

A case study on foreign English teachers' challenges in Taiwanese elementary schools

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Abstract

With the spread of English as the global language, many people from English-speaking countries go to foreign land to work as English teachers. A review of the literature reveals that there is little research on these teachers' teaching-abroad experiences. The current study is an attempt to address this gap in the literature. Situated in an intercultural team-teaching program in Taiwan, this study documents the many challenges that three South African teachers faced. The data suggest that one common challenge is doubts on their accents. They also confronted various problems, including having to teach something they were not familiar with, managing misbehaved students, and teaching large classes. The study calls for a better preparation for foreign English teachers before they begin their teaching assignments.

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1. Introduction

Intercultural team teaching, defined by Carless (2006) as team teaching between native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) and local English teachers, is a common teaching arrangement across Asia. Large-scale schemes, such as JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching Program) in Japan and EPIK (English Program in Korea) in Korea, are well documented in the literature (e.g., Aline and Hosoda, 2006; Crooks, 2001; Park 2007). The current study is situated in a similar context, i.e., Hsinchu City of Taiwan, where foreign English teachers have been hired to practice team teaching with local English teachers in all the public elementary schools since 2001 (referred to as the Hsinchu Program hereafter). While many studies have documented how team teaching is practiced between these two groups of teachers (e.g., Luo, 2006, 2007), team teachers' voices are rarely heard. Even rarer is a documentation of foreign English teachers' experiences in the local context. The current study, based on the experiences of three foreign English teachers working in the Hsinchu Program, is an effort to offer such an account.

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2. Literature review

In the past decade, the field of English language teaching has witnessed a surge in studies on non-native-English-speaking teachers (NNESTs; see Braine, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Llurda, 2005). A wide range of issues have been covered to understand, for example, pedagogical interventions to empower NNESTs (Bernat, 2008), their employment in western contexts (Clark and Paran, 2007), and their preparation process (Kamhi-Stein, 2009). Through these efforts, the voices of NNESTs have been better heard and their needs better addressed.

Just as there are many NNESTs working in the profession, many people from English-speaking countries have traveled to a foreign land to make a living by teaching English. Many of them join government-initiated programs in Asia like the Hsinchu Program, while many more work for private language schools. These teachers have become a common face in many English classrooms in non-English-speaking countries around the world, thus playing a crucial role in many students' English learning. In contrast to their frequent presence, there is little research on these teachers' teaching-abroad experiences. One exception is Verity's (2000) study in which she documented her sense of lost expertise as a novice teacher in the Japanese context. Although she was a well-established teacher in her home context, Verity felt much stressed from having to cope with unfamiliar administrative demands such as large classes in Japan.

Another study which focuses on English-speaking teachers teaching abroad was conducted by Gingerich (2004). She studied three American teachers in Lithuania and developed a knowledge base for teachers who are native speakers of English and teaching in an international setting. An important component of this framework is the knowledge that teachers bring from their home context (*general pedagogical knowledge*) and how this knowledge is utilized and transformed in the new context to develop a set of knowledge needed for English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) teaching (*pedagogical content knowledge*), which involves *arriving with a plan* and *making adjustments*; also see Watzke, 2007). Gingerich's conceptualization of EFL teacher knowledge base also highlights the need for teachers to understand the multiple contexts surrounding their work, including that of the classroom, the school, and the larger society (*pedagogical context knowledge*).

3. The current study

The current study is a qualitative case study which focuses on the challenges that foreign English teachers encounter in Taiwanese elementary schools. It is part of a larger study which examines local and foreign English teachers' collaboration and professional development in intercultural team teaching.

3.1. Participant recruitment

To look for potential participants, the first author attended several workshops in the summer of 2006 which were organized by the Hsinchu Program to provide training for teachers and administrators involved in intercultural team teaching in the city. Each elementary school in the city, typically attended by children aged from 6 to 11, was also contacted to gain more information about the status of their foreign English teachers. Three foreign teachers agreed to participate in this study; they are May (School A), Amy (School B), and Ivy (School C; pseudonyms are used to referred to all the participating teachers, teaching staff, and administrators in the study). All of them come from South Africa. More detailed background information about each participant will be presented in the next section.

3.2. Data collection and analysis

Data collection began in late August of 2006 and ended in late June of 2007, with the exception of Ivy, who left the program without any notice after the first semester ended. Data were collected via different methods, including interviews, questionnaires, classroom observation, fieldnotes and researcher journal, and document inspection. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim for further analysis. This study will mainly focus on the data pertaining to the focal participants' challenges in their teaching sites.

4. Findings

4.1. May

4.1.1. Background information

May comes from Johannesburg, South Africa. She is a black woman in her mid-50s. May is quite well-educated and well-traveled. Besides a Bachelor of Arts degree, she also obtained a couple of undergraduate degrees in education.

In South Africa, May had taught in elementary school, high school, and university (where she worked as a teacher trainer). After teaching in South Africa for 23 years, she moved to the United States. In Charlotte, North Carolina, she worked as an ESL and remedial English teacher in a primary school for two years and as a secondary school English teacher for another year. She came to Taiwan in the summer of 2005 to join the Hsinchu Program. When asked about her reason for coming to Taiwan, she answered, “I love diversity. I like to travel and meet new people. I like to learn new cultures and learn some language. So I came here initially with the hope to learn Chinese” (interview, 2006/09/05). The 2006 school year was the second year that May taught at School A. She mainly co-taught with two Taiwanese English teachers, Mei-ling and Hsin-yu.

4.1.2. May's challenges

4.1.2.1. Classroom management. Data indicate that managing the misbehaved students was the most challenging aspect of May's teaching at School A. One important incident took place in a Grade 6 class in the middle of the first semester. On that day, everything went business-as-usual until May told students that they needed to do a few extra pages for homework. Students were unhappy and began to make some grumbling noises. One of the students said a bad word in English. May went hysterical and scolded the class. Before she ran out of the classroom, she told her co-teacher of that class, Mei-ling, that she was going to the principal's office to report what just happened. May first went to the Office of Academic Affairs to make a complaint and ask for help; she did not go to the principal's office afterwards because the staff at the Office of Academic Affairs stopped her. In the meantime, Mei-ling stayed with the students and tried to manage the class. The class ended and it was lunch time. Mei-ling went back to the homeroom with the students and told the homeroom teacher what had happened. She also wrote a few comments on the communication book of the troublemaker so that the parents would be informed of this misconduct.

Mei-ling, May's head teacher and main teaching partner, was frustrated with May's reaction to students' behavioral problems. In her words, “When students sometimes have some behavioral problems, May will say we should report them to the homeroom teacher, write a letter to or call their parents, or even we should talk to the principal.” Mei-ling felt that this is such an obvious example of cultural differences. She further elaborated, “In the school environment, we know that we have to deal with these problems by ourselves. These issues are not so serious that we need to talk to the principal.” She also expressed her frustration, “I'm really annoyed because we cannot just go to the homeroom teacher or the administrator all the time. . . In my understanding, I am responsible for my own classes. I should not give more troubles to the homeroom teachers” (interview, 2007/01/04). Even though May had been in Taiwan for more than a year, it seemed that she still had not been fully socialized into the ways that Taiwanese schools function.

4.1.2.2. The issue of racism. Around the same time that May was having problems with some students in her school, she was also developing a close relationship with Ivy, the foreign teacher of School C, who participated in this study in the first semester. May and Ivy were the only two black female teachers in the Hsinchu Program during the school year of 2006 (there was also a black male teacher working in the program). During the first semester, Ivy was having some serious problems at School C, and the school was considering replacing her (see later for more details). May was very upset that School C was turning Ivy down; Mei-ling remarked that May accused Ivy's colleagues of being racist in one of their casual conversations. In one informal conversation with the first author, May also talked about her sensitivity towards racism in these words, “I'm a very sensitive person. When students misbehave, I sometimes think that ‘Are you misbehaving because I am black?’” (field-note, 2006/12/05).

In the last two months of 2006, May's emotional problems really influenced her teaching performance and interaction with her colleagues. She was more silent when she was not teaching. When she was teaching on the stage, she was less energetic, especially with the problematic Grade 6 classes. In a teacher meeting in late November, she asked Mei-ling if the local English teachers could sometimes spend 5 min talking to students about "the importance of respecting others" (fieldnote, 2006/11/28). She said, with much agony, "People hurt, and I hurt, too." Mei-ling said that she would spend some time talking about this issue with students in her classes, but she also told May that moral education is something that Chinese teachers always emphasize at school.

In the midst of her struggle with the misbehaved students, May acknowledged that she should learn to control her emotions when it came to classroom discipline. The following is an excerpt from an interview the first author had with May at the end of the first semester:

Cheryl: So when students disrespect you, you sometimes think that it's because of your skin color?

May: Maybe. Sometimes I really feel that. I also have told Mei-ling. I have done this and I have tried that. Maybe they don't want a black teacher. Maybe they want a white teacher. And of course, anyways, Hsin-yu said they do the same in her classes. I feel a bit better then because if they can do it to her, it's not my problem. I am highly sensitive to racism and discrimination. Maybe too much so. I should stand back and say no no no (interview, 2006/12/28).

In her description of the conflicts with students, May repeatedly mentioned that she had applied every resource she had to deal with these students. However, according to Hsin-yu, the tension between May and these students had built to the point that May always showed a very unhappy face and negative attitude when she taught this class. Hsin-yu referred to this as a "vicious circle" (fieldnote, 2006/11/27) — seeing that May seemed to have lost control of her emotions, the misbehaved students challenged her even more by being uncooperative, which in turn, made May even more frustrated. May's frustration was mounting to the point that her teaching was affected. By the time the interview took place, it was already a few weeks away from those serious conflicts that May had with these students. Although she still felt that students misbehaved because of her ethnicity, she was able to take a step back and said that maybe she was too sensitive.

4.1.2.3. The issue of accent. The issue of accent is a recurring theme in the data collected across three schools. In the very first classroom observation at School A, May's pronunciation of retroflex sounds was quite noticeable. In this class, May had to read out a few items to help students write the placement test. One of the items was "ice cream," which May pronounced as "ice clim" (fieldnote, 2006/09/04). In another class in November, May was introducing "shirt" and "shorts" to students. Her pronunciation of the two words ended up confusing many students because she did not really pronounce the retroflex sounds clearly. As a result, many students could not tell which of the two words May was saying (fieldnote, 2006/11/27). Later in the semester, in a casual chat with Hsin-yu and Mei-ling, Hsin-yu (who had worked with May in the previous year) remarked that May spoke with a much heavier South African black accent when she first began teaching at School A in 2005. For example, she would pronounce the word "soccer" as [saka], without the retroflex sound. May was told that her pronunciation was hard for many children to understand, and she tried to modify it.

Although May was willing to somewhat modify her pronunciation, she questioned the fact that the American accent is the one "wanted" in Taiwan. In late December, a teacher from School B came to visit May; the purpose of the visit was to record May's oral reading of a short story which would be used to find out elementary school students' attitudes toward different English accents. Upon learning about the purpose of the recording, May said immediately, "I don't understand why people want American accent here" (fieldnote, 2006/12/28). The visitor explained that the American accent is the norm in Taiwan, and May replied with an unhappy facial expression, "Not everybody speaks with an American accent." Although May had learned from her teaching in Taiwan that American accent is the norm, she did not agree that everyone should speak like Americans. She once remarked in a casual conversation, "How many of these children will have an opportunity to talk to Americans when they grow up? They just need to learn how to use English to communicate!" (fieldnote, 2006/12/11).

4.2. Amy

4.2.1. Background information

A white woman in her mid-20s, Amy comes from the east coast of South Africa. She worked in the UK in a hotel and nursing home for 3 years after she graduated from high school. She then returned to South Africa and completed her college education. Besides a teaching certificate, she held an undergraduate degree in psychology and sociology. Before coming to Taiwan in August, 2006, she just completed her 1-year teaching practicum in a Grade 1 classroom in an elementary school in her hometown.

Amy got to know about the Hsinchu Program from a hometown friend who had worked in the program for a few years. She said in the background interview that she came to Taiwan because she wanted to “experience and do something different” (interview, 2006/09/04). In the 2006 school year, she co-taught with a local English teacher, Li-ying, and all the Grades 1 and 2 homeroom teachers.

4.2.2. Amy's challenges

4.2.2.1. Teaching phonics. In Taiwan, phonics is commonly used as a way to introduce children the sounds of English and letter-sound connection. Without adequate knowledge in phonics, Amy felt challenged by having to teach phonics in class. Throughout the second semester, Amy repeatedly commented on different occasions that she did not enjoy teaching phonics. She said it is because they do not teach this way in South Africa. Sensing her partner's unwillingness to teach phonics, Li-ying sometimes took the lead when it was time to teach phonics in class. Meanwhile, in their co-teaching lessons which focused on phonics, Amy would sometimes make open comments like, “I hate teaching phonics” or “Teaching this stuff is so boring” in front of her students. Li-ying was fully aware of Amy's negative attitude toward having to teach phonics and felt annoyed whenever her partner openly showed her lack of interest.

4.2.2.2. The issue of accent. One area in which Amy got a lot of comments from her Taiwanese colleagues was her South African accent. Like May, the way she pronounces certain words is quite different from the American way which most Taiwanese people are used to. On a fine day in mid-September, the first author arrived at Amy's classroom and found that she was talking to a Grade 2 homeroom teacher about the homework she just announced to the students before the break. After their talk was over, the homeroom teacher told the first author that in the last class, her students were very confused by Amy's pronunciation of the word “white.” She could not really imitate Amy's pronunciation of the word, so the first author was wondering how Amy had pronounced the word in the last class. The next class arrived and the lesson soon began. As a warm-up, Amy asked all the students to stand up and walk around the classroom to touch an object of a certain color. Many students hesitated when Amy said, “Find something white” (fieldnote, 2006/09/18). The way Amy said the word “white” sounded more like the word “what.”

Amy's pronunciation of the two letters “i” and “r” also confused some of the students when she administered an alphabet dictation quiz in the first semester. She tended to pronounce the letter “i” with a little retroflex sound at the end, so it actually sounded quite like the letter “r.” In a class in early November, although she repeatedly told students “i for ink” during the alphabet quiz, some students were still very confused; these were probably the weaker learners who could not benefit from the extra guidance (the word “ink”) Amy provided. When Amy was going over the answers, one student kept asking Li-ying, the co-teacher of that class, “Teacher, wasn't the letter *r* in the quiz?” (fieldnote, 2006/11/07).

Li-ying was frustrated with Amy's pronunciation. In her words, “She really misleads the kids. She can detect students are making some mistakes, but she cannot tell the children are simply following her way of pronouncing those words. I feel very tired and annoyed” (interview, 2007/06/21). Li-ying said that she had tried to correct Amy a few times, but Amy sometimes got upset—“She sometimes got annoyed and told me it's the American way of saying those words.”

4.2.2.3. Large student number and class size. Amy had to teach about 700 students per week in her 22 different classes. She compared the situation in Taiwan to that in South Africa, where she worked as a homeroom teacher and got only 24 students. She remarked, “In South Africa, we know a lot about children's background. Things like if they come from a broken home or if they are seeing a psychologist.” She continued, “Also, a lot

of children are on Ritalin, and we have to write reports on how they are coping with Ritalin and if it's working. We have to monitor the children on Ritalin. We write reports to social workers" (interview, 2006/12/26).

Amy also admitted that because of her lack of knowledge about her new students in Taiwan, she sometimes got impatient when a student behaved inappropriately in class. She felt that each of her students in Taiwan was "just like a face" whereas back home, students were "actually a person." She talked about a student she had in South Africa, "I had a girl last year. She came from quite a broken home. Her parents fight a lot. You can tell by the mood when she came to school if her parents had a fight again the night before" (interview, 2006/12/26). She talked about the situation in Taiwan, "Here, when students act out in my class, I just think they are naughty and I shout at them. And you know, maybe it's because they are having problems at home."

4.3. Ivy

4.3.1. Background information

Ivy is a black woman in her early 40s. She comes from the east coast of South Africa. She holds an undergraduate degree in education from South Africa. In her country, she had several secretarial jobs before working as an English tutor for Grades 6 and 7 students for 2 years. This part-time job required her to provide after-school remedial instruction to black students. She went to Japan to join the JET program in 2004. When she was there, her base school was a middle school where she worked for two days a week. For the other school days, she needed to go around the other schools (including elementary and middle schools) that she was assigned to in the region.

After working in Japan for 2 years, she went back to South Africa in the summer of 2006. In an interview with her at the end of the first semester (2006/12/28), she said that she felt "out of place" after going back to South Africa, so she decided to look for an oversea teaching job again. She came across the advertisement for the Hsinchu Program on the Internet and decided to come to Taiwan. She arrived in Taiwan in early September, a couple of days after the new school year had started. In School C, Ivy taught all the Grades 2 and 4 classes with the homeroom teachers and the Grade 6 classes with three different English subject local teachers, Pei-lin, Wen-li, and Wei-kai.

4.3.2. Doubts on Ivy's teaching skills and accent

There were many doubts on Ivy's accent and her teaching skills at School C. Soon after Ivy began to teach at School C, it became obvious that she was a very introverted person. Her heavy South African black accent confused many students, especially the younger ones. The only teaching aid she often used was the flashcards. Many of the observed Grade 6 lessons contained endless drill practices. In the middle of the class, Ivy often turned her back to the students and started writing some sentences on the blackboard in a very slow manner, leaving students nothing to do for a few minutes.

After 2 weeks teaching at School C, Ivy was overwhelmed and demotivated by the negative comments she received. In the semester-end interview, she specifically talked about the comments about her accent as "unconstructive criticisms." She had a hard time cooperating with some of her co-teachers because of their negative attitudes toward her accent. In her words:

When we are on the stage teaching, you could see that I say a word with my accent, the one that they say is not good, and you feel that the co-teacher would just look at you with that look in front of the students. Or maybe they will correct you in public, in front of the students. Even if you make a mistake, it's not wise to be corrected this way. I'm the professional, and I expect that I'm corrected in a professional manner. For example, don't give me that look in front of the students. By doing so, you're sending the wrong message to the students (interview, 2006/12/28).

In the same interview, Ivy also remarked that she felt that she had been unfairly judged because most of the negative comments about her came from the second graders, who she thought could not comprehend her instruction because they were too young, not just because of her accent. She said, "I'm feeling that I'm unfairly judged because they listen to what Grade 2 are saying. They are very young. They are not exposed to this language." She continued, "Even if they bring in an American, they won't understand the instruction. It's not

about my accent, but I'm told it's my accent." She then recalled her own experience of learning English when she grew up in South Africa, "You know we have another language, Zulu. When I was learning English, it was difficult for me. But the more it was spoken to me, I grabbed until I understood." She went on to say that she wanted to challenge people's criticism on her confusing the children with her accent—"I want to challenge that one, but I don't want to cause problems. The Grade 2 can't understand my instruction because of my accent? That's not true. Language itself is a problem to these kids."

Perhaps the comment of Pei-lin, one of Ivy's Taiwanese co-teachers, best sums up why Ivy could not adapt well to the new school—"I think Ivy probably senses some hostility toward her when she first came to the school. Maybe hostility is not the right word." She continued, "Because of her pronunciation, some of our teachers have doubts on her. And I think her skin color is also a factor. She is an introverted person. I think if you keep cringing on the corner, other people will not approach you" (interview, 2006/12/21).

Ivy managed to save her job by showing improvement on her teaching skills. However, she did not show up at School C when the school reopened on February 26, 2007. Ivy's colleagues found that she had emptied her rented apartment during the winter break. She left the program without any notice.

5. Discussion

One common challenge the three participants face is doubts on their South African accents. Most Taiwanese people are more familiar with the American accent, and to a lesser extent, the British accent. Many Taiwanese parents and teachers feel that foreign English teachers should function as language models, someone the children can learn a "beautiful" accent from. The data show that the participants seemed to be cognizant of the fact that their accent is not the one "wanted" by many parents in Taiwan. May was somewhat willing to modify her pronunciation when she taught. However, like the other participants, she also expressed much resentment and frustration towards doubts on her accent.

Although the participants felt defensive about their accents, the data from this study suggest that the varying accents of these teachers are indeed the source of many problems at the three schools. Closely related to the thorny issue of accent is the practice of hiring the so-called "native speakers" of English. These teachers are recruited as native speakers of English on the basis that they come from a country where English has the status as one of the 11 official languages. As found out from the background interviews with Ivy and May, they did not start learning English until they went to primary school. With their diverse linguistic and family backgrounds, perhaps it is not surprising to find that many South African teachers speak English with different accents, some of which sound quite unfamiliar to the general public in Taiwan. If the goal of hiring foreign teachers is to teach Taiwanese children how to speak the variety known as General American, and not to be interfered with by other varieties, the authorities should not recruit non-American speakers in the program. It is perhaps better to wait until the students' English knowledge is more extensive and better established before English speakers of different varieties are introduced to the learners.

On the part of the three South African teachers, doubts on their accents are emotionally disturbing. As Wong (2006) suggests, accent is an important part of one's identity; doubts on one's accent are more than an unfavorable judgment on the way one speaks a language. Perhaps Matsuda's (1991, p. 1329, as cited in Wong, 2006, pp. 9–10) account of accent discrimination best captures Wong's point and can help explain the frustration deeply felt by the participants of this study, "Your accent carries the story of who you are—who first held you and talked to you when you were a child, where you have lived, your age, the schools you attended, the languages you know, your ethnicity, whom you admire, your loyalties, your profession, your class position." He continued, "[T]races of your life and identity are woven into your pronunciation, your phrasing, your choice of words. Your self is inseparable from your accent. Someone who tells you they don't like the way you speak is quite likely telling you that they don't like you." Indeed, as shown in the data, accent is an essential part of the participants' identity. Perhaps what the local teachers and parents did was simply to voice their surprise upon hearing an unfamiliar accent and preference for a more familiar one. For the participants, however, these comments on their accents posed challenges to their professional as well as personal identity.

Among the three participants, Amy and Ivy were first-year foreign teachers in the Hsinchu Program. Having to cope with unfamiliar demands in the new educational context was challenging for them in many aspects. In Amy's case, she did not seem to cope well with the large student numbers and class size. Additionally, she

did not enjoy teaching phonics, a common educational practice in EFL settings. As for Ivy, she often looked nervous and lost when she taught on the stage. She also displayed unsatisfactory teaching skills when she first began to teach in School C, perhaps suggesting her inadequate training and teaching experience. Indeed, with insufficient knowledge on EFL teaching and the local educational context upon arriving in Taiwan, both teachers faced many challenges in their first year of teaching. To function more effectively in the Taiwanese context, they need to be equipped with more what [Gingerich \(2004\)](#) terms *pedagogical content knowledge* and *pedagogical context knowledge*. To be more specific, they need to make adjustments to address the learning needs of their students and gain more knowledge about the classroom, school, and societal contexts. The program organizers will need to provide many on-the-job training opportunities to help professionalize these teachers and help them function as effective EFL teachers.

May was the only second-year teacher in the study. It was found that when confronted with new problems like classroom management, May became emotional and felt that the reason for her students' misbehavior was their disrespect for people of color. At one point, she even accused Ivy's colleagues of being racist. Any accusation of racism is a serious statement. [Verity's \(2000\)](#) view on experts' loss of self-regulation and reversion to novicehood when facing emotional distress can also be applied to explain May's accusation of racism. Deeply frustrated by her unpleasant experience with some of the Grade 6 students in her school and probably influenced by her empathy for her friend Ivy, May reverted to a novice-like emotional state in which she seemed to lose control of her composure at times.

May's insistence on involving school administrators to handle misbehaved students was indicative of her inadequate knowledge on how schools function in Taiwan. May did not seem to realize that class size and school size in Taiwan are much larger than those in the US and that the administrators' work mainly revolves around macro-level affairs. Furthermore, the discipline mechanism in Taiwan's elementary schools is mainly class-based. In other words, it is the responsibility of homeroom and subject teachers to maintain discipline. Although May had worked in Taiwan (and at the same school) for the second year, there were still gaps in her knowledge of what [Gingerich \(2004\)](#) refers to as *pedagogical context knowledge*, which is developed by teachers' ability "to see and understand the interrelated contexts of the classroom, the school, and the society" (p. 240). May's case suggests that purposeful raising of foreign teachers' awareness of local society's expectations toward teachers is needed. This can take many forms, such as inviting veteran foreign teachers to share their experiences or engaging in open discussions with foreign teachers on the local school and parents' expectations.

6. Conclusion

While the current study mainly addresses the challenges the three South African teachers faced in Taiwan, it should not be mistaken that their experiences in Taiwan were all negative and their contribution unrecognized. May's Taiwanese colleagues appreciated her open attitude for trying new teaching ideas and diverse teaching experiences from different parts of the world. Amy's body language attracted students' attention in class, and she was easy to work with. In School C, Ivy saved her job by showing improvement in her teaching skills, although she left the program during the winter break. For students to gain maximum benefits of intercultural team teaching, the participating foreign teachers need to be better prepared for the challenges they may face in an unfamiliar educational system. In his book on teaching English abroad, [Snow \(2006\)](#) maintains that foreign English teachers should be encouraged to reflect on their teaching regularly so that their teaching is guided by more informed decisions. In the case of the Hsinchu Program, this reflection can take many forms, such as engaging in casual conversations about the lesson they taught together with their team-teaching partners the other day, writing a reflective journal and exchange it with their partners, and conducting action research to investigate a certain aspect of team teaching. It is hoped that with better preparation and continued professional development, foreign English teachers can thrive and contribute their teaching expertise to the foreign land.

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