at a teaching seminar at the original first branch of franchise A. The seminar was held by NESTs. It was at this *buxiban* where the syllabus and teaching methods were developed for the purchasers of franchises to follow. It was completely different to my previous experience of this franchise. It had long-term, motivated, professional NESTs and well controlled and motivated learners with a positive attitude to learning.

Codes – behaviour of students, students' attitude to learning environment, expectations of NESTs, control of students in classroom

13. (Jobs 3,5,11 (see Appendix 2) and outside sources) I noticed that in many *buxibans* (both franchise and independent) the focus was on the 'star' students, not on the lower achievers; for example, classes went at the pace of the good students, and the 'star' students got special treatment.

    Codes – reputation of *buxiban*, restriction of negative feedback to parents, different ability levels in same classroom, treating students differently, shortsighted goals, mixed learner outcomes

14. (Jobs 3,5,11 (see Appendix 2) and outside sources) I noticed that almost all *buxibans*, whether I considered the *buxiban* to teach well or poorly, had students that attained good results. The problem was not the achievement of the good students, but the lack of achievement of less able students and those that had no motivation for learning. As long as their parents continued to pay their tuition, they remained in the classroom and were very unlikely to face any consequences or their parents to be told about their lack of achievement.

    Codes – poor learner outcomes, restriction of negative feedback to parents, mixed learner outcomes, different ability levels in same classroom, treating students differently, shortsighted goals

15. (Jobs 3,4,5,11 (see Appendix 2) and outside sources) I observed that many *buxibans* (franchise and independent) targeted parents of certain professions such as local school teachers. They believe that if they can attract a teacher then the teacher may introduce the students that he/she teaches. In my *buxiban*, quite a few times we received calls enquiring about classes where the first thing the caller told us was that they were a teacher at a local school and appeared to assume that this would be of interest to us and may lead to preferable treatment. It did not.

    Codes – franchise *buxiban* marketing, attracting parents, treating parents differently

16. (Job 3,5,6,11,13 (see Appendix 2) and outside sources) I observe that Communicative Language Teaching is exploited by franchise *buxibans*. Little understanding of what CLT is and parents' belief in the perceived superiority of NESTs combine to allow franchise *buxibans* to get away with the use of unqualified/barely qualified NESTs. They encourage the misguided perception that teaching skills are not really required for teaching CLT as it is

focused on speaking and that current teaching methodology validates the importance of simply being exposed to English with a native speaker for language acquisition to take place.

Codes – parents' lack of understanding of foreign language acquisition, parents' belief in the superiority of NESTs, value of NESTs, encouragement of misleading beliefs, idea that CLT is best taught by NESTs

17. (Job 13 (see Appendix 2) and outside sources) Many after-school-'care' classes also try to teach English. But I have never seen it done successfully, even with teachers that I consider as competent. I observed two major issues. Firstly, the constant turnover of students. Secondly, their pool of students is too small to be able to divide into viable classes of similar age and ability. Also in many cases they do not use specialist English teachers, instead they sometimes expect the teachers who help learners with their homework to also teach English.

Codes – turnover of students, convenience for parents, unrealistic goals, poor learner outcomes, money not education as goal

18. (Jobs 3,5,6,11 (see Appendix 2) and outside sources) I noticed that, although similar, tuition varied between franchise *buxibans* and the tuition appeared to reflect the type of parents the franchise wished to attract. For example, a more expensive franchise's television advertisements (franchise B) focused on images of future professions and international study abroad. This *buxiban* appeared to target the professional class. While other less expensive *buxibans* focused on the 'fun and easy' learning of English. In reality each offered pretty much the same learning experience and learner outcomes to those who enrolled. It is my opinion that the more expensive *buxiban* was deliberately trying to make itself look slightly more exclusive. Upon opening my own *buxiban*, I received two contradictory pieces of advice. One – be cheaper than others to attract parents. Two – be expensive and get parents who want to come enough to be willing to pay more for it. I disagree with both concepts, but we chose to be at the lower end of the tuition range, not because we wanted to attract parents by price, but because we wanted to be affordable to the widest possible range of parents.

Codes – attract parents, mixed learner outcomes, parents' lack of understanding of foreign language acquisition

19. (Job 16 (see Appendix 2)) At a kindergarten, I was told that I was too severe and strict a teacher – "the learners are very young and will be afraid of you". There was one boy that no teacher was able to control. After setting rules with him and strictly enforcing them, I had no problems with him. When he graduated from kindergarten, he asked his mother to find out where else I taught as he wanted me to continue teaching him, and I did so for a number of years.

Codes – students' attitude to learning environment, behaviour of students, restriction of negative feedback to parents, control of students in classroom, (not) missed learning opportunity

20. (Job 16 (see Appendix 2)) At a kindergarten, I was asked to arrive early and to sit in the porch area as learners arrive in the morning in order to be seen by parents and act as an advertisement. I refused.

   Codes – attract parents, NESTs as advervisments

21. (Outside source – later years) I observed a NEST arriving at an elementary school with the 'care'-class teachers to pick up their learners. The NEST was in a cowboy hat and carrying toy pistols. The NEST's role was to be seen rather than to be responsible for the learners and his role had been reduced to that of an 'entertainment clown'. I wanted to suggest to him that he doesn't allow his employer to treat him in this way, but he appeared happy in his role. I believe that using NESTs as advertisements like this not only disrespects the teachers, but also devalues the role of many professional NESTs because young learners on seeing this may associate NESTs as figures of fun instead of teachers.

   Codes – attract parents, NESTs as advertisments, entertain not educate, parents' lack of understanding of foreign language acquisition, students' attitude to learning environment, money not education as goal

22. (Jobs 11,12/17 (see Appendix 2) outside sources) A common complaint from parents is over the changing of teachers. Teachers, especially NESTS, are often changed. I noticed that Taiwanese parents like to and sometimes expect to choose their child's teacher. In mainstream education it is a common and accepted practice. In *buxibans* there is often both a high turnover of teachers and the regular combining of classes leading to frequent changes in teachers.

   Codes – parent/*buxiban* disputes, changing of teachers, combining of classes, turnover of students, power of parents in education

23. (Job 19 (see Appendix 2)) A NNEST coworker opened her own *buxiban*. I considered her to be a very competent English teachers. She bought a franchise. I questioned her on this, as I couldn't understand why she didn't consider herself strong enough to open and run a *buxiban* on her own. Her response was that she did not believe that she could succeed on her own and buying a franchise would make things go a lot smoother and easier, especially at the beginning with attracting parents/students.

   Codes – smooth and risk averse operation, attracting parents

24. (Jobs 12/17 (see Appendix 2)) The most common dispute I witnessed between parents and *buxibans* (both franchise and independent) was over money when a student leaves and the parent asks for tuition to be returned. Taiwan has laws governing the return of tuition which means that private LTOs only need to return a small amount of tuition once a class has commenced. I observed (and once even heard a parent admit) that they tried to find fault in the *buxiban* in order to argue for their money back. Often there are reasons that a child has to discontinue lessons even when parents are happy with the *buxiban*. Often only a small amount of money was involved, but *buxibans*' insistence on keeping ever possible penny meant that even parents who were happy with the *buxiban* left on a negative note.

Codes – parent/*buxiban* disputes, *buxiban* reputation, ending of studies, best interest of students, money not education as goal, shortsighted goals

25. (Jobs 12/17 (see Appendix 2)) In many *buxibans*, the owners often fear their own teachers becoming too successful and parents/students becoming loyal to the teacher rather than the *buxiban* – and possibly rightly so. I observed many teachers who left a *buxiban* and attempted to take their students with them - either opening their own *buxiban* or promising their new employer they will bring students with them. In my observation, this was more of a problem in independent *buxibans* than franchises – maybe because independent *buxibans* relied on the quality of their teaching/teachers more than the recognition of their brand.

Codes – rivally between *buxibans*, teacher/*buxiban* different goals, teacher/parent different goals, *buxiban* reputation, money not education as goal

26. (Job 12/17 (see Appendix 2)) In this *buxiban* some learners had small 'jobs' and activities that they were responsible for. I asked one learner if she would like to help with an activity in a lower-level class of younger learners. The mother came to ask me if there was any possibility that her daughter could in any way 'fail' or get in trouble in this class. I told the mother that I could not guarantee anything and that all my usually class rules would apply to both that class and her daughter. It was my opinion that the mother believed that her daughter deserved special treatment by being a high-achieving student and did not want to risk her daughter's 'status' or to try anything that she wasn't guaranteed to succeed at. She was not allowed to come to help.

Codes – shortsighted goals, parents' lack of understanding of education, treating students differently, missed learning opportunity, students' attitude to learning environment

27. (Job 12/17 (see Appendix 2)) *Buxiban* classes were often open ended and the owner wasn't happy whenever learners left and always attempted to persuade learners not to leave. The

inevitable result was that every parent/student had to eventually choose a time to leave and many left on an unhappy note, even often after many successful years at the *buxiban*.

Codes – ending of studies, parent/*buxiban* disputes, keeping students as goal, *buxiban* reputation, money not education as goal

28. (Job 12/17 (see Appendix 2)) This independent *buxiban* had a stronger reputation than most; however, the owner still privately complained about parents. "Nobody goes into a restaurant and asks to speak to the chef to ask for an explanation of how the food is going to be cooked and then offers the chef some advice on cooking. Why do parents think they are qualified to do that to teachers at *buxibans*?" In my opinion, parents question and attempt to influence *buxibans* because they do not completely trust. They question *buxibans* because the *buxibans* allow them to. They respect and feel safer in a *buxiban* that is strong enough to not allow that.

Codes – difficulties in communication with parents, parents' lack of understanding of foreign language acquisition, power of parents in education

29. (Job12/17 (see Appendix 2)) The owner of this independent *buxiban* suddenly raised the tuition by a very large amount (from an average tuition fee to around the highest possible for this type of *buxiban*). The *buxiban* was unable to articulate any reason for this raise other than 'we are worth it' and "we do more than other *buxibans* which we have never charged more for before". As the manager of the *buxiban*, I argued against these changes and especially how it was communicated. I lost. Almost every parent was unhappy. Some left. Many stayed, but the reputation of the *buxiban* never recovered and new enrollment fell dramatically.

Codes – parent/*buxiban* disputes, *buxiban* reputation, difficulties in communication with parents, money not education as goal

30. (Jobs 3,5,6,11 (see Appendix 2)) Franchise *buxibans* have a very organized syllabus with professionally prepared textbooks, teaching guides and lesson plans. A lot of effort goes into producing these. More effort goes into the preparation of text books than into the teachers. The text books are what parents see and they are designed so that teachers, especially NESTs, are required to undertake the minimum of preparation – they simply follow the lesson plans. Some franchises allowed more deviation from the set lesson plans than others. Franchise B was notorious for not allowing any deviation. Text books were also taught at a set pace that could not be deviated from regardless of learners' progress.

Codes – expectations of NESTs, smooth and risk averse operation, parents' lack of understanding of foreign language acquisition, franchise *buxiban* marketing, the relationship between process and product

31. (Job 12/17 (see Appendix 2)) A rival *buxiban* (not a franchize) attempted to 'steal' an entire class of mine (just after anecdote 29). The parents were offered a class for only a fraction of the usual tuition fee. The plan was to later enter the entire class for Taiwan's General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) and use the results as an advertisement for the *buxiban*. A number of parents accepted the offer, half returned after one week. The new class collapsed after two weeks. The rival *buxiban* believed that what they lacked was good students, but what they really lacked was good teachers/management. 'Good students' do not exist in isolation – they are the product of good teachers and well managed *buxibans*.

Codes – rivalry between *buxibans*, *buxiban* marketing, attracting parents, poor learner outcomes, misunderstanding the relationship between process and product, money not education as goal

32. (Job 19 (see Appendix 2)) While working in a kindergarten, a new potential learner was brought into my class to take part in the lesson while the principal talked to the parents. We were in the computer classroom and the new learner broke a pair of headphones. When the principal returned to collect the learner and was told what he had done, there was only one instruction – don't tell the parents.

Codes – restriction of negative feedback to parents, shortsighted goals, missed learning opportunity, money not education as goal, students' attitude to learning environment

33. (Job 12/17(see Appendix 2)) The *buxiban* was advertising for a new teacher. A NEST telephoned the *buxiban* and was put through to me as the manager. He said that he was a newly arrived 'teacher' and wanted a job, but he then refused to speak to me and demanded to be put through to 'someone Chinese'. He got quite angry when I told him that I was the manager and there was no one else for him to speak to. He had been led to believe that being a native speaker was of such high value that it automatically got you a job and automatically gave you high status.

Codes – status of NESTs, value of NESTs

34. (Job 12/17 (see Appendix 2) and outside sources – later years) I observed that vocabulary learning (older age groups – end of elementary school and junior high) was purely by rote memorization (something I was incapable of) and that many learners were unable to pronounce the words even if they could recognize and write them. I developed my own vocabulary teaching method that started from accurate pronunciation and then combined an

analytical rules-based method (my preferred method of learning) with local rote memorization skills.

Codes – assessment by memorization, mixed learner outcomes, lack of flexibility in assessment practices, narrow focus of assessment

35. (Job 12/17 (see Appendix 2) and outside sources – later years) I observed that, in junior high, grammar was tested in two ways. Firstly by multiple-choice questions that tested knowledge of grammatical rules, but ignored meaning. Secondly by the reproduction of English sentences/paragraphs from the Chinese translation. These sentences were always taken from the textbook, and no deviation from the original was tolerated even if grammatically and linguistically correct. In my *buxiban*, I took the idea of testing English from the Chinese translation; however, my tests became tests of, not only what had recently been taught, but also combining it with all they had previously learnt and I would accept any answer as long as the meaning was successfully conveyed using accurate grammar.

Codes – narrow focus of assessments, assessment by memorization, focus on form not meaning, lack of flexibility in assessment practices

36. (Outside source – later years) Another NEST told me that he had tried to open his own *buxiban*, but it had failed because he couldn't please all the competing demands of the parents.

Codes – parents' lack of understanding of foreign language acquisition, power of parents in education, varying goals of parents, please the parents

37. (Job 19 (see Appendix 2) and outside sources) Most advice upon opening my *buxiban* was that the key to success was to please the parents.

Codes – please the parents, parents' lack of understanding of foreign language acquisition, power of parents in education, shortsighted goals

38. (Own *buxiban*) On opening my *buxiban*, we were approached by a number of nearby after-school-'care'-class schools (not franchises) that told us that it was impossible for us to survive on our own teaching only English, as parents want everything in one place. They told us that our only option was to cooperate with them. We did not want to be associated with anywhere else. We refused.

Codes – rivalry between *buxibans*, convenience for parents, money not education as goal, *buxiban* reputation

39. (Outside sources) I witnessed a number of NEST owned *buxibans* that attempted to implement only Western ideas of education and teaching methodology as they believed this to be right and more advanced and modern than local understanding of education. They paid little attention to local context or needs. Some could survive, but none were very successful.

Codes – lack of flexibility in teaching practices

Appendix 2: Timeline

First year

Job 1 – Franchise *buxiban* A 1ˢᵗ job – first 'teaching' experience. A 'show' class for the opening of a new school.

Job 2 – 1-2-1 job teaching young learner approx 7 years old – once a week for the rest of the year.

Job 3 – Franchise *buxiban* A 2ⁿᵈ job – not successful. Franchise owned by the chain. Foreign manager. No training given.

Job 4 – Independent *buxiban* – Moderately good school and successful. Not franchise. Worked there for the rest of the year.

Job 5 – Franchise *buxiban* A 1ˢᵗ job (return) – My most successful of Franchise A. Businessperson owner, but buxiban had a very good teacher/manager and little owner involvement. Worked there for the rest of the year.

Job 6 – Fanchise *buxiban* B – worked at 'show' day at the opening of a new school (very similar to first ever teaching job).

Job 7 – Business class – teaching business English once a week to a company's sales team. Worked there for the rest of the year.

Job 8 – Class of retirees – twice a week. They were more interested in the social side. Worked there for the rest of the year.

Job 9 – Adult businesswoman 1-2-1 student – once a week for the rest of the year.

Job 10 – Adult businessman 1-2-1 student – once a week for the rest of the year.

Second/third year

Job 11 – Franchise *buxiban* A 3ʳᵈ job – moderately successful. Worked there twice a week for around 2 years. The owner was a businesswoman. She had no understanding of education or

teaching and so saw everything in terms of the business. Buxiban had very mixed learner outcomes.

Job 12 – Independent teacher owned *buxiban* – short-term summer classes then one lesson twice a week.

Job 13 – Independent after school 'care' class (where students go after school to be taken care of and do their homework) – well teacher run as a bilingual 'care' class. Constant, turnover of students. Despite being well run by competent teachers, the language-learning results were very poor.

Job 14 – Kindergarten A – Businessperson owner. I worked there five mornings a week for around two years. The owner had no understanding of education or teaching and saw everything in terms of business.

Job 15 – Adult businessman 1-2-1 student – continued from the first year.

Later years

Job 16 – Kindergarten B – A small teacher owned kindergarten. Worked there for five mornings a week for around 3 years. Well run and reasonably successful with stable, long-term teachers, but very tame and risk averse with its teaching. Little ambition to improve.

Job 17 – Independent teacher owned *buxiban* (continuation and expanded role at job 12) – continued to work there six days a week for around ten years for the last four years as the manager. Worked there until I set up my own *buxiban*.

Job 18 – Kindergarten C – Very large kindergarten that was ruthlessly run as a business. Worked there five mornings a week. Huge turnover of staff. Very poor learner outcomes. I worked there for around a year.

Job 19 – Kindergarten D – Large kindergarten (and 'care' class). Businessman owner who had neither interest or understanding of education. I worked there five mornings a week until setting up my own *buxiban*. Kindergarten had many good long-term teachers, but learner outcome was mixed. Managed as a business, not a school.

Appendix 3: Structure and strategies of my *buxiban*

School structure

1. My school had a five-year syllabus. The school followed a year-group structure which had more in common with mainstream education than other *buxibans*. Two new classes were opened each summer and then no more for the rest of the year. Students would never change classes (outside of their year-group) unless dropped to a lower year. Classes would never be combined outside of the year-group. The two classes were usually combined into one class in either the fourth or fifth year.

   Link to – anecdote 5,8,27,

2. Year 1 (2nd to 4th grade) (2 hour lesson twice a week): The entire first year was focused on listening and speaking. I did not teach any writing, nor did I teach reading specifically; however, students were exposed to written English from the start and soon picked up how to read the English that they were familiar with. The first half an hour of every lesson was an oral test in which every student had to test (usually in pairs) what had been taught the previous lesson (and anything previously taught). Students had two chances to pass, if they still couldn't pass, they would have to return to make-up the test the next day.

   Link to – anecdote 9,13,14

3. Years 2-4 (2.5 hour lesson twice a week): This was the core of syllabus. Writing was taught. Vocabulary and grammar were taught and tested every lesson. The first half an hour was an oral test. The second half an hour was a vocabulary and grammar test. All tests had a second chance to pass, if a student still couldn't pass they would have to return to make-up the test the next day. One new grammar point was taught each lesson. The rest of the lesson was a mixture of stories, listening tasks and speaking tasks.

   Link to – anecdote 9,13,14,34,35

4. Year 5 (2.5 hour lesson once a week): In the final year only the oral test and the vocabulary test continued. All the rest of the lesson was focused on speaking. Homework focused on writing compositions. About half way through the year all students tested Cambridge KEY and at the end of the year they all tested Cambridge PET. Near the test time, lesson time was used on test preparation. KET was quite easy for the students and used to familiarize them with a proficiency test. I used PET in order to set learners a goal to achieve before they left my *buxiban* and to demonstrate that English is a global language and so they should test an international test, not a local test. The students could usually pass PET, despite many still being in elementary school,

based mainly on the speaking and writing sections. They struggled on the reading section mainly due to limits of vocabulary.

Link to – anecdote 9,34,35

School strategies

1. I taught all classes myself while my close associate handled the administration, parents and students' make up of tests.

   Link to – anecdote 4,22

2. Students were given two chances to pass all oral, vocabulary and grammar tests. Any student who did not pass had to arrange a time to return before the next lesson.

   Link to – anecdote 9,13,14

3. I did not insist on an English only classroom.

   Link to – anecdote 6,16

4. All learners used a recording device. At the end of every lesson, I would record everything that had been taught that lesson and examples of everything that would be tested the next lesson. This was a very flexible method as it meant I could record examples of what students had had trouble with in that lesson and any issues that had come up.

   Link to – anecdote 30

5. All remaining tuition was returned whenever a student left regardless of the reason.

   Link to – anecdote 24

6. We only accepted students who started from the first lesson, nobody could join an existing class regardless of how good their English was.

   Link to – anecdote 1, 3, 5

7. I set a limit of 5 years with a clear goal at the end. If anyone left for whatever reason before this time, we would be happy for them for whatever they had learnt or for whatever they planned to do. Everyone could leave on a happy note.

   Link to – anecdote 27

8. The five-year syllabus would be completed for every year-group regardless of student numbers.

   Link to – anecdote 5

9. We did not accept 1st grade students. I believed that 1st grade was too young for our syllabus It was the time they were starting grade school, and I believed it was not a good time to also start learning a foreign language. We only accepted 2nd to 4th grade students (and often suggested that 2nd graders wait a year unless they appeared mature enough) for new classes. We refused 5th graders, they would have been suitable for a couple of years, but would be reaching high school by the time they completed our syllabus and would be unlikely to be able to give us the time commitment required.

    Link to – anecdote 5, 7

10. We did not do 'show' classes or allow potential parents/students to come and watch a lesson.

    Link to – anecdote 1,3

11. I took the idea I had seen commonly used in junior high school of testing grammar from the Chinese translation; however, my tests were tests of, not only what had recently been taught, but also combining it with all they had previously learnt and I would accept any answer as long as the meaning was successfully conveyed using correct grammar. I never tested textbook examples.

    Link to – anecdote 35

12. The school's tuition was at the lower end of the tuition range. I wished the tuition to be affordable to the widest possible range of parents, and our class sizes were larger than the norm for elementary-school-aged *buxibans*.

    Link to – anecdote 18, 29

13. We emphasized students' behaviour and attitude to learning over results.

    Link to – 1, 3, 6, 11, 12, 19, 21, 26, 31

14. We distanced ourselves from parents, at least for the first few years with us.

    Link to – anecdote 36, 37

15. The school's goal was for everyone to learn together and for every learner to achieve comparable result. This required more of a focus on those that risked falling behind than on the fast leaners. Maintaining progress in all learners then also benefitted the faster learners, as everyone maintained a similar attitude and results.

    Link to – anecdote 13, 14

16. If a student was struggling or we considered the class unsuitable for them, we were not afraid to tell the parent. We would either suggest they do not continue to study or drop

a year-group. If they wanted to drop to a lower year-group, we would offer an optional three-month break before continuing. We would also not charge any tuition until the student returned to the point from which they had been dropped.

Link to – anecdote 8, 13, 14,

17. Once established we did no promoting of the school. All new students were introduced by word of mouth usually by existing or former students' parents.

Link to – anecdote 1, 3, 5, 6, 15

18. I stressed the importance of what I considered to be correct pronunciation and the ease of attaining it for young learners. Taiwan's education system uses the phonetic English alphabet adapted from that published by Kenyon and Knott in 1944 as a representation of American English pronunciation (Kenyon and Knott, 1944). This is what I used and how I defined native-speaker pronunciation.

Link to – anecdote 34

Notes on school

1. Once the school had been established for a number of years and all year groups were active, we reached a ceiling of just over 200 students.

2. The school was located on a small, quiet side street a little distance away from the nearest mainstream education elementary school. We wanted parents to come to us rather than relying on being noticed in a prominent position, and we were not targetting only a single elementary school for our students.

Link to – anecdote 2

3. I wrote all the teaching material myself, except storybooks.

Link to – anecdote 30

4. I ordered grammar by what I believed to be level of difficulty and usefulness. At the time I had little knowledge of teaching methodology or ideas of the natural order of acquisition.
Link to – anecdote 30, 35

5. We acknowledged that our methods were no suitable for every learner. We told parents this at the beginning.

Link to – anecdote 5, 6, 7, 8, 36, 37

Appendix 4. Lists of codes, categories and themes

All data within each category in ranking order. Colours refer to the six themes and where the code was originally categorized.

Colours: Buxiban management (red)

Misaligned goals (green)

Organization of the classroom and learners (purple)

Relationship with parents (orange)

The role of NESTs (blue)

Teaching Methodology, practice and assessment (grey)

Theme: *Buxiban* management (red)

Category: Running the *buxiban* (48)

Rivalry between *buxibans* (4)

Smooth and risk averse operation (4)

Shortsighted goals (8)

Restriction of negative feedback to parents (7)

Parent/*buxiban* disputes (5)

Expectations of NESTs (4)

Keeping students as goal (2)

Difficulties in communication with parents (2)

Show classes (2)

Combining of classes (2)

Please the parents (2)

The relationship between process and product (2)

Lack of assessment (1)

Changing of teachers (1)

Disruption to classroom (1)

Use of teaching resources (1)

Category: Promoting the *buxiban* (34)

Franchise *buxiban* marketing (9)

Buxiban reputation (8)

Name recognition (1)

Prized location (1)

Attract new parents (11)

NESTs as advertisements (2)

Visibility of NESTs (1)

Ideal that CLT best taught by NESTs (1)

Category: Values of the *buxiban* (27)

Ending of studies (2)

Money not education as goal (15)

Value of NESTs (4)

Status of NESTs (2)

Entertain not educate (2)

Encouragement of misleading beliefs (1)

Unrealistic goals (1)

Theme: Misaligned goals (green)

Category: Goals of *buxiban* (43)

Money not education as goal (15)

Shortsighted goals (8)

Keeping students as goal (2)

Entertain not educate (2)

Encouragement of misleading beliefs (1)

Misleading educational goals (1)

Unrealistic goals (1)

Franchise *buxiban* marketing (9)

Smooth and risk averse operation (4)

<u>Category: Goals of parents (5)</u>

Parents/*buxiban* different goals (2)

Varying goals of parents (1)

Ending of studies (2)

<u>Category: Goals of teachers (2)</u>

Teachers/*buxiban* different goals (2)

<u>Category: Goals of students (2)</u>

Best interest of students (2)

Theme: Organization of the classroom and learners (purple)

<u>Category: Classroom beyond the teacher's control (10)</u>

Turnover of students (3)

Combining of classes (2)

Show classes (2)

Disruption to the classroom (1)

Use of teaching resources (1)

Changing of teachers (1)

<u>Category: Classroom (partially) within the teacher's control (18)</u>

Poor/mixed learner outcomes (8)

(not) missed learning opportunities (4)

Different ability levels in same class (2)

Control of students in the classroom (2)

Difficulties in communication with parents (2)

<u>Category: Students in the classroom (12)</u>

Students' attitude to the learning environment (9)

Behaviour of students (3)

Theme: Relationship with parents (orange)

<u>Category: Communication with parents (31)</u>

Attract new parents (11)

Restricting of negative feedback to parents (7)

Parent/*buxiban* disputes (5)

Treating parents/students differently (4)

Please the parents (2)

Difficulties in communication with parents (2)

<u>Category: Role of parents (19)</u>

Parents' lack of understanding of education/foreign language acquisition (11)

Power of parents in education (4)

Convenience for parents (3)

Parents' belief in the superiority of NESTs (1)

Theme: The role of NESTs (blue)

<u>Category: Issues focused on NESTs (16)</u>

Value of NESTs (4)

Expectations of NESTs (4)

NESTs as advertisements (2)

Status of NESTs (2)

Visibility of NESTs (1)

Cooperation of NESTs and NNESTs (1)

Parents' belief in the superiority of NESTs (1)

Idea that CLT best taught by NESTs (1)

Theme: Teaching methodology, practice and assessment (grey)

Category: Assessments (7)

Narrow focus of assessments (2)

Assessment by memorization (2)

Lack of flexibility in assessment practices (2)

Lack of assessment (1)

Category: Teaching methodology (4)

Relationship between process and product (2)

Focus on form not meaning (1)

Idea that CLT best taught by NESTs (1)