

CHAPTER SEVEN: JOYCE CONTINUED HER

JOURNEY WITH RACHEL

Background Information About Rachel

The First Contact

My first observation at School C for the second semester took place on February 27, 2007. When I arrived at the classroom before the class began, I saw Joyce was chatting with Lucy, the foreign substitute teacher who was sent by the company to cover Ivy's schedule for the first week. Lucy and I got to know each other during the 2006 summer training organized by the company. We greeted each other warmly, and I got her permission to observe the class.

Just before the class began, Stacy walked in with a young white girl and told students that the latter would be their English teacher for the rest of the year. Stacy then left the room, and the young girl walked toward me. She got herself a chair to sit on, and we shook hands and observed the class together. After the class was over, I told her who I am and my research project. She told me her name is Rachel; she said she would be happy to help me, although she was not sure when she would begin teaching. Since the foreign-teacher company had sent a substitute teacher for the first week, Stacy wanted Rachel to do some classroom observation first and try to settle down before she began teaching. Rachel finally began teaching four days later, on March 3.

Rachel: A Novice Team Teacher From South Africa

Rachel comes from Free State, South Africa. She is a young woman in her mid 20s. After she finished her college education in South Africa, she went straight to London, England, where she worked as a substitute teacher for public schools in the East London region. She was in London for two years before

returning to South Africa. In the background interview (2007/03/13), she told me that she had some friends who were already working for the Hsinchu Program and they invited her to come. Also, she would like to try something new, so after two months of vacation at home, she left for Taiwan in late February of 2007.

Description and Perception of Team Teaching Experience

Rachel's Definition of Team Teaching and Perception of Her Role

In the background interview, Rachel defined team teaching in these words, "Teaching is like a school itself. You also learn every day. You learn new things from teaching, from going to the class. Every class is different." She continued, "To define it, I would say that you've broadened your own knowledge and use that knowledge to give it to the children. Everything should be positive. It should be a fun environment. You should enjoy it" (interview, 2007/03/13). She also talked about how she could work together with her co-teachers to help children learn English, "We are both in the class, very positive. We teach in a team. There should be communication between each other. Just because I am the English teacher doesn't mean I have to do everything and she just stands there." She continued, "If we can get along with each other, the children will feel that it's nice to learn English. We help each other in a team. If we just work together, it can be fun."

Although she saw herself as the main teacher, she stated that she expected her and Joyce to work as a team. In her words, "Obviously, it's my subject. I have to take control. When you work as a team, there is always a leader and people who follow." She continued, "But it doesn't mean that I am the leader or the main teacher and she can't have a say in what's going on in the class. Like I said, team work, together, everybody, that's what team work stands for" (interview, 2007/03/13).

In a later interview, Rachel also mentioned the importance of involving her students in her team—“For me and Joyce, we work well as a team, but it’s also the children that you need to involve in a team. That sometimes can be difficult” (interview—part one,⁴⁶ 2007/06/25). In other words, Rachel included her students as members of her teaching team. This quote echoes to Tajino and Tajino’s (2000) idea that team teaching should be reinterpreted as team learning, where team teachers as well as their students should be considered as co-participants or team members of the learning process. Tajino and Tajino first explain the implied meaning of “team teaching” —“The term team-teaching rather suggests that teachers, as a team, just teach, and students, hopefully, just learn.” On the other hand, the term “team learning” views students as members of the teaching team. In their words, “Team-learning encourages all the participants, teachers as well as students, to interact with one another by creating more opportunities for them to exchange ideas or cultural values and learn from other ‘team members’” (p. 6).

Rachel’s Initial Observation of Her Students

Rachel was quite observant of the characteristics of her new students. In the background interview, she described some of her observation of the differences between the Grade 6 boys and girls—“You see some of the boys, and you get the feeling that, ‘Oh, they’re going to be part of the mafia’ (laughing). You can already see, ‘These children, they don’t want to work.’ ‘These (pause) the girls, they like to listen’” (interview, 2007/03/13). She continued, “I don’t have trouble with the girls. Some of the boys (pause) you can see, you have to be strong. It doesn’t help if you are scared of them or whatever.” Indeed, unlike Ivy who often

⁴⁶ With Rachel, the two interviews at the end of the semester were conducted on the same day (see Chapter 3 for more details). In this dissertation, data from her answers to the two questionnaires (Appendix E & F) are annotated as “interview—part one, 2007/06/25.” Likewise, the annotation of “interview—part two, 2007/06/25” means that the data are taken from Rachel’s answers to the interview questions in Appendix I.

appeared nervous and weak in class, Rachel would confront those misbehaved and mindless students. For example, in a class in mid-March, Rachel noticed that a boy did not have a book on his desk when everyone else was busy with finishing the written exercise (fieldnote, 2007/03/15). She asked for a piece of blank paper from Joyce and told the boy to do some work. The boy kept his head on the desk while Rachel was talking to him (he even yawned!). Seeing this, Rachel did not walk away. She said to the boy, "I want to see some work before the end of the class." Joyce also came over to talk to the boy, who finally started writing something on the paper.

Rachel's Positive Attitude

Rachel has a pleasant personality and positive attitude toward living and teaching in a foreign land. Many of her sixth graders, especially the girls, liked to approach her during the recess time. When she taught, she would often walk around the classroom and pay attention to individual students. Rachel also tried hard to establish a good relationship with her students. In the first two weeks of June, Rachel conducted the oral test with the sixth graders. At the end of each interview, she often asked the student how he/she felt about going to junior high school (a question not from the textbook!). Rachel would take time to allow students to express their feelings and tell them things like "Well, good luck. I'm sure you'll do well there" or "Come back to visit us if you are not too busy." For me, watching her interacting with her students during the oral test was a very enjoyable experience.

I conducted the first interview with Rachel after she began teaching for two weeks. One of the questions I asked was whether she felt there was anything she needed to adjust to, and she responded, "Obviously, the culture shock. It's not big thing. I wouldn't have come here if I feel my personality won't fit here." She

continued, “I mean this is different from where I was born and from England. Like I said, it’s the kind of personality (pause) I’m open-minded and flexible” (interview, 2007/03/13). She then said that she likes to travel and does not want to lead an ordinary life in her hometown—“If I just wanted to stay with my family all the time in the Free State, teach there, get children and get married, but this is not the type of person I am. I like to travel.” She felt that starting her new life in Taiwan is a nice learning process for her, and she had adjusted well to the challenges. In her words, “Like the different types of food here. It’s not like you have to eat the food; you have a choice here. I like it here. So far so good.”

Rachel’s positive attitude is also evident in her teaching. In a later interview, I asked her to talk about her strengths as a team teacher. She replied, “I’m a very happy, lucky kind of person. I am not so shy, and I think the children can see it well, ‘Oh, you are in a good mood. You want to teach us.’” She continued, “I think if you have a positive atmosphere around yourself, then the children are also, ‘Yes, I want to learn English’” (interview—part two, 2007/06/25). She stressed the importance of being positive and creative for her students, “If you go into the classroom with a negative attitude, students can feel it. You need to be creative for them. You should take the lead and tell them, ‘This is going to work out fine.’” In the same interview, Rachel also stated that she would like to have more time to teach the children, instead of just having 40 minutes with each class per week. However, she felt that she should try to make the best use of the 40 minutes she got now—“In a class of 40 minutes, I think you can come up with something to make it work.” She also remarked in an earlier interview (2007/03/13), “If I can give something to the community, I can make a difference in their English, then I achieve my goal.”

Because of her positive attitude, Rachel was able to gradually break the barrier

between her and some colleagues who treated her rather coldly when the semester began. She described her change of relation with John, one of the local English teachers who is a somewhat reserved man—“Our group of English teachers work quite well together, especially I can see a change between me and John.” She continued, “We are more open with each other now. He would come to me and we would talk. Even in the morning, he would say to me, ‘Hi, good morning. How’s your weekend?’” (interview—part two, 2007/06/25). She felt positive about these small changes—“It’s like you are taking steps, baby steps, but you are getting there. I can feel the change.”

Rachel also described the change of her relationship with a Grade 2 homeroom teacher. She told me that in the first half of the semester, this homeroom teacher did not even greet her when she went to her classroom to teach. Then in the middle of the semester, a professor sent by the government came to observe Rachel in this class. Rachel got high ratings from this professor, and the homeroom teacher became friendlier to her. In her words, “She’s more open to talk to me. The thing is we want to talk to them, but it’s not just one way. They also have to come and make the effort.” She continued, “Even if it’s just hi and hello, you know that the teacher is acknowledging what you are doing. That can also make a big difference. We can work on these baby steps. The children also observe as well.”

Rachel’s Skill in Managing Students

As someone completely new to the teaching situation in Taiwan, Rachel was quite confident and skillful with managing her students. Her experience of working as a substitute teacher in where she described as the “rough” side of London probably has helped. She talked about her previous schools in these words—“Some of the schools are really low class, and the children, there’s no discipline in their house. So when they come to school, some of them already have

criminal records, you know, children like that.” She continued, “Especially when you walk into the class, they don’t know you, and they think they can take advantage from you” (interview, 2007/03/13). In the same interview, she also described the school violence there—“There has been some horror stories. Luckily, it hasn’t happened to me. Some children would have knives in the classroom. That’s why there’s so much bullying. You know, knives, scissors.” She continued, “They will attack each other in the playground. They are very violent inside. They don’t have any love in them. They are only 9 or 10. How are they going to be related to others when they grow older?”

Rachel felt that her teaching experience in London helped her learn how to establish herself as the authority in different class situations. In her words, “You really learn about classroom management. When you go in as the substitute teacher, they have to know immediately that, OK, you are the new teacher...They have to have respect for you. They have to listen to you” (interview, 2007/03/13). Compared to teaching in England, she felt that teaching in Taiwan is more relaxing and her efforts are also well-received here—“Like in England, it’s much harder. Here, it’s more relaxing. In England, it depends on which school you go to. Here, you can be yourself. You can do well in the classroom, and they will appreciate what you do.” She stated that teaching in Taiwan is quite a different experience, but she felt she is challenged in a nice way.

Rachel and Joyce’s Metaphors for Team Teaching

At the end of the second semester, I asked Rachel and Joyce to provide a metaphor for team teaching in one of the interviews. After practicing team teaching for one semester at School C, Rachel compared it to a time bomb:

Researcher: Please use a metaphor to discuss what team teaching is

for you.

Rachel: It can be like a time bomb. I mean you don't know what's going to happen in the classroom. You can do planning, and you can do whatever, but in a big class, especially in that hyper-active class, you don't know what's going to happen next. It's like a time bomb. One day, everything can run smoothly, you can do what you planned, and they just listen. Maybe just the next minute, somebody will say something else, then it's whole another situation.

Researcher: They just explode?

Rachel: Not explode in a bad way, but I mean it's a surprise. In a nice way (interview—part one, 2007/06/25).

The hyper-active class Rachel was referring to was one of the two classes she co-taught with Joyce, Class 6-4. This is a class with good energy; some of the students were advanced learners of English who often participated actively in class. However, as their graduation date approached, most of the students became quite restless and difficult to manage. For Rachel, teaching the sixth graders was like facing a time bomb which might explode at any time. Although she might not be able to execute her lesson plans every time, she remained positive about the challenge of having to be reactive and flexible in her daily teaching.

As for Joyce, she provided the same metaphor for team teaching as the last semester. She stated, "I still have the same feeling as last semester. It's like rowing a boat, and we are on the same boat. If one of us is not in good condition, the boat will not go anywhere" (interview, 2007/06/15). She continued, "If she's the one who needs to lead that particular class and she's in bad condition, that class is over." Although Rachel proved to be a more capable teacher compared to her previous partner Ivy, Joyce still felt helpless when Rachel could not offer a good lesson to the students.

One example to illustrate the scenario described by Joyce took place in mid-April. One of the foci for that day was a few consonant clusters (*bl*, *pl*, *cl*, and *gl*)

and words associated with them (e.g., *blow*, *place*, *clock*, and *glass*). Before she introduced the consonant clusters, Rachel told students to warm up their voices, pretending they were in the music class. She demonstrated by clearing her throat and singing a little bit, but no one really followed her. In fact, all the students looked puzzled and disinterested. Rachel tried to encourage students by singing again, but no one followed her. She then said, “Oh well” and gave up. At this point, Joyce stepped in and said that students were very shy (fieldnote, 2007/04/12).

Rachel and Joyce’s Most Memorable Incidents in Team Teaching

The incidents which Rachel and Joyce described as most memorable are related to their Grade 6 students. Rachel described an activity related to teaching students how to give and follow directions. Before the class began, Rachel put some flashcards of names of places (e.g., *park*, *post office*, *school*, etc.) on the blackboard to make a street map. She then began the class by reviewing the key phrases for giving and following directions which she taught last week. Using the street map on the board, she also gave students a series of directions and asked them where she was. After a few turns, I saw Rachel exchanging a few words with Joyce on the stage (fieldnote, 2007/04/24). Rachel then told students that they were going to play a game: A student would be chosen to go outside until he/she was called back; meanwhile, Joyce or Rachel would hide a flashcard somewhere in the classroom. Another student would be chosen to give directions and help the first student (with his/her eyes closed) to find the flashcard. The activity went well.

Rachel recalled that before this particular lesson began, she did not talk about her plan for the day with Joyce. But she liked the fact that her partner stepped in and offered a nice activity which everybody enjoyed. Rachel described the situation, “We didn’t really discuss what we were going to do. She has a creative mind of her own. She was like, ‘Let’s do it differently’...So she was in charge, I

was in charge, and everybody enjoyed the lesson” (interview—part one, 2007/06/25).

In Joyce’s case, she was overwhelmed by many sixth graders’ negative attitude toward learning English. In the second last interview of the year, she did not describe a specific event as most memorable. Instead, she talked about her frustration in general, “Maybe because it’s the second semester, the sixth graders are quite impatient and restless. We had a change of foreign teacher at the beginning of the second semester.” She continued, “At the beginning, students seemed to be OK. Toward the middle of the semester, their learning became terrible” (interview, 2007/06/15). What also impressed her is that Rachel also felt helpless with the situation—“What impressed me is that even Rachel feels helpless. She feels a strong sense of helplessness. We want to pull students back, but it’s not easy.”

Joyce went on to explain what she learned from working with the sixth graders in the past year. In her words, “What I learn is that 6th graders really become restless in the second semester, and those who haven’t learned English that well have more or less given up on the subject. They don’t want to absorb things anymore.” She also told me that she hoped she could continue to learn from other teachers how to stimulate a little bit of these students’ learning interest in the last part of their life in the elementary school.

Joyce’s Continued Support for Team Teaching

Unlike the other two Taiwanese teachers, Joyce continued to endorse the team teaching arrangement after practicing it for one year. In the last interview of the school year (2007/06/22), I asked her if her opinion about team teaching had changed, and she replied, “I still like team teaching because I think what we can provide students is quite limited. I think the accent and background of the foreign teacher provide students with very different cultural stimulation.” She then

mentioned about the benefits of those extracurricular activities which were led by the foreign teachers at her school in the past year—“For example, our foreign teachers tell stories or lead the dancing club. For kids, they will learn that English is not just limited to the classroom. English can be learned elsewhere, not just from the textbook” (see the next section for more discussion about these extracurricular activities at School C).

Development in Skills and Knowledge

Rachel’s Growth

Areas Rachel wanted to improve on

Being new to Taiwan, Rachel stated in the background interview that she needed to gain more knowledge about the children here—“From Grades 2, 4, and 6, it’s different. You have to get yourself into their shoes, think like them. Knowledge on things that interest them, so that they can be more positive to have English lessons” (interview, 2007/03/13). This was also her first time of teaching the older children, and she felt she needed to adjust herself to their mentality—“I’m used to teaching from kindergarten to 9 years old. This is my first time having to teach the older children.” She continued, “This is something I really have to adapt to. How they think. From this morning, I know if you point a boy and a girl at the same time, the class kind of goes crazy.” She continued to state that she needed to learn to relate to them by putting herself in their shoes—“Thirteen-year-olds behave like that. I just have to learn to put myself into their shoes and remember how things were like when I was 13 years old, you know the hormone and everything like that.”

Rachel’s gains from leading the dancing group

As stated earlier, Rachel hoped she would get to know what interests her students so that she could better motivate her students to learn English. With

Joyce's help, Rachel started to lead a dancing group for Grade 6 students in the second month of the semester.⁴⁷ She described how this experience helped her establish a close bond with the students in the group:

Like I said, I didn't exactly know what to expect because it was my first time teaching here. But with my dancing group, it's an activity outside the lesson. With them, you can know what they like because you teach them in a very different kind of way. There, you talk about other stuff. With some of the children in the dancing group, I have a better relationship with them. You can see that in class as well. They would come up to me and greet me. They just have a more open and positive attitude. Obviously, you won't know about everybody and what interests them because of the time constraint. If you can start with a small group of children and they know what you are doing, you already gain a lot. The dancing group already makes a difference. They can go out and share the positive experience (interview—part two, 2007/06/25).

The above quote illustrates that if the school can make the best use of foreign teachers' talents in these activities outside the realm of normal school curriculum, there are many benefits for all the people involved. For Rachel, she got to know her students better and developed a better relationship with them. Her students in the dancing group also saw different sides of their new teacher. Rachel remarked, "They see YOU, and they don't see you just as the English teacher." She continued, "They can also see, 'Hey, you also have a life. You can also be fun. You can also do something else,' instead of just standing in front of the class and teach English"

⁴⁷ One of the conditions spelt out in foreign teachers' contract is that they need to devote four hours per month to help their schools with extracurricular activities. However, it is up to each school whether they ask their foreign teachers to do any activity besides their normal teaching. For example, at School B in the 2006 school year, Amy helped with remedial instruction and preparation of the English performance show. At School C in the first semester, Carol led a story-telling session for the lower graders every Thursday morning, and Ivy worked as her assistant. Meanwhile, the foreign teachers at School A did not lead any extracurricular activities.

(interview—part two, 2007/06/25). According to Rachel's observation, the students who joined the dancing group also brought their positive experience to their classrooms. In other words, the dancing group helped to create a catalytic effect on the classroom atmosphere.

Because of the dancing group, Rachel also got to know Joyce better. I asked her to talk about her relationship with Joyce, and she replied, "Like I said, it's a learning process. I really learn to know her in our dancing group. We started to realize we are getting along just fine. Next semester, I think we can just make it work better." She went on to describe her partner as an active person who has good teaching skills and love for children. She further commented, "We can just take this relationship now and take it to the classroom. We can just make the best use of the forty minutes. We can work together as a team."

Rachel's gains from working with people of different cultures

For Rachel, one additional benefit of engaging in team teaching in Taiwan is that she learned how to work with people from a different culture. In the last interview of the year, she told me that since she went straight to teach in England after she finished her education, she did not have a chance to teach in South Africa, a country where people come from diverse ethnical backgrounds. She feels that if she is to go back to teach in South Africa now, she should be equipped with the right skills and attitude to work with people of different ethnicities.

Joyce's Growth

With Ivy leaving in the middle of the school year, the first year of team teaching was quite a dramatic year for Joyce. She described the impact of Ivy's leaving in these words—"There's minimum impact on teaching because we felt she was quite weak at her teaching. It affected me more on the affective side. I don't know if I can call this culture shock. She disappeared all of a sudden" (interview,

2007/06/15). During a casual chat at the beginning of the second semester, Joyce told me that it was quite incomprehensible for her why someone with an important job as a school teacher would not take the job seriously and just disappeared.

At the beginning of the second semester, Joyce also had to readjust to her new teaching partner and help her to settle down as soon as possible. She talked about the role she played—“In the second semester, we got a new foreign teacher. I felt it’s my obligation to help her become familiar with the conditions of each class.” She continued, “I had more opportunities to do some teaching as an equal partner. Of course, it’s not a 50-50% situation, but I did a little bit more teaching this semester” (interview, 2007/06/15).

Joyce was able to establish a close professional and personal relationship with her new partner. She also benefited from her interaction with Rachel. She remarked, “I always learn something from the foreign teachers in our daily talk. Compared to Ivy, I have more interaction with Rachel.” She continued, “A few weeks ago, we played bowling together on weekend. I have more interaction with her, and I also get to know how she views Taiwan” (interview, 2007/06/22).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Joyce started the 2006 school year as a novice English teacher in team teaching and in teaching the higher graders. By the end of the school year, she felt that she had learned some teaching ideas by talking to Stacy, Carol, and Rachel—“I often discuss with Stacy. Carol gives me some suggestions. Rachel also shares her views. Stacy and Carol are quite experienced with the higher graders. It’s nice to know their opinions and see how I can modify my activities” (interview, 2007/06/22). Joyce’s conversations with her colleagues serve as an illuminating example of the type of teacher learning which can occur in an informal context. She also acknowledged Rachel’s creativity in using flashcards to design different activities for the sixth graders. In her words, “She makes good

use of flashcards. She designed many activities around flashcards. She doesn't use them just to ask students to read words."

Although Joyce often talked to her colleagues about teaching ideas, she still felt it is necessary to have regular lesson planning meetings. As discussed in the previous chapter, Stacy, the English head teacher of School C, did not see the need for these meetings where everyone sits down to discuss the plans for the upcoming week or month. Like the first semester, no such meetings were held formally in the second semester, although as mentioned earlier, the members of School C's English team often exchanged and discussed teaching ideas together in an informal manner. Joyce felt that she collaborated with Rachel in class mostly by relying on her instinct as a teacher—"In class, we can communicate through eye contact, and we will discuss a little bit. It's like our instinct" (interview, 2007/06/15).

For Joyce, teaching by one's instinct without thorough discussion in advance is not the ideal situation. She hoped that there would be more formal opportunities for teachers to plan and discuss together in the new school year. She remarked, "I asked Stacy if we could all get together on Friday afternoons and do some serious planning." She continued, "Previously, we just read their lesson plans and thought about how we could cooperate with them. It took us a while to learn how to work together" (interview, 2007/06/15).

In the absence of teacher meetings, I found that Joyce often had little idea of what activity Rachel was going to do until the latter explained to her in the middle of a lesson. In the Grade 6 lesson on March 13, Rachel began the class by reviewing the key phrases with students (e.g., *What a scary ride* and *What a boring show*). She then explained to Joyce the simple activity she was going to do next. She had prepared some pieces of paper, each with a keyword written on it (e.g., *scary*). She then gave a piece of paper to some students. When she said a word (e.g., *scary*),

the two students holding the cards with “scary” and “ride” must stand up and go to the front of the class. The rest of the class must read aloud, “What a scary ride.” Although what Rachel did was a simple activity, I noticed that she still needed to spend a couple of minutes explaining it to Joyce on the stage before asking students to follow her directions. After this class was over, Joyce asked Rachel if she got markers. She told Rachel that students could not really see her handwriting on the small pieces of paper. If the two teachers had discussed the activity earlier in a setting like the regular teacher meeting, Rachel would not have to spend time in class explaining her ideas to Joyce and Joyce could have made the suggestion of using markers to write the words before Rachel conducted the activity.

Joyce’s Change in Perception of EFL Teaching

After practicing team teaching for one year, Joyce stated that she is no longer so idealistic about what she can do to help students learn. In fact, she felt a strong sense of helplessness. As discussed earlier, she was always troubled by how she could help those weaker learners in the sixth grade to learn some English. However, she seemed to have exhausted her resources and energy by the end of the school year. She talked about the possibility of implementing group work in class—“Some students have even given up English. This is a big burden for us. I tried to think of ways to solve it. Maybe team work? But dividing them into teams is such a complicated job” (interview, 2007/06/22). She mentioned that in some teaching resource books, teachers are encouraged to put students into groups, but she felt that some of her sixth graders were not willing to help others or participate in class. In her words, “Those who don’t want to help will never help, and those who have given up will not try at all. It’s impossible to persuade them. They refuse to learn.” She summed up her frustration in these words, “So about EFL teaching, I feel that their different levels will affect their learning, and I can’t

expect myself to be able to pull them up.” She continued, “I am no longer so idealistic. I was a very idealistic person. I felt I could try my best to help every student. I feel a very strong sense of helplessness.”

Rachel and Joyce’s Participation in Professional Development Activities

Rachel stated that she participated in some workshops organized by her company. She felt that the ideas presented there did not always work because she was pressed for time in the real classroom situation. She reflected, “It doesn’t always work here because activities take a long time. This week, you have to finish this page and that page.” She continued, “It’s not like you have a lot of time to play games; you have to move on to the next page. Some of the children may fall behind, but you cannot really stop there” (interview—part two, 2007/06/25). In the same interview, she told me that she would like to have more time to teach her children, but wondered if it is possible to squeeze out more time for English classes in a public school like School C.

In late June of 2007, Rachel was planning to come back to Taiwan two weeks before the new school year began to attend the company training for new teachers (because Rachel joined in the program in the middle of the school year, she had not attended the training for new teachers). She talked about her feeling for this event, “I must be here at the 13th of August for the training for new teachers. I think there, I will learn more” (interview—part two, 2007/06/25). Rachel wondered what courses the company would offer during those two weeks. It turned out that, as mentioned earlier, this event was not held in the summer of 2007 because there was no longer a single foreign teacher company running the program in the new school year. Therefore, Rachel and other new teachers did not have a chance to benefit from the training organized by the company.

Like Rachel, Joyce also attended some training sessions and felt that some of

the ideas presented there were not really practical or spoke to her needs. She stated that throughout the year, she gained the most by discussing with the English teachers in her school. At the same time, she also acknowledged the training sessions provided a good venue for her to learn about other people's experiences. In her words, "We attended one session about innovative lesson plans. One of the teachers who shared his lesson plan came from School B. It was a very big project called *E-pal*. I think it's a good idea." She also discussed with Stacy about how they could implement a similar project at their own school, "I talked about it with Stacy, and we thought that we could implement it if we have a chance. We have to consider our students' level and the curriculum and see how we can implement it appropriately" (interview, 2007/06/22).

Joyce stated that the most memorable professional development activity she participated in the school year was the co-teaching conference in April, 2007. She described the event as a shocking experience—"What shocked me was the conference we attended. On that occasion, we got to listen to different experiences from other countries, like Korea and Australia. The Korean scholar presented their case so undisguisedly. I was very shocked" (interview, 2007/06/22). She further explained why she was shocked by the keynote speech made by the Korean scholar, Dr. Joo-Kyung Park (2007) —"I think she talked about the situation very honestly. Korea is also an EFL environment. I think it's important for us to know about their experience. We have the same ideal goals as they had before. They have made the mistake and realized that they were too idealistic." She continued, "I was thinking that our policy is really too idealistic. I think we may need to adjust some of our goals."

The Effects of Participating in My Research Project

Both Joyce and Rachel felt positive about participating in my research project.

Joyce commented that she gradually got used to having me in her class and that I asked her some crucial questions which helped her reflect—“At the beginning, I worried about whether I could do a good job. As time went by, I got used to it because you always sat quietly on the corner.” She continued, “One good thing is that I will remind myself not to be too lazy on the day of your observation. You asked some very crucial questions. I think about them sometimes. I use your questions to guide my reflection” (interview, 2007/06/22).

As for Rachel, she stated that participating in my project was a nice experience. Also, as someone completely new to team teaching in Taiwan, she felt that the questions I asked her in the background interview gave her a better idea on the issues involved in teaching in the new context. She remarked, “Obviously, it makes my eyes open more. Those questions you asked me at the beginning of the semester? I think if you didn’t ask me those, I wouldn’t have thought about the things you asked me.” She further explained, “Those questions made me realize that there aren’t just you and your co-teachers. There’re you, co-teachers, the school, and the kids.” She continued, “It’s not like you are the important person, and the school has to follow you. It’s more like the school, the children, the culture, and everything else. You allowed me to think about a lot of questions” (interview—part two, 2007/06/25).

Summary

At the end of the second semester, Joyce stated that she learned some teaching ideas from her new partner Rachel; she also acknowledged Rachel’s creativity in using flashcards to design different activities. From her interaction with Rachel, she also learned foreigners’ views of Taiwan. After teaching the sixth graders for one year, she learned that these students really become restless as the day for them to leave School C approaches. She also felt a strong sense of helplessness as she

realized that those students who have not learned English well have more or less given up on the subject. Besides learning from Rachel, Joyce felt that her conversations with Stacy and Carol also helped her gain teaching ideas. Throughout the school year, Joyce also attended various professional development activities. Although she felt that some of the ideas presented there did not really speak to her needs, she felt she still learned other teachers' experiences from attending these events. Like Angie and May from School A, the most memorable professional development event for Joyce was the co-teaching conference. She was especially impressed by the speech given by a Korean scholar and felt that the team-teaching policy in Hsinchu needed to be evaluated.

In Rachel's case, at the beginning of the semester, she stated she needed to gain more knowledge about the students in Taiwan. Since it was her first time teaching the older children, she hoped she would learn more about their mindsets and what interest them. After practicing team teaching in School C for one semester, she stated that she learned how to work with people from different cultures. Besides learning from engaging in team teaching, she gained a better knowledge about her partner, Joyce, and her students through leading the dancing club of School C. Like the other foreign teachers in this study, the most frequent professional development activity which Rachel attended was the regular training workshops organized by her company. She did not specifically talk about how these workshops helped her grow as a teacher, but she mentioned that she needed to evaluate the ideas presented there and thought about if she could apply them to her teaching.

Factors for Teachers' Professional Growth

Table 8 is a summary of the individual and social/interpersonal factors which either facilitate or hinder Rachel and Joyce's growth, which is followed by a brief

discussion of each of the factors.

Table 8

Factors for Joyce and Rachel's Growth

	Individual	Social/Interpersonal
Facilitating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● positive attitude toward living and teaching abroad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● a close collegial relationship ● participating in extracurricular activities ● participating in professional development events
Debilitating		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● lack of regular lesson plan meetings

Individual Factor Which Facilitates Growth

Positive attitude toward living and teaching abroad

As Carless (2006b) suggests, the success of team-teaching, to a significant extent, relies on the interpersonal skills of team teachers. Rachel's positive attitude toward living and teaching in a foreign land was conducive to her professional growth because she adapted quickly to the new environment and was willing to take up challenges. In her school, instead of avoiding misbehaved students or having conflicts with them, Rachel always tried to involve them in her teaching. She also did not give up establishing a positive relationship with the colleagues who treated her rather coldly at the beginning of the semester. Her persistence did pay off, as she gradually built a good relationship with her students and those colleagues, which

further facilitated her professional development in a foreign teaching context.

Social/Interpersonal Factors Which Facilitate Growth

A close collegial relationship

According to Carless (2006a), one of the favorable conditions for successful team teaching is the development of relationships inside and outside the classroom. Most of the English teachers at School C were quite close on the professional and personal level. They exchanged many ideas and opinions in their daily conversations. Joyce once talked about how she benefited from her daily interaction with her colleagues, “I feel I gain the most by discussing with the English teachers in our school. I often ask them what they would do under some circumstance. I learn from their experience so that I won’t make the same mistake again” (interview, 2007/06/22).

A harmonious atmosphere at School C also helped Rachel to settle down quickly. Rachel once commented on the friendly atmosphere of School C, “The staff here are very friendly. They asked me to come back for the next school year. I still think there are things I can learn from this school.” She continued, “There are things I’ve observed. It’s very positive. The children are playing outside and everybody is happy. There are not major problems in the school itself. Everything is running smoothly. I can just learn more. Everyone seems to work together as a team” (interview—part two, 2007/06/25).

Participating in extracurricular activities

Participating in extracurricular activities, such as leading the dancing club, gave Rachel an opportunity to gain more knowledge about the sixth graders and get to know her partner Joyce better. The knowledge about her students was crucial in her development at School C because she could apply it to improve her instruction. Meanwhile, getting to know Joyce better by means of participating in such an

extracurricular activity helped Rachel to cooperate more effectively with her partner in team teaching.

Participating in professional development events

As mentioned earlier, attending different professional development activities helped Joyce grow as a teacher because she could learn other people's ideas and experiences. The co-teaching conference also had a strong impact on her, as she learned about how team teaching programs were run in other countries. After coming back from the conference, she felt an urgent need for the government to evaluate the team-teaching policy in Hsinchu. In the case of Rachel, although she was relatively new to the program and did not take part in many professional development activities, she often reflected on the applicability of the ideas presented to her on these occasions.

Social/Interpersonal Factor Which Debilitates Growth

Lack of regular lesson plan meetings

Since it was the responsibility of the foreign teachers to prepare lesson plans for co-teaching lessons, the lesson plan meetings, if held, could have played an important role in helping teachers develop further as team teachers and English teachers, especially in the area of lesson design. In the case of School C, Joyce could have provided her input to Rachel's teaching plans and they could have brainstormed ideas together during these meetings. Even a minor suggestion such as writing the keywords with markers so that students can see clearly could help the execution of a teaching plan. More importantly, in the process of explaining her plans to Joyce, Rachel would have a chance to reevaluate her plans through other's eyes and learn areas that require needed adjustments.

The lesson plan meetings could also have functioned as a venue where team teachers got together to reflect on their previous teaching. For example, Rachel

once misled the students by telling them that the word “worried” in the sentence “I was so worried” was a past-tense verb (fieldnote, 2007/05/17). Joyce caught the mistake immediately and told students in Chinese that in that sentence, the past-tense verb is “was,” not “worried.” According to Andrews (2007), it is not uncommon for foreign teachers to lack declarative knowledge of grammar and grammatical terminology. If regular meetings took place at School C, teachers would have had a chance to discuss problems and questions related to both English teaching and the English language, leading to improved pedagogical content knowledge.