AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF
ENGLISH-AS-A-SECOND-LANGUAGE (ESL) TEACHERS’ MOTIVATIONAL
BELIEFS IN DEVELOPING DIFFERENT PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES

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Holly CHUNG Ho-ying

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Abstract

Motivated teachers affect not only their own teaching quality and job satisfaction, but also their students’ motivation and learning outcomes, and institutional culture and development. One self-financed tertiary college in Hong Kong has also begun to consider the significance of teacher motivation and revised its appraisal criteria to include evaluating teacher motivation. However, as of yet, the college has not developed programs, classes, or seminars designed to improve teacher motivation. Hence, teacher motivation, and the different ways to improve and assess it, has become an important consideration for higher education institutions like the research site. This study employed an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) to investigate higher education English-as-a-second-language (ESL) teachers’ motivational beliefs about pedagogical development. This study was guided by the following research question: How do ESL teachers in a private tertiary college in Hong Kong make sense of their motivational beliefs in developing or adopting different pedagogical strategies. Through qualitative inquiry, this study employed semi-structured interview questions. Four full-time ESL teachers working at the Department of English in the research site participated in this study. The teachers perceived that students’ ESL weaknesses and learning needs were the driving force behind teacher motivation for pedagogical development. The participants were also motivated to tailor different instructional practices to suit their students’ age, learning characteristics, and affective needs. While teachers exploited their strengths to
develop teaching practices they were confident in, their perceived weaknesses became the
reason to attempt different ways to keep their lessons interesting and meaningful. Teachers
also gained confidence in instructional strategies proven successful when being adopted by
their role models. On the other hand, they disassociated themselves from negative images of
teachers who were unable or reluctant to modify their teaching. Influences from departmental
and college policies on teachers’ pedagogical decisions, however, were comparatively minor.
This study suggests that higher education faculty can motivate themselves by gaining
knowledge of students’ academic needs, personalities and satisfaction needs, and of the
teachers’ pedagogical strengths and weaknesses. The findings in this study can also inform
higher education administrators about the importance of tailoring professional development
programs to meet faculty’s individual needs. Additional research is needed to explore the
perspectives of teachers of other subjects or in other higher education institutions who may
receive and react to alternative sources of motivation.

*Keywords:* teacher motivation, ESL teacher motivation, higher education teacher
motivation, pedagogical development, self-efficacy
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Chapter One: Research Problem

Motivation provides an incentive that results in the imitation of learned behavior (Bandura, 1977). Not only does it trigger an action, but it also affects individuals’ choice of action, commitment to the action, and the effort devoted to achieve the action (Bandura, 1994). In education, empirical studies have suggested that a high level of teacher motivation is positively linked not only with teachers’ teaching quality and job satisfaction (Evans, 1998; Michaelowa, 2002), but also with students’ motivation, learning, and achievement outcomes (Dornyei, 2005; Kassabgy, Boraie, & Schmidt, 2001) and school development as a whole (Ames, 1990). Teacher motivation, as reflected in teachers’ cognitive teaching behavior, therefore, has been gaining increasing attention in education research.

Statement of the Problem

Higher education institutions have also become invested in considering the significance of teacher motivation. Hill College (pseudonym), a private tertiary education college in Hong Kong under investigation in this doctoral thesis is one of them. The appraisal criteria for teaching staff, effective from academic year 2012–2013, were revised to include the evaluation of teachers’ cognitive teaching behavior, rather than merely judging teaching performance via student evaluations. Specifically, one newly added criterion is the demonstration of “passion and commitment in continuous professional development and improvement in teaching practices and in sharing good teaching practices and/or new
teaching methods” (Hill College, 2013, p. 3). In other words, teachers’ cognitive motivation (Bandura, 1994) for developing different pedagogical strategies is becoming just as important to evaluate teachers’ performance, if not more so, as their actual teaching behavior.

Despite the significance of teacher motivation in the appraisal of its faculty’s performance, the College has not expended much effort to strengthen its faculty’s motivation. The faculty were merely informed of the change in the performance review through an email from the College’s Human Resources Department. From the College’s founding in September 2010 to the end of the academic year 2012–2013, there was no in-house seminar or workshop aiming to recognize teachers’ cognitive needs in teaching or increase their motivation. Among the six seminars organized by the Staff Development Committee in the academic year 2012–2013, one was a sharing seminar titled “Developing Pedagogical Methods that Facilitate the Realization of Learning Outcomes,” but this was only mandatory for new teachers to the College. The issue of teacher motivation for pedagogical development was still left unaddressed. It should also be noted that professional development or training for teachers in pedagogical change, even if any, may not necessarily translate into actually executing new teaching practices, because some teachers may not see the need to change in the first place (Ertmer, Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Sadik, Sendurur, E., & Sendurur, P., 2012). It is the “passion and commitment” a teacher displays that holds the key. In other words, the extent to which teachers are able to improve their teaching practices depends on the teachers’
motivation to develop and execute different pedagogical strategies (Bernaus, Wilson, & Gardner, 2009; Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008). If the College does not implement more concrete strategies to nurture teacher motivation, the time and resources it has allocated to professional development might be misspent.

If the contradiction between the College’s emphasis on teacher motivation and its lack of corresponding measures or policies is left unaddressed, both the College and its faculty will suffer. This problem of practice has sent conflicting messages to the faculty. One was that the College has taken the cognitive aspects of its faculty for granted, assuming that all of them are already motivated to improve their teaching. Or that the College was not willing to devote resources to, or simply did not know what concrete measures it could use to improve teacher motivation. One other interpretation could even be that the College did not particularly care about teacher motivation, and that the new appraisal criteria were merely for show.

To the faculty, the problem of their appraisal criteria not being aligned with the College’s practice has already put them at a disadvantageous position, as they were evaluated based on “one of the most elusive concepts in the whole domain of the social sciences” (Dornyei, 2001, p. 2): motivation. If teacher motivation is left undefined by the College, it can be unfair to faculty to be evaluated by this subjective construct. The lack of close attention to teacher motivation has also deprived the faculty of the opportunity to thoughtfully improve this cognitive aspect of their teaching.
The discrepancy between the criteria used to evaluate faculty performance and the College’s policies can be addressed through a research project that investigates teachers’ motivation to be pedagogically innovative, while working within an institutional context that has not yet prioritized teacher motivation. ESL teachers’ motivation calls for particular attention, because many tertiary students learning English as a second language have limited proficiency and low learning motivation (Evans & Green, 2007). Teachers who are motivated are especially needed to enhance such students’ learning engagement through a wide variety of teaching and learning activities (Bernaus & Wilson, 2009). The purpose of this study was to explore which motivational beliefs ESL teachers hold could contribute to pedagogical innovation. This study would also draw much-needed attention to the concept of teacher motivation and its influence on teachers’ career development and job satisfaction, students’ learning, and schools’ improvement.

**Significance of Research Problem**

Investigating faculty members’ motivation for improving their teaching in a context where the College has not yet addressed their motivation is significant within both the broader community and the local context. This study can help higher education administrators become more aware of the importance of teacher motivation in the implementation of pedagogical strategies. The administrators would then realize that the key to successful teaching and learning is the alignment between teachers’ pedagogical beliefs
and their teaching practices, together with the actual execution of teaching practice.

Corresponding professional development training can be planned to address the emotional and cognitive teaching needs of student teachers, and in-service teachers and mechanisms can be introduced to help teaching practitioners evaluate such areas. The administrators can also conduct a more holistic review of teachers, instead of merely appraising their teaching outcomes.

Giving a voice to the faculty to articulate their motivational beliefs also contributes to the research of teacher motivation since empirical studies on teacher motivation, when compared to those on student motivation, are still limited (Sharabyan, 2011a, 2011b; Sugino, 2010b), especially in the domains of second-language learning (Dornyei, 2005) and higher education (Visser-Wijnveen, Stes, & Van Petegem, 2012).

Locally, gaining an in-depth understanding of ESL teachers’ motivational beliefs offers teachers themselves a chance to reflect upon their needs when initiating and implementing pedagogical strategies in second language-learning classrooms, instead of only recalling their past teaching experiences and labeling motivational factors as positive or negative, as has been done in the limited number of teacher motivation studies conducted thus far (Matsumoto, 2011; Wu & Hung, 2011; Yunus, Osman, & Ishak, 2011). This understanding can inform teaching practitioners of potential misalignment between their instructional beliefs and practices since sometimes teachers recognize the effectiveness of some instructional
strategies, but since they may not see an immediate need to implement them or are not confident in implementing them, a pedagogical change is not enacted (Lee et al., 2013).

However, ESL teachers in higher education delivering courses such as English for Academic Purposes are supposed to be not only skillful at their subject knowledge, but also adept at developing new pedagogical knowledge, evaluating the effectiveness of different instructional strategies, and adopting different curricula throughout their teaching process (Hall, 2005). Therefore, examining their own motivation for developing and adopting different instructional strategies can help teaching practitioners adjust their teaching beliefs and pedagogy when delivering ESL courses to students at the College under investigation, who have a relatively weaker foundation in English compared to their counterparts at public universities. Teachers’ improved motivation for pedagogical development can then translate into their higher job satisfaction and less resistance to change.

Teachers who recognize their own motivational beliefs in developing instructional strategies will become more likely to be responsive to their students’ different learning needs (Hashweh, 2003). Such reflection by teachers will also inspire them to examine whether their teaching practices are aligned with their motivational beliefs. And considering the positive relationship between student motivation and teacher motivation, which is well established in empirical studies (Atkinson, 2000; Bernaus, Wilson, & Gardner, 2009; Williams, K. & Williams, C., 2011), an increase in teacher motivation can also increase student motivation,
leading to more job satisfaction for teachers and better learning outcomes for their students.

**Research Question**

The central research question for this study was: How do English-as-second-language (ESL) teachers in a private tertiary college in Hong Kong make sense of their motivational beliefs in developing or adopting different pedagogical strategies?

**Organization of the Study**

This thesis is organized according to the steps taken to explore the topic of higher education ESL teachers’ motivation for pedagogical development. Chapter one concludes with a discussion of Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy theory as the theoretical framework guiding this study. Chapter two reviews three strands of literature. First, it reviews theories and research in the field of teacher motivation, particularly the scholarship on teachers in higher education and on ESL teachers. Then, it discusses the significance of pedagogical development in higher education. Finally it connects the first two strands of literature by reviewing scholarship that illustrates the importance of teachers’ motivational beliefs in affecting higher education faculty members’ pedagogical innovation. Chapter three describes the research design, which is based on Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, to explore ESL teachers’ meaning-making process of their motivation for pedagogical development in a private tertiary college in Hong Kong. Chapter four includes a detailed analysis of the data obtained through semi-structured interviews with the four participants. Chapter five discusses
the findings in relation to the extant literature and Bandura’s self-efficacy theory. This last chapter concludes with implications for practice and for future research.

**Theoretical Framework**

To explore the motivational beliefs of English-as-a-second-language (ESL) teachers in developing and adopting different pedagogical strategies, this study adopted Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy theory, particularly its concept of teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs, as the theoretical framework. A brief introduction of this theoretical framework will first be given, followed by an explanation of its application to the study of teachers’ motivation. This section will conclude with a discussion of how the concept of teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs helps address the problem of practice, guide the literature review, and shape the research design.

**Self-efficacy Theory**

Self-efficacy theory is a useful tool for understanding teachers’ perceptions of their motivations to make pedagogical assessment and improvement, because it focuses on individuals’ perspectives on their capacity to perform actions (Bandura, 1977). In the context of this study, teacher self-efficacy referred to how teachers perceive their motivation to evaluate and improve their instructional practices in English-language classrooms. The theoretical underpinning of self-efficacy theory can be found in social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997). Social cognitive theory posits that individuals are able to choose and pursue particular courses of actions; this is known as human agency (Bandura,
This agency works through a mechanism that Bandura calls “triadic reciprocal causation”: an individual’s past and current behavior, cognitive factors (such as motivation), and the environment all exert causal effects on each other (Bandura, 1997; Henson, 2001). The inter-relationships among these three influences then affect how individuals perceive their capabilities to achieve a goal. This cognitive appraisal is at the core of self-efficacy theory.

**Teacher Self-efficacy**

This study focussed on the self-efficacy of teachers. Teachers’ self-efficacy refers to their self-perception of competence in performing a particular teaching task and affecting student performance (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, & Zellman, 1977). This conceptual foundation is important for this study because its focus on human agency gives a voice to teachers themselves. Skinner (1996) posits that Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy theory is one of the few, in the study of human control, that makes a clear distinction between agent-means beliefs (the belief that one can use a particular method) and means-end beliefs (the belief that a particular method will lead to a certain result). At the same time, Skinner (1996) recommends Bandura’s (1977) attempt to shift the focus from the distinction between the two beliefs, to a missing link: the agent’s response to the means and how it may affect the ends. This missing link is crucial because it serves as a more reliable predictor of behavior (Bandura, 1977) than simply examining the agent-means or the means-end relationship alone.
For example, teachers’ beliefs in the effectiveness of a teaching practice may not necessarily translate into its adoption, if the teachers lack the confidences that they would be able to implement the practice (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). On the other hand, examining teachers’ perceptions of their abilities may reveal more, such as the teachers’ past training or experience with, feelings about, and contextual factors in adopting a new teaching practice. That is to say teachers’ behavior, cognitive evaluation of their abilities, and environment (triadic reciprocal causation) all play an important role in affecting the teachers’ choices of pedagogical methods and their execution.

**Teachers’ Self-efficacy and Motivation**

The four sources of efficacy expectations in Bandura’s (1986, 1997) theory of self-efficacy beliefs provided this study with a clear way of determining the development of college teachers’ motivation. Bandura (1986, 1997) proposes four sources of self-efficacy beliefs: mastery experience (prediction of performance based on successful or failed experiences), vicarious experience (changes of self-efficacy based on observation of others’ performance), social or verbal persuasion (changes of self-efficacy based on performance feedback), and physiological feedback (the influence of feelings such as anxiety or excitement on forming positive or negative self-efficacy). These four sources are important to this study because they help explain the root of teachers’ motivational beliefs in adopting and developing different pedagogical strategies. Simply labeling a teacher as having high or low
self-efficacy, without examining the sources of such self-efficacy beliefs, is not enough. Even teachers who are equally efficacious may react very differently to the idea of adopting different pedagogies. For example, empirical studies reveal that efficacious teachers are more committed to evaluating their pedagogy and experimenting with new instructional practices (Allinder, 1994; Stein & Wang, 1988). However, some efficacious teachers may still be resistant to new teaching methods because they do not see the need to change their already successful methods (Wheatley, 2005). This leads to a less-discussed aspect of motivation study: motivation to sustain past accomplishment (Raynor & Brown, 1985). As a result, a more comprehensive interpretation can be reached by judging which sources of self-efficacy are most influential in developing self-efficacy, and how these sources interact (Morris & Usher, 2011), instead of the over-absolute attribution of strong motivation for pedagogical improvement to highly efficacious teachers.

Self-efficacy beliefs also offered this study on teacher motivation a more multifaceted lens through which to interpret sources of motivation, rather than merely categorizing them as positive or negative motivators. According to Bandura (1977), motivation provides an incentive that results in the imitation of learned behavior. However, examining incentives alone cannot always fully explain whether a teacher will pursue a goal. For example, a college can use monetary incentives to encourage its faculty to develop an effective instructional practice. However, such incentives will not be effective if the faculty dismiss
themselves as incapable of offering new, more effective strategies, or dismissing their students as unwilling to learn. The potential discrepancy between incentives and their expected outcomes means that motivation from different sources is first mediated by one’s self-efficacy beliefs, before transforming into a goal, and then an action. Teachers’ self-efficacy acts as a professional filter (Smylie, 1988) through which the sources of motivation pass. Based on influences from past and current behavior, cognition, and environment, teachers then make judgments about their abilities to achieve a teaching goal. This self-appraisal then translates into their self-efficacy beliefs. Different self-efficacy beliefs determine different motivational levels. Stronger motivation may inspire a higher goal, together with more effort and resilience when attaining the goal (Carbery & Garavan, 2007).

With the filtering role of self-efficacy in the development of motivation in mind, teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs shape the study in the following ways. First, understanding teachers’ self-efficacy formation help identify the root of this study’s problem of practice. The problem of practice, as elaborated in the previous chapter, is that the college under investigation has put significant emphasis on its teachers’ motivation for pedagogical innovation in its newly revised faculty appraisal criteria; however, its motivational policies and practices have not kept up with this emphasis. The underlying assumption about the revision of the appraisal criteria is that motivated teachers are more likely to reflect upon and improve their pedagogical strategies. Bandura’s (1997) concept of teacher self-efficacy
beliefs helps justify the college’s emphasis on teacher motivation, because the theory posits that teachers’ beliefs in their own capacity (self-efficacy) to perform a teaching act can reveal a more holistic picture of teachers’ choices, effort, persistence, and resilience (Pajares, 1996, 1997), than simply looking at their teaching performance. At the same time, self-efficacy beliefs help reveal the root of the problem of practice: The college wants its faculty to be motivated enough to develop effective pedagogical strategies but it fails to recognize the influence of teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs on their motivation. This problem can be dealt with by realizing that motivation cannot be forced once the college sets down the criteria in the faculty appraisal. To motivate teachers to develop and adopt different teaching practices, the faculty must first understand their own beliefs in their abilities to execute different instructional methods—in other words, their self-efficacy beliefs. Only then will the teachers be motivated to reflect upon their pedagogy.

Second, self-efficacy beliefs inform the research question of this study: How do English language teachers in a private tertiary college in Hong Kong make sense of their motivational beliefs in developing or adopting different pedagogical strategies? Self-efficacy beliefs can help teachers attach meanings to their related abilities, or the lack thereof, and also their opinions and evaluations of their present, current and future abilities. As a result, employing self-efficacy beliefs allows the research question to encompass both the formation of college teachers’ motivational beliefs and the way these beliefs change over time, rather than just
eliciting answers about the sources of motivation.

Self-efficacy beliefs also help inform the scope of the literature review of this study. While numerous empirical studies have positively associated higher teacher efficacy with teachers’ willingness to adopt pedagogical innovations (Allinder, 1994; Berman et al., 1977; Ghaith & Yaghi, 1997; Guskey, 1984; Smylie, 1988; Stein & Wang, 1988), what has remained unaddressed is the meaning of this association, and the influence of changing levels of teachers’ beliefs in their self-efficacy. Self-efficacy theory does not stress teachers’ actual pedagogical effectiveness but their beliefs in their capabilities, and beliefs are easily changeable. Thus, employing this theory can help answer questions left unexplored in previous studies, such as: Why would teachers with relatively low self-efficacy, who are considered in need of implementing pedagogical change, be more reluctant to do so? How can efficacious teachers be convinced that adopting new teaching strategies will not affect their successful track record?

The concept of self-efficacy beliefs also helps evaluate the findings in the teacher self-efficacy literature. Wheatley (2005), an advocate for reconceptualizing teacher efficacy research, has pointed out that most empirical studies on teachers’ self-efficacy categorize teachers into only two groups: teachers with high self-efficacy and those with low self-efficacy, with the former usually associated with stronger willingness for pedagogical innovation. However, such an absolute association has limitations since it neglects the fact
that sometimes highly efficacious teachers might actually lack the motivation to change their already successful teaching practices (Brodkey, 1993; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). On the other hand, teachers who have doubts about their teaching effectiveness can be more motivated to improve their pedagogical strategies (Floden & Buchmann, 1993; Wheatley, 2002). Employing the concept of self-efficacy beliefs helps judge the merits and limitations of the teacher efficacy studies in the literature review, especially because efficacy beliefs are changeable (Bandura, 1989) and context-specific (Bandura, 1977).

Finally, Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy theory informs the choice of this study’s research design and methodology. Research employing teacher efficacy beliefs as a theoretical framework has long been dominated by quantitative methodology (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). However, numerical teacher efficacy ratings, usually demonstrated in form of the Likert scale, fail to determine which particular teaching tasks different teachers consider to be more or less effective, if the tasks happen to share the same ratings (Wheatley, 2002). Following Tschannen-Moran et al.’s (1998) advocacy for an interpretivist paradigm and a context-specific orientation in studying teacher efficacy, this study will use an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methodological approach. Through one-on-one semi-structured interviews, the IPA approach will allow the researcher to interpret the meanings the interviewed teachers attach to their motivational beliefs in adopting different pedagogical strategies.
However, using the concept of self-efficacy beliefs can have some drawbacks. Teachers’
perceptions of their own abilities to develop pedagogical strategies may not derive
exclusively from their professional lives, but also their personal backgrounds. The underlying
assumption of this study is that understanding teachers’ motivational beliefs through
self-efficacy beliefs will help school administrators recognize the importance of teacher
motivation in the implementation of pedagogical strategies. If the findings reveal that aspects
of the teachers’ personal lives, such as their upbringings or family backgrounds, help shape
part of their motivational beliefs, the administrators may not be able to address this. That said,
self-efficacy serves as a strong predictor for behavioral change (Bandura, 1997). The
future-oriented nature of self-efficacy beliefs can still inform the findings of this study about
how school administrators can attain better alignments between faculty’s motivational beliefs
and their pedagogical strategies.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

The following section reviews relevant literature on teacher motivation and the relationships between teachers’ perception of their motivation and their investment in developing or adopting different pedagogical strategies. The review will be guided by the following questions:

- How have researchers and scholars explained teacher motivation, especially in the subject of teaching English as a second language (ESL) in a higher educational setting?
- What does the literature on pedagogical development in higher education demonstrate?
- How important is teacher motivation to higher education faculty’s developing and adopting different pedagogical strategies?

In response to these questions, this review will begin with a discussion of theories and research in the field of teacher motivation, especially scholarship on teachers in higher education and ESL teachers. Since this study’s problem of practice is the mismatch between the college’s advocating for motivated teachers to improve their pedagogy, and its lack of corresponding policies, the literature on the importance of pedagogical development in higher education will also be reviewed. The last section will connect the previous two by reviewing literature that illuminates the importance of teachers’ motivational beliefs in pedagogical innovation. Overall, this literature review will reveal how teachers’ perceptions of their abilities influence their motivation, and how these perceptions inform their teaching.
practices.

Teacher Motivation

Leading Motivational Theories and Their Limitations

One of the most influential and commonly used definitions of motivation derives from Porter and Lawler’s (1968) expectancy theory. Porter and Lawler, drawing on Vroom’s (1964) expectancy-valence theory of work motivation, divided motivation into two types: intrinsic and extrinsic. Overwhelmingly, most studies employing expectancy theory revealed that teachers drew motivation and job satisfaction from intrinsic factors such as student achievement, and professional recognition and development (Scott, Dinham, & Brooks, 2003; Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2006). On the other hand, extrinsic motivators such as salary, school administration, and job security were only treated as basic needs by teachers (Shoaib, 2004). Only intrinsic motivators, such as an inherent desire to help students learn, could explain why teachers take up the profession (Dörnyei, 2011; Pennington, 1995; Pennington & Ho, 1995).

Despite its wide adoption in studies on teacher motivation, Porter and Lawler’s categorization was criticized as presuming an additive relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, while neglecting the possibility of other kinds of motivation (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Deci and Ryan (1985), in their self-determination theory, thus suggested two other types of motivation: autonomous motivation and controlled motivation. Similar to
Porter and Lawler’s categorization, if teachers chose to pursue a goal they found worthwhile, they were considered autonomously motivated. On the other hand, if teachers only acted due to factors like school rules, rewards, or punishments, their behaviors were induced by controlled motivation (Verhagen, Feldberg, van den Hooff, Meents, & Merkivi, 2011). In other words, the most significant difference between autonomous motivation and controlled motivation is the availability of choice.

However, many critics have attacked this schema as a false dichotomy. Nias (1981) argued against this unnecessary polarization, urging greater consideration of the complex context of teaching itself. Amabile (1993) concurred, criticizing the labeling of motivation as overly rigid; he pointed out that there is a synergistic relationship between different kinds of motivation. Other researchers also noted the limitations of the overlapping categories or definitions found in previous teacher motivation studies: the neglect of the contextual, cultural, or subject-specific nuances (Hartnett, St George, & Dron, 2011; Watt & Richardson, 2007), and teachers’ cognitive or social satisfaction and needs (Wighting, Liu, & Rovai, 2008). These limitations point to the fact that researchers should start to look at how teachers interpret their own motivational needs in a specific context, rather than treating them as passive agents, reacting to the same motivational factor in the same way in any situation.

**Current Trends in Teacher Motivation Research**

Researchers of teacher motivation in the 21st century have begun to factor in teachers’
cognitive evaluation of themselves, and of other parties. For example, one category of motivation in Wighting et al.’s (2008) studies was perception of one’s own ability to execute a task. This work was rooted in Bandura’s self-efficacy theory, this study’s theoretical framework, by extending the discussion of motivation from qualifying motivational factors as intrinsic or extrinsic, to examining individuals’ self-perception of competence. Hernandez, Montaner, Sese and Urquizu (2011) proposed the concept of social motivation, highlighting an individual’s need to establish reciprocal relationships such as gaining a sense of community and recognition from others. This finds support in Inman and Marlow’s (2004) studies on the attitudes of beginning teachers toward staying in the profession. The researchers identified a supportive community and school environment as the most important factors in teacher retention, using examples such as presence of teaching mentors, cooperative colleagues, encouraging school administrators, and an education-oriented community.

This body of literature on the development of teacher motivation research reveals a new research trend: rather than assuming teachers are passive agents only being influenced by different motivational factors, researchers are now recognizing the active role teachers themselves and their beliefs can play in motivation. The latter trend finds its theoretical root in self-efficacy theory, which deals with individuals’ perceptions of their abilities to attain an expected result from a goal (Bandura, 1997). Most empirical studies on teacher motivation
concluded that teachers find intrinsic rewards the most motivating factor and the most substantial source of job satisfaction (Dörnyei, 2001). This finding is the impetus for investigating the problem of practice in this study. School administrators may rely on the assumption that because teachers were motivated to join the profession, they will thus stay motivated on their own. For instance, the administration in the college under investigation may well assume that its faculty should have an inherent desire for pedagogical development, and that motivation did not have to be nurtured. However, at the same time, the college started to put a high value on teacher motivation in its newly revised performance appraisal criteria. The contradiction between the college’s expectations for its teachers and its practice forms the problem of practice in this study.

Teacher motivation has always received less attention in the literature than student motivation (Sharabyan, 2011a, 2011b; Sugino, 2010b), and even less has been written on the motivation of higher education faculty (Visser-Wijnveen, Stes, & Van Petegem, 2012) and, specifically, on the motivation of language teachers (Dörnyei, 2001). The following section will review the scant studies in these two relatively uncharted fields, before discussing how this study can fill this knowledge gap.

Motivation of Higher Education Faculty

Self-efficacy theory helps inform this study’s focus on higher education English-language teachers because the school context (environment) interacts with behavior
and cognition in a triadic reciprocal causation to influence self-efficacy formation (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Teacher efficacy is also situation- and subject-matter specific (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). A teacher may feel confident in teaching a specific kind or level of students, in a particular subject area, but not in others.

The context of higher education and its teachers’ motivational beliefs is worth studying, because it differs from other educational settings in the competition for a faculty member’s time and effort between teaching and research (Visser-Wijnveen, Stes and Van Petegem, 2012). Compared to research, the value of teaching in higher education and the role teaching plays in the evaluation of faculty is still debatable (Secret, Leisey, Lanning, Polich, & Schaub, 2011). Thus the motivation for pedagogical development might vary widely among higher education teachers. In his study of a post-1987 university in Australia, Bailey (1999), a pioneer in the study of higher education teacher motivation, discovered that faculty on the professorial track and those with higher degrees were relatively more confident and motivated in research. On the other hand, academic staff with lower degrees (bachelor’s or master’s) and those with low research productivity displayed higher motivation for teaching. Over a decade later, in their quantitative study on 231 higher education teachers, Visser-Wijnveen et al. (2012) reported similar findings and explained that academic staff with high research productivity might have only limited training in teaching, and so it would be natural for them to feel less confident and motivated in the classroom. Colbeck (1998)
asserted that some of these staff might not even find it worthwhile to invest time and energy in teaching. These studies all point to the fact that in higher education, sources of (positive) motivation alone might not be conducive to faculty’s pedagogical development. The above studies reveal that differences in educational qualification, teacher training, and research productivity influence how higher education teachers perceive their abilities and how much effort they would expend to adopt different teaching practices.

While the abovementioned studies focus on teachers’ individual perceptions, others (Bess, 1997; Feldman & Paulsen, 1999; Kızıltepe, 2008; Macfarlane & Hughes, 2009) suggest that the roles played by colleges or universities and the teaching community are also important motivating factors. Feldman and Paulsen (1999) advocated for a supportive teaching culture in colleges or universities, which they characterized as strong commitment and support from administration, frequent pedagogical demonstrations or workshops, and regular faculty interaction and collaboration. Macfarlane and Hughes (2009) echoed and confirmed the synergistic roles played by administration and faculty members in promoting teaching and research, such as developing and recognizing a new identity for teachers as pedagogic researchers.

This body of literature on higher education teachers’ motivation sheds light on the study in the following ways. First, while most teacher motivation studies have been on pre-service, primary or secondary teachers, the limited number of studies on teachers working in higher
education colleges or universities implies that this untapped field has research potential.

Second, the findings from this body of literature show that simply categorizing different sources of motivation as intrinsic or extrinsic cannot fully account for complex contexts. For example, teaching support from colleges or universities (Feldman & Paulsen, 1999; Macfarlane & Hughes, 2009) might fall under the category of extrinsic motivation. However, such support might be interpreted differently by different teachers, and it may not turn out to be a source of extrinsic motivation after all. Some teachers may not care about incentives to improve their teaching because their research productivity is high enough to secure a promising performance appraisal. Some, on the other hand, may transform the administrative support into an intrinsic desire for increasing their level of competence in the specific subject matter. As a result, self-efficacy theory’s focus on individuals’ cognitive evaluation provides a more suitable interpretative lens to study the motivational beliefs of higher education teachers who demonstrate a strong individual interest in either research or teaching (Macfarlane & Hughes, 2009).

The limitations in this body of literature further help justify the employment of self-efficacy theory as the theoretical framework in this study. Kiziltepe (2008), in his quantitative study of motivation and demotivation of 300 public university teachers, noted that teachers working at private universities could respond differently to different motivational factors compared to their counterparts at state institutions. Sugino (2010a)
attempted to address this limitation by surveying second-language teachers working at the defense academy and private and national universities in Japan. However, he failed to acknowledge the commonalities or differences, if any, in the demotivational factors identified by teachers at the three different schools, which follow very different curriculums and have different student body composition. Such limitations inform the researcher of this study to take into account the private, teaching-oriented nature of the college under investigation.

Self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977, 1986) would help address these limitations, because it pays equal attention to environment (the school context in this case), behavior and cognition, when examining how they influence an individual’s perceptions of his or her abilities.

**Motivation of ESL Teachers**

Other than being context specific, teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs also vary according to subject matter (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, A. & Hoy, W., 1998). Within the higher education context, this study will focus on ESL teachers in the private college under investigation. The field of language teachers’ motivation deserves research attention, as these teachers shoulder more responsibilities than just spreading academic knowledge (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). They are expected to help their students identify with the second-language community (Gardner, Masgoret, Tennant, & Mihic, 2004). ESL teachers are also faced with subject-specific difficulties, such as choosing the medium of instruction, balancing the four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking), and scheduling intense practice with students
Among the limited empirical studies on ESL teachers’ motivation over the past two decades, the most frequently cited are those conducted by Pennington (1995) and Doyle and Kim (1999), as well as two doctoral degree theses by Gheralis-Roussos (2003) and Shoiab (2004) at the University of Nottingham. Their major findings corresponded to other teacher motivation studies: Teachers are most motivated by intrinsic rewards, such as satisfaction from witnessing students’ progress, while they are the most demotivated by extrinsic factors within and outside the school context, such as limited advancement opportunities, low pay, and lack of social respect.

However, only a few studies have associated their findings directly within the specific context of teaching English as a second language. For example, Pennington (1995) managed to reveal some motivational factors especially linked to ESL teachers, such as being able to interact with students and others from different cultures and travelling opportunities when leading student exchange programs. However, the British and American context of Pennington’s (1995) studies imply that his findings may not necessarily reflect the unique features of ESL in non-native English speaking places like Hong Kong. Wu and Hung (2011) offer the closest research context to this study, studying the pedagogical perspectives of an assistant professor’s beliefs when delivering a Senior Thesis Writing course to undergraduates in a Taiwanese university. Menyhart (2008) conducted a qualitative study in
another non-native English speaking research site, Budapest, and interviewed seven university teachers from departments of linguistics and English, about their motivational perspectives on teaching interactive, student-centered classes. While these two studies looked at the higher education, it is worth noting that the interviewed students majoring in English-related disciplines had chosen, of their free will, to study English. In such cases likely have a strong motivation to learn, which would likely affect teachers’ motivation considering the strong correlation between student motivation and teacher motivation (Dörnyei, 1994; Matsumoto, 2011; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, A., & Hoy, W., 1998; Yunus, Osman, & Ishak, 2011).

A review of this body of literature points to a research gap, because neither the unique nature of second-language teaching nor the context of higher education has been fully explored in the study of ESL teacher motivation. The review also elucidates that teachers’ motivational beliefs are subject to change, when teaching in a non-native English-speaking context and when teaching students taking mandatory English courses at college or university. Besides, most of the studies in this field investigated ESL teachers in Britain and the United States (Pennington, 1995), Greece (Gheralis-Roussos, 2003; Tiziava, 2003), Korea (Doyle & Kim, 1999), and Saudi Arabia (Shoaib, 2004). So far the motivational beliefs of ESL teachers in higher education in Hong Kong are still under-researched. This study hopes to contribute to the literature by investigating the formation of motivational beliefs of ESL teachers in a
private tertiary college in Hong Kong, delivering mandatory undergraduate English courses (such as English for Academic Purposes and English for Public Speaking). Focusing on their motivational beliefs about developing different pedagogical strategies in ESL, employing self-efficacy theory allows the researcher to understand how the ESL teachers make pedagogical decisions when teaching ESL in a higher education context, and how such decisions are affected by their interactions with students in the college.

**Importance of Pedagogical Development in Higher Education**

Since motivational beliefs vary depending on teachers’ roles and responsibilities, this study will focus on higher education ESL teachers’ motivational beliefs in developing and adopting pedagogical strategies. To justify this chosen area, this section will review the body of literature on how pedagogical development is essential for higher education institutions in the 21st century. This section will also discuss the scholarship on the role played by faculty members in pedagogical development, and the problems associated with pedagogical development in research and in practice.

**Definition of Pedagogical Development**

While pedagogy can be a very broad term, Stipek (2002), in his book *Motivation to Learn*, provides a concise variety of tasks that teachers should consider when planning instruction: elucidating task values, designing tasks engaging students to learn with effort, fostering students’ intellectual capacity, devising multidimensional tasks, promoting students’
self-learning through interesting and complex tasks, and varying tasks over time. In this study, these instructional activities can guide both the researcher and the potential interviewees when discussing teachers’ motivational beliefs in developing different pedagogical strategies. ‘Development of pedagogical strategies’ in this study was defined as implementation of both innovative and previously developed teaching practices to enhance teaching and learning, since the focus here is on examining why and how teachers are motivated to develop pedagogical proficiencies, rather than on examining the efficacy of the practices themselves.

**Facilitation of Educational Improvement by Pedagogical Development**

Educational improvement hinges on adopting new or different teaching practices, ranging from small-scale changes in classroom activities to implementation of a new curriculum or a completely different pedagogical approach (Guskey, 1988). Kozma (1985), nearly 30 years ago, already supported the idea of reviewing and changing pedagogical practices in higher educational institutions, because of the diverse backgrounds and academic preparation of college students. In the 21st century, the need to develop teaching practices to suit different students has grown even more pressing. Now all higher education institutions are facing unprecedented changes because of the growing impact of globalization, student mobility, the marketization of education, increasing competition from online education, and the imminent need to keep up with technological innovation in relation to teaching and learning. All these challenges call for adaptation by higher education institutions to secure
their survival and to increase their competitiveness (Mok, 2000; Silva, 2009). One important adaptation strategy for higher education institutions in this 21st century is to increase teaching and learning quality (Christensen & Eyring, 2011; Xu & Yu, 2008).

**Role of Higher Education Faculty in Pedagogical Development**

The growing importance of improving teaching and learning quality has imposed a new duty on higher education faculty members; they must now adopt different pedagogical strategies on top of their existing duties of teaching, researching, and service. Faculty members who constantly reflect upon and develop pedagogical strategies are more likely to successfully adapt to the changing higher education context. Professional development of higher education faculty members in the 21st century has to be aligned with the needs of 21st century schools (Davidson and Stone, 2009; Striano, 2009). According to Davidson and Stone (2009), a 21st century school should offer an interdisciplinary, rigorous, and real-world-based curriculum. The instructional approach should be student-, inquiry- and project-based. A 21st century school should also demonstrate innovative teaching and learning methods, integration of technology, and instruction in 21st century skills. To attain these attributes, teachers should not be content with the teaching practices that may work best in any given moment, but consistently develop their pedagogy.

**Hindrance to Pedagogical Development in Higher Education**

Despite its importance to enhancing teaching and learning quality, current pedagogical
development in higher education faces challenges in terms of both research and practice. First, the field of higher education teachers’ implementation of pedagogical strategies is under-researched because higher educational institutions have undervalued the instructional training of their faculty members (Bess, 1997). While pedagogical training is commonly state-mandated for elementary and secondary teachers (Morris & Usher, 2011), higher education institutions can make their own decision on whether to consider faculty members’ training in their recruitment and/or performance appraisals. Usually, faculty members’ expertise and research productivity holds the key to their career trajectory (Postareff, Lindblom-Ylanne, & Nevgi, 2007). As a result, teaching-related professional development has been lacking in such institutions (Cowan, Georable, & Pinheiro-Torres, 2004); the college under investigation in this study is no exception.

Even if pedagogical development has been a priority in some higher educational institutions’ professional development programs, higher education researchers (Biggs, 1989; Ramsden, 1992) have pointed out that many of these programs were simply offering teachers a set menu of teaching skills, assuming that a certain pedagogical practice would fit all situations. Researchers specializing in higher education faculty’s teaching practices saw the same limitation and investigated why most of the expert-oriented, top-down, short-term professional development workshops on specific teaching practices failed to change teachers’ pedagogy. Gibbs (1995) and Trigwell (1995), for example, described several commonly seen
reactions from teachers taking part in such workshops: Some would question the feasibility of the practice; some would have a strong conviction of the effectiveness of their own teaching methods; some would simply use the practice mechanically; and some would modify a supposedly interactive, student-centered practice into an instructive, teacher-centered lesson.

This section of the literature review illustrates the importance of pedagogical development in higher education. Higher education institutions should consider pedagogical development crucial for ensuring their teaching and learning quality, and hence their survival, in response to 21st century needs in the higher education landscape. This recognition by institutions echoes the problem of practice in this study, as administrative support to nurture teacher development is essential. Faculty members should also perceive pedagogical development as part of their teaching scholarship, rather than just a choice made to attend some professional development workshops or take on additional work. Self-efficacy theory is aligned with this perception, as teachers should be treated as active agents in the effective execution of pedagogical development.

Teacher Motivational Beliefs in Pedagogical Development

The previous two sections, respectively, have established the importance of teacher motivation in facilitating teaching and learning in general, and the importance of pedagogical development in teachers’ careers and in education as a whole. The following part of the literature review will examine the relationships between the two and address the question of
how teachers’ motivational beliefs affect their pedagogical development.

**Definition of Teacher Motivational Beliefs**

There are various definitions of teachers’ beliefs in the literature, ranging from “beliefs,” “thinking,” “pedagogical principles,” “cognition,” “perspectives,” “concepts,” “attitudes,” and “intention,” to “intuition” (Pajares, 1992). In general, “beliefs” refer to “suppositions, commitments, and ideologies” (Calderhead, 1996) which are affective and can serve as predictors of behavior (Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992). Although it is difficult to arrive at a universally agreed upon definition of “teacher beliefs,” a clear distinction should be made between teachers’ general beliefs and teachers’ educational beliefs. While individuals can have an opinion about anything in life (general beliefs), “teacher beliefs” should pertain to their educational attitudes about school, teaching, learning, and students (Pajares, 1992).

Pajares further advised researchers to arrive at a context-specific definition of teacher beliefs, such as educational beliefs about the nature of knowledge (epistemological beliefs), or educational beliefs about the reasons for teachers’ performance. In tandem with Pajares’ recommendation, “teacher beliefs” in this study will refer to teachers’ educational beliefs about what motivates or demotivates them to adopt or develop different pedagogical strategies (referred to here as “motivational beliefs in pedagogical development”). More precisely, “motivational beliefs in pedagogical development” in this study refer to the interpretations the teachers attach to the positive and negative motivators they use to consider
adopting or developing different teaching practices.

**Importance of Teacher Motivational Beliefs in Pedagogical Development**

To recap, the problem of practice in this study builds upon the contradiction between the college’s emphasis on teacher motivation for pedagogical improvement in its performance appraisal criteria and its lack of initiatives for nurturing teacher motivation. The literature review so far in this section has led to a re-examination of this problem. Assuming that the college provides administrative support for the implementation of different pedagogical strategies and conducts teaching-related professional development, does that mean that all of its faculty members will be motivated to implement these new strategies? The assumption that individuals will automatically make use of the available resources was dubbed “the fingertip effect” by Perkins (1985) in his study of the use of information-processing technology in education. He challenged the fingertip effect, proposing that individuals must first see an opportunity to use a resource, then recognize the need to use it, and most importantly, become motivated to use it.

The same notion can be applied to pedagogical development. Only when teachers are motivated to adopt different pedagogical strategies can a new teaching practice be enacted in a classroom (Ghaith & Yaghi, 1997). This is not a new concept, as Shavelson and Stern (1981), over 30 years ago, already conducted a thorough review on teachers’ pedagogical thoughts, judgments, and decisions and established that teachers’ teaching behaviors were
inseparably linked to their intentions. In other words, teachers’ perceptions of teaching and their cognitive processes about teaching influence their teaching approaches and actual practices (Fullan, 2001a, 2001b; Postareff, Lindblom-Ylanne, & Nevgi, 2007; Prosser & Trigwell, 1999). Even the most effective pedagogy may not be implemented in a classroom if teachers do not believe in its efficacy (Bernaus, Wilson, & Gardner, 2009). Underhill (1999), focusing on language teaching, provided an insightful conclusion regarding the importance of teachers’ cognition for instructional effectiveness: “New techniques with old attitudes may amount to no change, while new attitudes even with old techniques can lead to significant change” (p. 131).

Numerous studies on instructional innovation or pedagogical change have supported the significance of studying teachers’ motivational beliefs in developing or adopting different teaching strategies (Abrami, Poulsen, & Chambers, 2004; Breen, 1991; Breen et al., 2001; Borg, 2003; Ertmer, 2005; Foley, 2011; Hu, 2002; Karaman, Okten, & Tochon, 2012; Lee et al., 2011; Savignon, 2007; Surry, 2000; Wozney, Venkatesh, & Abrami, 2006). Among these, Wozney et al. (2006) studied primary and secondary school teachers’ motivation to utilize computer technology in classrooms. In line with Vroom’s (1964) expectancy-value theory, the assumption in Wozney et al’s study was that teachers were only motivated to use computer technology when they expected it would yield desirable outcomes (perceived expectancy of success), when they saw a high value in the innovation (perceived value of technology use),
or when they saw low costs of implementation (perceived cost of technology use). The researchers revealed that teachers’ expectations of success, which affected teacher perceptions of the use of teaching strategy and the expected outcomes, were the most predictive factor in whether computer technology was adopted. The findings of this study echoed Abrami et al.’s (2004) and Foley’s (2011) research, which focused on the implementation of cooperative learning and evidence-based reading comprehension teaching practices, respectively. The three groups of researchers, though looking at three different pedagogical strategies, arrived at the same conclusion that teachers’ expectations of success were the strongest motivational factor in pedagogical innovation.

Other researchers, especially those looking at teacher motivation in language learning, place much more weight on teachers’ internal negotiating processes, rather than on the pedagogy itself. Karaman et al. (2012) analyzed the teaching experiences of native Turkish speakers as they worked at research universities in the United States or Turkey, delivering a Turkish as a Foreign Language course based on the deep approach to language teaching. The deep approach aims to create a student-centered language-learning environment where students are engaged in self-directed or collaborative educative projects. The researchers identified three main themes in the mental negotiations of adopting the deep approach in teaching Turkish: balancing the deep approach with teachers’ established teaching routines, dealing with students’ professional and cultural identities, and effecting transformations in
learning and teaching. For example, teachers resisting the deep approach expressed that they expected the new pedagogy to fail, noting that some students might not be responsive to certain culture-specific materials such as jokes.

Karaman et al.’s advocacy for supporting local pedagogy finds support in Hu (2002) and Savignon (2007), who both examined the needs of teachers teaching English as a second language. Hu and Savignon both studied the use of communicative language teaching (CLT), which emphasizes learners’ communicative competence more than their linguistic abilities. Despite extensive research findings supporting the effectiveness of CLT, Hu (2002) attributed its failure to achieve the expected outcomes in China to its conflicts with traditional Chinese learning culture. For example, Chinese teachers tended to create a teacher-centered classroom that valued students’ mental activeness and conformity, rather than a student-oriented environment encouraging students’ verbal acumen and independence, which CLT promotes. Savignon (2007) concurred and remarked that pedagogy adoption should go beyond the method itself, considering local needs and experiences. While a pedagogical theory might work well on paper, teachers, after all, are the ones who make professional decisions as to whether or not a teaching practice is adopted and how it is executed in a classroom.

Overall, these studies examined the implementation of different kinds of teaching strategies, but all pointed to the significance of studying teachers’ motivational beliefs, rather than the procedures, details, or effectiveness of a teaching practice, when considering whether
or not, and how, new pedagogical practices can be implemented in a classroom. Motivational factors may vary depending on teachers’ expectations for success and their cognitive negotiations. However, these studies share the same underlying principle that teachers constantly make judgments about their internal attributes (confidence, capabilities) and external factors (students, school policy), when trying to decide whether or not a teaching practice can bring about an expected outcome. Self-efficacy theory, recognizing the pivotal role of human agency (Bandura, 1986), helps illuminate the ways in which teachers respond to motivational factors, and how such responses translate into teachers’ motivational beliefs, affecting the implementation of different teaching strategies.

However, caution must be exercised when establishing a causal relationship between teachers’ beliefs and their actual teaching practices. Guskey (1986) posited that a teacher’s pedagogical beliefs were only formed after, not before, the implementation of a successful teaching practice. Ross (1994) concurred and added that teacher efficacy beliefs could be a reason for or a result of adopting effective teaching techniques. A number of teacher efficacy researchers concurred and elaborated that one common indicator of success was progress in student outcomes (Bishop, Berryman, Wearmouth, Peter, & Clapham, 2012; Fullan & Heargraves, 1996; Guskey, 2002; Harootunian & Yargar, 1980). Norton et al. (2005) also rebutted previous findings that claimed teachers’ conceptions of teaching were a direct and absolute reflection of their teaching practices (Samuelowicz & Bain, 1992; Pratt, 1992).
Instead, they and other researchers on higher education teachers’ beliefs like Brown and Bakhtar (1998), maintained that teachers’ beliefs could deviate from their teaching behavior. Overall, this body of literature has established the significance of motivational beliefs in affecting teachers’ pedagogical decisions and classroom practices. However, the possible discrepancies between teachers’ beliefs and practices, together with the debate over whether they have a causal relationship, point to the fact that beliefs might not be the most reliable indicator of classroom practices. This also points to the research gap left by only analyzing the alignment between teaching beliefs and practices. By employing self-efficacy theory, this study helps bridge the gap by illuminating the relationship between ESL teachers’ perceptions of their ability to develop different pedagogical strategies, and their investment in implementing them. This study is based on self-efficacy theory’s assumption that there must be an alignment between teachers’ confidence in their ability to execute a certain teaching practice, and their beliefs in the efficacy of the practice. Only then will they be motivated enough to deploy this practice in classrooms.

Summary

The literature reviewed suggests a knowledge gap in scholarship on teacher motivation that further research can bridge. Many researchers have tried to categorize sources of teacher motivation, leading to a common conclusion that teachers gain the most satisfaction from intrinsic rewards such as witnessing students’ improvement. However, the complexity of the
teaching environment in higher education, as well as the growing importance of considering teachers’ cognition and behavior, requires a more encompassing theoretical framework to analyze teacher motivation. Bandura’s self-efficacy theory can thus lead to a more holistic understanding of the relationship between the environment (context), behavior, and cognition. The context- and subject-specific nature of this theory also helps address two uncharted fields in teacher education: higher education teachers and ESL teachers.

While the roles and responsibilities of college faculty are multifaceted, this study focuses on teachers’ teaching scholarship, especially their adoption of new teaching strategies. Pedagogical development has been undervalued by many higher educational institutions, or mis-focused on prescribing certain one-size-fits-all teaching skills for teachers of different subjects. More research and practice effort should be expended to analyze higher education faculty members’ active role in interpreting what the available, or the unavailable, motivational factors in pedagogical development mean to them. This doctoral study proposes to adopt an interpretivist research paradigm and explore the meanings attached to motivational beliefs about adopting different pedagogical strategies, by interviewing English-language teachers at a private tertiary college in Hong Kong.
Chapter Three: Research Design

Research Question

The central research question for this study was as follows: How do English-as-a-second language (ESL) teachers in a private tertiary college in Hong Kong make sense of their motivational beliefs in developing or adopting different pedagogical strategies?

The primary purpose of this question was to fulfill the objective of Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy theory, which aimed to understand an individual’s perceived ability to execute a particular course of action. This study aimed to understand ESL teachers’ perceptions of motivational factors in making pedagogical decisions. The term “pedagogical strategies” in the central question included, but was not limited to, a variety of classroom activities that teachers should consider when planning instruction; this term also covered methods employed to achieve the following: elucidating task values, designing engaging tasks, fostering students’ intellectual capacity, devising multidimensional tasks, promoting students’ self-learning through interesting and complex tasks, and varying tasks over time (Stipek, 2002).

Methodology

This study employed qualitative research methodology because it answered the need to study a group of ESL teachers whose motivational beliefs were insufficiently being considered. Qualitative research empowers participants to share their stories, especially those
whose voices are infrequently heard (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, a qualitative design was an ideal approach in addressing an underexplored domain in both teacher motivation research and professional development in schools. This approach especially helped determine how teachers’ motivational concerns were mediated in the formation of self-efficacy. The researcher was not attempting to count the occurrences of certain factors in the participants’ teaching experiences or to determine the relationships between variables, as in quantitative research (Creswell, 2012). Instead, qualitative studies take place in a context-specific setting in which the participants experience the same phenomenon (Ponterotto, 2005). A qualitative research design best answered this study’s open-ended research question, which aimed to understand the lived experiences of a group of ESL teachers who delivered general English undergraduate courses in the same college.

The methodology for this study was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which studies how individuals made sense of their personal and social world (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Developed in the mid-1990s by Jonathan Smith, a professor of Psychology at the University of London, IPA has its philosophical underpinnings in phenomenology and symbolic interactionism. The phenomenological assumption of IPA stems from Edmund Husserl’s (1859-1938) philosophical foundation. Experience was theorized as consisting of individuals making meanings in their life-world (Ashworth, 2003). As a result, only through the individual’s personal and subjective account can IPA researchers arrive at the lived
experiences of their research participants.

Symbolic interactionism, another philosophical foundation of IPA, posits that the analysis should be able to interpret the meaning-making and sense-making process of the individuals (Smith, 1996). This reveals the hermeneutic phenomenological tradition of IPA, with key theorists including Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002). In hermeneutics, the importance of knowing through interpretation has significantly informed the development of IPA where Smith et al. (2009) employed a double hermeneutic, or two-way interpretation. The double hermeneutic starts with the research participants interpreting their lived experiences; in turn, the researcher analyzes the participants’ interpretations (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

With its roots in phenomenology and symbolic interactionism, the IPA approach was appropriate for the current study. IPA was aligned with the researcher’s interpretivist research paradigm (Ponterotto, 2005) which aimed to explain the subjective account of individual consciousness (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The researcher’s nominalist ontology and anti-positivist epistemology (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) were also echoed in IPA. Nominalist ontology assumes that multiple and equally valid social realities exist and that such realities are relative to individuals’ subjective cognition (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Ponterotto, 2005). The understanding of these realities, according to the anti-positivist epistemology (Burrell & Morgan, 1979), derives from interactions between researcher and participants. Hence, IPA’s
double hermeneutic best reflected the researcher’s philosophy, that is, the interpretations of both the researcher and the participants are equally essential.

IPA is also a useful research tool to explore novel topics (Reid et al., 2005; Smith & Osborn, 2003) and understand a process over time (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Therefore, IPA fitted this study because the teaching efficacy of higher education teachers was under-researched, more so the process by which teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs influenced their motivation (Ames, 1990). The research topic was best examined as a process over time because it was not just one or two incidents or specific lessons that have shaped teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs.

The IPA approach, however, has its limitations. In tandem with IPA’s idiographic nature, Smith et al. (2009) advocate a smaller research population (even as small as three participants). Nevertheless, the sample size still poses limitations in terms of generalizability. The fact that the researcher was one of the participants’ colleagues sharing experiences in the same phenomenon might also lead to research bias. The researcher might have formed some preconceptions which could influence her data interpretation.

The current study overcame these limitations by the following means. A small sample size, with four participants in this study, allowed the researcher to privilege each participant’s individual account of experiences and then to make comparisons across cases (Smith & Osborn, 2003). In other words, a large sample size can become a hindrance to a rich and
in-depth descriptive and interpretative account of each participant (Pringle et al., 2011). To reduce the potential threats of research interference and biases, the researcher addressed her role and prior experiences in the phenomenon under investigation, and their potential impact on the data analysis (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). The rapport the researcher built with her participants also allowed them to share their experiences in detail, and the researcher was in a good position to understand their lived experiences.

**Site and Participants**

The research site was the Hill College located in Hong Kong. It was formerly named Hill School, a senior secondary (Form Six and Seven) and post-secondary (Pre-Associate Degree and Associate Degree) college established in 1981. It was renamed HSMC in September 2010, the time at which it began to offer self-financed honors degree programs. The researcher has been working there as a lecturer in the Department of English since September 2006 and personally knew all of the potential participants. The unique background of the college, together with its transformation from a renowned senior secondary school to a self-financed degree-granting college, led to the classification of teachers in the Department into two groups: faculty members on the professorial track with research and teaching duties, and those on the teaching track primarily engaged in teaching (with the majority beginning their career in the college as secondary school teachers). Teachers on both tracks experience the same phenomenon of delivering general English courses mandatory to undergraduate
college students. However, differences in factors such as their teaching histories, educational qualifications, and career prospects in the college may influence their subjective experiences and their self-efficacy beliefs.

Given that IPA focuses on offering a detailed descriptive and interpretative account of individual experiences, Smith et al. (2009) recommend a limited number of participants (three to six) with data obtained from semi-structured interviews. In the academic year 2013 to 2014, the Department of English employed 20 full-time teaching staff; of these, four teachers were invited and agreed to take part in the interview. The purposive and criterion sampling strategy was employed to select a homogenous population of participants. To be aligned with the principle of phenomenological studies, where research participants should share their experiences of the same phenomenon and meet certain criteria (Miles & Huberman, 1994), the four potential participants were full-time teachers at the Department of English, delivering at least one mandatory English course for undergraduates. Age range, gender, highest educational qualification, and accumulated teaching experiences were collected as their demographic data. However, these were not part of the sampling criteria.

The following gives a brief profile of each participant to provide some context for the participants’ accounts of their experiences. All names were changed according to the procedures described in the section titled Protection of Human Subjects in this chapter.

- Brenda, in her late 30s, started working as a Lecturer in the Department of English in
the College six and a half years ago. She had taught senior secondary students (Form Six and Seven) the subject of English Language in the College when it had been primarily a secondary school. In 2010 the College started to offer self-financed bachelor degree programs and Brenda also began to deliver ESL courses to undergraduates. Before joining this College, Brenda had six years of teaching experiences in secondary schools. Of the four participants, she has the most teaching experiences in the College, and in the teaching industry.

- Alex, in her mid-30s, shares a similar teaching background to Brenda’s. Alex started working in the College as a senior secondary teacher in September 2007 and has been part of the ESL teaching unit in the Department since 2010. She has the second most teaching experiences in the College, 6 years, and had five years of secondary school teaching experiences before joining the College.

- Joe, in her late 20s, joined the College as a Lecturer when the secondary school curriculum completely faded out and there have only been degree programs offered to undergraduates. Joe had been a tutorial school teacher for one and a half years before joining the College in September 2012.

- Of the four participants, Kelly, also in her late 20s, was the only teacher who started to work as a part-time Lecturer in September 2012. She then became a full-time Lecturer in September 2013. She is the only doctoral degree holder, while the other
three teachers have their masters listed as their highest educational qualification at the
time this study was conducted.

As a teacher of the English Department, the researcher had access to this site and to the
potential participants. After obtaining permission from Northeastern University’s Institutional
Review Board (IRB) (Appendix A) and from HSMC, an email invitation (Appendix B) was
sent to the participants’ college email account and the participants chose to take part on a
voluntary basis. The email invitation included the research purpose, research questions, data
collection procedures, and the amount of time needed from each participant. The participants
were assured of their anonymity during the research process.

**Data Collection**

The researcher was the only interviewer and analyst in this study. This study employed
semi-structured one-on-one, face-to-face interviews. A 30-minute member checking interview
was conducted after the data analysis process. The interview took place in the participants’
own offices at the college or in a private conference room so as to offer them the most
secured environment. Each semi-structured interview lasted between 45 to 60 minutes. A
written consent was obtained prior to conducting and recording the interview. Before the
interview began, the participants filled in a form collecting their demographic information
(gender, age range, highest educational qualification, and numbers of teaching years in the
college and before joining the college).
The interview began with a protocol (Appendix D) containing several icebreaker questions and five to seven open-ended questions. The responsive interviewing model (Rubin, H. & Rubin I., 2012) was followed, wherein the interviews were considered a natural exchange between the researcher and the participants. The research and interview questions were modified, depending on the personality, emotion, and input of the participants during the interview (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The interviews were conducted in English, even though all participants’ native language was Cantonese. The interviews were recorded on a portable digital recorder and the researcher’s mobile phone. All interviews were transcribed verbatim at the semantic level, including false starts, pauses, laughs, and other features that allow the voice of the participants to be fully heard (Reid et al., 2005; Smith & Osborn, 2003). Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant in all written or digital files to ensure confidentiality. All files were stored in the researcher’s password-protected personal computer and audio recorder. The transcripts and analyses of the interviews were emailed to the participants for member checking, and were edited by the researcher with their comments. Other than the participants themselves, only the researcher had access to the transcripts and the audio recordings to secure confidentiality. The researcher worked on the data analysis by herself.

Data Analysis

As recommended by Smith et al. (2009), the data analysis process will be conducted in
an iterative and inductive cycle (Smith et al., 2009). The process is designed to be iterative to allow non-linear lines of thought and the creative assessment of such thoughts (Smith et al., 2009). The process is also inductive because it starts with broad research questions so that unexpected themes can emerge during analysis, instead of bounded hypotheses or theories (Reid et al., 2005). The researcher then followed the six-step data analysis recommended by Smith et al. (2009) to interpret each set of interview data. Smith et al. (2009) advise that IPA researchers should conduct an in-depth analysis of the first case—usually the most detailed, complex and engaging—before moving to the next case. The six-step data analysis process is described below.

Step 1) Reading and re-reading: This allowed the researcher to immerse in the original data and to ensure the participants remain the foci of the analysis. The researcher relived the whole interview experiences through repeated reading of the transcripts, building rapport and trust with the participants, and locating richer sections or contradictions.

Step 2) Initial noting: This step was a free textual analysis with no rules or specific requirements. The researcher developed a three-column chart, with the original transcript in the middle. The left column included the “initial comments” and the right column had the “emergent themes.” Only the richer sections of the interviews warranted more commentary, and the comments were descriptive, linguistic or conceptual.

Step 3) Developing emergent themes: This step made use of the right column “emergent
themes”. This was a dual process of description and interpretation based on the participants’ original words (the initial notes in Step 2), and the researcher’s analysis. The notes were transformed into higher level phrases or expressions that captured the conceptual connections within and across different cases but retained the particular details at the same time.

Step 4) Searching for connections across emergent themes: The emergent themes in Step 3 were now arranged chronologically in a new document or word file on a computer. The researcher then interpreted and made connections among the themes. Some themes were clustered while some were discarded. The researcher produced a table of such coherently ordered clustered themes. The clusters were then given names that stood for the superordinate theme. Under each superordinate theme were the identified themes (located in Step 3), each annotated with the page and line numbers in the original transcript with a few original key words from the participants. The researcher kept an open mind during this step. This was because the interpretative analysis involved going back to the previous steps and re-evaluating the importance of some themes. There were themes with oppositional relationships worthy of being developed into a clustered theme. Themes that did not fit well in the emerging structure or have weak evidence were discarded.

Step 5) Moving to the next cases: While the researcher would inevitably be influenced by the themes developed for the first case, it was strongly advised to acknowledge new emergent themes when analyzing a new case. Step 1 to Step 4 recurred in the analysis of each
Step 6) Looking for patterns across cases: Paying attention to convergences and divergences in the themes in all cases, the researcher produced a final table of superordinate themes by looking for patterns across all cases. The table contained the superordinate themes (reconfigured or relabeled) that captured higher level concepts shared by all or most cases. At the same time, the researcher presented the particularity of individual qualities. The clustered themes with instances (keywords and page number in the original data) from different transcripts were listed under each superordinate theme. The development of the superordinate themes was not purely based on their frequency, but also on the richness of the original data, which highlighted the themes and how the themes helped in illustrating other identified themes.

After the six steps were completed, the table in Step 6 was developed into a narrative account evidenced by verbatim extracts and detailed commentary from the transcripts. The participants were invited to review their interview transcripts and the researcher’s interpretations as part of the member checking process. The researcher made adjustments to the transcripts and/or the narrative accounts after the participants provide feedback. Overall, the researcher used one month to transcribe and analyze the interview data.

**Validity**

The four criteria used to assess the validity of qualitative research include credibility,
transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The purpose of credibility, in an IPA study, was to ensure an accurate description of the subjectively created lived experience of individuals sharing a common phenomenon (Krefting, 1991). In this study, one potential threat to its credibility was that some participants might offer preferred social responses to achieve social desirability (Miles & Huberman, 1994), because sharing negative teaching experiences might make them feel like an incompetent teacher. To encourage frank sharing, the participants’ anonymity and the confidentiality of their interview data was guaranteed in the informed consent form. The researcher also used probes and iterative questioning in the interviews to avoid preferred social responses (Shenton, 2004).

Another threat to credibility was the fact that the researcher has close friendships with some potential participants, which might impose preconceived ideas on the interpretation. This was mitigated by the researcher’s clarifying bias at the outset of the study and bracketing herself in both the interviews and analysis. Reflexivity was also ensured by the researcher who kept a field journal reflecting her feelings, ideas, questions, or problems during the process.

Transferability in qualitative research is concerned with whether the research results can be applied from one group or setting to another. The limitation of the small sample size (four to six participants) in this study was addressed by the researcher, who made a clear
assumption that this IPA study was descriptive and interpretative in nature. The common themes extracted were only the representative of this research population. However, to facilitate the transferability judgment made by readers, demographic data of each participant was detailed (Guba, 1981; Seidman, 2006), and a thick description was produced to account for each participant’s lived experiences (Guba, 1981). Member checking was applied to check whether the data are typical or atypical (Krefting, 1991). The readers also judged the interpretation accuracy through the verbatim extracts of each interview (Smith et al., 2009).

In qualitative studies, dependability can be an issue due to the changing nature of the phenomenon being investigated (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). However, the researcher reiterated IPA’s idiographic nature that the research findings did not constitute a single definitive report but a credible one (Smith et al., 2009). Dependability was further ensured through the provision of supporting interpretations with proportionate verbatim extracts from participants, and the full interview transcripts in the thesis. Various perspectives were explored, even if only one phenomenon was discussed, to present a detailed and multifaceted account of the phenomenon (Reid et al., 2005). The researcher also followed a code-record procedure wherein the researcher waited at least two weeks after the first coding activity, until she recoded the same data and check for consistency (Krefting, 1991).

When admitting that researchers’ biases were inevitable, Patton (1990) suggested that researchers focus on confirmability in a qualitative study to ensure objectivity. As suggested
by Miles and Huberman (1994), the researcher clarified her predispositions in conducting this study from the outset, such as the choice of IPA, the interpretivist paradigm, and the detailed methodological description. The researcher also conducted an ongoing reflective analysis through the field journal, to achieve the corroboration of the results.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

The researcher passed the National Institutes of Health’s (NIH) online training entitled “Protecting Human Research Subjects,” which was offered by the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board (IRB). To ensure the participants’ voluntary participation, an informed consent form was developed (Appendix C), by modifying the IRB consent template for social or behavioral studies. The researcher then made the application to the IRB so that a review was conducted, to ensure that the study followed the required procedures in accordance with the federal guidelines.

To ensure the protection of human subjects in this study, the researcher adhered to the three principles identified in the Belmont Report (1979), namely, respect for persons, beneficence and justice. To respect the potential participants, they were invited via email, which will contain detailed information about the research purpose, the procedure, as well as the potential risks and benefits involved. The participants could accept or decline the invitation via email or by phone. During the study, the participants could ask any question regarding the research and its procedure, and indicate their preferred time at which to conduct
the one-on-one interviews. The participants were also given the option to disengage from the 
study anytime, without any financial cost or retaliatory consequence. The researcher also 
obtained their consent to be audio-taped during the interviews.

To adhere to the Belmont principle of beneficence, the researcher acknowledged in the 
research the contributions made by the participants for extending the literature on teacher 
motivation for pedagogical development. The participants’ professional development might 
also benefit as they reflected on their teaching experiences in relation to the research findings. 
However, the participants might express negative feelings, such as embarrassment or 
frustration, when being asked to describe their unsuccessful or demotivating teaching 
experiences. Other than offering psychological support, the researcher was also prepared to 
stop the interview under such circumstances to safeguard the participants’ well-being 
(DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtre, 2006). The participants were also given the right to approve or 
request to remove any aspect of the transcripts and the findings, which they perceived as 
damaging to their well-being and/or their career.

To further guarantee confidentiality, the interview data was de-identified. Pseudonyms 
were be used in the transcripts and in the study, and any identifying information was revised 
or removed. The recordings and transcripts of the interviews were only stored in the 
researcher’s personal home computer, which was protected by a password only known to the 
researcher. All participants were be guaranteed that the data was only used in this study and
in professional meetings, and was not disclosed to any other party. The participants could access their transcripts two weeks after the interview for member checking. They were given seven days to verify the accuracy of the transcripts, during which they could also retract any uncomfortable statement that they feel should not be revealed.

To ensure a fair procedure and outcome in the selection of research participants, the selection was solely based on the teachers’ relevant experience as regards the research problem. It should be noted that the researcher was not in the position of authority to any potential participants, and professionally treated all participants in the same manner.

**Conclusion**

Most teacher motivation studies have pointed to the contribution of motivating teachers to increase their job satisfaction, execute the successful implementation of teaching activities, and ensure their students’ learning and achievement outcomes. Individual academic institutions have also become invested in considering the significance of teacher motivation. In the academic year 2012-2013, a private tertiary college in Hong Kong under investigation in this study updated its appraisal criteria for teaching staff to evaluate member’s motivation in developing and improving teaching practices. However, a problem of practice arose when there was no corresponding effort expended to nurture or strengthen its faculty’s motivation levels. It should be noted that the development of different pedagogical strategies depends on teachers’ recognizing the need and become motivated to do so. In other words, there must
first be an alignment between teachers’ motivational beliefs and teaching practices, before any pedagogical improvement can take place.

Previous teacher motivation studies in education have also established the significance of teachers’ cognitive needs in determining their pedagogical decisions and classroom practices. One of the common findings is that teachers respond most positively to intrinsic rewards such as witnessing students’ improvement. However, most teacher motivation researchers do not offer adequate explanations on how and why teachers attach different meanings to various sources of motivation. Most of the published works focused on labeling the motivators as either positive or negative. Under-researched areas also include higher education teachers’ teaching beliefs and the influence of teaching a particular subject on their motivational perceptions. The researcher believes that understanding how teachers make sense of their own motivational beliefs can explain why the teachers react differently to the same source of motivation, taking into account the interrelated relationships among school context, behavior, and cognition.

The main objective of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of ESL teachers’ perceptions of whether or not they were motivated to develop different pedagogical strategies. Drawing from Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy beliefs, this study asked the central question: How do ESL teachers in a private tertiary college in Hong Kong make sense of their motivational beliefs in developing or adopting different pedagogical strategies? In order to
investigate this question, an IPA approach was to be used in this study, which involved four full-time ESL teachers working at the college’s Department of English who were delivering mandatory general English courses to college undergraduates. Through semi-structured in-depth interviews, the researcher interpreted these participants’ experiences in terms of making different pedagogical decisions in class as well as their understanding of how they were motivated (or not) in pedagogical development. In tandem with the IPA idiographic research nature, the researcher first drew common themes from each participant’s interview data and then looked for patterns across all four cases. In the end, the goal of this study was to explore which motivational beliefs could contribute to pedagogical innovation by ESL teachers in higher education.
Chapter 4: Findings & Analysis

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of English-as-a-second-language (ESL) teachers’ motivational beliefs concerning pedagogical innovation. Specifically, the research attempted to answer the question: How do ESL teachers in a private tertiary college in Hong Kong make sense of their motivational beliefs in developing or adopting different pedagogical strategies?

Three superordinate themes and eight sub-themes emerged from the analysis of the transcripts. The emergent themes are present in each of their accounts, but are experienced in similar or divergent ways. The superordinate and subthemes are 1) Students as Major Driving Force, including a) Turning students’ ESL needs into teachers’ motivation, b) Higher education students’ learning attitudes and characteristics, and c) Students’ satisfaction; 2) Perceptions of Teachers’ Teaching Abilities, including a) Evaluations of their teaching, b) Teachers’ role models, and c) Peer observation; and 3) Perceptions of the Administration, including a) Adherence to or autonomy from departmental guidelines, and b) Perceived effectiveness or ineffectiveness of college practices. Table 1 provides a list of the superordinate themes and, as well as the recurrence of each theme across the four participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Super-Ordinate Themes</th>
<th>Joe</th>
<th>Brenda</th>
<th>Kelly</th>
<th>Alex</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nesting Themes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students as Major Driving Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turning students’ ESL needs into teachers’ motivation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Higher education students’ learning attitudes and characteristics</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Students’ satisfaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceptions of Teachers’ Teaching Abilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluations of their teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers’ role models</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer observation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceptions of the Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adherence to or autonomy from departmental guidelines</td>
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<td>Perceived effectiveness or ineffectiveness of college practices</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Students as Major Driving Force</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Turning Students’ ESL Needs into Teachers’ Motivation</td>
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<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Higher Education Students’ Learning Attitudes and Characteristics</td>
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<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Students’ satisfaction</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Perceptions of Teachers’ Teaching Abilities</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Evaluations of Their Teaching</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Teachers’ Role Models</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Peer Observation</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Perceptions of the Administration</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Adherence to or Autonomy from Departmental Guidelines</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Perceived Effectiveness or Ineffectiveness of College Practices</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This chapter will explore these superordinate themes and their respective subthemes with concentrated summaries and thick descriptions of the participants’ perceptions and understandings. The findings were supported by verbal quotations from the interview transcripts which were slightly modified for clarity. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the findings.

**Students as Major Driving Force**

Teachers interact daily with students inside and outside classrooms. When developing
teaching practices, materials, and strategies, students inadvertently influence the motivations of teachers in different ways and to different extents. The first superordinate theme captures the motivation of participants to adjust their teaching based on the various needs of their students. Although no primary interview questions were related to students (except for the question prompts), the participants, in their first speaking turn, all brought up their students. The participants spent more than half of their interview time describing in detail how they interacted with their students and learned about their academic needs inside and outside the classroom. The participants became more articulate and energetic when they discussed their students than when the discussions focused on the course syllabus, themselves, their colleagues, department, or college. These observations suggest that students have a major role in influencing the motivational beliefs and role of the participants in their pedagogical development. Although the ways in which the participants were motivated by their interactions with students differ, the convergence attained was adequate to allow the researcher to identify three subthemes: Turning students’ ESL needs into teachers’ motivation, Higher education students’ learning attitudes and characteristics, and Students’ satisfaction.

**Turning Students’ ESL needs into Teachers’ Motivation**

When the participants were asked about the role of pedagogical development in ESL teaching in their college, the participants consistently mentioned the weakness of their students in English. The students of the participants had a similar academic background. They
were admitted to the research site, a self-financed private tertiary college because their public examination results (the entrance exam for tertiary education in Hong Kong) did not qualify them for admission into any of the eight government-funded public universities in Hong Kong. Against this backdrop, the English competence of these students can be considered as lower than those enrolled in public universities.

The four participants concurred that the academic needs of their students to learn ESL functioned as a reliable indicator to reflect upon their teaching strategies. Although the participants noticed shortcomings in their students, most participants expressed positive feelings toward them. The researcher found that the teachers were most eloquent and engaged in this part of the sharing. Some participants leaned forward and had more eye contact with the researcher when the discussion segued into the topic of their students. The researcher also noticed more hand gestures and vocal variations from the participants. This observation suggests the centrality of the learning needs of the students in the pedagogical development of teachers that includes teaching principles, materials, and practices used in class, and the evaluation of their own performance after class.

Of the four participants, Kelly provided the richest descriptions regarding the weak grammatical foundation of her students. She mentioned that “I’m not a grammar person but yes, it seems to me that there’s a need for me to highlight some of the grammar points as well.” The learning needs of her students in grammar overrode her concerns about her
teaching expertise. All participants mentioned the weak grammar foundation and limited vocabulary of their students. However, Kelly described these aspects in the most vivid and specific details, citing as examples the inability of her students to master the use of adjective or noun clauses, relative clauses, sentence patterns such as “not only… but also” and parallelism structure, the correct usage of “concern,” and the construction of thesis statements and topic sentences when writing essays.

When Kelly described the common grammar mistakes of her students, the researcher noticed the most significant change in her emotions and body language. She banged on the table and withdrew her smile as she described the mistakes. Among the four participants, she was the one who smiled and laughed the most during the interview. This relaxed manner sharply contrasted with her serious demeanor when articulating the ESL weaknesses of her students. This clear distinction indicates that she was mindful of projecting a serious, professional teacher image when attempting to fulfill the primary academic needs of her students. Her non-verbal behavior, together with her thorough description of the common ESL mistakes of her students, highlighted the feeling of being needed as a teacher as a major source of her motivation to develop an effective pedagogy.

To illustrate her effort at addressing the weaknesses of her students in ESL, Kelly provided another rich description of her pedagogical change and development. She mentioned more than once in her interview that she produced “a pile of grammar notes” and
“a package of grammar quizzes.” Through hand gestures, she showed the researcher the considerable thickness of the additional notes and quizzes she created. She was proud of the extra work she made for her students. Other than customizing grammar notes and quizzes, she offered individual consultations outside of the regular class hours. During these consultations, she devoted approximately five minutes for each student to review the thesis statements, “but not the whole essay of course, in order to be fair.” Although conducting individual consultations was “really time-consuming” and “tiring,” Kelly described the results on a positive note. She quoted some of the remarks of her students both during and after the consultation. “I've been writing a lot of essays in secondary school, but no teacher actually emphasized thesis statement,” and “Oh yes! (Kelly clapped) I originally got the wrong sense of the topic!” These excerpts are evidence of the changes Kelly made to her teaching materials and arrangements in direct response to the ESL learning needs of her students, as well as her interpretation of their effectiveness.

Other than serving as an impetus for pedagogical change, the low English proficiency of her students was a channel through which Kelly realized how fortunate she was to be an ESL teacher at the higher education level. She remarked that some of her students once complained to her about feeling bored learning the same definitions or theories in content-based subjects like economics and business because they had already learned these in secondary schools. Kelly considered herself lucky as an ESL teacher because “we all know
they (students) all need English improvement.” Kelly even dismissed the idea of students as a source of negative motivation to teachers: “It’s not like they will demotivate you to not to do anything under whatever circumstances, right?” The desire to fulfill the learning needs of her students in ESL was particularly stressed in her accounts. Approaching the end of the interview, Kelly summarized that her students were her “driving force to change my pedagogy…everything I do is really for students.”

When Brenda was asked about the time she decided to change her teaching or activity during a lesson, she expressed (in a manner similar to Kelly’s) that her decision was based on the observed difficulties in completing tasks, unfamiliarity with vocabulary, and inadequate knowledge about the task context of her students. When asked to recall one occasion in which the teacher was motivated to make changes during a lesson, Brenda described an instance in which she prepared extra worksheets for her students who were unable to use correctly pairs of words such as “counsel” and “council” or “affect” and “effect” the usage of which is generally easily confusing. However, this incident was the only occasion in the entire interview in which Brenda pointed out the ESL weaknesses of her students. She spent some time recalling this incident. The account was brief, and according to Brenda, occurred “a long time ago.” The researcher was a bit surprised by her hesitation, considering the fact that she has the longest teaching experience in the college and in the teaching industry compared with the other participants.
The brief description of the incident that occurred “a long time ago” in which Brenda was motivated to prepare additional worksheets for her students can be explained by her teaching philosophy. Unlike Kelly who emphasized her active role as the giver in the interview, central to Brenda’s account regarding her pedagogical development was the assumption that both she and her students have a give-and-take relationship: “without their mistakes or without their request or without their responses, I wouldn’t have made that worksheet.” Brenda used the metaphor of players in a match to describe her role and that of her students in the learning process. Perceiving her students as players, Brenda began building a reciprocal relationship with them. Brenda is more likely the passive and reactive type of player. Rather than focusing on the ESL weaknesses of her students like Kelly, the pedagogical decisions of Brenda depend on the willingness of her students to learn and their manifestation of such willingness. To further elaborate on her “players in a match” metaphor, she cited that she and her students “interact,” “what I mean is: if you’re interested in the minimum amount of materials, that’s ok. I give you the minimum.” To use the metaphor of Brenda, she was most likely adopting the strategy of defense in her reactive role in the “match” when she adjusted her teaching materials or practices.

Similar to Brenda, both Joe and Alex briefly identified the need of their students to improve grammar and expand vocabulary. However, they shared more details concerning how they defined and emphasized the needs of their students over their own personal needs.
Joe described how she would immediately modify her teaching once “they (her students) are falling asleep, or if one student yawns.” To Joe, non-verbal in-class behavior was an indication of her failure to fulfill their learning needs. Both Joe and Alex valued casual talks with their students outside classrooms to acquire information about their learning needs.

“Through social networking sites or informal meetings outside classrooms,” Alex stated, “they will intentionally or subconsciously talk about how they feel about the school, or how they felt about other subjects. That kind of implicitly gives me a message on how to change my lessons, or modify my lessons.” Both Joe and Alex believed that information gained from student assignments might not be enough to reveal their learning difficulties or needs in relation to ESL learning. The verbal and non-verbal behavior of students inside and outside classrooms could be valuable resources for the ESL teachers in adjusting their teaching.

The ESL weaknesses of students were viewed as the primary academic need. The teachers interviewed in this study regarded these needs as sources of motivation, as well as clear indicators of the need to modify their ESL teaching. However, perception of the ESL needs of the students can be diverse. Although two participants (Kelly and Brenda) targeted the specific shortcomings of their students in ESL, the other two (Joe and Alex) focused more on formal and informal channels to obtain information about the shortcomings of students. Overall, the fact that the four participants kept refining their pedagogy based on the academic needs of their students in ESL did not indicate a “signature” or “best” teaching style, but only
the ones suitable to fulfill the needs of their own students. This finding implied that they need

to constantly adjust their pedagogy, and that motivational sources would never end as long as

their students need to improve their English. Absent any display of such needs, there would
be no strong reason to keep improving on their practices.

Higher Education Students’ Learning Attitudes and Characteristics

Other than identifying the subject-specific needs, all participants attributed the need to
adjust their teaching practices to the learning attitudes and characteristics of their higher
education students. When Brenda was asked about her perception of the phrase “teacher
motivation,” she first asked the researcher if the question required her to describe the
situation in her own institution or in higher education generally. Her question hinted at two
opposing accounts she recounted. First, she defined teacher motivation in her college as
“challenging.” She elaborated that, “because students themselves are not currently highly
motivated, teachers (or just me) sometimes get frustrated or unmotivated because we don’t
get positive encouragement or motivation from that area.” Her account further supported the
finding that she is a reactive teacher because her motivation for pedagogical development
depends on the learning motivation of her students. She first used “teachers,” and then
corrected to say “just me” when she described how teachers could be demotivated by the lack
of encouragement or motivation from students. This change of subject use possibly indicates
the personal relevance of the phenomenon for Brenda. However, the use of “currently”
implies that the low motivation of students could be temporary, and she remained optimistic for future students in the college or higher education students in general. This implication was realized when Brenda proceeded to describe her understanding of teacher motivation in the higher educational sector in general. She believed that keeping higher education teachers motivated was easy because they were teaching students who are “relatively mature…Most of them are adults. Most of them are not forced to take up their specialized subject.” Based on her understanding, Brenda correlated the ages of students in higher education with their maturity levels. Age and maturity accord students the autonomy in selecting the preferred subjects to study in college. Brenda attributed the academic freedom of higher education students to their motivation to study. According to Brenda, motivated higher education students can also enhance the motivation of their teachers. Teachers in primary or secondary schools whose students lack the maturity and autonomy to choose their favorite subjects are on the opposite side of the spectrum.

The age and maturity of higher education students as a theme also surfaced when Kelly explained how she encouraged her students to peer review each other’s work in class. Bonus marks would be given to the student group whose work was positively reviewed by both the teacher and their classmates. Kelly affirmed the effectiveness of these peer evaluation activities based on the results of her research on the peer review practices of form-one students as part of her master’s study: “Even form-one students absorbed what I needed them
to do. I don’t think a 20-year-old mature guy could not do that.” Similar to Brenda, Kelly also
correlated the age of her students with their ability to render fair peer evaluations. The fact
that she awarded the presenters with bonus marks partly based on the evaluations of her
students exemplified her respect for the opinions of her students, her confidence in their fair
judgment, and the efficacy of her pedagogy. Other than the age and maturity of higher
education students, Kelly credited the small class size of approximately 20 students in
college-level ESL classes because “it’s actually, it should be possible for us to at least identify
the general needs of most of the students.” Her use of “actually” and “at least” suggests that
small class sizes granted higher education ESL teachers an opportunity to identify the
learning needs of most, if not all students, which is the basic duty of teachers.

Joe also presented the learning attitudes of her higher education students, which provided
clarity to her teaching routine. Joe revealed that her students “have got very short attention
spans.” Therefore, the lessons were usually divided in three parts to keep her students
engaged. She lectured for 20 min to 30 min with the aid of PowerPoint slides, distributed
handouts or exercises for her students to work on, and finally, conducted activities, such as
group discussions and competitions. She further explained her choice of group work for her
students. “Maybe the Asian mentality will make them care more about the class.” A Chinese
national who received her education in Hong Kong, Joe deployed her cultural understanding
of the Chinese inclination toward collective behavior and responsibility. She translated this
understanding into resources to enable her to choose the most suitable teaching mode.

Other than drawing upon her cultural resources, Joe tapped into her knowledge of the current social behavior of higher education students and reflected upon how this knowledge will influence the future direction of her teaching. Joe blamed the popularity of Instagram, an online social networking service used mainly for sharing photos and videos, for the lack of interest in text among her students. “They just look at pictures and no words at all. So quite a bad thing.” Joe compared this application with another popular social networking site, Facebook, and remarked that at least students were reading and writing when they use Facebook. She was confused about the preference of her students for audio-visual materials. She suggested, “I don’t know how we develop our course materials.” However, her confusion resulted in her reflection upon the future development of ESL courses for higher education students. She suggested that teachers and institutions plan courses such as “English in the Digital Age.”

Although the short attention span and Asian mentality of her students led Joe to diversify her teaching practices, she justified her occasional repetitive pedagogy, which was also based on her understanding of the learning needs of her students. “Some students can’t remember what they have been learning. So I suppose sometimes things have to be repeated.” This excerpt illustrates how the motivation of teachers for pedagogical development can be expanded to retain teaching methods and materials.
Similarly, Alex stated that if her students “look puzzled and lost during the lesson,” she would intentionally choose “the least desirable approach” in teaching, which required “showing them step by step” and “asking heavily guided questions such as yes or no questions, or questions with options provided to inspire them to think about a task or to complete a task.” Alex indicated that the motivation of a teacher for pedagogical development is not necessarily or entirely the search for the most innovative or latest teaching approach. Rather, Alex justified her adoption of “the least desirable approach” by taking the learning attitudes of her students at a particular moment in class as the paramount consideration.

In summary, the participants understood the learning attitudes and characteristics of higher education students in terms of their age, maturity, attention span, preferences for group work, online socialization behavior, and the relatively smaller class size in ESL compared with other classes in higher education. These insights inspired the teachers to develop corresponding teaching strategies that teachers of younger students in primary or secondary schools would not have been capable of. Attending to the learning attitudes and characteristics of their higher education students indicates that contextual information was important to the process of influencing participants’ motivation. Rather than viewing them as “just students,” the teachers considered their students as adults whose non-academic needs were as influential as, if not more influential than, their academic ones in the pedagogical development of teachers. To some participants, the drive to satisfy the non-academic needs of
their students sometimes superseded their commitment to formal learning goals, indicating that the motivation for the pedagogical decisions of teachers could also come from non-pedagogical concerns.

**Students’ Satisfaction**

Unlike the previous two sub-themes that focused on the academic needs of students, this sub-theme illustrates how the participants valued the feelings of their students, such as pleasure and the need to be respected, how the feelings of students affected the feelings of teachers, and most importantly, how these last two elements increased the motivation of participants to develop different teaching strategies.

Among the four teachers, Joe spent the most time during the interview in discussing how she maintained the interest of the class. Further elaborating on her three-part teaching routine (lecturing, students working on handouts, and conducting activities) as mentioned in the discussion of the second sub-theme, Joe remarked that she encouraged her students to decide whether to work individually or as a group so that they could work “under no pressure.” Her description revealed that she considered the choice of her students rather than the effectiveness of the teaching routine as a more important factor influencing her motivation to change her teaching strategies. Sometimes, even a teaching strategy deemed appropriate by the teacher would have to be abandoned to sustain the interest level of the students. “I want them to talk a lot. But then they don’t necessarily like discussions. So I sometimes have to
think of other ways to make them interested.”

In addition to enriching her lessons with a variety of activities, Joe employed other tactics to ensure the satisfaction and engagement of her students. She described one tactic: “I like asking them questions if they're falling asleep. So remembering all their names is important, even though I may shortly forget their names after the course.” Additionally, she was mindful of what her students were engaged with in their spare time and discerning why her students were not paying attention to her lessons. “Maybe he or she has got something to do with their clubs (committee work) and stuff. Sometimes they might stay up late… He’s interested in the course but just that he’s tired or that he’s not feeling well.” This description revealed that Joe had to play the role of a parent to discern that her students are people whose physical and mental well-being requires her attention. Joe also viewed the small gestures of her students, such as yawning, as a cue to change her teaching mode immediately or to comfort the class by saying, “Oh that’s the last slide, all right, almost there.” These non-academic strategies she deployed emphasized her goal to make her students feel respected, interested, and special. This kind of focus can further be illustrated by how Joe viewed her students in general:

They’re customers in a way. I think sometimes they are quite self-contradictory.

Sometimes if you let them go early, 10 minutes early, 15 minutes early, they are happy.

But then if you don’t give them something concrete, then they would complain. So
sometimes they are very difficult customers.

Although concern for the reactions of her students strengthened her motivation to modify her in-class teaching, her choice to treat the students as customers also demonstrated that the satisfaction of her student with her teaching superseded her teaching identity.

Alex shared a similar view regarding the non-academic needs of students, but she directly associated this knowledge with her teaching materials. When she explained the importance of deeper understanding of the daily lives of her students, Alex stated, “We assume they know something but actually they don’t. So if I know their interest, I can choose relevant examples which can facilitate my teaching.” The word “something” can be understood to refer to examples or background information teachers use to illustrate knowledge of their subject. On the one hand, Alex admitted that a “knowledge gap” between teachers and students existed, possibly because of age difference. On the other hand, she transformed the gap into motivation to learn more about the interests of her students to enable her to apply this knowledge to create a common language with her students.

Securing the satisfaction of students in relation to the decision of pedagogical development may not only be for the benefit of students, but may also benefit the mental needs of teacher. Brenda and Kelly expressed how their desire to keep their students happy and satisfied affected their motivation to improve their teaching. However, student satisfaction was considered a condition for their own happiness. Only with the attainment of
the satisfaction of both teachers and students would the teachers be motivated to conduct pedagogical development. When she was asked to describe a motivated ESL teacher, Brenda defined motivated teachers as mentors who would treat every lesson as extremely important to ensure that they and their students would not be disappointed. Describing her own teaching abilities, Brenda believed she was available and helpful to her students, which could assure their happiness. However, she did not stop at ensuring the happiness of her students, but she also asked more from her students: “they are happy and they will know what to do and they give me positive responses in terms of knowing how to do the assignments well, or just saying thank you.” The gratitude of students was reiterated in this account from Brenda: “If the students are not grateful, then I won’t be motivated.” She opined that both student satisfaction and teacher satisfaction are equally important to motivate her teaching.

Kelly shared Brenda’s belief in keeping both students and teachers satisfied. However, Kelly went one step further by reiterating one of her teaching principles, that is, to align teaching and grading with clear rubrics. Kelly further explained, “I don't like people arguing with me about blah, blah, blah. It's not objective. I'm not a subjective person to be honest. I love everything to be objective.” According to Kelly, student satisfaction is always intrinsic to the objectivity and fairness of her assessment of the works of students. Among the four participants, however, Kelly emphasized this sub-theme the least. She identified her students using the word “people,” which underscored her intention not to give them special treatment.
Gaining student satisfaction paved the way for a more important factor to surface: the satisfaction of the teacher. Although Brenda and Kelly put emphasis on their satisfaction level as teachers, the responses of all participants indicated that guaranteeing the satisfaction of their higher education students with the teachers was an important factor in the development of pedagogical strategies. For teachers who are motivated by the fulfillment of the affective needs of students, revising teaching strategies holds a pragmatic value: winning the affection and appreciation of students for their teachers and their efforts.

To conclude, the teachers in this study viewed the academic weaknesses in learning ESL of their students as the primary motivation of teachers to adopt different teaching strategies or develop customized teaching materials. Although the academic needs of the students could be reflected in their schoolwork, the participants also perceived non-academic or informal channels, such as interacting with students outside classrooms and observing their non-verbal behavior, as valuable indicators that could guide pedagogical improvement.

Further, the participants made their pedagogical decisions based on the ages of their higher education students. The teachers believed their students are adults who have achieved a particular level of maturity and who should be more responsible for their studies because they chose the subjects. Based on this observation, more challenging learning activities, such as peer evaluations, were arranged. However, some participants chose to repeat their teaching practices or even use undesirable approaches such as heavily guided teaching based on the
understanding of teachers on the learning attitudes and characteristics of their students. Some participants prioritized the satisfaction and interest level of their students as the key to adjusting their teaching modes and materials, as well as choosing what to say to the students inside and outside of the classroom. Nevertheless, some participants displayed the desire to strike a balance between keeping their students happy and maintaining their happiness.

Overall, other implicit factors influenced the motivational beliefs that led to the pedagogical development of ESL teachers. The participants were motivated to improve their teaching strategies to teach, please, and assure their students.

**Perceptions of Teachers’ Teaching Abilities**

All of the participants in this study identified a strong connection between their teaching abilities and their motivation for pedagogical development. Other than their students, as revealed in the first superordinate theme, the teachers themselves, including their teaching philosophies and experiences, influenced the process through which they confirmed what they were capable of as ESL teachers. The second superordinate theme captures the perceptions of the participants regarding their ESL teaching abilities. They evaluated their teaching performances based on objective factors, such as the number of years they have been teaching, and subjective factors, such as their own reflections. The participants also learned from role models, namely their own teachers, their colleagues, or other teachers in the teaching community. The participants managed to apply what they believed to be positive
teaching styles and behaviors to their respective practices. The participants also differentiated themselves from several negative teacher images they knew personally or observed in the teaching community. The three sub-themes that signify these specific areas of convergence across participants include Evaluations of Their Teaching, Teachers’ Role Models, and Peer Observations.

**Evaluations of Their Teaching**

The participants evaluated their teaching performances based on different factors, including teaching experience, educational background, strengths, and weaknesses. First, Kelly and Joe are relatively new to the college, having less than one year and two years college teaching experience, respectively. They both acknowledged this observation in their interviews, but believed their currently limited full-time experience in the tertiary college being studied was not a hindrance to their teaching abilities. Kelly admitted that when she first started as a part-time teacher in the college, she was like “a blind person getting a taste of what teaching is like.” The situation heightened her appreciation of the experience because she was afforded the opportunity to observe the students of the college. To emphasize the process, she more than once cited her private tutoring experiences stemming back to when she was a senior student in secondary school: “So, it adds up to my teaching experiences as well.” Kelly defined pedagogical development as a “continuous process” and “from time to time, some new pedagogies actually emerge.” She perceived her accumulated part-time
teaching experiences as a continuous process, allowing her to learn about the different needs of students and try out different teaching strategies.

In addition to her past teaching experiences, Kelly was the only one among the four participants who made a clear and positive connection between educational background and teaching ability. When asked to describe what a motivated ESL teacher should be, Kelly forwarded the idea that an ESL teacher should have had his or her training. “I couldn’t say I had acquired a lot of information about pedagogy and linguistics up until I was studying MPhil (Master of Philosophy).” She further expressed her belief that most ESL teachers should have acquired such training because “I think most of us actually were English majors, right? We did actually know something about linguistics and teaching pedagogy theories.” Her criterion for a motivated ESL teacher indicated that her teaching ability was strengthened because she was an English major in college.

Similar to Kelly, Joe conveyed that her first year of working in the college provided significant meaning to the teaching practices she adopted. In response to the question on her preparation before developing a lesson, Joe responded, “Because I’m a newcomer to this school, a relatively new teacher. We have got all the course materials prepared; so, usually I would just look at the materials and then select some of the most important ones.” The point she raised about her being a new teacher revealed that Joe was conscious of the influence of teaching experiences on the pedagogical decisions of a teacher. Her remarks could also imply
that experienced teachers may not have regularly relied on the given materials as much as she did.

Despite a relatively shorter teaching experience compared with those of the other participants, such as Brenda and Alex, Joe demonstrated the highest level of confidence when she evaluated her strengths and weaknesses in teaching. In terms of strengths, she repeatedly used the word “flexibility” in describing her teaching style. When asked to define pedagogical development, she stated that while the standardized materials were provided by the department, she would “add some of my personal touches onto the materials to make the course more unique and think about the way to make the lesson more interesting.” She was certain about the effectiveness of her “personal touches” because these were formulated “from the viewpoint of a student.” Other than being able to put herself in the shoes of her students, Joe also showed interest in their feelings toward her lessons. She described their reaction: “They are happy to express their opinions, not in public, in private. They will be more than happy to do so.” This evaluation of the affective response of her students indicated her strong belief in the effectiveness of adding “personal touches” to her lessons, which were based on how well she learned about their needs.

When asked to describe what a motivated ESL teacher should be, Joe made a brief generic description of this kind of a teacher: “I guess the teacher should listen to students’ needs more.” However, she immediately exemplified her answer with her own actions. “So,
every time I try to ask them, ‘Oh, will you be interested in this?’ and then try to see if we can
talk more about this aspect next time.” The switch from a third-person reference (“the
teacher”) to a personal pronoun (“I”) reinforced her emphasis on the uniqueness of her
lessons. The instant association she intimated between a motivated ESL teacher and herself
also revealed her confidence in her teaching abilities; she considered herself one of the
motivated teachers she described.

Joe also mentioned several negative comments she received in the end-of-semester
evaluations written by the students. While she admitted she felt “frustrated” and “depressed”
because of a few harsh comments, Joe believed she has grown immune to them because
“there must be some people who like you and who don’t like you.” She further suggested that
the negative comments came not from a lack of a specific teaching ability, but to a difference
in expectations.

I have very high standards that you have to meet. If you don’t feel like meeting the
standards then drop the course. So I guess the bad comments sometimes are because
students and the teachers, they have got different expectations. The students expect you
to be very lenient, and then actually you are not. Then the discrepancies will give rise to
the bad comments.

Joe demonstrated a strong faith in having high standards that she wanted her students to meet.

She also justified the negative comments from her students by pointing out the gap between
her expectations and that of her students. The excerpt above describes the way in which a positive evaluation of her teaching could be understood within the negative reflection of her teaching performance.

A few of the participants cast doubt on their teaching abilities when evaluating their respective teaching performances. However, they turned this self-doubt to motivation to improve their teaching or to adopt different teaching strategies. When asked to evaluate her teaching abilities, Brenda described herself as a teacher with good preparation and the availability to help her students. She further elaborated on “having good preparation.”

I think I need to understand everything. No, well, it’s hard. At least to my knowledge and to the best of my knowledge. And I will try. At least what I give my students to do, I should be able to explain how they can complete the task or I can give suggestions. I understand the materials very well, I should say. Maybe not, not perfect but I understand it very well, thoroughly and good enough for me to answer the questions, if not all questions, most questions.

Brenda repeatedly corrected herself (“No, well, it’s hard,” “Maybe not, not perfectly”) and toned down her assertiveness with phrases such as “at least to my knowledge and to the best of my knowledge,” “good enough,” and “if not all questions, then most of the questions.” This excerpt revealed her definition of an ideal teacher (“understand everything”) and, more importantly, her awareness of the gap between this ideal teacher and herself. However,
addressing her limitations did not deter Brenda from improving her teaching. Conversely, this awareness motivated her “to do better because I know good preparation usually results in good lessons.” Thus, based on her doubts concerning her teaching ability as well as her definition of an ideal teacher, Brenda made the pedagogical decision to always prepare more than enough for her lessons.

Similarly, Alex explicitly discussed her limitations when asked to evaluate her teaching ability. She stated, “I don’t think I am good at telling stories. Telling stories is good to arouse students’ interest but I’m not the kind of person who has a strong sense of humor.”

Subsequently, she identified her motivation to adopt other teaching strategies as the basis for the strategy through which she can address this shortcoming. “I know what I’m lacking and so I’m trying to polish that kind of skill, so that I can make my class more interesting.” In the evaluations of both Brenda and Alex of their teaching, the acknowledgement of what they could do or not do well as teachers could be understood as a lack of confidence in teaching ability. However, this understanding revealed that the teachers realized the need for improvement in specific areas that they could make to increase their teaching efficiency.

Overall, their educational background and understanding of the needs of students provided sources of confidence for the participants in their teaching strengths. Moreover, they had no desire to conceal their weaknesses; instead, they channeled these into a drive to seek alternative teaching strategies.
Teachers’ Role Models

Except for one participant, everyone gave credit to their own teachers and others they met in their workplace when explaining their strengths in teaching. These role models inspired the participants in different ways, but all led to the same outcome: positive examples that the participants followed to enhance their teaching strategies. Two participants recalled how they benefited from their higher education teachers. Joe praised her ESL teacher in an undergraduate course she took called “English through Films.” She appreciated how her teacher encouraged her to “think outside the box.” She liked the course and the teacher so much that she believed the department she currently works in could use those teaching methods as a model or offer a similar course. It could be implied that Joe’s teaching philosophy placed a high value on learning from role models. “I think the key is continuous learning because in this way I can always remember that I am a student and I can see teaching from a student’s perspective.”

Similarly, Kelly expressed her gratitude for a professor she met as a student, especially regarding something the professor once said: “Even though you only have five or six students out of 40 listening to you, you still need to be happy because you are still saving someone.” This influenced Kelly to understand that teachers do not have to be recognized, but that their work is valued in being able to be of importance to at least one student. This “teacher as a savior” conviction significantly influenced Kelly, so much so that she insisted on asking her
students to submit their thesis statements and topic sentences in their essay assignment before the submission deadline, even if, as Kelly reiterated, “we are allowed to apply process writing here.” Kelly also mentioned that she was strongly influenced by a marking scheme her American-born Chinese professor introduced to her. “Maybe some of them (her students) are particularly weak in preposition. They (the teachers) can highlight them and then work on it.” Kelly remarked that her professor explained that this grammar-feature-oriented marking method was widely adopted by Western educational institutions. This example showed that Kelly was emboldened to appeal to the authority of her university professor to support her use of this kind of marking scheme in her current teaching assignment.

Role models also included colleagues. Both Kelly and Alex remarked that they could learn from other teachers working in the same department. In particular, Alex appreciated learning by observing: “how they mark an assignment or how they view a presentation through informal chit-chatting, talking about performances of students or how they think about their conduct.” The information that Alex obtained from these informal exchanges with her colleagues inspired her to apply the same technique. “That’s what I do too: informal chit-chats with my students.” Learning from her role models proved effective because she noted that she was able to obtain valuable information about how to change her lessons from informal interactions with her students.

While Brenda did not mention any role models, she cited how the experience of being
considered a role model could boost her confidence in her teaching ability. When asked how this could strengthen her motivation for pedagogical development, Brenda explained that it would happen if her colleagues, especially the senior ones, would appreciate her teaching ideas and even apply them to their teaching. She further noted, “I can gain a sense of reassurance and recognition when somebody says, ‘OK, it works.’” The learning experiences of the participants from other parties, ranging from their own teachers, their colleagues, to even themselves, suggests that confidence in the teaching ability of their teachers was also developed from modeling the teaching strategies of positive role models.

**Peer Observations**

On the one hand, the participants drew inspiration from their role models for pedagogical development. On the other hand, all four participants expressed negative feelings about some of their counterparts in the teaching community whose motivation for pedagogical development was undermined. Both Brenda and Alex cited time, specifically the limited time several teachers devoted to teaching, as one factor that may weaken their motivation to develop different teaching strategies. Brenda contrasted higher education teachers with secondary school ones who were “so distracted because they may need to take up so many different areas of teaching and administrative work.” Alex shared the same thought and added that “dealing with students’ discipline” compounds the heavy workload of secondary school teachers. Alex was also the only participant who commented on the priority
placed on research rather than teaching by a few higher education teachers. “We have 24 hours. We have one mind, one body, and one heart. How can we allocate everything equally? So, there should be some sort of sacrifice. So, to me, they are motivated to do research, not teaching.” In essence, Brenda and Alex negatively depicted their counterparts who were unable to allocate sufficient time to actual teaching. Brenda described her engagement with non-teaching matters as being “distracted” and Alex regarded the insufficient time devoted to teaching as “some sort of sacrifice.” Both of them believed that a teacher who was motivated for pedagogical development should spend a significant amount of time on actual teaching.

However, Joe explained that the quantity of time was not a concern in understanding a motivated teacher. She expressed that teachers devoting their entire lives to teaching alone was an idea that is “too unrealistic for me.” When asked about what a motivated teacher should be, Joe recalled watching a television documentary program about several teachers teaching students with extreme behaviors who were throwing chairs around the classroom and breaking windows. She described the teachers in the program as “highly motivated, even too motivated… not realistic in a way because the teachers get up at 5 in the morning and then they go home at 10 or 11 (at night).” Joe elaborated that she would reflect upon whether she had done enough for her students if they were not interested in her teaching. The interest level of students, not the quantity of time she spent in school or on teaching alone, was a more reliable indicator of her teaching ability. She also stressed at the end of her interview, “I
Joe explained that teaching “is not my only interest. I’ve got other interests as well that I want to develop.” She treated teachers who spent long hours a day just in school or on teaching as her counter-examples. This was her reason for attaching importance to the continuous learning of teachers. She mentioned her pursuit of a master’s degree in Japanese studies as a way to support her belief that continuously learning ESL teachers should not be limited to the teaching of English as a language. Joe elaborated on her definition of peer observation through her taking these kinds of “hobby classes.” “I could tell the method may not be good enough, or that teacher may not be good enough.” Instead of the quantity of time, Joe perceived the quality of time spent on teaching ESL and also on developing personal interests of a teacher as a better embodiment of the teaching ability an ESL teacher.

When asked to contribute their thoughts on the phrase “teacher motivation,” both Alex and Joe ended their interviews on a negative note concerning their counterparts in the teaching community in general. Alex responded that “most of the teachers in Hong Kong lack motivation. I don’t know why, but the atmosphere in Hong Kong is not encouraging.” Joe shared a similar thought, believing that “motivation is quite a heavy word” to describe teachers in Hong Kong. “They (Hong Kong people) prefer not to be teachers; it’s not common to hear people say that they are motivated teachers, or ‘Oh, I’ve got a motivated teacher.’” She shared the comments she received from her friends who learned about her
occupation. “Oh you’re still working as a teacher!” and “Oh it’s boring!” Joe’s descriptions reflected that the monotonous image of a teacher was formed by teachers themselves, students, and the community in general.

Similarly, Kelly cited one conversation she had with a university student, whom she used to tutor when he was a secondary student, to show another negative image of the public on ESL teachers. Kelly recalled that her student believed being an English teacher in Hong Kong was “a very frustrating job” and that job satisfaction was weak. In response, she emphasized that “this is actually from his perspective” and stated, “You have to solve the problem anyway. I’m not saying that I’m God that I have to save everyone. But at least I try my best, even with those daydreaming students.” This excerpt indicated that Kelly tried to separate herself from the helpless image of ESL teachers in Hong Kong that her student adhered to, as well as from an image of the almighty (the metaphor of “God”). Kelly was equally aware of her limitations and her abilities as an ESL teacher. She considered herself a problem solver and a savior, not of the world, but at the very least, of the students who had problems that she could help solve.

Two participants viewed the unwillingness of a few teachers to innovate in their pedagogy as a flaw. When asked to describe what a motivated ESL teacher should be, Alex offered the idea that a teacher should be experimental. “The world is changing… The old methods may not be applicable to this generation. I think some teachers in Hong Kong are
not willing to change, to get out of the box, insisting on using the same old method.” Kelly shared the same impression on several teachers when she recalled working in a secondary school as a part-time student teacher. “My classmates (other student-teachers), and the existing teachers, are very pessimistic. They used to say, ‘No we can’t do this, we can’t do that. We can’t change the world.’” From the accounts of both participants, adherence to the established teaching practice was not a reflection of a capable teacher. Adopting different teaching strategies is not an option but rather a necessity because of the changing world.

Among the participants, depicting negative teacher images was a way teachers used to differentiate themselves from their counterparts in the teaching community who were deemed unmotivated or unwilling to try different teaching strategies.

In summary, based on the various evaluations of their teaching abilities, what the participants could and could not do within their teaching capacities provided a reason, or more importantly, impetus for adjusting their teaching methods and materials. They also learned from successful examples set by their own teachers and colleagues and used these to evolve into teachers who are more innovative and attentive to the needs of students through in-class practices and outside-classroom interactions. However, the teachers also affirmed their teaching abilities by differentiating themselves from teachers who competed against time, failed to strike a healthy work-life balance, held a pessimistic view about what they could help students with, and showed reluctance to change.
Perceptions of the Administration

Teachers may experience challenges in complying with school policies while striving for their academic autonomy. The third superordinate theme represents both the participants’ appreciation and criticism of administrative practices. Administrative practices in this case refer to departmental guidelines and policies that the participants are supposed to follow while working in the Department of English, as well as college practices that affect all faculty members working in the college. While the participants considered course outlines and centralized course materials provided by the department helpful at the beginning of a course, the teachers perceived the concept of standardization as a barrier to their motivation for pedagogical development. The participants also described several college practices, such as seminars for teachers and end-of-semester evaluations from students, as unhelpful or of little use, contrary to the expectations of the college administrators. The two sub-themes that describe these specific areas of convergence across participants include: Adherence to or Autonomy from Departmental Guidelines, and Perceived Effectiveness or Ineffectiveness of College Practices.

Adherence to or Autonomy from Departmental Guidelines

Several participants experienced a struggle between following the teaching schedule and using the materials set by their department and acquiring autonomy in their teaching. This struggle was perceived by the teachers as a motivational factor in their attempt to render
different teaching practices, without considerably violating departmental guidelines. The four participants were pleased that they had been provided a course outline with a clear course objective and a package of materials before they started teaching the course. When asked to define pedagogical development at the beginning of the interviews, all participants began with a macro view on the given course materials provided by the department before elaborating on specific and personalized teaching practices for their respective students.

Brenda, in her first speaking turn in the interview, stated, “I will follow the course outline of course, and then the general objective of the course itself.” She provided a Business Communication course she was currently teaching as an example. “The course outline is a very useful; clear guideline for the teachers to follow and for reference at least. If they (students) read the course outline, we can do something that meets their expectation.” To Brenda, the given course outline was beneficial because this allowed both teachers and students to arrive at the same understanding of the course. Other than the course outline, Joe gave credit to the “standardized, centralized materials” as helpful to her, as “a newcomer to this school, a relatively new teacher.” She considered the departmental course materials as a source of security, on top of their practical values, particularly for new teachers. Kelly shared Joe’s appreciation for the standardized course package and stated:

Very luckily I would say our English courses are usually well-designed. Our colleagues are very responsible, preparing a lot of teaching materials. The curriculum actually is
well-designed and I basically follow the teaching schedule. And I use most of the teaching materials provided by the department.

Among the four participants, Kelly had the most positive comments on the teaching package provided by the department. She considered herself fortunate to have received such a package, intimating that she did not perceive the distribution of a well-prepared teaching package as a universal practice.

While the participants welcomed the standardized course outlines and materials offered by the department, the desire for the autonomy to modify their daily teaching practices was evident. Kelly expressed her belief in the effectiveness of applying process writing when teaching essay writing. However, “in order to be fair we can’t do it.” Kelly stressed more than once in her interview that she defines fairness as giving the same treatment to all students, not only those taught by her. Despite the concern for fairness, Kelly continued to ask her students to submit their thesis statements and topic sentences, in addition to their completed essays. She deemed paying attention to each student as important; thus, she insisted on applying process writing to a certain extent, even though it was against departmental guidelines. She cited another occasion in a Business Writing course. She was originally given two weeks (four lessons in total), based on the departmental schedule, to teach business letter writing. Kelly explained how she adjusted the teaching schedule. “But I have two lessons, one on highlighting professional language, and the other on emphasizing proper vocabulary usage.
Thus, in the second week, I asked them to practice group writing.” The use of “but” indicated that she was aware that group writing was not part of the expected teaching practice adopted by other teachers in the same course. However, she found a leeway to modify her teaching while complying with the departmental guidelines.

Joe had a similar experience in deviating from the assigned teaching plan of the department. However, unlike Kelly, who stressed that her teaching was still aligned with the departmental guidelines, Joe was relatively more straightforward in her criticisms against the materials provided by the department. She described an occasion in her first semester in the college when she had to use a textbook assigned by the department in an ESL course. She expressed, “Many students weren’t really interested in the book, and I found it quite hard to arouse their interest. Then, I had to catch up with the teaching schedule and I didn’t want to miss out all the chapters.” Joe explained that this experience “made me quite stressed out in a way because I prefer having flexibility.” Labeling this teaching experience as “traumatic,” she concurred with her students on the use of textbooks. “We can’t use a textbook to deal with problems in the real world all the time.” The struggle that Joe faced included adhering to the teaching schedule and the textbook on the one hand, and upholding her teaching philosophy (against the use of textbooks and her preference for flexibility) on the other. She dealt with the dilemma by supplementing the textbook with her own materials and activities. Her remarks indicated that she did not want to dismiss the assigned textbook entirely.
Nevertheless, she tried to fulfill her desire for flexibility by enriching lessons with her own activities and materials other than what the assigned textbook offered. This struggle between abiding by departmental standardization and seeking pedagogical autonomy was evident in all participant interviews. This struggle provided the spur of the teachers’ pedagogical improvement.

**Perceived Effectiveness or Ineffectiveness of College Practices**

While the participants expressed mixed feelings about the departmental guidelines, the three participants who mentioned college practices underplayed the importance of the effectiveness of these guidelines in relation to their motivation for pedagogical development. When asked about their expectations from students, colleagues, or school that could increase their motivation, Kelly recognized the roles played by her students and colleagues, but said, “I’m never concerned about the school administration, sorry about that.” In response to the same question, both Alex and Joe commented on the effectiveness of the seminars for faculty members held by the college. Alex responded:

I’m inspired not because of the content but because of the speakers. They are lecturers, professors, actually teachers and they are role models. Their sharing can inspire how I view, first of all, education. Education is the core belief. And how I view my relationship with my students and then probably how I view the physical building, the school.

Joe further responded to the effectiveness of the seminars after making a critical
comment that several of these seminars were merely “stating the obvious,” she said “It would be nice to look at how other teachers teach.” Both Alex and Joe’s comments demonstrated that the content of the college seminars organized thus far was not directly related to their pedagogical development. However, the speakers and the way they conducted the seminars provided the inspiration for the participants to reflect on their teaching philosophies and practices.

In addition to the college seminars, Joe was also critical of another college practice, namely, the end-of-semester evaluations written by students. She welcomed the negative comments because these could help improve her teaching. However, she noted that “you can only get the student evaluation at the end of the semester, and I think it’s quite hard to change things after everything has ended.” This observation explained why she developed her own mid-term evaluation, where her students could anonymously give comments concerning her teaching and her teaching methods. She justified the practice by remarking, “in other institutions, we have got mid-term evaluations.” Her use of other higher educational institutions as an example indicated the effectiveness of conducting mid-term evaluations in improving her teaching and her belief in the possibility of introducing this practice to the college.

Overall, the motivation for the pedagogical development of the participants was influenced by the administration, namely, their department and college and, to a relatively
smaller extent, other parties, including their students, themselves, and their colleagues or counterparts in the teaching community. In general, the participants appreciated the departmental guidelines in terms of providing teachers with a clear course outline, teaching schedule, and package of teaching materials. However, when a few of these ideas and materials were determined to be in conflict with their teaching philosophies, the teachers would seek leeway to gain greater autonomy from the departmental requirements. The struggle in determining whether to adhere to the departmental guidelines entirely or to stick to their teaching principles became the stimulus for the adoption of different teaching strategies. Essentially, the influence of the college practices on the motivation for pedagogical development of the participants was minor or indirect. College seminars inspired the teachers not because of the content, but because these accorded avenues for observing the speakers. End-of-semester evaluations by students were perceived as insufficient basis for changing teaching practices during the semester because these come at the end of the term. Overall, the participants did not view the college practices as successful in increasing their motivation for pedagogical development. The different attitudes toward the effects of departmental policies and college practices on their motivation indicated the active role they took in choosing how to react to guidelines that emanated from the higher levels of administration. The teachers desired autonomy to enrich their teaching materials and lessons with a unique touch, which was in accordance with their pedagogical philosophies. Their desire was satisfied because the
way they conducted lessons was unmonitored by the department and almost completely
unmonitored by the college. This situation illustrates that top-down measures, even those
with the best intention of assisting teachers with their teaching practices, could not
necessarily foster pedagogical development. Conversely, pedagogical development was
driven by the concerns of teachers about freedom and flexibility in conducting lessons.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to understand the motivational beliefs of ESL teachers in
relation to pedagogical innovation. This chapter presented an analysis of the findings from
four semi-structured interviews with ESL teachers working in the Department of English in a
private tertiary college. An interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) of the interview
data uncovered three superordinate themes and eight sub-themes that characterized the
meaning of pedagogical motivation of the four ESL teachers.

The four teachers shared their experiences of developing tailor-made activities and
materials to cater to the ESL weaknesses of their students, specifically grammar and sentence
structures, which were observed by the participants through school work and informal
interactions with students. The participants also described their expectations concerning the
maturity and autonomy of their higher education students. However, the teachers also
addressed the necessity of repeating the same pedagogy or adopting unfavorable teaching
practices if only to respond to the undesirable learning attitudes of a few students. The
teachers involved in this study developed their lessons based on the affective needs of their
students, which included the feeling of being interested and respected.

The participants gained a clear perception of their teaching abilities by evaluating their
strengths and weaknesses in teaching. The teaching experiences and educational backgrounds
contributed to their overall pedagogical development. However, specific shortcomings
became evident. This reflection also served as a stimulus to adopt different methods to keep
their lessons meaningful and interesting. Furthermore, the participants attributed their
desirable teaching practices to what they learned from role models, including their own
teachers and colleagues. At the same time, they perceived that practicing the same teaching
method is a sign suggesting a lack of motivation among several peers in the teaching
community.

Their department and college exerted influence, albeit a small one, on the participants’
motivation for pedagogical development. On top of their teaching values, well-designed
course outlines and teaching materials provided an expectation of the course that they shared
with their students as well as a sense of security, especially for the relatively less experienced
teachers in this study. However, once the departmental guidelines came in conflict with their
teaching philosophies, several participants took it as a chance to tailor their lessons and
materials to the specificities of each situation. At the college level, the particular perception
that teacher seminars and end-of-semester evaluations were not entirely conducive to
pedagogical development surfaced.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Research Findings

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of English-as-a-second-language (ESL) teachers’ motivational beliefs in pedagogical decisions and innovation. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was employed to investigate how ESL teachers make sense of pedagogical development and how they were and would be motivated to change or adopt innovative teaching practices. Bandura’s (1977) concept of self-efficacy addressing individuals’ perspectives on their capacity to perform actions provided an interpretative lens through which to examine the teachers’ motivational beliefs in this study. The research was also guided by the following research question: How do ESL teachers in a private tertiary college in Hong Kong make sense of their motivational beliefs in developing or adopting different pedagogical strategies?

Three superordinate themes emerged from analysis of the transcripts. These superordinate themes are 1) Students as Major Driving Force, 2) Perceptions of Teachers’ Teaching Abilities, and 3) Perceptions of the Administration. This chapter discusses each theme with a focus on how it connects to the theoretical framework and extant literature, the significance and limitations of the findings, and the implications for the educational community.

Students as Major Driving Force
The participants in this study were motivated to develop different instructional strategies in response to their higher education students’ ESL weaknesses, and learning attitudes and characteristics. Some of the teachers also desired to keep their students happy and satisfied by adjusting their teaching modes and materials, or by tailoring their language and conversational content when interacting with their students inside and outside classrooms.

Students’ weaknesses in ESL and the associated learning needs fueled the teachers’ pedagogical development. This finding was reinforced by the participants’ detailed and vivid descriptions, together with their body language and facial expressions conveyed in the descriptions, during their interviews. This finding confirms the most accepted conclusion in most teacher motivation studies, namely that teachers are most motivated by intrinsic rewards such as satisfaction from witnessing students’ progress (Dörnyei, 1994; Matsumoto, 2011; Scott et al., 2003; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Yunus et al., 2011; Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2006). Yunus et al. (2011), for example, suggested the importance of teachers learning about students’ individual needs because students came from different backgrounds. The four participants in this study were able to take into account their undergraduate students’ secondary school English-learning backgrounds and articulate the specific ESL weaknesses of students in their own classes, ranging from grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure and understanding of task contexts.

Other than the role of a teacher sharing ESL knowledge with students, the finding also
reveals the social responsibility borne by the teachers who believed teaching was a socially important and worthwhile calling and a chance to be part of students’ life. One participant expressed that she could not “save” all students because she was not God. However, she was determined to save as many as possible, even if only one. The teacher used the word “save” rather than “teach” and this revealed a transformation of her teacher identity: from simply a teacher teaching a subject to a savior able to give students a new life through mastering English as a language.

This finding confirms the consensus on teachers’ additional roles within the second-language teacher motivation literature that they were expected to help students identify with the second-language community, including its culture and mindset (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Gardner, Masgoret, Tennant, & Mihic, 2004). Several participants played the savior role and this substantiated Flores, Ek and Sanchez’s (2011) study of Latino bilingual teacher candidates who considered altruistic motivation, such as giving back to society and making a difference as a role model, a reason to engage in the teaching profession. In this study, the teachers were motivated not only by the practical role they could play in helping students overcome academic shortcomings but also the noble mission to make their students into contributing members of society. Perhaps this was because most undergraduates the participants taught would soon go to work upon graduation and face real-life challenges in society. Having a good command of English could open up more career opportunities for
students. The teachers, therefore, felt more responsible for their students understanding the importance of English proficiency for their future professions, specifically in international cities like Hong Kong.

The findings in this study also substantiated the importance of human agency in Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy theory, also a fundamental paradigm for this study. Human agency refers to the concept that individuals create incentives to act by believing in their abilities to arrive at desirable results and prevent undesirable ones (Parajes, 1996; Solberg et al., 1995). In the study, all participants demonstrated human agency in their pedagogical decision-making. In some participants’ cases, their pedagogical decisions depended on their students’ willingness to learn and their ability to manifest that willingness in class. This finding reinforces the importance of human agency in self-efficacy theory that individuals are able to choose and pursue a particular course of action, instead of reacting passively to stimuli.

All participants reported having specific expectations for and understanding of their students’ characteristics and personalities. When making pedagogical decisions, the participants took into account their students’ advanced age to perform challenging class activities and the students’ autonomy to choose their preferred subjects in the higher education context. The findings corroborated Hartnett, St George and Dron’s (2011) and Watt and Richardson’s (2007) argument concerning how the scholarship on teacher motivation had
long neglected the importance of contextual, cultural, or subject-specific nuances. These researchers suggested investigating how teachers took into consideration the specific context when interpreting any given motivation, rather than being passive agents who reacted to the same motivational factor in the same way in any situation. In this study, teaching higher education students provided participants with the contextual resources to develop teaching strategies they might not have been able to develop when teaching younger students in primary or secondary schools.

Aligned with the finding in this study, Karaman et al.’s (2012) research suggested that second-language teachers had three different types of mental negotiations regarding the adoption of new pedagogy, with one being dealing with students’ cultural identities. As in one participant’s case, her students’ “Asian mentality,” perceived by the teacher as Chinese people’s preference for collective action and responsibility, was a reason for her conducting group work with them. Her use of cultural resources for modifying her pedagogy represents the fact that her teacher identity was developed through not only her teacher status but also her Chinese heritage. Had it been with students of other nationalities, the participants might have adopted a different teaching strategy. A teacher’s concern about students’ cultural backgrounds, in this case, outweighed the concern regarding the effectiveness of teaching practices.

The agent-means-end interrelationship in Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy theory
effectively explained the participants’ response to different teaching strategies based on how these affect student outcomes. Skinner (1996) credited Bandura’s focus on the agent-means-end interrelationship with filling the gap left by the mere distinction between agent-means beliefs and means-end beliefs found in the most human control studies. When faced with students’ undesirable learning behaviors, two participants in this study specified that they would nevertheless intentionally reuse the same teaching methods and materials or even adopt a practice deemed unwelcomed by the teachers themselves, such as asking heavily guided or yes-no questions. Despite admitting that changing teaching practices and facilitating students’ independent learning could be better pedagogy (the means), the teachers (the agents) deemed that such practices were not suitable to achieve the best learning outcomes because of their students’ learning attitudes and characteristics (the agents’ response to the means). The result was the employment of less favorable teaching approaches (the end).

Teachers’ motivation for pedagogical development did not necessarily involve looking for the most innovative or latest teaching approach, as this study showed. This finding is contrary to the positive association between higher teacher efficacy and teachers’ willingness to adopt pedagogical innovations found in numerous empirical studies (Allinder, 1994; Berman et al., 1977; Ghaith & Yaghi, 1997; Guskey, 1984; Smylie, 1988; Stein & Wang, 1988). In contrast, several participants in this study shunned pedagogical innovation not
because they displayed a low level of self-efficacy but because of their analysis of their
students’ learning needs. This finding affirms, once again, the role played by mental
negotiations (Karaman et al., 2012) and human agency (Parajes, 1996; Solberg et al., 1995) in
teachers’ pedagogical decisions. Further research is warranted on understanding the meanings
of teachers’ motivation to maintain the same teaching pedagogy, instead of simply
stigmatizing these decisions as a result of a lack of motivation or confidence.

The participants’ ensuring students’ satisfaction with the teacher and lessons, beyond
their academic needs, served as the driving force behind teachers’ pedagogical changes.
Talking to students about their extra-curricular activities and interests helped to develop a
friendly relationship between the participants and students. The information obtained from
these informal interactions also helped develop teaching methods and examples used in class
which were of the students’ liking. This finding was parallel to Wu and Hung’s (2011) and
Yunus et al.’s (2011) research pointing to the importance of a close and positive relationship
with students in improving their classroom behavior, study motivation and academic
performance. Such a relationship was particularly of essence because of the comparatively
small age difference between the students who are in their late 20s and early 20s and the
participants in their late 20s and 30s.

There is a scholarly opportunity to reexamine or even redefine the definition of the
teacher-student relationship in this twenty-first century. One participant in this study regarded
her students as customers. The underlying implication could be that higher education students
had a higher status than teachers, and the teachers were here to serve and please the students.
One possible explanation could be that student evaluations of the participants’ lessons and
teaching formed a significant basis for the teachers’ annual appraisal by the College. The
finding is contrary to Dörnyei’s (1994) research that explained the relationship between
teacher motivation and student motivation with students’ “affiliative drive… to please the
teacher (or other superordinate figures like parents) whom they like and appreciate” (p.278).
It is important to note that Dörnyei’s research is 20 years old and he examined the
teacher-student relationship in the decades before the mid-1990s. A significant change has
occurred in teachers’ and students’ perceptions of each other. Additional research is warranted
in this area, especially involving higher education teachers and students and/or in the context
of self-financed educational institutions.

While this study found out that most participants are motivated to change teaching
practices to keep their students happy and interested in lessons, two participants valued their
own mental well-being as much as that of their students. For example, one participant
disclosed that her motivation to create tailor-made teaching materials would be lowered
without her students’ expressing gratitude. Another participant insisted on presenting clear
criteria to students when explaining assignments and grading them was because she always
wanted to avoid arguments with any person. The findings supported Wighting et al.’s (2008)
study on recognizing teachers’ cognitive or social satisfaction needs. The necessity of
addressing teachers’ own satisfaction is also significant because it gave confirmation to the
significant impact of teachers’ beliefs on their motivation to execute particular teaching tasks

Overall, as ESL teachers in higher education, the participants in this study embraced
their instrumental role in identifying their students’ ESL weaknesses and helping them
overcome them. Viewing themselves as problem-solvers needed by their students provided
the teachers with a good reason to keep updating their teaching practices and materials. Some
participants also found motivation by undertaking the mission to make their students useful
citizens. This adds an extra dimension to the motivational beliefs held by language teachers
because they see themselves as doing more than just teaching a subject, they also see
themselves assisting students in their personal growth through learning an indispensable
survival skill.

The fact that their students were in higher education also influenced the participants’
pedagogical decisions. The teachers were encouraged to develop corresponding teaching
strategies based on their adult students’ maturity, limited attention span, preferences over
group work, and socialization behaviors. However, it is worth noting that a teachers’
motivation for pedagogical development can also be witnessed in their decision to repeat the
same teaching practices due to their students’ learning needs, rather than always searching for
the latest or innovative teaching approach. The findings help address the limitation in
Sugino’s (2010) study in Japanese schools in which he failed to acknowledge the
commonalities or differences in the motivational factors identified by teachers in three
different kinds of schools: defense academies, private, and national universities in Japan. The
findings in this study pointed to the influence of different types of curriculum (ESL learning
in higher education) and a specific student body composition (higher education students in a
private tertiary college). The student population in the College under investigation also
resulted in the teachers paying attention to ensuring the students’ affective perceptions of the
teachers and their lessons. For some teachers, a pedagogical change might not entirely be
adopted for the purposes of more effective teaching and learning, but in order to make the
students feel satisfied and happy.

Perceptions of Teachers’ Teaching Abilities

The participants in this study formed opinions about their teaching abilities, which
informed their motivational sources for pedagogical development. The teachers evaluated
their strengths and weaknesses in teaching, learned from role models and disassociated
themselves from negative teacher images.

All participants reported that both their teaching strengths and weaknesses contributed
toward their motivation to seek improvement in the methods of instruction. This finding
confirms, once again, the central role of human agency in Bandura’s (1977) theory of
self-efficacy and the bidirectional interactive relationships between behavior, cognition and other personal factors, and environment (Bobbett et al., 2007). One participant, in response to negative comments on her teaching performance from end-of-semester student evaluations, expressed that she felt “frustrated” and “depressed”. She believed there must be people who did not like her (cognitive and personal factor). Therefore, she grew to be less sensitive but more responsive to negative comments. The teacher’s behavior change now consistently reminded students of her high standards for them and their work so as to bridge the gap between the expectations for herself and her students’ expectations. She exercised her human agency through choosing not to dwell upon the negative feedback but to use this energy to build herself an image of an assertive teacher who wanted to keep her students on a par with her high standards. This finding is aligned with Bobbett et al.’s (2007) assertion that the causal interactions among behavior, personal factors, and environment influence teachers’ beliefs about seeking to accomplish teaching tasks. In the participant’s case, the change in her personal factors (from frustration to optimism) altered her pedagogical behavior and her classroom environment.

With the teachers’ own perceptions of their teaching abilities being the focus, the findings in this second superordinate theme especially echoed the four sources of self-efficacy beliefs identified in the theoretical framework used in this study (Bandura, 1977), namely mastery experience, vicarious learning, verbal persuasion and physiological and
psychological arousal.

All participants attributed their earlier successful teaching experiences to an increase in their teaching abilities. The finding is in congruent with self-efficacy researchers’ finding of the important influence of mastery experience, which is the prediction of performance based on successful or failed experiences on individuals’ perceptions of capabilities (Stajkovic & Luthans, 2003). Sources of mastery experience demonstrated by the participants in this study included their teaching experiences before joining the College, educational background, and successful implementation of instructional methods proven by positive feedback from students and by teachers’ self-evaluations. However, as far as the correlation of teaching experience with self-efficacy is concerned, this finding indicated the need for additional research. Current literature suggests teachers’ self-efficacy increased with teaching experience (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007; Wolters & Daugherty, 2007). In this study, two participants were relatively less experienced among the four, with (respectively) one and two full-time teaching experiences in the College. They were the only two participants who expressed the need to conform to the departmental guidelines and teaching materials because they were relatively new. However, neither of them found their limited teaching experience an obstacle. Both participants, instead, made a point of reflecting upon the failures they experienced in their first-year teaching and made significant improvements in their second year because of the setbacks. One of them also associated her master and
doctoral education with the professional knowledge she could draw on in her current teaching role. Both cases showed how even a novice teacher could have a high level of self-efficacy as long as other sources of mastery experience were available. Further research is warranted to examine the role of teachers’ experience in influencing mastery experience as a source of self-efficacy beliefs.

Contrary to the novice teachers’ assurance about their teaching abilities, the two more seasoned teachers in the study were candid about the limitations and shortcomings in their teaching. The sentiment, however, was not reflected in their motivation to improve their instructional methods. Conversely, one of them reiterated the gap between her ability and that of an ideal teacher who, in her own definition, “needs to understand everything.” Acknowledging such a gap resulted in her undertaking more preparation than needed. Another participant admitted that her sense of humor was lacking and so she was seeking alternatives to make her lessons interesting. The findings, on one hand, complicated numerous empirical studies which associated higher teacher efficacy with teachers’ stronger willingness to adopt pedagogical innovations and experiment with different instructional methods (Allinder, 1994; Berman et al., 1977; Ghaith & Yaghi, 1997; Guskey, 1984; Smylie, 1988; Stein & Wang, 1988). On the other hand, the findings supported a more contemporary assertion justified by Wheatley (1999, 2002, 2005) who defined the benefits of teachers doubting their teaching efficacy, as shown in these two seasoned teachers’ teaching abilities,
including encouraging teacher reflection, strengthening teachers’ motivation to learn, and fostering an openness to diversity in instructional methods. Scholarship on teacher motivation can be further enriched by making qualitative interpretations of teachers who displayed low self-efficacy so as to arrive at a holistic understanding of teachers’ doubts about their teaching efficacy.

The participants’ self-efficacy was enhanced when they learned from and identified themselves with the positive role models. The findings substantiated the influence of vicarious experience as confirmed in the experimental study by Hagen, Gutkin, Wilson and Oats (1998). The researchers found out that the group of pre-service teachers, after watching a videotape featuring effective behavior-management procedures, showed a significant increase in their self-efficacy perceptions, than the control group of teachers watching a placebo videotape. With vicarious experience referring to a change of self-efficacy through observing others’ performance (Labone, 2004), all but one participant in this study boosted their motivation to implement instructional strategies successfully adopted by their previous teachers or adopt the teaching philosophy of the teacher the participant admired. The findings further proved Abramie et al.’s (2004), Foley’s (2011) and Wozney et al.’s (2006) argument that that an increase in a teachers’ expectation of success resulted in a motivational boost to use a teaching strategy.

Verbal persuasion, as one of the four sources of self-efficacy, refers to a change of
confidence centered around positive or negative feedback (Usher & Pajares, 2008). The participants in this study expected a boost in her motivation for pedagogical development if their teaching was well-received by supervisors and other senior colleagues in the Department. Verbal persuasion, in this case, also led to the formation of mastery experience in strengthening the teachers’ interpretations of her teaching abilities. While the sources of verbal persuasion for teachers usually included administrators, supervisors, colleagues, parents and other members in the teaching community (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007), the finding in several participants’ cases complicated the definition of “important others” in the teaching context (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). Some teachers in this study gave considerable weight to their students’ comments, especially the negative ones, on their teaching performances. They regarded these comments as suggestions to improve their teaching. Since teacher motivation and student motivation are positively associated in the literature, it is worth investigating the impact of students’ positive and negative verbal assessment on teachers’ behavioral and cognitive reaction and change, especially in the higher education context and/or educational institutions where part of a teachers’ appraisal is subject to evaluation from students.

Since the four participants in this study are female teachers, the above-discussed findings are comparable to previous studies that examined if men and women were similarly or differently influenced by the four sources of information in self-efficacy beliefs.
Establishing the influence of vicarious experience and verbal persuasion on the teachers’ motivation for pedagogical development in this study is built off of Parjares and Zeldin’s (1999) and Zeldin and Parajes’ (2000) research. These researchers demonstrated how these two sources of self-efficacy beliefs were critical for women who primarily built their confidence upon observing and listening to messages from important parties in their lives. However, such a comparison must be treated with caution. The 15 women interviewed in Zeldin and Parajes’s (2000) study had careers in science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) which were generally male-dominated sectors at their time. Gender equality has progressed since then, affecting the gendered proportion in STEM careers and also female perception of their sources of confidence. A gap also exists in comparing the four female participants in this study with the ones in Zeldin and Parajes’ (2000) as the teaching industry where this study’s participants worked, showed no significant gender preference. The four teachers in this study are even working in a Department where females are the majority. Further research is warranted on male and female teachers in the same study to examine how they process the four sources of self-efficacy belief.

Physiological or psychological arousal, when applied to teachers’ self-efficacy formation, refers to the fact that joy or excitement experienced by teachers from a successful lesson may contribute toward their self-efficacy beliefs (Usher & Pajares, 2008). Negative psychological and emotional arousal, such as stress or anxiety resulting from a particular instructional
method, may lower teachers’ confidence in using it again. In this study, one participant’s reflection on utilizing a course textbook provided a perfect example of this self-efficacy belief. She expressed that she was stressed out about having to teach based on an assigned textbook that both she and her students did not like. She even described that teaching experience as “traumatic.” However, she developed a good lesson to supplement with her devised teaching materials and activities the next time she needed to teach with the same textbook. The finding gave confirmation to the influence of the teacher’s negative psychological arousal on lowering her sense of self-efficacy in adhering to the unsuccessful instructional method. The finding further offers insight into the examination of physiological arousal in the formation of self-efficacy beliefs suggesting that this kind of arousal seldom exerts influence on individuals alone. In this participant’s case, the negative emotional arousal (her being stressed out) resulted in the formation of a negative mastery experience in using the textbook and negative verbal persuasion from her students.

All participants in this study expressed negative feelings toward the concept of teacher motivation in Hong Kong, believing that most teachers in this city were not motivated in the eyes of the public and even the participants themselves. The finding echoes the major finding in teacher motivation studies suggesting that teachers are the most demotivated by extrinsic factors (Doyle & Kim, 1999; Gheralis-Roussos, 2003; Shoiab, 2004; Pennington, 1995). In this study, the extrinsic factors undermining teachers’ motivation for pedagogical motivation
included the heavy non-teaching workload (such as administration) and dealing with student discipline issues and the failure to maintain a healthy work/life balance. One participant also mentioned how her friends considered her occupation as monotonous and boring. The finding is aligned with the perceived lack of social respect, which was also identified as a common negative motivational factor in the literature on teacher motivation. However, the causal relationship between poor teacher motivation and a lack of social respect for teachers should be viewed with caution. The current literature maintained that the public’s disrespectful attitude toward teachers was the cause. However, two participants remarked that some teachers were actually at fault in the first place, being reluctant to change and pessimistic about their capability to innovate. The two participants considered these teachers’ lack of motivation as the reason for the public’s negative image of teachers, on the assumption that all teachers were able to, and ought to be, experimental and open-minded with regard to pedagogical innovation. Regional factors in Hong Kong can be considered in future research to offer more explanation on this undesirable image of teachers.

Overall, much of what the participants shared about their teaching strengths formed the mastery experiences on which the teachers relied to keep refining their pedagogy. However, teacher efficacy doubts which surfaced when the teachers admitted their teaching shortcomings were also useful to keep the teachers from lingering over what they could not do in order to focus on developing pedagogy within their best capacity. The participants’
confession of their weaknesses illustrated the fact that teachers were not motivated only by the existence of an effective teaching strategy but also by their cognitive process regarding whether they could achieve the best out of a teaching practice based on their capabilities.

Besides, participants in this study tended to adopt teaching strategies proven effective when practiced by teachers they trusted and respected. On the other hand, sources from such vicarious experience can be found in negative teacher images depicted as being reluctant to change or pessimistic about one’s capability to innovate in teaching practices. Depicting such undesirable teacher models reflected an image of unmotivated teachers from which the participants differentiated themselves. Several participants also cited student feedback, both positive and negative, as a source of verbal persuasion and their physiological and psychological arousal, and more importantly, an impetus for their pedagogical change. The strong impact of students’ voices on teachers’ motivational beliefs suggests an examination of how the four sources of self-efficacy belief influence particularly higher education teachers who seem to give more weight to teacher-student interaction.

**Perceptions of the Administration**

The final superordinate theme that emerged in this study was the attitude toward the school administration. There was a general consensus among the four teachers that departmental policies and college practices were less influential on their motivation for pedagogical development compared to the impact of their students, other teachers, and the
participants themselves.

The participants were appreciative of the Department in terms of their providing a clear course outline and teaching package for the ESL courses. In contrast, they did not believe the College itself did a good job in offering constructive motivation for pedagogical development. The teachers’ closer tie to the departmental guidelines and policies can be explained by Weick’s (1976) discussion of educational institutions working in loosely coupled systems.

Schools were usually described as loosely-coupled systems because departments in educational organizations were not tightly linked (Meyer, 2003; Pajak & Green, 2003). The many self-functioning subunits are still coupled to a certain extent, some with a stronger connection whereas others are understood as “circumscribed, infrequent, weak in [their] mutual affects, unimportant and/ or slow to respond” (Weick, 1976, p. 3). The relationship between the teachers in this study and their Department was relatively stronger than that between the teachers and the College for two reasons. First, the departmental policies mentioned by the participants had a direct impact on their daily instructional practices, including the teaching schedule, materials, and assignments. Second, the majority of ESL course panels in the Department consisted of more than one teacher, with a course coordinator overseeing operations such as standardization and mark adjustment. These two reasons helped explain why the participants largely adhered to departmental policies.

The participants, however, still desired and also exercised their autonomy in making
instructional decisions, especially when the departmental policies conflicted with their teaching philosophies. This conflict became a motivational factor for the teachers to modify their teaching. This finding was consistent with Hu’s (2002) and Savignon’s (2007) research demonstrating that local needs and experiences of both students and teachers should be considered when adopting pedagogy. In this study, several participants acknowledged the need for instructional change when they found the provided teaching schedule or textbook could not achieve the best outcomes. Their pedagogical judgment was comparable to Hu’s and Savignon’s analysis that even with an instructional strategy widely understood as effective in the teaching community, teachers are still able to make professional decisions concerning the execution. This decision-making process also echoes this study’s theoretical framework that asserts teachers’ perceptions of their capability to execute a teaching task can serve as a more reliable predictor of their behavior than their actual abilities (Berman et al., 1977).

Among the four participants, three who mentioned college-level teaching practices played down the importance of activities like teacher seminars and end-of-semester evaluations for motivating teachers to improve their pedagogy. One participant did not even mention any of these practices. Two participants dismissed teaching seminars, as part of the professional development programs arranged by the College, as irrelevant. The seminars, however, had unintentionally beneficial side effects as the teachers acknowledged the
inspiration drawn by observing how the speakers delivered the seminars. This finding substantiated Smylie’s (1988) argument that professional development is associated with self-efficacy in which teachers’ self-perceptions may function as “a professional filter through which new ideas and innovations must pass before teachers internalize them and change their behaviors” (p. 148). Smlyie’s assertion also found support in Colloby’s (2003) findings that established the effectiveness of curriculum materials as a professional development tool for teachers but recognized teachers’ identity and beliefs in measuring its influence on instructional execution. In this study, the participants’ accounts illuminated how their beliefs were at play: the seminar content, which should have been the focal point of the College, was not the teachers’ focus. Instead, their professional filters took effect and resulted in their observation concerning the seminar speakers. The observation then turned into motivation for the teachers’ pedagogical development.

The above finding indicates the need for additional research, beyond the current literature, that analyzes the important roles played by the higher education administration in promoting teaching and instructional development (Bess, 1997; Feldman & Paulsen, 1999; Kızıltepe, 2008; Macfarlane & Hughes, 2009). Although several participants disregarded the administration and valued their teaching autonomy, this doesn’t necessarily mean that higher education administrators are in no position to strengthen faculty members’ motivation for pedagogical development. The research participants’ accounts of the college seminars should
be viewed with caution because the teachers might not have attended all seminars and their opinions could have only concerned the seminars they joined. Besides, it should be the content or direction of the College’s professional development programs that warrant review as the consistency between one’s knowledge of their subject matter and pedagogy is of essence (Ball, 2000).

Overall, participants in the study had mixed feelings about departmental policies requiring them to teach based on the standardized teaching schedule and materials. The negative feelings, emerging when some policies were incompatible with the teachers’ teaching philosophy, facilitated the adaptation of their teaching practices. Such motivation for pedagogical development was however absent in the participants’ experiences with policies at the College level. Nevertheless, the teachers derived different inspirations for teaching from speakers in the college seminars. The difference between the College’s objectives and the teachers’ individual benefit in attending the seminars indicated that teachers did value the impact of professional learning on pedagogical development but that these seminars should better answer the individual needs of teachers from different departments.

**Implication for Practice**

This study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of ESL teachers’ motivational beliefs about initiating and implementing pedagogical strategies in second language-learning classrooms. This understanding could inform practitioners and their institutions about the
alignment (or misalignment) between teachers’ beliefs and their practices so that both parties could know how to improve teacher motivation for pedagogical development. As a result, the findings of this study are relevant to both faculty members and higher education administrators.

There was an overwhelming consensus among the four participants in the study concerning helping their students identify and overcome their ESL weaknesses and this was one of the teachers’ major motivations to improve their teaching. An entry English-language test for all second-language learners of English can be implemented for first-year undergraduates. So far no tertiary colleges or universities in Hong Kong have such a test while some only have an exit English test. The only indicator of students’ English proficiency for ESL teachers in higher education is the secondary school graduates’ English-language public exam score. With an entry test examining freshmen’s reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills, or even the sub-skills in each domain, ESL teachers in higher education can be informed of students’ strengths and weaknesses before they come to class and thus devise the most appropriate instructional methods and materials. Tracked classes with students sharing similar learning needs can also facilitate a match with suitable ESL teachers to showcase their capabilities and thus yield more positive feedback from witnessing their instructional strategies working to the full extent.

ESL teachers in higher education would benefit from learning about students’ academic
needs through course online platforms. The participants in this study perceived that helping their students overcome ESL weaknesses was a major motivation for pedagogical development. They further noted their students’ preference for informal communication channels and the importance of an amicable teacher-student relationship. An online teaching and learning platform tailored for each ESL course would allow teachers to have personalized communication with each student in a class. Two to three weeks out of the original school weeks where physical lessons take place could be set aside for virtual meetings using web-cams or instant messaging between the course teacher and each student. This way both the teachers and the students would not find it an extra burden to participate in the online platform but regard it as a substitute for the face-to-face class time. Through casual conversations in the online meetings, the teacher would be able to learn about their students’ particular difficulties and weaknesses in learning ESL and recommend improvement methods and resources tailor-made for each student. Teachers could also design corresponding activities or exercises to measure their students’ learning outcomes. For example, ESL students particularly weak in speaking could be asked to upload an oral commentary on news for teachers to assess while students weak in writing could produce a written commentary instead. The students should feel more comfortable with sharing with their teachers their needs in learning ESL than doing so in a physical classroom facing 20 classmates. The individual attention from their teacher would also make them feel special and respected.
Teachers fulfilling students’ mental needs finds support in this study’s finding where several participants remarked that they changed their teaching practices to make their students feel happy and satisfied.

Higher education administrators at the departmental level can contribute toward increasing faculty members’ motivation by granting their teachers more room for autonomy in curriculum design and development. A few participants in the study acknowledged that they had already experimented with their preferred teaching practices and methods within the constraints of the pre-set curriculum. Course coordinators should allow much more flexibility concerning the adoption of assigned teaching materials as long as all teachers follow the same marking criteria and deadlines for assessment. The coordinators could communicate this message with panel teachers in a briefing meeting before a semester starts and welcome adaptations of the pre-set curriculum and the development of new instructional strategies.

Online forums for each course can be set up to facilitate instant communication and exchanges of new teaching ideas among teachers. The coordinators can also build and maintain a course database archiving instructional practices, activities, and materials contributed by teachers so that teachers in the future can benefit from these innovations. Most importantly, as an incentive, teachers’ participation in the online forums and contribution to the database should be acknowledged as part of their professional development.
The participants in this study were dismissive of the college practices which were meant to facilitate pedagogical development, indicating that the seminars and workshops organized so far have not yet met the teachers’ needs. Higher education administrators, especially those responsible for teachers’ professional development, could seek ways to collect faculty members’ preferences for formats, topics and speakers for future seminars and workshops. Since the participants in this study remarked that they learned more from the way some seminar speakers spoke than from the seminar content, speakers other than those from the educational sector could be invited. Faculty members can benefit from presentations by politicians, performance artists, psychologists, social workers and lawyers to improve their communication skills and lesson delivery. Since no “one-size-fits-all” professional development program can fulfill the needs of teachers from different departments (Nabhani & Bahous, 2010), administrators could open up the possibility of organizing departmental seminars and workshops tailor-made for the teachers’ expertise.

In addition to improving professional development programs, a teaching center could be set up to facilitate professional development for in-service faculty and to prepare new teachers. While no public or private colleges or universities have such a center in Hong Kong, these schools could learn from establishments such as the Center of Pedagogy at the Montclair State University and the Center for Research for Learning and Teaching at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. A teaching center could aid the instructional
development of faculty members by building networks with local and overseas teaching practitioners in higher education and by initiating research projects on the latest teaching strategies for different subjects. Through such a center, high education administrators could provide faculty members with both concrete assistance in pedagogical development and also demonstrate a firm commitment to improving teacher motivation.

**Implication for Research**

This study, using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the research methodology, supports existing literature that calls for a qualitative or interpretivist paradigm to explore teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs. While Bandura’s (1977) model of self-efficacy beliefs established the importance of individuals’ perceptions on their abilities to perform a task, comparisons can be made between one’s perception of one’s own abilities and his or her actual classroom practices by conducting studies with both semi-structured interviews and class observations. An IPA study interviewing both teachers and their students could also provide insights into the similarities and differences of their interpretations on implementing a teaching practice. Practice efficacy can better be judged by examining the voices of the two most important parties in a classroom.

One of the limitations cited in extant literature on teacher motivation is that the relationship between the unique nature of second-language teaching and the context of higher education has not yet been fully explored in the studies of ESL teacher motivation. The
current study adds to the literature regarding the perspectives of ESL teachers in higher education and their specific motivational beliefs in making pedagogical decisions and development when attending to higher education students’ learning needs and satisfaction. However, the findings might not be reflective of the experiences of teachers in other subject areas such as Business Administration and Journalism. Further research could compare the motivational beliefs of teachers of major subjects with those of electives or other mandatory subjects such as Chinese Language and General Education classes in colleges and universities in Hong Kong. The impact of student choices and their motivation to study on teacher motivation could then be evaluated.

Similar studies could be replicated with different teacher populations and at varying types of higher education institutions. Some participants in this study addressed time allocation as a concern in a teacher’s pedagogical development. Since the four teachers are on the teaching track, being assessed based on their teaching, administration, and service to the College, faculty members on the professorial track whose assessments are based on teaching, administration, service, and (most importantly) research, are not yet represented. It is natural to expect that their interpretation of time and also motivational beliefs could significantly differ because of their engagement with research and publication commitments. Also, since the four participants in this study are native Chinese speakers, accounts from native English-speaking teachers teaching native Chinese students in English-language classrooms
could provide important additional research. The teachers in this study accounted for the specific learning needs, attitudes and the need to attend to the satisfaction of their students in the self-financed, newly-established, small-scale tertiary college in Hong Kong. Future research can be conducted on comparing the findings of this study to research participants working in different types of institutions, such as the eight government-funded universities in Hong Kong, their affiliated community colleges, and other self-financed institutions in other Asian countries such as Japan and Korea.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of how ESL teachers in a private tertiary college in Hong Kong attached meaning to motivational beliefs in developing different teaching strategies. The researcher found that students’ ESL weaknesses and learning needs were the driving force behind teacher motivation for pedagogical development. Expectation for higher education students because of their age, understanding of their learning characteristics, and desire to satisfy their affective needs also influenced teachers’ instructional practices. While teachers exploited their strengths to develop teaching practices in which they were confident, their perceived weaknesses became the reason to attempt different ways to keep their lessons interesting and meaningful. Teachers also gained confidence in instructional strategies proven successful when being adopted by their role models. On the other hand, they distinguished themselves from negative images of teachers
who were unable or reluctant to modify teaching. Influence from departmental and college policies on teachers’ pedagogical decisions were comparatively minor.

The researcher believes the findings of this study are significant because they contribute new knowledge to the body of literature on teacher motivation, particularly the motivational beliefs of higher education teachers teaching mandatory English-language courses to undergraduates. Although the scholarship on positive and negative motivation for teachers is available, the extant literature has not captured how teachers assign meaning to each when performing particular teaching tasks. Employing Bandura’s (1977) theory of self-efficacy belief as the study’s theoretical framework, the researcher was able to focus on the participants’ choices concerning teaching practices when being informed by their own perception, past and current behavior, and environment. These findings advance the understanding of how teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs influenced their interpretations of motivational factors. This study also contributes to the current literature on teacher motivation by providing insight into the subject- and context-specific descriptions of the lived experiences and perceptions of teachers. As seen in the previous section, the knowledge generated from this study led to recommendations for changes in educational practices in which both faculty members and higher education administrators could collaborate on improving teacher motivation and thus students’ learning and school reputation.
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Appendix A - Northeastern University IRB Approval

Northeastern

NOTIFICATION OF IRB ACTION.

Date: March 19, 2014
IRB #: CP914-03-06

Principal Investigator(s): Kimberly Nolan
CHUNG Ho-ying, Holly

Department: Doctor of Education Program
College of Professional Studies

Address: 20 Belvidere
Northeastern University

Title of Project: An Interpretative phenomenological Analysis of English – as-a-second-language (ESL) Teachers' Motivation Beliefs in Developing Different Pedagogical Strategies

Participating Sites: [Ethics Approval In File]

DHRIS Review Category: Expedited #6, #7

Informed Consents: One (1) signed consent form

Monitoring Interval: 12 months

APPROVAL EXPIRATION DATE: MARCH 18, 2015

Investigator's Responsibilities:
1. The informed consent form bearing the IRB approval stamp must be used when recruiting participants into the study.
2. The investigator must notify IRB immediately of unexpected adverse reactions, or new information that may alter our perception of the benefit-risk ratio.
3. Study procedures and files are subject to audit any time.
4. Any modifications of the protocol or the informed consent as the study progresses must be reviewed and approved by this committee prior to being instituted.
5. Continuing Review Approval for the proposal should be requested at least one month prior to the expiration date above.
6. This approval applies to the protection of human subjects only. It does not apply to any other university approvals that may be necessary.

C. Randall Colvin, Ph.D., Chair
Northeastern University Institutional Review Board

Nan C. Regina, Director
Human Subject Research Protection

Northeastern University FWA #4630
Dear Potential Participant,

I am conducting a research submitted in partial fulfillment of my doctoral degree with the specialization in Organizational Leadership and Communication, at the College of Professional Studies, Northeastern University. I would like to invite you to participate. I am studying how you, as an English-as-a-second-language (ESL) teacher, working in this private tertiary college in Hong Kong, make sense of your motivational beliefs for pedagogical development.

If you decide to participate, you will be invited to two face-to-face interviews at a mutually agreed time and private place of your choice at the College. The first interview is a semi-structured interview where you will be asked a series of open-ended questions about your teaching experiences relating to your teacher motivation for adopting and developing different teaching practices. It should last about 45 to 60 minutes. The other interview is a member-checking interview. It will take place after the interview transcripts and data analysis are completed and should last around 30 minutes. Both interviews will be audio-taped, with your consent. A confidential transcription service provider will be paid to transcribe the interview. The audio recordings will only be reviewed by me who will analyze the transcripts and produce the research findings.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can stop at any time, even after we have begun. Your participation and identity will be kept confidential.

I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at ******** or by email at chung.h@husky.neu.edu to accept this research participation if you are interested. Thank you very much for your attention.

Yours faithfully,

Holly CHUNG Ho-ying
Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies, School of Education
Name of Investigator(s): Dr. Kimberly Nolan (Principal Investigator), Chung Ho-ying, Holly (Student Researcher)
Title of Project: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of English-as-a-second-language (ESL) Teachers’ Motivational Beliefs in Developing Different Pedagogical Strategies

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study
You are invited to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?
You are being asked to take part in this research study because you are a full-time English-as-a-second-language (ESL) teacher who is delivering at least one mandatory ESL course for undergraduates at the study location at the time the research is conducted.

Why is this research study being done?
The purpose of this study is to understand English-as-a-second-language (ESL) teachers’ motivational beliefs in pedagogical innovation.

What will I be asked to do?
If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to take part in two interviews. The first one is a face-to-face semi-structured interview. You will be invited to state your preferred time and a private location in your workplace to conduct the interview.

Once the interview transcripts and data analysis are completed, they will be emailed to you to review and you will be given two weeks’ time to do so. After two weeks, another face-to-face member-checking interview will be conducted in a time and a private location of your choice in your workplace. You can verify the accuracy of the transcripts and comment on the data.
analysis.

All interviews will be audio-recorded with two different recording devices with your consent. All identifying information will be excluded from the audio recordings and the research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You will first be interviewed at a time and a private location that is convenient for you. The first face-to-face semi-structured interview will take about 45 to 60 minutes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once the interview transcripts and data analysis are completed, they will be emailed to you to review and you will be given two weeks’ time to do so. After two weeks, another face-to-face member-checking interview will be conducted in a time and a private location of your choice. It will take about 30 minutes.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?</th>
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<tr>
<td>There are no known personal, physical or emotional risks to your well-being and your career in the college by taking part in this study. However, there is still a chance where you may express negative feelings, such as embarrassment or frustration, when describing unsuccessful or demotivating teaching experiences.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

In case you experience negative feelings and do not feel comfortable with such feelings, you can take a break from the interview and I will offer you psychological support. I am also prepared to stop the interview to safeguard your well-being. You will also be given the right to approve or request removal of any aspects of the transcripts and the findings which you perceive as damaging to your well-being and/or your career.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Will I benefit by being in this research?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There will be no direct benefits to you for taking part in the study. However, your participation will contribute to extending the knowledge of higher education teacher motivation. You may also benefit, in terms of your professional development, through reflecting upon your teaching experiences in detail.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who will see the information about me?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your part in this study will be confidential. Only the researcher on this study will see the information about you. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way or any individual as being of this project.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The interviews will be digitally audio-recorded, using the researcher’s mobile phone and an audio recorder. The audio files in both devices will be transported immediately after each interview to the researcher’s password-protected personal home computer and one flash drive that will be stored in a locked drawer in the researcher’s home.

All identifying information, including your name and the name of the study location will be excluded from the recordings. You will be given gender-neutral pseudonyms and the pseudonyms will be used as the file names of all related audio recordings and word documents stored in the researcher’s password-protected personal home computer.

Only a confidential transcription service provider and the researcher will have access to the interview data. The transcription service provider will not be able to identify you because your name will be de-identified in all audio recordings.

If I do not want to take part in the study, what choices do I have?
If you decide you no longer want to participate in the interview, you are encouraged to inform the research of your decision. The information already obtained through your participation will not be included in the data analysis and final report of the study.

What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?
You can disengage from the research at any time you feel uncomfortable or harmed. However, no special arrangements will be made for compensation or for payment for treatment solely because of your participation in this research.

Can I stop my participation in this study?
Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time. If you do not participate or if you decide to quit, there will be no effect on your relationship with the researcher or any other negative consequences.

If you decide you no longer want to participate in the interview, you are encouraged to inform the research of your decision. The information already obtained through your participation will not be included in the data analysis and final report of the study.

Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?
If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Chung Ho-ying, Holly at chung.h@husky.neu.edu or her mobile phone at (852) ********, the person mainly
responsible for the research. You can also contact Dr. Kimberly Nolan at k.nolan@neu.edu, the Principal Investigator.

**Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?**

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

**Will I be paid for my participation?**

You will not be paid for your participation.

**Will it cost me anything to participate?**

It will not cost you anything to participate in this study.

**Is there anything else I need to know?**

N/A

**I agree to take part in this research.**

___________________________________________  ______ __________________
Signature of person agreeing to take part  Date

____________________________________________
Printed name of person above

_____________________________________________________________
Signature of person who explained the study to the participant above and obtained consent  Date
Appendix D - Interview Protocol

Topic: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of English-as-a-second-language (ESL) Teachers’ Motivational Beliefs in Developing Different Pedagogical Strategies

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

Introduction/Description of Project

(a) Purpose of the Study

(b) The sources of data being collected

(c) Explanation of what will be done with the data to protect the confidentiality of the participant

(d) Provide an approximation of how long the interview will take

(Turn on recorders)

Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me how you will describe pedagogical development in teaching English-as-a-second-language (ESL)?

Prompts: Can you tell me how you prepare your lessons? Can you describe, if any, instant changes you made which were deviant from your planned teaching routine during the class? Can you share with me the experiences in conducting follow-up teaching activities after lessons?

2. Can you describe the role(s) played by pedagogical development in ESL teaching in
your higher educational institution?

Possible prompts: Can you tell me about the similarities or differences in such role(s) in other subjects? Can you tell me about the similarities or differences in such role(s) in other higher educational institutions?

3. Can you describe what it would look like to be an ESL teacher who is motivated for pedagogical development?

Possible prompts: teachers’ beliefs, their behavior inside and outside classrooms, their interactions with work colleagues and/ or students

4. Can you describe an occasion/ occasions when you were motivated to develop different teaching practices when teaching ESL in your institution?

Possible prompts: How long ago? What do you think brought this about? How did you feel in the occasion(s) you described?

5. In what ways do you perceive that your ESL teaching abilities influence your motivation for pedagogical development?

Possible prompts: Can you describe what it would look like to successfully execute a new teaching practice?

6. Can you describe any changes in your motivation for pedagogical development in teaching ESL?

Possible prompts: How long ago? What has brought about any of these changes? How did you feel in the change?

7. Can you tell me about how you could increase your motivation to improve your teaching practices?

Possible prompts: actions by yourself, students, work colleagues, school administrators, the teaching community?

8. We talked a lot about teacher motivation and its relation to teaching practices. Do you have any other thoughts on these topics?