

现代外语教学研究著作丛书

崔洪国 著

# A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO THREE ENGLISH TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES

三位英语教师经历的叙述性探究

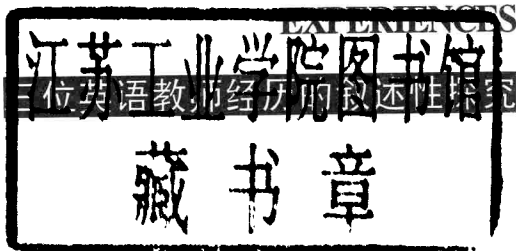


哈尔滨工业大学出版社  
HARBIN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY PRESS

现代外语教学研究著作丛书

崔洪国 著

A NARRATIVE INQUIRY  
INTO THREE ENGLISH TEACHERS'  
EXPERIENCES



哈尔滨工业大学出版社

## 图书在版编目(CIP)数据

三位英语教师经历的叙述性探究:英文/崔洪国  
著. — 哈尔滨:哈尔滨工业大学出版社, 2008. 12  
(现代外语教学研究著作丛书)  
ISBN 978 - 7 - 5603 - 2499 - 9

I . 三… II . 崔… III . 英语 - 教学研究 - 高等学校 - 文  
集 - 英文 IV . H319.3 - 53

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2008)第 144229 号

责任编辑 孙 杰  
出版发行 哈尔滨工业大学出版社  
社 址 哈尔滨市南岗区复华四道街 10 号 邮编 150006  
传 真 0451 - 86414749  
网 址 <http://hitpress.hit.edu.cn>  
印 刷 黑龙江省地质测绘印制中心印刷厂  
开 本 850mm × 1168mm 1/32 印张 6 字数 162 千字  
版 次 2009 年 1 月第 1 版 2009 年 1 月第 1 次印刷  
书 号 ISBN 978 - 7 - 5603 - 2499 - 9  
定 价 26.00 元

---

(如因印装质量问题影响阅读,我社负责调换)

# 前 言

我的这个研究使用的是叙述性探究的方法(narrative inquiry)。叙述性探究是一种质性的研究方法(a qualitative method),与量性的方法(quantitative methods)不同。我在文中经常使用第一人称便是一个不同之处的例子。

我的论文的主题都是与我的教学与学习密切相关的。我的研究话题之一是我的身份认同(identity)。话题之二是我的个人实践知识(personal practical knowledge)和我的专业知识(professional knowledge)之间的关系。话题之三是我(作为教师)和课程设计(curriculum making)之间的关系。同样的话题也用于研究另两位参与者的经历。参与论文研究的另外两位教师,因为对他们身份的保护的原因,只能笔名代替他们的真实姓名。我在这里真心感谢他们的参与和分享。我的论文对中国英语教学以及中国英语教学的改革做了讨论。这篇论文同时也是我们三位英语教师心声的表达。

我坚信教师的经历(experience)是教师身份认同(teacher identity)以及教师的个人实践知识(teacher's personal practical knowledge)的关键所在。叙述性探究就是研究教师的经历的方法。我希望我的这篇论文能让叙述性探究这种研究方法在中国被更多的教师接受和使用。

崔洪国  
2008年10月  
于哈工大

## Foreword

This compelling text offers the results of a powerful narrative inquiry into the experiences of three university teachers in China. As we read their stories and Dr. Cui's inquiry into their stories, readers are offered a way to understand three teachers' experiences of teaching within an educational reform context.

Their stories offer insights into understanding the distinction between knowledge for teachers and teacher knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000). The reform context in which these teachers live and work is focused only on knowledge for teachers, that is, on the knowledge that reformers and policy makers ascertain that teachers need to know. Dr. Cui's analysis helps readers understand that the focus on knowledge for teachers has diverted attention away from teachers' practices and the teacher knowledge that finds expression in those practices. Rather than attending to what teachers do know, reformers appear focused on what teachers need to know.

As Dr. Cui explores the reform context in which he and his two colleagues work, knowledge for teachers is handed down a metaphoric conduit (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) to teachers. Those of us who work in other contexts recognize the reform process so apparent in the stories the three teachers tell. In this reform process, one that begins with knowledge for teachers, the main plotline of reform is a silencing one for teachers. However, another kind of silencing of teachers also occurs. The mandated material with its work sheets and precisely

ordered materials also silences teacher knowledge. The material itself is material that silences teacher knowledge with its teacher proof orientation. These notions are “found in programmed learning textbooks, some versions of computer-assisted instruction, and highly prescriptive textbooks detailing what the teacher should say and do at particular times and giving answers to questions teachers might pose to students” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 138).

As I read Dr. Cui’s text, I thought about teacher knowledge and knowledge for teachers and what I learned from reading the narrative accounts of the three teachers whose stories fill these pages. I saw how the teachers were positioned in a plotline of curriculum reform that begins with understandings of knowledge for teachers. More and more knowledge for teachers was pushed more and more insistently down the metaphoric conduit (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) with more and more serious consequences for them and their students. The narrative accounts of the three teachers help us understand how their current reform context shapes their experiences.

In his careful analysis of the teachers’ stories, Dr. Cui argues for a shift from a focus solely on knowledge for teachers to one that also acknowledges and honors each teacher’s knowledge. His argument for a shift from a reform context shaped only by knowledge for teachers to one in which teacher knowledge is also honored might be seen as a call for what Lindemann Nelson (1995) calls a counter story, that is, a narrative designed to shift and to change how we think about teachers and their knowledge in reform contexts. Dr. Cui’s call is to shift the way teachers are positioned in reform contexts.

As I carefully read the narrative accounts and Dr. Cui’s thoughtful inquiries, I began to see possibilities for a counter story of how teachers might be positioned in reform contexts that begins with

teacher knowledge. Starting with teacher knowledge means, of course, starting with teachers' lives. Working from an understanding of teacher personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1985), knowledge is found in the lives of teachers as they compose and live out their lives in complex educational landscapes with students, parents, colleagues, administrators, subject matter, resources and constraints. In this book, we see that Dr. Cui and his colleagues, Mey and Lee, have made visible their teacher knowledge, knowledge that was composed and recomposed as they grew up, attended schools and universities and taught in university landscapes.

The narrative accounts of these three teachers, and the teacher knowledge they have composed in the living out of their lives, help readers see that, in reimagining reform in ways that begin with teacher knowledge, we need to attend to teachers' lives in motion. Teachers' lives, composed over time and lived out in different contexts and relationships, become central. Questions of person-making and world-making become central concerns as we try to think about beginning reforms in ways that acknowledge teacher knowledge. In imagining this counter story of educational reform, and the place of teacher knowledge within it, we need to stay wakeful to the experiences students and teachers are living both in- and out-of-schools and universities, to the dreams students hold for their lives, to the dreams families hold for their lives, to the dreams families hold for their children's lives, to the gaps, silences and exclusions shaped in the bumping places students, families and teachers experience in educational institutions (Clandinin et al., 2006).

Elizabeth Soep (2006), building on Maxine Greene's (1995) thoughts on artistry in the margins, directs attention in ways that might be helpful to thinking about a counter story that attends to teacher

knowledge in curriculum reform contexts. The main or dominant text of curriculum reform begins in knowledge for teachers. How can we make a place for teacher knowledge in the margins of the main text? In the narrative accounts of Mey, Hongguo and Lee, we begin to see possible ways for bringing teacher knowledge into the main text of educational reform.

Soep asks us to consider the notes we write in the margins of main texts, those scribbled marginalia where we record our thoughts triggered by the main text. Can we think of teacher knowledge as the marginalia, the notes written along the margins of the main story of curriculum reform? Teachers' stories, their knowledge, are marginalia to main text. Can we use that as a kind of metaphor to move us to other ways of thinking about teacher knowledge in contexts of curriculum reform? As I read the narrative accounts of the three teachers in Dr. Cui's text, I thought about the importance of engaging teachers in composing and inquiring into their stories, their personal practical knowledge, as a first step in creating reforms.

As I read Dr. Cui's text, I thought about how differently we would work with teachers if their knowledge were the starting point for thinking about curriculum making in reform contexts. If we take his ideas seriously we must acknowledge and understand that this is a high stakes game we are involved in. Students' and teachers' lives are at stake. We can create universities as educative places, as places of possibility, or we can create miseducative places where lives, both teachers' and students', are shut down.

Currently the problem of curriculum reform is often framed as imposing a one size fits all curricula. In a counter story where teacher knowledge and teacher lives are central, we would not only have to attend to, and inquire into those lives, but we would have to create



spaces for those lives to shift and change. Our university classrooms and our reform initiatives would have to be places that were open to new possibilities, to inquiry, to change and growth.

Dr. Cui's thoughtful text is filled with possibilities for how we might re-imagine curriculum reform that begins to acknowledge what teachers know. The narrative accounts he has written offer us ways to think of occluding, breaking or interrupting the flow of what is happening in curriculum reform in a way that the marginalia of teacher knowledge becomes part of the main text as we negotiate a new story of curriculum reform. Thinking about reform as a question of teacher knowledge rather than knowledge for teachers creates moments of possibility for interrupting the flow and giving us a break, a gap, a space for re-imagining curriculum reform in ways that are more attentive to lives.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jean Clandinin".

Dr. Jean Clandinin  
Director of Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development  
University of Alberta  
Canada

## Dr. Jean Clandinin



Internationally acclaimed teacher, counsellor, psychologist, professor, researcher and author.

Dr. Clandinin is the editor of the *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry*, published by Sage in December 2006. She is also co-author with Michael Connelly of many books, and many chapters and articles. Their most recent book is *Narrative Inquiry*, (2000). She is past Vice

President of Division B of AERA and is the winner of AERA's Early Career Award, the 1999 Canadian Education Association Whitworth Award for educational research, and the 2001 Kaplan Research Achievement Award, the University of Alberta's highest award for research.

In addition, Dr. Clandinin was awarded the AERA Division B Lifetime Achievement Award in 2002, and she is a 2004 Killam Scholar at the University of Alberta.

As Director of the University of Alberta's Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development, Dr. Clandinin is currently involved with an ongoing inquiry into teacher knowledge and teachers' professional knowledge landscapes.

## Acknowledgements

I am so grateful to many people who helped me with their friendship and care. My first thanks go to my supervisor, Dr. Joe Wu, who trusted and helped me from the beginning to the very end of this doctoral journey. My great thanks go to Dr. Heather Blair. Her great trust in hiring me as her research and assistant helped me grow academically and gave me some of the financial support for my doctoral studies. My special thanks go to the students and researchers at the Research Issues Table at the Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development in the University of Alberta. My thanks go to my friends in the Chinese communities in Edmonton. Weihua Zhou, Dabo Sun, Xiaoou Wang, Liqun Sun, Ning Sun, Tim and Grandpa, Xiaoli Du, and many other friends. My thanks go to the Chinese Evangelist Baptist Church groups in Edmonton. I especially want to thank Lynn, Lesley, Joe, Ken, Susan, Haitao, Man Liu, Dorris, Terrance, and many other friends who gave me spiritual and moral support and accepted me as a family member. My thanks go to the International Christian Fellowship in Edmonton. I am grateful to Verne, Irene, Maxine, Keith, Jim, Milli, Dave, Kathy and many other leaders and friends in the group. The two friends who agreed to join my study and to share their stories, and whose name I cannot even mention for the nature of this study, I am ever grateful to them. My wife and my daughter, my parents and my two sisters (and their families) sacrificed and supported my journey. They are my roots.

My most special thanks go to Dr. Jean Clandinin. It is a wonder and miracle for me to meet her in this journey. She spent hours, months, and years with me to help me grow into a narrative inquirer. The experience of getting helped by her pencil is forever in my heart.

# Contents

<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>The Research Puzzle</b>	(1)
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>Related Literature</b>	(6)
2.1	Contexts of English Teaching in China	(7)
2.2	Teacher Knowledge, Teaching Context and Teacher Identity	(25)
2.3	Tensions and Dilemmas Teachers Experience on the Shifting Landscape	(32)
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>Narrative Inquiry</b>	(38)
3.1	The Beginning of My Written Narratives	(40)
3.2	Living in the Field	(42)
3.3	Composing Field Texts	(47)
3.4	Composing Research Texts	(48)
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>My Narrative Accounts</b>	(59)
4.1	Space of My Living and Learning	(60)
4.2	Elementary School Life	(67)
4.3	Junior High School	(70)
4.4	Summer Private English Class	(73)
4.5	End-of-Junior-High Carnival	(75)
4.6	Senior High School Crisis	(77)
4.7	City High School Life	(81)
4.8	New Strategies of Learning English	(89)
4.9	English Major	(90)
4.10	Lost in College and City Life	(93)
4.11	Working as an English Teacher	(101)

4.12	Stories of Returning to Teach .....	(106)
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Mey's Narrative Accounts .....</b>	<b>(110)</b>
5.1	Coming to Mey's Narratives .....	(111)
5.2	Mey's Living Space and Schooling .....	(111)
5.3	Mey's Undergraduate Life .....	(119)
5.4	Mey in America .....	(121)
5.5	Mey Became a Teacher .....	(125)
5.6	Mey as a Teacher .....	(127)
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>Lee's Narrative Accounts .....</b>	<b>(133)</b>
6.1	Lee's Living Space and His Early Schools .....	(134)
6.2	Lee's University Life .....	(144)
6.3	Lee as an English Teacher .....	(146)
<b>Chapter 7</b>	<b>Narrative Overlappings .....</b>	<b>(153)</b>
7.1	Our Starting Landscapes .....	(154)
7.2	Our School Landscapes .....	(156)
7.3	Our Teaching Landscapes .....	(160)
<b>References</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>(175)</b>

## 『本章导读』

在这一章我介绍了我的论文所研究的主要话题。话题之一是我的身份认同(identity)。话题之二是我的个人实践知识(personal practical knowledge)和我的专业知识(professional knowledge)之间的关系。话题之三是我作为教师和课程设计(curriculum making)之间的关系。同样的话题也用于研究另两位参与者的经历。

*A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO THREE ENGLISH  
TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES*

China has been going through educational changes and reforms ever since the Cultural Revolution ended in 1976 and universities and colleges reopened their doors to students. However, as might be true of any other transformation in society, the process of China's educational reforms is not always smooth or easy to adapt to for students and teachers. Growing from a school age boy to a university teacher, I walked under, within and through those educational, social, ideological, economic, and philosophical changes in China. I experienced the changes in China as I passed crises, pressures, anxieties, excitements and hopes in my life.

I experienced great pressures and underwent changes preparing for the entrance exams for universities. After being accepted by a university, I struggled to get used to the new relationships in campus life. After I graduated with my first degree, I became an English teacher and new struggles followed. When I was teaching English in China, I felt I did not know enough teaching methods and theories to teach, and that I did not know how to conduct the educational research that I was expected to do. I also felt I lacked first-hand living experiences in an English-speaking country and a PhD degree to better qualify myself as a teacher. I was told my personal experiences had nothing to do with my teaching and I sensed that I needed new, academic experiences to be a qualified teacher. Under these circumstances, I came to Canada and started my doctoral studies.

I came to Canada to find the answers to how to better teach English and how to do educational research work; I came to obtain life experiences in a native English-speaking country and to earn a title that will better qualify me as an English teacher in China; I also came to find who I was expected to be and how I could better fit into a role that

## *Chapter 1 The Research Puzzle*

was expected of me. I came with a conviction that my past experiences had little or nothing to contribute to make me an able teacher or researcher.

In this doctoral journey, as a person walking in the parade of changing landscapes (Geertz, 1995), I found myself again losing grasp of who I was and what I knew in a brand new context, while I was trying to find out who I had been and what I should have known in an old landscape. In my doctoral journey, I found that in classes and seminars a lot of sharing and discussions are about personal experiences. I found myself drawing on my personal experiences of learning and teaching to contribute to class discussions and to finish my course assignments. I also found that there were no ready answers to the best way to teach English. Gradually I turned my focus to inquiries rather than to find set answers.

In my doctoral studies, I also eagerly explored the ways of conducting educational research. I first joined an introductory research course, which mostly covered quantitative research. I enjoyed the course very much and had an initial understanding of the concepts, symbols, designs, and even calculations in quantitative research (Fraenkel, 2000). Then I came to the great discussions about the different epistemological and ontological beliefs that qualitative and quantitative researchers may consciously or unconsciously work under (Ellis, personal communication, Edmonton, September, 2002; Clandinin, personal communication, Edmonton, 2002). Among the discussions and especially with my experiences at the Research Issues table in the Center for Research for Teacher Education and Development, I came to realize that what I was really concerned with was not so much about numbers, or about treating people as



*A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO THREE ENGLISH  
TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES*

standardized trend markers, but about individuals with unique feelings, emotions, and experiences. As I continued to join the Research Issues table where researchers/students came each week to share the stories of their lives and stories of their research work in process, I then found, especially with my progress in the Narrative Inquiry course, that besides my inquiry of how to better teach English, I cared about who I was as a teacher and researcher. I began to see that in order to understand myself as a teacher I need to study my experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999).

Indeed, as I attend to my life experiences, I might come to a better understanding of my experiential knowledge, knowledge that researchers such as Connelly and Clandinin (1985, 1988) and Clandinin and Connelly (1995) referred to as "personal practical knowledge." They define personal practical knowledge as narrative, composed and expressed in teachers' practices and as shaped by and shaping their professional knowledge (Clandinin, personal communication, Edmonton, 2003). I feel in my past teaching, my personal practical knowledge had not been valued, and that it had not been linked to my professional knowledge. By reclaiming, studying, and learning from my personal practical knowledge, which is embedded in and is composed through my experiences, I might have a chance to grow in my professional teaching life.

Thus, my experiences of schooling and teaching became sources for my identity search, sources of my practical knowledge, and the basis for me to form and understand my professional knowledge.

I came to Canada with the conviction that I was an un-knower (Vinz, 1996) and that my past experiences were irrelevant and worthless to my teaching and educational research. However, now I