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海外華語師資數位碩士在職專班

碩士論文

Online Continuing Education Master's Program of  
Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language

Department of Chinese as a Second Language  
College of International Studies and Social Sciences  
National Taiwan Normal University

Master's Thesis

過程即結果:

一個關於從英語教師轉型為中文教師的敘事探究

Getting There is As Good As Being There:  
A Narrative Inquiry into Transitioning from  
an ESL to a CFL Teacher

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中華民國 114 年 1 月

January 2025



## Acknowledgement

First and foremost, I would like to thank my husband, Andrew Cross, for the incredible opportunity to travel around the world as part of his career. While this lifestyle comes with its challenges, the unique experiences we have gained are invaluable. This recent relocation to Germany made it possible for me to pursue an additional master's degree, an opportunity that allowed me to delve deeply into my own experiences in a way I might never have otherwise.

Throughout this transformative journey, I am profoundly grateful to Dr. Tsai for her unwavering support. She has guided my inquiry thoughtfully, helping me stay on course while encouraging me to tell my story authentically. I also extend my gratitude to Dr. Liu for her mentorship and guidance as my academic advisor, which has been instrumental during this period of growth.

I would also like to thank NTNU for offering such a comprehensive program that supports the professional development of CFL teachers around the world. The course platform and the school staff, especially Ms. Hsin-Rong Peng, have provided consistent and prompt assistance, making this journey possible.

As narrative inquiry reminds us, the story continues even as this project concludes. Though I still need to complete the teaching practicum for full licensure, this journey has shown me that getting there is just as good as being there.

# Abstract

This inquiry traced the transformative journey of an uncertified ESL teacher in Taiwan who transitioned to a Virginia-certified Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) teacher, with the goal of establishing a stable career as a diplomatic spouse amidst frequent relocations. The study examined the inquirer's evolving professional identity as a CFL teacher through an online master's program and specialized professional coursework. This process involved constructing self-positioned identity through field texts such as photos, reflective notes, and program documents, which documented how the inquirer navigated internal and external challenges in redefining a professional teaching identity in the CFL field. Guided by Clandinin's narrative inquiry framework and Fruchter and Emery's interdisciplinary concepts, the findings of this inquiry highlight how online learning experiences and prior ESL teaching shaped the inquirer's interdisciplinary professional growth and identity transformation as a certified CFL educator. Reflective practices, institutional support, and peer connections were also essential to build confidence in adopting a new CFL teacher identity as well as in fostering a sense of belonging within online learning communities. These experiences empowered the inquirer to integrate transferable skills, adapt to diverse educational contexts, and confidently pursue new teaching opportunities globally.

The findings offer valuable insights for educators undergoing similar transitions, highlighting strategies for navigating identity shifts and establishing a sense of belonging within new professional communities.

**Key Words:** Narrative Inquiry, Interdisciplinary Learning, teacher identity, professional development, CFL Teaching

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# **Chapter 1 The Initial Attempt at Teaching Certification**

This narrative inquiry aimed to present the inquirer’s experience of transitioning teaching identities through the method of narrative inquiry. It began with the inquirer’s past experience as a non-mainstream children’s English teacher in Taiwan (TW) and described how the inquirer seized the opportunity to gradually transition into a certified Chinese language teacher in Virginia, United States (U.S.). This inquiry used the inquirer’s personal background as the starting point of the story and focused on the learning experiences from September 2023 to August 2024. It explored how the inquirer had enhanced new teaching knowledge and skills in a different educational field through the study of online professional courses, and how, during this learning process, the inquirer had gradually established a sense of professional teacher identity and belonging while still in a pre-service teaching role. Through self-narration, the inquirer depicted key moments in the transformation of her career planning, reflected on how she cultivated a positive learning mindset, and examined the challenges and gains experienced in the process of meeting professional growth needs.

The inquirer began with her personal background story, using the learning experiences from online professional courses taken in both the United States and Taiwan, within different online educational contexts, as the central framework to reconstruct past learning experiences. By reflecting on these experiences and engaging in internal self-dialogue, the inquirer aimed to organize her memories and reflections, while further exploring how these experiences shaped her professional growth and

identity. This inquiry not only examined individual growth but also bridged insights from ESL to CFL, demonstrating the transformative potential of interdisciplinary learning on professional identity formation.

This inquiry not only focused on narrating personal learning experiences but also thoroughly reflected on how differences in the educational design and provision of learning resources in online courses between the two countries enabled the inquirer to gain new knowledge in a different professional field, and how virtual interactions facilitated the development of a new teacher identity and sense of belonging. Ultimately, the inquirer provided detailed written reflections on her learning experience, offering insights and feedback that might inspire other educators undergoing similar identity transitions.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first, *The Moment it Took Root*, explains the background of the inquiry by exploring the unseen struggles of a diplomatic spouse. The second section, *Edge to Core*, outlines the motivation and objectives of embracing a new teaching identity. In the third section, *Crossing Cultural Boundaries*, the research questions are framed around the experience of transitioning from Taiwan to the U.S. educational landscape. Finally, *Paving the Way Forward* provides definitions of key terms essential to understanding this inquiry.

### **1.1 The Moment it Took Root: The Unseen Struggles of a Diplomatic Spouse**

The story of life is fascinating, and its twists and turns are always beyond our grasp. It is precisely because of this unpredictability that life's story is full of highs and lows, leaving those immersed in it longing for more. While the glamorous aspects of international diplomatic life are often highlighted, the professional challenges faced by

spouses are less visible. The impact of frequent relocations on a spouse's career stability and personal fulfillment led me to realize that obtaining a teaching license would provide a stable and portable professional path, particularly for someone like me who is both a diplomatic spouse and has a background in teaching.

### *The Past*

My story began soon after graduating from college in Taiwan, when I embarked on a career in teaching English as a second language. Starting as a teaching assistant, I then gradually transitioned into a non-mainstream children's English teacher and eventually became a teacher trainer at the headquarters of several well-known English “cram school” organizations in Taiwan. I recalled that during my first year in the educational field as an assistant, I learned teaching skills and English alongside the students, guided by a lead teacher who was a native English speaker. This experience of sitting alongside the students provided me with a deep understanding of what it meant to be a teacher. Engaging with the knowledge and contexts through the classes not only refined and enhanced my teaching approach and skills but also led to a more nuanced understanding of the teaching role, resulting in more effective and personalized teaching dispositions. It was not until I secured a lead teaching role and worked as a teacher-trainer that I truly encountered myself as a teacher and developed my teacher identity. In essence, engaging with teaching work, such as through observations and early classroom experiences, helped shape teachers' understanding and intertwined their personal identity with their professional role (Pennington & Richards, 2016).

As a teacher trainer, I was required to teach at least one class to stay current with teaching practices. I further challenged myself by teaching a variety of classes, ranging from kindergarteners to elementary school students, at both public schools and within the company where I worked, in order to gain experience with diverse student populations. Additionally, I was responsible for organizing and presenting local and international training workshops, evaluating and supervising teaching performance, and implementing strategic promotional campaigns to promote educational materials. These experiences further strengthened my confidence in teaching and helped to shape my teacher identity in the field of language education.

### ***The Change***

After many years of actively and successfully working in the language education field, a hiring advertisement caught my attention one day. It was for an administrative assistant position at the Australian Office in Taipei, formerly known as the Australian Commerce and Industry Office (ACIO). Although this role was unrelated to my previous work experience, both positions involved working in a cross-cultural environment. What attracted me was the opportunity for change while continuing to work with native English speakers, which ultimately became a life-changing experience. After working as an administrative assistant for a few months, I soon secured a position as a property officer, marking the beginning of a significant transformation in my life. Given the nature of the property officer position, arranging events was a key part of my job duties which provided me with opportunities to meet new people. It was through this role that I met my husband during an event; he was

working as a U.S. foreign service officer at the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) at the time. Just like that, I started the Foreign service life alongside my husband.

The many rewarding aspects of Foreign Service life are often readily apparent. The unique experiences, including extensive travel and cultural exposure, broaden one's perspective. The top-notch education provided to diplomatic children further enriches this lifestyle. The experiences gained while posted overseas shaped one's values and deepened the appreciation for global diversity. It has truly been an honor to serve the country in this capacity. However, despite the excitement and challenges of relocations, the career perspective of a diplomatic spouse is often overlooked. As my identity shifted from an ESL teacher to a spouse and then to a stay-at-home mom, I realized that reentering the workforce, particularly as a diplomatic spouse, was challenging. This realization marked the beginning of this inquiry, following our relocation to Frankfurt, Germany, for a three-year assignment.

### ***The Encounter***

Upon learning about the Germany assignment, I was working as a Special Education Teacher at a public elementary school in northern Virginia. After being a stay-at-home mom for eight years, during which I raised my daughters, who were 7 and 8 at the time, I returned to the workforce as a special education substitute teacher for the 2021-2022 school year. I soon committed to a "life influences life" teaching position and obtained a provisional license in Special Education while teaching during the 2022-2023 school year. Although I hoped to continue making a difference in this role and to obtain a full license in Special Education, the twists and turns of life once again went beyond my control. I began planning how to continue working in the

teaching field while in Germany, only to realize that all teaching positions within mainstream school systems required a full teaching license and that there were no special education classes available in mainstream international schools. Therefore, furthering my education became another option to remain in the teaching field.

As the idea of furthering my education emerged, I received an email with an admissions brochure for the “Online Continuing Education Master’s Program in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language.” At first glance, I wasn’t ready to commit. However, just a week before the registration deadline, another enrollment reminder arrived. This time, I gave it serious consideration, though the deadline was only a week away. I needed to address some concerns to ensure I could complete the program while relocating to Germany. I contacted the department assistant with my questions, and after several exchanges of emails, I successfully signed up and submitted all the required documents for evaluation a day before the deadline.

Fortunately, I passed the initial document evaluation and was invited to an online oral exam two weeks later. I was officially accepted into the program on May 19, 2023. This acceptance marked the beginning of my journey in search of a new identity as a Chinese teacher.

### ***The Catalyst***

In the seventh week of the program, narrative inquiry was introduced through the topic titled “The Exploration of Influencing Life with Life,” led by Dr. Tsai in the Special Topics on Chinese Instructional Methodology course. This engaging topic immediately captured my interest and drew me into Dr. Tsai’s pre-recorded class videos and teaching materials. Through these resources and the stories she shared, I

began to understand the narratives that have shaped her teacher identity and continue to influence her evolving self. As I engaged with her stories, I reflected on my own experiences as a teacher trainer and envisioned myself once again as a successful language teacher, promoting global language education.

Dr. Tsai's shared experiences inspired me to express my own inner voice and explore my evolving identity across different contexts. I realized that while earning a master's degree in Teaching Chinese as a Second Language was valuable, obtaining a teaching license would not only open up more opportunities for professional growth but also provide greater career stability, addressing the challenges faced by diplomatic spouses during relocations. This clarity led me to embrace the transition in identity from being an uncertified English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher to becoming a certified mainstream Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) teacher. This journey also had underscored the importance of interdisciplinary learning, blending insights from ESL and CFL to enrich my teaching practice and deepen my professional identity.

### **1.2 Edge to Core: Embracing a New Teaching Identity**

As I gained clarity on my transition from being an uncertified English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher to embracing a new core identity as a certified mainstream Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) teacher, it became clear that taking decisive action was necessary. Additionally, as a native Chinese speaker, I found it increasingly challenging to compete with English-native ESL teachers in the international job market. This realization underscored that shifting from ESL to CFL would not only leverage my language skills but also facilitated a smoother transition to a certified teaching role in the mainstream. Pursuing a teaching license thus became a strategic

step, essential for securing stable employment in international schools and aligning my career with the realities of frequent relocations. By adopting this new teaching identity, I aimed to enhance my professional opportunities and navigate the complexities of a global career more effectively. This goal also aligned with research findings on the motivations of second language teachers, which highlighted that extrinsic factors such as job transferability and job security played a crucial role in teacher motivation (Gu, Wang, & Zhang, 2021).

### **1.3 Crossing Cultural Boundaries: From TW to the U.S. Educational Landscape**

The decision to pursue a language teaching license was profoundly influenced by my engagement with Dr. Tsai's stories. Her experiences resonated deeply with me, inspiring me to envision a return to teaching and teacher training. To align my personal journey with my professional goals, obtaining a U.S. teaching license became essential, particularly as my diplomatic life would eventually lead us back to the United States. Therefore, pursuing a mainstream Virginia state teaching license became a crucial step in shaping my career path and achieving my professional goals.

While this goal was firmly rooted in my aspirations, I was aware that many challenges lay ahead. My entire educational background had been shaped by Taiwan's traditional rote memorization methodologies, which contrasted with the more interactive, engaging, and student-centered approaches prevalent in the educational contexts of the U.S. This led me to question whether I would find it difficult to adapt to these new educational methods. Would I be able to transition smoothly from the traditional Taiwanese rote style to the more dynamic and participatory U.S. teaching approach? Moreover, since I relocated to Germany, attending in-person U.S. classes

would be impossible. Therefore, pursuing an alternative online education route, in addition to the master's program, became necessary to achieve a U.S. teaching license.

Online learning was not unfamiliar to me, as I had already started an online master's program after relocating to Germany. However, the continuing education master's program I was enrolled in was offered by National Taiwan Normal University (NTNU), whose educational system, context, and framework I was well-acquainted with. The familiarity with key elements such as cultural practices, educational settings, and teaching methods that shaped my educational experiences would further support my learning journey at NTNU.

However, pursuing a U.S. teaching license required navigating an educational framework and context specific to the U.S. Although I was prepared to face challenges, I anticipated significant anxieties, struggles, and stress, particularly in balancing my family responsibilities with intensive studies. I questioned whether I would be able to adapt to this new educational environment, gain the professional insights needed to advance my teaching career, and develop a new teacher identity within the online learning platform, recognizing that teacher learning involves not only teaching skills but also the cultivation of a new identity (Yang & Han, 2022).

While my background in Taiwanese education provided a strong foundation, adapting to the American educational culture brought its own set of challenges. Academically and socially, I had to navigate cultural differences, adopt new teaching practices, and build the self-confidence necessary to thrive in this diverse and evolving educational landscape. However, these challenges also motivated me to maintain a positive attitude. As noted by Gu et al. (2021), teacher education fosters a collaborative

process where educators share experiences, discuss ideas, refine practices, and apply what they have learned - a philosophy that deeply resonated with my own aspirations as I embarked on this new professional journey. I anticipated receiving support from this community and hoped to strengthen my sense of belonging. This combination of internal motivation and external support reinforced my belief in my ability to navigate the shifting educational and social landscape.

### ***Inquiry Questions***

1. How do online learning experiences in Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) and related professional studies, along with previous ESL experiences, contribute interdisciplinarily to professional teaching growth and the development of teaching opportunities?

2. How did the process of developing a professional teacher identity evolve from that of an uncertified ESL teacher to a certified Chinese teacher (CFL) through an online learning experience?

3. What are the key factors in developing a sense of belonging in teaching community through online learning experiences, considering the shift in the educational landscape from Taiwan to the United States?

### **1.4 Paving the Way Forward**

To move forward with this inquiry, it is essential to clarify several key terms that will serve as the foundation for understanding the broader context. These key terms include narrative inquiry, interdisciplinary learning, English as a Second Language (ESL), Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL), and professional studies. Defining these terms will not only provide a solid foundation for understanding this inquiry but also

facilitate a smoother exploration of my evolving teacher identity and professional development

### ***Narrative Inquiry***

Clandinin (2023) defined narrative inquiry as “an approach to the study of human lives, conceived as a way of honoring lived experience as a source of important knowledge and understanding” (p.7). Yang and Han (2022) further simplified it as “a means to capture lived experience” (p.5). They proposed that, through narrative inquiry, studying teachers' lived stories enhances our understanding of teacher identity. In this inquiry, I aimed to explore my own lived experiences through online learning, focusing on my transformation from an ESL teacher to a CFL teacher.

### ***Interdisciplinary Learning***

According to Jacob (1989), interdisciplinary learning referred to a way of understanding and structuring knowledge that intentionally combines methods, terminology, and perspectives from multiple disciplines to explore a central theme, question, or issue. This inquiry adopted an interdisciplinary approach by integrating insights from the inquirer's experiences as a teacher trainer in English as a Second Language (ESL) and as a teacher in Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) to facilitate a comprehensive exploration of the connections between these two fields during the inquirer's journey of identity transformation.

### ***Teacher Identity***

According to Yang & Han (2022), teacher identity was defined as “one's self-understandings in relation to other people and wider social structures, which shift across time and space and concern one's considerations of future possibilities” (p.3).

In this inquiry, I aimed to explore how my teacher identity evolved during the transition from an uncertified ESL teacher in Taiwan to a certified Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) teacher in the United States. This exploration involved reflecting on past experiences, examining the influence of social and institutional contexts, and understanding how these factors shaped my professional self-perception.

### ***Professional Development***

Professional development referred to the ongoing process of enhancing content knowledge, teaching skills, and professional competencies for growth and effectiveness in the education field. In this inquiry, professional development was pivotal as I transitioned from an ESL teacher in Taiwan to a certified CFL teacher in the United States. This journey involved engaging in online learning, participating in professional coursework, and practicing reflection. These experiences not only deepened my pedagogical expertise and content knowledge but also significantly shaped my professional identity which boosted confidence and fostered interdisciplinary growth.

### ***Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) Teaching***

CFL teaching refers to the teaching of Chinese to non-native speakers in regions where Chinese is not the primary language. As I transitioned from ESL to CFL, this term underscored my shift towards becoming a U.S. certified Chinese language teacher. This process involved exploring online learning opportunities and engaging in professional development to align with U.S. educational standards.

## Chapter 2 Mapping the Path

As the transition from an uncertified English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher to a U.S. certified mainstream Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) teacher became clearer, the inquirer recognized that personal motivations played a crucial role in shaping this transformative journey. To fully understand this process, it is essential to not only explore the underlying motivations, but also to map the pathway to becoming a U.S. certified foreign language teacher.

This chapter will first explore what it takes to become a teacher, focusing on the transition from being an uncertified ESL teacher in TW to becoming a U.S. certified Foreign Language teacher. Key differences in educational culture between these two contexts will be examined to highlight the challenges and opportunities in this professional journey. This discussion is presented in the section titled “The Making of a U.S. Certified Foreign Language Teacher.” The chapter will then examine how coursework completed through the TW master’s program and professional studies courses taken through U.S. universities facilitated the transition from initial aspirations to formal accreditation. This process is detailed in the section titled “From Aspiration to Accreditation: Professional Development Courses.” Finally, the chapter will review literature on narrative inquiry and interdisciplinary learning to offer a deeper understanding of the journey outlined as “Navigating the Bumpy Road through Narrative Inquiry and Interdisciplinary Learning.”

## **2.1 The Making of a Certified U.S. Foreign Language Teacher**

### ***The Desire and Motivation of Becoming***

While diplomatic life is often admired for its perceived prestige, the job instability experienced by accompanying diplomatic spouses is frequently overlooked. Rosenbaum-Feldbrügge et al. (2022) found that non-working partners with employment desires often expressed frustration or dissatisfaction due to their inability to find work or pursue a career. This unfulfilled desire made it difficult for these individuals to feel settled or adjust to their new surroundings. I personally resonated with this issue, as the challenge of job instability resurfaced when I permanently relocated to Germany with my family in August 2023.

Although I had prepared for this challenge by enrolling in a master's program, hoping to make the most of my time overseas by pursuing a second master's degree, the frustration of navigating job instability persisted. It was not until I encountered Dr. Tsai's stories through the narrative inquiry introduced during the first semester of the master's program that I considered pursuing a U.S. teaching license. Dr. Tsai's stories inspired me to reimagine my previous roles in teaching and training in TW. Her narratives encouraged me to view those past experiences in a new light and significantly influenced how I planned to shape my future career.

Reflecting on my past, I not only recognized the joy I found in teaching but also realized that I possessed the essential attributes of a good teacher, as affirmed by the feedback I received from my previous teaching and training experiences. Pursuing a U.S. teaching license became a logical step, especially given the requirement for teaching in accredited international schools. Through the co-construction of personal

reflection on these experiences and the social context of the feedback I received, my desire for teaching emerged as a key factor driving both my learning and teaching processes (Norton, 2016b). This intrinsic motivation mirrored findings from research on pre-service Chinese teachers, which emphasized the importance of personal passion and intrinsic values over external rewards in choosing a teaching career (Zhang, Wu, & Zhu, 2020).

### ***My Teaching Attributes***

As I pursued a profession in teaching, I recognized that job stability was not my sole motivation. My journey was deeply shaped by my love for language and teaching, my determined desire for security, and my imaginative vision for my professional future. In reflecting on this process, I found that Sarasa and Porta's (2018) notion of “the processes of becoming, knowing, and doing through love, desire, imagination, and fluidity” (p.143) closely aligned with my own experience. These processes unfolded naturally as I recognized that I was not only driven by the pursuit of stability but also by a clear understanding of my teaching attributes and my proactive steps toward becoming a U.S. certified language teacher. Sarasa and Porta's framework helped me grasp that becoming a teacher was not solely about acquiring knowledge; it also involved fully embracing the role and committing to ongoing personal and professional growth.

Moreover, my transition from an ESL teacher to a CFL teacher underscored not only my strong belief in disciplinary learning and the significance of language in shaping identity (Creese & Blackledge, 2015) but also the key teaching attributes that I developed throughout this process. This shift required cultural sensitivity, adaptability,

and a deep understanding of how language serves as a bridge between personal and collective identities. As Creese and Blackledge (2015) noted, “at least some language users, at least some of the time, hold passionate beliefs about the importance and significance of a particular language to their sense of ‘identity’” (p.25). This perspective strongly influenced my preparation for teaching Chinese, as I aimed to bring both linguistic knowledge and an awareness of how language and culture interact, which enables students to navigate their own identities in a multicultural world.

Furthermore, I remained acutely aware of the cultural differences between my educational background and the teaching expectations in the United States and abroad, a point highlighted by Haley and Ferro (2011) in their exploration of the challenges faced by individuals transitioning into U.S. schools from diverse educational experiences. Although I possess strong linguistic skills and is capable of using language in a nuanced way, I realized that this ability does not automatically make me good at teaching those skills to others. In other words, being good at language use doesn't always mean I am good at teaching or explaining it effectively (Schrier, 1994).

### ***Awareness of Diverse Educational Cultures***

Growing up in Taiwan, my educational experiences spanning from K-12 through college and into my master's degrees were deeply rooted in the Taiwanese educational context. The standardized college entrance exam, Daxueliankao, along with the authoritative role of teachers, were the dominant factors shaping my schooling. The arrayed seating and teacher-centered lectures created a learning environment that emphasized passive reception of information and left little room for student engagement or interaction. Consequently, note-taking and rote learning became

prevalent practices in classrooms, primarily aimed at preparing students to pass college entrance exams - Daxueliankao.

I could hardly remember speaking much during classes unless a question was directed at me. Interaction with classmates was often discouraged, as it was considered disrespectful to the teacher. I passively absorbed what was taught and was expected to remember as much as possible in order to pass each exam. In my English class, for example, vocabulary and grammar dominated each lesson. I diligently took notes on grammatical rules and was encouraged to refer back to them and practice incorporating them correctly into my sentences.

The emphasis on accurate language use was paramount in English, while across all subjects, the expectation to provide correct answers rather than genuinely understand the concepts remained consistent. Despite passing my exams, I often forgot what I had learned and felt disconnected from its deeper significance. The pressure and stress associated with achieving high scores shaped the overall educational culture I experienced. Zhao (2009) argued that this focus on high-stakes testing and standardization could hinder creativity and critical thinking, further contributing to the limitations of my educational experience.

Fast forward to my roles as a substitute teacher and special education teacher in the U.S. public schools: the classroom dynamic was completely different from what I had experienced. Had it not been for my consistent involvement in my daughters' schools, I would have faced extreme culture shock. There was no traditional arrayed seating; instead, classrooms featured a variety of options including small couches,

bouncing balls, stools, and chairs. Students were encouraged to switch seating arrangements for different tasks.

Furthermore, teacher-centered lecture time was brief, while student-centered collaborative activities dominated the class. Consistent with the findings of Haley and Ferro (2011), students gained new knowledge through peer collaboration and hands-on experiences, with teachers supporting them using diverse approaches tailored to their needs. This aligns with their description of teachers as motivators and facilitators who create an interactive environment that promotes students' freedom of expression.

In Taiwan, such a student-centered and flexible approach would have been perceived as chaotic within the traditionally well-disciplined and teacher-centered classrooms. As Haley and Ferro (2011) noted, educators transitioning from different schooling backgrounds, like mine, faced significant challenges in classroom management when adapting to the more fluid and student-centered U.S. educational environments. This adaptation was also essential for me to develop strategies for becoming a U.S. certified language teacher.

Overall, these experiences highlighted the marked contrasts between the two educational contexts, and I was fully aware that these cultural differences would significantly impact my transition into becoming a U.S. certified CFL teacher. To address these challenges, engaging in professional development became essential, not only through my master's program but also through the professional studies required for the U.S. teaching license. These programs equipped me with essential pedagogical knowledge for teaching Chinese and enriched my understanding of cultural differences, particularly through collaboration with in-service language teachers in the U.S. Their

shared experiences and practical insights prepared me to navigate and adapt to the American educational context. Thus, professional development was pivotal in bridging the cultural gap and facilitating my transition.

## **2.2 From Aspiration to Accreditation: Professional Development Courses**

Haley and Ferro (2011) emphasized that teachers with educational backgrounds outside of North America often developed teaching perceptions shaped by their own educational experiences. They further noted that professional development became crucial for these teachers to adopt student-centered teaching methods. This deeply resonated with me as my own educational journey was firmly rooted in the Taiwanese educational context. Acknowledging this, I recognized the need to further my professional development to effectively adopt student-centered teaching strategies and enhance my professional knowledge in the CFL field.

### ***Online Continuing Education Master's Program***

Pursuing a U.S. teaching license was not my initial goal when I enrolled in the master's program. Instead, I aimed to make the most of my time in Germany by furthering my education. My decision to study Teaching Chinese was somewhat coincidental as I came across the admissions brochure in my inbox. However, it quickly became my new goal to complete this master's degree, hoping to gain valuable professional knowledge in this field and to open up potential teaching opportunities in the future.

According to National Taiwan Normal University (n.d.), Online Continuing Education Master's Program of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language was established in 2016 to address the global trend of digital learning and the shortage of

advanced talent in overseas Chinese language education. This program provided a professional development pathway for individuals engaged in overseas Chinese language education or those seeking to enhance their teaching skills. It was structured to provide participants with comprehensive training in Chinese instructional methodology through a blend of interactive discussion boards, synchronous and asynchronous classes, assignments, and group presentations. At the time I enrolled in 2023, students were required to complete a total of 25 credits, which included 1 credit from required courses and at least 24 credits from elective courses for the degree. The table 2.2.1. below listed the courses I enrolled in.

**Table 2.2.1**

*Inquirer's Course Enrollment*

<b>School Year</b>	<b>Enrolled Courses</b>
2023/09 - 2023/12	Special Topics on Chinese Instructional Methodology Special Topics on Linguistics Chinese Society and Culture
2024/02 - 2024/06	Assessment of Chinese Language Proficiency Seminar on Chinese Language Teaching Methods and Materials Chinese Character Teaching Theory and Applications
2024/09 - 2025/01	IB Philosophy and Practices Applied Interactive Teaching Research Method and Thesis Writing

This program offered flexible online learning pathways, making it ideal for working individuals regardless of their location or time zone. The advantages of this format included the ability to study at one's own pace, access to a diverse range of resources and materials, and the convenience of fitting coursework into busy schedules without the need for commuting. Most importantly, the courses were conducted in Chinese. This approach provided a stress-free learning experience without the challenges of navigating other languages and cultural differences. The pre-recorded videos created an immersive classroom experience that made me feel as though I was attending live lectures. Additionally, through discussion boards and group assignments, I had opportunities to interact with other participants and exchange ideas and perspectives. Many of my peers were located in different countries and worked as in-service teachers. This situation enabled me to gain valuable insights into actual teaching practices as I was not actively in a teaching role. Furthermore, most courses offered an online chat platform via the Line application. This platform provided an instant and convenient way for the participants to address concerns or raise questions, which enhanced the overall learning experience.

While the online master's program offered numerous advantages, I faced several challenges that needed to be addressed. One significant challenge was adapting to different time zones. Waking up at 3 a.m. for a three-hour synchronous class was difficult, as it disrupted my sleep and required me to quickly focus on the instruction. Coordinating with peers across various time zones to complete group assignments also proved to be challenging. Nevertheless, while conducting this inquiry, I successfully completed 18 credits and enjoyed a positive experience with both instructors and fellow

participants through my participation in various individual and group assignments that enriched my learning journey. What propelled me forward during these difficult times was the grit and resilience I brought to the experience. This personal trait allowed me to persevere through disrupted sleep, challenging time zones, and coordination hurdles, turning obstacles into opportunities for growth. By demonstrating determination and adaptability, I not only overcame these challenges but also gained a deeper appreciation for my ability to thrive under pressure which reinforced my confidence to face future challenges in both my academic and professional journey.

Moreover, during the first year of this master's program, I was also enrolled in six required courses for the U.S. teaching license, which I will address in the next section. The intense study schedule and looming assignment deadlines required me to spend countless hours on my coursework. Balancing my studies with work responsibilities and family care allowed me to preserve family time, but it came at the expense of my own sleep and relaxation. As a result, my vision worsened significantly due to the strain of intense studying. It was once again my grit and resilience that helped me overcome these challenges, enabling me to stay focused and persevere despite the physical and mental strain. By the end of August 2024, I had successfully completed a total of 36 credits and earned straight A's in every course.

### ***U.S. Foreign Language PreK-12 Teaching License***

As noted by Ball and Forzani (2010), “the principal way to become a teacher used to be through higher education; however, most states now sanction a variety of options, including district-based ‘residency’ programs, ‘alternative’ programs such as Teach for America, and online training” (p.8). While exploring the pathways to becoming a

teacher in Virginia, I discovered that an alternate route to licensure was available. This finding excited me, as it underscored the diverse options for becoming a U.S. certified language teacher and made me feel that the process would be more accessible and achievable. My desire to pursue a U.S. teaching license was further reinforced, and I recognized that my cultural background could serve as an asset in language classrooms.

As I reflected on the various pathways available for obtaining a teaching license, I recognized that the excitement of discovering alternate routes must be balanced with the awareness of their implications. Simply being a native speaker of a foreign language was insufficient; possessing comprehensive professional teaching knowledge was essential for effectively delivering that language. Ball and Forzani (2010) emphasized that “allowing teachers to learn at children’s expense is unethical. We must build a system for ensuring that new teachers have the requisite professional skills and know how to use them” (p.8). Pursuing a U.S. teaching license within authentic U.S. educational contexts became increasingly clear to me, as it not only highlighted accessible routes but also underscored the importance of a robust learning and training system to adequately prepare me as a new U.S. certified foreign language teacher.

Since Virginia was my family's home, obtaining a VA teaching license would have been more beneficial for me, as a U.S. teaching license was generally recognized by most international schools. Therefore, the following section outlined a pathway for me to become a U.S. certified foreign language teacher.

### ***VA General Components for Licensure***

According to the Virginia Department of Education (n.d.), several general components were required for licensure at the time of my research. First, a licensure

candidate had to be a U.S. citizen, a permanent resident, or a specific type of temporary resident who held a U.S. Social Security number. Next, the candidate needed to possess a bachelor's degree from a nationally recognized college or university. Additionally, proof of completion of content-area knowledge coursework, professional studies coursework, and prescribed assessments was required. One year of student teaching or practicum in the endorsed area was also necessary for obtaining the license. Lastly, candidates had to meet several statutory license requirements, which included certification in Child Abuse and Neglect Recognition, Intervention Training, CPR, and other relevant training programs (VDOE, 2022). These addressed requirements could also be fulfilled through an approved traditional licensure pathway such as a teacher preparation program or via an accepted alternative licensure route. The general components were listed in the table 2.2.2.

**Table 2.2.2**

*General Components for Licensure*

<b>General Components for Licensure</b>	
<b>Basic Requirements</b>	<b>Additional Requirements</b>
Social Security Number	Professional Studies Coursework
Bachelor's Degree	Prescribed Assessments
Content-Area Knowledge	Student Teaching/Practicum
	Statutory Licensure Requirements

As a U.S. citizen, I obtained a social security number, which granted me the legal right to work in the U.S. Although I completed my master's degree in Applied English in Taiwan, I had my credentials evaluated and recognized by the U.S. education system.

Given that my entire educational background was rooted in Taiwan, I possessed the required content-area knowledge. However, I recognized that additional knowledge in Methods of Teaching Foreign Languages was essential for my progress. While I had met most of the basic requirements for the Virginia teaching license, I still needed to complete the content-area course and fulfill additional requirements to finalize my licensure.

### ***Professional Studies Coursework***

According to the VDOE administrative code 8VAC20-23-130, a total of 18 semester hours/credits were required for endorsements in early/primary education, elementary education, and middle education. The required courses included Human Development and Learning, Curriculum and Instruction, Classroom and Behavior Management, Assessment of and for Learning, Foundations of Education and the Teaching Profession, and Language and Literacy.

While pursuing licensure through the alternative route, which involved learning a foreign language without formal academic credit from a regionally accredited college or university, I was also required to complete three semester hours in Methods of Teaching Foreign Languages at the elementary and secondary levels as previously mentioned. I was particularly pleased to learn that taking the Methods of Teaching Foreign Languages course would fulfill the requirement for the Curriculum and Instruction course. Therefore, to meet the professional studies requirements, I needed to complete a total of six courses, amounting to 18 credits (Table 2.2.3).

### **Table 2.2.3.**

#### *Professional Studies Coursework*

<b>Professional Studies Coursework</b>	
<b>Course Name</b>	<b>Credits</b>
Human Development and Learning	3
Classroom and Behavior Management	3
Assessment of and for Learning	3
Foundations of Education and the Teaching Profession	3
Language and Literacy	3
<b>Content-Area Knowledge</b>	<b>Credits</b>
Methods of Teaching Foreign Languages	3

Since I was not actively employed in a VA public school, I needed to initiate the licensure process independently without the assistance of Human Resources. This interaction became a critical part of my transition, as it required navigating administrative complexities and finding solutions to logistical challenges. To do so, I reached out to the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to confirm the six courses required for the license. However, VDOE informed me that all course approvals needed to be submitted through official mail. Given my overseas location, I kindly requested an exception to submit the course approvals via email. Fortunately, my request was granted, saving me considerable time that would have been spent on back-and-forth mailing and allowing me to start the process sooner. Although the overall process remained complicated and time-consuming, communicating online added another layer of difficulty, as delays in responses and unclear instructions often prolonged the process. Despite these challenges, I was grateful for the opportunity to communicate online, especially since I had no school personnel available to assist me.

It was my patience and attention to detail that ultimately helped me navigate this lengthy online communication process, ensuring that I could resolve each issue as it arose.

After frequent correspondence with VDOE, I finalized the approved online courses at the University of Phoenix (UOP) and the University of Virginia's College at Wise (UVA Wise), which perfectly suited my needs while I was located in Germany. The names of the approved courses differed slightly from the required courses, but their frameworks and objectives remained consistent. More detailed course names were provided in Table 2.2.4.

**Table 2.2.4**

*Approved Professional Studies Courses*

<b>Professional Studies Coursework</b>				
<b>Required Course</b>	<b>Credits</b>	<b>Approved Corresponding Courses</b>	<b>Credits</b>	<b>Approved Institutions</b>
Human Development and Learning	3	Theories of Growing and Learning	3	UOP
Foundations of Education and the Teaching Profession	3	Foundations of Education	3	
Classroom and Behavior Management	3	Classroom Management for Educators	3	
Language and Literacy	3	Reading Methods: Secondary	3	
Assessment of and for Learning	3	Assessment and Evaluation for Educators	3	
<b>Content-Area Knowledge</b>				
Methods of Teaching Foreign Languages	3	Methodology of Teaching Foreign Languages	3	UVA Wise

### ***Prescribed Assessments***

According to the VDOE administrative code 8VAC20-23-360, a prescribed assessment for Foreign Language - Modern: Chinese PreK-12 was part of the licensure requirements. The correspondence I received indicated that “a minimum score of 600 on the Test of English as a Foreign Language is required if English is not the native language; native speakers of English are exempt from this test.” I received a “Not Applicable” designation from VDOE, which I believed was due to my citizenship status. However, given that my highest degree was in Applied English and I had experience as an ESL teacher, I felt confident in my English proficiency. This exemption allowed me to dedicate more time to my professional studies.

Another assessment mentioned in the correspondence was the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) and the Writing Proficiency Test (WPT). To fulfill this requirement, a proficiency level of “advanced low” was necessary. As a native Chinese speaker, I was confident in my ability to meet this standard, so I promptly scheduled both tests to take place alongside my studies. I achieved a Superior rating in the WPT in January 2024 and an Advanced High rating in the OPI in June 2024. I purposely selected my self-evaluation level as Advanced High in speaking instead of Superior to test the system's response. I wanted to see if it would only recognize the highest level I selected, regardless of my actual proficiency, knowing that I only needed Advanced Low to pass. Despite this, both scores still exceeded the “Advanced Low” requirement for the license.

### ***Student Teaching/Practicum and Statutory Licensure Requirements***

Regarding student teaching and statutory training, both would be completed after my return to the U.S. since I was located in Germany during this inquiry. I was not permitted to teach unless I applied for a work permit. Additionally, I did not find any K-12 international schools in the area that offered Chinese language instruction, and I did not hold an active language teaching license. Therefore, this inquiry primarily focused on my pathway to licensure, effectively titled “Getting There is as Good as Being There,” as I gained valuable insights about the journey to becoming a certified language teacher beyond just obtaining the license.

The journey to becoming a U.S. certified language teacher underscored the significance of both personal and professional growth within the field of education. By fulfilling the requirements through approved online courses, I not only acquired professional knowledge for teaching Chinese but also deepened my understanding of U.S. teaching standards. This experience expanded my professional expertise and profoundly shaped my path toward licensure. Narrating this interdisciplinary experience through the lens of narrative inquiry revealed my personal stories and experiences, which helped me understand my evolving identity.

### **2.3 Navigating through Narrative Inquiry and Interdisciplinary Learning**

#### ***Narrative Inquiry***

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) defined narrative inquiry as “a way of understanding experience. It is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus” (p.20). Clandinin (2023) further explained that narrative inquiry not only emphasizes

individual experience but “is also an exploration of the social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives within which individuals’ experiences were and are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted” (pp.7-8). That was to say that narrative inquirers study individuals' storied experiences by living relationally alongside them and strive to understand and transform the shared experiences for both themselves and others.

While Clandinin (2023) noted that Dewey’s theory of experience serves as the foundational framework for narrative inquiry through the concepts of temporality, place, and sociality - the three commonplaces - the field of narrative inquiry had since evolved. It now focused more attentively on diverse populations, different cultural heritages, and most importantly, ethical considerations and relational ethics. The revised view of narrative inquiry now considered it as “relational across time, place, and relationships” (Clandinin, 2023, p.9). As researchers came into relation with participants, shared storied experiences became visible in the contexts where they met across times and places. The focus of narrative inquiry was now to be “people in relation studying people in relation” (Clandinin, 2023, p.12).

### ***Narrative Inquiry and Teacher education***

Narrative inquiry initially employed by Connelly and Clandinin in 1990 to examine how teachers gain knowledge (Craig, 2011). This approach was further established as a key method for studying educational experiences in Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology (Clandinin, 2006). This book reinforced narrative inquiry's pivotal role in the educational field. Additionally, Craig (2011) emphasized that “teacher education is inextricably linked to teachers’ lives and

narrative inquiry studies lives in motion; the link between teacher education and narrative inquiry could not be stronger” (p.20). In other words, teacher education was deeply intertwined with teachers' personal and professional lives, shaped by their experiences, beliefs, and identities. By focusing on understanding and interpreting individual stories, narrative inquiry created a powerful connection between teachers' experiences and teacher education. This method allowed educators to reflect on their personal journeys while fostering deeper self-awareness of how these experiences shaped their teaching practices. Understanding teachers' development was therefore inseparable from understanding their ongoing life narratives.

For me, this approach resonated deeply as my own journey toward teaching had been marked by personal transitions and identity shifts. Narrative inquiry not only helped me examine my diplomatic life and its impact on my teaching aspirations, but also provided a lens through which to reflect on my educational experiences, particularly those in online learning. This reflective process was central to my development as I worked toward becoming a certified language teacher. By unfolding my own story through narrative inquiry, I hoped to contribute to the broader conversation on identity transformation for educators in similar transitions.

### ***Interdisciplinary Learning***

According to Jacobs (1989), interdisciplinary learning was defined as “a knowledge view and curriculum approach that consciously applies methodology and language from more than one discipline to examine a central theme, issue, problem, topic, or experience” (p.8). Ivanitskaya et al. (2002) further emphasized that “interdisciplinary approaches encourage students to perceive the connections between

seemingly unrelated domains, thereby facilitating a personalized process of organizing knowledge” (p.99). The exchange of expertise across diverse disciplines created opportunities for learning from other fields. With a broader knowledge base, perspectives on new concepts would offer various angles, thereby contributing fresh insights to a new field.

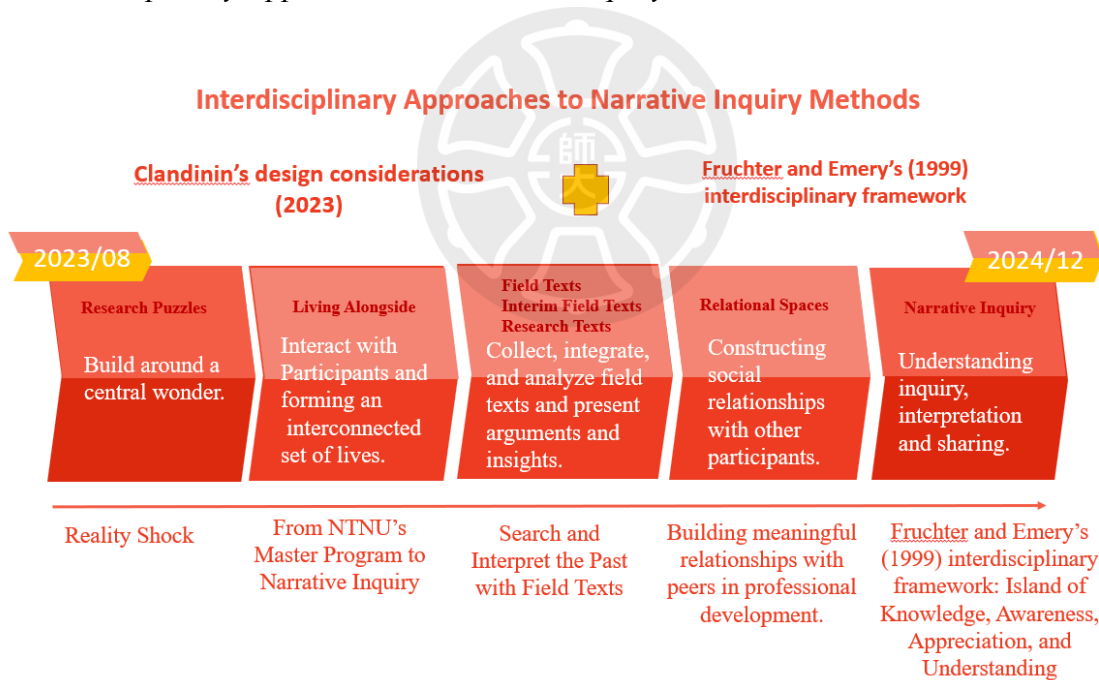
Given my ESL experiences, I may not have obtained the necessary professional knowledge in the CFL field; however, I could easily adapt the teaching methodologies and strategies. Even though ESL and CFL are two distinct areas, they both fall within the realm of education. Through interdisciplinary learning, I was able to identify and transfer relevant pedagogical approaches and techniques from ESL to CFL. This adaptability not only enriched my teaching repertoire but also highlighted the interconnectedness of language instruction across disciplines, enabling me to create more effective and engaging learning experiences for my students. By recognizing the shared principles underlying both fields, I was able to build a strong foundation that supported my growth as a certified language teacher.

# Chapter 3 Interdisciplinary Approaches to Narrative Inquiry Methods

This chapter will focus on the methodology of narrative inquiry, emphasizing its interdisciplinary nature as shown in Figure 3. This approach serves as a foundational framework for understanding my journey toward becoming a certified language teacher, integrating insights from both English as a Second Language (ESL) and Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) education.

**Figure 3**

*Interdisciplinary Approaches to Narrative Inquiry*



This chapter begins with the section “Purpose of Narrative Inquiry,” which articulates the motivations behind adopting this method and its relevance in capturing the intricacies of both personal and professional growth. Following this, “Narrative Inquiry Design” outlines the methodological considerations that guided my research

process. The chapter then transitions to “Exploring My Inquiry Path within an Interdisciplinary Framework,” where I describe how I designed the inquiry emphasizing the interdisciplinary aspects that informed my inquiry. In “Investigating Temporal Pathways,” I examine the importance of past, present, and future perspectives in developing my teacher identity which illustrates how each timeframe contributes to my growth. The section “Learning Alongside Participants” explores the collaborative dynamics within the learning environment and the role of peer interactions in shaping my experiences. Finally, “Exploring the Field Text Trail” reviews the various data sources that enriched my understanding of this journey. This methodological exploration aims to provide a comprehensive view of how narrative inquiry illuminated the complexities of teacher development and the relationships formed along the way.

### **3.1 Purpose of Narrative Inquiry**

My first encounter with narrative inquiry occurred during a course led by Dr. Ya-Hsun Tsai in the Online Continuing Education Master’s program in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language at NTNU. The three-credit course, titled Special Topics on Chinese Instructional Methodology, was offered in the first semester of the program and became a pivotal experience in my narrative inquiry journey. During this topic, I learned that narrative inquiry is a method for understanding experiences through storytelling. As Connelly and Clandinin (2006) proposed, this approach enables individuals to engage with the world and interpret their experiences with personal meaning. Through narrative inquiry, people can make sense of their lives and experiences by sharing their stories.

This engaging topic immediately captured my interest and drew me into Dr. Tsai's "multiverse" as I actively engaged with her pre-recorded class videos and PowerPoint slides. Her stories offered vivid examples of narrative inquiry in action and demonstrated how lived experiences shape professional identity and personal growth. Through these materials and the stories she shared, I began to understand the experiences that have shaped her identity. I also recognized how these narratives continue to influence her development, shaped by her past, present, and future experiences.

One story that particularly resonated with me was Dr. Tsai's active involvement in International Baccalaureate (IB) workshops. IB workshops are professional development trainings designed to equip educators with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively implement the IB curriculum, which emphasizes critical thinking, inquiry-based learning, and global awareness. This resonated with my own experiences as a former speaker at teacher development workshops which created a sense of connection and shared purpose. Like Professor Tsai, I found that our shared experience in teacher professional development and educational growth created a strong bond between us. We were both dedicated to enhancing teaching practices, and her narratives inspired me to reflect on my own journey in education. Her identities in the field of language teaching and learning deeply inspired me and prompted me to envision myself following a similar path with new possibilities. These possibilities began to take shape almost imperceptibly when I enrolled in this master's program, as if they were always meant to be.

Recognizing the growing importance of Mandarin Chinese education, I reflected on my transition from an ESL teacher, stay-at-home mom, and Special Education Teacher. I realized the need to focus on a single role that would ensure career security as a diplomatic spouse. Becoming a U.S. certified foreign language teacher aligned perfectly with my goals, given my status as a native Chinese speaker and the increasing demand for Chinese education. My next step was to further develop my professional teaching skills in Chinese instruction.

Despite my teaching experience, I had never obtained formal license in education. The shifts in my professional roles contributed to uncertainty and anxiety about becoming a certified Chinese language teacher. This tension in my professional identity stemmed primarily from a lack of specialized knowledge and a feeling of disconnection from the language teaching community. By completing the required professional studies coursework for foreign language teacher license in Virginia and earning a master's degree in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, I aimed to enhance my teaching skills, reshape my professional identity, and foster a sense of belonging within the language teaching community. Ultimately, I hoped to secure a language teaching position as a certified teacher, regardless of where I relocated as a diplomatic spouse.

Therefore, through narrative inquiry, I realized that this was a valuable opportunity for me to give voice to the silence within - to explore who I was and who I was becoming over time and in various contexts. Narrative inquiry offered a way to document and understand my evolving identity, reflecting the complex interplay of past experiences and future aspirations. It was a chance to discover and articulate my evolving identity and sense of belonging during my journey of becoming a U.S.

certified language teacher, and to understand how I was shaped and continue to be shaped by these experiences through the professional development path. Specifically, I intended to explore the intersections to professional teaching skills, teacher identity, and belonging within this online professional learning, while also examining the interdisciplinary connections between my previous experiences and my journey as a U.S. certified Chinese language teacher. My hope is to encourage others who aspire to make similar transitions from diverse roles. As Okri (1997) stated, “We live stories that either give our lives meaning or negate it with meaninglessness. If we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives” (p.46). This perspective highlights the transformative power of narrative inquiry, which has the potential to offer a similar impact on others who engage with it.

### **3.2 Narrative Inquiry Design**

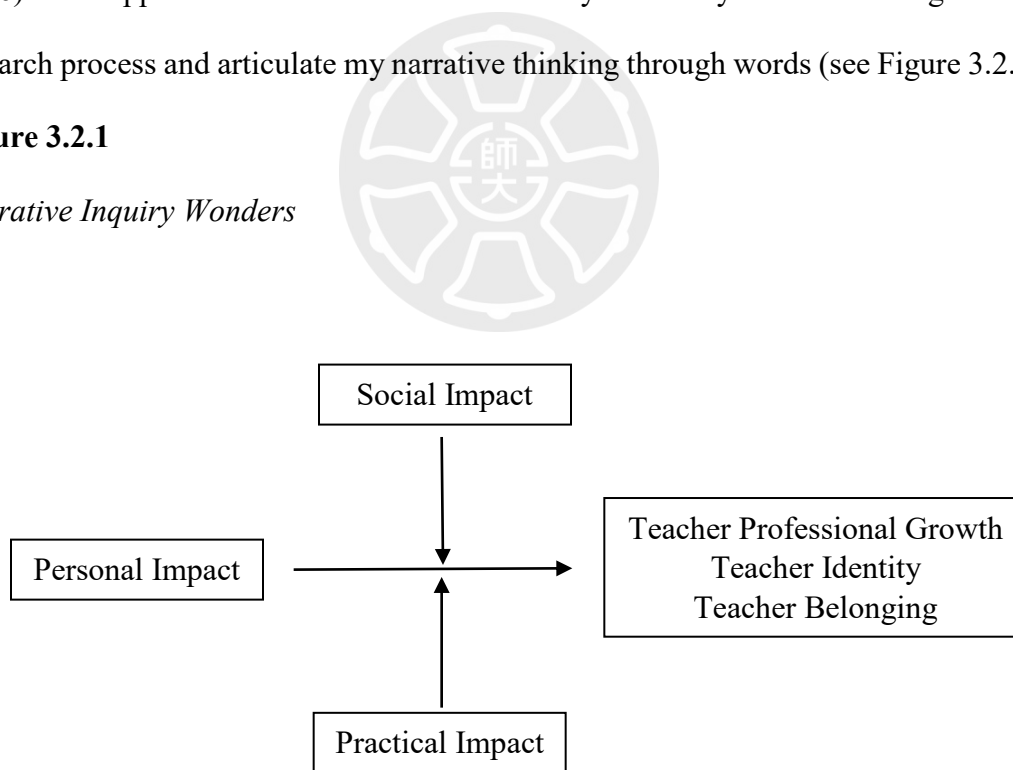
Clandinin (2023) suggested that “coming alongside participants” can serve as one of the starting points for narrative inquiry (p.20). During the first semester of the master’s program, I entered Dr. Tsai’s stories and encountered narrative inquiry in her course. This experience, along with my relationship with Dr. Tsai, has since transformed my own living story, particularly in my pursuit of becoming a U.S. certified language teacher. The goal of obtaining a Virginia teaching license endorsed in foreign language (Mandarin Chinese) became a central focus of my narrative.

The purpose of my narrative inquiry was to frame my journey in personal, practical, and social contexts, as outlined by Clandinin (2003). On a personal level, I sought to understand how these courses shaped my development of professional teacher identity and a sense of belonging, particularly within an online learning environment.

Practically, I aimed to explore how the structure and content of these online courses promote professional development in the field of teaching, and how these outcomes impact teaching practices. Socially, I wished to examine how my prior experiences and interactions with fellow participants in these online courses impacted my path toward becoming a certified language teacher. Thus, these particular wonders became the focus of my research and took shape as research puzzles rather than traditional research questions within narrative inquiry. As Clandinin and Connelly (2023) stated, “each narrative inquiry is composed around a particular wonder, and rather than thinking about framing a research question with a precise definition or expectation of an answer” (p.26). This approach allowed me to continuously refine my wonders throughout the research process and articulate my narrative thinking through words (see Figure 3.2.1).

**Figure 3.2.1**

*Narrative Inquiry Wonders*



### ***Inquiry Conceptual Framework***

To effectively design and implement my narrative inquiry, I adapted Clandinin's seven design considerations (2023; see Figure 3.2.2) as a thinking process. These considerations guided the generation of ideas, collection of information, and documentation of my lived experiences. This phase involved reflecting on past events, gathering artifacts, and organizing these materials into a coherent story. By using these design considerations, I was able to systematically construct a narrative that authentically represented my journey and highlighted key moments of transformation.

### ***Clandinin's Seven Design Considerations***

First, Clandinin emphasized that narrative inquiry was built around a central “wonder”, instead of formulating a rigid research question aimed at a clear-cut answer (p.26). She further highlighted that narrative inquiry involved “a sense of reformulation,” which was carried out through the inquirer's process of “a sense of a search, a re-search, a search again” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.124). This iterative process set narrative inquiry apart from other research methodologies; thus, the term “research puzzle” was used rather than “research question” in this narrative inquiry. Therefore, framing a research puzzle was the first key element in the design process.

This inquiry began with a wonder about how I could transform my identity from an ESL teacher in Taiwan to a certified CFL teacher in the United States through online professional learning, in order to better adapt to the uncertainties of my career as a diplomatic spouse. It further explored the potential for developing a professional teacher identity and fostering a sense of belonging within the teacher community during my preservice training through these online courses. As I explored these wonders and

deepened my understanding of my experiences, my research puzzles became more defined and focused.

With the development of these research puzzles, the inquirer's life began to intersect with that of the participants and potential participants, forming an interconnected set of lives within the inquiry. This intersection then led to a deeper involvement as the inquirer lived alongside them and became deeply engaged in their lives through the process. As Clandinin (2023) described:

As participants' and researchers' lives meet in the midst of each of our unfolding complex and multiple experiences, we begin to shape time, places, and spaces where we come together and negotiate ways of being together and ways of giving accounts of our work together. (p.26)

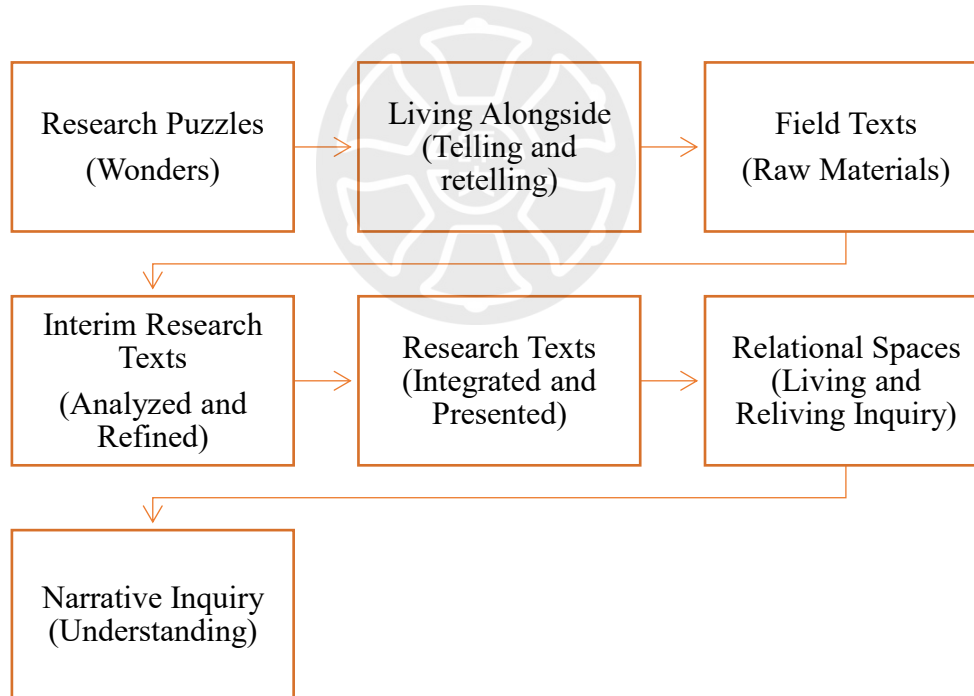
To fully understand the intricate living and lived experiences in this inquiry, it was essential to explore the interconnected lives of all involved. This process started with appreciating the initial wonders and then delved into the participants' lived stories by examining the interconnections. Consequently, I engaged deeply with both my own life and the lives of those I encountered, experiencing and re-experiencing these stories through the act of telling and retelling within our shared inquiry relationship. Through the act of telling and retelling these stories, field texts were incorporated to continually refine and deepen the understanding of what these shared experiences meant to me. This approach helped clarify the significance of living alongside the participants and how these experiences impacted my own perspective.

Field texts - such as photographs, handwritten notes, journals, and recordings - played a crucial role in this process. Clandinin (2023) noted that "field texts are co-

compositions that reflect the experiences of researchers and participants” (p.28). This process of collecting field texts started with gathering raw materials that captured lived experiences. These materials were then analyzed and refined into evolving versions of the researcher's interpretations, known as interim research texts. Ultimately, insights were integrated into a coherent narrative, presented as research texts, which convey the study's conclusions and arguments. Finally, engaging in relational narrative inquiry was vital, as the roles of researcher and participant evolved throughout the process, fostering the exploration of new possibilities and perspectives in their lives.

**Figure 3.2.2**

*Conceptual Framework Adapted from Clandinin's (2023) Design Considerations*



### 3.3 Exploring My Inquiry Path within an Interdisciplinary Framework

Narrative inquiry enables us to comprehend experiences by reinterpreting the past and shaping the future through stories (Nakata, Tokuyama, & Gao, 2022). To contextualize my journey in personal, practical, and social terms, and to effectively

understand the experiences I lived, it was essential to explore the various paths that had shaped this inquiry. Therefore, while the construction of the narrative was informed by Clandinin's design considerations, the analysis of the narrating texts was guided by Fruchter and Emery's (1999) interdisciplinary framework: Island of Knowledge, Awareness, Appreciation, and Understanding. These concepts facilitated a deeper exploration of how my previous ESL experiences influenced my identity transformation.

Fruchter and Emery identified four key concepts to understand the interdisciplinary learning process and assess learners' learning evolution. They suggested that cross-disciplinary learning involved transitioning from a narrow focus on knowledge specific to one discipline to a broader comprehension of the goals, language, and representations used in various fields. In this inquiry, I aimed to explore how my previous experiences in ESL not only facilitated my understanding of educational practices but also eased my transition into the CFL field. By examining these interdisciplinary connections, I sought to illuminate how my ESL background informed and enriched my development as a certified Chinese language teacher.

### ***Island of Knowledge***

As an ESL teacher and trainer in Taiwan, the institute where I worked periodically offered professional development training. Through these sessions, I learned essential skills ranging from effective speaking and writing techniques for the classroom to planning successful workshops for diverse audiences. To deepen my expertise in the ESL field, I dedicated myself to daily English study and took the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) to enhance my language proficiency. Fruchter

and Emery described that students who mastered one discipline but not another as being on an "island of knowledge." I found myself firmly situated on the island of ESL, having spent over seven years in this field before transitioning to a new role. The professional knowledge and experience I gained during this time solidified my position on this island. In the next chapter, I would narrate the experiences that shaped my professional identity as an ESL educator and ultimately positioned me on this island of knowledge.

### *Awareness*

Life's unpredictability led me from being an ESL teacher to becoming a diplomatic spouse. While I embraced the opportunities for travel that accompanied diplomatic work, I had not anticipated the career instability that came with each relocation. As I faced yet another move and considered pursuing an additional master's degree, I recognized that obtaining a teaching license could provide greater stability in my career. Consequently, meeting the requirements for a U.S. teaching license became the focal point of my inquiry.

However, achieving this goal involved more than just financial considerations; I also grappled with mental challenges. I needed to awaken to the constraints of the CFL discipline that I would inevitably encounter. By cultivating awareness of my initial anxieties about entering the CFL field, I aligned my experiences with the state of awareness outlined in Fruchter and Emery's framework. This aspect of my journey would be explored in greater depth in the next chapter, as the reality shock I experienced ultimately enriched my understanding and heightened my awareness of the path ahead.

### ***Appreciation***

Through my online professional learning journey, I began to construct a conceptual framework for teaching Chinese as a second language. I realized that my prior experiences served as a bridge, linking me to this newfound knowledge and igniting my enthusiasm for the field. With the support from external sources, I slowly transitioned between disciplines, allowing me to develop a deeper appreciation for my teaching attributes and skills. As I navigated this transformative process, I discovered how to apply these qualities effectively in my new context. In the next chapter, I would delve into how this appreciation took shape and the pivotal role it played in my professional development.

### ***Understanding***

Participating in online courses allowed me to weave together my previous teaching experiences with new knowledge, igniting a sense of excitement about my evolving role in education. Engaging with peers and receiving constructive feedback in these online professional learning environments were pivotal in shaping my professional identity. Through these interactions, I began to grasp the multifaceted role of a CFL teacher, which not only encompasses linguistic instruction but also cultural exchange and adaptability. By employing narrative inquiry, I reflected deeply on my journey, uncovering the intricate connections between my developing identity and the transformative learning process I was undergoing. This understanding had empowered me to embrace my past experiences while adapting to the demands of a new teaching context, ultimately positioning me to thrive as a U.S. certified Chinese language teacher.

### **3.4 Investigating Temporal Pathways**

According to Clandinin (2023), narrative inquiry is defined “a way of studying people’s experiences, nothing more and nothing less” (p.22). Clandinin further asserted that narrative inquiry is an approach used to explore and comprehend experiences by fostering a collaborative relationship between the researcher and participants. This collaboration unfolds over time, in various locations, and within diverse social contexts. In this inquiry, three-dimensional commonplaces were utilized, focusing on the past, present, and future, and were situated within the participants’ experiences. This approach allowed for simultaneous consideration of “backward and forward, inward and outward, with attentiveness to place(s)” (Clandinin, 2023, p.24). In this narrative inquiry, the approach involved examining experiences from both historical and future perspectives. This meant considering how past events had influenced current experiences and exploring how present experiences might shape future developments. The inquiry also delved into both personal and external aspects of these experiences. It looked at how internal factors such as personal reflections, emotions, and thoughts, as well as external factors like social interactions, environments, and contextual influences, have contributed to shaping my teacher identity and ongoing professional development. Additionally, the significance of the online platform, as the primary location of the experiences, was examined to understand how this online setting impacted the experiences themselves. This focus provided insights into how my evolving teacher identity, a sense of belonging in teacher community, and professional teaching knowledge were shaped.

#### ***Chronological Sequence***

For structuring the research, this narrative inquiry adopted Riessman's (1993) chronological sequence method. This inquiry was organized according to the chronological order of events, with an emphasis on recounting stories from past experiences up to the present.

**Table 3.4.1**

*Inquirer's Chronological Sequence (The Past)*

Prior Experience
Teacher Trainer at Joy English Headquarters, Taiwan
Teacher Trainer at Hess English Headquarters, Taiwan
Teacher Trainer at Kangxuan Cultural and Educational Business, Taiwan

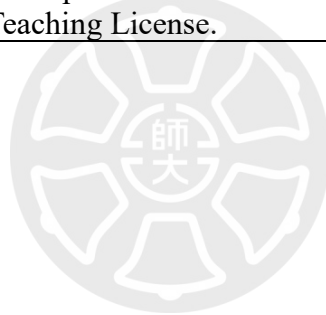
The core narrative focused on the reflections from concurrently participating in online professional courses from both the United States and Taiwan. The inquiry examined the causes, processes, issues, and impacts related to this core event. Through data collection and experiential reflection, this inquiry outlined a cohesive story of professional teacher identity and sense of belonging.

The research inquiry focused on the period from September 2023 to August 2024 (see Table 3.4.2 and Table 3.4.3), during which I, the inquirer, was enrolled in six professional courses within the American online educational system and six courses within the Taiwanese online educational system. By reflecting on the progression of each course, I examined how these online learning experiences influenced my development of professional teacher identity and my sense of belonging within the teaching community as a preservice language teacher. Additionally, I explored how my prior experiences and interactions with participants contributed to this process.

**Table 3.4.2**

*Inquirer's Chronological Sequence (The Present of the year of 2023 and 2024)*

09/04/2023 - 12/22/2023
Launched of the Online Continuing Education Master's Program in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language at National Taiwan Normal University. Enrolled courses included: Chinese Society and Culture Course (3 credits) Special Topics on Linguistics Course (3 credits) Special Topics on Chinese Instructional Methodology Course (3 credits)
10/16/2023
Encountered with Narrative Inquiry through Dr. Tsai's Stories and Course Content in the Special Topics on Chinese Instructional Methodology Course at National Taiwan Normal University.
12/02/2023 - Current
Lived alongside with Dr. Liu's Stories.
12/24/2023 - Current
Initiated Q&A with Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Regarding Virginia Foreign Language Teaching License.



01/09/2024 - 06/10/2024
Continued with the Online Continuing Education Master's Program in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language at National Taiwan Normal University. Enrolled courses included: Chinese Character Teaching Theory and Applications (3 credits) Assessment of Chinese Language Proficiency (3 credits) Seminar on Chinese Language Teaching Methods and Materials (3 credits)
01/18/2024
Took the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Writing Proficiency Test (WPT), a required assessment for the Virginia Foreign Language Teaching License.
01/23/2024 - 02/19/2024
Human Development and Learning Course at University of Phoenix (3 credits)
02/20/2024 - 03/10/2024
Foundation of Education and the Teaching Profession Course at University of Phoenix (3 credits)
04/09/2024 - 05/06/2024
Classroom and Behavior Management Course at University of Phoenix (3 credits)
05/14/2024 - 06/10/2024
Language Literacy Course at University of Phoenix (3 credits)
06/04/2024 - 07/01/2024
Assessment of and for Learning Course at University of Phoenix (3 credits)
06/11/2024
Took American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Oral Proficiency Interview Computer (OPIc) Test, a required assessment for the Virginia Foreign Language Teaching License.
06/24/2024 - 08/02/2024
Methodology of Teaching Foreign Language Course at the University of Virginia's College at Wise (3 credits)

As the professional studies coursework came to an end, I continued with other courses in my master's program (see Table 3.4.3). Although the inquiry focus period concluded in August 2024, reflecting on the stories I shared and navigating my ongoing experiences remained vital in shaping both my identity and my development as a professional language teacher.

**Table 3.4.3***Inquirer's Chronological Sequence (The Future)*

08/19/2024 - 12/20/2024
Narrative Inquiry Research
09/02/2024 - 12/20/2024
Continued with the Online Continuing Education Master's Program in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language at National Taiwan Normal University. Enrolled courses included: Applied Interactive Teaching (3 credits) IB Philosophy and Practices (3 credits)

**3.5 Learning Alongside Participants**

Clandinin (2023) stated that “narrative inquirers always enter into research relationships in the midst” (p.26). She further elaborated that participants are continuously navigating their own lives, and as inquirers join them in the research relationship, both their lives and ours are influenced by engaging with the unfolding narratives of the “past, present, and future”, including “social, cultural, instructional, linguistic, and familial” aspects (p.26). As inquirers explore shared experiences, the relational dynamics of living alongside one another continually shape and negotiate our ways of being together. These ongoing interactions influenced and continually reshaped who I was as an inquirer.

***Entering the Coexistence Experience with Dr. Ya-Hsun Tsai***

Dr. Ya-Hsun Tsai, a professor at National Taiwan Normal University, became a significant figure in my academic journey through the course “Special Topics on Chinese Instructional Methodology,” offered during the first semester of my master’s program. This course was conducted both synchronously and asynchronously. I first encountered Dr. Tsai on September 21st, during a synchronous class session. Despite

her esteemed status and role as a professor, Dr. Tsai's respectful and humble demeanor immediately resonated with me. I felt that Dr. Tsai's ability to treat all students with respect, regardless of her status, highlighted a crucial trait of an effective teacher. This approach fostered a deep sense of belonging within the learning community and emphasized the importance of mutual respect in the educational experience.

It was not until the seventh week of the course that I truly engaged with Dr. Tsai's stories. The topic of that week, "Narrative Inquiry: The Exploration of Influencing Life with Life," presented by Dr. Tsai in her course materials, deeply resonated with me. From that point onward, her life stories began to have a profound impact on my own life. Entering into Dr. Tsai's lived experiences as a professor in the Department of English, then the Department of Chinese, and now the Department of Chinese as a Second Language, reminded me of who I was and how much joy I had found in my past experiences. Dr. Tsai's experiences - taking college freshmen to the United States for teaching certification, establishing a Ministry of Education-accredited Master's program in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, actively organizing International Baccalaureate (IB) workshops, and promoting contemporary Chinese teaching methodologies - evoked memories of my own work as a teacher trainer before relocating to the United States and transitioning to roles as a wife and mother. As I explored Dr. Tsai's teaching materials and engaged with her pre-recorded class videos, I felt drawn into her stories and began to live alongside her experiences. This sense of coexistence marked the beginning of my journey toward becoming a certified language teacher in Virginia. It reignited my desire to reenter the trainer role and once again host teaching workshops. Dr. Tsai's life deeply influenced mine, as highlighted by the

course topic title “The Exploration of Influencing Life with Life.” The phrases emphasized in Dr. Tsai’s course materials – “Writing One’s Own Story,” “Having One’s Own Code,” and “Traversing a Universe of One’s Own Choosing” - profoundly inspired me to craft my own narrative.

***Entering the Coexistence Experience with Dr. Michelle Liu***

Dr. Liu, an itinerant adapted physical education teacher, became a close friend and a significant mentor during the year I worked as a special education teacher in Fairfax County, Virginia. A few weeks into the 2022-2023 school year, Dr. Liu and I discovered that we both spoke Mandarin Chinese. Our shared language and cultural background fostered a deeper connection, which allowed us to quickly build a strong rapport. This connection was further strengthened by our aligned teaching philosophies and work ethics, leading to a close and ongoing collaboration.

As I contemplated becoming a certified Virginia language teacher, Dr. Liu supported me at every step of the journey, which drew on her own experience of pursuing teaching certification in Virginia and allowed her to offer me invaluable guidance based on her path. By sharing her journey with me, she created a space for me alongside her. Dr. Liu provided encouragement throughout this challenging path, as we shared a common cultural background and faced similar situations. Her belief in my abilities and the teacher dispositions I possessed affirmed my decision to pursue teaching license and helped define my professional identity. This support was a powerful motivator, and while this step was small, it represented a significant advancement in my professional development journey.

***Entering the Coexistence Experience with the Participants in the Professional Development***

The participants in my professional studies were divided into two distinct groups. The first group comprised peers from my master's program at National Taiwan Normal University (NTNU). This cohort consisted of Chinese language teachers from around the world, all sharing a common cultural background and fluent in Mandarin Chinese. Although the composition of this group varied slightly depending on the specific courses I enrolled in, they were all pursuing a master's degree in Teaching Chinese as a Second Language. Despite not interacting directly with each participant throughout the research period, we engaged in shared teaching philosophies, ideas, and perspectives via online discussion boards and synchronous classes. Additionally, a smaller group of participants who were in the same time zone as I was collaborated on group assignments and participated in periodic online meetings via platforms such as Zoom or Webex.

The second group comprised peers from the professional studies I took at the University of Phoenix (UOP) and the University of Virginia's College at Wise (UVA Wise). This cohort included teachers from the United States who were pursuing a teaching license or additional credits to fulfill license renewal requirements. Although these peers came from diverse cultural backgrounds, English was the sole language used throughout the entire course period. Unlike the courses taken at NTNU, interactions in these professional courses were conducted exclusively through online discussion boards and email correspondence.

Although the participants in my professional studies did not actively engage in this inquiry process itself, their presence and interactions played a significant role in my journey. Despite not being directly involved in this inquiry, the online interactions and engagements with these fellow teachers - who were all actively involved in teaching - helped me create a sense of “coexistence” alongside them during the courses. Through these experiences, I was able to reflect on my professional development and recognize that, even as a pre-service teacher, I possessed the dispositions and abilities of a language teacher. This sense of belonging and the affirmation of my teacher identity emerged from our shared engagements and the reflective space we collectively created throughout the course periods.

### ***Incorporating online Interactions into Participant Dynamics***

In this inquiry, the online setting played a crucial role in shaping participant dynamics. Although the participants themselves did not actively engage in the process, the online interactions facilitated through platforms such as discussion boards, Zoom, Webex, and emails created a distinctive environment for professional development. These interactions allowed me to connect with a diverse group of educators and provided a unique space where I could engage with peers and instructors despite of not being physically present. The online setting served as an integral participant and created a “space” where we could exchange perspectives and experiences. This online environment was instrumental in my reflection on professional growth which helped me recognize my emerging teacher identity and sense of belonging within the teaching community. The dynamics formed through these online interactions significantly

influenced my understanding of what it means to be a teacher and how I could integrate into that role as a pre-service educator.

### **3.6 Exploring the Field Text Trail**

According to Clandinin (2023), narrative inquiry uses the term “field texts” rather than “data” to reflect a deeper understanding of how these texts are co-constructed. She defined “field texts as co-compositions that are reflective of the experiences of researchers and participants, and they need to be understood as such – that is, as telling and showing those aspects of experience that relationship allows” (p.28). This perspective specified that field texts were not merely data points but collaborative representations of the experiences commonly shared between researchers and participants.

The field texts of this inquiry derived from various sources - such as online discussion board interactions, course materials and assignments, and reflective journaling - were instrumental in exploring my evolving teacher identity and sense of belonging. These texts, collected in both English and Chinese, captured the dynamic interplay between my experiences and those of my virtual peers which provided a comprehensive narrative of my professional development journey. By analyzing these field texts, I gained valuable insights into how my engagement in the online setting influenced my growth as a pre-service language teacher. Through the interactions virtually, not only the peers but also the instructors who helped me delve deeper into the dialogues with myself in the process of teacher becoming. In other words, the virtual interactions with both peers and instructors facilitated a chance to dialogue with

myself, allowing me to reflect deeply and converse with my own evolving understanding throughout the process of becoming a teacher.

### ***Course Materials and Assignments***

The remote professional studies included both synchronous and asynchronous components. The synchronous elements consisted of live virtual meetings held on platforms like Webex, while the asynchronous elements included pre-recorded videos and assigned reading materials. All assignments were distributed and submitted through online platforms.

### ***Communication Records***

Communication records encompassed various online platforms where peers could exchange ideas on weekly topics and teaching practices. These platforms included discussion boards, social applications such as Line, emails, and video conferencing tools like Zoom.

### ***Others***

Other field texts consisted of the inquirer's notes, photographs, and planners, which documented significant events and captured reflective thoughts at the moment they were recorded. A more detailed list was provided in Table 3.4.4.

**Table 3.4.4**

*Field Text List*

<b>Numbered Figure</b>	<b>Filed Text Detail</b>
Figure 4.2.1	Story Artifact (Workshop Events)
Figure 4.2.2	Story Artifact (Workshop Attendee Feedback)
Figure 4.2.3	Story Artifact (Teacher Awards)
Figure 4.4.1	Story Artifact (Line Messages)
Figure 4.4.2	Story Artifact (NTNU Discussion Board)
Figure 4.4.3	Story Artifact (Outstanding Work Share Folder)
Figure 4.4.4	Story Artifact (UOP Discussion Board)
Figure 4.4.5	Story Artifact (Self-Reflection Notes)
Figure 4.4.6	Story Artifact (UVA Wise Peer Feedbacks)
Figure 4.5.1	Story Artifact (VDOE Updated Correspondence)



## Chapter 4 From Silence to Story

This chapter will begin by narrating the inquirer's journey of transitioning from an uncertified Taiwanese ESL teacher to a U.S. certified CFL teacher. The shift from silence to story reflects the inquirer's evolving identity, analyzed through the lens of Fruchter and Emery's (1999) cross-disciplinary framework. Their four-tiered concept - Island of Knowledge, Awareness, Appreciation, and Understanding - guides the exploration of the inquirer's identity transformation, emphasizing how interdisciplinary perspectives shaped both professional and personal growth.

### 4.1 The Backstory Before the Identity Shift

As part of our foreign service life, I knew that my family and I would be relocating to Germany in mid-August 2023 for a three-year assignment. Confronted with the uncertainty of my work situation as a spouse, I was determined to make the most of this period and aimed to secure a teaching position, regardless of future relocations. Consequently, I chose to pursue a second master's degree, focusing on Teaching Chinese as a Second Language. Fortunately, National Taiwan Normal University, a renowned institution for teaching, offered an online continuing education program, enabling me to pursue this goal while stationed in Germany. This opportunity was especially significant to me as the online format allowed me to stay engaged in the teaching field during my overseas assignment. Additionally, the flexibility of the program was ideal given my situation in Germany, where attending on-campus classes was not feasible. The program suited my personal circumstances while helping me achieve my professional goals.

The online continuing education master's program included both synchronous and asynchronous components, making self-discipline and time management crucial for success. The majority of participants in this program were originally from Taiwan but had since moved overseas, with Chinese as their first language. This global distribution added the challenge of navigating time differences for virtual meetings and synchronous seminars. It was my mindset and determination that kept me moving forward. Since the program began, I found myself genuinely enjoying the journey, even if it meant waking up at three o'clock in the morning for classes and finding time to complete course requirements and assignments. Balancing these demands with my responsibilities as a busy mom and wife, along with other works and professional studies in a new country, had been challenging but rewarding.

I began to experience the joy of becoming a language teacher as I engaged with the course content and listened to the diverse stories shared by other participants. The idea of transitioning from an uncertified English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher to a certified Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) teacher began to take shape as a way to better align with my personal situation, especially since Mandarin Chinese is my first language. This led to the consideration of obtaining a Virginia language teaching license. Additionally, through this online continuing education master's program, I would acquire the professional methodology needed in this content area. This idea deepened when I encountered the topic of narrative inquiry during the seventh week of Dr. Tsai's course, Special Topics on Chinese Instructional Methodology, offered in the first semester of the program.

Dr. Tsai's stories shared during the narrative inquiry topic brought back memories of my identities as a teacher and teacher trainer from my previous work experiences in both the United States and Taiwan. I began to imagine myself working alongside Dr. Tsai, leading workshops to promote Chinese teaching and sharing instructional methods. I knew I had to take action to make this vision a reality, so I shared my idea with my best teacher friend, Dr. Michelle Liu, whom I met while working as a special education teacher at Floris Elementary School in Virginia.

Dr. Michelle Liu is a physical education teacher specializing in special education and was previously an associate professor in a teacher education program at a four-year university for 13 years. Dr. Liu and I bonded over our shared teaching philosophy and commitment to hard work, and we have been close friends ever since. With her doctoral degree in physical education, I knew she would provide valuable advice on my idea. I shared my plan to pursue a language teaching license in Virginia with her, and Michelle had supported and encouraged me every step of the way since then.

Even though I was inspired and encouraged to pursue a new identity as a U.S. certified CFL teacher to better address the job instability that comes with being a diplomatic spouse, I still struggled internally with the evolving identity process. I questioned whether I could achieve the same level of recognition as I had as an ESL teacher, given the success of my self-positioned, socially-positioned, and institutionally-positioned ESL identity. I knew I needed to reflect on how I had built that successful identity so I could replicate the process in my journey toward becoming a CFL teacher.

## **4.2 Island of Knowledge in ESL: The Crafted Professional Identity**

My journey into the world of ESL teaching didn't start with a clear roadmap; instead, it unfolded gradually through a series of experiences that shaped my identity as an educator. Every step I took, from navigating various teaching methodologies to engaging with diverse students and workshop participants, became part of the intricate process of crafting my professional self. Like an island slowly rising from the sea, my knowledge and skills were built layer by layer, forming the solid foundation of what would eventually become my professional identity in the ESL field.

Reflecting on my journey as an ESL teacher and teacher trainer, I vividly recall the energizing moments spent on stage, sharing my insights on ESL teaching methodologies with students and workshop participants. These experiences profoundly shaped my teacher identity and fueled my passion for education. However, my professional identity didn't come easily. In the beginning, my English proficiency was limited, which made some workshops challenging, as they were presented in English. I spent countless hours improving my English, and it was my dedication to enhancing my language skills that enabled me to overcome this barrier. As Han and Ji (2021) emphasized that teacher identity was a crucial factor in how educators perceived themselves and interacted with their students. For me, this identity was built through countless hours dedicated to studying, researching, and preparing innovative teaching content and ideas, which became the backbone of my work and underscored my commitment to effective teaching. This intentional focus on professional development not only reinforced my identity as an educator but also enriched my interactions with

students, aligning with Han and Ji's assertion that teacher identity is vital for fostering meaningful relationships in the classroom.

Moreover, implementing these ideas in my classrooms validated my efforts and laid the foundation for the workshops I delivered. To stay updated in teaching, I took extra classes with different age groups to better understand the challenges teachers might face in the classroom. The intense teaching hours, combined with my full-time teacher trainer job, left me with little personal time, as I often worked on weekends. However, each workshop was a dynamic blend of knowledge and creativity, covering foundational skills like teaching reading and writing, as well as engaging topics such as using songs and chants to make learning lively and enjoyable. The visible energy in the room, as I watched fellow educators embrace these interactive approaches, reinforced the impact of my work and helped me navigate the demanding schedule. (see Figure 4.2.1).

**Figure 4.2.1**

*Story Artifact (Workshop Events)*





### ***Social-Positioned Identity***

After each workshop, participants were asked to complete a feedback survey. These responses became invaluable to my growth as an ESL teacher trainer. They not only offered insights into how effectively I delivered the content but also highlighted areas for improvement, helping me refine my future sessions. Over time, as the feedback consistently affirmed my skills, I gained recognition as a respected ESL teacher trainer. By engaging with participants' experiences, reflecting on their feedback, and constantly adapting, I developed my professional identity within the ESL field and earned recognition as a trusted professional in language education. This journey aligned with Huang and Wang's work (2021) on how identities shifted and evolved through the negotiation of different roles and perspectives, as each new experience and piece of feedback contributed to my growth and reshaped my professional self (see Figure 4.2.2).

### **Figure 4.2.2**

*Story Artifact (Workshop Attendee Feedback)*

**Attendee(s) Feedback Form 學員心得意見表**

Part A:

研習主題 topic	如何舉辦成果發表會 How to Hold a Successful Performance		
研習時間 date	95/04/15 09:00-12:00	講師 trainer	Cindy Chang
參與人數 sign up	30 人	研習地點 location	Kuchinsung
實到人數 showed	18 人	有效問卷 valid survey	份
費用支出 total expense		經銷商 agent	
講師費用			
助教費用	\$0		
交通費用			
住宿費用	\$0		
材料費用	\$15		

Part B:

The number of valid survey: 16

How well did the presenter(s) do on the following? 講師上課情況	invalid	1	2	3	4	5	%
1. Giving clear instructions? 指示明確?	0	0	0	0	4	12	95%
2. Facilitating the activities well? 活動帶動?	0	0	0	1	4	11	93%
3. Displaying professional knowledge of T/ESL topic? 此訓練的專業知識?	0	0	0	0	6	10	93%
4. Friendliness and approachability? 友善、親切?	0	0	0	0	4	12	95%
5. Following the handout contents? 教學步驟流暢?	0	0	0	1	3	12	94%
6. Controlling the time? 時間掌握得宜?	0	0	0	0	6	10	93%
7. Usefulness of T/ESL session in your class? 此訓練之實用性?	0	0	0	0	4	12	95%
8. Were your question(s) asked/answered to this training/seminar? 此訓練是否回答您對主題的疑問?	0	0	0	1	4	11	93%
9. Today's presentation overall? 整體評分?	0	0	0	0	2	14	98%
10. Your participation today? 您今天參與的表現如何呢?!	0	0	0	3	7	6	76%
11. Handout design? 講義設計?	0	0	0	1	5	10	91%

Part C:

1. Do you have a better understanding about the supplementary materials and its use? 教材用途及各項服務的了解?	3	0	0	1	6	6	71%
2. Do you know how to order supplementary materials? 教材選購訂購流程之了解?	4	0	0	1	6	5	65%

Part D:

- How did you know about this training? 您如何得知此次研習的資訊及消息?  
From school / other teachers / HESS / agent /
- What was your expectation of today's training/seminar? 您原先預計由課程中學到什麼?  
How to lead students to perform what they learn from the classes / Activities for performances
- What were the most useful idea(s)/game(s) from today's training/seminar? 訓練中最受用的觀念或遊戲  
How to train students and do rehearsals / How to hold a successful performance / How to train students to perform on the stage / All / Body movements and body language / Be creative and repeat the sentences / Make fun stories by using the sentences from the textbooks / How to prepare, train and get ready for a performance / How to train students to act and do facial expressions / Useful ideas and games / Stage training
- What other training/seminar topics would you like to have? 未來的研習會中, 您希望受訓的主題?  
Any topic / Story telling / How to plan activities / Props making for a performance / Holidays teaching /



### *Institutional-Positioned Identity*

In addition to the feedback from workshop attendees, another highlight of my well-recognized identity as a teaching trainer came from the awards I earned from various institutions (See Figure 4.2.3). These accolades not only validated my efforts in the ESL teaching field but also significantly boosted my self-positioned confidence.

**Figure 4.2.3**

*Story Artifact (Teacher Awards)*



### *Shifts in Identity*

Even though I was once recognized as a professional ESL teacher trainer, that identity gradually faded as my roles shifted over the years. When I became a diplomatic spouse and realized I would relocate to the United States, I knew I would not be able to maintain my identity as a teacher trainer. However, what I did not anticipate was the career instability that followed. As my identity transitioned from ESL teacher trainer, to diplomatic spouse, to mother, to special education teacher, and with the expectation of becoming a CFL teacher, I found myself losing touch with the teaching identity I had worked so hard to build. Just as I was prepared to re-enter the teaching field and embrace a new identity as a special education teacher, yet another relocation disrupted

my plans, forcing me to start over once again. I gradually lost confidence throughout this process, creating a mental conflict that left me questioning my professional self and sense of direction.

### **4.3 From Reality Shock to Enlightened Awareness**

#### ***Reality Shock***

I never imagined that I would return to formal education after completing my master's degree in 2011. While I always expected to continue learning through various resources, the thought of going back to school seemed far from reality. Yet, life unfolded in ways I could not have predicted just as I had not foreseen becoming a diplomatic spouse, traveling around the world, and facing the uncertainty of an unstable career. As I mentioned in Chapter One, life stories are fascinating in their unpredictability, filled with twists and turns that lead us down unexpected paths. This journey of pursuing a teaching license, while daunting at times, would ultimately shape the next chapter of my professional and personal growth.

To pursue this dream of becoming a U.S. certified Chinese as a Foreign Language teacher without any support from the school district office during my time in Germany, I knew I had to take matters into my own hands and address all my questions directly to the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). I reached out directly to the VDOE with questions, but the process was time-consuming and mentally draining. I had to carefully read through extensive regulations, and the overwhelming amount of information required me to sift through layers to find the right answers. Ultimately, persistence and proactive communication with the VDOE helped me understand the necessary steps and overcome the challenge.

The first part of the process involved completing six required professional studies to obtain a full K-12 Chinese teaching license endorsement. As my life took this unexpected turn, I found myself not only pursuing another master's degree but also required to complete professional coursework at an accredited university to obtain a U.S. teaching license, which would allow me to secure a job wherever I relocated as a diplomatic spouse.

This process would mark my first official experience with the U.S. education system, as I had grown up and been educated in Taiwan. While I was excited about the opportunity to engage with a new educational context, I also felt a sense of anxiety. One key concern was that even though I am a native Chinese speaker and had experience teaching students with special needs in the U.S., it was still necessary to undergo a transformation in my pedagogical approaches and practices to adapt to teaching the new subject in this new educational context (Gu, Wang, & Zhang, 2021). By synthesizing knowledge from these diverse areas, the shift from ESL to CFL became an interdisciplinary journey, making it essential for me to pursue professional studies within the U.S. educational landscape.

Moreover, unlike many other participants in these six required professional studies, who were in-service language teachers fulfilling their licensing requirements, I was not a language teacher at the time. This situation raised concerns about my professional identity and sense of belonging within the teacher community. Additionally, I was concerned about cultural differences and the challenges of navigating the online study platform, as well as managing the workload from both the courses and the master's program. However, I knew I needed to confront my fears in order to meet the licensing

requirements and resolve the uncertainty of my job situation as a diplomatic spouse. I pushed myself to enroll in the six courses consecutively, without any significant breaks, even while pursuing my master's program. In the face of the difficulties and challenges of managing overlapping studies, I remained determined, hoping to regain the lost identity.

### ***Enlightened Awareness***

Committing to professional coursework involved numerous factors to consider. Beyond financial implications, my lack of experience in a formal U.S. educational context led to a flurry of worries as I planned obtaining a teaching license. My first concern was whether I would be able to manage the coursework for both my master's program and the teaching license, especially given the differences in educational systems. I also questioned my ability to navigate various online learning platforms effectively. I recognized that these concerns stemmed largely from my mindset, and I was confident that I could overcome them with my determination and resolve. What I had not fully anticipated before making my decision was that most of the participants in both the master's program and the professional coursework for the teaching license were in-service language teachers. I did not realize that until a few weeks into the master's program, and shortly after that, I also discovered that the same was true for the professional studies coursework for the license. This revelation struck a blow to my confidence, leaving me feeling isolated and unprofessional. The question of how I could catch up with their prior professional knowledge and experience and contribute meaningful insights during class certainly worried me, especially since I was new to the CFL field.

Furthermore, the participants in the master's program all spoke Chinese, which created a shared cultural background among us and often resulted in more intrinsic and reserved personalities. In contrast, the participants in the professional studies coursework for the license were in-service teachers from various cultural backgrounds. As I faced their self-expression and more direct communication styles, I anticipated needing to invest extra time and effort to express myself and share my insights. This had been, by far, the most challenging aspect of the learning process.

Other challenges, such as building relationships with peers and instructors, navigating communication methods, and understanding course expectations, arose simultaneously and created an emotional and mental burden. Although no one could predict the outcome if I did not take the chance, I knew I would never reach my goal of becoming a professional, U.S. certified language teacher. Committing to my goal was my only way forward.

#### **4.4 From Inspiration to Deep Appreciation**

My story began with an inner exploration of the needs and aspirations that fueled my transition from ESL to CFL. Throughout this journey, my appreciation for the complexities of the pedagogical framework for teaching Chinese and the development of my new teacher identity deepened. This shift was not just a professional change; it represented a profound transformation in how I perceived my role as an educator. Engaging in an online master's program and professional studies for my teaching license enabled me to participate in professional development while connecting with fellow educators and experts in the field. This sense of community was essential as I navigated my evolving identity as a CFL teacher.

*NTNU Online Continuing Education Master's Program*

The initial motivation for enrolling in the master's program was to make the most of my time in Germany and, ideally, to secure a teaching position regardless of future relocations. However, this journey did much more than just provide me with the professional knowledge required to become a CFL teacher, it also significantly shaped my teacher identity. As Han and Ji (2021) proposed, “professional learning could also shape and reshape teacher identity” (p.3). They further argued that “teachers' vision of high-quality teaching was part of their understanding of teacher identity, which contributed to professional practice and learning” (p.3). Entering this program, specifically designed for CFL teachers, not only equipped me with the essential knowledge needed for the field but also fostered the evolution of my teacher identity, reinforcing my commitment to high-quality teaching practices.

**Professional Development.** During this pivotal inquiry period, I immersed myself in 18 credits of coursework, each designed to deepen my understanding of the Chinese language teaching field. These courses covered essential topics such as Chinese Society and Culture, Assessment of Chinese Language Proficiency, and Chinese Character Teaching Theory and Applications. However, two courses in particular stood out for how profoundly they shaped my evolving identity as a Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) teacher: Special Topics on Chinese Instructional Methodology and Chinese Character Teaching Theory and Applications. The course on instructional methodology introduced me to various teaching approaches, but what resonated most was the exploration of narrative inquiry. This concept expanded my perspective on teacher experiences, presenting a way to study and honor lived stories, as Clandinin (2023)

described. It affirmed that my personal journey, my struggles, growth, and transformation mattered deeply. Through narrative inquiry, I came to understand that my evolving story as a teacher was not just a personal reflection; it was part of something larger. It gave meaning to my professional journey and offered a way to reflect on who I was becoming, both for myself and for others navigating their own identity shifts. This was why I felt compelled to share my story and hoped it might resonate with and inspire others facing similar transformations.

Another course that profoundly shaped my path forward was Chinese Character Teaching Theory and Applications. As a native Chinese speaker, I had learned the language in an intuitive and immersive way. I spoke, read, listened, and wrote effortlessly, without consciously thinking about grammar or sentence structures. But this course opened my eyes to the complexities a second-language learner would face when approaching Chinese. It allowed me to see the language from a fresh perspective, one I had never considered before. This shift in perspective was pivotal. It reminded me of my own experience learning English, how every rule and structure had to be intentionally studied and internalized. Suddenly, I understood the challenges my future students would face, and this realization equipped me with the professional knowledge I needed to guide them effectively. The course took me deeper into the mechanics of Chinese - how characters are formed, the rules governing grammar, and the structures that underpin sentences. Linguistics, once abstract, became a doorway to understanding the intricate beauty of my own mother tongue. What struck me most was a newfound appreciation for being a native speaker. I had taken for granted the complexities that made Chinese such a unique and challenging language to learn. Now, with this

knowledge, I felt a renewed sense of purpose. It was no longer just about teaching; it was about passing on a part of who I am - my language and my culture - to learners who were eager to embrace it. This course ignited a passion in me, a desire to bridge the gap between my own understanding and the experiences of my students, helping them navigate the very challenges I had once overlooked. The experience I gained from these NTNU courses became a key factor in defining and constructing my new identity as a CFL teacher.

**Community and Connection Shaped by Peers.** Beyond the acquisition of professional knowledge, the peer interactions within the NTNU master's program were pivotal in shaping my emerging CFL teacher identity. This experience resonated with Han and Ji's (2021) findings, which emphasized that a CFL teacher's identity is "deeply influenced by their self-identification and their integration with others in the community." At the start of the program, I was anxious about being one of the few non-in-service teachers. The thought of my peers having extensive teaching experience, along with the ability to immediately apply new methodologies in their own classrooms, left me feeling less confident. It heightened my fears that I might not belong or thrive in such a community.

However, to my relief, all of the participants were native Chinese speakers. Sharing the same language and cultural background made it easier to connect, and the sense of commonality fostered an immediate sense of unity. The program itself was also thoughtfully designed, offering various ways to build relationships and collaborate with others. I realized early on that, in order to deepen my learning and sense of belonging, I had to stay active and engage meaningfully with my peers. As Han and Ji

(2021) pointed out that insufficient communication with others could lead to a crisis of positional identity, where one felt disconnected from the community. Determined to avoid that, I made a conscious effort to engage actively with my peers through collaborative platforms such as the discussion board, the messaging app Line, and virtual Zoom meetings.

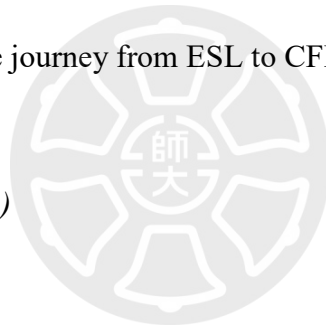
Through the discussion boards, I actively engaged by responding to every reply on my posts and sharing thoughtful perspectives on others' contributions. On the messaging app Line, we built a supportive network by exchanging greetings, checking in on each other's progress, and collaborating on assignments and study tips. Zoom meetings provided another layer of connection, where we went beyond discussing group assignments and presentations to share personal experiences and stories from our lives in different countries. These frequent and meaningful interactions deepened my understanding of my peers' ideas and teaching approaches, creating a strong sense of community and belonging. This collaborative environment not only forged lasting connections but also enriched my professional growth as I integrated diverse insights from these exchanges into my teaching practices.

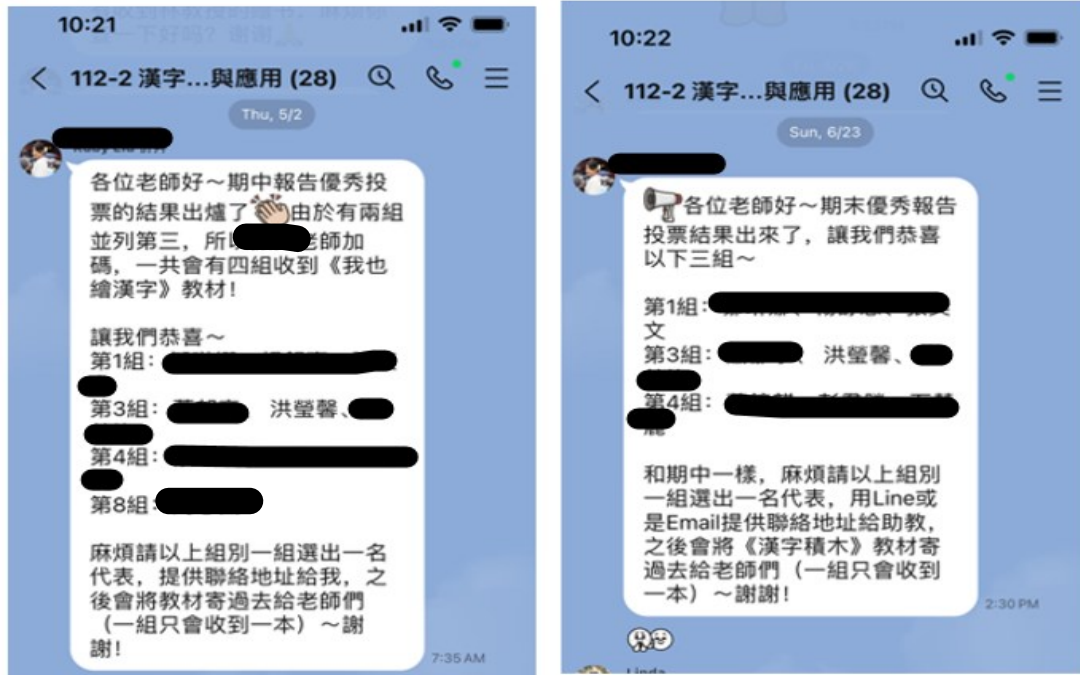
Furthermore, transitioning from EFL to CFL was not just a shift in subject matter but an interdisciplinary learning journey that enhanced my teaching skills and attributes. Drawing on my ESL teaching experiences, I was able to integrate newly acquired concepts from the CFL program into my teaching practices, creating a dynamic blend of methods and approaches that enriched both my instructional techniques and my evolving identity as a CFL teacher. An example of interdisciplinary learning and collaboration emerged through the midterm and final assignments in the Chinese

Character Teaching Theory and Applications course. These assignments required each team to apply the new concepts learned in class to create a 20-minute teaching presentation. Each team member was responsible for a specific part of the presentation, which was later evaluated by all participants in the course to determine the best presentation. Without my ESL teaching experiences, it would have been challenging for me to share and apply these newly acquired concepts in a teaching presentation, especially since I was not actively teaching at the time. I was proud to say that our team was voted among the top three for both assignments and received two books as a reward, which was announced through Line messages (see Figure 4.3.1). These recognitions from my peers not only validated our hard work but also significantly positioned me as I navigated the transformative journey from ESL to CFL teacher identity.

**Figure 4.4.1**

*Story Artifact (Line Messages)*





In addition to the support from my peers during this transformative process, reflecting on my learning experiences through discourse significantly contributed to the construction of my CFL identity. Engaging in discussion boards for each course allowed me to critically evaluate my thoughts and beliefs, as well as consider the responses I received from my peers. By reflecting on others' contributions, I gained valuable insights from their shared ideas. As Mezirow (2000) asserted, individuals achieved a deeper understanding of their experiences through reflective discourse. This interactive exchange on the discussion boards (see Figure 4.3.2) enriched my

perspective on the CFL teaching field which enabled me to approach my new identity with greater confidence and clarity.

### Figure 4.4.2

*Story Artifact (NTNU Discussion Board)*

The screenshot shows a Moodle discussion board interface. At the top, it says '國立臺灣師範大學 Moodle 數位學習平台 ver. 3.7'. The main content is a thread of replies:

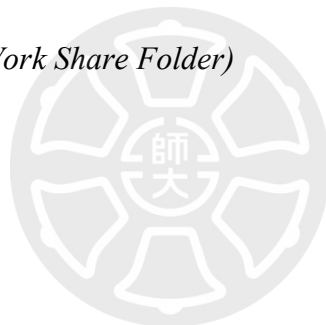
- Reply 1:** Posted by 洪瑩馨 Cindy Hung on 2024年 10月 17日 (四) 14:30. It discusses whether writing sentences/paragraphs counts as writing practice, arguing that it does because it deepens understanding of vocabulary and grammar structure, and improves language ability. It also mentions that writing different sentence structures and topics stimulates creativity.
- Reply 2:** Posted by a user on 2024年 10月 17日 (四) 23:10. It agrees with the teacher's idea that using the same words but different grammar structures can lead to 'creative' variations, which can be a good learning experience.
- Reply 3:** Posted by a user on 2024年 10月 18日 (五) 18:16. It agrees that writing sentences/paragraphs is an important part of the writing process, from simple sentences to more complex structures, and that it's not something that can be done overnight.
- Reply 4:** Posted by a user on 2024年 10月 21日 (一) 12:35. It agrees with the teacher's view that different methods have different importance depending on the stage of use.

**Institutional Recognition.** According to Sun, Wang, and Li (2022), teacher identity “refers to teachers’ understanding of themselves and their relationships with others in their situated communities.” As I transitioned from a successful ESL teacher to a CFL educator, I recognized that I possessed the essential teacher attributes and dispositions necessary for this new role. My participation in professional development further solidified my confidence in embracing my identity as a CFL teacher. This self-

understanding was further affirmed by feedback from one of my professors, which helped situate me within a supportive community that fostered my professional growth and identity formation. Notably, in the Chinese Character Teaching Theory and Applications course, six of my twelve required assignments were selected as outstanding work to share with my peers (See Figure 4.3.4. Outstanding Work Share Folder). This institutional recognition served as an external validation, reinforcing my identity as a CFL teacher and motivating me to further integrate my ESL experiences with new insights gained in my CFL coursework, thereby enriching my interdisciplinary learning process.

**Figure 4.4.3**

*Story Artifact (Outstanding Work Share Folder)*



Name	Type	Size	Date modified
「以詞彙為基礎」的華語教材及「以漢字...	Microsoft Edge PDF Document	221 KB	5/29/2024 10:22 AM
W2-1作業_古文改寫楷書_012845121_...	Microsoft Edge PDF Document	267 KB	5/29/2024 9:26 AM
W2作業_██████████	Microsoft Edge PDF Document	182 KB	5/29/2024 9:21 AM
Wk 2-2 右文說範例	Microsoft Edge PDF Document	120 KB	5/29/2024 9:30 AM
WK 5 漢字學習策略 (1)	Microsoft Edge PDF Document	549 KB	5/29/2024 9:49 AM
WK 7 漢字小遊戲	Microsoft Edge PDF Document	334 KB	5/29/2024 10:00 AM
Wk 9 形似字教學(作業六)	Microsoft Edge PDF Document	425 KB	5/29/2024 10:08 AM
Wk 11 字本位與詞本位教材的不同 (作...	Microsoft Edge PDF Document	247 KB	5/29/2024 10:21 AM
Wk 12 作業9 字本位教學優點	Microsoft Edge PDF Document	302 KB	5/29/2024 10:25 AM
作業三汉字学习策略_██████████	Microsoft Word Document	28 KB	5/29/2024 9:51 AM
作業1-1	Microsoft Word Document	303 KB	5/29/2024 9:17 AM
作業1-1 01184511_██████████ (1)	Microsoft Edge PDF Document	965 KB	5/29/2024 9:16 AM
作業1_██████████	Microsoft Edge PDF Document	189 KB	5/29/2024 9:27 AM
作業1-1:古文改寫楷書 (1)	Microsoft Edge PDF Document	229 KB	5/29/2024 9:19 AM
作業1-1:古文字-更正 (1)	Microsoft Word Document	75 KB	5/29/2024 9:20 AM
作業1-2:右文說舉例	Microsoft Edge PDF Document	110 KB	5/29/2024 9:31 AM
作業2-寒食帖觀後心得 (1)	Microsoft Word Document	15 KB	5/29/2024 9:42 AM
作業5:設計漢字教學遊戲	Microsoft Edge PDF Document	228 KB	5/29/2024 10:01 AM
作業7 :多媒體素材如何運用在漢字教...	Microsoft Edge PDF Document	4,506 KB	5/29/2024 10:14 AM

### *Professional Studies with UOP and UVA Wise*

Since my goal was to become a U.S.-certified language teacher, fulfilling the VDOE's requirements was essential. During this inquiry period, I successfully completed 15 required credits and met the professional studies requirement. However, throughout this long and challenging journey, I gained more than just the qualifications for licensure. I found myself immersed in a blend of Eastern and Western cultures, which played a significant role in shaping my professional identity as a teacher. This aligned with Li's (2016) concept of the cultural influence on CFL teachers where

experiences from both cultures contribute to the development of their understanding of relationships in teaching.

**Professional Growth.** The path toward obtaining my U.S. teaching license required more than just mastery of foreign language teaching methods; it demanded a well-rounded understanding of the broader educational landscape. This meant not only focusing on how to teach Chinese as a second language but also immersing myself in subjects such as human development, curriculum design, classroom management, educational foundations, language and literacy, as well as assessment for learning. These areas of study profoundly impacted my view of what it meant to be a CFL teacher and equipped me with the skills to apply theoretical knowledge to real classroom situations.

For example, Human Development and Learning provided me with essential insights into how students grow in their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual capacities. This knowledge helped me realize that teaching language is not just about grammar and vocabulary but understanding where students are in their developmental journey and guiding them accordingly. The course on Curriculum and Instruction was transformative. It showed me how to carefully choose curricula and materials that resonate with students' needs, making me more intentional about integrating cultural relevance into my lessons. Classroom and Behavior Management further enhanced my understanding by offering research-based techniques for building a community within the classroom, supporting positive behavior, and fostering an environment where students feel safe and motivated to participate. Another key element was the course on Language and Literacy. It opened my eyes to the complexities of language acquisition,

reminding me of my own journey learning English. Understanding the challenges my students would face in learning Chinese made me more empathetic and strategic in planning lessons. This also connected to Assessment for Learning, which gave me the tools to design reliable assessments that not only measure progress but also guide the learning process itself. The course that had the most significant impact on me was Foundations of Education and the Teaching Profession. It delved into the historical, philosophical, and sociological aspects of American public education. For someone who grew up in Taiwan, this course was a revelation. It expanded my understanding of the role of education in shaping society and gave me a deeper appreciation of the context in which I would be teaching.

Together, these courses allowed me to translate theoretical concepts into practical strategies, changing my perception of what it meant to be a CFL teacher. It was not just about imparting knowledge of the language but also about understanding the whole student academically, socially, and developmentally. This shift in perspective had become central to how I approach teaching, and the professional knowledge I gained had given me the confidence to shape my new identity as a CFL teacher.

**Personal Challenges to Appreciations.** Despite gaining valuable theoretical knowledge through my professional studies, I initially hesitated to embark on this journey. As mentioned earlier, stepping into a new educational landscape so drastically different from my own background felt daunting. The anxiety of academically interacting with participants from diverse cultural backgrounds and building relationships within a teaching community online was overwhelming. Compared to the sense of belonging I felt in the master's program, where participants shared a similar

cultural context, I knew forging these new connections would be much more challenging.

Recognizing that my past experiences and background shaped how I perceived and approached new situations, I understood that while this awareness helped me navigate my anxieties, it was also clear that I needed to push through these fears to grow. As Yan and Han (2022) pointed out,

As prior meanings constructed out of past experiences become problematic in constructing and guiding how we feel, think, or act about new experiences, they become a catalyst for us to revise our ways of relating to the world and make them more true, inclusive and justifiable for guiding future actions. (p.4)

Incorporating the strategies that I applied during the master's program to foster a sense of belonging, I reminded myself to stay connected and active in each course's discussion board. For instance, in the UOP Classroom Management for Educators course, I actively responded to others seven times on the week's discussion topic, and I received four replies to my post (see Figure 4.4.4). By paying attention to my peers' perspectives and engaging in constructive feedback, I not only deepened my understanding of their viewpoints but also cultivated meaningful connections. This collaborative engagement allowed me to feel supported by others, creating a nurturing environment that eased my anxieties and reinforced my commitment to personal growth as I navigated my journey from ESL to CFL teacher.

**Figure 4.4.4**

*Story Artifact (UOP Discussion Board)*

### Wk 1 Discussion - Classroom Management System [due Thurs]

Previous Meet Your Faculty and Peers! | Wk 1 - Classroom Management System Letter of Intr... Next

Discussion Topic Follow

**Requirements**

**Due Thursday, April 11**  
This week focuses on communication strategies and the obligations and responsibilities of a teacher.

**Due Monday, April 15**

**Details & Information**

- Due Date**  
4/16/24, 8:59 AM (UTC+2)
- Grading rubric**  
[This item is graded with a rubric](#)
- Goals & standards**  
[Aligned with 3 goals](#)

**Grade**

Discussion 37 / 40

**Participants (21)**

Find participants  
ying

**Ying Hung (Me)**  
1 Response | 7 Replies

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**Ying Hung**  
4/10/24, 7:47 AM

First, I believe that a teacher should comprehend the obligations and responsibilities associated with their role before introducing any classroom management system. According to Blane (2021), a proficient teacher supports students individually, delivering engaging lessons that serve as motivation. A teacher's responsibilities include lesson planning, encouraging student participation, providing support, assessing learning progress, and maintaining effective communication with students, among other duties. Clearly, both obligations and responsibilities are about students' growth and learning. Therefore, an effective classroom management system should be a student-centered approach.

The system I intend to implement to meet these obligations and responsibilities involves building relationships with students and collaboratively establishing classroom norms. Students should understand the purpose behind rules and actively contribute to a set of principles. This student-centered system prioritizes the students, promoting a sense of respect for the agreements they have collectively created. Moreover, building a strong relationship with students is crucial for successful classroom management. Students must trust their teachers and feel comfortable in the learning environment. Regular check-ins and getting to know each student individually can convey their value in the class. Thus, my approach involves building relationships and co-creating classroom norms to ensure effective classroom management.

To ensure effective communication with both families and students in my class regarding positive and negative behaviors, I plan to engage in regular interactions. On a daily basis, I will communicate with students, dedicating time at the end of each school day for reflection on both positive and negative behaviors. During this reflection period, I will pose questions such as "What behaviors from today contribute positively to the class?" or "What potential consequences do you foresee if certain behaviors persist?" These reflective discussions will encourage students to reinforce the principles they have collectively established. I will also maintain consistent weekly communication with parents through email. In these emails, I will highlight positive behaviors exhibited by their children. Besides, I will address a maximum of two instances of misbehavior, seeking the support of parents in reinforcing the importance of positive behaviors at school.

Blane, Paul. (August 2021.) "Care Business Associate Training. What are the duties and responsibilities of a teacher?"

*Edited by Ying Hung on Apr 10, 2024, 7:53:30 AM*

Reply | **Show Other Replies (4)**

Furthermore, while Western cultures might prioritize straightforwardness and individualism, many Asian cultures tend to preserve social harmony and avoid direct confrontation in communication. To prevent misunderstandings or the delivery of incorrect concepts, I approached each step with a heightened awareness of cultural differences and sensitivities. Preparing for positive and respectful engagement in a Western context, I drafted each discussion post in a Word document, carefully reviewing my drafts multiple times to ensure my thoughts were both well-articulated and culturally considerate. This behavior truly reflected the cultural differences and required additional time and effort on my part. Though it meant investing significantly more time compared to my Western peers, I preferred to ensure the quality and respectfulness of my contributions rather than rush through them. Over the six courses, the extra time I spent in comparison to my peers may seem astonishing to others, but it was a necessary part of navigating these cultural and communication differences. This echoed Yang and Han's (2022) statement that "when teachers consider why and how to act, they act on and sustain the negotiation of their professional identity" (p.4). By reflecting on my actions and adjusting my behavior, I was actively engaging in the ongoing process of defining and reinforcing my identity as a CFL teacher, turning challenges into opportunities for growth and deeper self-understanding.

**Peer Learning, Insights, and Supports.** A significant turning point in my online professional studies experience came during the Methodology, Curriculum, and Instruction of Teaching Foreign Language course at UVA Wise. The course was well-structured on the Canvas platform, with the instructor clearly dividing it into twelve modules, each with straightforward to-do lists, guided reflections, and detailed task

descriptions. Although I initially worried about navigating the course, the platform's organization eased my concerns. Each module centered around a real-life topic (i.e., Food) making the learning process engaging and practical. What truly stood out, however, was the instructor's approach of allowing participants to view each other's assignments. As I noted in my self-reflection notes, "The ability to see peers' work is highly beneficial for gaining new teaching strategies and ideas" (see Figure 4.3.5). This peer-sharing method significantly enhanced my understanding as it provided a valuable opportunity to learn from the insights and approaches of others in the course.

#### Figure 4.4.5

##### *Story Artifact (Self-Reflection Notes)*

06/28/2024

First Week of LAN 382:

1. The assessments feel less stressful as they are closely aligned with my teaching practices.
2. This instructor allows peers to view each other's work, which is highly beneficial for gaining new teaching strategies and ideas from others.
3. At the end of the week, reviewing others' work made me feel less confident.
4. I questioned my ability to be a good teacher when I compared my work to my peers'. Their work appears more professional, with deeper content, prompting me to revise mine to improve its quality.

However, there were also some challenges. At the start of the course, I felt my work was not as professional as that of the in-service teachers. They would post their assignments shortly after they were announced, and the depth and structure of their work reflected their extensive experience in language teaching. I would carefully review their submissions, picking up new terms and modifying my own assignments. After several modules, I noticed significant progress in my own work and realized how

much I had learned from others, especially in terms of teaching strategies and the terminology used in the U.S. educational context for second language teaching. This experience reminded me of Tsung and Hooper's (2006) findings that language learning through immersion in cultural and social environments enhanced learning outcomes. By reflecting on my peers' work, I not only improved my teaching methodologies and strategies, but also gained better language skills in the teaching context, which strengthened my evolving CFL teacher identity.

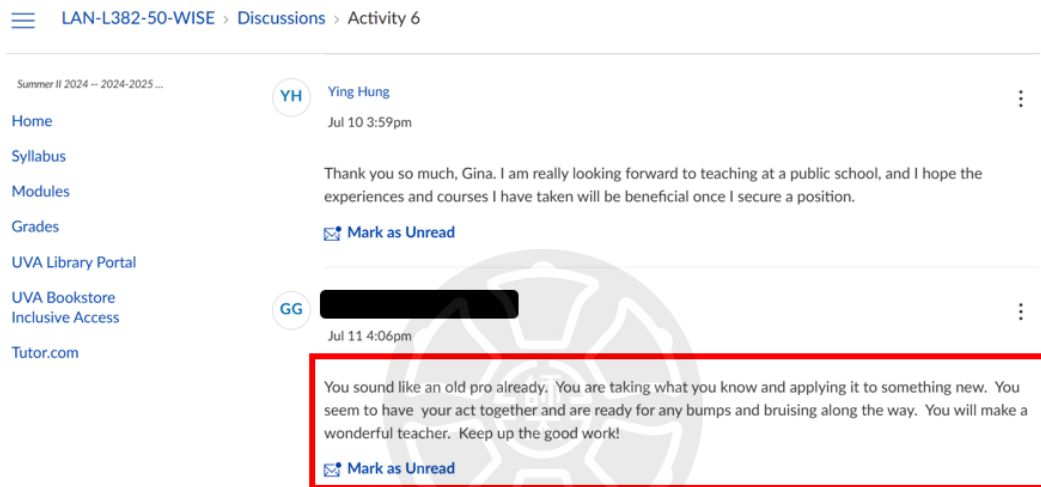
**Bridging Disciplines: Applying ESL Expertise to CFL Teaching.** Once I began to grasp the specific teaching methods shared by my peers, I found a renewed sense of confidence emerging from the interdisciplinary nature of combining ESL and CFL teaching strategies. This blending of disciplines not only deepened my understanding but also allowed me to tailor these methods to align with my evolving identity as a CFL teacher. One of the key techniques I embraced was scaffolding, a pivotal approach in ESL where complex concepts are broken down into smaller and more manageable parts to facilitate learner comprehension. As a native Chinese speaker, I had never consciously analyzed my language in this way; it had always come to me instinctively. Recognizing this gap, I began to see the value in this structured approach, not just for my students but for my own teaching as well.

Moreover, my prior ESL experience became a valuable asset in my new role. I effectively incorporated various teaching strategies, such as language immersion and communicative approaches, into my CFL instruction. For instance, I created immersive activities that encouraged students to engage with Chinese in real-life contexts, enhancing their fluency and cultural understanding. Additionally, the positive feedback

from my UVA Wise peers further validated my efforts and boosted my confidence (see Figure 4.4.6). By bridging these disciplines, I was not only building a solid foundation for my students but also reaffirming my own place within the teaching community, fully embracing my transformation into a confident CFL educator.

**Figure 4.4.6**

*Story Artifact (UVA Wise Peer Feedbacks)*



## A Narrative Inquiry into Transitioning from an ESL to a CFL Teacher

☰ LAN-L382-50-WISE > Discussions > Activity 11

Summer II 2024 -- 2024-2025...

Home  
Syllabus  
Modules  
Grades  
UVA Library Portal  
UVA Bookstore  
Inclusive Access  
Tutor.com



Ying Hung

Jul 29 3:09am | Last reply Jul 31 4pm

Please see attached for my cultural lesson.

Activity 11.pdf

Hide 6 Replies

Mark as Unread

AC

Jul 29 12:49pm

Ying,

I really enjoy reading your work. I learn a lot from your activities and they help me think of activities to create. In fact, the activity for Module 11, I created an activity that reflects Bolivian culinary traditions you did for Night Markets in Taiwan). Thanks and great work.

Mark as Unread

AA

Jul 29 2:26pm

I enjoyed reading your lesson, Ying. It is on that I think would really peak the interest of students and keep them engaged. I liked your research activity at the end too. For students who choose to research games, perhaps they could actually teach one of the games in the presentation and have the class play it. Sounds so fun!!

Mark as Unread

### 4.5 The Bridge to Understanding Through Online Education

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented disruptions to education globally and forced educators to rapidly adapt to digital methodologies and re-envision professional growth (Anis, 2024). This swift transition provided me with an opportunity for professional development while relocating overseas as a diplomatic spouse. It significantly influenced my journey in developing a CFL teacher identity, as my professional growth occurred in an online context. The evolving landscape of teacher learning in the digital age increasingly relies on individualized learning plans, collaborative communities, and accessible online resources, as emphasized in Anis's work. The collective challenges and opportunities presented by this shift provided

valuable insights into my personal narrative. Through a tech-driven, engaging, and collaborative learning environment, even when learners were geographically distributed, I found pivotal support in shaping my professional development and redefining my identity. My peer interactions and feedback loops within online courses played a crucial role in this transformation. Ultimately, the tailored learning strategies that emerged from these online interactions allowed my approach to the U.S. certified CFL professional identity to take shape within the broader context of global educational change. Through narrative inquiry methodology, I was able to reflect on and articulate my learning experiences which revealed the intricate connections between my evolving identity and the transformative impact of online education. As Yazan (2018) defined teacher identity as “the teacher’s dynamic self-conception and imagination of themselves as teachers, which shifts as they participate in varying communities, interact with other individuals, and position themselves (and are positioned by others) in social context” (p.21), I could now see myself as a professional CFL teacher through the process of self-positioning and being positioned by others during this journey.

### ***Professional Knowledge Gained and Self-positioned***

During the inquiry period from September 2023 to August 2024, I completed twelve professional studies, accumulating a total of 36 credits in education. These studies spanned a range of topics, from human development foundations to specific teaching methodologies designed for CFL educators, equipping me to become a well-rounded educator. Although it was a challenging year with extensive reading and strict assignment deadlines, it turned out to be a successful and fulfilling time for my professional growth. This was especially true since half of my learning took place

within the U.S. educational context, which directly applies to my future students. Furthermore, the variety of resources provided by NTNU, UOP, and UVA Wise enabled me to explore specific areas of interest and address the diverse needs of learners at my own pace. This flexibility allowed me to select the most relevant information to enhance my understanding and teaching practices.

Through this journey, I not only gained the professional knowledge necessary for my content area but also developed a broader understanding of human education. I was able to connect my newly acquired knowledge to my prior ESL experience, and synthesizing insights from various fields enriched my teaching practices while facilitating my identity transformation.

### ***Interconnected Growth and Social Positioning***

Before embarking on this transformative journey, I would have never anticipated that my experiences as an ESL teacher would serve as a valuable foundation for my transition into a CFL teacher. The prior knowledge and experiences I gained allowed me to apply established concepts in this new context, enriching my understanding and enabling me to share my unique CFL perspectives with my peers. This exchange of ideas fostered a supportive environment where collaborative work, discussion boards, and assignments not only enhanced my learning but also firmly positioned me as a professional CFL educator. The collective engagement with my peers played a pivotal role in my development which reinforced my identity and the profound impact of social positioning on my professional growth.

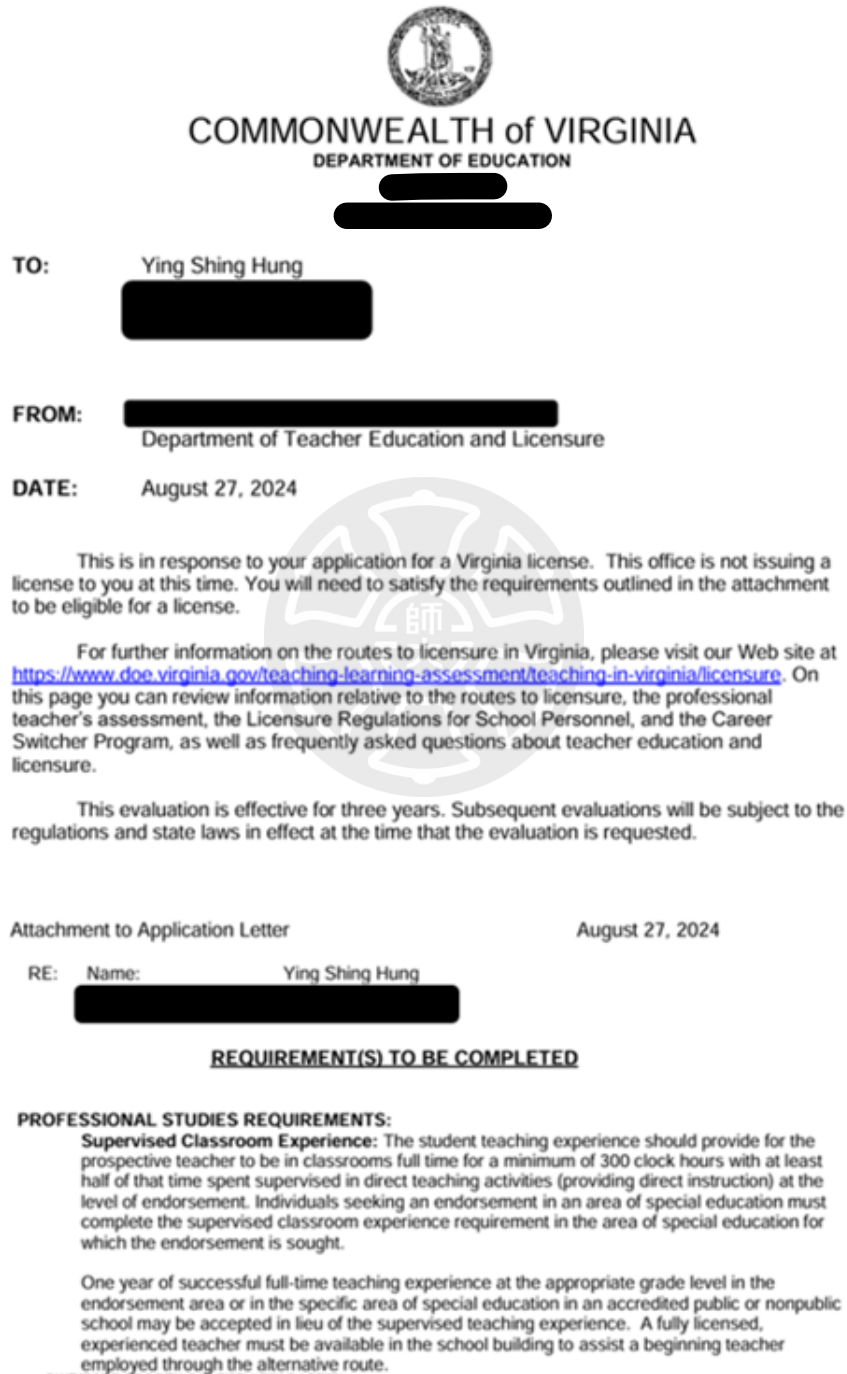
### *The Vision for the Future*

As I approached the completion of my master's degree and fulfilled most of the requirements for the U.S. language teaching license, I realized that this inquiry was not merely a chapter but an ongoing narrative in my professional journey. The relationships I forged with my peers throughout this experience would continue to shape my identity as an educator. As Downey and Clandinin (2010) observed, “In narrative inquiry, the story itself stands, shifting the focus of the inquiry to understand the many stories it stands on, beside or among, to render an account of life as it is lived” (p.387). My journey has woven together a narrative of shared experiences and collaborative learning that will have a lasting impact on who I am as a CFL teacher.

While I still have the Student Teaching/Practicum requirement to complete my licensing (see Figure 4.5.1), the path I've traveled to reach this point has been just as significant as the destination itself. I can already envision myself as a professional CFL educator, equipped with the knowledge and skills that have fundamentally transformed my self-perception. Embracing opportunities for further professional growth while relocating to Germany had not only expanded my expertise but had also paved the way for a stable and fulfilling career once I meet the practicum requirement. This journey reaffirmed my belief that every experience and every story contribute to a richer understanding of who I am and who I aspire to become in the ever-evolving landscape of language education.

**Figure 4.5.1**

*Story Artifact (VDOE Updated Correspondence)*



## **Chapter 5 Getting There Is As Good As Being There**

This chapter will conclude the narrative inquiry by bringing together key elements and answering the main research questions that guided this exploration. It will first examine the central research puzzles and provides reflective answers based on the experiences shared. Next, the chapter will discuss the broader implications of this inquiry and its contributions to CFL teaching and language education. Finally, it will suggest directions for future research and highlights areas where further exploration could support educators on similar journeys.

### **5.1 Key Elements and Answers to the Research Puzzles**

As this narrative inquiry came to an end, it marked not a conclusion but a continuation of the experiences and stories that shaped my ongoing life. The insights gained throughout this journey continued to influence my development and understanding as a CFL educator. As Clandinin (2023) noted, “for narrative inquirers, exit is never final exit. We continue to carry long-term relational responsibilities for participants, for ourselves, and for the work we have done together” (p.27). This perspective emphasized the enduring impact of my shared experiences and the continuous evolution of my narratives. Reflecting on these insights allowed me to more effectively address the central research puzzles that emerged from my initial inquiries.

#### ***Research Puzzle One***

How do online learning experiences in Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) and related professional studies, along with previous ESL experiences, contribute interdisciplinarily to professional teaching growth and the development of teaching opportunities?

To address this question, it was essential to recognize that memories serve as “recollection, not exact duplications of original experiences” (Clandinin, 2023 p.129). Understanding the past became a crucial element of this narrative inquiry as I reflected on the factors that shaped my identity. Although I could not replicate my original experiences, they offered a pathway forward. I began my journey as a successful ESL teacher trainer, relishing a prominent role in the language teaching field. However, over the years and through various professional transitions, my identity and confidence gradually faded. To rebuild my new CFL identity, it was vital to engage in deep reflection on my past experiences, which had informed my development as an ESL professional through self, social, and institutional positioning. By examining my background and these experiences, I recognized the importance of recollecting the pieces from my personal, social, and institutional narratives. This process enabled me to reclaim my identity as a CFL educator through my online studies, integrating my past into my present journey.

Through the online master’s program and professional studies, I gained substantial professional knowledge in the field of CFL and the foundations of American education. These studies not only provided me with the content knowledge essential for my future teaching but also offered valuable insights into teaching a foreign language within the American educational context. Engaging with the available resources and assigned readings allowed me to not only acquire knowledge but also engage in deep reflection as I applied what I learned to my assignments. This comprehensive understanding of both content and general educational principles significantly boosted my confidence in my transition to becoming a CFL teacher.

In addition to acquiring professional knowledge, social positioning played a crucial role in my development. As most of my course participants were in-service language teachers, I gained valuable insights through collaborative work and peer interactions. Engaging in discussion boards and group assignments allowed me to gather firsthand information about the current teaching landscape and see how the concepts we learned in our courses applied to real classrooms. These experiences provided me with a clearer vision of what teaching would entail. Furthermore, by reflecting on my learning and contributing to assignments and discussions, my peers were able to understand my perspectives and offer constructive feedback. The support I received from my colleagues significantly boosted my confidence in my transition to becoming a CFL teacher.

Although interacting with the participants and instructors in online courses initially seemed more complicated than traditional in-person classes, it proved to be more convenient than anticipated, thanks to recent technologies. Platforms such as email, discussion boards, shared files, and messaging applications like Line facilitated diverse forms of interaction. Experienced online instructors often provided prompt support and a wealth of resources for further study. Receiving institutional recognition by having my work selected as an outstanding assignment example was crucial to my development as a CFL teacher. As this narrative concluded, I also learned that I had been awarded the Outstanding Graduate Student Scholarship. This institutional positioning further enhanced my confidence, reinforcing my identity in the journey toward becoming a CFL educator. The confidence I gained through both social and

institutional positioning empowered me to successfully engage in self-positioning as a CFL teacher.

Furthermore, as I considered the teaching opportunities ahead, I could see how the professional knowledge and skills honed through my online learning, combined with my background in ESL, formed a solid foundation for new teaching roles. Once I complete my classroom practicum, a full teaching license will open a wide range of possibilities. This teaching license will be portable, allowing flexibility across locations, and my enhanced teaching skills and professional knowledge will support diverse classroom settings. Additionally, connections with peers made through the online learning have expanded my network to include in-service teachers around the world, creating avenues for collaboration and future opportunities. The master's program itself also offers international teaching options which adds another pathway to teaching roles globally. Ultimately, these online learning experiences have not only empowered me to reenter the teaching field but also positioned me to confidently pursue a stable career in CFL education as a certified teacher.

### ***Research Puzzle Two***

How did the process of developing a professional teacher identity evolve from that of an uncertified ESL teacher to a certified Chinese teacher (CFL) through an online learning experience?

To better answer this question, it was essential to consider several interconnected factors. Beyond the previously mentioned aspects of self, social, and institutional positioning, the transferable skills I acquired as an ESL teacher trainer played a pivotal role in this transformation.

Although I was not a certified ESL teacher, my extensive experience interacting with in-service English teachers in Taiwan, engaging in self-research and studies, and participating in institutional training provided me with a solid foundation of knowledge and skills in the language teaching field. Reflecting on these experiences allowed me to identify how the skills I developed as an ESL trainer could be effectively applied to CFL instruction. This realization created a bridge between my two identities, demonstrating that despite the differences in content knowledge, the underlying attributes of effective teaching and the essential teaching skills remained consistent across both disciplines.

Understanding how to adapt these skills to a new content area was crucial for my growth. The integration of the knowledge and teaching strategies from my previous ESL experiences, coupled with the insights gained from my online professional learning, empowered and enriched my teaching practice. This approach enabled me to seamlessly incorporate proven ESL strategies into my new identity as a CFL teacher that enhanced my confidence and effectiveness in the transitioning process.

### ***Research Puzzle Three***

What are the key factors in developing a sense of belonging in teaching community through online learning experiences, considering the shift in the educational landscape from Taiwan to the United States?

At the beginning of my inquiry, I anticipated that developing a sense of belonging in an online teaching community would vary significantly between educational contexts. However, as I progressed through six master's courses at NTNU and six

professional studies at UOP and UVA Wise, I found that certain foundational factors remained consistent, whether I was engaging with peers in Taiwan or the United States.

One key factor was the importance of maintaining strong connections with peers. Building and sustaining relationships in an online environment required intentionality, especially since interactions relied almost entirely on written communication. This made it crucial to construct meaningful and respectful responses to every interaction with care.

Another essential factor was the role of positive feedback and support within the community. Contributing constructively and offering encouragement created a collaborative atmosphere that strengthened our collective sense of belonging. By actively supporting each other, I fostered a sense of mutual respect and camaraderie, which was vital in creating a connected online community.

Effective communication also played a crucial role in developing this sense of belonging. Since most discussions took place in written form, ensuring my ability to convey ideas clearly and respectfully was essential. Expressing my perspectives with clarity and simplicity enabled meaningful exchanges which fostered trust and understanding among participants.

Lastly, developing an awareness of cultural differences was integral to bridging gaps and fostering inclusivity. In the American context, I noticed a more direct communication style compared to the conservative and reserved approach typical in Taiwan. Recognizing and adapting to these different styles allowed me to navigate interactions more comfortably and helped me feel more integrated in the group.

Together, these factors contributed to a cohesive and inclusive teaching community which allowed me to engage meaningfully across both cultural and educational contexts and strengthened my sense of belonging.

## **5.2 Limitations and Contributions of This Inquiry**

### ***Limitations***

This inquiry reflected a personal journey of identity transition and offered insights into how experiences shape professional growth. Each person's story and path to developing a teacher identity is unique. The challenges and lessons explored here may not resonate with everyone facing similar transitions. The limitations of this inquiry lied in its specificity; it captured one individual's journey with its own contexts and relationships. It may offer inspiration, but each person's journey depends on distinct experiences, individual relationships, and the unfolding of their story over time and in various settings.

Additionally, in Virginia, there were multiple pathways to obtain a foreign language teaching license, and this narrative focused on just one. Those pursuing licensure through different routes may have encountered varied experiences.

### ***Contributions***

The experiences shared in this inquiry also reveal the strength and potential of online professional development for sustained learning and growth. Despite the unique challenges of remote learning, online platforms allowed me to connect with peers, gain valuable perspectives, and build confidence in my evolving identity as a CFL teacher. These interactions highlighted the importance of cultivating supportive professional communities, even across virtual spaces. Staying engaged with peers and contributing

positively to our shared learning environment played a pivotal role in my journey, regardless of context, relationships remain foundational to growth.

Furthermore, this journey underscored the significance of self-reflection and cultural awareness as I adapted to new educational landscapes. Reflecting on my background and acknowledging cultural differences not only allowed me to navigate diverse educational contexts more effectively but also deepened my understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities in teaching Chinese. This process strengthened my professional identity and enhanced my appreciation for the pivotal role CFL educators play in bridging cultural gaps and promoting Chinese language learning globally. Through this narrative, I hoped to offer encouragement and practical insights to others embarking on similar paths.

### **5.3 Future Research Suggestions**

Every person's experience is uniquely embedded in their lived and shared stories. Exploring how past experiences shape the present and how these stories are reinterpreted as they are lived and told again in new contexts could offer profound insights for others on similar journeys. Capturing these memories of experiences through narrative inquiry holds potential to deeply influence the unfolding of one's story. For future studies, maintaining a rich collection of field texts, such as detailed diaries and self-reflection journals, could provide valuable reference points that enhance understanding.

Additionally, to further connect these suggestions to Chinese language teaching, future research could focus specifically on the experiences of Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) educators undergoing professional transitions. Investigating how CFL

teachers adapt to diverse educational settings, particularly in integrating cultural and linguistic knowledge into their teaching practices, could provide valuable insights. Comparative studies on the professional identity development of CFL teachers in different countries or educational settings could also highlight strategies for addressing common challenges, such as navigating cultural differences or adapting to varying educational standards. These studies would not only enhance the understanding of identity transformation within the CFL community but also offer practical guidance for aspiring CFL educators seeking to refine their teaching practices and foster meaningful connections with learners worldwide.





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