CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of TESOL Programs

In the trend of English as a lingua franca, English education has become essential. In Taiwan, an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, the primary source of students' English input is their English teachers who have a profound effect on the next generation's English ability. Therefore, there are more and more institutions or programs devoted to providing well-organized training for English teachers. After earning bachelor's degrees in a variety of English related departments, including Applied English departments, Foreign Languages and Literatures departments, and English departments, many graduates choose to pursue higher education. They enter graduate programs for the prospect of solving problems in English teaching, investigating the effects of certain methods, and combining research with real practices.

There is an organization established to help graduates with further studying. Teaching English to Students of Other Languages (TESOL) is an international professional association, and there are more than 90 affiliates established and over 13,000 members in over 120 countries (http://www.americantesol.com/History-of-TESOL.pdf). The mission of TESOL is to ensure the success in second English teaching. Hence, TESOL provides in-service and pre-service English teachers with opportunities to engage in research and reflective practices by means of diverse discourses in TESOL workshops, online discussions, professional conferences, and also graduate programs

(http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/sec_document.asp?CID=3&DID=220). Especially in TESOL graduate programs, English teachers can learn about TESOL methodologies, the way to do research, and information about current teaching trends. In order to enhance English competence of non-native English teachers and to train them to become capable teacher researchers, a good number of TESOL graduate programs have been established.

In local TESOL programs in Taiwan, the main purpose is to nurture English teachers, with the aim to equip them with professional knowledge of theories as well as competence to perform and teach in real classes. The first TESOL program in Taiwan was established in 1956 by National Taiwan Normal University (NTNU), with a purpose to advance teachers' knowledge of TESOL methods and to enhance their English teaching effectiveness (http://www.eng.ntnu.edu.tw/main.php). Due to the growth of English teaching, currently there are more than 30 TESOL-related graduate programs established across Taiwan, including public universities such as National Chengchi University (NCCU), National Chiao Tung University (NCTU), and National Kaohsiung Normal University (NKNU), and also private schools, such as Tunghai University (THU) and Providence University (PU).

To turn graduate students into qualified teachers or professional scholars, primary objectives of TESOL programs are specified. The followings are some of the general objectives set forth by some of the TESOL programs in Taiwan:

1. to offer an avenue for further research in English teaching, (http://tesol.nctu.edu.tw/)
2. to understand trends in language teaching and theories of English language teaching, (http://www.fl.nthu.edu.tw/main.php)

3. to integrate theories with teaching practices,
4. to enhance the effectiveness and quality of English teaching,
5. to develop English abilities for teaching performance (http://units.nccu.edu.tw/server/publichtmut/html/w501/cw501.html), and
6. to provide teacher training for pre-service elementary and high school teachers (http://units.nccu.edu.tw/server/publichtmut/html/w501/cw501.html).

In addition to the common objectives shared by different TESOL graduate programs, each school also has graduation requirements. First, every TESOL graduate program set forth minimum credits for coursework, ranging from 27 to 48. Second, students are required to take core courses such as TESOL Methods, Research Methodologies, or Thesis Writing, to equip them with the ability to conduct research and with the knowledge of TESOL theories and development. Third, writing a thesis in English is a requisite of every TESOL program. During the process of thesis writing, related rules are clearly stated. Every graduate program specifies the time to choose advisors, the duration of study, the size of committee, and the format and length of the thesis. For example, NTHU students should select advisors by the end of the second school year; NCTU students are required to deliver thesis proposal before the end of the first semester of the third school year; and students in NCCU are asked to write an 80-100 pages long thesis in English, using APA style.

Aside from those shared requisites, different graduate programs vary some graduation requirements. For example, students in NTNU should either take a comprehensive examination or present research at local or international conferences or publish an article in professional journals. Students in National Changhua

University of Education (NCUE), on the other hand, are required to take a comprehensive exam and pass an oral defense to graduate. Students in NCCU are expected to pass a comprehensive exam as a prerequisite of application for a thesis oral defense. Further, students in NCTU are required to have minimum passing scores on certain English proficiency exams, such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exams, as a prerequisite for an oral defense.

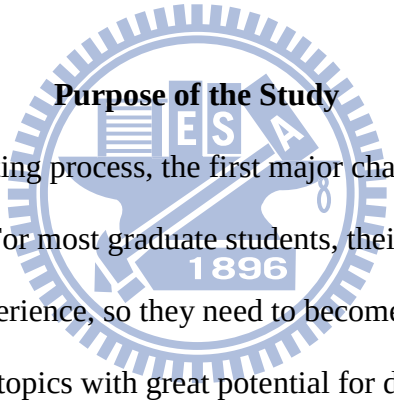
The requirements for graduation seem to be clearly described; however, issues relating to the process of thesis writing are not so definitely specified. For example, how novice student researchers know what to investigate, how they choose thesis topics, participants, and methods, and how they negotiate with their advisors are underdeveloped questions. Therefore, the present study aims to solve the proposed questions and to provide an easier way to go during the completion of graduate theses.

Rationale

There are numerous published studies conducted to provide an overview of research trends in their respective fields in a certain period of time. In these studies, researchers examined the research topics, research participants, and research methods employed to provide a picture of the current popular issues, the most investigated research contexts, and the frequently used methods. Researchers can gain knowledge of the current trend and identify the gaps by virtue of these series of research. However, most published studies have paid attention to journal articles, and few of them focused on graduate thesis projects. With the flourishing establishment of graduate programs, thesis projects have become one valuable source of research products. Thus, there is a need to analyze those graduate theses for providing a future

direction for student researchers, experienced advisors as well as the policy makers in graduate programs.

To our best knowledge, among the small number of studies which aimed to analyze the trend of thesis projects, only one study (Lin & Cheng, 2010) investigated TESOL master's thesis projects in Taiwan. The present study, intends to extend the study of Lin and Cheng by gathering the current TESOL theses produced between 2004 and 2008, the researcher also aimed to further investigate the underlying issues of the selection process. Furthermore, the relationships between advisors and advisees in the negotiation process of selecting thesis topics, participants, and methods are also examined in the present study.



Purpose of the Study

During the thesis writing process, the first major challenge for graduate students is to choose a thesis topic. For most graduate students, their thesis research is likely their very first research experience, so they need to become familiar with areas that have been overdone versus topics with great potential for development. Accordingly, the first purpose of the present study is to assess the current trends of TESOL master's theses regarding the most frequently investigated areas, the dominant research sites, and the principal research methodologies, providing the novice researchers with current thesis research trends in TESOL fields. As a result, TESOL graduate students can become familiar with the development in the TESOL field and they can search for the gaps through this meta analysis of TESOL graduate theses.

Secondly, based on the fact that novice researchers lack experience in conducting research studies, it is of interest to investigate the factors influencing the choice of thesis topics, the educational level of research contexts as well as prominent

research methods. Furthermore, graduate students' knowledge of how to negotiate with advisors is limited; hence, it is also worthwhile to further examine the role of advisors in conducting advisees' thesis research. Third, the researcher also attempts to provide relevant implications to the field of TESOL, with an aim to offer directions for TESOL graduate students, research advisors as well as policy makers in TESOL programs. For TESOL graduate students, they can learn what to investigate from knowing the current trends of graduate thesis research; likewise, they can further understand the advisor-advisee relationship during thesis completion. For research advisors, the reported observation of advisor-advisee relationship can provide them with suggestions for better advisement. For policy makers in TESOL programs, the updated knowledge of TESOL trends can help them improve their courses, and provide classes related to popular current issues, thus offering graduate students diverse and useful courses. Moreover, identifying under-studied topics can assist them in building knowledge of certain areas and providing them with a direction for improving the training of those under-developed topics. With these purposes, three research questions are therefore proposed:

1. What are the most common research topics, participants, and methods examined in TESOL master's theses in Taiwan between 2004 and 2008?
2. What are the current TESOL graduate students' perceptions of thesis decision-making process for thesis research topics, participants, methods revealed in their survey?
3. How do advisors and advisees negotiate during the process of completing research?

By implementing a meta analysis of the present TESOL master's theses to know the current directions, a survey to understand the reasons for the development of the current research trends, and an interview to further realize the negotiation process between advisors and advisees, the present study would shed light on student researchers, research advisors as well as policy makers in TESOL programs.

Significance of the Study

The results and implications of this study would shed light on graduate student, research advisors, and policy makers in TESOL programs. TESOL graduate students can gain knowledge and information of the current thesis trend and know better about the process of negotiation with advisors. Likewise, thesis advisors can know the negotiation process with advisees and understand the factors influencing their decisions on thesis projects. On the other hand, policy makers in TESOL programs can improve the course design by virtue of the information of the missing foci in these years.

Organization of the Thesis

In Chapter 2, literature related to meta analysis studies, factors influencing thesis topic selection, and the advisor-advisee relationship are reviewed first. In Chapter 3, the researcher introduces the research design including participants' information, instruments used, procedures of data collection, and the process of data analysis. In Chapter 4, findings and discussion are presented and discussed. In Chapter 5, the researcher presents a conclusion, including the limitation of the present study, future research suggestions, and implications.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

With the prosperous development of English education, many TESOL programs were established to provide graduates with opportunities to be acquainted with the theories and latest research, to discover teaching-related problems, to put teaching methods into practice, and to dedicate important findings to the TESOL field. However, most novice student researchers in graduate programs lack experiences of conducting research, and their information of current research trends is scanty. The present study, therefore, aims to offer an updated picture of TESOL graduate theses for tyro researchers to understand the trends of research topics, participants, and methods and to discover the gaps of issues that are underdeveloped in research. In addition, based on the meta analysis of graduate theses, the researcher attempts to look further into these student researchers' rationale for selecting certain thesis topics, recruiting particular research participants, and adapting specific research methods, as a way to explain the TESOL master's thesis trends between 2004 and 2008. The results of this study can result in gains for novice researchers as well as TESOL program policy makers. Graduate students can be informed of the current TESOL thesis research trends and discover the potential research topics, while the policy makers in TESOL programs, with the knowledge of present research directions, can further improve their graduate courses.

Meta analysis of Research Projects

Master's thesis is often the first major piece of independent research those novice student researchers undertake. In Taiwan, there are only few universities

requiring undergraduate students to complete research projects. As a result, most postgraduate students do not know what research is until they enter graduate programs. In graduate programs, novice student researchers may take courses related to research methods, thesis writing, and statistics-related courses; and they might need to conduct a small scale study for term papers in different courses. After going through the process of recognizing the kernel of research, understanding the steps of doing research, and executing an experiment, graduate students leave one crucial thing to do: Writing a thesis.

Completing a thesis is essential for graduate students. According to Mauch and Birch (1989), a thesis is done to demonstrate students' ability to independently carry out a well-organized study and to arrange the valuable findings in a rational and comprehensible fashion. Demb and Funk (1999) stated that a thesis is important in three dimensions of graduate education: "quality evaluation of programs, student mastery of a recognizably valuable set of learning outcome, and as a facilitator in resolving certain developmental issues experienced by people in their twenties" (p. 18). In other words, completing a thesis is considered a process distributed to manifold benefits, including a demonstration of the program quality, an acquisition of various learning outcomes such as how to manage time, how to integrate theory with their own study, and a promoter of forcing young researchers to solve problems. Because of the importance of conducting and writing a thesis, every graduate program in Taiwan, either private or public, requires students to finish a thesis as a qualification for their graduation. In addition to a graduation requirement, presenting research findings and giving pedagogical and research implications to the field by completing a thesis is considered worthwhile. Both novice and experienced

researchers can be inspired by the results; likewise they can develop and improve the research design via the reflection of these outcomes.

For the reason that thesis writing is indispensable for graduate students, it is beneficial for novice student researchers to have a full exploration of previous research in their field. By virtue of the investigation and understanding of the current trends in their field, graduate students can become familiar with the areas that they can further explore. The research designs, research questions, even the flow of academic writing can have a profound effect on graduate students' thesis completion.

There has been a great quantity of studies conducted to compile and review research projects produced in a certain field and to analyze the content of each project. Meta analysis, defined by Lord, De-Vader, and Alliger (1986), is a quantitative analysis which does not examine the quality of the studies but aims to provide a general conclusion. Weber (1990) also indicated that meta analysis has been used to show trends of a field or a body of literature.

Meta analysis studies have been done in a variety of professional fields, such as psychology, educational psychology, science education, and instructional technology (Shih, Feng & Tsai, 2008; Tsai & Wen, 2005). For instance, Daresh (1987) collected more than 500 studies conducted between 1977 and 1984, classified the research methodologies and the research findings, and also suggested future directions in the field of Staff Development and In-service Education through finding the gaps from the current research outcomes.

In other field, Mestri (2008) collected doctoral theses in Library and Information Science completed in Indian Universities during 2001-2007 and provided a list and an analysis of 219 dissertations. Each dissertation would be listed with the information of the author's name, the title, the advisor's name, name of the

department and university, and the place of the university. Further, the researcher categorized theses into three major categories: (1) Science & Technology, (2) Humanities, and (3) Social Science for the analyses of popular areas.

Several education-related meta analysis papers have been published to present the current trends in education. In the field of educational technology, Caffarella (1999) gathered a total of 2,689 doctoral dissertations completed at 55 educational technology programs in the United States, between 1977 and 1998. In this study, the researcher attempted to see the trends of research themes and the variation of research methodologies over these years. By implementing the meta analysis method, the results showed that the research topics were of variety, ranging from research on computers, instructional development and systems, and also the newest hardware/software technologies such as multimedia, hypermedia, simulation, games, television, and video. With regard to research methodologies, there was a decrease in the number of comparison studies and experimental papers. On the contrary, the qualitative research contributed a significant proportion to the total dissertations and exceeded the number of quantitative studies gradually.

The study conducted in Turkey provided a thorough meta analysis of graduate theses. Simsek et al. (2009) examined 259 master's theses produced between 2000 and 2007 in the field of educational technology. The researchers investigated the most frequently employed methods, the most popular topics, and the most common educational levels of participants. The results revealed that about 79% of the theses were conducted in a quantitative paradigm; 8% of theses were qualitatively executed; and 13% of them were done with both paradigms. In relation to topics, the two most popular areas were "Teaching and Learning Approaches" and "Instructional Technologies." With respect to sampling, approximately 27% of the thesis writers

selected participants from higher education and adult education settings; 19% were from elementary education; and 9% from secondary education.

Relevant to the field of science education, Abou, Rahmanpour, Mohaghegh, and Hosseini (2008) examined the theses produced in the university education courses. The researchers categorized each thesis into the three main groups: (1) Information Science, (2) Administration, and (3) Health Care Economics and Organizations. The result showed that the first ranked topic was "Information Science," with 89 theses, the second was "Administration," with 67 theses and "Health Care Economics and Organizations," with 41 theses.

Shih, Feng, and Tsai (2008) gathered 444 articles related to cognition in e-learning published in five Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) journals, including *Computers and Education*, *British Journal of Educational Technology*, *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, *Educational Technology Research & Development*, and *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*. The researchers categorized each article into seven topic categories, such as "Motivation" and "Information processing." The results revealed that topics related to "Instructional Approaches," "Learning Environment," and "Metacognition" were the three most popular research topics between 2001 and 2005. Moreover, the researchers reanalyzed the highly cited articles and classified those articles into three major research types, including experimental research, descriptive research, and developmental research. From a total of 16 articles, it was found that descriptive research was the dominant research method, occupying 10 of the 16 articles. Particularly, there were 10 articles using questionnaire as the major data collection method. Another clear tendency in data collection method showed that many researchers employed learner's log files or online messages as their primary data sources.

In the field of science education, Tsai and Wen (2005) analyzed a total of 802 research papers published by three major science education journals, including *International Journal of Science Education*, *Science Education*, and *Journal of Research in Science Teaching* between 1998 and 2002. The selected articles were analyzed according to three main categories: research types, research topics, and author's nationality. Research types were subsumed under five subcategories including "empirical research studies," "position paper," "theoretical paper," "review," and "others." In relation to research topics, based on the criteria listed in the National Association for the Research in Science Teaching conference strand categories (http://www.educ.sfu.ca/narst/sub-g-proc.html#47858), they classified each published article into one of the following nine categories: (1) Teacher Education; (2) Teaching; (3) Learning-Conceptions; (4) Learning-Context; (5) Goals and Policy; (6) Culture, Social, and Gender issues; (7) History, Philosophy, Epistemology, and Nature of Science; (8) Educational Technology; and (9) Informal Learning. Results indicated that empirical studies dominated the publications, followed by position papers. In addition, the number of published theoretical articles, reviews of literature, and other types of studies were not plenty. On the other hand, with respect to research topics, the category "Learning-Conceptions" had been consistently ranked as the top two topics from 1998-2002. "Learning-Context" contributed an average of 17.9% to the total theses during these five years, and issues about "Culture, Social, and Gender" had also drew attention from researchers and ranked as the top two topic in 1998 and 2001. Contrary to their expectations, issues related to "Teacher Education," "Teaching," and "Educational Technology" did not make a great contribution to the amount of the total theses over these five years. This study has been cited by dozens

of other studies since 2005 as an important evidence of the research trend in science education.

Unlike the abundance of meta analysis studies in other fields, in the general field of TESOL, or related fields, only a few studies have been conducted to give a broad view of current research trends.

In the field of applied linguistics, there were several studies investigating its current trend from different perspectives. With the aim to analyze the major methodologies carried out in applied linguistics studies, Lazaraton (2000) collected 332 data-based research articles published in four major applied linguistics journals consisting of *Language Learning, The Modern Language Journal, Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, and *TESOL Quarterly* from 1991-1997. During these seven years, about 88% of the articles were examined using a quantitative inquiry, while 10% were using the qualitatively approach. More particularly, more than 90% of the articles published in *Language Learning, The Modern Language Journal*, and *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* were done by a quantitative paradigm.

In a similar vein, Gao, Li, and Lu (2001) compared a total of 2,486 articles from four Chinese journals and four English journals, attempting to compare the dominant research methods carrying out in China and the West. The data from Chinese journals were produced between 1978 and 1997, while those from English journals were published between 1985 and 1997. Results indicated that there was a great inconsistency between research methods used in China and the West. In China, the implemented method changed from non-empirical research toward empirical research, and the number of qualitative studies increased considerably. In the West, well-established empirical research was gradually challenged by the rise of qualitative methods. However, there was an obvious and similar phenomenon that qualitative

research gradually drew attention of both China and West researchers, and the quantity of studies done with a qualitative paradigm increased.

In *English Teaching & Learning* journal, there were a series of meta analysis articles published in 2007 and 2008. Vongpumivitch (2007ab) wrote two review articles focusing on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) listening and speaking assessment in Taiwan. In the first article concentrating on EFL listening assessment, she collected 25 papers published in domestic and international journals as well as articles in proceedings of conferences held in Taiwan. By examining the 25 papers, nine topic categories, such as roles of pre-listening support, effects of different types of listening texts on listening performance, or portfolio assessment of listening ability were identified. For each paper, she described the research design and the vital contribution of each paper. Aside from the clear analysis of each paper, the researcher also gave suggestions for future direction. For example, the use of technology to assess listening, the employment of visual aids or videos to enhance listening inputs, and the application of verbal protocol methods were of great potential.

Followed by this study, Vongpumivitch (2007b) continued to use the same mode to analyze 18 articles on EFL speaking assessment published between January 2001 and July 2006. She classified those papers into four groups, including difficulty of speaking test tasks, pausing pattern, self-assessment of speaking ability, and the use of technology to assess speaking. She also summarized the content of each paper. At the end of the article, she proposed seven unexplored topics and called for more studies in diagnostic testing, strategies used in speaking tests, and portfolio testing of speaking.

In a similar research line, Liou (2008) published an article of reviewing EFL writing research in Taiwan. She assembled 126 papers either publishing in four local

journals or appearing in proceedings of three major English teaching conferences between 2005 and 2007 and further categorized them into four main categories, including text-oriented, writer-oriented, reader-oriented, and instruction-oriented research. In addition, those articles were classified into three aspects: the problem areas, population examined, and research methods, to give a broader view of the writing research trends in Taiwan. In addition to providing a potential gap in research topics and explaining the development of the trend, the author also claimed that a comprehensive analysis of graduate theses and doctoral dissertation was of great importance, which is also the focus of the present study.

Although the literature above, except for Liou's review, endeavored to present a current trend in methodologies or topics in selected fields, there was a lack of a meta analysis of graduate theses. Only one study conducted by Lin and Cheng (2010), investigated the trends of TESOL thesis topics and participants. In this study, the researchers selected seven national universities in Taiwan and collected thesis projects produced between 2003 and 2007. The results showed that the most popular thesis topics during these five years were Language Skills, Teaching Methods, and Materials or Curriculum. The most investigated research sites were in secondary education in high school and undergraduate education in universities.

Inspired by this study and discovered the paucity of research with systematic analyses of the content TESOL graduate theses, the researcher endeavored to examine the current TESOL master's theses between 2004 and 2008 and to discover the most frequently investigated research topics, the most common research contexts, and the highly implemented research methods. Moreover, according to Liou (2008), a comprehensive analysis of graduate theses was important; the researcher believed that there is a need to complete a meta analysis of current TESOL master's theses, hoping

to give implications to both graduate students and policy makers in graduate programs.

As shown in the above literature review, meta analysis studies provide researchers with important information about the trend and the gap identified in a field. These studies, however, could not manifest the reasons which led researchers to decide how to carry out their studies. In other words, although the previous studies provided a clear view of the current trend of a certain field, the reasons behind the trends were overlooked. Questions such as why those researchers pay attention to a certain area, why they often choose a specific level of participants, and why they prefer a particular type of methodology are necessary to be answered. For graduate students, understanding the factors influencing their decision making about the thesis topics, participants, and methods is also valuable to their completion of thesis. Accordingly, the next section of literature review focused on the reasons behind the scenes, attempting to explore the issues in the decision making about research thesis topics and the embedded factors relating to the formation of the current research trend.

Factors Influencing Thesis Topic Selection

Thesis topic selection is of great importance because first, the choice of thesis topic is the foremost fundamental step of conducting a thesis study, and second, the students should consume 2-3 years thoroughly immersing in the chosen topic (Isaak & Hubert, 1999). For many students, identifying a research topic can be painful and exhausting. Demb and Funk (1999) asked questions about framing the question, and 21% of the participants described the distressing experiences of spending much time and many efforts to choose a topic. Topic selection is painstaking because through the

process of making up their minds to select an appropriate topic, graduate students need to take many factors and issues into consideration.

Myriads of motives for decision making process have been provided by several studies. For example, I'Anson and Smith (2004), from the interviews and the follow-up survey, addressed that the three major determining factors for students' choice of research topics were the intrinsic motivation or personal interest in certain topics, a link to career ambitions, and the issues of access to data or literature.

Intrinsic motivation and personal interests were considered influential factors for choosing a thesis topic. I'Anson and Smith (2004) claimed that students' inner desire to develop a topic and their yearning for solving the contemporary questions can lead to an in-depth exploration of a certain topic. Also, Rynes, McNatt, and Bretz (1999) suggested that the favorable psychological feedback produced by presenting one's dedication to a definite field and the feelings of success and achievement can bring the study into the one with great contribution.

With respect to future aspiration, researchers believed that the conducted studies should have a beneficial effect on researchers' personal development. Especially for those who planned to get a doctoral degree, their master's theses are important since they can potentially be extended into their dissertations (desJardins, 1994; Lei, 2009).

Access to literature and data was also the leading factor in the selection of thesis topics. I'Anson and Smith (2004) pointed out that many students may underestimate the difficulties of collecting data and the pressures of time limits and effort-making. The problems of access usually begin at the data collection stage. The challenges students may face include "the status of the researcher, ethical implications, gaining access to respondents or an organization" (p. 24). The process of collecting

data may be frustrated for students on account of the rejection from participants and the disallowance of conducting research at the perfect research sites. In addition, the process of asking for help may be one stressful step in that researchers might depend on the relationship among participants. On the other hand, the access of literature also needs attention. The lack of previous studies done in the similar field may contribute to an insufficient support or backups for the thesis results, and the literature review section might be absolutely vacuous.

In addition to empirical findings, Mauch and Birch (1989) provided a checklist for students to make sure their research topics were feasible and appropriate. The checklist suggested important and complex issues involved in the decision making process of choosing a research topic. First, as discussed before, the resources of literature and access to the needed data were crucial when choosing a topic. Furthermore, the researchers suggested that students should ask questions such as "whether the topic was in the trend of the field," "whether there was a gap between the present topic and the previous findings," "whether the topic was acceptable in their institution," and "whether there was a clear statement proposed related to the topic" to test feasibility and appropriateness of the chosen topic. Peters (1997), on the other hand, highlighted the important role of the research trend. The researcher proposed that topics on the rise may help students be hired after the completion of thesis. Thesis topics of foresight can show employers the researchers' understanding of the current market and research trend, empowering them with higher enrollment.

Interestingly, Criollo (2004) used marriage as a metaphor to describe the process of selecting a thesis topic. He claimed that how to select a Ms. or Mr. Right was important for both marriage and thesis topic selection. To choose an applicable thesis topic, the first step was to identify the researcher's own research interests. The

situation is similar in that one would never choose someone he or she does not even like to be a life partner. Second, the author emphasized the originality of the topic. It can be paralleled with the truth that no one wants to marry a person with history. Third, he also pointed out the significant role of the available references. In reference to marriage, it was essential to know one's wife or husband-to-be has valuable, serious, and reliable friends. Choosing a thesis topic is similar to deciding which one to marry. During the process, researchers should think about their personal research interests, the originality of the topic, and the access of related literature.

Aside from the factors, such as personal interest, access to literature, and trend of the field, thesis advisors appear to influence the selection of a thesis topic. A great number of studies probing into the connection between advisors and topic selection were conducted. Brown and Krager (1985) indicated that graduate students might be strongly or subtly influenced by the definite research alliance conducted by their advisors. Moreover, Rodrigues, Lehmann, and Fleith (2005) conducted an inquiry into the factors affecting the interactions between advisors and advisees. One of the questions on the survey was, "When the subject chosen by the advisees is within the advisor's area of interest, it makes it both more acceptable and more satisfying," and the answers from participants resulted in a discrepancy. With a variable weight of -0.46, most participants disagree with this statement maybe on a condition that what the faculties focus is not contributive to students. Although from the outcome, advisors seem to have little effect on selecting research topics, if the topic is valuable to students, the result may be totally changed.

Supporting the idea that advisors play an important role in thesis topic selection, desJardins (1994) provided a suggestion for students and advisors. The researcher believed that some advisors had long-term and well-organized projects and expected

their students to partake in. In addition, he stated that if the students pursued their own interest which was not related to their professor's research field, they might lose the technical support, and the advisor might not pay as much attention as expected on them. In line with desJardins's observation, Brown and Krager (1985) cautioned graduate students for making choices between selecting thesis topics in their advisors' research alliance and choosing a topic distant from their research interests.

Peters (1997), going a step further, began to analyze the differences between advisor-advisee relationships in the field of sciences and humanities. In sciences and some social sciences fields, students chose advisors right after they knew they were qualified to enter the program. Thus, before entering the institute, they had decided which area interested them most and which professor they desired to study with. Based on the nature of the departments of sciences, the advisors considered graduate students "potential disciples who will help them carry out research and publish" (p. 33), so they might suggest a piece of their own research for advisee's thesis. On the contrary, in humanities, even though research was usually done individually, there were still many students doing theses suggested by their advisors because it was considered both time-saving and blessing-receiving.

Even though the previous literatures emphasized the vital role of their advisors in thesis topic selection, there is still a need to verify the accuracy of such observations. Thus, the present study aims to enquire into the factors influencing the decision making about thesis topics, the educational level of research contexts, and research methodologies, attempting to offer factors underlying the development of the current TESOL master's thesis trend in Taiwan. Furthermore, the relationship between advisors and advisees in the process of selecting a thesis topic is as well as one important focus of this study.

Advisement

Aside from the factors such as personal interests, access to literature, and trends in the field, advisors are influential in the selection of thesis topics. There have been a number of studies claiming that research advisors play extraordinarily important roles in determining research topics and also implementing related issues, (Brown & Krager, 1985; Styles & Radloff, 2001) and that a good relationship between advisors and advisees is essential to the successful completion of theses. The present research focuses not only on the topic selection process but also on the wider role of an advisor in thesis writing.

The Role of Advisors

A graduate advisor serves many different functions during the process of helping students become novice researchers. Miller and Newman (1996) indicated some typical tasks of advisors, including helping students with course selection, resume preparation, and thesis or dissertation topic selection. Thesis topic selection, in particular, is typically the first problem that graduate students face. Advisors should help advisees find their own way in the painstaking process of choosing a research topic. In addition to the functions above, Winston, Miller, Ender, and Grites (1984) claimed that a graduate advisor should serve as (1) a reliable source for providing information, (2) a connection helping students survive in the department, (3) a socializer assisting students in finding their careers, and (4) a strong “advocate” for the advisees (as cited in Selke & Wong, 1993, p. 9). Most of all, graduate advisors are the most accessible role models for students (Brown & Krager, 1985; Rodrigues, Lehmann & Fleith, 2005; Selke & Wong, 1993). For graduate students, thesis research might be their very first studies conducted while their advisors, on the other

hand, have plenty of experience in designing research procedures, implementing experiments, and analyzing data. From the preliminary step of understanding the core concepts of research to the stage of handing in piles of pages, graduate students regard their advisors as their educational destiny (Selke & Wong, 1993). In other words, advisors are important at all stages for graduate students.

The Student-Advisor Relationship

During the process of selecting an appropriate research topic, there must be some negotiation and discussion between advisors and advisees. When discussing potential thesis directions, thesis advisors are influential in the decision making about thesis topics, the implementation of methodology, the selection of research contexts, and the communication of ideas. Thus, the quality of the relationship between advisors and advisees is considered a paramount factor in completing many tasks of graduate programs (Styles & Radloff, 2001; Wrench & Punyanunt, 2004). That is, the student-advisor relationship can be a determinant of a success or a failure in students' theses.

Due to the nature of graduate education, the advisors and the students have a close working relationship (Selke & Wong, 1993). With numerous opportunities to work as research partners or to work as assistants, graduate students devote time and efforts into research fields related to their supervisors, also into the lives of their advisors; therefore, the communication between them is a big issue. For example, Polkosnik and Winston (1983) claimed that about 78% of their participants considered a close relationship with advisors of great importance. More specifically, Mauch and Birch (1989) described that successful advisors and advisees often compared their relationship to parents and adult children. Similar to the real parents and offspring,

this relationship could become unhealthy if advisors give too much direction and too many guidelines, making students lose creativity and independence. Thus they believed that a more appropriate metaphor of advisor's role was a "senior research colleague and advanced instructor" (p. 24). Because the relationship between advisors and advisees is complex, it is not always easy to deal with those difficulties and different expectations.

Graduate advisement has been deemed a challenging task since there were diverse factors influencing the relationship between advisors and advisees. First, the perceptions of students and advisors are of difference. Schlosser, Knox and Moskovitz, and Hill (2003) interviewed 16 third-year counseling psychology doctoral students about their relationships with their graduate advisors. The findings indicated that there were 10 students who were satisfied, while six were unsatisfied with the advisement. The discontent students claimed that they originally expected their advisors to be warm and supportive; however, their advisors seemed to be indifferent and disregarded them. In addition, they argued that the advisor-advisee relationship was business-like, and their advisors showed no interests in their personal lives or professional careers. In sum, their expectations of having an encouraging advisor were unmet. In other words, the professors did not provide what the advisees anticipated in the process of advising.

The other example in a case study conducted by Krase (2007), the interviewed participant and her advisor had different conceptions of advisor-advisee relationships. Influenced by the understanding of the advising interaction in South Korea, the advisee expected a hierarchical relationship and desired her advisor's direct and explicit instruction and help. However, the advisor, from a western culture background, looked forward to a closer relationship, and she hoped the advisee could

consider her a close fellow learner. With this expectation, the advisor did not make any decision for her, and did not tell her the truth that her topic was too broad and undoable. In the end, this dysfunctional advisement relationship caused many problems and ill feelings.

The other issue related to the difficulty of advising rapport is the lack of training for advisors. In graduate programs, the advisors are always the faculties who are responsible for teaching courses, doing their own research, and the senior faculty may need to do administration work (Selke & Wong, 1993). In addition to those professional duties, they are assigned to be advisors. However, there are few programs providing courses to instruct professors how to be supportive advisors, how to control emotions, and how to help students. Due to the lack of experiences, preparations, and trainings, the professors may find challenges in communication and negotiation with advisees.

On account of the complex and tough advising process, Tanner (2002), from advisors' point of view, provided graduate students with tips for a successful working relationship with their advisors in order to enhance the effectiveness of negotiation between advisors and advisees. From the anticipation of advisors, graduate students should first, select a reasonable and feasible project. Second, they should be always interested and passionate about their own research. Third, they should develop the ability to work independently. Fourth, they should schedule regular meetings with their advisors. Fifth, they need to establish ground-rules pertaining to the nature of the working relationship early. Sixth, when communicating, they should be straight-forward to report their progress or lack. Finally, they should follow the advices provided by advisors and other committee members. From the list of Tanner's suggestions, it is not surprising that the first major thing contributing to a successful

advisement is to choose a good topic in the eyes of the advisor and the advisee. The thesis project appears to be joint efforts shared by both parties. Therefore, the present study aims to understand how students respond to different situations relating to thesis topic selection process, hoping to give a clear picture of advising issues.

The relationship between advisors and advisees has a profound effect on the completion of graduate thesis, particularly on the selection of thesis topics and related issues. When advisors and advisees meet with disagreements, how they communicate to solve the problem is one of the foci of the present study. In view of providing a clear overview of the current thesis trend of TESOL graduate programs, presenting the factors influencing the decision making about thesis topics, participants, and methods, and understanding the negotiation process between advisors and advisees when deciding thesis projects, the present study intends to identify the underlying issues involved in TESOL master students' journey of conducting their thesis research. In addition, the researcher also aims to see whether the current TESOL graduate students' perceptions of their thesis decision-making process corresponds with the trends identified in research question 1.

The next chapter will talk about the methodology design of the present study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Overview

Given the lack of understanding of the trends in current TESOL master's theses research and the factors affecting TESOL graduate students' decision making process about thesis topics, participants, and methods, the present study was divided into two stages. The first stage aimed to investigate the research trend development of TESOL master's theses. In the second stage, was to look into the underlying factors which may help explain the current thesis trends. In addition, the issues related to advisement would be addressed in the present study.

First Stage of the Present Study

Before the Scenes: Meta Analysis of TESOL Master's Theses

Meta Analysis of Thesis Projects

Meta analysis is a method which utilizes a detailed classification and analysis of the content of each study. In the present study, the purpose was to present the trends of TESOL master's theses produced between 2004 and 2008. The researcher intended to provide a clear view of the directions of thesis topics, the educational levels of research participants, and research methods employed.

Theses for Analysis

The first stage of this study analyzed TESOL masters' theses produced between 2004 and 2008 to see the trends of thesis topics, the educational levels of research participants, and research methods employed. Seven TESOL graduate programs in

different national universities, including National Chung Cheng University (CCU), National Chengchi University (NCCU), National Chiao Tung University (NCTU), National Changhua University of Education (NCUE), National Kaohsiung Normal University (NKNU), National Tsing Hua University (NTHU), and National Taiwan Normal University (NTNU) were selected. These schools were chosen because they also provided a secondary teacher education program. The TESOL program in NCTU was not established until 2003, so the first cohort of master's theses was produced in 2005. On the other hand, National Cheng Kung University, though has a secondary teacher education program, its TESOL program started in 2009, with no master's thesis produced, was not included in this study. Aiming to analyze the current research trends, the researcher gathered thesis projects produced between 2004 and 2008, the most up-to-date theses which were also accessible online.

The data contains 502 abstracts retrieved from the National Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations in Taiwan (http://ndltd.ncl.edu.tw/cgi-bin/gs32/gsweb.cgi/ccd=na.vCk/webmge). By using a meta analysis method, the researcher identified research topics, the education levels of research participants, and research methods used in these studies. To provide a clearer view of this categorization, the three main categories were described in the following sections.

Categories of Research Topics

The categorization of research topics was modified from the list of content areas specified in the TESOL convention proposal worksheet (http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/seccss.asp?CID=1517&DID=8277). In addition, the

researcher adapted coding schemes from Tsai and Wen (2005) for better clarification. See the comparison of the categorization of the three coding schemes (Table 1).

Table 1

Comparison of the Categorization of the Three Coding Schemes

TESOL convention proposal worksheet	Tsai and Wen (2005)	The present study
Interest Section 1. Applied Linguistics 2. Computer-Assisted Language Learning 3. English as a Foreign Language 4. English for Specific Purposes 5. ESL in Bilingual Education 6. ESL in Higher Education 7. ESL in Secondary Schools 8. ESOL in Adult Education 9. ESOL in Elementary Education 10. Intercultural Communication 11. International Teaching Assistants 12. Intensive English Programs 13. Materials Writers 14. Program Administration 15. Refugee Concerns 16. Second Language Writing 17. Social Responsibility	1. *Teacher Education*. Pre-service and continuing professional development of teachers; teacher education programs and policy; field experience; issues related to teacher education reform; teacher as researcher/action research. 2. *Teaching*. Teacher cognition; pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge; forms of knowledge representation (e.g. metaphors, images, etc.); leadership; induction; exemplary teachers; teacher thinking; teaching behaviors and strategies. 3. *Learning — Students' Conceptions and Conceptual Change (Learning — Conception)*. Methods for investigating student understanding; students' alternative conceptions; instructional approaches for conceptual change; conceptual change in learners; conceptual development.	1. *Affective Factors* was added by the researcher to compensate for the negligent area. Some of the definitions were adopted from category 3 and 4 in Tsai and Wen (2005). 2. *Computer Assisted Language Learning* was adopted from interest section category 2 in TESOL convention proposal worksheet. 3. *Culture, Social, or Gender Issues* was adopted from Tsai and Wen (2005). 4. *English for Specific Purposes* was adopted from interest section category 4 in TESOL convention proposal worksheet. 5. *Integrated Skills* was adopted from content-area orientation category 11 in TESOL convention proposal worksheet. 6. *Learner Development* was adapted from content-area orientation category 14 in TESOL convention proposal worksheet.

Table 1

Comparison of the Categorization of the Three Coding Schemes (Continued)

TESOL convention proposal worksheet	Tsai and Wen (2005)	The present study
18. Speech/Pronunciation 19. Teacher Education 20. Video and Digital Media 21. Non-Native English Speaking Teachers Content-Area Orientation 1. Accreditation 2. AIDS education 3. Assessment, testing 4. Content-based instruction 5. Curriculum, materials development 6. Community College 7. Discourse, pragmatics 8. Employment, certification 9. English as an international language 10. Grammar 11. Integrated skills 12. Leadership 13. Literature, arts, media 14. Personal development 15. Psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics 16. Reading, literacy 17. Second language acquisition 18. Sociolinguistics, culture 19. Sociopolitical concerns 20. Speaking, pronunciation, phonology, listening 21. Specific language groups	*4.* *Learning — Classroom Contexts and Learner Characteristics (Leaning —Context).* Student motivation; learning environment; individual differences; reasoning; learning approaches; exceptionality; teacher–student interactions; peer interactions; laboratory environments; affective dimensions of science learning; cooperative learning; language, writing and discourse in learning; social, political, and economic factors. *5.* *Goals and Policy, Curriculum, Evaluation, and Assessment*. Curriculum development, change, implementation, dissemination and evaluation; social analysis of curriculum; alternative forms of assessment; teacher evaluation; educational measurement; identifying effective schools; curriculum policy and reform. *6.* *Cultural, Social and Gender Issues*. Multicultural and bilingual issues; ethnic issues; gender issues; comparative studies; issues of diversity related to science teaching and learning. *7.* *History, Philosophy, Epistemology and Nature of Science*. Historical issues; philosophical issues; epistemological issues; ethical and moral issues; nature of science; research methods.	7. *Linguistics* was added by the researcher to combine interest section category 1 and content-area orientation category 7 and 18 in TESOL convention proposal worksheet. 8. *Language Skills* was created by the researcher to combine interest section category 18 and content-area orientation category 10, 16, 20, 24, and 26 in TESOL convention proposal worksheet. 9. *Materials or Curriculum Design and Evaluation* was adapted from interest section category 13 and content-area orientation category 5 in TESOL convention proposal worksheet. The definition was adopted from category 5 in Tsai and Wen (2005). 10. *Second Language Development* was adapted from interest section category 3 and content-area orientation category 17 in TESOL convention proposal worksheet. 11. *Testing and Evaluation* was adapted from content-area orientation category 3 in TESOL convention proposal worksheet. 12. *Teacher Factors* was adapted from category 2 in Tsai and Wen (2005).

Table 1

Comparison of the Categorization of the Three Coding Schemes (Continued)

TESOL convention proposal worksheet	Tsai and Wen (2005)	The present study
22. Standards 23. Technology in education 24. Vocabulary, lexicon 25. Workplace, business English 26. Writing, composition	8. *Educational Technology*. Computers; interactive multimedia; video; integration of technology into teaching; learning and assessment involving the use of technology. 9. *Informal Learning.* Science learning in informal contexts (e.g. museums, outdoor settings, etc.); public awareness of science.	13. *Teaching Methods* was created by the researcher. 14. *Teacher Professional Development* was adapted from category 1 in Tsai and Wen (2005).

The researcher and her advisor discussed and modified the two adapted coding schemes to reflect the actual teaching contexts and research tendency in Taiwan, and finally 14 categories were selected. The research topic of each thesis was classified into one of these 14 categories: (1) Affective Factors, (2) Computer Assisted Language Learning, (3) Culture, Social, or Gender Issues, (4) English for Specific Purposes, (5) Integrated Skills, (6) Learner Development, (7) Linguistics, (8) Language Skills, (9) Materials or Curriculum Design and Evaluation, (10) Second Language Development, (11) Testing and Evaluation, (12) Teacher Factors, (13) Teaching Methods, and (14) Teacher Professional Development. The categories with details and examples are elaborated in the following:

1. Affective Factors (AF): Issues concerning learner's motivation to learn English or their self-perception of certain language ability are considered AF. In addition, learner's anxiety, their needs to learn certain skills, and also their personalities and beliefs are included (Lin & Cheng, 2010). For example, the

title of “A Preliminary Study on the Predictors of Situational Willingness to Communicate (SWTC) in an EFL Context” was coded as AF.

2. Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL): Studies related to using computers, multimedia, or technology in teaching or learning are coded as CALL (Lin & Cheng, 2010). For example, the title of “EFL College Students’ Perceptions of Culture Learning at a CALL Center” was coded as CALL.
3. Culture, Social, or Gender Issues (CSG): Cross-cultural study, cultural learning, multicultural or ethnic issues, and bilingualism are the studies considered as CSG. Furthermore, gender differences, family factors such as socioeconomic status are also coded as CSG (Tsai & Weng, 2005). For example, the title of “Correlations of parental attitudes towards English learning with parental expectation, involvement and children's English achievement: A case study in Taipei's Wanhua and Da'an Districts” was coded as CSG.
4. English for Specific Purposes (ESP): ESP program, English for academic purpose, English for occupational purposes, news English are examples of the ESP category (Lin & Cheng, 2010). For example, the title of “A Study of News English and Its Application to English Teaching” was coded as ESP.
5. Integrated Skills (IS): Studies on the combination of two or more language skills are coded as IS. For example, studies investigating the relationship between English listening and speaking are regarded as IS (Lin & Cheng, 2010). For example, the title of “Comparing the Effects of Listening and Reading on the Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition of CULL Senior High Students in Taiwan” was coded as IS.

6. Learner Development (LD): Learner factors including individual differences, prior learning, cognitive development, and their conceptions are parts of LD (Lin & Cheng, 2010). For example, the title of “Effects of Pre-junior High English Learning Experience on Students' English Achievement: From the Perspective of Instructions in the Private Children Language Institute” was coded as LD.
7. Linguistics (LIN): Studies related to phonetics, morphology, syntax, discourse analysis, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and neurolinguistics belong to LIN (Lin & Cheng, 2010). For example, the title of “Morphological and Syntactic Abilities in Taiwanese EFL Children's Oral Narratives” was coded as LIN.
8. Language Skills (LS): Language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar are coded as LS. Particularly, in the subcategory of speaking and communication, pronunciation studies are included. Issues relevant to phonetic awareness, phonological processing, metalinguistic awareness, and phonetics are categorized under reading. Issues regarding spelling are also coded under writing (Lin & Cheng, 2010). For example, the title of “The Use of Passive Voice in Research Articles” was coded as LS.
9. Materials or Curriculum Design and Evaluation (MC): Teaching or learning materials such as supplementary materials, projects, or tasks or curriculum design and/or evaluation are instances of MC (Lin & Cheng, 2010). For example, the title of “Graded Readers and Young Adult Literature in an Extensive Reading Classroom” was coded as MC.
10. Second Language Development (SLD): Second language acquisition studies

and interlanguage studies are included (Lin & Cheng, 2010). For example, the title of “Second Language Acquisition of English Telicity-Related Constructions” was coded as SLD.

11. Testing and Evaluation (TEVAL): Studies investigating the effects or the flaws and advantages of language tests are included in TEVAL. For instance, achievement tests, General English Proficiency Test (GEPT), or TOEFL exams are examples of TEVAL. In addition, new evaluation methods such as portfolios and peer evaluation are other examples (Lin & Cheng, 2010). For example, the title of “The Relationship Between the Rational Cloze Test and the Discourse Structure Test” was coded as TEVAL.
12. Teacher Factors (TF): Studies concerning teachers’ beliefs, personality, and attitude towards certain methods or language skills, teachers’ aptitude, their pedagogical or content knowledge, teacher behaviors and strategies are coded as TF (Lin & Cheng, 2010). For example, the title of “High School English Teachers' Beliefs on Grammar Instruction in Taiwan” was coded as TF.
13. Teaching Methods (TM): Teaching methods, such as communicative language teaching, audiolingual method, direct method, or task-based approach are coded as TM. In addition, the application of specific teaching activities, such as Reader Theater, drama, jazz chants, storytelling, debate, picture books, and graphic organizers are also in the TM category (Lin & Cheng, 2010). For example, the title of “Grammar Teaching for 6th Grade CULL Students: The Use of Communicative Games” was coded as TM.
14. Teacher Professional Development (TPD): Issues related to teachers’ professional training and their career development, such as pre- or in-service English teacher training or programs, team teaching, tour study program for

teachers are categorized as TPD (Tsai & Weng, 2005). For example, the title of “A Case Study on the Professional Development of Local and Foreign English Teachers in Team Teaching” was coded as TPD.

The Education Levels of Research Contexts

Research contexts refer to the educational levels of research participants or target research sites. For instance, research aiming to investigate the effects of communicative language teaching approach on elementary students’ English learning outcome was coded into elementary school category based on the educational levels of the involved participants. On the other hand, studies related to junior high school teachers’ beliefs in using portfolios were classified into high school category since those teachers work in a high school setting.

In this study, the researcher categorized research context of each thesis into one of the following eight categories (See Table 2). The categorization of educational levels of research contexts was adapted from Tsai and Wen (2005) and the TESOL convention worksheet. Also, the researcher modified and added some other categories to fit the current situation in Taiwan.

Table 2

Categorization of Research Contexts

Categorization of Research Contexts	Definitions
(1) preschool	Kindergartens are under preschool category.
(2) elementary school	Elementary school settings are under elementary school category.
(3) high school	Junior high schools, senior high schools, and vocational high schools are under high school category.
(4) grade 1-9 Curriculum	Research sites which involve both an elementary school and a junior high school are under grade 1-9 Curriculum category.
(5) higher education	Research contexts such as universities, colleges, graduate programs, and post-graduate studies are included in higher education.
(6) adults	Adult participants who are not studying in schools are categorized under adults group.
(7) private institute	Language schools and cram schools are under private institute category.
(8) mixed levels of participants	Participants whose educational levels involve two more of the above categories are coded under mixed levels of participants.

Types of Research Methods

To understand how novice researchers, such as master's students undertake their research, the researcher classified research types into six main categories, including (1) qualitative research, (2) quantitative research, (3) classroom research, (4)

review article, (5) survey, and (6) mixed methods. The researcher categorized each master's thesis into these six major groups by means of the way graduate students collected data in their research. For example, using interviews to be the major data collection methods to find out the answers will be coded as qualitative research. Research method types with elaborations are listed as follows (See Table 3).

Table 3

Categorization of Research Methods

Research methods	Definitions
(1) Qualitative research	In general, qualitative research is "not set up as experiments, and the data cannot be easily quantified" (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 2). Qualitative studies include descriptive research, ethnographies, case studies, or studies using interviews and observations. First, descriptive research is the study which required researchers to collect data in order to answer questions or to test hypotheses, (Criollo, 2004). Second, ethnographic research usually occurs in a natural setting, in which researchers should record and study behavior as it normally occurs by using field notes, diaries, checklists, and so on (Criollo, 2004). Third, according to Criollo (2004), a case study is a kind of observational study in that researchers do not manipulate or get involved in the situation rather than just execute an in-depth investigation of the situation. Fourth, there are two types of interviews. The first one is structured interview in which interviewers use a list of identical questions; the other is semi-structured interview in which interviewers still have a set of questions in hand; in the meanwhile, they propose follow-up questions based on the interviewees' answers (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Finally, observations usually refer to methods which engage researchers in the research settings, in which researchers carefully describe participants' activities without getting involved or making influences on them (Mackey & Gass, 2005).
(2) Quantitative research	Quantitative research generally starts with experiments to test certain hypotheses, and the data can be quantified and analyzed statistically (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Some general examples of quantitative studies include quasi-experimental or experimental research, correlational research, and measuring the effect of treatment. First, experimental research involves the examination of the effects of independent variables on dependent variables, and this type of research provides "the strongest evidence for cause-and-effect relationships,"(Criollo, 2004, p. 37). The difference between truly experimental and quasi-experimental is the assignment of participants. Truly experimental research use random assignment of participants while quasi-experimental research chooses participants without random assignment (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Second, correlational research is to determine the relationship between two or more variables and to "estimate the relationship's magnitude" (Criollo, 2004, p. 37). Third, to measure the effect of certain treatment, participants are given pretest and posttest to compare the effect of treatment. For example, to compare students' grades after implementing a special kind of teaching method is one of measuring the effect of treatment studies.

Table 3

Categorization of Research Methods (Continued)

Research methods	Definitions
(3) Classroom research	Research conducted in a classroom, which with an aim to "enhance our understanding of how to implement effective ways of improving learners' second language skills," (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 186), to investigate the effects of methods, to solve teaching problems, or to evaluate teachers' own teaching, or to enhance their teaching are defined as classroom research. In addition, action research is one type of classroom research. Action research is defined as a mode of inquiry practiced by teachers, and it reflects more about instructors and learners' developments (Mackey & Gass, 2005).
(4) Review article	A review article is a summary of research literatures on a specific topic in order to give an overview of the history and development of some issues, without proposing a strong position (Tsai & Wen, 2005).
(5) Survey	According to Criollo (2004), survey research typically utilizes questionnaires to inquire about participants' attitudes, opinions about certain issues.
(6) Mixed methods	The combination of two or more of the five research methods described above is coded as MIX.

Procedures

The researcher and her thesis advisor first met to discuss the preliminary coding scheme adapted from Tsai and Wen (2005) and the categories for Content Area and Targeted Instructional Level listed in TESOL convention proposal worksheet. They then randomly chose 5% of the total thesis abstracts and independently coded these theses based on the preliminary coding scheme. Later, they discussed and modified the coding categories to reflect the actual instructional contexts in Taiwan. For example, for the categories of research topics, because accreditation and AIDS education are not typical thesis topics in Taiwan, so they were deleted; for the categories of research contexts, the unique education system Grade 1-9 Curriculum in

Taiwan was added. For research methods, mixed type was added due to their observation of growing numbers of thesis studies employing more than one type of research methods.

Twenty percent of the thesis abstracts (i.e., a total of 100 theses) were randomly selected from each of the seven TESOL programs and coded by the researcher and her advisor independently. The average inter-rater agreement was 0.96. More specifically, in the coding of educational levels was 0.98, 0.95 in the coding of research topics, and 0.96 in the coding of research methods. The researcher and her advisor met again and the disagreement was further discussed and clarified on agreement. The remaining thesis abstracts would be categorized by the researcher based on the final coding scheme.

Data Analyses

Each abstract was categorized according to the three main categories, and the results were analyzed by descriptive statistics to give a broad view of the research trend in TESOL master's theses. In addition, the most popular research topics, educational levels of research contexts and research methods were described and analyzed in details for a better understanding of the variation during these years.

Second Stage of the Present Study

Behind the scenes: Issues in thesis decision making about thesis topics, participants, and methods

Reasons for Choosing Research Topics

The follow-up study of the present research attempted to look into the factors influencing the decision making about research topics, the educational levels of research contexts, and research methods employed. It is interesting and valuable to know the motives triggering the final decision. Graduate students can gain knowledge about what issues to be considered when selecting thesis topics, research participants, and research methods.

Participants

The participants were 2nd-to-4th year TESOL master's graduate students in the same TESOL programs in the previous meta analysis. The researcher believed that 2nd-to 4th - year graduate students should have some ideas about their thesis topics or their own research direction after one-year study in the TESOL program. The related issues such as their negotiation with their advisors, the process of identifying participants and methods would be more easily discussed than talking to 1st year TESOL students. The survey questions were distributed to 9 students in CCU, NCUE, NKNU, and NTHU, respectively while 11 students in NCTU, 8 students in NTNU, and 3 students in NCCU. There were a total of 58 people involved. Voluntary participants were approached to be interviewees. There were 4 voluntary participants to be interviewed, 2 from College of Education cohort and 2 from Teacher Education Program schools.

Instruments

In the second stage of the present study, the researcher employed two types of instruments to see the reasons behind the scenes. A survey and an interview were the data collection methods used in this part of the study. The survey provided basic information about the reasons affecting TESOL graduate students' decisions about research topics and related issues, while the interview section focused more on the negotiation between advisors and advisees during the process of selecting thesis research.

Survey

To further understand the reasons for choosing thesis topics, the educational levels of research contexts, and the research methods, a survey was administered (See Appendix A). The survey was developed by the researcher especially for this study, and there were three sections in the survey. The first section of the survey included questions designed to gather general information about the participants' background information, such as the name of their institute, their thesis topics or potential research directions, the possible research participants, and research methods. In the next section of the survey, a four-point Likert scale was provided to obtain information about factors influencing the choices of thesis topics, the educational levels of research contexts, research methods, and the issues correlated to advisement. In this part, the participants were required to circle the best described options for a total of twenty-one questions. Garland (1991) conducted a study comparing the effect of using 5-point Likert scale and 4-point Likert scale to test which one was more convincing and countable. The result showed that "social desirability bias" (p. 70), which means the situation that participants desire to be helpful or to please the

researcher and the circumstances that they do not want to choose socially disagreeable answers, could be lessened by eliminating the neutral, the mid-point category from the Likert scale. Based on this assumption, the researcher used a four-point Likert scale whereby a score of 1 means that the participant strongly disagrees with the statement mentioned; 2 indicates “disagree;” 3 is “agree;” and 4 means “strongly agree,” to prevent the “The Doctrine of the Mean” (Chan, 1963, p. 95) and a tendency of choosing the neutral answer.

The final part of the survey was to have the participants rank factors influencing their decision making about their thesis topics, participants, and methods with number 1-7. Number 1 represents the most influential factor; 7 means the least important one.

Interviews

Four voluntary participants were approached for the follow-up interviews. This semi-structured interview was carried out to provide further insights, and it allowed for a focused inquiry into the reasons for the choice of research topics, the educational levels of research contexts, and the research types. In addition, issues of the thesis advising were also discussed in the interviews. Questions such as “If your advisor provides you with a thesis topic, what would you do,” “If your advisor does not like your topic, what would you do” were integrated in the interview (See Appendix B).

Procedures

The survey was distributed to graduate students in those seven TESOL programs in Taiwan via emails. The participants, after receiving emails, voluntarily filled out the survey and sent it back to the researcher. In the last section of the survey, a consent form of participating interview was applied. The participants who were

willing to be interviewees were contacted by the researcher and arranged the time for interview.

Data Analyses

Data analyses for the follow-up study involved both quantitative and qualitative approaches. For the quantitative analysis, firstly, the background information about the tentative research topics, participants, and methods revealed in the first section of the survey was analyzed by the categories used in the first section of the present study, aiming to provide a comparison between the research direction before and after 2008. In addition, the four-point Likert scale surveys were analyzed to have a general conclusion of factors influencing the choices of thesis topics and the selection of research participants and research methods. On the other hand, the final section of the survey aimed to understand the importance of various factors influencing the decision making about thesis topics, the educational levels of research contexts, and research methods, and the data were analyzed by descriptive statistics to rank the factors.

For the qualitative analysis, the interview data were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. All identifying information about participants and advisors were removed, and each participant was assigned a code name (Participant A and B in College of Education; Participant C and D in Teacher Education Program) to maintain confidentiality. However, to further understand the specialty of each program, information about participant's program was revealed. Later, the interview transcripts were coded and explained by the researcher. After the completion of transcribing, the participants would be able to review the description of the interview, to make sure that the interpretation was appropriate and sensible.

Results and discussion will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview

The researcher employed a meta analysis method to analyze the trends in TESOL master's thesis projects between 2004 and 2008. The present directions of thesis research topics, the educational levels of research contexts, and the popular research methods used were provided and discussed. In addition, with the use of a survey and an interview, the researcher, going a step further, examined the possible factors influencing TESOL master's students' selection of and decision on thesis topics, participants, and methods. Furthermore, the issues related to advisor-advisee relationship and their negotiation process during thesis completion were studied and described.

Popular Research Topics, Contexts, and Methods Examined in TESOL Master's Theses Between 2004 and 2008

Popular Research Topics Examined in TESOL Master's Theses

Table 4 presents both the numbers and percentages for each research topic examined in the master's thesis projects completed between 2004 and 2008 in the seven selected TESOL programs. In the total of 502 TESOL master's theses, Language Skills and Teaching Methods constitute 30% and 17%, respectively, ranking the top two research topics, followed by CALL (12%) and Materials or Curriculum (11%). As shown in Table 4, a great variation in popular research topics

was observed across the seven TESOL programs. Particularly, Language Skills was consistently ranked in the top two topics in all programs. In addition, Teaching Methods was the top two research topic in four programs (i.e., CCU, NCCU, NCUE, and NKNU). On the other hand, CALL was the leading and dominant topic in NCTU and NTHU. In contrast, theses produced in other five TESOL programs (i.e., CCU, NCCU, NCUE, NKNU, and NTNU) tended to have more diversity in their thesis topics.

Common Research Contexts Examined in TESOL Master's Theses

The analysis of research contexts examined in the TESOL master's theses is shown in Table 5. The results of this study revealed that more than half (60%, 302 of 502 articles) of the theses completed between 2004 and 2008 were conducted in high school contexts. Higher education settings ranked second, averaging 18%, followed by elementary school, contributing 15% of all thesis projects. As revealed in Table 5, high school settings dominated the top two research contexts investigated in thesis projects produced in all seven TESOL programs. In addition, higher education was the top two research context investigated in more than or nearly half of all theses in four programs (i.e., NCTU, NCUE, NTHU, and NTNU). Elementary school ranked first or second in three programs (i.e., CCU, NCCU, and NKNU). A slight variation of the three most popular research contexts among these master's programs was showed in further analyses (Figure 1). For example, while high school settings dominated the common research contexts across most TESOL programs, ranging from 56% to 81%, the higher education contexts were the primary research sites examined in theses produced in NCTU and NTHU, contributing 70% and 62%, respectively. Furthermore, elementary school settings had also started receiving

attention and ranked second most investigated context in theses produced in three programs, including CCU (33%), NCCU (9%), and NKNU (20%).

Table 4

Numbers and Percentages of Research Topics in Master's Theses in Individual TESOL Programs from 2004-2008

Research topic	Total	CCU (52)[a]	NCCU (68)	NCTU (20)	NCUE (61)	NKNU (205)	NTHU (37)	NTNU (59)
AF	50 (10.0%)	3 (5.8%)	5 (7.4%)	4 (20.0%)★	8 (13.1%)	21 (10.2%)	2 (5.4%)	7 (11.9%)
CALL	60 (12.0%)	2 (3.8%)	8 (5.9%)	8 (40.0%)★	2 (3.4%)	23 (11.2%)	16 (43.2%)★	5 (8.5%)
CSG	13 (2.6%)	2 (3.8%)	2 (2.9%)	1 (5.0%)	1 (1.6%)	6 (2.9%)	0	1 (1.7%)
ESP	6 (1.2%)	0	0	0	1 (1.6%)	4 (2.0%)	1 (2.7%)	0
IS	9 (1.8%)	0	0	0	3 (4.9%)	4 (2.0%)	0	2 (3.4%)
LF	6 (1.2%)	1 (1.9%)	0	0	1 (1.6%)	2 (1.0%)	0	2 (3.4%)
LIN	15 (3.0%)	3 (5.8%)	5 (7.4%)	2 (10.0%)	1 (1.6%)	1 (0.5%)	0	3 (5.1%)
LS	150 (29.9%)★	13 (25.0%)★	16 (23.5%)★	4 (20.0%)★	26 (42.6%)★	66 (32.2%)★	9 (24.3%)★	16 (27.1%)★
MC	55 (11.0%)	6 (11.5%)	5 (7.4%)	1 (5.0%)	2 (3.3%)	29 (14.1%)	3 (8.1%)	9 (15.3%)★
SLA	5 (1.0%)	0	1 (1.5%)	0	1 (1.6%)	0	0	3 (5.1%)
TEVAL	22 (4.4%)	5 (9.6%)	3 (4.4%)	0	0	9 (4.4%)	1 (2.7%)	4 (6.8%)
TF	20 (4.0%)	5 (9.6%)	9 (13.2%)	0	4 (6.6%)	1 (0.5%)	0	1 (1.7%)
TM	85 (16.9%)★	12 (23.1%)★	15 (22.1%)★	0	11 (18.0%)★	38 (18.5%)★	5 (13.5)	4 (6.8%)
TPD	6 (1.2%)	0	3 (4.4%)	0	0	1 (0.5%)	0	2 (3.4%)

Note. [a] Total numbers of theses *are in parentheses*.

★*Top two research topics.*

Table 5

Numbers and Percentages of Research Contexts in Master's Theses in Individual TESOL Programs from 2004-2008

Research context	Total	CCU (52)[a]	NCCU (68)	NCTU (20)	NCUE (61)	NKNU (205)	NTHU (37)	NTNU (59)
Preschool	4 (0.8%)	1 (1.9%)	0	2 (10.0%)	0	1 (0.5%)	0	0
Elementary school	75 (14.9%)	12 (32.7%)★	6 (8.7%)★	0	2 (3.3%)	41 (20.0%)★	4 (10.8%)	5 (8.5%)
High school	302 (60.2%)★	29 (55.8%)★	56 (81.2%)★	4 (20.0%)★	43 (70.5%)★	126 (61.5%)★	9 (24.3%)★	35 (59.3%)★
Grade 1-9	6 (1.2%)	2 (3.8%)	1 (1.4%)	0	0	0	0	3 (5.1%)
Higher education	88 (17.5%)★	2 (3.8%)	3 (4.3%)	14 (70.0%)★	14 (23.0%)★	17 (8.3%)	23 (62.2%)★	15 (25.4%)★
Adult English	11 (2.2%)	1 (1.9%)	1 (1.4%)	0	0	8 (3.9%)	0	1 (1.7%)
Private Institute	1 (0.2%)	0	0	0	0	0	1 (2.7%)	0
Mixed	15 (3.0%)	0	0	0	2 (3.3%)	12 (5.9%)	0	0

Note. [a] Total numbers of theses *are in parentheses.*

★*Top two research contexts.*

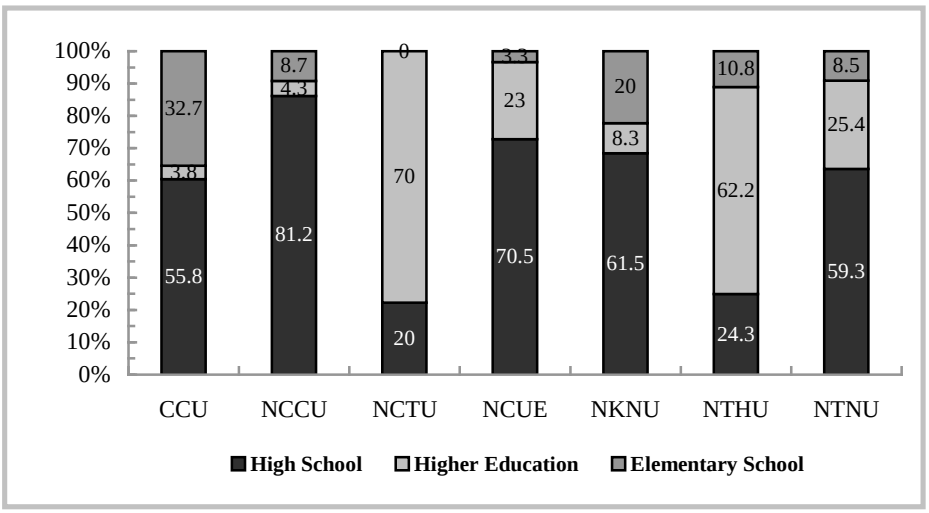


Figure 1. Percentages of three common research contexts across the seven TESOL master's program.

Prevalent Research Methods Examined in TESOL Master's Theses

Table 6 presents both numbers and percentages of research methods in master's theses in individual TESOL program between 2004 and 2008. Approximately 48% of the theses used mixed methods as the primary data collection method, followed by quantitative methods, ranking second (20%), and qualitative method, ranking third (16%). As shown in Table 6, a great majority of the theses employed mixed methods, and they ranked first in these seven TESOL programs. Quantitative methods contributed a great proportion of theses produced in four programs (i.e., NCTU, NCUE, NTHU, and NTNU) while qualitative methods were the top two research methods in CCU and NCCU. In particular, survey method had already made up a substantial proportion of the studies, contributing 15% of all the theses produced in the seven TESOL programs, almost surpassing the number of studies using qualitative methods.

Table 6

Numbers and Percentages of Research Methods in Master's Theses in Individual TESOL Programs from 2004-2008

Research method	Total	CCU (52)[a]	NCCU (68)	NCTU (20)	NCUE (61)	NKNU (205)	NTHU (37)	NTNU (59)
Qualitative method	80 (15.9%)	17 (32.7%)★	17 (25.0%)★	2 (10.0%)	11 (18.0%)	22 (10.7%)	3 (8.1%)	8 (13.6%)
Quantitative method	99 (19.7%)★	10 (19.2%)	11 (16.2%)	5 (25.0%)★	15 (24.6%)★	25 (12.2%)	13 (35.1%)★	20 (33.9%)★
Classroom research	5 (1.0%)	1 (1.9%)	1 (1.5%)	0	2 (3.3%)	1 (0.5%)	0	0
Mixed methods	242 (48.2%)★	20 (38.5%)★	32 (47.1%)★	8 (40.0%)★	28 (45.9%)★	114 (55.6%)★	16 (43.2%)★	24 (40.7%)★
Review articles	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Survey	76 (15.1%)	4 (7.7%)	7 (10.3%)	5 (25.0%)★	5 (8.2%)	43 (21.0%)★	5 (13.5%)	7 (11.9%)

Note. [a] Total numbers of theses *are in parentheses.*

★Top two research methods.

Discussion of Popular Research Topics, Contexts, and Methods Examined in TESOL Master's Theses Between 2004 and 2008

Popular Research Topics Examined in TESOL Master's Theses

The analysis of the research topics showed that the most popular topics were Language Skills, Teaching Methods, CALL, and Materials or Curriculum. Studies on Language Skills, in particular, were commonly seen during these five years, and this result was consistent with the common educational objectives shared by these TESOL institutions. The program objectives of these TESOL programs were designed to

combine research with actual teaching and to equip students with the competence and knowledge to teach English, which were practical goals to assist potential student teachers in becoming qualified teachers. Thus, investigating topics related to Language Skills is considered compatible with their career orientation and future job development. Also, the trend of investigating topics relevant to Teaching Methods was consistently observed in the results. Teaching Methods in the previous study (Lin & Cheng, 2010) ranked second and remained the rank order in the present study. In addition, the category of Materials or Curriculum has been one of the focused topics since 2003 (Lin & Cheng), showing the importance of examining and rectifying teaching materials and curriculum designs.

On the other hand, with the advent and development of technology in language teaching, a steady increase in the popularity of CALL-related thesis research in these years has been seen. Especially in NCTU and NTHU, with the neighboring location of Hsin-Chu Science Park as well as the major educational focuses on engineering and sciences, these two schools produced most of the CALL-related theses during these five years.

In contrast, topics related to Culture, Social or Gender Issues, English for Specific Purposes, Learner Factors, Second Language Acquisition, and Teacher Professional Development were rarely examined during these years. It is probably that Culture, Social or Gender Issues, Learner Factors, and Second Language Acquisition required more complicated research methodologies, relied on less accessible participants who have the cross-cultural backgrounds, and needed more observation time to elicit the outcomes. Other research topics, such as English for Specific Purposes and Teacher Professional Development were still on their early stage of research development. With the significant effects of teacher professional

development on students' learning outcomes (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Hart & Lee, 2003) and the worldwide demand of ESP (Johns & Dudley-Evans, 1991), these topics might have a prosperous development in the future.

Common Research Contexts Examined in TESOL Master's Theses

Research context analysis indicated that the top three research sites were high school, higher education, and elementary schools. The most prevalent context was high school, and this finding coincided with the general observation of the program characteristics and educational objectives among these seven TESOL programs. All these programs were located in universities with a secondary teacher education programs. Most students in these programs were either working on high school teacher certification or already completed the courses required for teacher certification. Some were even in-service high school teachers pursuing a higher education. Thus, investigating topics related to high school education is considered compatible with their career aspiration and future job development. On the other hand, higher education settings, including universities, colleges, graduate programs, and post-graduate studies, were also popular during these years. For graduate students, the ease of the access to data might be one important factor influencing their selection of research contexts. Since using convenience samples is commonly found in research (Hasegawa, Ogasawara, & Katz, 2007; Wang, 2008), it is not surprising that they utilize the convenience samples in their universities to be their participants. In addition, studies conducted in elementary schools increased during these years. In the study of Lin and Cheng (2010), elementary settings contributed to 11% of the total theses between 2003 and 2007; however, between 2004 and 2008 studies done in the

elementary school contexts consisted 15% of the total theses. Especially in CCU, NCCU, and NKNU, elementary school ranked second among other research contexts.

Prevalent Research Methods Examined in TESOL Master's Theses

The analysis of research methods showed that the majority of TESOL master's theses employed mixed research methods; that is, graduate students tended to use two or more than two methods in data collection. The reasons for using two or more methods might be that researchers want to confirm the results elicited by one method, and to gain more information from different perspectives. Mackey and Gass (2005) claimed that "it is increasingly common for researchers to present and discuss both quantitative and qualitative data in the same report, or to use methods associated with both types of research in a process sometimes known as split methods or multiple methods" (p. 164). Similarly, mixed methods have been suggested to be a new research paradigm by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004). In their study, they regarded mixed methods research as the third research paradigm which combines with both qualitative and quantitative research and values the importance of both paradigms. Furthermore, from the study conducted by Shih, Feng, and Tsai (2008), a similar trend was found. Through the analysis of highly-cited papers produced in five e-learning journals, the researchers indicated that there would be more and more studies using mixed methods in the e-learning field.

In particular, the combination of the use of survey and interview has become the most employed mixed method types recently. Due to the fact that social scientists commonly used surveys and interviews to explore participants' behavior, opinions, and attitudes (Carey, Morgan, & Oxtoby, 1996), it is reasonable for student researchers to select surveys and interviews as their main data collection methods.

Furthermore, a survey can be administered in many forms, such as email and online platforms while interviews can be done in face-to-face model or on telephone, providing researchers “a greater degree of flexibility in the data gathering process” (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 96). Other research methods, such as quantitative and qualitative methods, constituted 20% and 16% respectively of the total theses. Quantitative methods appeared to be the second most commonly used method in the research thesis projects conducted in NCTU, NCUE, NTHU, and NTNU. On the other hand, qualitative methods were more commonly employed in the theses produced in CCU and NCCU. On the whole, in every year during 2004-2008, the number of studies using quantitative methods surpassed the one of research employed qualitative methods. This is probably because using quantitative methods to conduct a study is relatively easier to perform the results in writing. This assumption was supported by Flowerdew’s (1999) study. Reported by the participants, they claimed that it would be easier for non-native language speakers to write quantitative articles, due to their “more formulaic nature” (p. 259). In addition, the results presented with statistic numbers and percentages are comparatively more straightforward to student researchers. Thus, there were relatively more theses employing quantitative paradigms. On the contrary, qualitative research, such as ethnographies and case studies, requires a long-term data collection and a continuous observation hence it is not easy for student researcher to conduct (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Furthermore, qualitative research also requires “persuasive and skilled writing” (Mackey & Gass, p. 304) in order to summarize a large amount of findings and to convey the significance of the research to the audience. For graduate students, it is a difficult and complicated process and it is challenging to them.

The other emerging method, survey, also received a great attention across these five years. A survey had been considered one frequently used method because it is easy to design and deliver (Shih, Feng, & Tsai, 2008; Simsek, et al., 2009). More and more online websites have been established to provide users a platform to design and deliver surveys (e.g., http://survey.youthwant.com.tw/). Through the social networks, such as PTT (telnet://ptt.cc) and Facebook (http://www.facebook.com/), users can easily distribute surveys to those who are willing to answer the questions. Most of all, these systems provide a detailed analysis of the results observe; hence, it is not surprising that survey has emerged to be one popular research method used in graduate theses.

Trends in Frequently Investigated Research Topics, Contexts, and Methods in TESOL Master's Theses Between 2004 and 2008

Figure 2 graphically presents the percentage changes in the top four research topics between 2004 and 2008. Across these years, Language Skills remained the most commonly investigated research topics examined in the TESOL master's theses, with a marked decline from 32% to 22% in 2007 and a remarkable increase from 22% to 46% in 2008. Studies related to Teaching Methods had a steady development from 21% in 2004 to 18% in 2007 but decreased to 4% in 2008. The category of Materials or Curriculum had a declining trend within these years, decreased from 12% in 2004 to 9% in 2008. With the similar decreasing patterns over these years, CALL started with 16% in 2004 and ended with 8% in 2008.

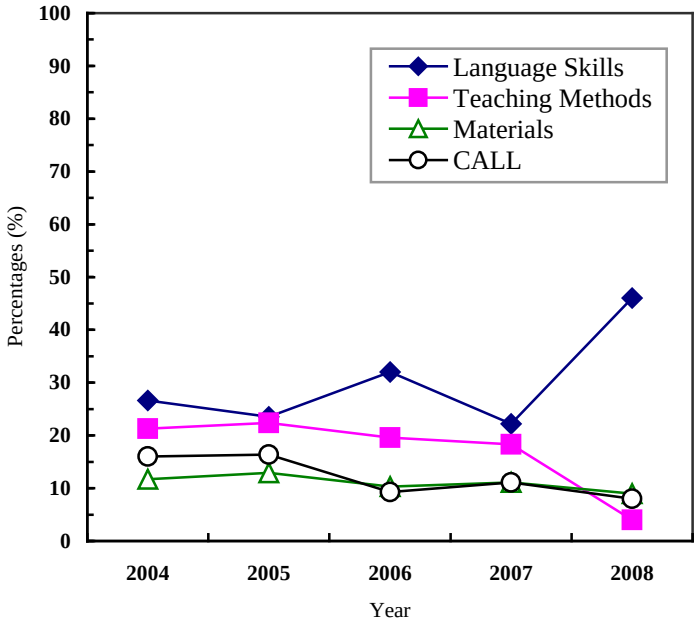
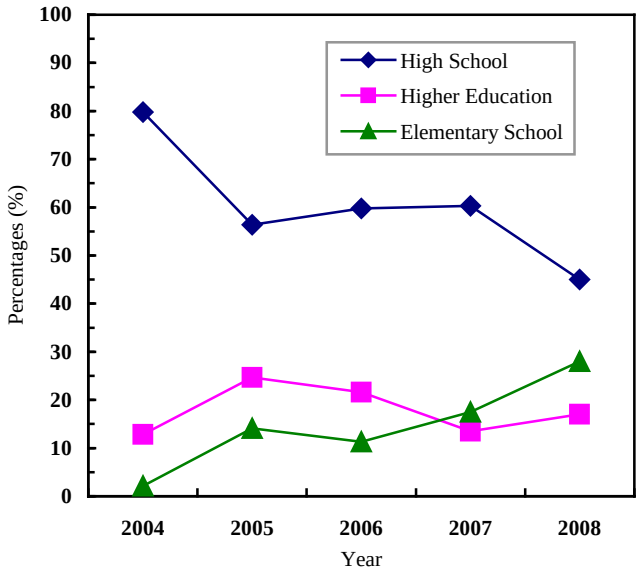


Figure 2. Trends of frequently investigated research topics in TESOL Master's theses between 2004 and 2008.

Figure 3 illustrates the percentage changes in the top three research contexts investigated in TESOL master's theses (i.e., high school, higher education, and elementary school) between 2004 and 2008. Across the five years, high school settings though remained the most examined contexts in TESOL master's theses, appeared to be with a steady and notable reduction from 80% in 2004 to 45% in 2008. Studies examined in higher education leaped from 13% in 2004 to 25% in 2005 and then slightly dropped back to 17% in 2008. The percentages of thesis research in elementary school contexts had seen a relatively steady increase over the five years, from 2% in 2004 to 28% in 2008. As shown in Figure 3, the percentages of each context in 2008 showed that higher education and elementary school settings had been gradually catching up the numbers of theses conducted in high school contexts. In

other words, during these five years, a clear shift in research contexts can be seen in a reduction in the number of studies conducted in high school contexts and an increase in the number of theses examined in higher education and elementary school settings.



*F*igure *3*. Trends of frequently investigated research contexts in TESOL Master's theses between 2004 and 2008.

Percentage changes in the top four research methods employed were as pronounced as those observed in the frequently examined contexts (Figure 4). Mixed methods consistently ranked as the most frequently used method within these five years, with a notable decrease from 61% to 38% in 2006 and a gradual increase to 51% in 2008. Percentage variation of research theses using quantitative methods and qualitative methods had seen a similar curve. Quantitative methods increased from 13% to 26% during the first three years, and dropped to 19% in 2007, and then rose back to 22% in 2008 while qualitative methods also rose from 13% to 21% during the first three years, and dropped to 14% in 2007, and then rose back to 18% in 2008.

Survey studies had ranked the fourth in two years (i.e., 2006 and 2008), with a modest increase from 13% to 21% in 2007 and then a sharp decrease to 9% in 2008.

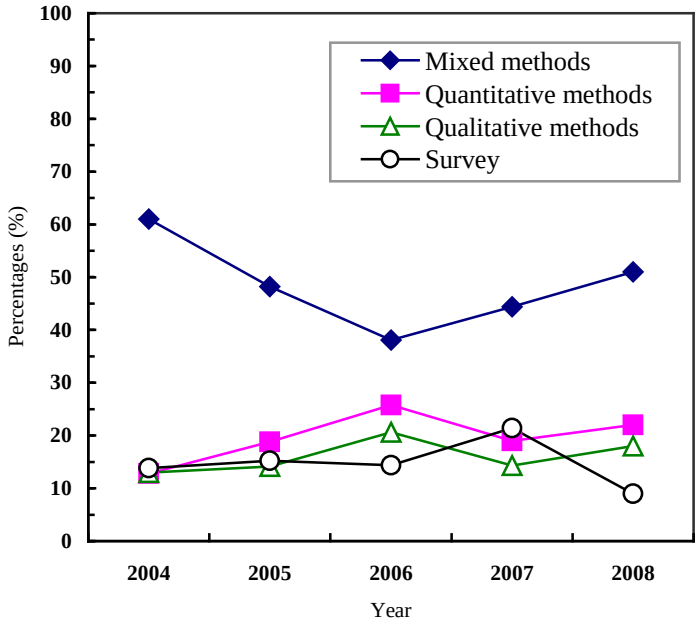


Figure 4. Trends of frequently investigated research methods in TESOL Master's theses between 2004 and 2008.

Comparison between College of Education and Teacher Education Program Schools

According the observations in the previous meta analysis of the research issues and directions in TESOL master's thesis projects, the researcher discovered a clear difference between two cohorts of schools. For example, the primary research contexts investigated in the theses produced in NCTU and NTHU were higher education while NCCU and NKNU paid more attention to elementary school settings. In addition, theses produced in NCTU and NTHU paid noticeably high concentration

on CALL-related topics while NCCU, NCUE, NKNU, and NTHU focused on Language Skills. Following this line of reasoning, to further understand whether there is a discrepancy among these seven TESOL programs with seemingly differently program characteristics and directions, the researcher further categorized the seven programs into two cohorts: College of Education, which has a long-established history of either college or department of Education and Teacher Education Program, whose teacher education program was not established until 1990s or 2000s. NCCU, NCUE, NKNU, and NTNU were therefore grouped into College of Education. CCU, NCTU, and NTHU, on the other hand, were classified under Teacher Education Program.

By implementing an *ANOVA* test, the results showed that among the most popular research topics including Language Skills, Teaching Methods, and Materials or Curriculum, no significant group difference was observed, F (1, 5) =2.64, p=0.17, F (1, 5) =0.37, p=0.57 and F (1, 5)=0.23, p=0.65 respectively. However, the value of CALL yielded almost significant effects of school cohort differences, F (1, 5) =4.12, p=0.098. The number of CALL-related theses was greatly contributed by those produced in NCTU and NTHU, and the tendency caused the strong differences between two school cohorts.

In addition, regarding the popular research contexts including elementary school and higher education, one-way *ANOVA* revealed no significant group differences, F (1, 5) =0.23, p=0.65 and F (1, 5) =2.64, p=0.17 respectively. However, in relation to high school contexts, a significant group difference was shown, F (1, 5) =9.64, p=0.027. In other words, high school settings were dominantly chosen by students in College of Education.

Furthermore, *ANOVA* results suggested that no significant group differences were observed in the most prevalent research methods (mixed methods, quantitative

methods, qualitative methods, and survey), F (1, 5) =1.44, p=0.3, F (1, 5) =1.13, p=0.35, F (1, 5) =2.74, p=0.17 and F (1, 5) =1.36, p=0.31 respectively.

In sum, the choice differences of the most popular topics, participants, and methods between two school cohorts did not show statistical significance. However, one major finding observed was that CALL-related studies were predominantly done in theses produced in the Teacher Education Program cohort, NCTU and NTHU in particular. In addition, the choice of research contexts between school cohorts revealed that high school contexts were predominantly investigated by students in the College of Education cohort. It is of interest to discover that the effect of the school characteristics on students' choices of thesis projects.

Factors Influencing the Selection of Thesis Topics, Participants, and Methods

The second section of the survey was a four-point Likert scale used to investigate factors influencing graduate students' decisions on thesis topics, participants, and research methods. The twenty-one categories were grouped into three major clusters (personal interests, feasibility of the research design, and the role of advisors). The internal consistency reliability estimates for each cluster of this survey were calculated using *Cronbach's Alpha* procedure. As shown in Table 7, the overall alpha of personal interests, feasibility of the research design, and the role of advisors Clusters are 0.714, 0.752, and 0.632, respectively. The alpha value of each is high and indicates a strong internal consistency among the items in the same cluster.

Table 7

Reliability Statistics of Personal Interests, Feasibility, and the Role of Advisors Clusters

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
personal interests	0.714	3
feasibility of the research design	0.752	5
the role of advisors	0.632	4

Table 8 presents the overall rank order of the three factor clusters according to the responses reported by the participants.

The three factor clusters were rank-ordered according to the participants' responses. Since each cluster was created by a set of items of similar concepts, it is logical to take the mean values of all these items when determining the significance of each cluster. In the 4-point Likert scale, higher numbers represented the greater value participants gave to the category. As shown in Table 8, the mean point of personal interests ranked first (M = 3.01), followed by feasibility (M = 2.81) and the role of advisors (M = 2.53). That is, personal interests were the most influential factors for TESOL graduate students when choosing thesis topics, participants, and methods.

Table 8

Rank Order of the Three Factor Clusters and Descriptive Statistics of 4-Point Likert Scale

Factors influencing thesis topic, participant, and method selection	*Mean*	*SD*
1. Personal interests	3.01	0.57
(1) When deciding thesis topic or research direction, I mainly depend on my personal research interest.	3.17	0.68
(8) When deciding thesis research field, I mainly consider realistic teaching needs.	2.83	0.73
(10) When choosing thesis research participants, I mainly concern my own research interest.	3.02	0.74
2. Feasibility	2.81	0.55
(5) When deciding thesis topic or research direction, I mainly consider the convenience of data collection.	2.76	0.84
(6) When deciding thesis topic or research direction, I mainly consider the affluence of literature reviews.	2.52	0.76
(7) When deciding thesis topic or research direction, I mainly consider the feasibility of research methods.	2.33	0.85
(9) When choosing thesis research participants, I mainly concern the convenience of data collection.	3.05	0.78
(12) When choosing thesis research methods, I mainly concern the feasibility of the research method.	3.38	0.62
3. The role of advisors	2.53	0.55
(2) When deciding thesis topic or research direction, I mainly consider my advisor's research interest or profession.	3.05	0.63
(3) When deciding thesis topic or research direction, I mainly select the topic that my advisor assigns.	2.07	0.88
(11) When choosing research participants, I mainly take my advisor's choice.	2.19	0.91
(14) When choosing thesis research method, I mainly concern my advisor's expert methods.	2.81	0.76

The results indicated that among the three major factor clusters, the participants regarded their personal research interests as the most important factor influencing their decision on thesis issues and designs. This finding coincided with the outcomes in I'Anson and Smith (2004). The participants in their study also considered personal interests the most significant motive that influenced the selection of thesis topics. The result was sensible because students would usually spend 2 to 3 years on certain topics (Isaak & Hubert, 1999). It would be hard to neglect researchers' personal preference which has a profound effect on their emotional states during the years of conducting research.

In addition, students considered the easiness and the feasibility of the research topics, research designs, and the accessibility of research participants of great importance. The findings in the present study concurred with the results shown in Mauch and Birch's study (1989); that is, the resources of literature and access to the data were essential factors influencing the selection of thesis projects. The survey results appear to support the findings revealed in the common research contexts observed in the previous section. The high percentage of research examined in higher education suggested that graduate students tended to recruit participants within their universities rather than seek participants outside of the campus.

Surprisingly, as a whole, the role of advisors cluster was considered the least important factor influencing students' decision about thesis research projects. It is likely that the research advisors of these survey participants may position themselves as students' senior co-workers, who are responsible for assisting them in finding potential research directions, not for assigning topics for them. As discussed in chapter 2, a similar role assumed by advisors themselves can be found in Krase's study in 2007. The advisor in her study, from a western culture, expecting her advisee

to considered her a fellow-learner. On the contrary, her advisee, from South Korea, expected an advisor to make decisions for the advisees and direct their research. In sum, advisors investigated in the survey assumed a similar role as the advisor in Krase's study, that is, they are the advisee's research colleagues, not their guides.

Similar findings were observed in the follow-up interview section. Two of the four participants also indicated that their advisors only provided directions for them, being available for problem-solving, but they were not responsible to direct their topics. As Participant C stated "At the beginning, my advisor provided me with some possible research directions but after this, she only played a role in solving my problems and giving advices when I got into troubles" (interview, February, 23, 2011). In addition, Participant D also said,

> My advisor gave suggestions to my interested topics, and she made sure whether the topic was logical. The rest of the details were decided by me. For me, my advisor assisted me in clearing problems, not directing my study (interview, February, 21, 2011).

Rank Order of Influential Factors

The third section of the survey asked the participants to rank factors influencing their decision making about thesis topics, participants, and methods according to the importance. Items with higher number values represented the lower importance received from the answerers, and vice versa. Table 9 shows the rank order of importance of factors influencing thesis topics. It was found that personal interests, which received a mean point of 1.59, were considered the most important factor affecting students' topic selection. The second dominant factor was advisor's research

interests or professional specialties, with a mean point of 2.93, while the easiness of data collection ranked third, with a mean point of 3.84.

When choosing research participants, these student researchers considered the easy access to the available participants of great importance (See Table 10), with a mean point of 1.66. On the other hand, when deciding research methods, the feasibility was thought to be the most influential issue to be considered, with a mean point of 1.38 (See Table 11).

Table 9

Rank Order of Importance of Factors Influencing Thesis Topics

	Personal research interest	Advisor's research interest or professional specialty	Trends of TESOL field	Teaching needs	Convenience of data collection	Quantity of literature reviews	Feasibility of research design
Mean	1.59	2.93	4.72	4.93	3.84	5.02	5.17

Table 10

Rank Order of Importance of Factors Influencing Thesis Participants

	Convenience of data collection	Personal research interest	Advisor's assistance or decision
Mean	1.66	2.14	2.28

Table 11

Rank Order of Importance of Factors Influencing Thesis Methods

	Feasibility of research method	The current trend of methods in TESOL	Advisor's expert methods
Mean	1.38	2.74	2.16

When the participants were asked to select major factors influencing thesis topics, participants, and methods respectively, the results further support the previous observation in the second section of the survey. From the rank order of the importance of the factors, it was found that when asked about the influential factors affecting thesis topic selection, the most important one was personal interests. This finding concurred with the previous result that personal research interests played a determinant role in choosing thesis projects. On the other hand, when choosing research participants and research methods, the participants revealed similar responses reported in the 4-point Likert scale. In other words, graduate students identified research participants and utilized research methods primarily according to the easiness and feasibility of them.

Comparison between College of Education and Teacher Education Program Schools

A *Mann-Whitney U Test* is a "non-parametric test used to test for difference between the medians of two independent groups" (*Mann-Whitney Test*, 2000, p. 583). To compare the degree of personal interests influencing selection of thesis topics, participants, and methods between College of Education and Teacher Education Program groups, a *Mann-Whitney U Test* was conducted.

Table 12 showed that the degree of personal interests influencing selection of thesis topics, participants, and methods between College of Education and Teacher Education Program groups were apparently different, but this difference did not reach statistical significance, $U(57)=383.5$, $Z=-.585$, $p = 0.559$. Similarly, the difference between College of Education and Teacher Education Program groups in the role of advisors and feasibility did not reach statistical significance, $U(57)=401$, $Z=-.307$, $p = 0.759$, $U(57)=383.5$, $Z=-.584$, $p = 0.559$. However, the descriptive results appeared to show that students in the TESOL programs residing in the College of Education emphasized the importance of personal interests and advisors with the mean rank of 30.78 and 30.17 respectively, while students studied in schools in Teacher Education Program tended to value feasibility ($M = 30.78$) when choosing thesis topics, participants, and methods.

Table 12

Mann-Whitney Test Ranks of Major Factors Influencing Thesis Selection

	School Type	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Personal interests	College of Education	29	30.78	892.50
	Teacher Education Program	29	28.22	818.50
	Total	58		
The role of advisors	College of Education	29	30.17	875.00
	Teacher Education Program	29	28.83	836.00
	Total	58		
Feasibility	College of Education	29	28.22	818.50
	Teacher Education Program	29	30.78	892.50
	Total	58		

The analysis of the compared results of College of Education and Teacher Education Program groups presented distinct pictures of students' perceptions of

influential factors. TESOL students in College of Education schools tended to see personal research interests and advisors' opinions as prior factors which may affect their selection of thesis topics, participants, and methods. This result coincides with the findings of the most popular topics and the prevalent research sites observed in the previous meta analysis of the thesis direction in the present study. Among these theses produced in NCCU, NCUE, NKNU, and NTNU, Language Skills were mostly examined according to students' personal interests. Also, the top research contexts they chose were high school settings, which appeared to reflect their personal interests and career aspiration. In addition, according to the fact that professors working in schools in College of Education cohort may be senior than those working in Teacher Education Program cohort, those experienced and senior professors may assume a more dominant role in directing and designing the thesis research. Thus, advisees might consider advisors' suggestions one influential decision maker.

For example, in the interview section, Participant A in one of College of Education cohort indicated that the relationship between advisors and advisees in their TESOL program was very strict. She stated that "There is a strong hierarchical relationship between teachers and students in our program, and teachers are considered with high authorities" (interview, February, 23, 2011). In addition, Participant B in the same school cohort also revealed the similar opinions. She claimed that her advisor was an "autocrat" who assigned the topics for her, and every advisee of his had responsibilities to inherit the field which was the focus of the advisor's research interests (interview, February, 22, 2011).

On the contrary, students in Teacher Education Program schools regarded feasibility of the research design as the most important factor affecting their selection of thesis topics, participants, and methods. Corresponded with the results that students

in two out of the three programs (i.e., NCTU and NTHU) chose higher education settings to be the major target research context, the students in these schools had a tendency to think of whether the study can be smoothly done first.

From the interviews with Participant C and D in Teacher Education Program schools, similar opinions support the findings above. Participant C addressed that feasibility was one of the important factors influencing her thesis topic selection. She stated that "The first concern of thesis topic selection for me is the access to participants. I am afraid of not finding available participants, so I choose thesis topics that require non-human data" (interview, February, 23, 2011).

To avoid the high possibility of not finding available participants, Participant C chose to select thesis topics which used data from an existing corpus/database. In addition, the method employed in her study was decided by the feasibility of data analysis. In sum, feasibility played a crucial role in her thesis topic, participant, and method selection. In a like manner, Participant D also considered feasibility the most important factor affecting her choice of research participants.

As Participant D said,

> I am aware of the difficulty of searching for participants, so I do not place restrictions on participants' educational levels. At the end, I chose the available participants who were suggested by my advisor (interview, February, 21, 2011).

In sum, the results in the interview section concurred with the analysis of the survey section. That is, students in College of Education cohort tended to value personal interests and advisors' opinions when choosing thesis projects while those in

Teacher Education Program cohort had a tendency to emphasize the feasibility of the research design.

Negotiation Process Between Advisors and Advisees

The negotiation process between advisors and advisees, especially when they discuss about the selection of thesis topics, participants, and methods, was one of the foci of the present study.

From the fourth section of the survey, in which questions such as "If my advisor provides me with a thesis topic, even though it does not relate to my research interests, I would still accept the offer happily," the researcher discovered that students in two different cohorts showed similar attitudes toward the negotiation process between advisors and advisees. To be clear, the mean point of each question was showed in Table 13.

Table 13

Mean of Each Question in D-Section of the Survey

	D-15	D-16	D-17	D-18	D-19	D-20	D-21
College of Education	3.0	2.6	2.3	2.5	2.3	2.5	2.7
Teacher Education Program	3.0	2.8	2.4	26	2.4	2.5	2.9

However, in the interviews, the participants from different cohorts of schools indicated different opinions about advisement issues. In the interview section, two participants from each cohort of schools were interviewed to reveal the facts when they negotiated with their advisors.

According to the nature of graduate education, there are more opportunities for students to spend time with their advisors (Selke & Wong, 1993) than college students. It is likely that there is a high possibility of having disagreement with each other. When asked about “If there is a conflict between you and your advisor, how would you react?” All of the participants indicated that they could communicate with their advisors, but they mostly showed high respect to their advisors because of their professional knowledge. However, Participant D in Teacher Education Program schools argued that if she disagrees with her advisor’s opinion, it was fine.
As Participant D stated,

> Because I am the one really doing the study, and my advisor barely understood the difficulty embedded in it. In this case, it’s ok to disagree with her and for me her opinions are just for reference (interview, February, 21, 2011).

In addition, Participant D claimed that there is no hierarchical structure between students and advisors in their program, which echoed the results shown in the survey that is, the advisor-advisee relationship in Teacher Education Program schools appeared to be less restricted than that in College of Education schools.

Peters (1997) compared the advisor-advisee relationship between science-related departments and humanities, and he claimed that even though research in humanities was usually done individually, there were still many students doing theses suggested by their advisors because it was considered both time-saving and blessing-receiving. In the interview section, a similar result was observed. When asked the question “If your advisor provides you with a topic, what would you do?” all of the interviewees responded with a positive answer. Participant B stated that “If the topic interests me, I would accept it since it rescues me from the suffering process

of finding a doable thesis topic" (interview, February, 22, 2011). In addition, Participant D also said that "It's good when there is a topic offered, and then I don't have to spend that much time on trial and error" (interview, February, 21, 2011).

However, all of the participants took the provided topic on the premise that they were interested in the topics, or more specifically, they were familiar with the field. Participant A claimed that "If I am not interested in the topic, I would talk to my advisor and reject the topic" (interview, February, 23, 2011).

On the other hand, when answered the question "If your advisor is not interested in your topic, what would you do?" all of the participants revealed that at first they would try to figure out the reasons why their advisors dislike the topics. For example, Participant D stated that "If the reason is that the topic is not a significant or doable topic, I would give up the topic" (interview, February, 21, 2011).

In sum, three out of four participants (Participant B, C, and D) suggested that they would give up the topics if their advisors dislike them. However, Participant A revealed that even her advisor showed no interest in her topic, she would persist in conducting the study.

As Participant A stated,

> If my advisor is not interested in my topic, I would ask for the reasons and show my independence in conducting research. By the way, my advisor is very nice and she is not arbitrary. Even though she defines my topic as a boring one, she lets me to do it on the premise that I like it (interview, February, 23, 2011).

Further, when asked about "If your advisor does not like your topic, what would you do?" or "If your advisor strongly rejects your topic, what would you do?" all of the participants chose to directly give up the topic. For example, Participant C stated that "If my advisor strongly rejects my topic I would abandon the topic immediately

since I would lose her support and help" (interview, February, 23, 2011). Similarly, Participant D said that "I have to consider the reality that if my advisor hates my topic, I would not receive help from her and I wouldn't be able to graduate on time" (interview, February, 21, 2011).

The opinions expressed in the interviews concurred with the suggestions given in the previous studies (Brown & Krager, 1985; desJardins, 1994). Both of the studies warned students of doing studies which are not supported by their advisors. It seemed apparent that graduate students considered the assistance of advisors an influential factor affecting their choice of thesis topics. Moreover, the rank order results also suggested that although as a whole, the role of advisors did not rank the most important factors influencing students' decision making about research projects, advisors did play a determinant role during the process.

In conclusion, even though the relationship between advisors and advisees in College of Education schools seemed to be less loose than that in schools in Teacher Education Program cohort, the results showed that the negotiation process between advisors and advisees appeared to be peaceful. Students had rights to freely discuss the arguing issues with their advisors while advisors provided the room for discussion. In addition, concurred with the studies claiming the importance of advisors in the process of thesis topic selection (Brown & Krager, 1985; Styles & Radloff, 2001), the opinions revealed in the interview section presented the influential roles the advisors play in deciding thesis topics.

A conclusion of the present study will be introduced in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Overview

The present study employed a meta analysis method to investigate the directions of thesis topics, the educational levels of participants, and research methods in TESOL thesis projects produced before and after 2008 in seven TESOL programs in Taiwan. Next, by administering a survey and conducting follow-up interviews, the researcher intended to understand TESOL graduate students' reasons for selecting their thesis topics, research participants, and methods. Finally, the negotiation process of discussing thesis topic selection between advisors and advisees was also discussed in the interview section.

Research Summary

Through the analysis of 502 theses produced between 2004 and 2008 in seven TESOL programs in Taiwan, the directions of thesis topics, the educational levels of participants, and research methods were discovered. Language Skills, Teaching Methods, CALL, and Materials or Curriculum were found to be the top four most investigated topics. In addition, the most common educational levels of research participants were found to be high school, higher education, and elementary school. Regarding the most popular research methods, mixed methods ranked first, showing the fact that nowadays researchers tend to combine two or more methods, such as qualitative methods, quantitative methods, and/or survey in their data collection process.

The most influential factors influencing graduate students' decisions on thesis topics, participants, and methods were revealed in the survey and interviews. The result showed that personal interests were the most influential factor affecting student researchers' decisions about the design of their thesis projects, closely followed by feasibility of the research design and then the role of advisors. These findings provided background information for the meta analysis of the current research trends in TESOL master's thesis projects. Personal interests have a profound effect on students' choice of thesis topics while feasibility of the research design plays an important role in the selection of thesis participants and research methods. Surprisingly, although the role of advisors was considered by the graduate students the least important factor affecting the choice of thesis projects as a whole, research advisors did play influential roles in deciding thesis topics as commonly suggested in the interview section.

Finally, the results elicited from the interviews suggest that most of the interviewees' advisors appeared willing to communicate with their advisees. Likewise, advisees could discuss matters with their advisors should there be any conflicts. However, advisees respected their advisors' opinions because they were seen as the experienced researchers who have more professional knowledge. Moreover, students think of advisors' interests in their topics as a substantial factor affecting their decision on thesis topics, and this finding showed that advisors do play a major role in deciding thesis topics.

Research Limitations and Future Research Suggestions

Some adjustments can be implemented to improve the data collection process and improve the reliability of the results. First of all, the thesis projects collected in

the present study were only produced in seven targeted TESOL programs. Because of the small sample size, it would be better if all of the theses produced in every TESOL program in Taiwan were gathered for analysis; therefore the full picture of the current thesis research trend could be more clearly revealed. Second, despite the participants included in the interview section may reveal some valuable insights concerning the negotiation between advisors and advisees, their personal observation and opinions; cannot represent all TESOL students.

Although the present study had limitations, substantial findings were presented. For future research suggestions, it would be better to include more data samples to enhance the validity and reliability of the results. In addition, follow-up studies may be conducted to search for the future thesis research directions in the following years. Most of all, it is of interest to extend the interviews into real observations. Based on the observations of the actual negotiation process of selecting thesis topics, the relationship between advisors and advisees can be clearly revealed, and the findings may provide current graduate students and advisors with valuable suggestions for better advisor-advisee relations.

Implications

The present study indicated the current research directions of thesis topics, participants, and methods. In addition, the survey results revealed the influential factors affecting the selection process of thesis projects. Furthermore, the negotiation process between advisors and advisees can shed some light on interactive advisor-advisee relationship. The results are beneficial for graduate students, policy makers in TESOL programs as well as research advisors. For graduate students, by

understanding the current research trends, they can gain knowledge of what topics are overdone and what fields are left unexplored. On the other hand, for policy makers, they can improve the course designs to compensate for the lack of training on underdeveloped fields. Moreover, research advisors can understand the factors affecting students' choices of thesis related issues, thus making the negotiation process more effective.

Conclusion

There are two remarks to conclude the present study. First of all, although the results pointed out the most popular thesis topics, participants, and methods investigated recently, a future study is needed to analyze the entire thesis projects produced in every TESOL program in Taiwan, in order to provide a full picture of current thesis directions.

Secondly, the interview findings show that most interviewees' advisors position themselves as a fellow-worker instead of an expert who guides students in their research; however, we do not want to over-generalize the result since there may be other different cases.

Analyzing current trends in TESOL master's theses is of value and follow-up investigations should be done every few years. In addition, the advisor-advisee relationship during the negotiation process of selecting thesis projects is of interest. Future studies are called for in which observation is employed to reveal the actual discussion process between advisors and advisees.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Survey

Dear participants,

I am Iris Chiao-Ping Cheng, a third-grade graduate student studying in the institute of TESOL in National Chiao Tung University. ◦ First of all, thank you for spending your precious time on this study. The major purpose of the present study is to understand the current master's thesis trend in TESOL programs and the related issues about the selection of thesis research topics.

The first section of the survey requires for basic background information. The second part of the survey focuses on the process of deciding thesis topics. Please answer the questions according to your real experience. These questions are answered anonymously, please do not worry! This information is for my research reference only, and it will not be distributed to any third parties.

Thank you for your help sincerely. Your participation will help a lot!
If you have doubts of this study, your questions are welcomed.

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A. Background Information

- School and Programs
  - School _____ Department/Program _____
  - ☐ Full-time student ☐ In-service students
  - ☐ Grade 1 ☐ Grade 2 ☐ Grade 3 ☐ after Grade 3
- Thesis topic/research direction (Tentative one is OK.)

_____

- Research participants (Select one.)
  - ☐ (1) preschools
  - ☐ (2) elementary schools
  - ☐ (3) high schools, including junior and senior high as well as vocational high schools
  - ☐ (4) 1-9 Curriculum
  - ☐ (5) higher education, such as universities, graduate institutes, and doctoral programs
  - ☐ (6) adults
  - ☐ (7) cram school or language schools
  - ☐ (8) mixed levels of participants
- Research methods (Select one.)
  - ☐ (1) Qualitative research
  - ☐ (2) Quantitative research
  - ☐ (3) Classroom action research
  - ☐ (4) Review article/Meta analysis
  - ☐ (5) Survey
  - ☐ (6) Mixed method (including two more of the above methods)
    - Write down the numbers of mixed methods _____

B. Master's thesis topics

1. When do you decide your thesis topic or research direction?
   ☐ Grade 1 ☐ Grade 2 ☐ Grade 3 ☐ after Grade 3
2. According to your experience, write **X** in the check box

（1=strongly disagree；2=disagree；3=agree；4=strongly agree）

	1	2	3	4
A. Factors influencing thesis topic or research direction				
1. When deciding thesis topic or research direction, I mainly depend on my personal research interest.				
2. When deciding thesis topic or research direction, I mainly consider my advisor's research interest or profession.				
3. When deciding thesis topic or research direction, I mainly select the topic that my advisor assigns.				
4. When deciding thesis topic or research direction, I mainly				

depend on the current TESOL trend.				
5. When deciding thesis topic or research direction, I mainly consider the convenience of data collection.				
6. When deciding thesis topic or research direction, I mainly consider the affluence of literature reviews.				
7. When deciding thesis topic or research direction, I mainly consider the feasibility of research methods.				
8. When deciding thesis research field, I mainly consider realistic teaching needs.				
B. Research Participants				
9. When choosing thesis research participants, I mainly concern the convenience of data collection.				
10. When choosing research participants, I mainly concern my own research interest.				
11. When choosing research participants, I mainly take my advisor's choice.				
C. Research methods				
12. When choosing thesis research methods, I mainly concern the feasibility of the research method.				
13. When choosing thesis research method, I mainly concern the current method trend in TESOL field.				
14. When choosing thesis research method, I mainly concern my advisor's expert methods.				
D. Thesis topics and advisement				
15. If my personal research interests disagree with my advisor's interests, I would try hard to negotiate with my advisor.				
16. If my personal research interests disagree with my advisor's interests, I would tie in my advisor's research interests.				
17. If my advisor provides me with a thesis topic, even though it does not relate to my research interests, I would still accept the offer happily.				
18. If my advisor provides me with a thesis topic, even though				

it does not relate to my research interests, I would still accept the offer reluctantly.				
19. If my advisor provides me with a thesis topic which does not relate to my research interests, I would not accept the offer.				
20. If my advisor disagrees with my topic, I would try hard to convince him/her.				
21. If my advisor disagrees with my topic, I would give up the topic.				

C. Rank Orders of Factors

According to the importance of the factors influencing the selection of thesis projects, ranking them with numbers.

(The smaller number represents the greater influence the factor has on the selection of thesis projects. Number one is the most influential factor.）

◆ **When deciding thesis topics or research direction**（1-7）

（　　）Personal research interest
（　　）Advisor's research interest or professional specialty
（　　）Trends of TESOL field
（　　）Teaching needs
（　　）Convenience of data collection
（　　）Quantity of literature reviews
（　　）Feasibility of research design
（　　）Others _____

◆ **When choosing thesis research participants**（1-3）

（　　）Convenience of data collection
（　　）Personal research interest
（　　）Advisor's assistance or decision
（　　）Others _____

◆ **When deciding thesis research methods**（1-3）

（　　）Feasibility of research method
（　　）The current trend of methods in TESOL
（　　）Advisor's expert methods
（　　）Others _____

D. Opinions or suggestions

Note of reply
Name_____ ☐ is willing to take part in the interview ☐ is not willing to take part in the interview To contact me ◆ E-mail _____ ◆ Phone_____ _____ year _____ month _____day ♥Thank you for your participation♥

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. What is the rank of your thesis advisor, an assistant professor, an associate professor, or a professor?

2. How did you choose your thesis topic?

3. What factors influence your decision of thesis topic?

4. Why did you choose those participants to be in your study?

5. How did you choose the method to conduct your study?

6. Did you choose your advisor's familiar method?

7. What role did your advisor play in choosing your thesis topic?

8. If there is a conflict between your advisor and you, what would you react?

9. If your advisor provides you with a topic, what would you do?

10. If your advisor is not interested in your topic, what would you do?

11. If your advisor does not like your topic, what would you do?

12. If your advisor strongly rejects your topic, what would you do?