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Portraits of successful Thai English teachers: an exploration of teaching journeys

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The Graduate School

PORTRAITS OF SUCCESSFUL THAI ENGLISH TEACHERS:
AN EXPLORATION OF TEACHING JOURNEYS

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

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College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
School of Teacher Education
Educational Studies

This Dissertation by: Denchai Prabjandee

Entitled: *Portraits of Successful Thai English Teachers: An Exploration of Teaching Journeys*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Education in College of Education and Behavioral Sciences in School of Teacher Education, Program of Educational Studies.

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ABSTRACT

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This study is an exploration of the journey to becoming a Thai English teacher. Guided by narrative epistemology and by utilizing the theoretical lens of goodness, I employed life story interviews, classroom observations, photo-elicitations, shadowing techniques, and artifacts to collect the data necessary for this study. The teachers were recruited through the combination of a principal's suggestion, a department head's recommendation, a teacher's reference, and their willingness to participate in the study. The data were analyzed by using the portraiture methods and the Zoom model.

The data revealed that the journey to becoming an English teacher for each participant was developmental, messy, complicated, and multidimensional. The journeys consisted of three vital events: (a) inspirations for becoming an English teacher, (b) individual journeys to become an English teacher, and (c) motivations to remain an English teacher. The three Thai English teachers decided to enter the teaching profession because of the following reasons: destiny, pride, schooling, the influence of their mothers, job security, society, and resisting an affront.

After entering the profession, the three Thai English teachers became successful through hard work and active involvement in the profession. These teachers shared similar characteristics; they were all exertive, responsible, and innovative. They also had unique attributes that contributed to their success such as well-roundedness, leadership,

kindheartedness, good mannerisms, sassiness, willingness to advocate for change, and sense of humor. The findings also showed that the three Thai English teachers stayed in the teaching profession because of the following reasons: students, pride, teaching, sense of belonging, right career, and hometown.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is hilarious to admit that I started writing this acknowledgement before I started

writing my dissertation proposal. At that time, I was not even positive about where the

journey of this dissertation would begin, but I remembered the moment when I

involuntarily typed to say "thank you" to those who have helped, supported, and

encouraged me. I am not sure why I started writing the acknowledgement first. It might

be because the value of "gratitude" is practiced in my family. When I told my friends

about this writing project, they even called it a "backward" design. Whatever reasons I

had in mind, I wanted to show respect and document valuable contributions of the people

who have helped me complete this dissertation.

First and foremost, I would like to begin by saying thank you to my amazing

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INTRODUCTION

"Teachers make a difference."
(Sonia Nieto, 2003, p. 19)

My passion to become a teacher resulted from an inspiring moment that I experienced when I was young. The influential moment took place when a group of students visited my aunt at school. She is a solemn teacher who taught *prathomsuksa* (elementary school) students in the northeastern rural area of Thailand. She had a passion for teaching and high expectations for her students. She also taught wholeheartedly, disciplined her students fiercely, implanted ethics, and was well respected by parents. Yet, the students did not appreciate her attempts. Many of the students were scared of her, and some of them even hated her.

I remember vividly; it was January 16, Teachers' Day, that the incident occurred. My aunt was grading students' assignments at the school, and I was reading a book at a distance. I saw a group of teenagers come into my aunt's classroom with a loud presence. They were smiling, happy, and excited. "*Sawasdee Krub, Kru*! *Sawasdee Kha, Kru*!" They said hello to my aunt. She smiled immediately as she saw her students and asked them to sit on chairs, but as a sign of respect, they insisted on sitting on the floor. When they all sat in a half circle, one of the students told her that they came back to pay homage on this special Teachers' Day. Then, all the students gave beautifully crafted jasmine garlands to my aunt. As the scent filled the air, she said thank you and offered

her blessing. From a distance, I could see my aunt was pleased and had tears in her eyes.

That was the first time that I saw my aunt cry. Looking at the scene, my heart was filled

with happiness and pleasure. It was the transformative moment that changed me. I know

that my aunt was a good teacher, even though the students did not appreciate her until

they graduated. I wanted to become a good teacher, like my aunt.

I decided to go to a college of education, majoring in English. I took several

enjoyable classes. Four years in college enhanced my determination to become a teacher.

Even though there was a high demand for people with strong English proficiencies in the

business sector that offered more salary and better benefits, my goal of becoming a

teacher did not waver. However, 80% of my classmates did not enter the teaching

profession even though they expressed an interest in becoming a teacher at the beginning

of the program. I was curious, surprised, and even frustrated at the same time. I had no

inkling of why they did not become teachers. Since then, it has been a question that

remained deep down inside me like a no-exit labyrinth.

As a soon-to-be teacher educator, I believe that this is an appropriate time to start

finding an exit from that labyrinth so that I have a better understanding of this issue and

later use this understanding to inform and inspire my future students. When I examined

the literature in Second Language Teacher Education (Burns & Richards, 2009), I found

that understanding the journey to become a teacher might answer my previous curiosity

and it might help me find a way out of the maze. Specifically, I wanted to study

successful teachers like my aunt by focusing on why they became teachers and what

motivated them to stay in the profession. With this attempt, I hoped that the results

would add to the knowledge base that teacher educators would consider when designing the curriculum for the teachers of tomorrow.

Statement of the Problem

In the current globalization era, countries worldwide have attempted international cooperation in several aspects such as social, economic, technological, and educational sectors. As a result, learning foreign languages, especially English, is important since it strengthens a nations' ability to negotiate in the international arena as well as to have access to knowledge, serving as a foundation for social and economic development (Burns & Richards, 2009). In Thailand, the importance of learning foreign languages is explicitly addressed in the national educational curriculum. The Office of Basic Education Curriculum (OBEC, 2008) states that:

> In the present global society, learning a foreign language is very important and essential to daily life, as foreign languages serve as an important tool for communication, education, seeking knowledge, livelihood, and creating understanding of cultures and visions of the world community. (p. 252)

The OBEC (2008) further says that learning foreign languages helps increase an awareness of self-understanding, diversity of cultures, and multiple viewpoints. With the capability to use foreign languages, Thai students will be able to access and acquire a body of knowledge from other countries such as cultures, customs, traditions, and thinking. This capability will strengthen the national ability for competitiveness in rapid social growth, economic development, and technological advancement.

In Thailand, schools provide multiple foreign-language classes such as English, French, German, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Arabic, Pali, and other neighboring-country languages. Among these foreign languages, English is a compulsory subject at all levels of education (K-12), while others are optional, depending on the discretion of schools and

the availability of teachers. Mostly, English is taught by Thai English teachers, and in some schools, they co-teach with a native-English teacher. The focus of teaching English in Thailand is on developing "knowledge, skills, attitudes, and cultures application for communication, seeking further knowledge, and livelihood" (OBEC, 2008, p. 10). In higher education, English is a required course that counts toward graduation in both undergraduate and graduate levels tailored to students' fields of education (OBEC, 2008).

Even though English is required and regarded as important, previous studies have pointed out that Thai students were not successful at learning English. For example, Wiriyachitra (2001) pointed out that Thai students had inadequate English proficiency in all four aspects of language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Bolton (2008) found that Thai students had low scores on standardized English-proficiency tests such as the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). Compared to 18 other Asian countries in the study, Thai students' TOEFL scores ranked 17th, lower than Cambodia, Burma, Vietnam, and other Southeast Asian countries.

Recently, Education First (2011), a global language training company, compared English proficiency across worldwide countries based on online standardized test scores. They pointed out that Thai people had a very low English proficiency level. Two years later, Thai people's English proficiencies remained at the very low level (Education First, 2012; 2013). In 2012, out of 54 countries, Thai people's English proficiency levels were at the 53rd rank, and in 2013, they were ranked 55th out of 60 countries. These statistics illustrate the need to improve English language learning and teaching if Thailand wants to compete with other countries in social, economic, and technological development.

Need for the Study

With the awareness of the situation of Thai students not being successful at learning English, the public focal interest in Thailand is drawn to English language teaching and English teachers (Burns & Richards, 2009). Several researchers have identified factors influencing this dilemma. For example, Wiriyachitra (2001) said that English language teaching in Thailand is problematic for both learners and teachers. Thai students are typically passive learners, embarrassed to use English with peers, not taking responsibility for their learning, not motivating themselves, and being challenged by language interference. Thai teachers generally have heavy teaching loads, too many students in a class (approximately 45-60), inadequate English language skills, and lack native speaker cultural knowledge.

Researchers and educators in Thailand have been looking for ways to fix this dilemma such as fostering students' English language proficiency, motivation, autonomy, self-efficacy, and responsibility, but the dilemma has not yet been resolved. An alternative resolution to this predicament might be to extensively study successful Thai English teachers who could share their knowledge with other teachers (Nieto, 2003; Stronge, 2002). In Thailand, schools and other educational institutions do not have adequate numbers of Thai English teachers. As a result of this shortage, many schools assign any teacher, who might not have a degree in English, to teach English. This may affect the quality of English language learning and teaching.

The crisis of the English language teacher shortage in Thailand has been debated among teacher educators for almost 40 years, since 1977 (Wongsothorn, Hiranburana, & Chinnawongs, 2002). In 2013, Mr. Krai Kettan, who is the chief executive of the Bureau

of Personal Administration, Development Management, and Legal Affairs, reported the teacher shortage crisis in Thailand to the Office of Basic Education Commission. He found out that Thailand needed approximately 58,805 more teaching positions. Of this vacancy, 7,884 positions were for English teachers (Kettan, 2013). This phenomenon has been a challenge for teacher educators in Thailand, to produce English major students who will enter into the teaching profession.

Previous researchers (e.g., Hahs-Vaughn & Scherff, 2008; Handcock & Scherff, 2010) have investigated the teacher shortage crisis by examining teacher attrition (why they leave the profession) and predicting teacher attrition by using several variables such as gender and ethnicity. The results in the literature on teacher attrition produced two themes: individual factors and contextual factors (Schaefer, Long, & Clandinin, 2012; Rinke, 2008). For individual factors, teachers left the profession because they felt burned out, were not resilient, were not resourceful, or had family issues. Teacher attrition was also significantly related to demographic information, such as gender and ethnicity. For contextual factors, teachers left the teaching profession because they did not receive professional support, enough salary, collaboration, a supportive working environment, or an adequate teacher preparation (Schaefer et al., 2012).

Recently, Schaefer et al. (2012) questioned the literature on teacher attrition and argued that "prior research seemed to focus on providing correct answers, quick fixes, and decontextualized data" (p. 115). They further critiqued previous studies on teacher attrition as not incorporating individual and contextual factors; often times, they focused on only one aspect. In addition, Schaefer et al. noticed that previous researchers treated teacher attrition as a stable event, something that happened at one moment, rather than

characterizing it as a developmental process that is negotiated over time (Schaefer et al., 2012). As a result, Schaefer et al. suggested that future research should shift the focus to study why teachers stay in the profession. Specifically, Rinke (2008, 2011) suggested future studies uncover a teacher's professional journey in order to "understand and ultimately solve the education current crisis" (p. 11). An understanding of the teacher journey may provide a window for teachers to express their voices (Rinke, 2008).

Purpose of the Study

As a result of the lack of English teachers in Thailand, I proposed a research area to focus on the journey to becoming Thai English teachers, depicting reasons to become teachers, teaching experiences, and reasons to stay in the profession. With this focus, teachers, educators, and researchers would be able to form a picture of teachers' lives adding to the knowledge base of SLTE.

To explore the journey to becoming Thai English teachers and their teaching practices, I was not trying to fix things; rather, I tried to understand the *goodness* of this phenomenon (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983). The notion of goodness is a holistic, complex, and dynamic theoretical lens that resides and depends on context for interpretation. Goodness is not only idealism, but it also admits imperfection, vulnerability, and weakness as perceived by inhabitants.

The assumption of the journey to become teachers is complicated, multilayered, developmental, and contextualized (Rinke, 2008; Schaefer et al., 2012). In order to capture this complexity, I wanted to employ a research methodology that would capture this nature. Merriam (2009) said that qualitative research paradigms attempted to understand meanings and lives of human beings. Under the qualitative research

paradigm, portraiture methodology was developed to capture the complexity of humans'

lives and experiences (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983). Few studies have used this

methodology to investigate the journey to becoming teachers.

Research Questions

To understand the journey to becoming a successful Thai English teacher, I

attempted to answer the following research questions.

Q1　How do Thai teachers describe their journey to becoming a successful
English teacher?

SQ1　What has been the teaching experience of successful English
teachers in Thailand?

SQ2　What motivates successful English teachers in Thailand to stay in the
teaching profession?

Significance of the Study

Research on the journey to become teachers makes a potential contribution to the

field of SLTE and educational research since there has been limited research on this issue,

especially in a Thai context. The findings in this study were beneficial to several parties.

First and foremost, SLTE gained benefit from this study because understanding the

journey to becoming Thai English teachers serves as indirect empirical evidence whether

or not SLTE has prepared their student teachers well enough to be able to work in the real

teaching environment. As a result, the curriculum designer in SLTE could take into

consideration the experience of becoming a teacher and use this information to inspire

their students to enter the teaching profession.

The findings in this study were also beneficial to English teachers. Since I

attempted to represent the data that allow the public to engage in the academic

conversation, the teachers could learn about the journey of other teachers in several

aspects, such as motivation to enter the teaching profession, teaching experiences, and reasons to remain in the profession. Reflecting on who they are as a teacher helps them engage in the profession, reconsider teaching practices, and become reflexive and transformative practitioners.

Additionally, qualitative researchers also gained benefit from this study. Several researchers (e.g., Chapman, 2005; Dixson, 2005; Schendel, 2009) have discussed the potentials of portraiture methodology as the ability to provide voices to marginalized groups, gain access, empower the participants, and nurture the relationship in fieldwork. By using portraiture methodology, this study illustrated the possible power of portraiture methodology from a Thai perspective.

Context of the Study

This study was conducted in Thailand, known as "The Land of Smile." Geographically, Thailand is located in the southeastern part of Asia, bordering with Laos to the northeast, Burma to the west, Cambodia to the east, and Malaysia to the south. As a country, Thailand has never been colonialized. Three important components have shaped Thai's identity, society, and culture: nation, religion, and monarchy. There are approximately 65 million people living in Thailand. Compared to the United States where racial and ethnic diversity clearly exists, the population in Thailand is considered unclearly diverse since Thai people look similar, based on race and ethnicity, but their heritages are different. Thailand has its own language with its own alphabets, pronunciation, and grammar.

Since Thailand has never been colonialized, it does not have a direct link to the English language, and no political pressure to use English in daily life exists. As a result,

English in Thailand is regarded as a foreign language (EFL) that is taught in schools only. Outside of school, Thai people do not use English in the community, and English is not socio-politically received as a must-use language, except in the international business sectors (Nayar, 1997). Outside of those settings, Thai people use Thai as a means for communication and contact with government offices. According to Bolton (2008), approximately 10% of Thai people speak English.

The history of English language teaching in Thailand was first traced back to King Rama III (King Nangklao, 1787-1851). At that time, there were a growing number of Westerners in Southeast Asia exploring new lands to colonize and take away agricultural productions and natural resources (Methitham & Chamcharatsri, 2011). Those Westerners viewed countries in this region, including Thailand, as barbarous, underdeveloped, and shameless in language and dress (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2005). The arrival of the Protestant missionaries during the 1830s to convert Thailand from Buddhism to Christianity by teaching English in Thailand raised the King's awareness of the importance of English (Methitham & Chamcharatsri, 2011). King Rama III believed that English was a key to success in global and regional competitions, and it was a national security against colonization.

King Rama IV (King Mongkut, 1804-1868) was the first Thai person to communicate in oral and written English and other foreign languages such as Pali, Sanskrit, French, and Latin fluently (Debyasuvarn, 1981). He brought missionaries to teach English to his wives and children and educate them about the world beyond Thailand. During the reign of King Rama V (King Chulalongkorn, 1853-1910), Thailand was open and changed to a modernized country because he foresaw the threat by the

West to colonize the country. As a result, King Rama V welcomed English language teaching to the country and sent officers and Thai students abroad to pursue higher education. He did not want the West to claim that Thailand was underdeveloped and take over the country (Methitham & Chamcharatsri, 2011).

In 1895, English became an optional subject taught in secondary schools, and it was extended to primary schools in 1909 (Khamkhien, 2010). In 1921, King Rama VI (King Vajaravudh, 1880-1925) issued the Compulsory Education Act. This made English a required subject for students beyond fourth grade to create "modern" thinkers and to provide students with English skills (Methitham & Chamcharatsri, 2011). In 1960, there was a change in the English syllabus with a greater emphasis on English for international communication.

During the 1980s, English was classified as an elective subject since it was believed that second language learning should be introduced only after children had mastered their first language (Foley, 2005). At this period, educators introduced an English language teaching approach that was broadly termed the "communicative approach." In 1996, English became a compulsory subject again in order to foster language proficiency to fulfill a number of purposes: communication, acquisition of knowledge, and career advancement.

The current English curriculum was revised and introduced in 2001 when the Ministry of Education introduced the national foreign language standards and indicators (Khamkhein, 2010; OBEC, 2008). English language teaching consisted of four strands: a) language for communication, (b) language and culture, (c) language and relationship with other learning areas, and (d) language and relationship with community and the

world (OBEC, 2008). The emphasis of teaching English in Thailand was placed on a learner-centered approach, cultural diversity, and life-long learning through cognitive, emotional, affective, ethical, and cultural growths (OBEC, 2008).

This study was conducted at a time when Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries were starting a new effort of economical, political, social, and cultural cooperation in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Keling, Som, Saludin, Shuib, & Ajis, 2011). The objective of this association is to provide regional connectivity, labor, peace, and knowledge (Keling et al., 2011). With this new movement, country members are moving forward to create regional solidarity by using a free-trade system and promoting professional, industrial, and agricultural fields. In order to move forward, Thailand is placing emphasis on education, especially English language teaching since it is the language that will be used throughout the region. As a result, the theme of teaching English in Thailand is currently preparing young citizens to be proficient in English. English teachers are encouraged to use the ASEAN module.

Like many countries around the world, the teaching profession in Thailand is also female-dominated. When I was a student from 1988 to 2000, I learned mostly with female teachers in all subjects at the schools I attended. According to the national statistics of the Ministry of Education website, from 2004 to 2011 there were more female teachers than male teachers. In 2012, 36.42% of teachers were male, and 63.58% were female. Based on current statistics, I would say that the number of female teachers seems to be continuously increasing.

Portrait of the Researcher: The
White Elephant in the
Northeastern Wood

In any qualitative research, the researcher is a primary research instrument (Merriam, 2009). As I employed portraiture methodology, I was aware that my voice was interwoven throughout the research process (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). To a certain extent, my voice influenced a research decision, data collection, data analysis, interpretation, and data representation. As a researcher who has been armed with ethics, I attempted to make my voice explicit (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983) so that readers have better informed decisions when reading this dissertation.

In this section, I wrote my own portrait reflecting on the journey to become an English teacher. I used the metaphor "The White Elephant in the Northeastern Wood" to describe my journey. Unlike in the United States where "white elephant" is typically used in relation to the present-exchange game, the term "white elephant" in Thai context refers to a valuable person who was born in a remote area. The portrait was constructed by my own memory and stories from my mother with whom I spoke and asked questions at length over the phone.

This portrait is the product of "remaking the past" (Bochner, 2007, p. 200). I admitted that I could not remember all the details in my own stories. This portrait is not a mirror of what happened in the past; rather, it is a recollection and transformation of my memory (Bochner, 2007). However, it should be noted that I did not make up the events; rather, I used the memory of feelings to craft this portrait (Ellis, 1993). No matter if stories are factual or imaginative, they do not lose the power of stories (Bruner, 1990). During the data collection, I found myself sharing these stories with the participants.

Going to Baan Nongtao

I was born and raised in Baan Nongtao in the Ubon Ratchathani province of Thailand. The word "Baan" means a village, and it is used throughout the country. Compared to other neighboring villages, Baan Nongtao is relatively large with approximately 250 families. People know each other well; they know their neighbors' grandparents, children, and pets. Houses have a similar design; two stories, a wooden top with an empty ground floor for the purpose of welcoming guests and accessing the breeze.

We speak our own dialect, called *Isaan*. This dialect is similar to standard Thai, but the pronunciation and some words are different. Like other provinces in Thailand, we do not have a direct link to English, and even today, it remains difficult to access English in this village. Very few people know English, and the only group who knows English is students who learn it at school.

I am going to take you back to see my early childhood life and along on my journey to become an English teacher. Imagine that you are using Google Maps© to look for Thailand. To the right on the map, Ubon Ratchathani is situated along the border to Laos. Tap your touch screen to zoom in to the central part of Ubon Ratchathani, and you will see a provincial park, called Thung Sri Mueng. In this park, focus in on an enormous cement, carved candle, the symbol of the province, sitting patiently, ever saying, "Hello" to visitors. Trees, flowers, and grasses brighten up the park. You will also see activities such as people jogging, aerobic dancing, and sitting under the shade of trees. From this park, I will ask you to Google the bus schedule and hop on the first public bus heading to my house. Wait for the bus at the bus stop.

Look for the blue bus, a medium-sized one with approximately 60 seats and ceiling fans to relieve you from the hot climate. The bus driver will have all the windows open so you can enjoy the view and smell the natural breeze. When the bus is pulling over, hop on and find yourself a seat close to the window. The bus will head to the West, and it will take approximately 45 minutes to arrive at my hometown. Once you are on the bus, the conductor will collect the money from you. Please tell the bus conductor that you are going to Baan Nongtao, and the conductor will tell you the price. Don't worry, the bus conductor knows where it is, and he/she will tell you when it arrives.

Sitting close to the window, you will see an eight-lane highway which leads to Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand. Following this highway, you will see rice fields on both sides of the road. When looking closely, the wind will blow the rice plants and it is like they are waving at your arrival. Smile at the fields' greeting, if you can, because we are "The Land of Smile." During the rainy reason, you will see the green color all over the place, and you will see golden brown in the harvest season. Following this road, you will see villages scattering, and the bus will slow down automatically because there is no speed limit sign along the street.

At the 19th kilometer, to the left, you will see a small hut where villagers used to wait for the bus. You will ring the bell hung above the exit door. When the bus pulls over, get off the bus. In front of you, you will see a bumping little red-dust road to the village. It is approximately two kilometers. Walk along this road. If you are lucky enough, you will see a villager driving a motorcycle into the village. The villager may stop and ask where you are going. Please hop on and tell him that you are going to my house because everyone knows each other. If no one drives past, keep walking. On the

way to my house, villagers will look at you curiously, and some of them may ask where you are heading. Do not panic, smile, answer their questions, and keep going until you see an elementary school on your right. My house is opposite from the school.

My house is a two-story building with the wooden top and the cement bottom. Unlike most houses in the United States, my house does not have a basement. The top floor is brown, and the ground floor is blue. There are countless windows. My dad designed and built this house by himself a year after he married my mom. Since he was a carpenter, he paid loving attention to every detail. My mom told me that he was really proud of this house. No one can hang any pictures on the walls because it will create holes, and he does not like that. I would like to call this house "My Dad's Dream" to acknowledge his passion, love, and career.

Mom and Dad

At the age of 19, while cutting a customer's hair, my mom got a phone call from her mom to come back home as soon as she could. She had been working as a hairdresser after she finished middle school. She was informed that she would be married to a 30-something-year-old man who just came back from abroad. During the 1980s, arranged marriages were common in this village. My mom was no exception. My dad had just come back from working abroad as a construction laborer, and rumors spread that he had brought tons of money back home. My dad was the son of the village headman who was well respected by other villagers. My dad was old enough to get married, so his father found a perfect girl for him. That lucky girl was my mom.

My mom was born in a Chinese-immigrant family. Her father emigrated from China to Thailand and married a Thai girl. My mom's family was relatively wealthy

because they owned a little store. Unlike other villagers, she had fair skin, which was regarded as pretty. Her parents wanted her to get married with an appropriate man, so they arranged the marriage with the son of the headman. My mom did not want to get married, but she had no choice. Years later, she told me with a smile, "Your dad was old. That's why I didn't want to marry him."

My dad argued with a smile, "No, I was not old. I was good looking and charming." Yes, he was the most wanted man in the village.

I do not know how they lived together when they had not fallen in love. After they got married, my dad built his dream house and opened a new store, which became a big financial source for the family. A year later, my mom was pregnant.

Early Experience

October 18, 1985 . . . it was Friday when my dad was waiting anxiously outside a labor room in a hospital in Ubon Ratchathani province of Thailand. Hours of waiting gradually increased his anxiety. He was to become a father at any moment. Suddenly, a doctor walked out of the room and informed him that my mom was safe, but I was too small. The doctor put me in an incubator to help me breathe. My dad remembered vividly that he was not allowed to hold me. He saw me off in the distance through a mirror of a room where all babies were sleeping quietly. "You were super small, underweight actually," he said with smile.

"We were not sure whether you were breathing or not," my mom added. My body was covered with untidy wires from several machines. My parents worried that I would not survive.

Several weeks later, I was brought home, to the relief of my parents. Under the roof of the two-story house, created with the dream of my dad, all relatives, close friends, and acquaintances were waiting to see the little boy. Like other small villages around the world, all villagers are friendly and know each other. The news spread over the village quickly that my parents had a boy, so villagers were expected to visit and look at the baby. My dad was well known among the villagers because he was active in community service, so every community member came to see his son. Smiles, happiness, and enjoyment were floating in the air of that day. A little party started at my house.

I was born into a happy family. My parents were funny and fun loving. Growing up, I would hear laughing and see smiles painted on their faces. However, when it came to education, my parents were strict. They wanted me to work hard and do the best I could. For example, my dad would watch me doing homework every day. He never taught me to solve math problems nor read, but he would sit there until I was done and teach me the meaning of life, gratitude, and ethics. He typically turned on the TV with his favorite Chinese Kung Fu shows, watching me doing homework.

One important lesson that I have remembered to this day was the use of an eraser. He did not want me to use an eraser when writing because it would tear the paper apart, and it would become a bad habit in the future. If he saw me use the eraser, he would become serious, asking me to stop, think, and write. He even used the ruler to rap the back of my hands if I erased a lot. "In real life, you cannot use eraser to undo things that you don't want, so think before you write," he said (While I was writing until this point, I missed my dad so much.). At that time, I did not know the meaning of this, but I know now, and I am thankful for this lesson.

Every night I would go to bed with bedtime stories told by my dad. "Time for tales!" he would yell.

"Can I pick the tale?" I would ask him enthusiastically. My dad had a collection of tales with moral lessons: family unity, respect, determination, gratitude, and being smart. I am not sure whether those tales were common in the village and passed down from my grandparents, but I thought they were narrated in my family only. Vividly, I still remember Dad's tales such as the story of two sisters who worked hard to help their family, the story of a bird storing up a grain of rice with effort, and a story of a crafty man who solved problems by using his wit. He would ask me to close my eyes and picture the story. Every night I would fall into sleep while I was listening to the story. I remembered clearly that I would ask him to tell those stories repeatedly.

The Transformative Moment

I was raised not only by my parents, but also by relatives from my mother's side. My grandparents, aunts, and uncles would visit daily and take me to their homes. I grew up with warm care from these people. My two aunts from my mother's side were teachers. They would bring me to their house and draw me pictures. My mom told me, "If you cried, the only thing that would comfort you is pictures. Your aunt would draw you a picture, anything, any picture. You would stop, look, and laugh."

I remembered spending most of my time with my one aunt who is a teacher. When I spent time with her, I saw many of her students whom she taught come back and visit her. They brought her presents, flowers, and food to pay respect. Some of them brought their kids to show my aunt. Several groups kept coming and visiting. I had witnessed those wonderful moments, laughing, sharing, and talking. When her students

visited her, I could see that she was happier than normal. As a kid, I had no idea what it felt like to have my own students.

When I grew up as a student, I went back to visit my old schools several times. Every time I went back, the teachers were pleased. It seemed like I made their day. I sometimes saw the teacher's tears. "You don't need to bring me a present. I am glad that you came back," they said. Due to those wonderful moments, I automatically internalized these poignant times. Stories of good teachers and the moments that I visited my teachers transformed my motivations to wanting to become a teacher. That's the power of the story.

First Exposure to English

I attended the elementary school in my village across from my house. I was not supposed to study in the kindergarten at that time because I was a year younger than the minimum age, but my parents asked the principal, who was their best friend, to put me in. The principal told them, "If he is ready, we will pass him up to the first grade." I do not remember much about learning experiences in kindergarten. Vaguely, I remember singing songs, drawing pictures, and writing the Thai alphabet.

The teacher told my parents that I had advanced to the necessary skills and was ready to move up. She appreciated my arts, writing, discipline, and ethics. "He is a White Elephant," she said with pride to my parents.

I started learning English when I was in Prathomsuksa Five, at approximately 10 years old. I was really excited because I had looked forward to learning English since I was 9 years old. On the first day of school, after the morning ritual, my friends and I came to the room, immediately sat at our tables, and tried to sing the ABC song. The

teacher was not even there yet. We were really excited to learn English. All voices sang "A, B, C, D, E, F, G, . . . X, Y, Z." It was a really wonderful experience. We were also competing on how many alphabets we knew. When my friends did not remember, we helped each other out. I also told my friends the letters they did not know.

When the teacher arrived in the classroom, we were all quiet immediately, showing him we were ready to learn. Since the teacher in an elementary school taught every subject, he started the class with, "What do you want to learn today?"

We all said "English Krub. English Kha!" The teacher smiled as if he knew that we would like to study English. So, he started off the class by singing the ABC song. Then, we sang along by yelling out as loudly as we possibly could, and we wrote down the English alphabet in our notebooks. It took us a really long time to finish writing. English was so different from Thai, yet it was really fun. After that, the teacher asked us to look at a mini picture dictionary that came with the textbook. I remembered that the first set of English words that he taught was, "bat, rat, and cat." We copied those words down and wrote the meaning in Thai next to it. I felt privileged to learn English!

After lunch, my friends and I would typically go to the playground, but today we were in our class trying to study English. We looked through the picture dictionary and tried to read it. Even though we couldn't read it, we kept opening the pages, and I really had fun. One day, I had an idea to play a game of learning English with my friends. I asked my friends to bring their mini picture dictionary. We sat in a circle. Then, I opened a page and tried to read one word from the dictionary. After that, my friends would look over the dictionary and tell me the meaning of the word. If anyone guessed the meaning of the word, he or she got a chance to choose a new word. We were so

excited and had a lot of fun. We kept playing this game on and on. One day, I forgot my dictionary, but I wanted to join the game. I realized that I remembered all the words in that dictionary.

Since I remembered all the vocabulary, learning English was exciting and easy when I was in elementary school. Many of my friends gave up learning English because it became harder and harder when it came to grammar and reading, yet I still enjoyed learning English. I was an outstanding student of English in the class. I was sent to school competitions and won several English contests, which brought pride to the school and my family. The story of success enhanced my self-confidence and positive attitude towards English. "We were right to move your son up in the first place. He is a White Elephant," the principal told my dad.

English became really difficult when I was in eighth grade. There were many vocabulary words that I didn't know. I was not the best student in English anymore, so I stopped studying. Thinking back, I was regretful that I did not continue to practice English. I could learn English, but I was not as excellent as I used to be. So, I did not pay attention much in English class. The English class continued to be difficult through high school. I tried to study, but it didn't work. I became good at Thai language and Social Studies instead. I loved those two subjects, and English gradually faded away.

Family Financial Crisis

I never knew that my family had a financial crisis; my parents never told me about financial issues. Growing up, I always had what I wanted: food, toys, and clothes. I was the only one in the village who had a Playstation game system. My dad bought me

the Playstation as a birthday present. I couldn't imagine we would have money problems because our family business was doing well.

My dad was diagnosed with kidney stones. He needed an urgent surgery; otherwise, he would not survive. Surgery was expensive at that time. My mom told me later that she spent the entire family savings for the first surgery. That's right, all our savings. After the first surgery, the financial crisis increased when the kidney stones came back, and my dad had a second surgery. The local family store started to make less money because public transportation was more convenient. The villagers preferred to shop in the city, so our business did not earn much income. With my dad's severe health problem, the situation was even worse.

My dad started gambling and playing cards. Gambling was illegal, but he did it. Initially, villagers did not engage in any kind of gambling. It was introduced by a group of people from the city. They were professional gamblers traveling around to find a safe place in the countryside to do gambling. Unfortunately, my village was selected as the safe place. My dad decided to join the gambling. It became his job. Several months later, my mom also started gambling.

I hated when they gambled, but I did not have a voice to tell them to stop. They wouldn't listen to me because I was too young. Part of it was we needed money, a lot of money. We did not know when my father would have a surgery again.

Since then, we have been financially miserable. And, I didn't even know about this financial crisis until I was in college.

Academic Life at the Intersection

I was really nervous while I was standing in the line, waiting to submit the national entrance scores to get into college. My sweat was all over the student uniform. I was not sure whether it came from the weather or from my frustration. The line got closer and closer to the desk. I became more nervous. Two months from now, I would know whether I would be able to get into college or not. My life depended on the two exams! I was not sure I was the White Elephant anymore.

It was at the "college festival" that 12th graders had to decide which school that we would like to attend. At that time, we had to take the national tests twice and choose the highest score to submit to college. I knew that I wanted to become a teacher, but teaching what subject? I had no idea. I took a lot of time thinking about the decision. I love the Thai language and Social Studies, but I was not sure whether there would be a job market. My immature response at that time was "Probably not!" So, I turned to English. Even though I did not love English that much, I could study it. Also, there was a huge demand for people who had good English proficiency in the schools and business sectors. I thought that if I majored in English, I would have a clear future. And, I was right.

With the English major, I got several part-time job opportunities while studying in college. I worked part-time as a tutor teaching English at several tutorial schools. I was also a simultaneous translator at various conferences. I started to realize by myself that my family had a financial crisis, so I worked crazily in order to support myself. My life schedule was hectic. I went to school during the day, worked after school in the evening, came back to the apartment late, and woke up early to finish my homework. During the

weekend, I taught at the tutorial schools all day long. I had only a few hours to sleep each night throughout four years in college. My parents never knew about this. I did not want them to worry about me.

**Practice Until You
Become . . .**

I finally got into a college of education to study English. The school was in another province, so I had to move. It was the third year of college that I realized I could speak English. I was standing in front of the mirror practicing my oral presentation for a class the next day. "Ladies and gentlemen . . ." I began, then stopped, and started again by adding an American-like accent, "Ladies and gentlemen. . . ." After that I went on and read the rest of the script.

The next day would be my first time that I would present a topic of interest in English for 10 minutes. Ten minutes! That's the longest presentation I had ever given! It was even more difficult when the professor did not allow me to look at the script. More importantly, we would be videotaped. I kept telling myself that I had to remember it all. A picture in my head of my dad siting there looking at me with the words, "You can do this," comforted my anxiety.

Again and again, I practiced this presentation in front of the mirror, until I was sure that I remembered all of the words in the script. I was scared I would not remember anything, so I kept practicing. Each time, I added my accent with attempts to sound like native English speakers. I was not sure how long I stood there. Everywhere I went, in the restroom, kitchen, and shower, I rehearsed the script silently.

My nerves started eating me up when it was about time. I was the first person to present. I remembered vividly that I presented about my favorite book. I took a deep

breath and started, "Ladies and gentlemen . . ." I paused, "As you know, my name is

Denchai. Today, I am going to talk about my favorite book." I told the classmates the

title of the book, the author, and a brief story. I ended my presentation with the reasons

why I liked this book. I remembered the feeling of getting it all out. When I watched the

videotape with the professor, she complimented that I was well prepared and set a good

example for my classmates. I was so relieved. I did well.

Throughout the semester, I practiced this kind of presentation five times. We also

watched videotapes of each session and brainstormed how to improve our presentations.

The professor also commented on common pronunciation mistakes. At the end of the

class, I had to give an impromptu public speech with a topic randomly chosen by my

professor. I had 60 seconds to prepare and present for 3 minutes. For the first time, I

realized that I could speak English. It was as though I could fly. The White Elephant had

returned.

**To Be or Not to Be . . . That's
the Question**

The word "teacher" in the Thai language literally means "hard work." Do I really

want to work hard?

Throughout the experiences of learning in the second language teacher education,

I was reluctant to decide whether to be or not to be a teacher. Even though I started to

like my English classes in the second year of college, I did not like my pedagogical

classes. In those teaching classes, I learned how to write a syllabus, make a curriculum,

and write lesson plans. The lesson plan part was so boring. We had to write, revise, and

write it again and again. I felt like all we did in college was write lesson plans.

I wanted to teach! I wanted to be in school and practice teaching. I wanted to feel like a teacher, but I rarely went into the school and practiced my teaching English skills in the first two years. Maybe I was not ready, but I was too young and immature to understand. Six years later, as a doctoral student, I am still writing lesson plans. But at this time, I see the value of writing them. I see it as a framework to guide my teaching practice. As a future teacher educator, I am not sure how to teach the students of tomorrow to appreciate the value of writing lesson plans.

In the last two years of college, I started observing English classes. I was assigned to observe an English class at an elementary school adjacent to the university. Excitement and frustration cannot capture my true feelings of being there at the school. I was thinking, "Finally I am here, but what am I going to do?" When I was at the school, the supervising teacher introduced me as "Kru Denchai," which means *Teacher Denchai*. It felt awkward to be called a teacher when I was not actually one. The students were really excited to have a new teacher. Their eyes told me pleasure, but I was not sure what my eyes told them. I remembered that I smiled a lot, and I tried to be nice.

After four observations, I had to practice teaching one lesson. This experience made me question myself whether I should be a teacher or not. I do not remember exactly what the lesson was about, but I remember the feeling of frustration and embarrassment. The supervisor teacher was sitting at the back of the classroom with an evaluation form, and I had to teach the students for 30 minutes. The beginning of the class kicked off well, but the rest was a disaster. I tried to encourage the students to participate by calling names to answer questions, but they had no idea what to do. My nerves started to eat me up, and it became uncomfortable. The supervisor teacher jumped

in and helped me out on some occasions. The situation became better, but what was left for me was a sense of failure.

What did I do wrong? I reflected on my teaching performance. Maybe I should ask? Should I be a teacher or not?

Job Offers from Unknown
Phone Calls

It was in the afternoon that I received an unknown phone call. I thought to myself, "Who is this?" as I answered unenthusiastically, "*Sawasdee Krub*."

A man responded, "Hi. Can I speak to Denchai, please?"

"Speaking," I replied.

"We would like to invite you for the job interview at our company. Is there any time you're available in the next two weeks?"

I was completely shocked, so I said "What? But, I did not apply for any job, and I have not graduated yet! How did you get my phone number?" I had more questions than answers.

"Well, we know that you're about to graduate. We realized that you might be a good match for our company."

I was still in shock, so I said, "Can you call me back in the next two days? I need time to make a decision."

"Will do, and we would like to let you know that you may get more phone calls from other companies because it is the season for hunting employees."

That man was right! I received three more phone calls. For the first phone call, they asked me to send my resume online so that they could put me in the recruiting system. I asked them several questions about the company and the job position that they

thought I might be able to do. The last phone received, the recruiter even asked me what the other companies offered, and that they were willing to pay much more than other companies. The salary was tempting, but I did not say yes to any company. I did not plan to raise my salary, but I was so confused about what I should do for my career.

Since I received the highest grade of the school and my major was English, several companies attempted to hire me in advance even though I had not graduated. It was typical for the graduates majoring in English to receive these kinds of phone calls. The business sector was in need of individuals who were proficient in English. They started competing against each other to find qualified ones. Additionally, the university that I graduated from was close to the company headquarters, so they targeted the graduates at our institution.

I admitted to myself that I was reluctant to accept a job offered by those companies. Even though I entered the school of teacher education in order to become a teacher, with the appealing salary, I almost changed my mind. Finally, I decided to say no to all the offers. I thought to myself, "If I worked in the company, I would not be happy." Even though the salary was high, they would kick me out one day. The job was not stable. As a result, I decided to pursue my Master's Degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) while working as a tutor at several tutoring schools teaching English. My mom was really disappointed with my decision. I left behind a big salary to spend more money on education. She did not understand why I needed more education. We had a big fight. I told her to be patient, that "Education will help our family in the long run."

Becoming an English Teacher

Due to the family financial crisis, my parents decided to sell our own lands for my dad's health and my tuition and fees. I asked for the tuition and fees for only the first semester. For the rest of the program, I supported myself. I tried to apply for scholarships, but I did not get one. I worked as a tutor teaching English. My life was busy, studying and working. I wanted to support my family, but the money I earned was not much. I lived from paycheck to paycheck.

While working as a tutor did not help me much financially, I decided to apply, with courage, to teach in one of the best international schools in Thailand. Typically, international schools in Thailand accepted only native speakers to teach English, but I walked in and convinced the program director to give me a chance. She interviewed me and asked me to do a teaching demonstration. She finally hired me to teach English. The salary at this school was much better than working as a tutor. I saved some money to send back to my family. My parents stopped gambling. The financial situation got better.

Two years later, January 16, Teacher's Day, I welcomed a group of students at my office. I was glad that my students came to visit. I opened the door with a big smile. My students greeted, "*Sawasdee Krub*! *Sawasdee Kha*!" They kneeled down and gave me beautiful flower garlands of scented jasmine. I was flattered and pleased. The picture of my aunt and those wonderful moments flashed back to me. Finally, it happened to me. I felt privileged. When they came back, it was the most wonderful moment I have ever had. This moment reinforced my commitment to the profession. Being a teacher was as tiring as the name given in the Thai language, but it was rewarding.

Final Negotiations between
My Dad and His Kidney
Stones

I received a phone call from my mom to come back home as soon as I could because my dad was really sick. I flew back home immediately and found out that my dad was in a coma, and he needed a kidney dialysis. This required a lot of money, so my dad refused to get treatment.

"I don't want to do this. I don't want to be the family burden," my dad told me while he was in a patient bed, and then he turned away, trying to hide his weakness. I swallowed the bitterness and pretended to smile.

"I am about to finish my Master's in two months. I want you to be there on my graduation day. Will you please do that for me, Dad?"

He turned back and looked at me. His eyes flooded with tears. That was the first and only time I saw him cry. I knew that he wanted to live and see me finish my Master's. When I graduated with my Bachelor's Degree, I remember that he was full of delight and pride. I graduated with a first class honors degree, and I received a gold medal for being the first rank in the college. When I gave him the gold medal, Dad kept it as the most valuable present he had ever received.

Staring at me, he finally said, "Ok, I will do this for you."

I smiled, trying to comfort him that he would be okay. I went to see the doctor and talked about options for kidney dialysis. The doctor walked me through benefits and challenges of each option. I decided to have my dad do dialysis with the machine. Even though the price was higher, it was safer. After making the decision, the doctor sent me to a nurse to proceed with paper work.

The nurse walked me through the process and expenditure in details. She said that I had to pay installments on that day. Unfortunately, I would not get paid until the next week. She gave me a dirty look, a look that hurt my feelings until now. "What's your job?" she asked.

"I am a teacher and studying for my Master's," I replied.

She exhaled and said, "Look, you have a high education, but it doesn't help your father here, okay?" She looked at me into the eyes and exhaled again, "I will process the paper work and you can pay later."

Her words ripped my heart apart. "Look, you have a high education, but it doesn't help your father here, okay?" She was right! I did not say anything after what she said. My jaws tightened, trying to control my sadness. I signed the paper and went to the restroom. If anyone were there in the restroom, they would hear a man crying as if his heart was literally broken.

Four weeks later, my dad died. He did not make it to my graduation.

Here I am: Soon-To-Be the
Teacher Educator

After I finished my Master's Degree, I received a scholarship from Burapha University to pursue a doctoral degree in Educational Studies with an emphasis in Bilingual and ESL Education. My mom did not want me to take it. When I received the scholarship, I divided some portion of the money for my mom to pay for my younger sister to go to college. I told her to be patient, "Education will help us in the long run." I still believed in education even though I was devastated after hearing what the nurse said. After I graduate from my doctoral study, I will go back and teach student teachers

majoring in English. I have a mission to inform and inspire them to become teachers.

Here I am, a soon-to-be teacher educator.

The White Elephant in the
Northeastern Wood

How can I speak English when my parents do not even know any English letters?

How have I come this far? It is probably not magic.

How about effort? Who knows?

Many people call me the White Elephant in a Northeastern Wood. I did not ask

why they call me that, but I guess it is a compliment, and I am humble to accept it. In

Thailand, the white elephant is a distinctive and difficult-to-find species. When it is used

to refer to a person, it is assumed that the person is valuable, precious, and hopeful for

others. Also, the northeastern part of Thailand is the driest area with few big trees, so it

is hard to find elephants. When they call me the elephant in the northeastern wood, they

probably think I am highly precious, and I am the hope of my village, the hope to go back

and help my hometown.

Chapter Summary

The goal of this dissertation was to investigate the journey to becoming a

successful Thai English teacher. The rationale to conduct this study resides in the

combination of my own experience growing up with a successful teacher and a research

gap in the literature on teacher attrition. In Thailand, the teacher shortage crisis,

especially with English teachers, has received attention among teacher educators for over

40 years. Previous researchers have studied teacher attrition in terms of why teachers

leave the profession. However, recent interest has shifted to focus on why teachers stay

in the profession.

For the purpose of this dissertation, I focused on researching successful Thai English teachers by studying their reasons for becoming teachers, teaching experiences, and reasons for staying in the profession. This study was conducted in Thailand, where there is no direct link to the English language. In order to inform readers of the perspectives I brought to this study, I provided a summary of my journey to becoming an English teacher and a soon-to-be teacher educator through my narrative portrait. The next chapter provides the review of the literature that informs the epistemological, theoretical, and methodological lenses for this study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

"The words teaching and teacher evoke in almost
everyone particular memories and images."
(William Ayers, 2010, p.13)

In this chapter, I will review significant concepts, previous studies, and the literature on the journey to becoming a teacher in order to provide the epistemological, theoretical, and methodological lenses for this study. This chapter consists of four sections as follows. In the first section, I will map out the terrain, historical development, and trends of Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE). In the second section, I will describe the term successful teachers and explain their characteristics. In the third section, I will present the literature on the journey to becoming a teacher, including reasons to become a teacher, metaphors of being a teacher, and reasons to stay in the profession. In the last section, I will present the literature on portraiture methodology and its historical development.

Second Language Teacher Education

Historically, the journey to conceptualizing the Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE) field was conducted by describing activity, rather than doing research (Johnson, 2009). Based on this view, the landscape of SLTE was originated in the 1960s as a short training program preparing English teachers with necessary skills and new

methods to teach students (Burns & Richards, 2009). During the 1970s, the profession was expanded to higher education, offering degrees and courses to prepare the teachers of tomorrow to teach English (Freeman, 2009). During this period, good teaching was perceived as the acquisition of a series of skills (Burns & Richards, 2009).

In the 1980s, the focus of SLTE shifted from the mastery of a set of skills to the attention to teachers as people (Freeman, 2009). Second Language Teacher Education attempted to prepare student teachers to work in the profession by treating them as a teacher and as a learner at the same time. In the school context, student teachers were seen as teachers, yet they were still learners, learning to become a teacher. In the 1990s, SLTE started to be drastically reconceptualized. Richards and Nunan published their seminal work in 1990, *Second Language Teacher Education*, which served as a wake-up call for teacher educators to rethink and redefine the field (Freeman, 2009). With this influential publication, they challenged the SLTE programs to go beyond "*what* teachers needed to learn, but increasingly *how* they would learn it" (Freeman, 2009, p. 13).

After the milestone of SLTE during the 20th century, Freeman (2009) described the changing perspectives of SLTE in terms of three dimensions: (a) substance, (b) engagement, and (c) outcomes/ influences. Substance is traditionally known as the content, learning process, and learning environment of the program. Freeman depicted the substance shift from learning as prescribing knowledge and skills to learning as a process of adopting a professional identity. The engagement dimension focuses on the nature of learning, whether it is short-term and long-term or explicit and implicit. The engagement aspect shifted from learning by imitating to engaging students to participate in the sociocultural profession. Freeman described outcomes or influences as the

evaluation of the product from the program or the teacher quality, changing from replicable knowledge and behaviors to shaping students' learning. Later, these three dimensions served as a framework to understand the historical development of the SLTE field.

Trends in Second Language
Teacher Education

Johnson (2009) synthesized the literature in SLTE and wrote the state-of-the-art chapter on trends in the field. She concluded that the trends of SLTE consisted of four areas: (a) the nature of knowledge base, (b) the legitimacy of practitioner knowledge, (c) the focus of second language acquisition, and (d) the features of professional development. These four areas helped teacher educators conclude that the process of teacher learning is socio-culturally situated, dependent upon knowledge of the self, students, content, curriculum, and setting. This process is dialogically and socially constructed.

The nature of knowledge in SLTE informs three broad areas: (a) what teachers need to know, (b) how it should be taught, and (c) how they should learn how to teach. The history of the knowledge base in SLTE has been derived from several related disciplines, such as applied linguistics, second language acquisition, and language pedagogy (Johnson, 2009). This knowledge assumes that once the students are exposed to these types of knowledge, they will be able to effectively teach. However, recent studies have shown that it is not the case. In 1998, Freeman and Johnson argued that the knowledge base of SLTE has little to do with second language teaching itself. They wrote that the knowledge base in SLTE should involve "what and how language is

actually taught in L2 classrooms as well as teachers' and students' perception of that content" (p. 410).

In regards to the legitimacy of practitioner knowledge, Johnson (2009) defined it as the knowledge that is related to practices, and it is detailed and organized around real-life problems. In this sense, SLTE knowledge should be extracted from teaching practices of teachers. This becomes the challenge for teacher educators to document specific and concrete scenarios of classroom problems. Several researchers have attempted to document this knowledge through reflective teaching (e.g., Burton, 2009), action research (e.g., Burns, 2009), and teacher research (e.g., McKay, 2009). Johnson encouraged teacher educators to focus on teaching practices. Rather than viewing teaching as personal, it should be treated as professional, in which it can create a body of knowledge for the field.

In addition, Johnson (2009) noticed the trends of SLTE in its changing focus of second language acquisition theory. The shift was from the assumption of language as a stable characteristic to a more dynamic and contextual base. Epistemologically, the findings from different disciplines such as anthropology, applied linguistics, psychology, and education have favored the sociocultural dimension of language (Johnson, 2009). These appreciates recognized that language learning occurred in a social setting, and it should be treated otherwise. As a result, SLTE should take into consideration this nature of language learning and acquisition (Johnson, 2009).

The final trend of SLTE is the nature of teacher professional development. Previously, teacher professional development was regarded as something ready to use that was provided for teachers. The assumption was that the teachers would use

knowledge in their classrooms. However, from the postmodern perspective, teacher development should be viewed alternatively as one that focuses on the teacher's quality as a person. As a result, SLTE should structure the professional development in a way that "allows for self-directed, collaborative, inquiry-based learning that is directly relevant to teachers' classrooms" (Johnson, 2009, p. 25).

Researching Successful Teachers

In the field of SLTE, previous researchers have struggled to define the term *successful teacher*, and it is evident that they used inconsistent terms to refer to similar concepts such as best (Bain, 2004), good (Ayers, 1989; Korthagen, 2004), effective (Gordon, 1973; Hickman, 2011; Stronge, 2002; Werbińska, 2009), qualified (Cajkler & Hall, 2009), excellent (Nieto, 2003), expert (Tsui, 2003, 2009), and caring (Nieto, 2005). Cruickshank and Haefele (2001) added that successful teachers have been called ideal, analytical, dutiful, competent, expert, reflective, satisfying, diversity-responsive, and respected. To avoid confusion in this study, I used only the term successful teachers since it matches with the theoretical and methodological lens in this study.

Several researchers have called for attention to the need to do research on successful teachers. Stronge (2002) argued that teachers have a powerful influence on students' learning and interaction. Johnson (2009) described the trends of SLTE to create the knowledge base from practitioners by studying their teaching practices. Nieto (2005) also argued that the quality of teaching matters to the students' learning. Chen (2012) said, "The teacher is one of the main factors that *has [sic]* a lot of influence on students' achievement" (p. 213). In this section, I will describe the criteria that previous studies

used to research successful teachers, characteristics of successful teachers, and their teaching practices.

Criteria to Research
Successful Teachers

Previous studies have focused on defining a successful teacher from different perspectives. For example, Cambone (1990) and Korthagen (2004) identified successful teachers from a psychologically humanistic perspective by listing desirable attributes and competencies. Bain (2004), Huang (2010), Ladson-Billings (2009), and Werbińska (2009) defined the term successful teacher by using external sources, such as student's rating or the principal's recommendation. As a result of these different perspectives, previous researchers have struggled to identify successful teachers creating problematic, messy, and no commonly accepted notion of successful teachers (Tsui, 2003).

To define successful teachers, some researchers used simple, yet ambiguous criteria. For example, Ayers (1989) looked at the ones who possessed degrees of morals and self-determined goals to become teachers. Huang (2010) studied successful English teachers in China by focusing on the ones "who are popular among students" (p. 20). Nieto (2005) chose to study successful teachers who had a passion for teaching, cared about students, and loved the job. Peshkin (2001) studied successful teachers in an elite college preparatory school in the United States. He assumed that if the school was excellent, then the teachers possessed characteristics of successful teachers. Also, Peshkin argued that since the students in this school exceled academically, socially, and emotionally, they were the product of successful teachers.

Many researchers have employed a combination of criteria to justify a successful teacher. Bain (2004) investigated college teachers in the United States from different

disciplines such as medicine, sociology, and education, and it became the book called,

What the Best College Teachers Do. In this book, Bain defined successful teachers by

using multiple evidences and ongoing criteria. He depicted successful teachers as the

ones who "had achieved remarkable success in helping their students learn in ways that

made a sustained, substantial, and positive influence on how those students think, act, or

feel" (p. 5). To identify the participants, Bain used several tangible evidences depending

on disciplines such as test results, students' testimony, and colleagues' comments. He

did not care about classroom performance, teaching styles, or lively lectures as long as

those teachers helped their students to be engaged in deep learning. In some cases, he

took time to gather evidences in order to identify successful teachers. In other cases, he

dropped the participants when he found out that they did not meet the criteria.

In the book *The Dream Keepers*, Ladson-Billings (2009) studied successful

teachers of African-American students in the United States. She asked parents to identify

successful teachers and provide reasons to support their decisions. From those parents'

perspectives, successful teachers were those who helped their children achieve academic

tasks, such as reading, writing, and mathematics. She also talked to the principals from

various schools to suggest successful teachers who demonstrate teaching effectiveness

with African-American students and asked them to provide their rationale. The

principals said that successful teachers helped students succeed in tests, had good

classroom management, and gained student satisfaction.

Additionally, Werbińska (2009) investigated a profile of a successful teacher in

Poland by using a combination between observation and interview. She used external

sources to identify successful teachers including evaluations from supervisors, school

principals, and students. First, Werbińska asked supervisors who observed teachers'

classes regularly to recommend successful teachers based on their teaching performances.

After that, she observed and interviewed them. Then, she asked the school principals to

provide extra information about these teachers, and students' surveys were distributed to

confirm the characteristics of successful teachers.

From a humanistic perspective, Korthagen (2004) developed a holistic approach

called *The Onion Model* in order to understand the essence of a successful teacher. He

disagreed with the performance-based approach (listing concrete and observable

competencies) since it lacks contextualized roles and is pedagogically inappropriate. The

alternative model is multilayered, trying to understand a teacher as a whole person.

Figure 1 summarizes the Onion Model to understand a successful teacher.
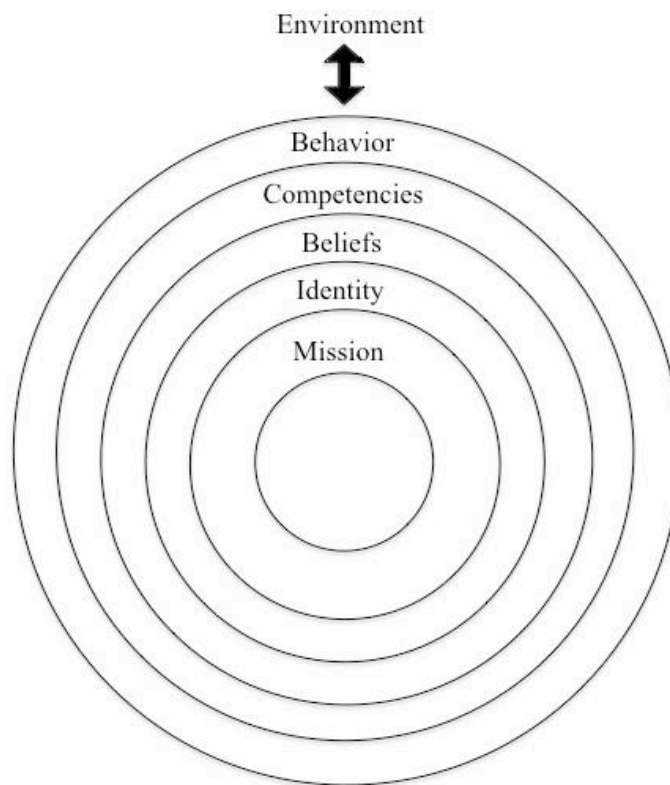
Figure 1. The Onion Model to understand a successful teacher (Korthagen, 2004).

As shown in Figure 1, the Onion Model presents different perspectives to understand a successful teacher. The answer to the question, "Who is a successful teacher?" depends on each level of the onion. Also, each level can influence the other. There are two outer levels (environment and behavior) that can be directly observed, but the others are inner characteristics. The outermost level, environment, consists of class, students, and school. The behavior level focuses on how well teachers manage problems in their classes. The competency level includes subject-matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The teacher's competency is regulated by their beliefs. One of the beliefs is about themselves, which Korthagen termed the identity level. The innermost level, mission, is defined as the spiritual drive inside the teachers.

Furthermore, Tsui (2003) discussed the term *successful teachers* similarly to the term *experienced teachers* by distinguishing this term from novice teachers. She challenged the criteria that asked for suggestions from school principals because it was not clear what criteria the school principal used to identify successful teachers. She also disagreed with the idea of using teaching awards as the criteria because it did not reflect true teaching performance. Given the complexity of defining successful teachers, Tsui decided to use a combination of ongoing examinations of experience, reputation, recommendation, and classroom observation.

Characteristics of Teachers

In this study, the characteristics of successful teachers were defined as psychological, intellectual, and emotional constructs that these teachers possess and that they are *critically different* from less successful teachers (Tsui, 2003). Attempts have been made to list essential characteristics of successful teachers (Miller, 2012; Nieto,

2005), portray the quality of successful teachers (Ayers, 1989; Cambone, 1990; Esquith, 2003, 2007; Gordon, 1973), and decipher what makes successful teachers (Huang, 2010; Peshkin, 2001; Werbińska, 2009). These studies have reported overlapping characteristics of successful teachers as follows: (a) appropriate content knowledge, (b) strong instructional skills, and (c) communication skills (Nieto, 2005). However, each study also addressed unique characteristics of successful teachers.

Nieto (2005) studied 21 successful teachers from different disciplines, schools, genders, ages, and years of experiences on why they became a teacher. She asked the participants to write stories, poetry, or any kind of representation. She found out that these teachers shared many characteristics. Apart from the consensus of characteristics mentioned above, they also have a sense of mission, solidarity, empathy, courageousness to challenge mainstream knowledge, improvisation, and a passion for social justice. These characteristics were continuously developed over time.

Miller (2012) described 10 characteristics of a successful English teacher based on her 15 years in the field of English language teaching, observing, and training English teachers. Miller concluded that successful English teachers have the following characteristics: (a) enthusiasm, (b) patience, (c) humor, (d) interest in students, (e) availability, and (f) mental health. To elaborate, successful teachers have a passion for their teaching as illustrated through their behaviors and presence. They are patient and available to students to answer questions and address concerns. They also have a sense of humor and pay attention to their students' interests. Successful English teachers have explanation ability and grammatical skills. They challenge their students to go beyond

their ability. Finally, successful teachers are fair and employ an appropriate pace of

teaching.

Apart from listing characteristics of successful teachers, several researchers also

illustrated successful teachers through holistic, complex, and multidimensional stories.

For example, Ayers (1989) portrayed the characteristics of six preschool teachers in the

United States. He found consistent qualities of successful preschool teachers as follows:

(a) compassion with children, (b) love of knowledge, (c) active commitment in the field,

and (d) positive interaction with children.

Similarly, Cambone (1990) portrayed a successful teacher of severe emotional

and behavioral concerned students in the United States. From this perspective, he argued

that successful teaching is "an act of love" (p. 217). By employing a think-aloud protocol

interview and portraiture methodology, Cambone illustrated characteristics of a

successful teacher as the one who possessed: (a) self-critical ability, (b) love, (c) caring,

(d) reflexivity, and (e) believed in the students' capability to heal. The journey to

become a successful teacher involved an ongoing process of reflecting on what works

and does not work, being open to learn and being patient, and trying out new strategies

based on students' needs.

Through the autobiographical methodology in the book called *There are No*

Shortcuts, Esquith (2003) illustrated his journey to become a successful teacher, helping

students to excel academically, enjoy reading, and score higher on standardized tests.

The school he worked at was located in a dangerous and poor neighborhood. With a

mission to make a difference in students' lives, Esquith encouraged his students to work

hard. He possessed reflexive ability, patience, determination, enjoyment, and mental

toughness to insist on his practices. Esquith (2007) continued to describe his characteristics in his subsequent book, *Teach Like Your Hair's on Fire.*

Shifting from listing characteristics, Huang (2010) investigated characteristics of a successful English teacher at the university level in China. By using case study methodology with surveys and interviews, he described the traits of a successful English teacher as: (a) knowledgeable, (b) responsible, (c) enthusiastic, (d) patient, and (e) kind. Huang described a successful teacher as the one with cross-cultural awareness, communicative competence, and sound teaching methodology. The successful English teacher also had skills to learn new information, strategies to help students learn effectively, ability to organize positive learning environment, and awareness of students' strengths and weakness. In addition, the successful English teacher also possessed affective characteristics as follows: (a) optimistic, (b) humorous, (c) open-minded, (d) earnest, (e) considerable, and (f) interpersonal.

Peshkin (2001) analyzed characteristics of successful teachers in a private, elite, and successful school. The successful teachers in this study came from different disciplines such as art, English, history, and mathematics. These teachers shared similar characteristics. They expressed the love of their job, devotion of their lives to teaching, excitement about their fields, enthusiasm, reflexivity, and engagement. They also loved the school, were involved in school activities, loved children, possessed energy, and transformed their positive attitudes into exceptional teaching practices.

From a cultural perspective, Sowden (2007) argued that a successful teacher is a key factor to successful student learning. He deduced that a successful teacher is well-rounded, confident, and experienced. The successful teacher also has "the sense of

plausibility about teaching" (p. 308), the awareness of active cooperation between students and themselves. Successful teachers did not depend on teaching methods or approaches; rather, they developed positive relationships in the classroom, nurtured that relationship, and built a learning community.

Werbińska (2009) studied nine English teachers in Poland in an attempt to create a profile of successful English teachers. The findings revealed that successful English teachers possessed several kinds of knowledge: (a) linguistic, (b) methodological, (c) psychological, (d) pedagogical, (e) normative, (f) experiential, (g) contextual, and (h) general. These types of knowledge were used in relation to the school context and students. Successful teachers showed a good command of English proficiency and cross-cultural knowledge. Psychologically, successful teachers had: (a) consistency, (b) determination, (c) autonomy, (d) motivation, (e) responsibility, (f) moral integrity, and (g) a desire for self-improvement.

Finally, in his essay, Gordon (1973) showcased that successful teachers demonstrated a degree of intelligence, the love of their jobs, a sense of humor, and the use of appropriate power. The successful English teachers also had good explanation skills, "making selection of the facts of the universe and forming them into meaningful patterns" (p. 449). They also have the ability to ask good questions such as factual questions or higher-level thinking questions. Additionally, successful teachers respect and care for their students.

Journey to Becoming a Teacher

When using the phrase *the journey to becoming a teacher* as a key phrase to search for scholarly articles in several search engines, I found no empirical studies. I

suspect that researching the journey to becoming a teacher is a new research area. As a result, I utilized the literature on the construct teaching attrition as well as teachers' professional lives to create a framework for this study (Rinke, 2008).

In this section, I will present the literature on the journey to becoming a teacher by focusing on three aspects: (a) reasons to become teachers (inspirations of becoming); (b) metaphors of being a teacher; and (c) reasons to stay in the profession (inspirations of staying) (Rinke, 2008). Each section is presented respectively.

Reasons to Become Teachers
(Inspirations of Becoming)

To my knowledge, I found 10 studies (Alsup, 2006; Burton & Johnson, 2010; Danielewicz, 2001; Hayes, 2008; Huberman, 1993; Lortie, 2002; Low, Lim, Ch'ng, & Goh, 2011; Nieto, 2003, 2005; Olsen, 2008) that examined reasons to become teachers. Among the 10 studies, only 3 of them (Alsup, 2006; Danielewicz, 2001; Hayes, 2008) were specific to English teachers, and the other 7 studies were for general teachers. In the early 1990s, previous studies attempted to find common themes in the decision to teach. Across those studies, four common themes emerged as follows: (a) schooling, (b) intrinsic, (c) extrinsic, and (d) altruistic reasons. However, recent studies cautioned those themes and suggested that they did not adequately address the complexity of becoming a teacher (Nieto, 2005; Tusin, 1999).

Previous researchers have pointed out that *schooling experience*, either positive or negative, was one of the reasons to become a teacher. Huberman (1993) found that a love of a subject, enjoyment of learning, successful learning, and desire to do better than early teachers impacted the determination to teach. Lortie (2002) revealed that the participants in his study reported having positive learning experiences at schools, which

is why they wanted to continue working in a school setting. Consistently, Hayes (2008) found that the participants became teachers because they studied with successful teachers, aptitude and interest in the subject, and thirst for knowledge. Recently, Burton and Johnson (2010) pointed out that the participants in their study became teachers because of an inspirational teacher who encouraged them to go beyond the status quo, so they wanted to return the feeling of empowerment to their students.

Apart from schooling experience, previous researchers also found that the decision to become teachers was driven by three sources as follows: (a) *extrinsic,* (b) *intrinsic,* and (c) *altruistic* reasons (Low et al., 2011). The extrinsic reason includes outside sources such as salary, family, and compensation. Hayes (2008) found that family was a strong influence on the decision to become teachers. Lortie (2002) revealed that the participants became teachers because of money, prestige, and employment security. This was consistent with the study of Huberman (1993) that participants became teachers because of access to higher status, a way of earning, and job security.

Another influential factor was intrinsic, which is defined as a job-related motivation that is driven by internal factors, such as the nature of the job. This provides the opportunity for learning or matching jobs with personal interests (Low et al., 2011). Lortie (2002) found that the participants became teachers because they perceived that teaching was a valuable career with moral worth. Moreover, Low et al. (2011) described the *altruistic reasons* as the "factors that go beyond any tangible benefits that the teaching profession has to offer" (p. 196). Huberman (1993) revealed that the desire to share knowledge, determination to guide others, and enjoyment to work with children were an influential factor to become teachers.

Furthermore, Lortie (2002) found the theme of time compatibility; the participants said that being a teacher allowed them to do other things at the same time, such as mothering. Huberman (1993) revealed that some teachers became teachers because they initially had no reasons, and later on, they had nowhere else to go. Olsen (2008) conducted a study with 13 secondary school teachers in the United States and found out that gender is an important factor influencing reasons for entry into a teaching career. He said that gender "illuminated underlying identity aspects that connect the teachers' prior experiences to their decisions to enter teaching and their emerging professional identities" (p. 27). The participants reported growing up playing a female teacher role, having influential women teachers, and perceiving teaching as mothering.

Tusin (1999) concluded that the decision to teach is complicated; some teachers decided to become teachers when they were young, while others were influenced by adulthood experiences. Nieto (2005) studied essays of 21 teachers on why they taught and found out that teachers entered the teaching profession for several reasons. The first group of teachers took a long journey to become teachers. Some of them avoided being a teacher, but it was the inevitable choice for them. The second group became teachers because they wanted to help students make sense of the world. The last group decided to teach because they wanted "to become more fully human" (p. 167).

Based on the review of the literature, I personally argue that reasons to become teachers are complicated and multilayered. To understand this phenomenon, researchers should take context into consideration. I feel that making a decision really depends on many factors such as context, time, and family. Danielewicz (2001) echoed my argument

by saying that the more she worked with her participants in the study, the more difficult and complex it was to find reasons to become teachers.

Metaphors of Being a Teacher

In 1980, Lakoff and Johnson published an influential work on metaphor analysis in *Metaphors We Live By*. Lakoff and Johnson defined "metaphor" as a linguistic device that is used to understand something by using another. They argued that human beings, through the use of metaphor, are naturally engaged in the metaphorical world, making decisions and understanding the self. Metaphor is not only a creative tool to describe life experience, but it also influences how human beings act and make decisions in daily life (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). After this seminal publication, metaphor analysis was brought into education in order to study teachers' and students' beliefs about learning, with the assumption that metaphors can decode awareness of individuals' perspectives on given topics (Wan, Low, & Li, 2011)

In the landscape of the teaching profession, teachers also used metaphors to describe their profession, beliefs, and teaching practices (Guerrero & Villamil, 2000). As a result, previous researchers have used metaphors as an analytic framework to engage teachers, pre-service teachers, and in-service teachers to understand the meaning of being a teacher. Among these researchers, Alsup (2006) explored the metaphor of student teachers about their perceptions of being a teacher. The participants in her study expressed unique metaphors; for example, teaching is like hands (leading and guiding students), teaching is a pair of shoes (putting oneself into learners' perspective), and teaching is a river (dynamic).

Guerrero and Villamil (2000) analyzed metaphors produced by 22 ESL teachers in a workshop on teachers' beliefs about teaching English. The teachers were given a prompt to finish a sentence, "An ESL teacher is like . . ." After that, the metaphors were categorized into roles of the teachers. The findings revealed that these teachers viewed the roles of teachers as: (a) cooperative leader, (b) provider of knowledge, (c) challenger of change, (d) nurturer, (e) innovator, (f) provider of tools, (g) artist, (h) repairer, and (i) gym instructor. These roles reflected the teachers' assumptions about language learning and teaching. Guerrero and Villamil concluded, "The metaphors also suggest personal preferences, attitudes, and grievances among teachers, showing the effect of individual trajectories in the teaching profession" (p. 348).

Patchen and Crawford (2011) employed metaphors as an analytic tool to study how teachers' epistemological practices reflected in teaching practices. They collected the data from 32 teachers in two tasks: creating timelines that depicted the journey to become teachers and writing autobiographies. Then, the participants were asked to generate the metaphor representing their roles as a teacher. The results showed that the participants created goal-oriented metaphors linking their knowledge to practices. The pattern of metaphors tended to lean toward an acquisition-based model, such as teacher as a book, actor, and artist.

Consistently, Wan et al. (2011) compared written responses of teachers and students in order to investigate perceptions of EFL teachers' roles in a Chinese context. The participants completed a prompt, "An English teacher is . . . because . . ." and later, they were interviewed for more details. The metaphors that emerged from the two groups were teachers as: provider, nurturer, devotee, instructor, culture transmitter,

authority, interest arouser, and co-worker. Wan and colleagues concluded that metaphors are powerful instruments to examine cognitive insights of teachers' beliefs.

Finally, Esquith (2003) describe the meaning of being a teacher as a boxer. Since he was a novice teacher, he had been struggling with institutional culture, students' satisfaction, colleagues, and prescriptive curriculum. He felt that he was a boxer who had been hurt and even knocked down. However, he concluded that successful teachers would always find a way to get up and answer the bell.

**Reasons to Stay in the Profession
(Inspirations of Staying)**

The reasons to stay in the teaching profession emerged from the literature on teacher attrition and teacher retention. Rinke (2008) synthesized previous studies and found causes of teacher attrition including individual factors such as burnout and contextual factors such as school support. These factors were not consistent across contexts and research methodologies. For example, Hahs-Vaughn and Scherff (2008) found that teacher attrition was only significantly related to salary, while Handcock and Scherff (2010) found other factors, including years of experiences and teacher apathy. Recently, Schaefer et al. (2012) questioned the literature on teacher attrition and suggested a new perspective to study why teachers stay in the profession.

In the literature on teacher attrition, Hahs-Vaughn and Scherff (2008) noticed that few researchers focused on the attrition of English teachers. They investigated the relationship between teacher attrition and social, institutional, and personal factors, such as teacher characteristics (e.g., gender), school characteristics (e.g., public or private), teacher income, and participation of mentoring activities. They used the national data from the 1999-2000 Schools and Staff Survey (SASS) and Teacher Follow-Up Survey

(TFS). The findings indicated that only salary was significantly related to English teachers' attrition.

In 2010, Handcock and Sherff used the data from the national 2003-2004 Schools and Staff Survey (SASS) to predict English teachers' attrition risk by using six related factors: (a) teacher characteristics, (b) teaching conditions, (c) teachers' self-efficacy, (d) student variables, (e) external support, and (f) salary. The results in this study were not consistent with Hahs-Vaughn and Scherff (2008). By using logistic regression analysis, Handcock and Sherff pointed out that minority status, years of teaching experience, teacher apathy, peer support, and administrative support were significant predictors of English teachers' attrition. English teachers with minority status, less teaching experiences, less enthusiasm, and less support tend to leave the profession more than those with no minority status, more experiences, motivation, and support.

Olsen and Anderson (2007) employed a qualitative methodology to investigate why teachers stay in, shift from, or consider leaving the profession in urban settings in Los Angeles. They used a series of interviews and observations to collect the data from 15 teachers. Olsen and Anderson found six themes for leaving or considering leaving teaching: (a) amotivation in teaching, (b) family pressure, (c) pursuing higher education, (d) salary, (e) considering how much teaching consumes time, and (f) a negative working environment.

Apart from researching teacher attrition, Rinke (2008) suggested studying teacher's professional journey since previous studies employed a large sample size, which ignored teacher's voices. Also, Schaefer et al. (2012) suggested a new perspective to study why teachers stay in the teaching professions, rather than to investigate why

teachers leave. With this wake-up call, researchers have started to examine reasons to stay in the teaching profession.

Nieto (2005) investigated reasons to stay in the profession, and it became a book called, *What Keeps Teachers Going?* She spent a year with teachers in Boston public schools and asked why they remained in the teaching profession. She found out that those teachers viewed teaching in several ways: teaching as evolution, autobiography, love, hope and possibility, anger and desperation, intellectual work, democratic practice, and shaping futures. Nieto admitted that these views were only partial to understanding the reasons for staying in the teaching profession.

Freedman and Appleman (2009) investigated why teachers stay in the profession in the context of high-poverty urban schools. Through a five-year longitudinal qualitative design, they tracked 26 new teachers who graduated from a MA/credential program and conducted a series of interviews (emails and face-to-face). Freedman and Appleman found six themes of reasons to keep teaching: (a) a sense of mission, (b) a disposition for hard work, (c) substantive preparation, (d) training, (e) opportunity, and (f) ongoing support. These themes reflected how teacher education programs help contribute to teacher retention.

In 2011, Rinke conducted an extensive longitudinal case study to examine teachers' perceptions of their careers. Rinke interviewed and observed eight teachers of different genders, age, race, number of years of experiences, school sizes, and subject matters. The data yielded the concept of "a continuum from integration to participation" (p. 646). This continuum defined a degree of professional engagement, motivation to enter teaching, and decisions to stay or leave the profession. At the one end of

integration, teachers entered the teaching profession with fully active engagement, were motivated to teach, and decided to stay no matter what happened. In the middle of the continuum, teachers integrated themselves into several school projects, but they separated themselves from other teachers and considered leaving. At the other end of participation, teachers participated in educational discourses for a while and considered leaving the profession. Rinke concluded that individual and contextual factors of teacher attrition did not work separately, but they corroborated to inform teachers' career decisions.

Historical Development of Portraiture Methodology

I was introduced to portraiture methodology in a class that I took in the spring semester of 2011. I had never heard of this methodology before. In this class, I had to read two books about portraiture methodology. The first book that I read was *Respect: An Exploration* by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (2000), which showcases six different people's experiences about respect. In *Respect*, I was fascinated by the thick, detailed, and rigorous description and the aesthetic taste of the portraits. As a result, I further examined *The Art and Science of Portraiture* by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot and Jessica Hoffman Davis (1997), which is a how-to book for conducting portraiture methodology. I was drawn into this methodology since it matches my epistemological, theoretical, and methodological perspectives.

In this section, I will review the literature on portraiture methodology and present it chronologically since the time of previous studies yielded different patterns. I arbitrarily divided those studies into groups in order to present the expansion of portraiture methodology. Specifically, I will describe the advent of portraiture, review changes in Lawrence-Lightfoot's work, explain other studies that attempted to redefine

this methodology, describe the period when portraiture methodology was expanded to different iterations, and present current portraiture studies.

Introducing Portraiture
Methodology

Portraiture methodology was developed and introduced to the field of qualitative research from 1980 to 1997. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) described this period as the crisis of representation in which several researchers such as Geertz, Clifford, Turner and Bruner, and Marcus and Fischer attempted to blur genres of research representations. In this period, Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot developed portraiture methodology, practiced this methodology in a book, and wrote a manual to do this research.

Portraiture methodology originated from the experiences of Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot. She was a subject for painting portraits on two occasions. The first experience occurred when she was young. She was allowed to move freely, and the artist used charcoal to draw her picture. She remembered that she was impressed by the portrait. The second portrait was painted when she was 25. She had to pose for several weeks, but she did not like this portrait because it was not a good representation of her. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) reflected on lessons that she learned from being an art subject. She said that the two portraits were products of the artist's interpretation, so it was her familiar and unfamiliar essences. She also learned that the portraits were created from mutual trust and respectful relationships. In addition, she learned that the portraits could capture her historical moments in representing timelessness.

With those lessons learned, Lawrence-Lightfoot developed the portraiture methodology in 1983 to study institutional characters and cultures of six good high schools. This work became an AERA (American Educational Research Association)

award-winning book called *The Good High School: Portraits of Character and Culture*.

To study those schools, Lawrence-Lightfoot wanted to create life drawings so that

readers could see the detailed description. At this point, she felt that she shifted her role

from being an art subject to becoming a portraitist. The experiences that she learned

earlier influenced the way she researched the six high schools. Lawrence-Lightfoot

called this inquiry portraiture because she wanted to move beyond the constraints of

traditional research, and she attempted to convey the meaning of this inquiry as a blur of

the boundaries between art and science (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983; 2005).

In 1988, after *The Good High School*, Lawrence-Lightfoot practiced her

portraiture methodology in tracing the journey to becoming a psychiatrist of her mother.

The work became the book called, *Balm in Gilead: Journey of a Healer*. In this book,

Lawrence-Lightfoot added the power of portraiture in its ability to portray an individual's

life story that connects history, past, and present. Portraiture was also claimed to produce

timeless narratives that were informed and inspired.

In 1990, Cambone employed portraiture methodology to investigate how one

teacher taught, handled, and helped students with severe, violent, and disturbed emotional

and behavioral problems such as cursing, physical abuse, or tantrums at a residential

school. Cambone incorporated the description of data collection into representational

portraits, so it enhanced an understanding of portraiture as a data representation. He

recorded classroom instruction and used the think-aloud protocol interview in which the

researcher and the participant watched the videotape together, paused the videotape, and

talked about their thinking. The findings revealed that the journey to help these kids was

developmental, time-consuming, and required an act of love. This teacher believed in the

students' ability to heal and devoted her energy to change teaching practices in response to the students' needs.

In 1994, Lawrence-Lightfoot polished her portraiture methodology in order to investigate the lives of six middle-class African-Americans who experienced loss and hope, and it became a book called *I've Known Rivers: Lives of Loss and Liberation*. This book was the product of her curiosity when she was a graduate student at Harvard University, experiencing a biased literature on Black families. Lawrence-Lightfoot challenged the literature that has emphasized the deficit mode of research in which it did not provide authenticity of Black lives. This work echoed the power of portraiture methodology in its ability to capture the complexity of African-American lives and feelings. Portraiture also served as a bridge, connecting the past, present, and future.

Three years after *I've Known Rivers*, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, a developmental psychologist inspired by Lawrence-Lightfoot's work, coauthored the book called *The Art and Science of Portraiture*, which attempts to explain essential components of portraiture methodology research in 1997. This book is an explanation of doing portraiture research. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis said that portraiture consisted of five components: (a) context, (b) voice, (c) relationship, (d) emergent themes, and (e) aesthetic whole. These components are employed to capture a central narrative. Figure 2 represents the relationship of these components.
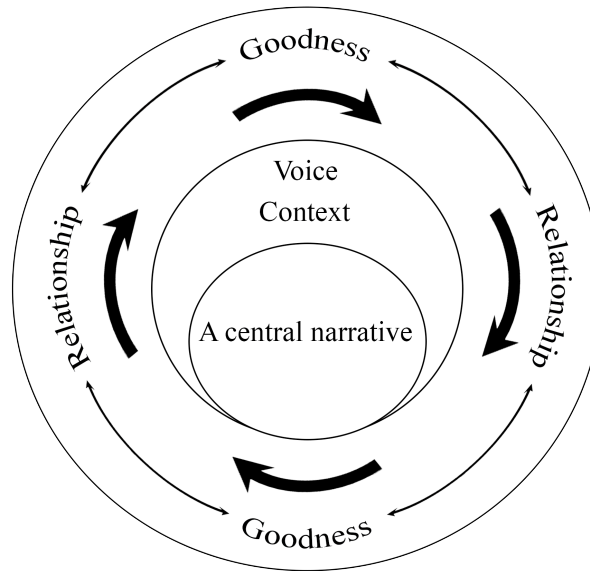
Figure 2. Five components of portraiture methodology.

The purpose of portraiture methodology is to capture a central narrative that is actively constructed by the researcher from emergent themes. This central narrative is embedded in contexts revealing holistic, complex, inspiring, rigorous, and aesthetic aspects. The narrative is also a result of establishing mutual relationships with the participants by looking through the lens of "goodness." Finally, the researcher's voice influenced the data collection and the craft of narrative.

Like other innovations, portraiture methodology received both admiration and criticism. English (2000) critiqued portraiture methodology as a method of inquiry that is trapped in the assumption of stable and absolute truth, since the researcher recounts only one central story. He further challenged that language in portraiture is a redundant jargon talking about "old objective science" (p. 21). Finally, he argued that portraiture conceals the power of readers from alternative interpretations. However, several researchers (e.g., Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Hackmann, 2002) disagreed with English. For example, Bloom and Erlanson (2003) argued that English "seriously misread or misunderstood the

work of Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis" (p. 876). They said that English had no evidence of how he arrived at those conclusions. They argued that portraiture actually relinquishes the power to readers in making connections or questioning the portraits.

Redefining Portraiture
Methodology

The second wave of portraiture studies occurred from 2000 to 2004. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) described this period as the "methodologically contested present" (p.20) in which qualitative research started to form its paradigm and confront other stances. They wrote, "This is a period of conflict, great tension, and in some quarters, retrenchment" (p. 20).

In this period, Lawrence-Lightfoot practiced her portraiture methodology, pushed the boundaries of this methodology to several disciplines in social sciences, extended the complexity of this methodology, and redefined the use of portraiture. During this time, several researchers explicated portraiture differently. Some of them depicted portraiture as a research methodology, but others described it as a data representation, research method, and data collection technique. Davis also integrated portraiture with the study of art in several books, helping to redefine the richness of portraiture methodology. In this period, other researchers started to employ this methodology and explicated the purpose of the methodology into different iterations.

Lawrence-Lightfoot employed portraiture methodology to study several pressing social issues. In 2000, she investigated the individual's experiences from different professions on how they defined respect in their disciplines. This work became a book called *Respect: An Exploration*. In 2003, she practiced her portraiture methodology to study how schools and parents communicate in *The Essential Conversation: What*

Parents and Teachers Can Learn from Each Other. After this book, Lawrence-Lightfoot extended the practice of portraiture to study extensive numbers of participants and combine stories of hundreds of people into one single story. This practice became two books called *The Third Chapter: Passion, Risk, and Adventure in the 25 Years After 50* (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2009) and *Exit*: *The Endings that Set Us Free* (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2012).

Davis also helped extend the practice of portraiture methodology by explicitly using it to study arts education and expanding the border of portraiture into making the past alive. In 2005, she wrote *Framing Education as Art: The Octopus Has a Good Day*, employing portraiture methodology to investigate the values of arts in helping individuals with self-exploration and self-development. This work opened the public to reconsidering the status of art education. In 2008, Davis further elaborated the values of arts education in *Why Our Schools Need the Arts* and depicted arts as essential to general education. In 2011, she practiced portraiture methodology in *Ordinary Gifted Children*, crafting her mother's school portrait by presenting through the presence of her mother as a good principal. This book added the value of portraiture methodology in its ability to bring the past alive.

In regard to other studies that employed portraiture methodology, other researchers (e.g., Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Tierney, 2004) have interpreted portraiture as a data representation technique, rather than a research methodology. For example, through the lens of critical race theory, Bloom and Erlandson (2003) showcased the implementation of voice in portraiture methodology in order to describe the process of writing verbal portraits. They explained the process of writing portraits as an intense

dialogue between the portraitist and participants in a social context by providing three

examples of African-American woman principals. The authors further extended the

dissemination of portraits as a way to engage audience voices in pressing issues.

In 2004, Tierney used portraiture methodology as a way to document a

marginalized group of low-income, urban students who were selected to participate in a

college preparation program. He attempted to listen to students' voices by portraying

their experiences in a writing session in order to encourage educators to reconsider their

program practices. Tierney explicated portraiture as a data representation method, rather

than a research methodology. By using portraiture, he argued that it provided an insight

into students' "emotions, needs, and educational challenges faced by students in high

school intervention programs" (p. 950).

Extending Portraiture
Methodology

In 2005, Dixson, Chapman, and Hill coedited a *Qualitative Inquiry* volume by

combining research studies on portraiture methodology, and this volume branched out the

methodology into different iterations. It was the first time that portraiture methodology

was warranted as a "subjective, empathetic, and critical lens of the research" (p. 17). In

this volume, the researchers (Chapman, 2005; Dixson, 2005; Harding, 2005; Hill, 2005;

Newton, 2005) extended the methodological notion of portraiture into five different

iterations: (a) exploring sensitivity, (b) poetic portraiture, (c) art-informed portraiture, (d)

convergence of critical race theory and portraiture, and (e) jazz methodology. These

iterations pushed the boundary of portraiture methodology to different doctrines.

To begin, Harding (2005) extended the purpose of portraiture methodology in an

attempt to study a sensitive issue. This adds to the purpose of portraiture from studying

the complexity and multiple layers of human experiences and organizational culture to

the ability to investigate sensitive issues. Harding employed portraiture to study how a

successful White teacher articulated her motivation to teach in an urban school and how

her racial identity informed her teaching practices. She collected the data from six

extensive interviews and observations. The results showed that the teacher's urban

identity was a source of internalizing motivation to teach in this school, and it shaped the

ways she taught. Harding further addressed the benefits of portraiture in its ability to

capture the richness of sensitivity issues, such as race.

Through the feminist theoretical perspective, Hill (2005) expanded the notion of

portraiture methodology by integrating the concept of context and voice in portraiture

into the doctrine of poetry and called it *poetic portraits*. She used poetic portraits to

represent the experiences of three African-American teacher educators. The data were

collected by using interviews, shadowing techniques, and documents. To create the

poetic portraits, Hill constructed emerging themes, looked for direct quotes from the

interview to acknowledge the participants' voices, and included her shadowing reflection

to provide contexts for interpretation of experiences. She found that the poetic portrait is

a valuable tool to represent the "spirit of their beings in a way that other, more traditional,

forms of data documentation would not enable" (p. 104). However, Hill was aware that

the poetic portrait was the product of a researcher's active role in shaping the story.

Apart from poetic portraits, Newton (2005) extended the notion of portraiture

methodology by incorporating it with art-informed research to examine a complicated

and sensitive issue. She designed poetry inquiry and the graffiti mat as a data collection

method and used them to study the experiences of two Arab-American, pre-service

teachers learning to teach in the aftermath of 9/11 in New York. The poetry that she created emerged directly from the interview. Newton said that the use of poetry advanced an understanding of multilayered experiences since the researcher could use "phrasing, repetition, short lines, and punctuation to emphasize what came up in the interview" (p. 86). Apart from the poetry, Newton also employed the graffiti mat, asking the participants to draw graffiti that reflected their emotional reactions to post-9/11 on a canvas. Then, they were allowed to write descriptions at the back of the canvas. Newton addressed the benefits of using graffiti as a tool to capture other dimensions of human experiences and to let go of their predispositions and speak from the inside.

In addition, Chapman (2005) explicated portraiture methodology as the one that shares the lens of critical race theory. In this study, she investigated contextual forces that drive a White teacher's instructional implementation in a multiracial English classroom. Throughout the study, Chapman argued that portraiture methodology and critical race theory is a research partnership, and it is viable to explore the convergence between the two. She said that portraiture is critical because it searches for goodness, empowers readers beyond academia, and listens to a marginalized group's voice. This is an interesting interpretation that pushes portraiture methodology forward.

Finally, Dixson (2005) broadened portraiture methodology as an inspiration to create her own research methodology called *jazz methodology*. Inspired by Lawrence-Lightfoot's work, she attempted to create this methodology in order to empower stories of African-American female teachers who have been historically neglected and invisible. Dixson claimed that the jazz methodology operated under the racialized epistemology, and she has formulated conceptual, theoretical, and metaphorical components of this

methodology, including solos, breaks, and riffs. These metaphors were used to illuminate the complexity of doing qualitative research.

Beyond Extending Portraiture
Methodology

After portraiture methodology was expanded into four different iterations, researchers have employed portraiture in their studies. Several researchers have enlarged the practice of portraiture into an instructional method, moving beyond a research methodology. For example, Gaztambide-Fernández, Cairns, Kawashima, Menna, and VanderDussen (2011) depicted their experiences while doing research on how social and cultural dynamics shape arts programs in a community. They argued that portraiture is a beneficial tool to gain site access, build relationships, navigate interview spaces, and understand research subjectivity and writing repetition. Portraiture methodology is a possible window to teach students to understand the nature of all qualitative research. Additionally, Gaztambide-Fernández et al. created a new way of representation by writing portraits as a group. This added to the methodological layer of portraiture representation.

Miranda, Robbins, and Stauffer (2007) integrated portraiture into ethnographic methodology as a pedagogical tool in order to engage music pre-service teachers in a deep reflection about their teaching and learning practices. The participants were trained to conduct ethnographic data collection, such as observations, writing field notes, and artifact collections. Then, they were asked to keep track of their reflections and compose ethnographic portraits depicting their teaching and learning experiences. At the end of the semester, the participants were interviewed. The findings revealed the ability of

portraiture to help pre-service teachers articulate multiple layers of their experiences, reflect on themselves critically and analytically, and offer insightful learning.

Apart from pedagogical values of portraiture, a group of researchers (Chapman, 2007; Murakami-Ramalho, Piert, & Militello, 2008) continued to combine portraiture methodology with critical race theory. They argued that portraiture and critical race theory bridged the gap between listening to marginalized groups and evoking researchers to be self-critical about race, class, and gender. Through the lens of critical race theory, Chapman (2007) employed portraiture to study success and failures of urban classrooms. Murakami-Ramalho et al. (2008) used portraiture to examine experiences of students of color in developing their research identity.

Schendel (2009) employed portraiture methodology to study struggling fourth-grade reading experiences. The data were collected from observation, interview, and artifacts. In this study, Schendel explicated portraiture as a theoretical lens since it focused on researching goodness. He added that the value of portraiture methodology resides in its ability to nurture relationships accepted by participants, and it also helped increase attention to students' voices.

In 2010, Burton and Johnson used portraiture methodology to study two novice teachers' teaching experiences in rural areas. The experiences traced back to family, school, community, and teacher education. The researchers used field notes, life history interviews, and contextual information to gather the data. They found that these two teachers engaged their identities into their lives and experiences in order to make sense of how to teach. They also had a strong connection with the schools since they were from the rural areas as well. However, the findings illustrated that the learning experiences in

the teacher education program did not support or prepare them well enough to work in the rural areas.

Richard (2010) integrated portraiture into her own methodology called *(re)valuing methodology* in order to study experiences of pre-service, secondary content area teachers to understand Content Area Literacy Immersion (CALI). Richard also created a new data representation and termed it *graphic portraiture*. The graphic portrait incorporated pictures that were carefully selected to present the themes as well as words and descriptions of the pictures. This data representation technique pushed the boundary of portraiture methodology into innovative representation.

Recently, Byrnes (2012) employed portraiture methodology to study how a contemplative orientation to teaching facilitates the wholeness of teachers and students. Byrnes defined contemplative teaching as an instruction with passion, integrity, and mindful awareness. This study added another layer of portraiture in its ability to capture transformative experiences as presented in the benefits of contemplative teaching.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature on Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE) and its historical development, researching successful teachers, the journey to become teachers, and the historical development of portraiture methodology. The review of literature suggests the need to research the journey to become teachers. By researching the journey to become teachers, teacher educators in the field of SLTE will be able to learn to inspire their students to enter the teaching profession. Portraiture methodology is as an appropriate plan of action to study the complexity of the journey to become teachers.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

"Letting stories breathe."
(Arthur W. Frank, 2012, p. 2)

As an English teacher, I have been struggling to understand why English-major students in the college of education in Thailand do not become teachers after graduation. These students typically spend several years in a teacher preparation program and decide not to become teachers. This has a profound impact on the quality of education since Thailand does not have enough English teachers (Kettan, 2013).

The teacher-shortage crisis in Thailand has received attention and been discussed among educators over the last four decades (Wongsothorn et al., 2002). Previous literature has examined the teacher shortage by studying why they leave the profession (e.g., Hahs-Vaughn & Scherff, 2008). In this dissertation, I shifted the perspective by investigating why English teachers decide to become teachers and what makes them stay in teaching (Rinke, 2008; Schaefer et al., 2012). In other words, I investigated the journey to becoming an English teacher and reasons for staying in the profession.

The review of the literature suggests that the journey to becoming a teacher is complicated, multilayered, and contextualized (Rinke, 2008). To conduct this inquiry, I wanted to employ a research methodology that allows me to capture this complexity. I also wanted to present findings in a manner that could reach out to audiences beyond the

academic arena and provide the public a voice in which to engage in a conversation. In

addition, I attempted to inform and inspire the public with the heartfelt inspiration that

this profession provides. With these reasons in mind, I believe portraiture methodology,

a type of qualitative research in which the researcher seeks to capture the complexity of

human lives and experiences (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman-David, 1997), provides a

relevant epistemological, theoretical, and methodological frames for collecting, analyzing,

interpreting, and presenting the data. In other words, portraiture methodology "links the

choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes" (Crotty, 1998, p. 3).

To investigate the journey to becoming Thai English teachers, I adopted Crotty's

(1998) framework of social science research. Crotty argued that researchers should have

four elements to guide their research process: (a) epistemology, (b) theoretical

perspective, (c) methodology, and (d) methods. Schendel (2009) depicted these four

elements as nested, interconnected, and informing one another as presented in Figure 3.
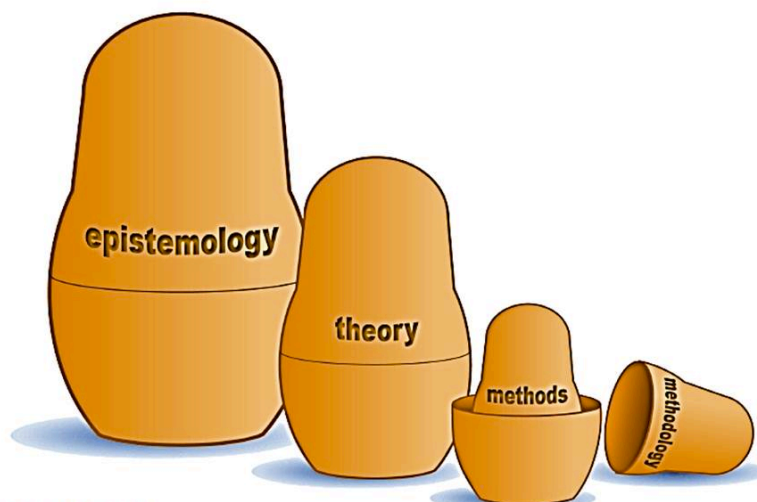
Figure 3. The nested relationship of four elements in social science research (Schendel, 2009).

As shown in Figure 3, epistemology is an umbrella term that covers the other elements. Epistemology is a theory of knowledge that covers researchers' beliefs of how to construct knowledge and reality (Crotty, 1998). Within the epistemology, theoretical perspective is nested and serves as a philosophical stance to acquire knowledge. The theoretical perspective informs methodology--a plan of action or design that link choices of methods with expected outcomes. Guided by the methodology, research methods are used to collect, analyze, and present the data (Crotty). In this chapter, I explain the four specific elements that guide this research process: (a) narrative epistemology, (b) goodness as a theoretical perspective, (c) portraiture methodology, and (d) methods.

Narrative Epistemology

Crotty (1998) described epistemology as the nature of knowledge that serves as "a philosophical grounding for deciding what kind of knowledge is possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate" (p. 8). In this study, I believe knowledge and reality are derived from the act of telling stories or *narratives*. I borrowed the term *narrative* from Jerome Bruner (1990), a psychologist and a distinguished scholar of narrative (Alsup, 2006). Even though Bruner did not describe a narrative as an epistemology explicitly, I think narrative is warranted as a source of knowledge since it is the human's innate ability to organize experiences, and telling narratives is a process of understanding reality and self-realization.

In *Acts of Meaning*, Bruner (1990) described characteristics of narratives as follows: inherent sequentiality, factual indifference, and unique illumination. Bruner said narrative is a series of *sequential events* and mental states that contain meaning, discourse, and human beings as actors. A narrative is a dual relationship between its part and the

whole; the events delineated in a narrative take the meaning from the story as a whole, and the meaning of story as a whole is constructed from its separate parts. The second feature of narrative is *factual indifference*. Whether a narrative is real or imaginative, it does not lose the power of a story. Human beings have innate readiness to sense and reference the narratives. As a result, human beings know whether a narrative is factual or imaginative. The last characteristic of narrative is the ability to explain the meaning of difficult concepts into a comprehensible form, which Bruner termed *unique illumination*. He said that, "the function of the story is to find an internal state that mitigates or at least makes comprehensible a deviation from a canonical cultural pattern" (p. 50).

Bruner (1990; 2010) sees narrative as a unique and creative mode of construing reality that creates a sense of immediacy, freshness, and excitement. He stated that narrative is a tool to organize our humankind experiences, an operation of thinking, and a process of coming to know. He further posited that narrative is a natural, universal, and fundamental ability of all human beings. We live in a sea of narratives. We use narrative to organize experience by framing, constructing, and segmenting events of the world (Bruner, 1996). Additionally, Bruner stated that an act of telling a narrative is purposeful and is subjected to interpretation, not explanation. Knowledge and reality in any narrative is constructed through a variety of interpretations. As a result, a narrative is evaluated based on authenticity or lifelikeness (Bruner, 1990). Moreover, Bruner (2010) expanded the function of narrative as "an all-purpose vehicle" (p. 45), shaping how we communicate, influence our concept of the past, and imagine the future.

Previous theorists, psychologists, sociologists, and researchers also depicted narratives as an epistemology. For example, Polkinghorne (1988) argued that human

beings construct meanings of their experiences in a narrative form, and this narrative

helps them understand themselves and the world. Richardson (1990, 1997) agreed with

Polkinghorne in that humans organize their experiences into narrative episodes, which

she termed the collective story, and these narratives provide a powerful framework to

access human sociocultural wisdom. Waterhouse (2007) investigated the construction

and development of leadership in schools through narrative epistemology. She explicated

the act of retelling stories as a process of gaining knowledge. Waterhouse argued that in

daily life, we use, practice, tell, and retell narratives as a way to acquire knowledge and

create reality through reflection. Finally, Goodall (2008) described his experience in

coming to know that narrative is an epistemology while writing his family stories. He

was engaged in the construction of knowledge revealing the history of his family.

Furthermore, critical race theorists (e.g., Berry, 2010; Dixson & Rousseau, 2006)

also value narrative as a source of knowledge. Dixson and Rousseau (2006) emphasized

that critical race scholars have used personal narratives of people of color as a valid form

of evidence to examine race and racism. Since people of color have lived in an

oppressive society, their stories are legitimate to counterbalance the dominant group's

stories that have portrayed them as marginalized. From the perspective of critical race

feminism, Berry (2010) also advocated narrative and suggested centralizing stories of

women of color as a model for de-marginalizing the lives of minorities since it helps in

understanding multiple positions of persons.

In this dissertation, I regarded narratives as a legitimate source of knowledge. In

order to investigate the journey to become Thai English teachers, I listened to the actors'

stories that were reconstructed and re-narrated over the period of their lives. By listening

to those stories, I could learn about vicarious experiences, life lessons, and stories of becoming English teachers.

Goodness as a Theoretical Perspective

Crotty (1998) defined a theoretical perspective as "the philosophical stance that lies behind our chosen methodology" (p. 7). In this study, I took a stance of portraiture methodologist in my attempt to study *Goodness* as a theoretical perspective, shaping the way I research the world (Crotty, 1998). Even though portraiture was claimed as a research methodology (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), Schendel (2009) argued that goodness warrants the place of a theoretical perspective since, through this lens, the researcher views the world through the lens of strength, health, and resilience. The term goodness is a holistic, complicated, and multidimensional concept that is closely related to education (Alexander, 2003).

In 1983, Lawrence-Lightfoot was inspired to create portraiture methodology to study inherent goodness of six high-school cultures and institutional characters. She defined goodness as a dynamic, complex whole, situationally determined construct and reflected the journey of good schools (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983; 1986). She wrote:

> Goodness is a much more complicated notion that refers to what some social scientists describes the school's "ethos," not discrete additive elements. It refers to the mixture of parts that produce a whole. The whole includes people, structures, relationships, ideology, goals, intellectual substance, motivation, and will. It includes measurable indices such as attendance records, truancy rates, vandalism to property, percentages going on to college. But it also encompasses less tangible, more elusive qualities that can only be discerned through close, vivid description, through subtle nuances, through detailed narratives that reveal the sustaining values of in institution. (p. 23)

In 1997, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis expanded the notion of goodness in *The Art and Science of Portraiture.* They resisted traditional research that attempts to document

failures or to fix things, describing this traditional research as a "pathological lens" (p. 8). The authors stated that the attempt to research failures often leads to blaming victims or inaction. Therefore, Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) took a different perspective in order to explore goodness. She said that the researcher who takes the stance of "What is good here?" is more likely to decipher different realities than the one who tries to find sources of failure.

It is important to note that Lawrence-Lightfoot did not define goodness as an ideal, perfect, or celebrating state; rather, she depicted the notion of goodness that involves vulnerability and imperfection. She argued, "the counterpoint and contradictions of strength and vulnerability, virtue and evil are central to the expression of goodness" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p.9). Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis expanded the notion of goodness into the "myriad ways" of how the participants perceive goodness. Through the lens of portraiture, the researcher does not impose the definition of good on the inquiry, but attempts to document how the participants define goodness.

Chapman (2005) extended the notion of goodness by integrating this concept into the stance of critical race theory. Through the lens of critical race theory, she emphasized, "depictions of people of color as survivors, activists, and emancipators, are called elements of goodness in portraiture" (p. 31). She also interpreted Lawrence-Lightfoot's endeavor to focus on goodness as an empowerment of the practitioners and the researchers. In addition, she sees the stance of portraitists as critical in researchers' attempts to document marginalized groups by giving them an opportunity to express their voices. Moreover, the fact that portraiture methodologists try to reach out to audiences

beyond the academic world warrants as a critical lens since it "gives voice" to those who barely have a chance to engage in a conversation about research (Chapman, 2005).

For the purpose of this study, I examined goodness in the journey to become English teachers by focusing on successful Thai English teachers who commit themselves to the teaching profession, who see themselves doing nothing but teaching, and who are determined to educate students to became better people. By exploring the journey to become English teachers, I collected stories of success and failures, strength and vulnerability, and passion and apathy. These aspects were used to define goodness. In addition, I documented goodness as defined by the participants.

Portraiture Methodology

In 1983, Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, a sociologist and professor of education at Harvard University, developed portraiture methodology while studying six good high schools in order to capture the complexity, dynamics, and subtlety of high school cultures as well as their institutional characteristics. Portraiture methodology shares many features of other qualitative research approaches such as ethnography, narrative, and case study; but, it was unique in its deliberate attempt to "combine systematic, empirical description with aesthetic expression, blending art and science, humanistic sensibilities and scientific rigor" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 3).

Portraiture methodologists attempt to study *goodness* inherent in social situations by capturing a central story, interpreting people's behaviors in contexts, and integrating researcher's voice throughout the research process, and the final portrait goes beyond the academic world (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983). Portraiture methodology is an appropriate and powerful framework to study life journeys (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1988), educational

research (Hackmann, 2002), complexity of human's lives and experiences (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1994), pressing social problems (Tierney, 2004), and sensitive issues (Newton, 2005). Bloom and Erlandson (2003) said that portraiture methodology is "a legitimate strategy for inquiry and its dissemination as well as its power as a mode of research" (p. 891). In 2005, Lawrence-Lightfoot reflected that the most powerful potential of portraiture methodology is the ability to embrace the paradox of human experiences such as strength and vulnerability.

Portraiture methodology consists of five essential components: (a) context, (b) voice, (c) relationship, (d) emergent themes, and (e) aesthetic whole. Lawrence-Lightfoot summarized that *context* is a framework to interpret human's behaviors, thoughts, gestures, and conversations. Without context, it is difficult to understand why people do certain things (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). When she described context, Lawrence-Lightfoot referred to multiple perspectives, including "physical, geographic, temporal, historical, cultural, and aesthetic--within which the action takes place" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, p. 41).

In addition, Lawrence-Lightfoot noted that the *voice* of the researcher is transparent and integrated throughout the research process from data collection to data representation. She argued that voice is the research instrument, reflecting the perspective and angle of vision, overarching and undergirding the text, creating metaphors, and echoing the central themes (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Moreover, portraiture methodology regards *relationship* as a central means of conducting portraiture research. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis argued that the stance of exploring goodness opens the participants to express imperfection and vulnerability.

Furthermore, to create a portrait, the researcher looks for patterns, repetitive refrains, or *emergent themes* to knit a central story that includes the beginning, the middle, and the end with attempt to communicate essences. The themes are derived from multiple sources of evidence and rich metaphors and grounded in cultural and institutional rituals (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Finally, a portrait or an *aesthetic whole* is crafted, based upon themes illustrating the complexity, multilayered, and aesthetic aspects of human's lives, experiences, and cultures.

In this study, I employed portraiture methodology because it helped me capture the complexity of the journey to becoming English teachers. Also, portraiture methodology matches epistemological, theoretical, and methodological perspectives of how I research the world. Additionally, portraiture invites audiences beyond the academic world to make meanings from a rich, empirical, and aesthetic data.

Methods

Crotty (1998) said that method is a specific plan of action for collecting the data in a research study. In this section, I will describe how I collected the data by presenting the process of getting site consent, obtaining actors (participants), and expressing voices, respectively.

Getting Consents and Obtaining Actors

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) used the term *actors* to refer to the participants. I purposefully selected the actors based on certain criteria. I was interested in successful Thai English teachers who were unique, interesting, easy to contact, and willing to participate (Stake, 1995). These criteria were used for the purpose of the

actors' selection only; they were not related to the notion of goodness, which is the theoretical lens to study the journey to becoming Thai English teachers.

I was also interested in studying Thai English teachers of different educational levels: middle school, high school, and university. By selecting teachers from different levels, I would be able to obtain an understanding of the journey to becoming an English teacher from differing perspectives based upon teaching level.

Lertluck Tangpanit, Chutima Chaolilitkul, and Kasemsiri Watthano were the three English teachers who decided to participate in this study. The actors preferred to use their real names, and they understood that I would use these names in all publications (see Appendix A for IRB approval). Lertluck is a middle school teacher, and Chutima is a high school teacher. Both teach at Benchama Maharat School. Kasemsiri is a university teacher at Ubon Ratchathani Rajabaht University. In this section, I will present the portraits of selecting sites, obtaining actors, and getting consents.

Benchama Maharat School is located in Ubon Ratchathani province, which is my hometown in the northeastern part of Thailand. I purposefully selected this school for several reasons. First, it is the most academically famous school in my hometown, and it was acknowledged by the Ministry of Education in 2013 as the best quality school in the northeastern area. It also ranked 13th on the list of high-quality schools in Thailand. Second, I chose this school because it conveniently consisted of middle and high school, so I did not have to travel between the two locations. Last, I was a high school student at this school, so I knew successful Thai English teachers from a student's perspective. The following portraits present the process of getting site consent and obtaining actors at Benchama Maharat School.

Lertluck Tangpanit. May 27, 2013: This Monday morning, I decided to approach Benchama Maharat School to obtain the actors for my dissertation. Today was the third day that I have been in Thailand after travelling over 20 hours by flight from the United States. I still have jet lag and need time to adjust.

Last night, I had scheduled an appointment on the phone with a former teacher who works at the school's Academic Affairs Office to visit the school and talk about my dissertation. I could not believe that the morning weather was warm so early. I had sweat all over my body as I walked to the school. This was not like the weather in Colorado.

As I arrived at the entrance of the school, the well-crafted granite sign reading "Welcome to Benchama Maharat School" screamed for attention. I stopped to recall my memories when I was a student here. I felt that the school was familiar and unfamiliar at the same time. The school must have changed the fence and grown more trees. Notices of school achievements and congratulations billboards were hung all over the fence. There was a covered walkway leading to the school's main building. In front of my eyes, I saw students walking to their homerooms, playing soccer, and sitting under shady trees.

I stopped recalling my memories and headed into the Academic Affairs Office. When I arrived, I asked for my former teacher. A woman pointed to the table at the other side of the office. I headed in that direction and saw my former teacher working in front of a computer.

"*Sawasdee Krub, Kru*!" I greeted her. She looked up and turned back to smile as a sign of welcome. I walked to hug her. After that, we asked about each other's well-being.

"I'll take you to the principal's office," she said after a short conversation.

On the way to the principal's office, we ran into the school's Vice Principal of Academic Affairs. My former teacher introduced me to her, saying that I was an alumnus who had come back to complete his dissertation. The vice principal smiled and said, "Welcome home."

We walked to the principal's office immediately after the informal introduction. My former teacher saw the principal off in the distance. "The Principal!" she shouted out loudly, but he did not hear us. We ran to catch up with him, and when he heard us arrive, he stopped. My former teacher introduced me again. The principal asked me to wait at the office because he was heading to the school morning assembly. The teacher took me to the office and introduced me to staff members and the principal's secretary (the person who managed administrative and clerical work for the principal, such as scheduling appointments, handling phone calls, maintaining paper work, and disseminating information; this job is considered low-level management and is different from "the secretary" that the actors in this study were assigned to serve). I thought to myself, "That was a series of introductions!"

After the teacher took me to the principal's office, my teacher went back to her office. The secretary took me to wait in a conference room. While I was waiting, I thought how I would describe my research project to the principal so that I could gain approval to conduct research at this school. I wanted to sound friendly, professional, informative, succinct, and persuasive, but I did not want to overwhelm him with research terminologies. Silently, I practiced describing the research project to myself. That was not an easy task at all!

As the principal walked in and took a seat, I greeted him and introduced myself. I told him that I was a former student of Benchama Maharat and was now doing a doctoral study at the University of Northern Colorado. I explained that I was interested in working with Thai English teachers for three months and that the university had approved this study because it had potential benefits for the education field with minimal risks.

The principal inquired, "How many participants do you need?" I told him that this project was an in-depth study, so I needed only two English teachers; one from middle school, and another from high school. The principal asked, "Is it qualitative research?" I nodded and smiled. I was surprised that he knew the term *qualitative research*. After this, I started to explain the research project, using more academic language.

To continue the conversation with the principal, I told him that the purpose of this research was to understand the journey to become an English teacher. I intended to ask Thai English teachers about their motivations for becoming English teachers, their teaching experiences, and reasons for staying in the profession. My theoretical stance was *goodness*, which focused on the positive aspects of the teachers, rather than evaluating their negative traits. The principal immediately smiled immediately as a sign of understanding. I told him that I would interview teachers, observe their classrooms, follow them around, and collect documents. After participating in the study, the teachers would become aware of their professional journey which, in turn, might help to improve their teaching practices.

After explaining my research project, I asked the principal for potential participants. I told him that I was interested in studying successful Thai English teachers

who had a passion for teaching, believed in students' capabilities, attained remarkable success in helping students learn sustainably, and had a positive influence on students' thinking, learning, and feelings. I also told him that I understood that successful Thai English teachers do not necessarily receive teaching awards, but they help their students learn and are committed to teaching them wholeheartedly. Successful teachers are not necessarily the most favored by their classes, but the students typically appreciate the values of the teacher after they graduate. This operationalized definition is derived from previous research (Bain, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Nieto, 2005) and my personal experience as a student.

After I explained my interpretation of successful Thai English teachers, the principal asked me, "As you were a student here, who would be a good fit for your study?" I told him that I had thought of Kru Lertluck Tangpanit. Lertluck was my English teacher when I was in 11th grade. As a student, I was impressed by her teaching styles and her sense of humor. The principal smiled and told me that he also thought of her. I asked him why he thought of Lertluck, and he replied, "She has in-depth academic knowledge, excellent teaching abilities, strong leadership, a high level of teacher identity, a kind personality, and a respect for the teaching profession." Based on the principal's response, I was already gathering rich data and was not fully in the door.

The principal further asked, "Who might be another teacher that you would like to observe?" I told him that I had no idea. He told me to get information from the Academic Affairs Office, as he could not come up with someone else. He told me to look for the "olden day teachers" who had been with the school for many years. The olden day teachers possessed teacher identity, while other novice teachers came to

Benchama Maharat to get "the brand" and had ulterior motives in regards to teaching. It

seemed to me that being a teacher at Benchama Maharat would be a door for better

opportunities such as making more money and achieving a higher social status.

Finally, I asked the principal to come up with a fake name to identify the school

in order to protect the school's identity. The principal looked confused. "What do you

mean?" he asked. I further explained that *naming* was a part of conducting research in

the United States to maximize confidentiality in case I wrote something negative about

the school. The principal insisted that he wanted me to use the school's real name. "We

don't have anything to hide," he emphasized. I smiled and thanked him for his

permission to use the school's real name. After that, the principal signed the site consent.

I was so excited that the principal approved the study so quickly.

After getting the site consent, I walked back to my former teacher's office and

told her that the principal had approved my research project. "The principal suggested

Lertluck as my potential participant, but I need another teacher. Who do you consider to

be a successful Thai English teacher?" I asked her.

"I don't know. Let's go to see Kru Lertluck and ask her." On the way to meet

Lertluck, my former teacher told me that Lertluck was now the director of the English

Program (EP), which was an alternative education where teachers used English to teach

in all subjects, except the Thai language.

We walked past several school buildings: the principal's office, the Office of

Quality Assurance, and the school conference hall. Little parks were scattered around the

school's area where big trees spread their braches, reducing the heat from the sun. Off in

the distance, the one-story English Program building was located adjacent to the school

cafeteria. As we walked closer, noises of machines and commands at a construction site attacked my ears. "This construction is a new EP building," the teacher told me, as if she could read my curious mind.

As we arrived at the English Program building, Lertluck smiled and greeted us first, "How are you doing, Denchai?" I was surprised that she remembered me, even though I was her student 10 years ago. I could not describe that feeling, the combination of being pleased, glad, shocked, and fulfilled. Lertluck welcomed our arrival at the main office. She asked her assistant to bring us a beverage and a snack.

After conversing, she asked, "How can I help you?" I told her that I was doing my dissertation on the journey to become an English teacher in Thailand, and I would like to invite her to participate in this study. I told her that she would be asked to do five things over the period of three months: interviews, shadowing, classroom observations, photo-elicitations, and sharing documents. She would have a chance to see and be involved with my research process. Lertluck interrupted, "I am happy to participate in this study,"

I continued, "To participate in this study, I would like you to come up with a name that will be used throughout the research process to help you remain confidential."

"Just use my name. I don't have anything to hide," Lertluck insisted. I assured her that I would use her real name in order to acknowledge her contribution to this study.

When I asked Lertluck if she had any ideas about who might be interested in participating in this study, she did not initially respond. So, I continued, "I am interested in investigating successful Thai English teachers who are committed to teaching and helping students learn sustainably."

Lertluck thought for a while and said, "How about Chutima?"

"Is she Chutima Chaolilitkul?" my former teacher asked for confirmation.

"Yes. She might be an interesting participant. I think she is a knowledgeable and responsible teacher. She also teaches wholeheartedly."

My former teacher volunteered to ask if Chutima was interested in participating in this study. Before she left, I told her that the name sounded familiar because she might have been my former English teacher. We both laughed out loud at the thought of that. I asked Lertluck to sign the consent form. Then, she photocopied the form and kept it as a reference.

"What activity should we start first?" I asked, seeking Lertluck's opinion. We agreed to start with the classroom observations. I asked for Lertluck's teaching schedule. When she gave me the schedule, I asked, "Do you teach both middle school and high school students?"

Lertluck replied, "Yes, I am teaching the translation class for high school students in the regular program, and I am teaching ASEAN studies for middle school students in the English Program. The ASEAN studies class is technically a social studies class, but I feel like I mostly teach English in this class. Does that work for you?"

"Do you know what levels Chutima teaches?" I asked.

Lertluck answered, "I think she only teaches high school students. If she agrees to join the research, she will be a representative of high school teachers. I can be a representative of middle school teachers. What do you think?" I told Lertluck that I would love to have her as a research participant from the middle school level. Lertluck

offered me a class to observe that day. I could not believe that I would have a chance to collect the data right away. The class began at 11:15 a.m. I waited at the office.

While I was waiting, my former teacher called to inform me that Chutima agreed to participate. I asked my former teacher to make an appointment with Chutima the next day so that I could talk about my study. Lertluck and I chatted for a long time until it was time to start the class. I walked with her to the classroom and started my data collection.

Chutima Chaolilitkul. May 28, 2013: I came to Benchama Maharat early since I had an appointment with Chutima. I dropped by to say hello to my former teacher at the Academic Affairs Office. "How was the data collection yesterday?" she asked.

"Everything went well," I responded immediately. "I am going to see Chutima now to talk about my research."

"Wait a minute. I'll go with you," my former teacher said as she finished organizing the documents on her desk. Then, we walked together to the English department. As my former teacher opened the door to the staff office, I saw Chutima working at her desk.

"She was my English teacher!" I told my previous teacher. We laughed about this. *"Sawasdee krub, Kru Chutima,"* I greeted her.

"This is Denchai, the one I told you about yesterday," my former teacher said as she introduced me.

"I was your student 10 years ago when I was in 11th grade," I added with a smile. Chutima tried to match my face with her memory, but she could not. My former teacher went back to the Academic Affairs Office, leaving me to talk to Chutima. I asked Chutima to find a room to discuss the research project. She took me to a room where

there was a comfortable sofa set. I explained the research project, what she needed to do, and the time commitment it would require.

She listened attentively and then said, "I am happy to join the project." I smiled and said thank you.

I asked her to sign the consent form and photocopied it for a reference. I asked her to come up with a name to use throughout the research project. Chutima replied, "Just use my real name." After that, I asked for her teaching schedule. Chutima and I agreed to start the data collection with classroom observations, and I made an appointment with her.

In summary, to obtain successful Thai English teachers at Benchama Maharat School, I asked my former teacher who worked at the Office of Academic Affairs to identify names of successful English teachers. At Benchama Maharat, that office is the center for the school's information such as students' grades, teachers' qualifications and performances, and alumni check-in. Since there are many English teachers at this school, I also asked the principal to suggest names of potential English teachers. From this obtaining-actor process, Leartluck Tangpanit and Chutima Chaolilitkul were chosen as the actors from that school setting. In the next section, I will describe the process of obtaining the actors and getting consents from the university context.

Kasemsiri Wattano. In regard to selecting a teacher at the university level, I purposefully selected Ubon Ratchathani Rajabaht University for several reasons. The university was originally a teacher college located close to Benchama Maharat School, so the commute would not be far. Also, I had a friend working at this university, and I personally thought she was unique and interesting. Her name was Kasemsiri Wattano.

Kasemsiri and I went to the same schools when we were in high school and in college. I thought Kasemsiri was interesting because she got a job as a university teacher immediately after she graduated with her bachelor's degree, which was not a typical situation. As a friend, I knew that she had a strong determination to become an English teacher. During college, she excelled academically, socially, and professionally. Based on those reasons, I felt that Kasemsiri was a good fit for this study. The following portrait presents the process of obtaining the actor and getting site consent.

May 14, 2013 (Greeley, Colorado): The night that my dissertation proposal was approved, I emailed Kasemsiri to invite her to participate in my research project.

> Hi Kasemsiri,
>   This is Denchai. I hope you are doing well. I am writing to ask you to participate in a research project, which is part of my dissertation. I am interested in understanding the journey to becoming an English teacher. These results will add to the knowledge base of Thai educators to understand the current situation of English teachers.
>   I have attached information about the project in this email. Please reply to this e-mail if you are interested and contact me if you have any questions about the research.
>   Thanks,
>   Denchai
> (personal communication, May 14, 2013)

Kasemsiri replied to my email the next morning:

> Hi Denchai,
>   I received your e-mail and the document about your project information. I am willing to be your participant of your work. Hopefully I will be a part of this very interesting research.
>   See you soon in Thailand,
>   Kasemsiri
> (personal communication, May 15, 2013)

I was delighted that she agreed to participate in this study. I replied back to her that I would start collecting the data when I went back to Thailand. I told her that I was waiting for the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at my university to approve my research

project. For now, she did not need to worry about anything. I would e-mail her again when I got a formal approval from the university.

After I got the approval from the IRB, I e-mailed the consent forms to Kasemsiri and called her. She told me that she would write a letter of permission to the department head and attach the site consent form to gain approval for the research project. I said thank you for her kindness.

June 3, 2013 (Thailand): After spending the first week at Benchama Maharat School, I called Kasemsiri requesting to meet and talk about the data collection. Over the phone, she told me the location of her office. When I arrived, Kasemsiri was cleaning up her desk and putting things into places. We greeted each other and talked for a while. She told me that she was cleaning up her space to set up a working table for me.

"No worries. I can sit anywhere." I was appreciative of her offer and felt considerate.

She insisted on finding a working area for me, so I helped her carry shelves, boxes, and piles of handouts. Then, we put a table close to her desk. "This is your working area," she said with a smile. I said thank you.

After setting up the table for me, Kasemsiri gave me the site consent. The head of the department had already signed the consent. I thanked her and asked her to take me to the department head. "Let's go," she said. We took the stairs to the second floor of the same building, and I realized that I had not made an appointment. Fortunately, the head of the department was there in his office. Kasemsiri opened the door, introduced me to the head of the department, and went back to her office. "I will go downstairs to organize materials and files in my office. Take your time with the department head."

I introduced myself, told him about the research project, and said thank you. He nodded occasionally as a sign of understanding.

"How long will you be here?" he asked.

"About three months."

The department head continued, "Can you tell me why you picked Kasemsiri as a participant in your research?"

"Well, I knew that she would be a good fit for my study. I have known Kasemsiri as a friend since we were in high school. From a relational theoretical stance, I think she is unique and interesting because she became a university teacher after she received her bachelor's degree, which is not a typical case. When we were in the undergraduate school, she performed well academically, especially in pedagogical classes. For these reasons, I think Kasemsisi will maximize an understanding of my research questions."

"That is very nice to hear," the department head lightheartedly said.

I further asked, "As you are the department head, what do you say about Kasemsiri in general?"

The head of the department thought and replied, "As a person, I think Kasemsiri is generous, kindhearted, and helpful. As a coworker, I think Kasemsiri is responsible and has self-discipline. When I assigned her to be the curriculum coordinator, she worked systematically and made positive changes to the department. As a teacher, I have not heard anything negative about her teaching performance. You know, I only hear about the negatives from students. If I don't hear anything about Kasemsiri's teaching performance, I can infer that she has done a great job."

After the conversation ended, I went downstairs to grab lunch with Kasemsiri. At lunch, I asked Kasemsiri about how she wanted me to start collecting data. Similar to Lertluck and Chutima, Kasemsiri decided to start with classroom observations. Also, like other teachers, Kasemsiri chose to use her real name throughout the study.

After lunch, Kasemsiri and I went back to her office and organized materials, files, and binders. As I went through several binders, I found a pile of course evaluation results. I asked Kasemsiri, "Can I photocopy these course evaluations for my research?"

Kasemsiri pointed to the photocopy machine at the corner and said, "You can use that machine over there."

When I went back home, I looked though the results of the course evaluations. By including course evaluations, I am not arguing that a course evaluation is an objective measure. Since I looked through a student's perspective in Lertluck's and Chuitma's cases, I wanted to include students' perspectives in Kasemsiri's case as well. Over the course of five years, Kasemsiri had received positive evaluations from her students. The average of her teaching performance had been more than 4.30 on a 5.00 scale in all aspects: knowledge, attitude, and teaching. The most consistent positive feedback included: being responsible and punctual, being a good role model for students, informing students about teaching activities and assessments, possessing a higher-level of knowledge, passing on knowledge to students systematically, providing constructive feedback to students, and possessing qualities of an ideal teacher. After I looked at these documents, I knew I made the right decision to invite Kasemsiri to participate in my dissertation.

Reflections on Getting Consents
and Obtaining Actors

In this study, the process of obtaining the actors and getting consents involved a series of introductions and building relationships. From the perspective of the portraiture methodology, relationship-building is regarded as a negotiated and ongoing process from gaining access to leaving the field (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). The relationship with my former teacher facilitated the process of gaining site access, and my relationships with the three teachers made them agree to participate in this study quickly. Also, the theoretical lens of goodness and the methodological choice of sharing my writing assisted the data collection process.

Since the review of literature suggests the complexity of using objective measures to define successful teachers, I relied on the subjectivity of institutional insiders' perspectives to define a successful Thai English teacher. These perspectives included those of the principal, the teacher at the Academic Affairs Office, and the department head. I also sought other documents such as classroom observation notes, course evaluations, and my prolonged engagement to reflect on and define successful English teachers. This ongoing evidence collection indicated that Lertluck, Chutima, and Kasemsiri met the criteria of this operationalized definition. They were successful Thai English teachers, and they were unique and interesting to this study.

Additionally, I did not sense a power relationship during the data collection process. To elaborate, even though I was researching my former English teachers and my personal friend, I was still comfortable collecting the data because the entire process felt natural and relational, as they had opened up immediately when the research started. Also, based on my observation and reflection, I did not see that the actors felt vulnerable

or less of an authority because I was educated in the United States. I gained insight and multilayered stories because of my sincerity and openness; I made my voice and my ideology explicit. I also respected the actors' privacy and decisions. As the study continued, all of the actors said to me repeatedly, "I am glad that I am part of your dissertation. I am glad that I could help you fulfill your goal." I attributed this easy access and smooth data collection to our relationships.

Expressing Voice

In portraiture, the notion of voice is regarded as a research instrument, consisting of three orientations: (a) epistemology, (b) ideology, and (c) methods (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Carroll (2007) elaborated, "epistemology speaking, voice refers to the many ways of knowing. Ideologically speaking, voice can be viewed as a metaphor for authorship and empowerment. Methodologically speaking, voice refers to the researcher's role in the inquiry process" (p. 152).

The portraitist's voice is echoed and interwoven throughout the research process from planning the study to crafting portraits. Even though the portraitist's voice is everywhere, the main purpose of including voice is not to dominate the actor's central stories, but to enhance understanding of the complexity of human's lives and experiences (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). This counterbalance between including self-portrait and writing actor-portrait is a challenging, nuanced, and difficult work since it involves the balance between self-possession and authentic story.

There are six interrelated ways to express voice in portraiture methodology: (a) voice as witness, (b) voice as interpretation, (c) voice as preoccupation, (d) voice as autobiography, (e) listening for voice, and (f) voice in dialogue. These aspects of voice

depict the presence of the portraitist, portraitist's role, authorship, interpretation, and

relationship between the portraitist and the actors (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

They are also overlapped and interdependent. In this study, I used all aspects of voice to

document the journey to become English teachers.

For the concept of voice as witness, the roles of the portraitist are a distant

observer, a stranger, and an outsider (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). This stance is

beneficial to research because researchers use a fresh perspective to look at patterns that

are often neglected or overlooked (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). As I entered the

field, I recorded written field notes in an "impressionistic record" (Lawrence-Lightfoot &

Davis, 1997, p. 188), presenting the description, impression, and hunches. This record

was used in conjunction with data analysis.

In regard to voice as interpretation, the portraitist takes an interpretative role,

trying to make sense of action, gesture, and communication. The portraitist tries to

provide the authenticity of meaning by moving from a thin description to a thick

description (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). The thick description appears when the

portraitist gathers several sources of data, deciphers them, and puts it back together.

Specifically to this study, I employed the impressionistic record to keep track of decisions

made, working hypotheses, hunches, questions, and plans. This technique was used to

engage myself in the process of meaning making.

As for the voice of preoccupation, the portraitist takes the role of the reflexive

practitioner (Richard, 2010), trying to identify predetermined preoccupation, assumption,

perspective, intellectual enjoyment, professional background, and knowledge of literature

(Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). In this study, I was engaged in reflexivity by

documenting my assumption in the impressionistic record three times a week: (a) before I entered the field, (b) after I was in the field, and (c) weekly. These reflections were used in combination with the data obtained from the actors in order to understand the journey to become English teachers.

Regarding the voice of autobiography, the portraitist tries to make connection with the actors by relating their life stories or autobiographies to the actor's actions, thoughts, and feelings. The autobiography consists of several aspects including "familial, cultural, ideological, and educational" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 95). In the process of making the self explicit and integrated, the portraitist does not entirely take the dominant role in collecting the data, but he adopts the role of self-questioning, self-reflection, and self-criticism as he is engaged in the data collection. To make myself explicitly aware of my autobiography, I crafted the portrait of my life story (see Chapter I), describing the journey to become an English teacher. During data collection, I made a methodological choice to share my stories with the actors with attempts to help them understand my stance and to make my voice transparent.

In the mode of listening for voice, the portraitist shifts attention to listen *for* (not listen *to*) the actor's voices including "the timbre, resonance, cadence, and tone of their voices, their messages, and their meaning" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 99). It should be noted that the concept of listening for voice is not equivalent to discourse analysis, which emphasizes detail analysis of language use and semiotic conversation in specific contexts (Gee & Handford, 2012). Rather, to listen *for* voices assumes the active roles of the portraitist, one who searches for meaning, selects the story, and shapes the story's coherence and aesthetics (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

To capture the actor's voice, I paid attention to their verbal and nonverbal language, pause, and tone. After that, I wrote reflections in the impressionistic records. While analyzing the interview data, I also listened to the recorded interview together with the transcript. In addition, when crafting the portrait, I carefully selected quotations and messages to express the rich and aesthetic description of the actors' journey to becoming English teachers.

The final way to express voices in portraiture is showcased as voice in dialogue. From this perspective, the portraitist takes an active and central role to display the relationship between himself and the actors. The "dance of the dialogue" is celebrated through conversation, intimacy, and trust (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 103). Lawrence-Lightfoot said that in the notion of voices in dialogue, "the reader also hears the researcher's methodology, her questions, her interpretations, her interventions" (p. 103). In this study, I showcased voice as dialogue in the final portrait. I used quotations from the actors and myself to express the relationship and our interactions.

In summary, for the purpose of this study, I attempted to make my voices explicit, rather than hiding in the shadow of presumptions. I included all of the six ways to document the participants' journey to become English teachers. I also kept track of my voices by writing reflections in the impressionistic records. These reflections were used for analysis and crafting the portraits.

Data Collection

Before the data collection began, I made my intellectual, ideological, and experiential assumptions transparent (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) by writing my own portrait on the journey to become an English teacher (see Chapter I). Documenting

my predisposition and anticipatory schema helped me become consciously aware of my biases and encouraged me to be more open to different realities (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). My research experiences while conducting pilot studies illustrated the usefulness of making assumptions transparent.

I explored this study through multiple perspectives. As a teacher, I had a clear motivation since I was young that I wanted to be a teacher. As a researcher, I have a passion to conduct qualitative research with ethical consideration. As a person, I have not been overly interested in arts, but I enjoy reading and listening for stories. I grew up with stories. My dad told stories before I went to bed. I have enjoyed listening and talking to people. I have an ear that opens wide and an eye that looks for non-verbal communication.

In this study, I employed several data elicitation techniques as follows: (a) classroom observations, (b) the life story interview, (c) photo elicitation, (d) artifact collection, and (e) shadowing. I was influenced by Newton's (2005) idea of multiple layers in data collection. He argued that researchers should "make sure that they have thoroughly analyzed and completed one layer before they move on to the next" (p. 83). For example, after I interviewed the actors, I transcribed the interview and finished conducting preliminary analysis before I conducted the second interview. Likewise, I finished my field notes on classroom observation before I observed more classes.

Even though I had several data collection techniques, I did not have a specific order of which one to use first. This flexible plan is in keeping with the emergent nature of qualitative research that overrides following a documented, but somewhat hidden path, of what seems to work best over a detailed, preplanned inflexible route. In the process of

going through informed consent with the actors, I asked them which activities they wanted to do first. All three actors agreed to have me observe their classrooms and collect artifacts to get the sense of their teaching practices, followed by the life story interview, photo-elicitation technique, and shadowing, respectively.

Throughout the data collection process, I kept writing an impressionistic record (Appendix B), "a ruminative, thoughtful piece that identifies emerging hypotheses, suggests interpretations, describes shifts in perspective, points to puzzle and dilemmas (methodological, conceptual, ethical) that need attention, and develops a plan of action for the next visit" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 188).

After I spent three months collecting the data, I felt like I had taken a time machine back to being a student in Lertluck's and Chutima's classes. There were many moments that I was familiar with classroom activities and teachings. I was grateful to be a student of Lertluck and Chutima because they were successful Thai English teachers who have helped and inspired several students to learn and love English. I was also proud of Kasemsiri who made positive changes in the culture of learning English at her university. In the following section, the data elicitation techniques will be described.

Classroom Observation

I started the data collection with classroom observations based on the actors' suggestions. In total, I spent 8 hours observing each teacher in their classrooms (24 hours altogether) in order to understand the teaching practices of successful English teachers. The observations took place on different days and months in order to collect a variety of data. The observations focused on classroom interactions and language as well as teaching strategies and styles. The purpose of my observation process was to sketch the

context of the portraits (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), rather than giving

evaluative feedback.

To conduct the observations, I assumed the role of a non-participant observer,

sitting at the back of the classroom and taking notes, and also as a participant observer

who was actively involved in the classroom instruction (Wolcott, 1995). Apart from the

observations, I was asked to teach the students because the actors wanted me to show

teaching practices that I had learned while I was in the United States. At first, I agreed to

teach the students because I wanted to be helpful. However, after reflecting on my

experiences as a temporary English teacher, I felt that this experience helped me

understand the complexity of classroom instruction in the actors' contexts.

From a temporary English teacher's perspective, I gained multiple layers of data

to understand the actors' classroom teaching practices. To help me gain experience in

teaching, Chutima asked me to co-teach with her on the topic of reading notices and signs,

and Kasemsiri asked me to talk about writing a good paragraph in her writing class.

Later, I volunteered to teach the students in some classes when the teachers were

unavailable and needed help.

After each observation, I asked questions about their teaching to advance an

analytic protocol, for example, why they used a particular activity or how they would

evaluate their own teaching performance. The questioning process took only a couple of

minutes while I walked with the teachers as they left the classroom. After that, I

immediately wrote field notes, reporting my experiences during my observations

(Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Before I observed more classes, I finished writing my

field notes, conducted a preliminary analysis, and wrote my reflections in the

impressionistic records (Newton, 2005). The field notes provided evidence for understanding teaching practices of successful English teachers.

Life Story Interview

After I observed at least three hours of classroom instruction, I made an appointment with the actors to conduct an interview. Guided by the narrative epistemology, I employed the life story interview method (Atkinson, 1998). The life story interview combines art and science, seeking to understand an individual's life in context (Atkinson, 2007). To conduct a life story interview, Atkinson (1998) argues, "life story interview can be approached scientifically, but it is primarily carried out as an art" (p. 21).

I agree with Atkinson that the life story is both art and science. To achieve this combination, I combined a semi-structured with an open-ended approach to interviewing by developing an interview protocol (Appendix C) to trigger the actors' response. Rather than strictly following the interview protocol, I used it as a flexible guideline to lead to another topic. During the interview, I also asked further questions to clarify unpredictable and interesting responses.

The interview protocol consisted of various dimensions of the journey to become English teachers: childhood experience, family background, academic background, experience during teacher education program, reasons to become teachers, working environments, self-image, self-esteem, teaching philosophy, teaching practices, and future orientation (Abednia, 2012; Bain, 2004; Burton & Johnson, 2010; Johnson, 2009; Kelchtermans, 1993; Lim, 2011; Simon-Maeda, 2004). Since the interview protocol required memory recall, I gave the actors the interview questions in advance, a week

prior to the interview, to facilitate this process and to avoid intimidating topics that the actors might not be comfortable sharing.

The actors had a chance to choose the language for the interview (Thai, English, or both), and all of them chose to be interviewed in Thai. There were some moments when Lertluck, shifted her language to the local dialect of the northeastern area of Thailand. I interviewed each actor twice. In the first interview, I focused on the actors' early lives, family background, academic background, reasons for becoming English teachers, and future orientation. After the first interview, I transcribed, finished preliminary analysis, and wrote reflections in the impressionistic records before I conducted the second interview (Newton, 2005). For the second interview, I focused on self-image, self-esteem, teaching philosophy, and teaching practices. Each interview of each participant took approximately one hour.

At every interview, I explained the purpose of the interview explicitly. The interviews were conducted in a relaxing, comfortable, and friendly environment free of disturbances at the school setting. Before the interview, I asked the actors' permission to record the interview and to take notes on key words and quotes to supplement the recorded data. Since the actors shared their journeys to become English teachers, the actors may have experienced emerging emotions such as sense of loss, shame, or pain (Atkinson, 1998). In those cases, I made sure that the actors were willing to continue. I respected the actors' decisions to share or not to share certain stories. My role was to be a good listener and a facilitator of the interview.

Photo-Elicitation

Photo elicitation is an alternative data collection technique that is used in social science research. Harper (2002) defined photo elicitation as a method that employs photographs as a means to conduct interviews in order to activate an individual's memory and information. This technique addresses the co-construction paradigm by involving the participants in discussing the meaning of the photos. This technique has the potential to help individuals realize their social existence (Harper, 2002).

To conduct the photo elicitation, I asked the actors to bring their photo albums or digital photos on computers that represented the journey to become English teachers and their teachers' lives in order to discuss in the interview. The actors went home, selected relevant photos, and brought the photos to the interview. In this sense, the actors analyzed and reflected on the journey to become English teachers.

After that, I interviewed the actors by asking them to tell stories of those photos. I also asked questions for clarification. The interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed for analysis. During the interview, I asked the actors' permission to take notes to supplement the data. At the end of the interview, I asked the actors' permission to copy the photos that represented the snapshots of the journey to become English teachers. I also asked the actors to think about the themes that they saw after telling stories of becoming an English teacher.

Artifact Collections

Norum (2008) defined *artifacts* in qualitative research as objects that people use in a society or culture. Artifacts tell stories and meanings of the owner (Schwandt, 2007). Hodder (1994) expanded the term artifacts into *material culture* and defined it as

everyday-life objects that communicate, represent, and trace individual's behaviors in a culture and society. Artifacts provide a historical and personal insight into individuals' lives, values, beliefs, knowledge, opinions, and assumptions (Hodder, 1994; Norum, 2008). As a result, Norum (2008) argued that artifacts "serve to enrich a study and often provide information not available from interview or observational data" (p. 25).

In this study, I looked at the artifacts on the actor's desk. I also asked the actors to share artifacts such as classroom handouts, pictures of inspiring people, photographs, or transcripts. The artifacts were used to enhance an understanding of the journey to become English teachers. I also used artifacts to assist the actors in recalling their memories. For example, the transcript was used to ask the participants to share their stories during their teacher education program, favorite classes, or useful classes. The photographs were used to trigger the participants' memory about childhood experiences. I was aware of the fact that the actors had a choice to tell or retell certain stories.

As a data collection method, artifacts were unique sources that were helpful for me to form pictures of the actors' lives and to focus on the actors' origins. Artifacts also added a layer of new understanding to the journey to their becoming successful Thai English teachers that the interview and observation data, alone, could not provide. For example, given the fact that the actors and I were from different generations, and they talked about their sociocultural contexts in the interview, it would have been difficult for me to understand their lives and their meanings without looking at artifacts (e.g., photos). By examining the actors' photos, I was able to form mental images that helped me understand the complexity of their contexts.

Shadowing

I used a shadowing technique (Wolcott, 2003) to gather the data about the lives of

English teachers and to check my hunches at the end of data collection process. The data

from the shadowing technique were used to supplement other sources. Shadowing is a

process of following a participant closely to decipher daily actions. As McDonald (2005)

suggested, it is beneficial to capture first-hand details of an individual's life and daily

behaviors. Gilliat-Ray (2011) expanded the benefits of the shadowing technique as an

opportunity to experience the "implications and the cumulative outcomes of several years

of work" (p. 478).

To employ this shadowing technique, I asked the actors to identify a day that

represented their typical teacher's day. Lertluck chose Thursday, the day that she had

some teaching classes, and the day that I could see her different roles at Benchama

Maharat School. Chutima chose Friday, the day that she was assigned to do extra-

curricular activities, and she had some teaching classes. Kasemsiri chose Wednesday, the

day that she had some teaching classes, and she typically prepared weekly lessons and

graded students' assignments.

After identifying a day, I followed the actors from the start of the school day to

the end of the day. As I followed them, I took discreetly and appropriately detailed notes

on their actions, times, conversations, interactions, body languages, and moods

(McDonald, 2005). For example, I walked to classrooms with the actors, sat in their

classrooms, had lunch with them, and observed the interaction between the actors and

others. I also asked questions about courses of actions for clarification purposes

(McDonald, 2005). I adopted the role of *participant-as-observer* (Wolcott, 2003), which

is defined as "a role in which the observer is known to all and is present in the system as a scientific observer, participating by his presence, but at the same time usually allowed to do what observers do, rather than expected to perform as others perform" (p. 8).

The shadowing technique has some limitations. McDonald (2005) says that shadowing is difficult to conduct due to the issue of access, data management, and the observer effect. He argues that the process of gaining access is difficult since the researcher needs to ask permission from the site and a series of individuals. Also, the data obtained from shadowing is massive, so it is difficult to manage. Finally, as the researcher enters into the participant's life, it affects how the participants behave in the natural setting; they may change the nature of their daily life (McDonald, 2005).

In this study, I attempted to minimize those limitations as follows. As for how to access the research setting, I developed a positive relationship with the actors and the setting (McDonald, 2005). I spent time getting to know an organizational culture by "being there" (Wolcott, 1995, p. 95). As I took the stance of searching for goodness, this study kicked off a favorable association with the actors (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). I informed the school principal so that he had an awareness of my presence. The actors also helped me develop a relationship with other people in the setting; they introduced me to their colleagues, friends, and other staff members.

For the data management issue, I wrote up field notes immediately after leaving the field, and I expanded the notes into cultural scenes before returning to the field (Emerson et al., 1995). Finally, for the observer effect issue, I used a small notebook to keep my field notes (McDonald, 2005) so that the actors were not distracted. I also informed the actors that these notes would be shared when I finished expanding. At the

end of shadowing, I asked the actors how typical their day had been in order to identify the observer effect (McKechnie, 2000). "That is what I do in real life," all three actors similarly reported. When I examined my reflections in the impressionistic records, I found that the three actors were comfortable with this process. I attributed this success to the appropriate timing and the relationship that I developed with the actors. It might be difficult if I employed this shadowing method at the beginning of the data collection.

Authenticity

Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) depicts the quality of portraiture research as the ability to portray *authenticity*, a term that is similar to trustworthiness and rigor (Merriam, 2009). The notion of authenticity shifts away from the positivist research paradigm where researchers seek for validity and reliability to the critical research paradigm, which seeks credible research and has impacts on members of the community (Given, 2008).

Since I employed the portraiture methodology, which is a type of qualitative research, I attempted to enhance the authenticity under the philosophical assumptions of qualitative research. According to Merriam (1995), qualitative researchers assume that "reality is constructed, multidimensional, and ever-changing; there is no such thing as a single, immutable reality waiting to be observed and measured" (p. 54). Similarly to Merriam, I believe that reality is constructed, rather than discovered. To a certain extent, the construction of reality was influenced by my background, experience, and personal history. As a researcher who has been trained to do research ethically, I attempted to strengthen the authenticity of this study by using the following techniques: (a) thick description, (b) crystallization, (c) transparent voice, and (d) an impressionistic record.

Thick Description

The term *thick description* was developed by Gilbert Ryle in 1949 and was implemented in the field of ethnography in 1973 by Clifford Geertz (Merriam, 2009). The original meaning of this term was an insider's description of a particular culture (Geertz, 1973), and it was expanded to encompass detailed accounts of the research setting and results (Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2008). Recently, Tracy (2010) defined thick description as an "in-depth illustration that explicates culturally situated meanings and abundant concrete details" (p. 843). Thick description is presented to the readers, rather than told to them (Tracy, 2010).

In portraiture methodology, thick description is valued since it creates the creditability and the authenticity of stories (Tracy, 2010), and it helps readers resonate with their experiences (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Portraiture methodologists attempt to describe detailed descriptions of multiple types of contexts, such as physical and historical, hoping the readers will picture themselves seeing, feeling, smelling, and touching the scenes (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

The question of what warrants as *thick description* has been debated, and there is no clear guideline of how to do it (Wolcott, 1995). To provide thick description in this study, I used the criteria of sufficiency, asking myself, "Is this relevant to the account?" (Wolcott, 1995). In this study, thick description can be found in the context of the portraits, the participants' descriptions, and in the research findings. To create detailed descriptions, I attempted to include multiple senses such as sight, sound, taste, scent, and touch (Stoller, 1989). I also supported the research findings with enough appropriate

evidence (Merriam, 2009) so that readers would have the framework to interpret the actors' experiences and the power to make connections with their experiences.

Crystallization Vs Triangulation

In this study, I used the term *crystallization* (Richardson, 1994; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), rather than *triangulation* (Denzin, 1978) to enhance the authenticity of this study because it matches with the epistemological, philosophical, and methodological perspectives in this study. Denzin defined triangulation as a methodological strategy to improve validity of social science research by using multiple data sources, investigators, theories, or methodologies (Merriam, 2009). Mile and Huberman (1994) also defined triangulation as an analytic induction "to get to the findings in the first place" (p. 267).

Several researchers have critiqued the notion of triangulation. For example, Mathison (1988) deconstructs the concept of triangulation by arguing that "triangulation provides evidence for the researcher to make sense of some social phenomenon, but that the triangulation strategy does not, in and of itself, do this" (p. 15). In other words, even though the researchers have multiple data, researchers, or theoretical lenses, the findings are not necessarily the only truth (Tracy, 2010). Mathison says triangulation should be used to offer alternative interpretation, rather than confirming the truth. Additionally, Tracy (2010) depicts triangulation as an attempt to eliminate subjectivity in the realist paradigm, assuming there is one truth to be validated.

Given the ambiguous nature of the term triangulation and its paradigm, Richardson (1994) offers the new metaphor, *crystallization*, as a means to enhance the authenticity of research. Through the postmodern mixed-genre perspective, Richardson

posited that the term triangulation assumes that reality has "a fixed point or an object that can be triangulated" (p. 522). She wrote:

> I propose that the central imaginary for "validity" for postmodernist texts is not the triangle--a rigid, fixed, two-dimensional object. Rather, the central imaginary is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angle of approach. Crystals grow, change, alter, but are not amorphous. (p. 522)

Richardson argued that there is no single truth; the discovery of truth depends on the researcher's angle of vision. There is no one truth to be triangulated; rather, there are multiple truths to be constructed from different lenses. Each lens provides partial and incomplete understanding of the issue (Richardson, 1994; Tracy, 2010).

Several researchers have supported the concept of crystallization. For example, Janesick (2000) shifted her perspectives from valuing triangulation to advocating crystallization. She agreed with Richardson that the concept of crystallization is a better lens to justify the quality of qualitative research. Janesick further expanded the concept of crystallization by proposing the "incorporation of various disciplines as part of multifaceted qualitative research design" (p. 392).

In 2004, Richardson and Lockridge showcased the concept of crystallization and put it into practice in *Travel with Ernest: Crossing the Literary/Sociological Divide*. Richardson is a sociologist and Lockridge, her husband, is a novelist. They traveled together and each of them recorded their experiences of similar places. Then, they got together, talked about the experiences, and recorded an interview. They presented the findings by recounting each experience and putting the transcribed interview at the end. Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) argued that this work was an example of crystallization since it presented the crossed boundary between sociology and the literary field.

Richardson was a woman and a sociologist looking from her perspectives, and Lockridge was a man and a novelist presenting his perspectives.

Ellingson (2009) expanded the concept of crystallization into a methodology that integrates multiple data analyses and different genres of representation to create a coherent series of texts that admit the construction of incomplete knowledge. She further provided the principles of crystallization, reflecting the researcher's positions to construct knowledge. The principles state that the researchers should: provide thick description, offer contrast interpretation, use various data representation, encompass extensive reflexivity, and relinquish positivist objectivity.

To enhance authenticity through crystallization in this study, I employed several data elicitation techniques. The purpose of using multiple data collection techniques was not to triangulate, but to crystallize and to examine the complexity of the data from different angles of vision. These techniques were used to offer alternative explanations when encountering convergences, inconsistencies, and contradictions (Mathison, 1988). I admitted that the knowledge derived from each data elicitation technique was partial and incomplete. I also explicitly provided angles of vision by documenting my perspectives in the impressionistic records throughout the research process (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

In addition, as I retold my personal stories in the portrait, it helped me become consciously aware of my predispositions, biases, and assumptions. Moreover, I revisited and analyzed the data several times during the data analysis process. I examined the data from different perspectives and considered possible interpretations. I used two different data analysis techniques: portraiture method and the Zoom model. Finally, I presented

the data interpretations in multiple forms such as description, poetry, and conversation with attempts to help readers see the crystallization of the data.

Transparent Voice

Tracy (2010) described the quality of qualitative research as the ability to portray the researcher's sincerity, honesty, and vulnerability. Richard (2010) said that one of the criteria to enrich the quality of portraiture study is to make the researcher's voice explicit. With these criteria, portraiture methodologists can enhance the authenticity of research through being self-reflexive and self-critical.

In portraiture, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) stated that the researcher's voice is everywhere in the process of data collection, interpretation, analysis, and in the portrait. For the purpose of this study, I made my voice predominant, rather than trying to hide it in the shadow of biases. To make my voice transparent, I wrote my own portrait, my stories of becoming an English teacher and a doctoral student before I had started the data collection. This writing helped me become aware of my own background. During the data collection process, I found myself sharing these stories with the actors. This sharing connected the actors to me, and it facilitated the data collection process in this study.

Every time that I collected the data, I made my roles explicit by telling the purposes, time of commitment, and instructions of each data elicitation technique. I found that clear instructions and guidelines maximized the smoothness of the data collection process. For example, in the photo-elicitation technique, I asked the actors to bring photo albums or digital photos that reflected their journeys to becoming English teachers. The actors selected their most relevant photos and brought them to the

interview. With this straightforward instruction, the actors were allowed to analyze their

own stories and retell them in a meaningful and coherent form. Apart from giving clear

instructions, I also informed the actors that I was open to letting them be involved in the

research process so they could see my writing and transcripts.

Impressionistic Records Vs
Audit Trail

To enhance authenticity, I also used the impressionistic records to engage with

my reflexivity, interpretation, and analysis (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). The

practice of *impressionistic record* is similar to an *audit trail* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and

analytic memo in grounded theory approach (Saldaña, 2013). I preferred the term

impressionistic record because it is used the portraiture methodology.

By using the impressionistic records, I kept track of how the data were collected,

recorded all decisions made, looked carefully at analytical perspective, documented logic

of interpretation and how the themes emerged, revisited whether the findings were

grounded in the data, and examined my personal experiences and biases (Lincoln & Guba,

1985; Merriam, 2002, 2009). I also wrote questions, issues, hunches, and ideas as I

engaged in the data analysis (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997; Merriam, 2009).

Resonance Vs Generalization: In the
Particular Resides the General

Robert E. Stake, a distinguished scholar in an educational case study, said, "We

expect an inquiry to be carried out so that certain audiences will benefit – not just to swell

the archives, but to help persons toward further understanding" (Stake, 2000, p. 19). As

is the case of other inquiries, I expect that this study will provide potential benefits to

readers. When talking about benefits, I refer to the notion of generalization. For the

purpose of this study, I will use the term *resonance* (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) to refer to the term *generalization*.

Resonance is conceptualized from a critical paradigm, which resists the notion of statistical generalization in traditional research. I believe that resonance does not occur automatically when researchers have a group of samples that is a good representation of the population. Instead, I believe that readers of research should retrieve their prior experiences to make judgments about research findings. As a result, experience is the key to understanding and education (Dewey, 1938). In this study, I was influenced by the concept of resonance from four interrelated notions: (a) portraiture methodology, (b) naturalistic generalization, (c) working hypotheses, and (d) Piaget's schema theory.

Portraiture methodologists resist the concept of generalization in traditional social science research in which researchers employ systematic sampling techniques and end up paying little attention to the findings, using the characteristics of the sample in order to make resonance (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Portraiture methodologists take a stance different from traditional social scientists by documenting detailed descriptions of experiences as perceived by inhabitants in the settings, hoping readers feel connected. The more detail is elaborated, the more connection is made. From this stance, portraiture methodologists argue that, "in the particular resides the general" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 14). This stance corroborates the notion of *naturalistic generalization* termed by Stake (1995, 2000).

Stake (1978) initially proposed the concept of naturalistic generalization. Naturalistic generalization is an interactive process in which readers retrieve their experiences or tactic knowledge to make sense of research findings (Stake, 1995). This

generalization also challenges the concept of traditional generalization that it is not useful in real life. Stake (2000) valued specific knowledge, rather than generic knowledge, since specific knowledge is both "intuitive and empirical, and not idiotic" (p. 22).

Lincoln and Guba (2000) agreed with Stake that naturalistic generalization is more appealing than traditional generalization; however, they resisted replacing the latter with naturalistic generalization. Indeed, Lincoln and Guba (2000) proposed the concept of the *working hypothesis*: generalization as a continuum. They argued that generalization is not a conclusion; rather, it is a process of considering the *fittingness* of contexts in order to make *transferability*. From this perspective, researchers are expected to provide sufficient information so that readers can make judgments on how contexts are congruent. In my opinion, the term *working hypothesis* is an expansion of language in the paradigm of naturalistic generalization since it trusts the reader's capability to make decisions.

Donmoyer (2000) expanded the concept of naturalistic generalization (Stake, 1995) and the working hypothesis (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). He challenged that the two notions do not provide adequate language to talk about alternative generalization. Drawing from the concept of Piaget's schema theory, Donmoyer proposed the language of generalization: *assimilation, accommodation, integration, and differentiation*. The focus of this perspective is on Piaget's cognitive function. Donmoyer said that "all knowledge of the empirical world must be filtered through cognitive structures, which shape what we know" (p. 59). When encountering new knowledge, we assimilate our cognition in order to accommodate new knowledge by adding to our existing knowledge.

This process is either integrated or differentiated. To me, Donmoyer also advocated for having experiences in order to make generalizations.

To summarize, I considered experience to be part of resonance. As I documented the complexity of the journey to become an English teacher, I "gave power" to the readers to feel connected with the portraits (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005). I believed that the readers would find universal benefits from the portraits as they engaged in, questioned, and reflected on their own experiences (Tracy, 2010). Tracy wrote, "the more specific, the more subtle the description, the more likely it is to evoke identification" (p. 13).

Ethical Considerations

The current understanding of ethics in social science research originated in the 1960s in the United States with biomedical research such as the Nuremberg Trials, the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, and the Willowbrook Hepatitis Experiment as well as the concerns of unethical social science studies such as the Tearoom Trade Study (Kitchener & Kitchener, 2009). The concerns centered on the issues of harm, consent, deception, privacy, and confidentiality (Punch, 1994).

Several publications have raised awareness about research ethics, which are derived from professional codes of ethics, federal guidelines, and ethical principles (Kitchener & Kitchener, 2009). This led to the establishment of the Institutional Review Board, or IRB, in 1971 and 1974 (Lincoln, 2005). However, these ethical sources have been critiqued for whether they are ethically justified or adequately addressed ethical issues (Kitchener & Kitchener, 2009).

In this study, I listened for life stories of English teachers describing their journey to become teachers. These stories were highly personal, emotional, spiritual, historical, and sociocultural (Atkinson, 1998). Since the actors shared their personal life stories, I employed ethical considerations throughout the study. All of the data collection processes, decision-making, data analysis, and representation took into consideration the actors' risks and benefits. In order to justify ethical decisions throughout the study, I employed a five-level model of ethics (Kitchener & Kitchener, 2009). Figure 4 presents the model.

Meta-Ethics

⇕

Ethical Theory

⇕

Critical Evaluative Level   Ethical Principles

⇕

Ethical Rules (Professional codes, laws)

⇕

Immediate Level   Particular Cases

Information about the situation   Ordinary moral
sense
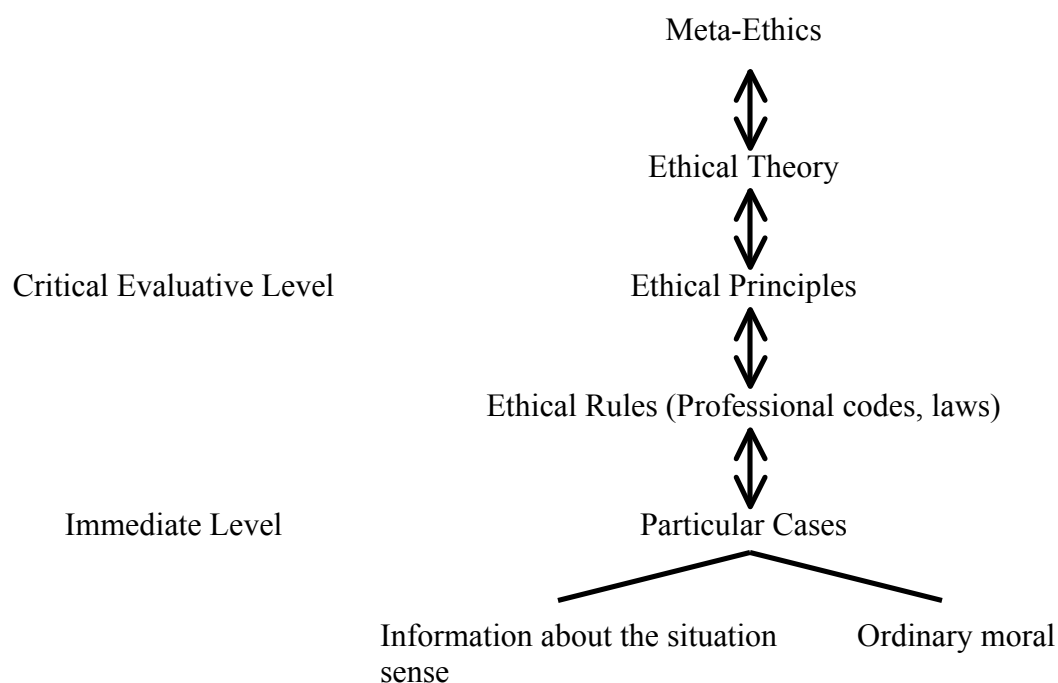
Figure 4. A five-level model of ethics.

As shown in Figure 4, the five-level model of ethics consists of tiers that are used to make ethical decisions. At the lowest level, the immediate level, ethical judgments are governed by particular cases depending on the information about the situation and

cumulative moral characters of the researcher. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) called this *situation ethic of practice* or *situational ethics*.

As a child, I grew up with bedtime moral stories that my dad told me, and I have used these moral characters to live my life. In the stories, he emphasized the values of gratitude, working hard, honesty, and respect. My Buddhism beliefs also addressed the importance of doing good deeds and avoiding harm to others. As a doctoral student, I took a research ethics class and received the certificate of the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) on research ethics. I used the combination of these experiences and information about the situation to guide my ethical decisions. However, if these experiences did not provide adequate guidance to make ethical decisions, I moved to the upper level of ethics, the critical evaluative level (Kitchener & Kitchener, 2009).

In the critical evaluative level, ethical decisions are influenced by ethical rules such as professional codes and laws, ethical principles, ethical theory, and meta-ethics. In this study, I used the codes of conduct from three sources as ethical rules and ethical principles: (a) Institutional Review Board (IRB), (b) American Psychological Association (APA), and (c) Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). These sources can be summarized into ethical principles: beneficence (do good), non-maleficence (do no harm), autonomy (participant's right), justice (be fair), and fidelity (be honest). These principles are sometimes conflicting, depending on situations, so I would consult ethical theory and dissertation chairs in cases where these principles failed to provide guidance (Kitchener & Kitchener, 2009).

In regard to the ethical theory, I employed critical race theory to justify ethical decisions since it matched with the epistemological, theoretical, and methodological

perspectives in this study. According to Thomas (2009), critical race theory is a framework to challenge inequality in society, raise awareness of social conditions, and promote autonomy. Through the lens of critical race theory, this study is inherently critical for several reasons.

Epistemologically, I perceived the actors in this study as a source of knowledge (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). By using a co-constructing of the research paradigm, I "gave voice and power" to the actors in order to speak up in public. Theoretically, I looked through the lens of goodness as perceived by the actors, rather than impose the definition of goodness for them. This emancipatory nature increased relational ethics (Ellis, 2007). Methodologically, portraiture addressed the issues of relationship, voice, ideology, reflexivity, positionality, and genre of representation, which are essential features to inform ethical decision-making (Thomas, 2009). If critical race theory could not provide enough guidelines for making ethical decisions, meta-ethics would be consulted (Kitchener & Kitchener, 2009).

Kitchener and Kitchener (2009) defined meta-ethics as the logic and meaning of making moral decisions. In this study, I used the *inductivism paradigm* to justify ethical decisions (Kitchener & Kitchener, 2009). Inductivisim was employed by the APA to generate ethical codes. In this study, I provided rationale, logics, and reasons to explain ethical statements that were decided and acted upon after considering ethical theory, ethical principles, professional codes, and moral characters.

Apart from the five-level model of ethics, I also held aspirational ethics throughout the study. Atkinson (1998) said, "the ethics of doing life story interview(s) are all about fair, honest, clear, and straightforward" (p. 36). The process of conducting

portraiture study is grounded in a respectful, trusting, and non-threatening relationship, so I made sure that the actors had the right to know the purpose of doing this study. I also shared my expanded field notes of shadowing techniques and classroom observations. By doing so, I hoped to engage the actors into co-constructed meaning making and to establish positive relationships.

Data Analysis: Searching for Emergent Themes

The data analysis and collection procedures in this study were conducted simultaneously (Merriam, 2009). Since context is important to understanding human behaviors, actions, and thoughts (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), I individually analyzed the data obtained from the actors. I also compared and contrasted the data across the actors in order to maximize readers' understandings (Stake, 2005). In this section, I will describe the process of data analysis by presenting the quality of the data set, data analysis methods, and reflexivity, respectively.

Quality of Transcripts and Field Notes

The data set in this study consisted of transcripts from the interviews and the photo-elicitation technique, field notes from classroom observations and the shadowing technique, and artifact collections such as teaching schedules and classroom handouts. Before I started the data analysis, I attempted to enhance the quality of the data set because it would strengthen the authenticity of my research.

Poland (2002) suggested that researchers pay attention to the quality of transcripts since the process of transcription involves multiple decisions, such as when to start and end a sentence. These decisions suggest that a transcript is a reconstructed text (Lapadat

& Lindsay, 1999), and it is also "a product of a transcriber's ongoing interpretative and analytic decisions" (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 9).

The transcription process in this study was conducted through a collaborative approach with a transcriber and a series of negotiations and checking for quality. I hired a transcriber to transcribe the life story interviews and the photo-elicitation interview. I asked the transcriber to not "tidy up" the transcriptions. I also asked the transcriber to insert notations in the transcript documents as suggested by Poland (2002) (see Appendix D). After that, I checked the transcripts again by listening to the recorded interview again while reading them to make sure that they were ready to analyze.

In regards to the quality of field notes, I wrote the field notes immediately after leaving the field and expanded them into cultural scenes by describing detailed accounts of my experience for that day (Emerson et al., 1995). This immediate writing helped me recall vivid and detailed memories (Emerson et al., 1995). By doing this form of immediate writing, I did not claim that the detailed accounts from the field notes mirrored what I observed. Indeed, the field notes in this study were the product of my partial experiences during observations and were influenced by my perspectives. I chose to emphasize certain actions, highlight particular interactions, and focus on specific aspects of my experiences. By doing this, I unintentionally omitted certain information (Emerson et al., 1995).

Therefore, the quality of the field notes in this study depended on the level of details in which I could revisit the field notes at any time and still recall the experiences of being in the field. Based on this criterion, I thought the field notes in this study gave me a feeling similar to that of being in the field.

Methods of Searching for
Emergent Themes

To analyze the data in this study, I searched for emergent themes by using the

data analysis methods from the portraiture methodology (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis,

1997) and the Zoom Model (Pamphilon, 1999). I searched for emergent themes by

incorporating interpretative exploration, analytic lens, and aesthetic appreciation into the

data analysis process (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). The themes emerged from

the inductive process, and they were used as a framework to craft the portraits.

To generate the themes by using portraiture methodology, I assumed an active

and creative role (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005), looking for repetitive refrains, metaphors

expressed by the actors, and patterns that emerged through cultural and institutional

rituals. I also listened to the interviews, consulted field notes several times, and

researched questions to revisit my fresh experience. I also reflected on my subjectivity,

questioning my assumptions throughout the data analysis process (Lawrence-Lightfoot &

Davis, 1997).

Additionally, I used the Zoom Model for data analysis since this technique

matches the epistemological, philosophical, and methodological lens of this study. The

Zoom Model was developed to maximize an understanding of the multilayered meanings

of life history. The term "Zoom" is a visual metaphor from the field of photography that

highlights the active involvement of a researcher, trying to analyze a life story from

different perspectives. Pamphilon said:

> The Zoom Model has been developed to maximize the multiple levels of meaning
> found in a life history. It is underpinned by a metaphor drawn from the field of
> photography, that of the zoom lens that allows us to focus in on the fine details of
> a leaf and out to the vastness of a forest. As we do so, we are aware that both the
> leaf and the forest are in fact deferring parts of a whole panorama. (1999, p. 393).

The Zoom Model was developed to acknowledge multiple perspectives. Pamphilon

argues that a life story is contradictory in itself; therefore, to understand the story of the

self, multiple dimensions should be employed. To analyze life story, I focused on the

following four zoom levels: (a) the macro, (b) the meso, (c) the micro, and (d) the

interactional.

For the macro-zoom level, I focused on the sociocultural dimension of the teacher,

seeking to understand the relationship between teachers' narratives and the society.

Specifically, I focused on how the teachers' sociocultural background shapes the way

they are. For the meso-zoom level, I focused on the teacher as an individual. I focused

on themes that have been constructed and reconstructed to form coherency across

teachers' narratives. In regard to the micro-zoom level, I focused on the narrative

dimension of stories. I focused on pauses, words, key phrases, and emotions embedded

in teachers' narratives. Finally, for the interactional-zoom level, I overtly zoomed into

myself, trying to play with my subjectivity and analyze my interpretative perspective.

The Zoom Model was developed to focus on different levels of meaning. It

should be noted that the Zoom Model is not a linear process. When I encountered

contradiction in one level, I zoomed in or out in order to scrutinize the contradiction.

Schwartz (2009) employed this model to analyze stories of Latina first-generation college

students, and she found that the model was appropriate to capture the complexity of

Latina students' meaning-making experiences. She suggested that this model should be

employed for further inquiry.

After I employed the Zoom Model to analyze the journey of becoming an English

teacher in Thailand, I found that this model had potential benefits for researchers to use

as a framework for data analysis and collection in any qualitative research. The Zoom

Model provided the language, angles of vision, and points of interest to decipher the

complexity of qualitative data. During the data analysis process, I found myself zooming

in and out of the data, attempting to put the teachers' stories into sociocultural contexts,

creating timelines, questioning pauses and emotions, and reflecting on my assumptions.

This interactional data analysis process allowed me to understand the complexity of the

meanings in the teachers' stories.

Reflecting on Impressionistic
Records

After analyzing the data from different levels of focus, I wrote the impressionistic

records, reflecting on the interplay between assumption and themes, perspectives and

interpretations, data gathering, reflections, themes, and cultural or institutional

connections (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). The impressionistic records helped

me become focused, reflexive, and critical.

In the impressionistic records, I answered the following prompts: Through what

lens am I looking at the data? What is going on in the data? How does the data answer

the research questions? What is the evidence that supports this conclusion? What is still

unanswered? These questions will be used as a framework to scrutinize the data, bring in

an interpretative lens, and generate themes (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

Data Representation: Crafting the Portraits

The research product from the portraiture methodology is called *"portraits"*

(Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983). A portrait is a central story that is carefully written based

on emergent themes. In this study, I presented the data by writing the portraits that

reflected a combination of art and science (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). The

purposes of writing a portrait are to reach out to audiences beyond the academic arena

(Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis), to inform and inspire with how heartfelt the teaching

profession is, and to show as much of the context as possible.

To craft the portraits, I assumed an active role in searching for a storyline from

the emergent themes, selecting quotes to illustrate the points, ignoring certain details of

the data, and awaking to aesthetic tastes (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). When

composing the portraits, I admitted that there were many possible stories, but the stories

that I crafted were the products of the confluence of my backgrounds, perspectives, and

interpretation of the empirical data. I also included stories that "speak of themselves"

(Wolcott, 1994, p. 10). As readers read the portraits, they are advised to engage in,

reflect upon, and question the portraits.

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) suggest four dimensions to consider when

writing a portrait: *conception*, *structure*, *form*, and *cohesion*. In this study, I used all four

dimensions when crafting the portraits. I considered the conception: a central story

grounded in the emergent themes with a series of situations, characters, and plots. I also

considered the structure or native sequences that reflected the multilayered complexity of

the journey to become English teachers. In addition, I took into consideration the form or

narrative movement reflecting aesthetics and emotions. Finally, I considered the

cohesion, or the unity, of the narrative that glued together all aspects of the portraits

(Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

A Day in the Life: A Frame
of the Portraits

In this study, I created three individual portraits and a group portrait. For the

individual portraits, I used a narrative frame called *A Day in the Life* (Wolcott, 2003) in

order to provide systematic comparisons when I created the group portrait. I presented the portraits of the journey to becoming an English teacher through a day spending time with the teachers in a school setting. In the portraits, I presented how I collected the data including the shadowing, interviews, classroom observations, and photo-elicitation. I decided to use this narrative frame because I wanted readers to engage in the scenes and see the methodology that I employed. For the group portrait, I pulled out themes from each portrait and made comparisons in order to maximize an understanding of the journey to becoming an English teacher.

**Framing the Contexts of
the Portraits**

When crafting each portrait, I incorporated multiple types of contexts. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) described the term *context* as a dynamic framework, shaped by the actors, to understand individual actions, feelings, and thoughts. The notion of context presents "descriptive detail, narrative development, and aesthetic expression, as well as interest in recording the self and perspective of the researcher in the setting" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 44).

When I described the context, I took readers to the internal context or physical setting of the schools such as location, community, and classroom. I also included the historical context such as the period when the actors decided to become English teachers. Additionally, I considered the sociocultural context in which the actors grew up such as family and community. Moreover, I took into consideration the researcher's context including my background and perspective that I brought to this study. These multiple contexts were used as a framework to understand the journey to become English teachers.

Presenting Crystallized Portraits

In order to present the concept of crystallization, Ellingson (2009) advocated multiple genres of writings in order to showcase that all knowledge is partial and incomplete. In this study, I attempted to present the crystalized portraits by using different types of writings and styles that reflected the combination of the actors' stories and the researcher's position and self-story. I also used writing styles that allow readers to engage in the portraits with differently zoomed lenses.

In each portrait, I incorporated detailed description, narrative accounts, and research poetry in order to present the complexity of the journey to becoming English teachers. The majority of the portrait sections were given for the actors' stories, and there were sections that I included my stories. In doing so, I did not attempt to override the actors' stories. Indeed, I incorporated the stories to enhance an understanding of the actors since only narrating the actors' stories could not capture the level of complexity as presented through the actors' voices (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

Apart from considering the balance between the actors' and my stories, I also considered the zoom lens of reader engagement (close-up and distance-angle) in order to present the notion of crystallization. For the close-up lens, I decided to write the portraits in present tense, which Maanen (2011) termed "ethnographic present" (p. 65), even though the accounts happened in the past. I also used the first person point of view. The present tense and the first person point of view allow the readers to witness the accounts from a close-up lens. In some parts of the portraits, I drew the readers' attention to distance-angle lens by using past tense and the third-person point of view (Cheney, 2001).

Showing Vs Telling

To suggest techniques for writing up qualitative research, Caulley (2008)

emphasized the standard advice of "show, don't tell" (p. 433). In trying to use this

suggestion, qualitative researchers often findd it is difficult to decipher what is meant by

showing or telling (Caulley, 2008). In his autoethnographic stories, Adams (2006)

explained the criteria that he used to justify which stories to show and which stories to

tell. He said he *tells* certain stories because they happened in the distant past, and they

were "fragmented and emotionally empty" (p. 717). However, he *shows* certain stories

that have occurred recently, as in the past five years, and those stories were "emotionally

rich, evocative, and highly valued events" (p. 717).

Informed by Adams' criteria, I used both showing and telling because the

combination of these two techniques helped me present the complexity of the journey to

become English teachers. "To show, or to tell?" I asked myself; which technique could

capture this complexity and which one could match the actors' voices. In deciding, I

listened to the interviews, reexamined the field notes, and wrote my reflections several

times. This ongoing reflexivity helped me become focused and responsive to the actors'

original meanings of their journeys.

Balancing Art and Science

When I crafted the portraits, I attempted to create a balance between art and

science, and I wanted to present the portraits that were both authentic and evocative

(Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). As I tried to achieve this balance, I felt like I was

walking on a string across a dangerous mountain ravine. While I was walking, I had to

be extremely skillful, careful, and focused. I had to walk slowly and persistently.

Several times, I had to stop, step back, and reconsider my moves before I continued walking.

The portraits consist of several life stories that were carefully chosen as a representation of the themes and were arranged in a storyline. The plot of the portraits was presented chronologically. All characters in the portraits were real. I used the collective nouns (e.g., the principal, friends, or the teacher) to refer to other characters in order to maximize confidentiality while using the actors' actual names. In each portrait, the conversations between the actors and me were either authentic or composite. When I included direct quotes from the interviews or the photo-elicitation technique, I translated these quotes by myself from the Thai language to English. However, when translating, I decided to clean up the actors' oral utterances such as "um" and "ah" in order to avoid unintelligible and syntactical issues. These techniques were employed in order to balance the empirical and the aesthetic features of portraiture methodology.

Chapter Summary

To investigate the journey to becoming a Thai English teacher, I viewed narrative as a source of knowledge (epistemology), looked through the theoretical lens of goodness, and employed portraiture methodology. To collect the data, I used five data elicitation techniques: (a) the life story interviews, (b) shadowing, (c) classroom observations, (d) photo elicitation, and (e) artifact collections. To analyze the data, I looked for emergent themes by using the portraiture method and the Zoom Model in order to capture the complexity of this journey. These themes were used to craft the narrative portraits. In addition, I enhanced the authenticity of this study through the crystallization technique, thick descriptions, the use of explicit voice, and impressionistic records. Readers are

encouraged to make naturalistic generalizations while engaging in this dissertation. Finally, the five-level model of ethics was used to make ethical decisions throughout the study.

In the next chapter, I will present individual teacher portraits reflecting the journeys to becoming Thai English teachers and their classroom teaching practices. I organized the sequence of portraits based on the level of education at which each teacher teaches. Based on this sequence, I will present the portrait of Lertluck Tangpanit, Chutima Chaolilitkul, and Kasemsiri Wattano, respectively. After presenting individual teacher portraits, I will present a collective portrait of becoming a Thai English teacher in which I will establish connections, make the research findings explicit, and situate the findings in the literature of the academic field.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Lertluck's Portrait

The Journey of Deva's Blessings--
Lertluck Tangpanit

Lertluck Tangpanit is a "soon-retiring" English teacher, but her exuberant energy

does not hint that she is retiring. Time has not taken away her adolescent spirit because

she light-heartedly claims, "I spend my life everyday with my students." Lertluck has a

contagious laugh. She has been teaching English for almost 40 years at Benchama

Maharat School. Unlike other teachers at Benchama Maharat who have transferred to

this school, Lertluck had been determined to become a teacher at Benchama Maharat

since she was in middle school. She started working as a teacher there, and she will be

retiring from the same school.

After 40 years of her life at Benchama Maharat, Lertluck currently wears two

hats: she is a member of the school's Board of Administrators, and she is the Director of

the English Program. The English Program is an alternative program that provides

education in English that is based on the curriculum of the Ministry of Education. After

three months of spending time with Lertluck, I saw her eyes communicated a sense of

pride from being a teacher at Benchama Maharat School. "I am proud to tell you that I

passed the selective examination as the first rank of the country to teach at Benchama

Maharat. This is my second home," says Lertluck proudly. The scent of dignity moves gently around us as she tells her stories: (a) The Stories of Becoming an English Teacher; (b) The Stories of Deva's Blessings; and (c) The Stories of Pride.

Back to Benchama Maharat

Benchama Maharat, known as Benchama among the locals, is an extra-large secondary school, based on the school area and the student population. How extra-large is this school? According to Lertluck, there are approximately 4,600 students this year, and there are at least 55 students in a class. As I looked at the databases on the school's website, Benchama Maharat covers an area of 2.4 square kilometers. There are 20 buildings and 147 classrooms in the school. The total number of teachers is 262; 92 are male teachers, and 169 are female teachers. Out of these teachers, there are 54 English Language teachers (19 males and 35 females), and Lertluck is one of them.

The history of Benchama Maharat School traces back to 1897. Benchama Maharat is a historically significant name because *Benchama* means "five" and refers to King Chulalongkorn (Rama V), and *Maharat* means "The Great," which is used to describe royalty. Prince of Pitsanuloke Prachanart decided on this name in remembrance of King Rama V who bestowed education on the Thai people with attempts to expand educational access to his population. In Thailand, Benchama Maharat is the only school with a name that consists of the glorified word--*Maharat*. The Ubon Ratchathani province regards the name as precious and is a source of pride.

Initially, Benchama Maharat was an elementary school (grades 1-3), established in a Buddhist temple, and was open only to monks and male students; therefore, teachers were only male. In 1915, the school was moved to another area because the number of

students increased. Four years later, Benchama Maharat was expanded to include grade 6, but it was still open to only male students; however, female teachers began to teach at the school. As the number of students increased, Benchama Maharat was moved to another area and was opened as a secondary school (including grades 7-12); the middle school was for males only, but the high school was for both genders. The teachers were both male and female. In 1995, Benchama Maharat accepted both male and female students to the middle and high schools.

As I am driving to Benchama Maharat on the summer morning in May, I take the main and familiar street that connects to other cities, and I turn left onto a smaller street leading to the school. A scatter of restaurants, shops, Internet cafes, and tutorial schools remind me of the old days when I was a student at Benchama. Ten years ago, I walked to and from the school using this street to wait for the blue bus back to my hometown. Even though the school is well known, there are no public buses past Benchama.

As I am driving closer to the school, the noise of doors opening indicates the "morning wake up" of several shops. The car moves slowly as I approach the school area. Parents drop their children off at the entrance, causing a little traffic. In front of my eyes, along the school fence, venders are setting up and preparing breakfast to sell to students. The smell of hot soymilk, sticky rice, and grilled pork permeates my car, kicking off my hunger. I take my eyes off the food and look at the school. As an alumnus, I am amazed at how the school has changed.

The fence has moved inside the school's property, allowing the street to become wider to better handle the traffic before and after school hours. The school entrance sign, "Welcome to Benchama Maharat School," is bigger. Billboards of welcoming messages

hang along the fence. One billboard strikes my eyes: "Congratulations to Benchama

Maharat School, which was ranked the best school in the northeastern region and the 13th

rank of Thailand." I say to myself, "Wow, the students' achievements have been

improving. I am proud to have been a student here."

I turn on the blinkers and enter the school property. The security guard opens the

school door, stops the car, salutes, and asks, "How may I help you, sir?"

I roll down the window and reply with a smile, "I have an appointment with Kru

Lertluck in the English Program."

"Okay, you drive along this street and make your first left there. The English

Program building is 400 meters on your left after turning."

"Thank you."

The security guard salutes again as I drive past. The school must have grown

more trees because I feel the breeze blowing across my face as I slowly drive along the

street. Some students are walking with friends under the cover way, heading to their

homeroom classes. Their uniforms look squeaky clean. In Thailand, all students wear

uniforms, from kindergarten to the undergraduate level. The history of uniforms traces

back to the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) who prescribed the first uniform in

order to maintain an equitable education for all. The purpose of uniforms, according to

the King, was for equal treatment of students, regardless of their sociocultural and

socioeconomic statuses. Currently, school uniforms are varied depending on the schools'

policies. Uniforms typically represent the school's identity, values, and beliefs.

In their long khaki shorts and white short-sleeved shirts embroidered with the

school's initials, "B.M.," in navy blue cotton yarn and their full names beneath those

initials and above the right pocket, a group of boys are cheerfully playing soccer. Their light-brown canvas shoes and same-color socks move quickly, chasing a soccer ball. Girls in their short-sleeved white shirts, navy blue knee-length skirts, black canvas shoes, and white socks are chatting under the shades of trees. Their shouting and laughing brighten up the school atmosphere. The scenes of students having fun bring back memories of when I was a high school student. I smile to myself.

When I arrive at the parking lot, I park the car, grab my bag, and walk toward the English Program building where noises of commands and construction attack my ears. The English Program was initially established in 2003 with a mission to provide education in English based on the curriculum of the Ministry of Education. I head to the building, trying to find a staff room. The students look at me and wonder who I am. I smile at them, and they smile back. As I find the staff office, I push the door open, and I see Lertluck sitting at the big table in the reception area.

"*Sawasdee Krub, Kru Lertluck*," I greet and put my hands on my chest as a posture of paying respect. This is a typical way of greeting in Thailand. The word "Sawasdee" means "Hello." The word "Krub" is added to make the greeting polite. The posture of putting one's hands to the chest and bowing the head is called "Wai," which is similar to shaking hands as a greeting in the United States

Lertluck is in her teacher's uniform: a khaki short-sleeved, two-pocket shirt with shoulder loops indicating the level of a special expertise teacher and a khaki knee-length skirt. Above the right shirt pocket, she has a black badge crafted with her full name and above the left shirt pocket, she has a strip of silk embellished with an insignia in different colors. Her short, shoulder-length curly, black hair is dancing around her neck as she

stands up and walks to hug me. It has been 10 years since we have last seen each other. I am really glad that she remembers me.

Lertluck greets me back, "*Sawasdee Kha, Denchai*. Did you have breakfast?"

"No, not yet."

She gives me a pack of sticky rice and grilled pork that she bought in front of the school. We eat at the table and talk about the past. Mostly, she asks me to talk about my experience in the United States. As I tell my stories, Lertluck listens attentively, nods in understanding, and laughs when I tell jokes.

"Let's make ourselves coffee before we talk more," Lertluck proposes the idea after we finish our breakfast. We walk to the little kitchen at the back of the office.

"I am really excited that I will follow you like a shadow today. I am Mr. Shadow Man," I tell Lertluck while I am pouring hot water in a coffee cup, printed with the school's emblem. We both laugh. As we finish making ourselves coffee, we come back to the table. We talk until the bell reverberates throughout the school, signaling the start of the day.

"Let's go to the conference hall. I will show you an activity that I established when I was inaugurated as the director of the English Program."

Educating "Goodness"

Lertluck and I walk out of the office and head to the conference hall that is located on the second floor of the school's cafeteria. On the way to the conference hall, several students greet us as they walk past to the join the morning assembly. While we are walking, Lertluck tells me that she will take me to see a special class session that aims to educate goodness and ethical behaviors based on the Buddhist Dharmic principles to

the EP students. Lertluck feels that EP students do not have a chance to chant Buddhist mantras or practice meditation as the Regular Program students do, so she launched this program to implant morals and ethics in students.

When we arrive at the conference hall, Lertluck opens the room, takes off her shoes, and walks quietly in her bare feet to sit on the floor in front of the room. I walk to sit on the chairs prepared for teachers along the wall. The conference hall is an empty square-shaped room covered with emerald green tiles, waxed and buffed to a shine. The windows are open to allow the breeze to puff the heat away. The conference hall is only an ordinary room, but when a set of altar tables with the Buddhist image decorates in the front, it increases the sacred atmosphere in the room.

The students gradually walk in and sit in rows based on levels of classes and genders. While the students are talking loudly as they are sitting down, Lertluk sits quietly, closes her eyes, and breaths in slowly in order to set an example for the students to be composed in front of the Buddha. The other teachers walk in and help organize students to sit properly in lines. Two teachers close the windows and turn on the air conditioners to decrease the heat from outside. I am glad they do that.

When all students have come in, Lertluck passes around chanting books and asks the students to sit properly, getting ready for the ceremony. *"Panom Mue Khuen Kha,"* she asks the students to press their hands together in the middle of their chests as a sign of respect. A quiet atmosphere suddenly kicks in. Lertluck folds her legs to one side facing the Buddha image and starts chanting the first verse of the mantra, which is written in the Pali and Sansakirt language. The students harmonize the mantra simultaneously. The

mantra melody moves gently in the air and resonates through the conference hall. During the 15 minutes of chanting, I felt goose bumps from time to time listening to the mantra.

After the chanting is over, Lertluck asks the students to get ready for meditation. The noises of students conversing and giggling are tumultuous. "Sit comfortably, close your eyes, relax your mind, and concentrate on your breathing," Lertluck starts speaking in the Thai language in a relaxing tone. When the students still continue talking, Lertluck says, "My dear students, you want to close your eyes now." The noises melt into the air. "As you enter this room, you are in front of the Buddha. If you are not calm and quiet, you are like a swaying needle that is not useful because no one can insert the thread in and use it. If your body is not calm, it is because your mind is not calm. We need to be calm, so we will be strong. When you enter this room next time, you should be calm."

As she talks, the students close their eyes and listen to her. The room is completely quiet at the moment.

Lertluck allows a quiet moment to take over for a while, and then she continues, "Today, I have a story to tell you. This story was written by a monk, who everyone here may know, W.Vajiramedhi. He models good behaviors and ethics. He is also a writer about Dhamma. The story that I am going to read to you is a part of the book called *Nine Stories for Self-Development*. I will read the first story to you."

After a short introduction, Lertluck starts reading the story about the importance of learning, reading, and writing. The students close their eyes, concentrate on their breathing, and listen to the story. Some students move their bodies and open their eyes, but Lertluk continues reading the story in a soothing tone.

At the end of the story, she asks the students to open their eyes. She says that she has a guest speaker who has come to talk to them about the importance of learning, reading, and writing. "Please give a warm welcome to Denchai Prabjandee," says Lertluck.

The students clap their hands and look for me. Since Lertluck does not tell me in advance, I am surprised that she gives me the floor to talk to the students. I find my way to sit close to Lertluck and begin my stories.

I introduce myself to the students in the Thai language. I tell them that I am Denchai Prabjandee, and I am currently working on my doctoral degree in Educational Studies with an emphasis on Bilingual, Multicultural, and ESL Education at the University of Northern Colorado in the United States. The students say, "Whoa!" when they know that I received a scholarship to pursue my degree. I tell them that I am an alumnus of their school and a student of Lertluck. I tell the students that my journey to becoming a doctoral student abroad is not easy. I explain that my journey is one of struggle and constant efforts. "I am a countryman whose family does not know any English, but I am eager for ongoing development. Some ways to accomplish my goals are to read, write, and learn," I conclude.

After I am done, the students clap their hands. I am glad that they listened to me. Lertluck says "thank you" to me and dismisses the ceremony. The students gradually walk out of the conference hall.

"Why didn't you tell me before that I would be speaking to the students?" I ask Lertluck with a smile.

"Well, I wanted you to feel surprised so that when I tell you about my unexpected journey to becoming an English teacher, you will not be so shocked," Lertluck says lightheartedly. We both laugh out loud at the same time and walk back together to the EP building.

Born to Be a Teacher

As we arrive at the office of the EP building, Lertluck invites me to make myself coffee in the small kitchen at the back. When we are in her office, Lertluck organizes the documents at her table, trying to find a space for me. Inside the office, a small file cabinet, a desk, and a computer are randomly placed without considering the art of decoration. I do not get a sense of a person frequently using this room as an office because there are no fancy decorations, no flowers, no lamps, and no paintings. The only thing that tells me that it is her office is her name crafted on a granite plate standing on the table. "I don't like working in here. It's not cozy enough. I like to work at the big table outside in the lobby instead," Lertluck tells me as if she could read my curious mind.

The aroma of coffee richly spreads throughout her office. I sip the coffee to warm up my throat and begin to ask questions about her childhood life.

In a rural area of the province of Ubon Ratchathani, Lertluck was born into a big family of 11 siblings. Of these 11 people, she was "the middle child" who was known as a "weepy girl." Her father was a school principal, and her mother was a housewife. Her grandfather was conferred the title Nobleman by the King to govern a sub-district. Her grandfather donated his personal property to establish a school in her hometown. Everyone in the community knew that her family had contributed education to their town.

"I am proud of my family heritage," Lertluck's eyes glisten as she starts talking about her family.

The first memory she tells about is when she went to school. She remembers going to school with her father because her mother needed to take care of her younger siblings. "I think the Devas blessed me to become a teacher. I was born into a family of teachers. My father was a school principal, so I kind of grew up in a school environment. My father took me to school with him every day, and I enjoyed it. I played with the older kids, and they became my friends. Sometimes, I played a teacher's role with these kids. When I came back home, I would ask my brothers, sisters, and friends who lived nearby to be my students. I taught them how to read, write, and do math. I pretended to spank them like the teachers did. I think the Devas wished me to become a teacher. It is like I was born to be one." Lertluck bursts out laughing.

The Family of Pride

"What was it like growing up in a big family?" I ask, and sip the coffee. The smell of coffee diffuses in the room. Lertluck pauses and thinks. I continue taking notes as Lertluck narrates her stories.

"Well, it was lots of fun! My siblings and I always played together with other friends whose houses were nearby because their parents were friends with my parents. We had a big group of kids that played together. Everyone knew me as the principal's daughter. At that time, it was a privilege to grow up in the family of teachers, and I am proud of that. Everyone respected teachers."

"How about your family's financial status?" I inquire and suddenly realize that I should not have asked this question because it may be too personal.

Lertluck smiles and says, "Well, I don't know about my parents' financial status. All I remember is the fun that I had with friends. But, I remember that I didn't have shoes. My friends and I walked barefoot from place to place. I didn't feel like I lacked anything because everybody was the same. I got my first shoes when I was 10 years old. My father bought them for me as a present for receiving the highest score in my class." Lertluck laughs as she tells the "barefoot story." I am relieved that she did not find this question offensive.

As I listen to the "barefoot story," I am amazed that Lertluck is such an emotionally-strong and healthy child. To me, the thought of not having shoes for 10 years is not pleasant at all.

"Were there any expectations for you to become a teacher?" I inquire.

"Not really. I remember my dad telling my older sister to become a teacher, but he didn't tell me explicitly to become a teacher. I just wanted to be a teacher because I had fun going to school and playing a teacher's role as a child."

"What was the most memorable moment growing up as a child?"

"When I went to the school, I saw my dad's name on the principal board, and it filled me with pride."

What Does "Poor Boy" Mean?

Growing up in a small rural area, Lertluck liked to go outside and play with friends, but she always came back home at 1.00 p.m.; not for food, but for her favorite song--"Poor Boy" by Cliff Richard. "I didn't even know English at that time, but I always waited for Cliff Richard's song on the radio. I didn't know whether the DJ would

play this song, but I always came back and waited for it," Lertluck continues telling her stories.

When the DJ turned the song on the radio, she would clap her hands to welcome her favorite singer and put her ears close to the radio:

> *It won't work, poor boy, don't you try again.*
> *Fate took away your love, and you can't win.*
> *You can sing the blues all to yourself.*
> *But while you're singing,*
> *She's with someone else, poor boy.*
> *While you're singing, she's with someone else.*

Lertluck, as a child, listened attentively and tried to sing along. She hummed and mumbled nonsensically as if she could understand the lyrics. When she heard the word "poor boy," she would shout it out as loudly as she possibly could.

"*Poor boy,*" she sang and then laughed.

Lertluck did not know what "poor boy" meant, but she hummed along anyway. "I had a desire to learn this song; I wanted to know the meaning of it. When I saw my brothers and sisters go to school, I wanted to go with them. I wanted to learn English and wondered when I would learn it," Lertluck explains.

Lertluck started learning English when she was in fifth grade and approximately 11 years old. "I started learning the ABCs and phrases such as, 'this is a chair,' and 'this is a book.' I waited patiently to learn the words 'poor boy'," says Lertluck. "When I was in middle school, I had the chance to use a dictionary for the first time in the library. That was the first time that I knew that 'poor boy' was actually two words instead of one." Lertluck and I burst out laughing.

Poor Lertluck. She made me want to hear the song.

Devas Bless to Have Education

Unlike other children in the community who started school in first grade, Lertluck began her educational journey at the kindergarten level. "I am lucky that the Devas blessed the most valuable wish for me--an education. I could not believe that a 'country girl' like me would have a chance to start school at the early level of kindergarten. I am thankful for the Devas."

Lertluck continues her stories, "I love school. It is the reason that I wake up every morning. My siblings and I would walk to school together. On the way to school, I would meet with my best friend, and we would walk to school together."

Lertluck was a "front-row" student who always paid attention in class, loved learning, and enjoyed reading. Her passion for reading came from her close friend, whose mother was a librarian. "During the summer, I liked to go to my friend's house because her mom had so many books. I think I discovered my love for reading because of my best friend's mom. I am thankful for meeting with my best friends. That is because of the Devas who have been helping me."

After kindergarten, Lertluck moved to an elementary school close to the district center. At this school, she showed her academic excellence, which brought pride to her family, especially her father. After elementary school, Lertluck and her close friend decided to go to "the city" to further their education. In order to further their study, Lertluck and her friend had to take a selective examination. Both of them passed the selective examination and gained admission to study at Narinukun School, the most famous all-girls school in Ubon Ratchathani Province. At this school, the Devas inspired Lertluck to become a teacher--a teacher at Benchama Maharat.

Letter Carrier to Benchama Maharat

At the time when Lerluck was in ninth grade and the telephone had not yet been available in Thailand, a teacher asked Lertluck and another two students to carry a letter to her husband, "Can you take this letter to my husband at Benchama Maharat? Walk along this street, and you will see a school with the most beautiful building. Don't goof around. If you are done, come back to school immediately, okay?"

Lertluck and her friends carried the letter tightly and walked along the street together. The students were excited to go to Benchama Maharat School, which was an all-boys school at that time. The street took them to the center of a park. Along the street, flowers brightened up the park, and their aroma disseminated throughout the air, increasing the excitement as they enjoyed the park view. Benchama Maharat School came into view off in the distance. Lertluck was stunned by the magnificence of the school. Lerltuck and her friends ran to the school, and they found themselves standing in front of the most beautiful building in the province.

Benchama Maharat was a chain of three connected two-story buildings. The roof was gable, spread over with red tiles. The entire building, ceiling, and walls were made of hardwood, which were perfectly joined, using no nails. Every door and window was made of golden teak. The door and window frames were painted in dark auburn. The school building was painted a reddish-yellow, and the ceiling was tinged with white. Two gigantic tanks, made to reserve the water from the rain for the students, sat outside. On all sides of the school, cement pavement was decorated by using colorful flowers and ornamental trees. That was the most meticulously constructed building that she had seen in her life.

Lertluck found herself standing closer to the school building. The wood showed embellishments and communicated the magnificence of Benchama Maharat. The beauty and the dignity of the school made her forget why she had come. As she realized her purpose, Lertluck walked up the stairs heading to the teachers' office. On the way to the teachers' office, Lertluck met several teachers. They asked her nicely why she was there. When she saw her teacher's husband, she dropped off the letter and immediately went back to school. "I was impressed by the school and the teachers there. They were all nice and admirable. I wanted to work in a nice environment. I felt that being a teacher at Benchama would be an honor," says Lertluck. Because of her impression of Benchama Maharat, Lertluck was determined to become a teacher – a Benchama Maharat teacher.

Going to the Teacher's College

Lertluck came back to the school and consulted with her teacher. "I want to teach at Benchama Maharat. What should I study?"

The teacher suggested that she go to "The Teacher's College" in her hometown, currently known as Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University. At that time, the Teacher's College offered a certificate of education degree, a two-year program equivalent to the high school level. With this degree, the students could take the selective examination to become a teacher.

"At first, I was not sure whether I would study there or not. But my close friend, who walked to school with me when we were in elementary school, decided to go there, so I made a decision to study at the Teacher's College as well."

Another reason that Lertluck decided to go to the Teacher's College was that it would take only two years to complete the program. Because her family had a limited

financial status, Lertluck wanted to help provide money for her family to take care of her younger siblings. As was the family obligation, she was required to take care of two of her younger siblings after graduation. Lertluck's experience of growing up in a school environment, the inspiration of Benchama Maharat School, the comfort of having close friends at the same college, and her family's limited finances pushed her to pursue a degree to become a teacher.

Devas' Blessing--More Education

In the second year at the Teacher's College, Lertluck completed her teaching practicum at a school. She had a positive teaching experience because she had friends who always did activities with her. In the morning, they went jogging, and they cooked together in the evening. It was a community of students learning to become teachers.

During the teaching practicum at this school, Lerltuck was determined to pursue a bachelor's degree in Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand. "At that time, after I graduated from the Teacher's College, I could take a selective examination to become a teacher. However, my supervising teacher encouraged me to pursue a bachelor's degree. I don't really remember the details, but I think she said something very special to me because she saw my potential. I remember that I had a strong determination to continue my education. I am thankful for the Devas to inspire me to continue my education," says Lertluck with a smile.

Praying to Get into College

Even though Lertluck was determined to pursue a bachelor's degree, she wondered how a "country girl" could compete with other students in the selective examination. "I turned to the Devas who had been helping me," says Lertluck. Every

night before she went to bed, she chanted the mantra to invite all the Devas to listen to her wishes. Lertluck would close her eyes and concentrate. When she started the chanting, the mantra was slow, melodious, and yet sacred.

> *May I invite the Devas who dwell either at places of sensuality or physicality?*
> *May I invite the Devas who dwell either at celestial castles or top of the mountains?*

Lertluck raises her voice at the end of each verse.

> *May I invite the Devas who dwell either in the sky, the island, or the kingdom?*
> *May I invite the Devas who dwell either at home or other residences?*
> *May I invite the Devas who dwell either at a dense jungle, field, or farm?*
> *May I invite the Giants, Grandhavas, and Naga*
> *To assemble together and listen to my wishes?*
> (The mantra is in Pali and Sansakrit. It is translated into the Thai language. In this passage, I translated the mantra by myself from the Thai language to English.)

The ending is fulfilled. The final word gradually fades away.

Lertluck chanted the mantra of the Devas' invitation every night before she went to bed and wished that she would pass the exam to gain admittance to the College of Education, Srinakharinwirot University, the first and the best teacher college in Thailand at the time. Out of 120 available seats, Lertluck passed the examination with the third highest score, which brought pride to her family. "If the Devas did not bless me luck, I would not have been able to earn a bachelor's degree, even though I passed the examination because my brother, who supported me financially, almost lost his job. I think the Devas listened to my wishes because of my determination to pray every night."

Surviving College Life

After Lertluck gained admission into the College of Education, she enjoyed her life there. During the first two years, she studied general classes such as mathematics,

philosophy, psychology, and pedagogy. She met a group of friends with whom she enjoyed hanging out. Even today, Lertluck continues to be in touch with those people.

Financially, Lertluck received a monthly allowance, 600 baht (approximately 20 dollars) from her older brother. Since there were many siblings in her family, it was the family obligation that each older sibling had to take care of two younger siblings financially. This 600 baht was very minimal, but Lertluck was not an extravagant person; she spent this money on food and necessary expenses only. Lertluck never spent this money on new clothes. She had five student uniforms and three casual outfits that she got for free from several exhibitions. She wore her uniform to school the whole day and took it off at night to wear the casual ones. With these clothes, she survived college life until she had to go camping for five days. Lertluck did not have enough outfits; she only had three. She had to borrow her friend's clothes!

"Thinking back, I was very impoverished. I don't want my children to live like that," Lertluck wipes her eyes. Then, she pauses to swallow the bitterness of her past. I stay quiet to make sure that she is okay to continue. The silence takes over the conversation for a few seconds. Lertluck clears her throat before continuing her stories.

In the fourth year of college, Lertluck had a chance to teach English at a student's house. She earned some money to pay for her clothes and other expenses. Her life became better after she got a job. "I think the Devas blessed me with good luck after they saw me suffer financially," Lertluck concludes.

When Lertluck shared this story with me, I could relate to her. When I studied during my bachelor's degree, I also earned the money from being a tutor. I applied to teach at several tutorial schools in order to support myself financially.

Deciding on a Major

On the day when the results of the selective examination were announced, Lertluck's life was changed. Lertluck and her friends were sitting at a granite table under the shade of trees. They were waiting for the secretary of the department to put the announcement on the board (in this context, the secretary is the one who does management and clerical work in the department).

"Will we pass the exam, guys?" Lertluck asked. She felt the nerves eating her up.

"We will all pass," her friends assured her.

"There's the secretary!"

Lertluk and the others ran to the announcement board. Several students crowded around the board waiting for the secretary to put up the announcement. The secretary slowly stapled a piece of paper to the board. After she was finished, the crowd immediately rushed in to look at the announcement.

"Do you guys see my name?" Lertluck could not see anything because the crowd blocked her.

"Wait a minute. I am trying to look at . . . "

"Do you guys see my name?" asked Lertluck again.

A scream of pleasure grabbed everybody's attention. Three of Lertluck's friends passed the examination to major in English.

"Congratulations, guys!" Lertlcuk was happy for her friends.

"Come here. You can look for yourself," said her friend.

Lertluck broke through the crowd. She tried to find her name from the top to the bottom. She pointed to the lists and moved her fingers down. Her heart beat faster. The sound of pleasure from other students was still around.

Lertluck moved her fingers up and down. She moved her fingers up and down *again*. Her name was not there on the list of English majors.

Because of That Letter

After failing the selective examination, Lertluck lost her self-confidence. She decided to study geography for her major. She chose geography because it was the minor of her brother-in-law. In the first semester, Lertluck did not enjoy geography, so she went back home to recharge her battery with the Devas.

One day, Lertluck walked around her community. She ran into a friend with whom she used to play at school. This man was a recent doctoral graduate who came back home before starting a job. He was an alumnus at the College of Education, Srinakharinwirot University. They asked about each other's well-being. After that, the man asked, "What are you studying now?"

"Geography," answered Lertluck.

"Why geography?"

"I wanted to major in English, but I didn't pass the selective exam."

"Have you written a letter of request to change your major?"

"No. Why?"

"Well, you can write a letter to the dean and attach your English grades to request the consideration to change your major," he explained.

"I don't know how to write a letter."

"You have no other choice. That is your only chance."

Lertluck decided to write a letter of request to the dean. A week later, she received a reply, allowing her to major in English. "I am thankful for my friend. Without him, I would not be the same Lertluck today. I think it was my destiny to major in English. The Devas blessed me again," she concludes.

On Becoming an English Teacher

At home, Lertluck and her sisters got together and talked about her future. Lertluck had just graduated with her bachelor's degree, and she wanted to become a teacher in her hometown, Ubon Ratchathani.

Lertluck had a desire to be a teacher at a very young age because of the collective experiences growing up in the school environment. Her sister suggested that she take the selective examination at a newly opened school close to her house. However, Lertluck wanted to be a teacher at Benchama Maharat School, the school that impressed her when she was a letter carrier during middle school.

"Are you sure you want to teach at Benchama Maharat? It is very difficult to pass the examination." Her sisters questioned Lertluck's determination.

Lertluck answered, "I am not sure that I will pass the examination, but it is my dream to teach at Benchama Maharat."

"How are you going to compete with others? If you take the exam at another school, I believe you will pass the exam," her sister insisted.

"It's worth a try. I don't know how I will compete with others. But, tomorrow, I will go to the temple to ask for blessings," said Lertluck.

At Wat Mahawanaram, a well-known sacred temple in Ubon Ratchathani, Lertluck sat with legs folded back to one side inside the monastery. Her face looked up to the Buddha image. She put her hands at her chest in a sign of salute and prayed for her wish to the Devas--to pass the selective examination at Benchama Maharat School. Lertluck vowed, "If I pass the examination, I will walk from my home to the school for 20 days to show my sacrifice."

**First Day of School: A Marathon
of Walking**

Lertluck passed the selective examination in the first rank. "I was very proud of myself," she says. After getting into Benchama Maharat, Lertluck had to stay true to the vow that she promised to the Devas--she would walk from her home to the school for 20 days. Every morning, Lertluck got up eagerly to get ready to walk. Before walking, she would go to the prayer room in her house to inform the Devas that she would be walking to school that day.

As Lertluck walked, she chanted the mantra silently. She was determined to fulfill her vow to the Devas. That first morning, she walked 20 kilometers. On the way to school, several shops started to open. Lertluck walked persistently. She sometimes sipped water to soothe her throat. As she arrived at the school, she sat under a giant banyan tree, which represented the school's identity. "I was connected to the tree in front of the school. On each of the 20 days of walking, I stopped there to take some rest before going to my office. After 20 days, I told the Devas that I had completed the walking in order to fulfill my vow," Lertluck said.

"Can you show me the tree?" I ask.

"Sure. Let's walk out of the office."

Lertluck and I walk out of the office. Off in the distance, I see the banyan tree with a trunk so large that 10 people could hug around it. The tree spreads its branches and limbs to give shade to the school. I can see why this tree is meaningful to Lertluck. When I was a student at Benchama Maharat, I walked past this tree for three years, but I did not know how meaningful it was to Lertluck. We look at the tree from the distance for a while and go back into the office. Lertluck proposes an idea to have lunch before she teaches a class in the afternoon, and I agree with her.

On Becoming a Special Expertise Teacher

The school's cafeteria is only a two-minute walk from the English Program building. Lertluck and I walk to the cafeteria. When we arrive, there are several students joyously eating lunch. The aroma of food stimulates my hunger. I walk around the cafeteria, find myself the food, and come back to the teachers' eating lounge. Lertluck is waiting for me inside the lounge. "What do you have?" she asks. I tell her that I have fried rice with fried chicken. She tells me that she has spicy papaya salad, fried chicken, and sticky rice.

"That sounds yummy!" I exclaim.

While we are eating, I initiate a conversation by asking how she became a special expertise teacher. Lertluck smiles and says, "You have no idea how vulnerable I was before I became a special expertise teacher."

I do not want to ruin the atmosphere of our pleasant lunch, so I apologize, "I am sorry. We can talk about this after we finish our lunch."

Lertluck smiles again and ensures me, "That's okay, Denchai. There is no better time to talk about vulnerability than during meals." We both laugh out loud, and Lertluck continues telling her story.

Lertluck did not want to request an academic standing as a "special expertise teacher" because she had a strong bias towards the process it would take to advance to this position. In order to become a special expertise teacher, she said she had to compile "tons of documents" about her teaching, such as lesson plans, research, achievements, and community service. Lertluck did not believe that this type of evaluation would help her become a better teacher. "I had seen so many teachers that did not do their jobs and took up their class time to assemble these documents. I also witnessed several teachers hire others to 'make-up' these documents. So, I did not believe in this process." As a result of her bias, Lertluck had been avoiding compiling the documents.

When most of her colleagues received the academic standing of special expertise teachers, Lertluck began to think about applying for the position. Several of her colleagues encouraged her to request the position because she deserved to be promoted. Given her negative attitudes and resistance towards this evaluation, Lertluck did not enjoy the process at all. "It was the most vulnerable time of my life as a teacher," she concludes. Lertluck finally compiled the documents and passed the evaluation with minor revisions. The revision was minor, but she pushed away this work until the last minute because she did not want to pick it up and work on it again. Lertluck thought about taking a vacation with her family as a reward for finishing the revision. "Thinking about a vacation with my family and my sons helped me get through this process," Lertluck lightheartedly says.

We continue talking about several things about her teacher's life at Benchama Maharat until we hear the bell ring as a sign to start a new class. "I have to teach next class. Do you want to come with me?" Lertluck asks.

"Definitely. I am your shadow today, and I will follow you wherever you go." Both of us chuckle, and walk back to the office. Lertluck grabs her teaching materials, and I pack my bag. We walk together to her classroom.

A Teacher in a Classroom

As Lertluck pushes the door open, she leads me to the classroom at the end of the EP building. We walk past several classrooms. Each classroom is labeled by the name of the country that uses English as the national language such as England, USA, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, and others.

On the way to the class, Lertluck says hello to the students from time to time when they greet her. She also gives me the background of this class. This class is called ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) studies for Mattayomsuksa 2 (eighth grade). It is not an English class; rather it is classified as a social studies class. Lertluck was assigned to teach this class because out of the other teachers, she is the most fluent in English. The ASEAN studies class is an additional subject that was implemented this year. At this time, the ASEAN countries (Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia, Myanmar, Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, and Philippines) launched a new cooperation with different sectors. This class is an impetus to catch up with the education trend in Thailand and to educate the students to become aware of the importance of ASEAN.

When Lertluck and I walk in, the classroom is chaotic. The students are shouting, talking, doing homework, and kicking a soccer ball. One of the students shouts in the Thai language, "Kru Lertluck has arrived!" The students stop all activities and quickly take their seats. Unlike other classrooms in the school, the EP classroom has air-conditioning. All windows are closed to maintain the cool temperature. The students sit in four rows of two tables put together. They sit based on their preferences. Some students walk into the class with sweat all over their bodies. They probably were playing soccer outside. I find myself an empty seat at the back of the classroom.

When all students have arrived, the head student, who was selected by the students themselves, leads everyone to stand up and greet Lertluck, saying "hi" and paying respect.

Lertluck asks the students to sit down. "Do we have everyone today?" She checks the students' names on her attendance sheet. The head student reports the names of students who are absent. I cannot hear the conversation clearly, so I move closer until I can hear well.

"Last Friday, we went to Bangkok. Did you have a good time?" Lertluck uses English to start off the class.

"Yes!" the students enthusiastically answer in English.

"What did we do?" asks Lertluck.

Nobody answers, so she rewords the question, "Can one of you tell me what you did in Bangkok?

A student raises her hand and tells the class in English that they visited a school, museums, a temple, and a hospital and went on a river tour. After her lengthy response in English, the rest of the class gives her a round of applause as a compliment.

"Okay, very good," Lertluck compliments. "How about the Friday before last Friday? What did we do?"

All students answer all together, "We learned about ASEAN."

"What did you learn about ASEAN?" persists Lertluck.

"The names of the 10 ASEAN countries," the students shout out. Then, Lertluck asks for the 10 names, and the students call out the answers.

"What is the official name of Thailand?" Lertluck further asks.

"The Kingdom of Thailand," the students respond. Lertluck then asks for the official names of the other countries. The students can answer all of them correctly.

Lertluck continues, "We also talked about the flags. What flag is this?" She shows the picture of a flag.

The students answer, "Singapore." Then, she shows another flag, and the students say "Cambodia."

When she shows the flag of Malaysia, the students do not pronounce the word "Malaysia" correctly, so Lertluck corrects them, "Say, *Malaysia*." The students follow her. "Malaysia!"

"What about this one?" she continues.

"Laos" the students reply.

When all of the flags are reviewed, she continues, "And your homework last time, what was it?"

"Drawing the flags of the 10 countries," say the students.

"Yes, everybody hand in your notebook at the end of the class."

Lertluck reviews again, "Last time, we talked about the establishment of ASEAN." She writes down the word "establishment" on the white board. "What does establishment mean?" she continues in English. The students shout the answer in the Thai language. "English, please," she says. A quiet moment takes over the class as Lertluck gives the students ample time to answer her question.

Finally, a student reluctantly answers, "Establishment means something like creation?"

"Yes, thanks for answering." Lertluck continues, "ASEAN was established in 1967. How many countries initially joined the ASEAN?"

The students shout the answer, "Five!"

Lertluck continues, "Today, we are going to talk about ASEAN's emblem. What is an emblem?" she asked the students. Nobody answers her question, so she shows a picture and says in English, "This is ASEAN emblem. Write down the word 'emblem' in your notebook." Then she writes the definition of this word in English on the board. The students copy it down in their notebooks. *An emblem is a picture of an object, which is used to represent a particular person, group, or idea.*

As Lertluck writes the definition on the board, she asks for the meaning of the word 'object' and 'represent.' The students know the word 'object,' but they do not know the word 'represent,' so she gives an example by using English. "If I were Ms. Thailand in a beauty contest, I would say 'I am representing Thailand.'" The students

giggle as Lertluck acts out the scenario. They shout out the meaning of the word

"represent" in the Thai language.

After Lertluck makes sure that the students learn necessary vocabulary, she shows

the picture of the ASEAN emblem and asks, "How many colors are there?"

"Four" the students answer.

"What are they?"

"Blue, red, yellow, and white."

"Do you think there are underlying meanings in each color?" asks Lertluck in

English. A quiet moment takes over the class again. Lertluck repeats her question, "Do

you think there are underlying meanings in each color?" Nobody answers.

The students seem to not understand the question, so she translates the question

into the Thai language. "Yes!" the students answer.

"Today, we are going to talk about the meaning of the color. It's time to take

notes again." Lertluck writes on the whiteboard: *The emblem represents a stable,*

peaceful, united, and dynamic ASEAN.

While Lertluck is writing this sentence, she simultaneously explains the meanings

of each difficult word in English, including stable, peaceful, united, and dynamic. "How

about the colors of the emblem: blue, red, yellow, and white? What do you think blue

means?" she encourages the students to guess.

A boy answers in English, "White means purity; blue means peace; and red means

courage" The rest of the class claps their hands.

"Good job," Lertluck compliments and asks, "How about yellow?"

The students try to guess the meaning and shout out the answer in the Thai

language, "Is it progress? Is it stability?"

Lertluck says no. Then, she writes several blanks to play the hangman game. The

students guess the letters until they get it right. Yellow means prosperity. The students

do not know the meaning of prosperity, so Lertluck tells the students the meaning in the

Thai language. After that, Lertluck writes down the meaning of each color on the board.

Blue: peace, stability.
Red: bravery, courage.
Yellow: prosperity.
White: purity.

"These words are going to appear in the ASEAN song that we will learn next

class. What is the name of the ASEAN song?" inquires Lertluck.

A student answers, "Something . . . way? I don't remember."

"Yes, it's called ASEAN Way. We're going to sing this song next time. Oh, I

forgot that the circle in the picture means together. The color yellow here represents rice

stalk." Lertluck explains the word "stalk" in Thai.

"Why stalk?" a girl questions.

"All of us ASEAN countries have something in common: we all eat rice, and we

all grow rice."

After introducing the meaning of each color, Lertluck assigns the students to draw

a picture of the ASEAN emblem and color it. She passes around colors to the students

and walks around to monitor them. When the bell rings as sign of class ending, Lertluck

asks for the colors back. "Finish your work and turn in today, okay? Have a good

weekend." She then dismisses the class. The head student asks everyone to stand up and

say thank you to Lertluck. I walk to the front of the class and help Lertluck carry her teaching materials back to the EP office.

Talking After Class

"Would you like another coffee?" Lertluck asks me when we arrive at the office.

"I am good. Thanks."

Lertluck goes into the kitchen to make herself coffee. I unpack my bag and prepare for the interview, taking out my notebook and a tape recorder. I walk to the kitchen to get a glass of water. "I have questions about your teaching. Can we talk about them?" I ask.

"Sure. We can talk in my office," Lertluck affirms.

Lertluck and I walk into the office together. We take our seats. I start the recording and ask the question, "How did the class go?"

"Well, I think it went well, but at the end of the class, I should have had time to conclude and do wrap-up activities. I felt like I did not have time to do wrap-up activities. I spent a lot of time warming up. What do you think about my teaching?"

"I think you did a good job. I love that you incorporate the English language into your teaching and I love that you write on the board when there are difficult words. I also love how you teach vocabulary to the students by giving contemporary examples that are relevant to then."

"Thank you. That's very nice to hear."

"How would you evaluate your teaching ability?" I change the topic.

Lertluck thinks and responds, "It depends on situation and my work. My teaching ability is like a momentum swaying from good to bad. When I was a secretary at the

English Resource and Instruction Center, I think I possessed high-level of teaching abilities because I received knowledge from many teacher-training workshops and I was required to distribute this knowledge to other teachers. Now, because I invest my energy into being the EP director, I tend to not use my teaching abilities to their fullest while teaching English. What I taught last class came from my collective experiences." Unlike the traditional notion of a secretary, Lertluck's job in this context was not about doing clerical work. As a secretary, she was a representative of her school who, together with the director, was assigned to run a center for English teacher professional development. It was an administrative position, rather than a support.

"That's very interesting." I pause before I continue asking more questions, "How would you describe yourself as a teacher?"

"I am a learning teacher. I see myself learning English with my students all the time. Even though I am 95% confident that I can use English, I still find myself learning it. I am also a kindhearted teacher, who wants to teach ethics and morals in English class. I am not afraid to make mistakes and I admit to my students that I do make mistakes. I feel that this helps my students take risks and learn English better because they are not afraid of making mistakes."

"How do you prepare your class?"

"I often have a long-range plan, weekly plan, and a lesson plan. First, I look at the whole picture of the class and try to break it up into manageable topics. For example, in the ASEAN Studies class, I had no idea what to teach because it was not an English class, so I talked to an experienced teacher. He gave me a book and I broke it into topics. Second, for each topic, I have my lesson plans."

"How do you plan a lesson?"

"I typically have warm-up activities such as games and songs. These warm-up activities lead to the content. In theory, I always plan to have a wrap-up activity as well, but currently I don't have time to conclude. I always run out of time," Lertluck blurts out laughing.

"How do you treat your students during class time?"

"I treat them equally. I respect their decisions and I hope that they respect me back as well." Lertluck's eyes glisten when she talks about her students.

"What are you goals for teaching English?"

"Well, I want my students to become global citizens who are honest and punctual. When I went to New Zealand, I left my cell phone at a restroom. Three days after that, my cell phone was still there. I was really impressed. I don't understand why Thai people think of those who are honest and punctual as 'super good' people. They are not 'super good' people; they are just global citizens. I also want my students to communicate fluently and accurately in English." As I listen to her response about global citizenship, I am amazed at her educational vision. I agree with Lertluck that Thai people think of punctuality as a "good person's" characteristic, but I think normal people should possess this trait.

"Well, thank you very much for your information about your classroom," I conclude. "Do you have photos with you today? Maybe you can show me some of them?"

"I have my photos in the car. Let's look at them," invites Lertluck.

Lertluck and I walk to her car together. When she opens the car trunk, I yell in surprise, "Wow!" In front of my eyes, four baskets of photo albums are sitting there.

On "Not Becoming" a University Teacher

Lertluck and I carry all four baskets of photos into the office. We put the four baskets down. "Do we have time to talk about these photos?" I am worried.

"No worries, Denchai. I chose the most relevant photos from home. We do not need to go over all of these photos. When you are available, you can come in and look through these photos. I am happy to answer any questions you may have," Lertluck says with a smile. I am so relieved. As we are ready, Lertluck shows her selected photos and tells the stories.

Lertluck shows me many photos that reflect her journey to becoming an English teacher. Most of them are about her life at Benchama Maharat School. Since her very first day at Benchama Maharat, Lertluck has been actively participating in school academic and extra-curricular activities such as teacher professional development, training students for English competitions, and cheerleading and being athletic at teacher sport days. "I never refuse to join these activities," she adds. With this active cooperation, Lertluck has received many opportunities to be the leader of school projects.

Many of the photos are about teacher-training workshops that she had attended. Lertluck had been the school representative to participate in workshops, and she had to disseminate this knowledge to other teachers. It seemed to me that she had a lot of knowledge. I wonder why she did not become a university teacher, so I ask, "Why don't you become a university teacher?"

Lertluck smiles and answers, "The Devas did not bless me to be one. You know, I passed a selective written examination, but I failed the interview. I failed because I did not wear 'professional clothing.' I accidentally lost my apartment key on the interview date, so I had to go to the interview with unprofessional clothing. Even though I performed well, I did not get a job. I could have lost my key any day, but I lost it on the interview date! It might be the Devas wanted me to stay at Benchama Maharat School."

Reasons to Stay in the Profession

I wondered, after 40 years of teaching, why has Lertluck stayed in the teaching profession? "Are you bored with teaching?" I ask curiously.

"There are definitely some moments that I feel bored, but there are also moments that I enjoy myself. I enjoy every minutes that I am with my students and my fellow teachers. I feel like I am a valuable person when everyone needs me. That's the reason why I wake up every morning. When I am bored, I always revisit those collective experiences. I revisit my determination to become a teacher at Benchama Maharat. I revisit the moment that I passed the selective examination. I revisit the love and laughter from students and parents. Most importantly, I am fulfilled when I see my students, like you, visit me, and I learn about how successful you are."

As I listen to her stories, my heart is fulfilled. The silence takes over our conversation. I am glad I came back in time before Lertluck retired.

Washing Hands in the Golden Bowl

The afternoon of a hot and sunny day flows over gradually. Our conversation is almost over as well. When Lertluck mentions her retirement, I ask her what she wants to do before she is retired.

"I want to wash my hands in the golden bowl," and she smiles at the thought of this metaphorical action. "My golden bowl is Benchama Maharat, which I wake up for every morning so that I can see my students. I want to teach my students until the last possible minute." Lertluck's eyes are glowing when she talks about the students. "I want to say thank you for choosing me to participate in your research. It is the perfect time to revisit my journey to becoming an English teacher before I retired. I am fulfilled and thankful for this experience." Lertluck's eyes are flooded with pleasure.

I am speechless to hear her "thank you." I am the person who should have said this words. As I learn about her journey to become an English teacher, I am thankful that I was Lertluck's student.

The sun moves slowly to the west, indicating the sign of school ending. Lertluck and I walk to the car together. "Thank you for having me. I really enjoy spending time with you. I will print your stories and give them to you on your retirement day, as a gift from a former student."

"Good luck with your study, and please come back to help our country."

We hug each other. I drive back home feeling grateful. Through the mirror of my car, I see Lerluck smile and wave goodbye.

Chutima's Portrait

The Journey of Mom's Model--
Chutima Chaolilitkul

You will never hear any complaints about Chutima Chaolilitkul's unprofessional mannerisms. After three months of collecting data, I am convinced that Chutima never uses bad language, and she never behaved inappropriately throughout her life. She is mannerly and verbally refined. The students refer to Chutima as "the most polite and

kindhearted teacher" that they have ever seen. Chutima is calmly beautiful. When she is in motion, she looks calm and majestic. She always wears a Thai silk blouse with a dark knee-length skirt. Her Louis Viton handbag shows her elegant side. From the top of her hair to her feet, Chutima's presence indicates her level of glory and dignity.

Chutima started teaching at Benchama Maharat in 1974. Before she had transferred to Benchama, Chutima worked at three different schools, one elementary and two secondary schools. Chutima says, "I have to move to different schools because my husband is a sheriff, and he was transferred to different places. As a wife, I have to take care of my family." Chutima has two years left before she will be retired. With this little time, she wants to spend every minute with her students. Unlike other soon-to-be-retired teachers, Chutima never counts down to her final day at the school. "I only have two years before I will be retired. I have very little time, so I will spend the rest of this precious time with my students," says Chutima.

In reflecting on her journey to becoming an English teacher, Chutima does not tell me explicitly why she decided to become a teacher. Instead, she shows me through her actions, gestures, and eyes, especially when she is with her students. That is why I started "the shadow day" at her classroom. The night before I started collecting the data, I had scheduled an appointment with Chutima to meet her at the classroom.

In the Classroom--My Passion

Chutima arrives at the classroom early, so she waits for the students at the teacher's table inside the room. As I walk into the classroom, I greet her, "*Sawassdee Krub, Kru Chutima!*"

Chutima smiles and greets me back and says, "I am waiting for the students. They are coming from a social studies class. They are typically 10 minutes late." It is typical for students at Benchama Maharat to move from class to class because of the limited number of classrooms.

The classroom is medium sized, located on the second floor at the corner of the building, close to the stairs. There are windows alongside the wall. The windows are closed in order to turn on air conditioners. The white board is at the front of the room. There are four rows of desks. Each row consists of two desks facing the whiteboard.

"Can you tell me about this class?" I inquire in the Thai language.

Chutima answers, "This is an additional English class for 10th graders called 'Reading for Life.' Today is the third time that I have met this group of students. In today's lesson, I am going to talk about how to use a dictionary. The students . . ."

The conversation suddenly ends when we hear a group of students approaching. Their laughing and talking arrive at the class before their bodies. When the students walk into the class, they have sweat on their faces and their student uniforms. The weather outside must be really hot. The students greet Chutima, "*Sawasdee Krub! Sawassdee Kha!*" They put their hands together in the middle of their chests and bow their heads as a sign of respect. After they greet Chutima, they walk to their desks and get ready, putting down backpacks, piles of books, and water bottles.

Chutima allows the students to take some time to rest after walking from a different building. "Take a deep breath. The weather outside is hot, huh?"

The students reply, "Yes, Teacher."

Chutima continues speaking in Thai, "My dear students, before we start, can you check your student uniforms to make sure they do not violate the school's dress code?" The boys adjust their uniforms, tucking in their short-sleeved white shirts in their khaki knee-length shorts and putting on their brown canvas shoes. The girls tuck in their short-sleeved white shirts in their navy blue knee-length skirts. They also check their hair to make sure it is bound tightly to the back.

When the students are ready, Chutima lightheartedly asks the head of the students using English, "Where is the student head? Do you forget to do your job?"

The head of the students smiles and says in English, "Students, stand up please." All students stand up and say simultaneously, "Good morning teacher. How are you today?"

Chutima replies, "Good morning, class. I am fine. Thank you. And you?"

All voices reply, "Very well. Thank you."

Chutima continues, "Sit down."

The students sit down and get ready. When the students are ready, Chutima introduces me to the whole class in the Thai language, "Today we have a guest to look at how you learn English. Why don't you introduce yourself?"

I walk to the front of the class and introduce myself in the Thai language, "Hi everyone, my name is Denchai . . ."

Chutima interrupts in English, "Can you speak English with these students?" The students buzz to each other--groaning.

I smile and start using English, "Hi everyone, my name is Denchai Prabjandee," I pause and continue. trying to speak clearly and slowly. "I am a doctoral student in

Educational Studies at the University of Northern Colorado in the United States." The

students cry out in surprise. I continue, "I come here today because I want to see the

current circumstances of English classrooms." The students show me a frown of

confusion. I thought to myself, I should not have said the word "circumstance!" I try

again, "I come here to see how you learn English." The students nod as a sign of

understanding. "Ten years ago, I was a student at Benchama, learning English with Kru

Chutima. You guys lucked out to have her as an English teacher because she is a great

teacher. Okay, nice to meet you all." The students clap their hands after I am finished.

Chutima walks to the front and asks in the Thai language, "Does anybody have

questions for Denchai?" The students ask me several questions: What is Colorado like?

What is it like to live there? Who supports me financially? What do I like about

studying abroad? When will I graduate? I answer these questions in the Thai language.

When there are no more questions, I walk to the back of the class and start observing.

Chutima takes out the score report. She smiles and then tells the students their

last quiz scores using English, "Okay, the total score is 15. Number 1, 9; Number 2,

10. . . ." Chutima uses the students' ID number to inform the score, and she also checks

whether they attend school or not. After she is finished, Chutima encourages the students

to put in more effort if they do not get the score that they want.

After informing the students of the scores on the quiz, Chutima asks in the Thai

language, "This is the third week of the semester. Does anyone know all of your friends'

names?" All voices buzz in a sign of uncertainty. Chutima smiles and says, "Okay, I

have an activity for you to remember your friends' names." She walks to the chalkboard

and writes down the following English verses.

Class: Who stole the cookies from the cookie jar?
A: (Name _____) stole the cookies from the cookie jar.
B: Who? Me?
A: Yes, you!
B: Couldn't be
A: Then, who?
B: (Name _____)

While she is writing, the students write down those verses in their notes. When Chutima is finished, she walks around the class checking students' writing. When she sees the students are done, she says in English, "This is a song to help you learn your friends' names. I will show you how to sing this song first. Then, you are going to sing with me. Okay? First, I need a volunteer to interact with me in this song." A student raises his hand. Chutima says, "Thank you, Piyapat. I will be 'A' and you will be 'B.' Okay?" Piyapat nods. "Class, are you ready?" inquires Chutima.

"Yes!" all the voices answer in English.

Chutima starts singing, "*Who stole the cookies from the cookie jar?*" She claps her hands while she is singing. The students clap their hands and hum along with her.

Chutima continues, "*Piyapat stole the cookies from the cookie jar.*"

Piyapat says, "*Who? Me?*" The rest of the class laughs out loud when they hear Piyapat's exaggerating tone.

Chutima continues, "*Yes, you!*"

"*Couldn't be,*" Piyapat says and shrugs. The class giggles.

"*Then who?*" asks Chutima with a smile.

"*Mongkol.*" Piyapat says his friend's name.

Chutima stops the singing and explains that Mongkol is the next person to participate in the interaction. "Piyapat and I will show you an example again. Okay?" says Chuitma in English. For the second time, the students try to sing along.

At the end, the students say "Whoa!" and clap their hands for Piyapat.

"Now, it is your turn," Chutima continues using English. It seems that the students are excited. Chutima counts, "One, two, three." Then the class starts singing. From the back of the class, I can tell that the students have fun. They giggle and sometimes laugh when they make mistakes. I think to myself, "This is a good way to start off the class!"

"Well done, class." Chutima complements and claps her hands after the activity is finished. After that, Chutima asks the students to take out the handout on using a dictionary that she administered last class. While she is waiting for the students to get ready, she asks, "Do you remember we talked about the journey to become a genius? What are ways to become a genius?"

The students answer, "Study in advance."

"What is the second one?"

All voices respond simultaneously, "Listen attentively."

"Good. How about the last way?"

"Review regularly," reply the students together.

After talking about the journey to become a genius, Chutima goes through the handout on using a dictionary, which is written in English. She reads the handout, "In order to use the dictionary quickly, you must know something about an *entry* and how it is constructed." After that, Chutima translates into the Thai language and then continues,

speaking English, "Next, I would like to talk about terms used in the dictionary including headword, entry, definition, compound, and derivative." Then, she switches to the Thai language, explaining those terms. The students sit quietly and take notes.

Chutima pauses and asks the students in English, "At this point, do you have any questions?" A quiet, waiting moment takes place. Chutima continues, "Does this make sense?"

The students nod, and some students say, "Yes" softly.

Chutima says, "Before we continue, I would like everyone to sit up with your back straight. If you sit up, it helps with your concentration." The students change their sitting position creating some noise. "Thank you for your cooperation," says Chutima.

Chutima continues explaining the handout. She reads the handout and translates for the students. She sometimes pauses to tell the meanings of difficult words and discuss grammar points. After she is finished, Chutima assigns the exercise to the students. She groups the students together and asks them to help each other with completing the exercise.

The students gradually move their chairs to sit in groups. When they are ready to work, Chutima walks around and makes sure that the students understand the instructions. I also walk around to answer questions that the students may have. A boy asks me the definition of the word "worship." The students work together until the class is over. At the end of the class, Chutima asks the students to turn in this exercise as a group next week. She also asks the students to list new words and come up with ways to remember these words, such as writing songs, mnemonics, flashcards, or graphic organizers. "We will talk about these difficult words in class next time. Okay?"

The students say, "Yes."

Then, Chutima dismisses the class. The head student asks the class in English, "Please stand up." The rest of the class stands up and simultaneously says in English, "Thank you teacher. See you again next time." They also press their hands against their chests and bow their heads down as a sign of respect.

From a distance, I see Chutima smile. Her eyes communicate a sense of delight and fulfillment.

After-class Discussion

Chutima and I walk out of the class and head to her office at the English Department. While we are walking down the stairs, Chutima asks me, "What do you think about my teaching?"

I smile and tell her, "Overall, I think you did a great job. I think the students were comfortable and active in class. I saw them take notes and listen attentively. I need to examine my notes before I tell you more. What do you think about your teaching performance?"

Chutima pauses and replies, "I think the lesson went well. I could see that the students wrote down what I said, and they paid attention to the lesson. This class is self-motivated by nature, and the students prefer a lecture-type format. That is why the lesson was a teacher-centered approach. I will not use this type of classroom format with other classes because it does not match with my students' interests. In some classes, I often go over the materials slowly and tell interesting stories to engage the students in the discussion. In other classes, I use learner-centered tasks, such as games and songs," says

Chutima. As a teacher, I think Chuitma understands the nature of her students, their needs, and learning styles. She teaches her students tailored to their needs.

I add my points, "I particularly love your assignment at the end of the class. You asked the students to come up with ways to remember vocabulary. Can you tell me a little bit about that assignment?"

Chutima replies, "Since I teach reading, I feel like the students need to learn a lot of vocabulary. In the first class period, I did a pre-test and found out that the students had limited vocabulary. They also told me that they do not have enough vocabulary to understand readings. To learn English vocabulary, I feel like students need to do something outside of class. They have to take a quiet time to process the overwhelming vocabulary. I can come up with several ways to help the students remember vocabulary, but those ways may not work for them. They need to find ways that work for themselves."

While listening to Chutima's reflection on her teaching, I gain an understanding of a teacher who is critical and transformative in her teaching practices. Chutima has a repertoire of pedagogical knowledge, and she uses this set of knowledge tailored to her students' needs. She expects her students to do extra work in order to become effective and efficient English learners. I am glad that I chose the right person to participate in my dissertation study.

On the way to the English Department, several students greet us, forming their hands in a sign of respect. We hear "*Sawasdee Krub! Sawasdee Kha!*" along the way. Chutima smiles and greets the students back. I continue the conversation while we are walking, "I am curious about how you would describe yourself as a teacher."

"Do you want me to evaluate myself?" asks Chutima.

"Something like that," I reply and pause for Chutima to take time in order to answer my question.

Chutima pauses and says, "I think I am a responsible and polite teacher. I am responsible because I am never late to class. I give feedback to my students on time. And, I turn in grades on time as well. I am polite because I am verbally and mannerly kindhearted. As a person, I do not like an aggressive person, so I do not do that to my students. I never use bad language in front of my students. I typically talk to them. I use reasons, rather than emotion. Is this the answer you want?"

I just smile and continue asking a question, "How do you prepare your teaching?"

Chutima replies immediately, "Well, I prepare a lot before I teach. I like to go through the materials as if I were a student. I prepare my lessons the night before class and 15 minutes before class. Even though I teach the same materials in different classes, I prepare my lesson differently because my students have different needs."

We have almost arrived at the English Department, so I ask a final question, "Why do you use English to teach English?" I ask this question because, based on my experience learning English in the Thai schools, many teachers use the Thai language to teach English. As a teacher, I have my personal bias that Thai teachers should use English to teach English. When I saw that Chutima used English on some occasions, I was impressed.

"I use English because I want my students to be exposed to English as much as possible. I think most of the Thai students learn English in order to take examinations only. Now, English is more important than passing exams because of ASEAN. Do you

know about ASEAN?" I nod and smile. Chutima continues, "Currently, Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries are establishing a new cooperation in political, economic, and sociocultural aspects. As a teacher, I feel that we are going to use more English in the future because of this ASEAN cooperation. I believe that the students need to be challenged, listening to English. They need to feel comfortable with English, otherwise they cannot compete with other countries." I think to myself, "That is a very thoughtful and inspirational idea!"

When we arrive at the office, I push the door open for Chutima. I see several teachers look up to see us. They probably wonder who I am. Some teachers continue working. Chutima puts her teaching materials on her table and introduces me to her neighboring teachers, "This is Denchai, my former student. He is doing a doctoral study in the United States. He came back to collect the data for his dissertation." I smile and greet every teacher in the room. To my left, I see my former English teacher smiling at me. I greet her and pay respect to her by pressing my hands together in the middle of my chest and bow my head down. We ask about each other's well-being for a while, and I tell her that I will come back to talk to her another day because I need to interview Chutima.

I ask Chutima, "Shall we find a room for an interview? I can interview you wherever you are comfortable, but it should be free of disturbances."

"Let's go upstairs to the department conference room," Chutima suggests. We take the stairs up to the second floor. The conference room is located in the department head's office. Chutima makes a phone call to ask permission from the head of the

department, and he gives us permission to use the room. Chutima puts her Louis Viton handbag beside her. I take out my notebook and an audio recorder.

When we are ready, I inform her of the purposes of the interview and ask Chutima's permission to record the interview and start asking questions.

Born in a Family of Teachers

In the rural area of Ubon Ratchathani province, Chutima was the oldest child among five children. She described her family as a "family of teachers" because her parents were elementary school teachers. As the oldest, Chutima grew up to be a role model for her brothers and sisters. She was taught to be responsible, obedient, and well behaved.

Growing up in a "family of teachers," Chutima was like a teacher assistant. Her parents liked to bring her to school. Her mom asked her to help with the teacher's jobs, such as grading homework and filling out scores in grade reports. Chutima liked to hang out with her mom, especially when she prepared her lessons. Chutima narrates, "I liked to spend time with my mother when she prepared a lesson because I had a chance to flip through her books, newspaper, and materials. I liked to listen to my mom's stories about school. Sometimes, she read for me. When I could read, I also read for her while she was preparing the lesson. It was a fun time for me to be with my mom. She was like a role model for me."

"What did your parents teach?" I inquire.

"At the time, as an elementary school teacher, my parents taught every subject such as math, Thai, social studies, religion, and English. When my mom was a student, she was really smart. She was a top student," says Chutima. While listening to Chutima,

I remembered when I was in an elementary school. I also learned every subject from my teacher. At that time, I thought my teacher knew everything. I thought being a teacher was like being a source of knowledge. I thought the teacher was always right because they had a lot of knowledge.

"What was it like to be a daughter of the teachers?"

Chutima smiles as she recalls her wonderful moments. She says, "I was treated prestigiously. When I went to a community get-together with my parents, I often saw the villagers treat my parents respectfully. Many families call my dad 'father' and call my mom 'mother' because they respected my parents. The community admired my parents as the ones who had a lot of knowledge."

"How do you feel growing up in a family of teachers?" I ask.

Chutima smiles and says, "Proud."

**A Girl Who Liked--School,
Science, and English**

Since Chutima was born in a family of teachers, she had a special quota to enter a school a year earlier than the minimum age. Unlike Lertluck who started school at the kindergarten level, Chutima started her educational journey at the elementary education level at the school where her mother taught. Like her mother, Chutima was a good student and had been ranked at the top of the class. She was considered a "scholarship student" because she always performed well academically and received multiple scholarships. Chutima liked school, and she was good at almost every subject.

Chutima fell in love with science. She liked when she did "some experimental activities" in class. She also liked English because she was impressed with her English teacher. "When I was in seventh grade, I liked an English teacher. Her name was Rerai

Sampasboon. She was really active and made English so fun. I think I liked English because of this teacher," narrates Chutima.

After Chutima finished her elementary school, she continued her education at a middle school in "the city." At this school, she performed well academically, especially in science. After middle school, Chutima wanted to continue her education, but she was reluctant to choose between The Teacher's College and Nursing College. Her mother had an answer for her . . .

**The Teacher's College Vs
Nursing College**

After graduating middle school, Chutima's friends invited her to take a selective examination at the Nursing College. Because Chutima entered the school a year earlier, she was not old enough to take the examination. Her friends suggested she create a fake ID so that she could take the examination. Chutima told her mother, and she said, "No, it is not an honest act. I don't want you to lie. You should study the certificate of education at The Teacher's College in our hometown."

It was not a difficult decision to go to The Teacher's College. Her Mother decided for her. As a daughter, she believed her mother. "It's my fate," said Chutima.

Since Chutima had a positive experience growing up in a teachers' family, she was not reluctant to take her mother's suggestion. Chutima narrates, "Given the nature of a small rural community at that time, a teacher was an ideal job for children. As a kid, I only saw 'teachers' or 'farmers' as careers. Since my parents were teachers, I wanted to be a teacher as well. My mom was a big influence in my life."

"She is like your idol?" I interrupt.

"Yes, she is my idol," Chutima replies immediately. "Also, to become a teacher at that time, it took only two years to complete a certificate of education. After I finished this two-year program, I could take a selective examination to become a teacher. My mother told me that I could get a job faster than studying other fields."

"Are there any other reasons why you chose to study at The Teacher's College?"

Chutima pauses and replies, "I think I had limited information about choices that I could make. In Ubon Ratchathani, there was only one higher educational institute, which is the Teacher's College. My mom was the only resource that I had. She was a teacher. She graduated from there. So, I automatically had to fall in the same track as her." As a result of her mother's suggestion, Chutima pursued the certificate of education at the Teacher's College in Ubon Ratchathani, the same school as Lertluck's.

"If you had a chance to choose your education again, what would you choose?"

Chutima smiles, "I would still choose to study at the Teacher's College. I was not regretful when my mom chose my educational path for me. I think being a teacher is 'the right' career for me."

Unfortunately, after Chutima graduated with the certificate of education, she was not qualified to take the selective examination to become a teacher because she was a year younger than the minimum age. Therefore, she decided to continue her education in a two-year certificate program in higher education at the same institution. At this time, Chutima got a scholarship to pursue a degree as well. "I might have been in the Nursing College by now if I didn't listen to my mother's suggestion. I think it is my fate to become a teacher," Chutima concludes.

Science Vs English: Which
One Do I Major?

In a conference room . . . when Chutima started her certificate in higher education, she had to decide her major. She was waiting anxiously, together with other classmates, for the announcement about the rooms for each major that she could attend for information.

After a long introduction about the program in general, the students had to choose their majors by attending breakout sessions in different rooms. The announcement said, "Room 401 for science majors, 402 for mathematic majors, 403 for Thai language . . . " Chutima was thinking about her grades and which subjects she performed well in during the last two years, "and, finally, Room 406 for English." It was a big decision for Chutima to make. Chutima walked out of the classroom and tried to find a room.

Chutima walked into Room 401 for science majors and sat close to the door. She decided to major in science because she performed well in that subject. She took out her notebooks, getting ready for the information. When a professor started talking about class requirements for the science major, Chutima took notes and paid attention. She was highly focused on the information.

While groups of people were walking past, Chutima heard someone from the group call her name, "Chutima!" She turned to see where the noise came from and found her friends there, "Come to the English major with us. This is science, nothing interesting! You can learn science whenever you want to because it is the Thai language. English is more interesting." Chutima was reluctant to go with her friends. Her friends said, "Come with us! It is more interesting to major in English. Come with us, please." Chutima could not resist her friends' persistent requests, so she decided to go with them.

"You chose a major because of your friends?" I frown and then smile.

Chutima laughs and says, "I am thankful to these friends. I am never regretful about my decision. I think it is my fate to become an English teacher."

"Your fate?"

"Yes, it is my fate to become an English teacher," Chutima confirms.

Lunch--ASEAN Day

Chutima and I decide to stop the interview and go have lunch together at the school's cafeteria. On the way to the cafeteria, we walk past several little parks which brightened up the school atmosphere. As we arrive at the cafeteria, Chutima and I buy our own food and go sit at the teachers' eating lounge. I have rice with teriyaki chicken, and Chutima has clear noodle soup.

We meet several teachers from other departments. Chutima introduces me to those teachers. One of the teachers asks Chutima, "Have you checked out the ASEAN Day exhibition at the school conference hall? There are multiple types of food and shows there." The ASEAN Day is an entire-school extra-curricular activity for students and teachers. The school receives cooperation from all departments to organize this special activity in order to raise students' awareness about the importance of regional cooperation--ASEAN.

Chutima shakes her head and asks me whether I am interested. I tell her, "We can check it out on the way back. You have another class in the afternoon, right?" Chutima nods because she is chewing her food. Chutima and I finish our lunch quietly, listening to the conversation of other teachers.

When we walk out of the cafeteria, a student comes to talk to Chutima. This student is the student head. She asks permission for the whole class from Chutima to root for her friend, who will be performing in the singing competition at the ASEAN Day exhibition. Chutima asks several questions and gives the students permission to participate in the ASEAN Day. "I need to make up this class session, okay?" says Chutima to the students. We walk to check out the ASEAN Day.

As Chutima and I arrive at the exhibition, I am amazed at the number of people in the room. There are several booths from different departments, displaying exhibitions about the 10 ASEAN countries (Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Brunei Darussalam, Lao PDR, and Myanmar). The students and the teachers are presenting information at each booth. Off in the distance, I see Lertluck dressed up in a Malaysian costume. I wave to say hi, and she waves back to me. Chutima and I walk slowly to learn about each country. While we are walking around, the ASEAN anthem kicks into the atmosphere. The ASEAN Anthem is titled "ASEAN Way," and written by a Thai composer. It is used as an expression of ASEAN identity.

> *Raise our flag high, sky high.*
> *Embrace the pride in our heart.*
> *ASEAN we are bonded as one*
> *Look-in out-ward to the world.*
> *For peace, our goal from the very start*
> *And prosperity to last.*
>
> *We dare to dream we care to share.*
> *Together for ASEAN*
> *We dare to dream,*
> *We can to share for it's the way of ASEAN.*

I think to myself, "The anthem is so beautiful!" The melody moves slowly and sometimes the tone raises high, signifying unity and cooperation. We stop at the Vietnamese booth and try fried egg rolls. Chutima asks a few questions about Vietnam and moves on to the next both. We stop at the Malaysian booth where we meet Lertluck in a Malaysian national costume. "*Sawasdee Krub, Kru Lertluck*. You look great in that costume," I compliment.

Lertluck cheerfully says, "Thank you, Denchai." Lertluck gives us a type of Malaysian food, but I do not remember what it was. Chutima and I walk around the hall and finally agree to go back to the office and finish our interview.

Becoming an English Teacher

"Where did we leave off?" Chutima asks when we are ready at the department conference hall. I use paper towel to wipe the sweat from my face and neck. The air conditioner in the room helps decrease the heat from outside and relieves the sticky feeling from my body.

I sip the water and reply, "We talked about you choosing a major."

"Right! So, what's next?"

I take out my interview questions and continue, "Can you tell me about the time when you first became a teacher?"

Chutima recalls her memories and narrates. June 17, 1974, was the first day when Chutima became a teacher.

To become a teacher, Chutima took a selective examination issued by the Ministry of Education. After she graduated with a two-year certificate in higher education, she took two examinations: one at an elementary school level, and another at a

high school level. Without a doubt, Chutima passed both exams. She had been waiting

for two months before an elementary school called her to fill in a position. Chutima took

the job. One month into teaching at the elementary school, Chutima received another call

from a high school. "At first, I did not know what to do," says Chutima. "I went with

my guts. I decided to quit the elementary school job and take a job at the high school

level."

 She started her teacher job at Muangsamsib Amphawanwittaya School. The first

experience of teaching for Chutima was adventurous and full of fun. Since this school

had just been established in a rural and remote area, the school building was under

construction. There were six teachers, and all of them were novices. These six teachers,

including Chutima, were waiting for a principal, but they did not know when he would be

coming.

 Chutima smiles, "I was impressed with my first experience at this school. All

teachers were novices, so we went through the same thing. We shared ideas and

supported each other. You know, at that time, I taught all subjects, such as English, Math,

and Thai traditional dance. It was full of fun and adventurous," Chutima joyfully narrates.

When she talks about her teaching, she smiles a lot as she talks about her early happiness.

 "What was the most significant experience at this school?" I inquire.

 "Everything," Chutima's answer is short and sincere, "but, there was one thing

that I am really proud of. I established free tutoring classes for my students."

Free Tutoring Classes: Devotion
for Education

 As a novice teacher, Chutima was zealous in teaching her students. She noticed

that the students in this rural area did not have a chance to enroll in tutoring classes

because they did not have financial support. In order to help her students catch up academically with other students in the city, Chutima sacrificed her free time to teach her students free of charge. She wrote a letter to parents to inform them about this special program. "I was glad that lots of students came. I was glad that I could make a difference in my students' lives. That was why I became a teacher," says Chutima.

Chutima had implemented this tutoring program for two years before she decided to pursue her bachelor's degree. Chutima got a scholarship from the government to earn a Bachelor's Degree in Education at Srinakharinwirot University, Maha Sarakham Campus (currently known as Maha Sarakham University). After she graduated with a bachelor's degree, Chutima went back and spent 8 more years (10 years in total) teaching at the same school. She had to move to another school, Khemarat Pittayakom, because her husband was transferred to become a sheriff at Khemarat District. Chutima taught at this school for two years before she moved to Benchama Maharat School. She described her journey to Benchama Maharat as "a journey of fate."

**On A Tricycle Taxi to
Benchama Maharat**

It was time for Chutima to move again. Chutima was trying to find a school to teach at because she had to move back to "the city." Her sheriff husband received words of requests to affiliate in the city. When she thought about the schools in the city, two schools came up, Narinukun and Benchama Maharat. Chutima decided to visit Narinukun School because Benchama Maharat was a prestigious school, and she was not confident about her teaching ability.

Unfortunately, when Chutima talked to the principal at Narinukun School, there was no availability. "When I knew that there was no position, I was really disappointed,"

says Chutima. "I did not want to go back home without anything. So, I took a tricycle taxi to Benchama Maharat School. I did not expect to get a job there. I just wanted to give it a try. When I informed the principal that I wanted to transfer to teach at Benchama Maharat, he smiled and told me that I came at the right time. The school needed one English teacher, and there was only one position left." Chutima narrates this story as if it were a dream. She continues, "Is it weird to say that it is my fate to teach here?"

The only thing that I can do to answer her question is smile. In my head, I try to compare Lertluck and Chutima. Both of them describe their journeys to becoming English teachers as "destiny" or "fate."

"That doesn't sound like science!" I think to myself.

Why do I need to label the teachers' stories as science? Is it because I associate research with science?

What is research? What is science? What is art? I think research is neither science, nor art until someone says it is. So, I will say my research falls into the balance between art and science.

There you go! I said it.

Never Count Down to
My Retirement

When I ask Chutima to reflect on her 39 years of teaching and why she stays in the teaching profession, her eyes shine with happiness. She smiles and says, "Teaching is the right career for me. Teaching is the reason that I wake up every morning. I want to go to school. I want to teach my students. I think a teacher is the job that creates virtue,

and there are many chances for a teacher to do good deeds, especially doing something to change students' lives. When I help my students succeed, I feel like I am fulfilled."

"Have you ever been bored of teaching?" I interrupt.

Chutima smiles and says, "No, never! Frankly, I have never felt bored of teaching. I love my job. I am happy every day. You know, sometimes, I hear my fellow teachers complain about teaching, and they are counting down to their retirement. I really feel sad for them. I do not understand why they became a teacher when they are bored every day, and they are not happy. In the next two years, I will be retiring. I think to myself, 'I have very little time to teach my students. I have to hurriedly do my job when I can.'"

"In the next two years, what is your plan to improve yourself as a teacher?" I inquire with a smile.

"I want to enjoy every minute with my students. I want them to have positive attitudes towards English. I want them to love school. To help my students love English and learning, I want to plan my lessons so they are tailored to my students' needs."

It is a simple plan, but I am speechless. As a teacher, I am amazed at how humble and dedication Chutima is.

When we finish the interview, Chutima walks me to the car. I say "thank you" to her. When I drive off of the school property, I smile to myself thinking about words to describe Chutima.

> Chutima is an English teacher
> Who has a strong passion
> To become a teacher,
> Who has a mother
> To be a role model,
> And who considers herself as a matrix

To educate students.
These students will be
An important force
For national development.

Kasemsiri's Portrait

The Journey of Opportunity,
Destiny, and Pride--
Kasemsiri Wattano

When a university teacher, Kasemsiri Wattano, talks about her journey to become

a university English teacher, she talks about opportunity, destiny, and pride. Unlike in

the United States where teachers at the university level are called professors, in Thailand,

the term "university teacher" is preferred when referring to a teacher in a university. In

Thailand, the term "professor" has its connotation to an academic standing, rather than a

general term to identify university teachers.

In 2007, Kasemsiri started working at Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University,

known as *Rajabhat* among the locals, when she was a recent graduate with a Bachelor's

Degree in English at a College of Education. "I had not expected to become a university

teacher so early. After I graduated, I suddenly received a surprising opportunity to fulfill

my dream, teaching at the university level. That was the first and the last time my

university recruited new graduates to become university teachers. I was so lucky," says

Kasemsiri with a smile.

Kasemsiri describes herself, as "sassy." (In this dissertation, the term "sassy" is

defined from a contemporary perspective referring to a woman with playful, daring,

cheeky, confident, and smart characteristics. Based on this perspective, it is a positive

term, rather than a negative one.) She is in her late 20s and is a slender young woman

who appears majestic. Her students often say she looks "too young" to be a university

teacher. When she is in motion, she moves like a horse, elegant and swift. As she is walking, her back is straight, and her steps are charming. She often lets her straight, long, black hair nestle, unrestrained on her back. Kasemsiri likes fashion, so her outfits are posh, stylish, and elegant. Like today, she wears a coral diamond-print dress with a white cardigan. "I like to wear colorful outfits to brighten up my classroom," Kasemsiri humorously says.

Given the fact that she looks "too young" to teach at the university level, Kasemsiri has experienced many doubts of students about her maturity and ability to teach. Her students often ask her, "How old are you?" Then, they frown as a sign of doubt when she answers. When encountering this type of question, Kasemsiri is not offended. Instead, she takes it as a compliment. "Most people in Thailand assume that university woman teachers should be spinsters. So, I understand why they are judging me. When people question that I am not supposed to be here because of my young age, I am proud of myself that I am changing a stereotype and status quo," says Kasemsri and continues with a smile. "After six years of teaching, I have proved myself that I am supposed to be here teaching at the university level."

Going to Rajabhat--Oasis of
Local Students

When people try to describe Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University, they typically talk about it in relation to Ubon Ratchathani University, known as *Mor Ubon* among the locals in my hometown. People often say that the location of Rajabhat is better because it is located in the city, but the academics of Mor Ubon are better. Unlike in the United States, some people perceive suburban areas as better than urban regions, and people in Thailand value "the city" living style. Rajabhat has a vision to provide

education for developing local communities for maintaining arts and culture. The majority of students at Rajabhat are from small villages in remote areas. The "city students" often go to Mor Ubon instead.

The history of Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University traces back to 1936 when it was initially a teacher training school for women; it expanded to the teacher training school for all genders in 1947. Eleven years later (1958), the school raised its status to become a college, known as the Teacher's College at Ubon Ratchathani, and is where Lertluck and Chutima pursued their certificate of education. At that time, this type of teacher's college spread throughout the country. In 1992, King Bhumibol Adulyadej conferred the name, *Rajabhat Institution* to all teachers' colleges, and all of these institutions became universities in 2004.

When I have an appointment with Kasemsiri, I borrow a black Honda Civic from my sister to get to Rajabhat. I take a familiar highway on which I commuted when I was a student at Benchama Maharat. The view alongside the highway changes from endless green rice fields to city residences and tall buildings. While I am driving, I turn on my favorite radio station and sing along. Close to my hometown, there are few cars passing by, mostly trucks. As I am getting closer to the university, there are more cars, and the buildings are taller. I rarely see motorcycles on the busy highway.

I turn right onto a medium-sized road leading to the Rajabhat's entrance. As I turn onto this street, the traffic is much different from on the highway. On this street, there are few cars, but motorcycles are everywhere. Rajabhat students in their uniforms are driving motorcycles to school. A boy in a long-sleeved white shirt, black pants, and a tie printed with the university's emblem is astride his motorcycle with a girl in her short-

sleeved white shirt and pleated black skirt on the back of the motorcycle. Based on their

uniforms, I think they must be freshmen. I turn on the blinkers and take a left into the

university's property.

Rajabhat looks familiar to me. I drive past a familiar soccer field, the library, and

the assembly hall. Off in the distance, flags of the 10 ASEAN countries are waving. A

small outdoor exhibition of ASEAN is decorated at a small park, which animated the

university's atmosphere. I thought to myself, "Not only did Benchama Maharat put up a

campaign for ASEAN, but Rajabhat is also active in this movement." I slow down my

car, trying to find Kasemsiri's office. After driving for a while, I find myself driving

around in a circle, so I call Kasemsiri to ask for directions to her office.

"Hi, Kasemsiri. I think I am lost," I tell her and laugh.

Kasemsiri laughs and says, "You should be because it is difficult to find my office.

You can park at Kanchanaphisek Cultural Center of Ubon Ratchathani, and I will come

get you, okay?" I agree with Kasemsiri that it is a good idea. I drive to the cultural

center and park there. The Kanchanaphisek Cultural Center of Ubon Ratchathani is a

seven-story building, designed in the contemporary northeastern architecture style,

constructed to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the King Bhumibol Aduljadej's accession

to the throne.

While I am parking my car, Kasemsiri waits for me under the tree. I grab my bag

and head in her direction. We say hi and ask of each other's well-being. After that,

Kasemsiri leads me to the back of the cultural center. We take a shortcut past a building.

"This is Building Two," Kasemsiri tells me and continues with a smile, "My office is

right there at Building One." When we arrive at the office, Kasemsiri scans her fingers to

get in the office. "A few month ago, the department was broken into during the day, so this machine was set up to prevent on-campus stealing," says Kasemsiri. I had no doubt why I could not find her office building from the street. A big building under construction blocks the view from the street.

Kasemsiri slides the door open, "Welcome to the English Department!" and then she takes me to her office. A student, sitting at the table in front of the door, puts her hands in the middle of her chest, bows her head down, and greets us, "*Sawasdee Kha!*" Kasemsiri and I greet the student back. In front of my eyes, the English Department consists of three big rooms, and each room has several cubicles. Kasemsiri's cubicle is in the first room with two other teachers, next to the department lobby. She calls these two teachers her "neighbors" because Kasemsiri spends time with them most often.

Kasemsiri's cubicle is organized and decorative. She has a working table that smells like a vase of roses. A hand-made stationary box sits quietly on her table. Next to her table, she has a wooden four-layer shelf where she places different colors of binders used to organize her documents from the department, seminar materials, last-year's lesson plans, and last-year's teaching materials. Close to the shelf, a small stainless cabinet keeps her current teaching materials. A pile of blue and red notebooks is placed separately on the top of the cabinet.

I take my eyes off the cubicle and ask her, "When do you teach today?"

"Before noon, about 10:30 a.m.," replies Kasemsiri.

"Great. Would you like to do the interview first today?"

"Definitely. Give me five minutes to get ready." Kasemsiri walks into the

department kitchen and makes me a cup of hot chocolate. I say "thank you" to her and

begin asking questions about her journey to become a university teacher.

**Growing Up with Different
Expectations**

It was 1984 when Kasemsiri was born in "the city" of Nonthaburi Province, part

of the Bangkok Metropolitan Region. Compared to Lertluck who has 11 siblings and

Chutima who has 5 siblings, Kasemsiri was born in a small family of 4 people all

together (parents and a younger brother). She grew up in a wealthy family in which her

dad was a civil engineer, and her mom was a schoolteacher, teaching the Thai language.

Her father was originally from the south, and her mother was from the northeastern part

of Thailand. Because of their jobs, her parents had to live in the metropolitan area.

Given the nature of her father's career, working outdoors, Kasemsiri spent most

of her time with her mother. She says with a smile, "I could say I grew up with my

mother. She took my brother and me everywhere with her. Since my mother was a

teacher, she typically took me to her school. I remember I played with other kids on the

school's playground. As an engineer, my dad had to work outside, and he always came

home late, typically after my brother and I went to bed. He worked really hard to support

our family. When he came back home, he would kiss me goodnight and make sure I

finished my homework. I would see him in the morning before he took off for work."

Growing up, her mother emphasized the values of having gratitude, honesty, and

responsibility. Kasemsiri was taught to be methodical, courteous, and mature. Kasemsiri

lightheartedly narrates, "My mother taught me to use polite words, tidy my bedroom,

wash my clothes, and keep my toys in their places. I had to take care of myself. She taught me how to welcome our guests, ask them to sit, and offer beverages."

Unlike her mother, Kasemsiri's father wanted her to have fun. They had their favorite activity that they liked to do together. They called this activity "art time." Her father often invited Kasemsiri to engage in drawing and painting. "I remember that my father and I spent time together, creating art such as drawings and paintings. My father sometimes taught me how to paint," says Kasemsiri and continues, "I think I love art, and I am good at art because of him." As a result of practicing art with her father, Kasemsiri showed extraordinary talent in art, beyond the talent typical of her age group.

Growing up in a family where parents had different jobs, Kasemsiri was expected to follow her parents' career paths. Her mother wanted her to become a teacher, but her father encouraged her to become an architect or an interior designer. "My parents did not tell me explicitly to follow their career paths, but I kind of knew that they had different expectations about me," Kasemsiri says with a smile.

I interrupt, "I guess your mom won over your dad then." We both laugh out loud. I continue asking, "So, when did you know that you wanted to become a teacher?"

"I guess when I played the role of a teacher," Kasemsiri concludes.

**Embodying the Role of
a Teacher**

Kasemsiri remembered her earliest memories when she was seven years old, playing the role of a teacher. Growing up in a housing development, Kasemsiri "forced" her younger brother and her friends in the same area to play the role of a teacher. "When I was a kid, I would invite my friends to come over to my house and play a teacher-student role. I pretended to be a teacher and asked my friends to be my students. I would

use my mom's whiteboard to teach my friends how to read and write. I would read and ask them to repeat after me. I remember I had a lot of fun, acting out the teacher's role. It was strange that my friends were very cooperative." Kasemsiri and I burst out laughing together.

As Kasemsiri narrates her stories about playing the role of a teacher, I can see that she becomes lively and happy. Her eyes communicate a sense of fun. When I interviewed Lertluck, she also told me about playing the role of a teacher when she was a child. I think to myself, "They have something in common." I pull myself out of my thoughts and listen to Kasemsiri's stories.

She continues, "When I asked my friends to 'read together,' they followed my directions. When I asked them to write, they did without conditions. And when I pretended to spank them, they screamed as if they were in real pain." We laugh again at this point. Kasemsiri continues, "My mom told me that she knew I was born to be a teacher."

Educational Journey Starts
at Home

When I ask about Kasemsiri's educational journey, she immediately responds, "My education started at home when my mother taught me how to read." Since Kasemsiri was young, books were good company. Her parents always bought books for her. "I remember when I was a little girl, I grew up with a set of books that my parents bought for me. Even though I could not read, I would flip through the pages of the books. I just fell in love with the characters and pictures in those books. When my mother decided to teach me how to read those books, I was very excited. I remember I spent

time with those books all day long, practicing my reading. Before I went to bed, my father sometimes read to me," narrates Kasemsiri with a smile.

While I am listening to Kasemsiri's story growing up with books, I pause to reflect on the differences between her family and mine. Growing up, my parents did not read to me before I went to bed, and I never had my own books; rather, they told me stories. I personally think that reading books to children before they go to bed is not a typical family practice in Thailand because Thailand is an orally traditional society. In Kasemsiri's case, I think her family was influenced by other cultures. I pull myself out of my thoughts again and try to focus on Kasemsiri's stories.

Kasemsiri continues telling her stories, "When I was four years old, my mom put me in a nursery school close to my house. At this school, I learned to be responsible and respectful to social rules. I remember I learned how to write in longhand, how to count, and how to get along with others. I also learned to eat appropriately and share my toys with friends." As Kasemsiri tells her stories, I can see that she is really proud of her school. After she finished her elementary school, her mother took her to a school that shaped Kasemsiri socially and academically.

The Only School in Thailand

Throughout Kasemsiri's life, there was a school that shaped Kasemsiri socially and academically. She used the words "the only school in Thailand" to describe this school--Chonprathan Wittaya.

Chonprathan Wittaya is a private school under the patronization of the Royal Irrigation Department of Nonthaburi Province. The school is located in front of the irrigation department. Her mother traveled throughout the province in order to find an

"appropriate school" for her daughter. She did not want Kasemsiri to attend an elite school where her daughter might turn into someone who would forget about her family lineage. She also did not want Kasemsiri to attend a school that could turn her daughter into an irresponsible and impolite person. After searching throughout the province, her mom finally found a perfect school for Kasemsiri--Chonprathan Wittaya.

"What was so special about this school?" I interrupt.

Kasemsiri replies immediately, "Everything!" She laughs and continues, "I think this school emphasized the importance of living together peacefully in the society. The school taught me basic principles to live with others and respect rules. For example, when I walked onto the school's property, I had to pay respect to a teacher at the school's entrance. When I was in the school's building, I had to take off my shoes. I had to put my shoes in front of my classroom. I had to line up in front of the class before the school started so that my homeroom teacher could check my uniform to make sure I dressed properly."

Not only did the school emphasize the orderliness of the students, the academics at this school were also outstanding, especially in English. Chonprathan Wittaya School emphasized the importance of learning English, and this emphasis ingrained a seed of passion for learning English.

**A Seed of Passion for
Learning English**

Kasemsiri was a successful English language learner. How did she become successful in learning English?

Curiously, I start asking the question, "When did you start learning English?"

Kasemsiri says, "When I was in nursery school, approximately three years old."

I thought to myself, "She started learning English so early!"

Kasemsiri remembers that she had "a lot of fun" when she was first exposed to English. At the nursery school, she practiced writing the English alphabet, memorizing English letters, and painting the alphabet. "I think the fun part of learning English was painting the alphabet. I liked to make them colorful. As you know, I had a passion for art since I was young, and I was able to use the arts in learning English. That was why I started to love English, I guess," Kasemsiri smiles.

After learning English at the nursery school, Kasemsiri moved to an elementary school, Chonprathan Wittaya, where her knowledge of English was cultivated. Unlike other schools in Thailand, this school emphasized the importance of learning English, especially vocabulary, grammar, and writing. At this school, Kasemsiri was exposed to excellent teachers, great teachings, and positive learning environments. "I remember writing the English alphabet, reading the news, practicing handwriting, and singing songs," she says with a smile and continues, "Do you know this song, Denchai? One little two, little three, little Indian . . ." Kasemsiri keeps humming. I nod and smile. "I also had to recite 10 new words a day to my parents, and they had to sign their verification on a paper sheet. After that, I had to recite those words again to my teacher at school."

"Do you mean dictation?" I interrupt.

"No! I had to stand in front of my teacher, and recite new vocabulary, 10 words a day! Dictation was another thing that I had to do regularly. Lots of dictations, actually!" Kasemsiri animates. At this school, learning vocabulary was regarded as important in

order to become a successful English language learner. Teachers mostly asked students to memorize vocabulary and tested them regularly.

Apart from learning extensive vocabulary, the school asked students to use cursive when writing. I ask Kasemsiri, "Why cursive?" She says that the school wanted to conserve cursive writing because the invention of the computer might take away this type of print. As an English teacher, I agree with the school's policy. I encourage my students to write in cursive because this conjoined penmanship is easier than writing in print.

"Can you tell me a little bit about your English teachers?" I inquire.

"Teachers were very qualified," Kasemsiri continues. Unlike other schools in Thailand, the principal at Chonprathan Wittaya School recruited English teachers by asking them to speak English and write English essays, and the salary depended on the English proficiency of teachers. Several of her English teachers ingrained the knowledge of English and the love of English into Kasemsiri.

One activity that Kasemsiri liked the most was decorating a bulletin board in English. At this school, the teachers would divide students into groups and ask them to produce a bulletin board about English. "We helped each other decorating a bulletin board each month. I remember my group did vocabulary about fruits. I drew pictures of fruits. My friends wrote vocabulary words, and they presented the board. I loved when I used the arts in learning English."

Kasemsiri continues, "When I was in fifth grade, English became more difficult. So, I took an extra English class after school with my teacher. My parents paid for this class, and it helped me a lot." Apart from extra classes, the school also organized several

English contests between classes such as fluency in reading. In each class, the homeroom teacher would find a representative by giving everyone a chance to express their abilities in reading. "Everyone has a chance to participate. When I say everyone, I mean everyone," Kasemsiri emphasizes.

When Kasemsiri went back from school to her house, Kasemsiri was also exposed to English when her father played a record of English songs. By listening to those English songs repeatedly, Kasemsiri was able to sing along with her father. Her mother also supported Kasemsiri in learning English. She would motivate Kasemsiri to learn English by asking her to read English books and tell her what the reading was about. Kasemsiri would get paid for reading to her mother. Her younger brother always competed in reading as well.

A Halt of the English Seed

While Kasemsiri was in eighth grade, her father got a job in Ubon Ratchathani Province, so her family had to move there. Kasemsiri was sorrowful leaving Chonprathan Wittaya because she was disappointed and experienced difficulty in mastering her English skills at a new school. "The biggest turnover of my life occurred when I was in eighth grade, moving to another school. I was placed in 'the most misbehaved class.' Teachers did not teach with their best capabilities because they had to stop the class from time to time, maintaining students' discipline. I was tired of unstructured learning, abusive language, and irresponsible peers," Kasemsiri's words flood out of her mouth as she narrates her bad experience.

"How did you keep up with your English?" I ask curiously.

Kasemsiri pauses and replies, "When my English teachers did not teach me with their best abilities, I started to learn independently with a group of friends. We helped each other do homework. We tutored each other after class."

"Did you continue reciting English vocabulary?" I interrupt.

"Yes, but this time, I recited to myself. English was the only thing that distracted me from the chaos and disappointment at school," answers Kasemsiri.

Resisting an Affront: Science-Math Vs Arts-Math

Kasemsiri was decisive in choosing an "Arts-Math" program as her academic track when she continued to high school, but her family did not approve. In Thailand, students have to choose their academic tracks when they are in high school. The choice of the academic track depends on the school. At Benchama Maharat when Kasemsiri was a student, there were three programs: science-math, arts-math, and arts-language.

"When I decided to study the Arts-Math program at Benchama Maharat School, my family, especially my grandfather, became upset about my decision," narrates Kasemsiri. "I told them that I wanted to become an English teacher, so I did not need to study in the Science-Math program, which led to careers in the science fields such as doctors, nurses, and engineers. My grandfather disagreed with my decision. He told me that I should become a doctor, but I did not want to. I insisted on my decision, and he was very disappointed." While I was listening to Kasemsiri's stories, I was connected to her. In Thailand, people have a default perception that students who study languages and arts are stupid, and those who study science and math are smart.

"What about your parents? Were they supportive of your decision?"

Kasemsiri nods and says, "I don't know. I think they were very supportive about my decision. Only my grandfather was bugging me."

"Did you enjoy your high school?" I ask.

Kasemsiri replies with a smile, "Definitely. I do not regret my decision at all. I remember that studying at Benchama Maharat was really difficult, though. I remember I had great teachers and great friends."

During her high school years, Kasemsiri was harped at about her decisions by her grandfather every time there was a family get-together. "My grandfather always said that I made a mistake. He could not see my bright future at all. I understand that he compared me to his other grandchildren who were in the science field. I remember one day he brought up my future again when I visited him. He looked down on me and said that I would end up being impoverished. I did not like his attitude, so I told him that I did not care. He was offended, so he continued talking about my wrong decision, and he complimented his other grandchildren. I was very annoyed," says Kasemsiri.

When her grandfather did not stop bugging her, Kasemsiri said to her grandfather with a red face, trying to control her temper, "Grandpa, I will become a university teacher one day, better than your other grandchildren."

Her grandfather laughed at her and said, "You are very small like a puppy. Who would take you to teach at a university?" Then he laughed again. Kasemsiri clenched her jaw trying to conceal her anger.

Because she was offended by her grandfather's insult, Kasemsiri was determined to prove him wrong, having a goal to become a university teacher. The College of Education was her first starting point.

**Starting Point for Becoming
a University Teacher**

With the determination to become a university teacher, Kasemsiri passed the
entrance examination to pursue a bachelor's degree in English at the College of
Education at Burapha University. The university was located in Chonburi Province, a
seven-hour drive from Ubon Ratchathani.

It was her mother's suggestion that influenced Kasemsir's decision to go to
Burapha University. Her mother was an alumnus of this university. When she knew that
Kasemsiri wanted to become a university teacher, she suggested that she consider this
university. "When I was young, my mom took me to this campus, and I really liked the
environment. I loved that Burapha was close to the beach and that there was an aquarium
in front of the university. The university was shady and pleasurable," says Kasemsiri.

Since she was young, she knew that she wanted to be a schoolteacher. She acted
out the role of a teacher with her brother and other friends. As a young child, she did not
know the differences between a schoolteacher and a university teacher. However, when
she was in high school, she started to consider becoming a university teacher because she
did not like the process it would take to get into the schoolteacher profession. To become
a schoolteacher, Kasemsiri would have to take a selective examination and wait for a
government sector to call her. If she were contacted, she would be placed at a school in
urgent need, which was typically located in a remote area where she would not want to
live. Also, Kasemsiri wanted to prove her grandfather wrong, that she could be a
university teacher.

Kasemsiri chose to major in English because it was the subject that she enjoyed
and performed well in when she was a child. During high school, she was also impressed

with an English teacher who trained her to take the university entrance examination. Kasemsiri was impressed with how "elegant and smart" the teacher looked. "I felt like being an English teacher would make me *posh*." She emphasizes the word "posh" and giggles. Based on Kasemsiri's stories, I agree with her that most English teachers in Thailand are sassy, posh, and elegant. As a friend of hers, I am surprised that this had an impact on her decision to become an English teacher.

Throughout her four years in college, Kasemsiri had a nickname, Kru Nui. Kru meant teacher, and Nui was her name. Many people called her Kru Nui because she had the personality of a teacher; she spoke intelligently, dressed appropriately, and was well-mannered. "I did not understand why everyone called me 'Kru Nui.' I did not remember who first called me that name, but it seemed like my roommates and classmates all called me that nickname. They might have thought that I was already a teacher or something." Kasemsiri and I laugh at the thought of this.

"When was the first time that you felt like you were a teacher?" I ask.

Kasemsiri pauses and replies, "Probably when I was a practicum teacher, I was actually 'a teacher.' I had my own students, and they called me teacher."

The Delight of Practicum Teaching

It was during her last semester of her fourth year at the College of Education that Kasemsiri completed her practicum teaching. She was placed at the Piboonbumpen Demonstration School, which was next to the College of Education.

Kasemsiri was really excited to teach. Throughout her four years in college, she had mostly studied English classes from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. "There were very few classes that I took about teaching because they were not required,"

says Kasemsiri and continues, "I felt like it was too late to be exposed to school and teaching when students were in their third or fourth year. As a student, I wanted to be exposed to teaching at the very beginning of the program because when I did the practicum teaching, it would help me a lot."

When I ask Kasemsiri to describe her experience during her practicum teaching, she smiles and says, "I had a lot of fun." She was assigned to teach middle school students and was asked to substitute in classes for her mentor teacher when the teacher was not available to teach. "I remember I had a lot of fun being with my students. Even though I had a lot of things to do, such as teaching, grading, substituting, and so on, I enjoyed every minute of it. That might have enhanced my determination to become a teacher."

"Can you tell me how you taught your students when you were a practicum teacher?" I inquire.

"Well, most of the time, I tried to make my lessons fun because I wanted to keep the students engaged. Fifty minutes of class was really long for them, so when they had fun, they would forget about time. I had to use a lot of my creativity in my lessons." Kasemsiri and I laugh out loud.

"So, you learned all of those strategies during college?"

"Very few. I put myself in the students' shoes and tried to come up with ways to make my lessons fun."

During this practicum teaching, Kasemsiri decided to further her education. She knew that she needed at least a master's degree to become a university teacher. As a result of this consideration, Kasemsiri decided to go back home to get her master's

degree in English and Communication at Ubon Ratchathani University. At this university, she was given an opportunity to become a university teacher.

On Becoming a University Teacher

Kasemsiri decided to go back home to pursue her master's degree because she wanted to stay with her family and take care of her parents. "My parents lived in Ubon Ratchathani. They were getting old, so I came back to take care of them," Kasemsiri narrates and continues, "I passed the selective examination to pursue my master's degree in English and Communication. During summer, my classmates and I were required to take an intensive English class to prepare us for our master's degree. I got to know a friend who was a teacher at Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University. She informed me about the open competition to become a university teacher."

Initially, the university set the educational qualifications for applicants at the master's degree or Ph.D. level, but no one applied for this position. Therefore, the university lowered the applicants' qualifications to a bachelor's degree with an outstanding academic achievement, such as a first-class honor degree or a second-class honor degree. Kasemsiri graduated with a second-class honor degree, so she was qualified to apply for the position. "I think that was the first and the last year that my university accepted applicants with a bachelor's degree," says Kasemsiri.

When Kasemsiri knew about the opportunity to become a university teacher, she was really excited. However, she had only four days to compile all the necessary documents, including her transcript, recommendation letters, and statements of purpose. To become a university teacher, Kasemsiri had to take a selective examination on English proficiency. After she completed the examination, Kasemsiri was not confident at all

about the results. "I tried my best to complete the exam, but I was not sure I would pass," says Kasemsiri with a smile.

Before the interview, Kasemsiri experienced two incidents that boosted her self-confidence. The first incident occurred when her mother invited a group of monks to her house to perform an auspicious birthday ceremony for her grandmother, with the family offering food and alms to the monks. While Kasemsiri was offering food to the monks, one of them told her that she would get a job in the near future. "I was surprised to hear that from the monk because only my parents and I knew that I was waiting for the exam results," says Kasemsiri.

The second incident occurred when she went to a temple. With her frustration from waiting for the exam results, Kasemsiri asked a monk whether she had passed the examination or not. The monk said that if she could recite a mantra, she would receive a passing score on the exam. "I remember the monk said something in a foreign language that I had never heard before. After the monk was finished, I tried to recall the mantra and tell him what I heard. When he told me that I had recited the mantra correctly, I was so delighted. He told me that it was my destiny to be a university teacher," Kasemsiri concludes.

Two days after the examination, she received a phone call for an interview. "I was really excited that I had passed the written examination. I screamed in delight so loud that my mom came to make sure that I was okay. She thought I was crazy, but when I told her the news, she screamed even louder than me. Then, we screamed together and jumped up and down. My father ran from the kitchen with a bamboo stick in his hand to

check on us. He thought we saw rats, so he brought a stick to kill them." Kasemsiri and

I laugh out loud, picturing two women screaming throughout the house.

The First Day of Teaching

On the first day of school, Kasemsiri dressed up in her favorite outfit: an ivory-

white lace long-sleeved blouse, a pink ruffled knee-length skirt, and raspberry high heels.

"I wanted my first day of teaching to be lively and colorful, so I dressed up to boost my

confidence," Kasemsiri smiles and continues, "I was assigned to teach academic writing

to third-year students. I was not given the student roster, so I did not know how many

students I would have. I remember I was very excited though." When Kasemsiri found

her classroom, she was shocked. From outside the classroom, all boys were waiting for

her. They were talking loudly and throwing paper at each other.

As Kasemsiri walked in the class, the loud noise suddenly stopped. Every student

focused on her. Their jaws dropped with a surprise. Kasemsiri smiled and greeted her

students, but they did not greet her back. "I remember after the initial silence, they asked

me a lot of questions. I thought they had never had a young teacher before, so they were

excited," says Kasemsiri.

"Maybe they were amazed at how beautiful you looked," I tease her. Kasemsiri

and I laugh together.

In the first two months, Kasemsiri enjoyed teaching her students. She brightened

up the atmosphere of learning English. The students also liked her. They all said that

they had never learned English in such a fun way their whole lives. Kasemsiri had a

great time teaching until she encountered the politics in her department.

Challenging the Status Quo

At a monthly staff meeting for the English Department, Kasemsiri was accused of wearing unprofessional outfits. Kasemsiri narrates, "One of my older colleagues brought up an issue during our monthly staff meeting. She said some teachers did not dress appropriately for class, especially me. When I heard my name, I was so mad and confused at why she blamed me in front of other teachers. I asked her why she claimed that I dressed unprofessionally, and she said because I wore colorful clothing!"

"Because you wore colorful clothing?" I ask for confirmation.

"That's what she said at the meeting," says Kasemsiri.

"What did you say in response to that accusation?"

Kasemsiri smiles and continues, "I was so mad, but I tried to conceal my anger. I smiled and told my fellow teachers that I had never heard of such a thing, that wearing colorful outfits was unprofessional. I told everyone at the meeting that I graduated from a well-known teacher preparation college in the country, and there were no rules, regulations, or codes of conduct that said teachers had to wear dark colors, teachers had to dress shabbily, or that teachers had to wear suits to work. The weather in Thailand is really hot, so I thought, 'Why did we have to wear suits to work?' I was positive that my outfits were neither indecent, nor provocative. Even though I dressed colorfully, it did not mean that I was a bad teacher, so I would keep wearing colorful outfits," says Kasemsiri.

While I am listening to Kasemsiri, I am thinking that she was really brave to defend herself. Since Thailand is a hierarchical and conservative culture, the status quo is that novice teachers are supposed to keep their mouths shut and listen to the comments

from experienced teachers. I think Kasemsiri did the right thing and was able to open up new horizons for her department. I pull myself out of my thought and hear Kasemsiri giggle while telling her stories. "After I defended my colorful dress at the staff meeting, my colleagues started to shine their sassy side, wearing colorful clothing. Some of them even thanked me for challenging the status quo."

At the end of the story, Kasemsiri and I hear the bell ring as a sign of class starting. "I have to teach a class, Denchai. Shall we stop? We can come back and finish up our interview later," Kasemsiri suggests. I agree with her. We each grab our stuff and walk to the class together. I help her carry a bag of materials and markers to class.

**In a Classroom with the
Sassy Teacher**

While we are walking to the class, I ask Kasemsiri to give me the background of this class. She tells me that this class is called English Writing for Specific Purposes, which is a compulsory subject for students majoring in science. Kasemsiri and I will meet her students for the first time.

As we walk into the classroom, all students sit quietly in their lecture chairs. There are more girls than boys; girls are sitting at the front, and boys are sitting at the back of the class. The classroom was a little bit old and small. The fans hanging on the ceiling are doing their jobs, decreasing the heat. I put the teaching materials on the table in front of the class and find myself a seat at the rear of the classroom.

One of the students speaks loudly in the Thai language, asking the class to prepare for greeting, "Students, please stand up." All of the students stand up and say, "*Sawasdee Krub! Sawasdee Kha!*" They put their hands in the middle of their chests and bow their heads to greet Kasemsiri.

She replies, "*Sawasdee Kha!*" Then she asks the students to sit down.

Kasemsiri introduces herself in English. She tells her name, her office telephone number, the location of her office, and the name of the class. While she is talking, she writes down the information on the board and amusingly asks the students in the Thai language at the end, "Is anyone in the wrong class?" The students laugh. Kasemsiri continues in English, "I have just introduced myself. Now, can you introduce yourself to me? Please tell me your name, your major, and your favorite leisurely activity."

The students introduce themselves, one by one, in English. They stand up while they are talking to the class. As the students introduce themselves, Kasemsiri moves close to the students and says, "Nice to meet you" to everyone after they are finished. When the students do not pay attention to their peers and are talking and giggling, Kasemsiri says in the Thai language, "Is it appropriate when someone talks, and you guys do not listen?" The class becomes quiet. She continues, "When someone talks, I expect everyone to be fully attentive. Okay?" The students nod their heads.

There are approximately 55 students in the class, and she patiently listens to every student. I am wondering why she is spending so much time on this activity. I assume that she wants to give an opportunity for the students to speak English, while casually assessing their communication skills. Interrupting my thought, the students clap their hands to signal the end of the introduction activity. After that, Kasemsiri administers a 3 x 5 note card where each student is to write the following information: their name, ID#, college, and major.

During the time that the students are writing their information, Kasemsiri and I walk around to check on them. I find that some of the students are having difficulty with

understanding the differences between major and college. Many of them do not know the

name of their majors and colleges in English. I ask Kasemsiri to write the information

down on the board for the students. After the students are finished, I collect the cards and

give them to Kasemsiri. She shifts to using the Thai language, "Next, I would like to talk

about classroom rules and policies." She writes down the following rules on the board:

1. Wear appropriate uniforms.

2. Attend and participate in classes.

3. Submit homework.

4. Bring a dictionary.

Kasemsiri defines appropriate uniforms, "For guys, you need to tuck your white

shirts into your black pants. You can wear short-sleeved or long-sleeved shirts, but I

would encourage you to wear short sleeves because the weather is really hot. You do not

need to wear a tie. For girls, you need to wear appropriate-length skirts and tuck your

white shirts into your skirts. Last year, one of my students was in a coma in the hospital

because she wore a skirt that was too long and the skirt coiled around a motorcycle wheel.

She almost died because of the skirt!" The students and I are shocked to hear this story.

Kasemsiri further discusses the attendance and participation policy, "Successful

students come to class and they participate, so you need to come to class prepared. You

need to bring necessary materials such as books, notebooks, and a dictionary. If you do

not have your materials, I will ask you to leave. You do not want to waste your time."

The students start to feel scared of her, so Kasemsiri smiles before talking, "You need to

turn in assignments on time at my office. I do not accept late assignment because I teach

a lot of classes, and I do not want to keep track of your late assignments." The students

listen attentively and take notes.

"Questions?" asks Kasemsiri. The students give her a dry smile. Kasemsiri

smiles back and moves on. After that, Kasemsiri asks her students to vote for the color of

their notebook; she wants her students to use the same color because she teaches many

classes, and it would be easy for her to manage her classes. The students agree to use

blue. Kasemsiri wants the students to take vocabulary notes on one side and do

homework on the other side. She checks the students' understanding before moving on

to Unit One.

"Let's begin our lesson with Unit One. We are going to write about ourselves,"

says Kasemsiri in English and continues, "Can you please pass around this handout?"

The students take one handout each and pass the rest on. While she is waiting for the

handouts to be administered, Kasemsiri asks the students in the Thai language, "Is it hot

in here?"

"Yes!" all voices answer immediately. Some of them are fanning their hands on

their faces to cool off, and others are wiping their faces with their handkerchiefs.

"I know it is hot. Please be patient. Next class, I will bring more fans. Can one

of you help me carry the fans from my office?" asks Kasemsiri with a smile. Three

students raise their hands. Kasemsiri says, "Thank you." At this point, I agree with the

students that the weather is really hot. If I were them, I definitely would not be able to

concentrate on the lesson in this hot and humid environment.

Kasemsiri interrupts my thought by saying in English, "Now, look at Unit One:

Who am I?" The students look at the handout. Kasemsiri continues using English, "In

this unit, you will write about yourselves. You will practice writing complete sentences, using the simple present tense, and using capital letters correctly. Throughout the semester, I will support and guide you through the writing process. You will write, edit, and revise in class." She pauses to make sure that the students understand. "Are you with me?" asks Kasemsiri. The students nod their heads. Then, Kasemsiri writes down the following information on the board:

1. Warming-up.

2. Language Focus.

3. Writing Focus.

4. Editing Focus.

5. Revising Focus.

Kasemsiri emphasizes in the Thai language that the handout consists of those five sections, and the students will learn until the writing focus section today. "Let's look at the warming up section, *Brainstorming Ideas*. If you want to write about yourself, what kind of information will you include in your writing?" asks Kasemsiri in English. The students do not answer. Kasemsiri translates her question into the Thai language.

One of the students answers, "Name."

Then, Kasemsiri writes the student's idea on the board. "What else?" she asks in English. When the students yell out the answers in English, Kasemsiri writes down their answers on the board: name, nickname, age, birthday, address, education, and appearance.

After brainstorming ideas with the students, Kasemsiri asks them in Thai why it is important to brainstorm ideas before writing. One of the students says in Thai, "Because it will give us some ideas to write about."

Kasemsiri smiles and says in English, "That's right! What else?" The class is quiet. "Okay, talk to your peers why it is important to brainstorm before writing." Kasemsiri gives the students ample time to come up with reasons before she discusses with the whole class.

After discussing with the students, Kasemsiri asks them to focus on the handout. On the handout, there is a picture of a boy with several vocabulary words including: name, hair, eyes, face, age, address, family, hobbies, interesting activities, personalities, favorite pet, and favorite super star. "Look at these vocabulary words and repeat after me," says Kasemsiri. She reads these words out loud, and the students follow. When the students do not pronounce the words correctly, Kasemsiri rereads them again and again, several times until the students get them right.

Kasemsiri explains the meaning of these words. For example, when she talks about faces, she describes possible shapes of faces including: oval, square, round, and diamond. Kasemsiri draws a picture of each face shape and asks the students to find their friends who have these facial shapes. The students laugh when she talks about a diamond face, which is the popular shape in the West. When she talks about hair, she writes down the following words: straight, curly, wavy, short, and long. When she talks about addresses, she tells the students how to write their addresses. She also explains the concept of hobbies and personalities in English. At this time, I am surprised at the knowledge about vocabulary that Kasemsiri has. I admit that I learned a lot by sitting there in her class. After Kasemsiri describes those words, she lets the students fill in the information. Kasemsiri and I walk around and help the students.

When the students are finished, Kasemsiri moves on, "Next, turn to Page 2. Look at the *Language Focus* section. To write about yourself, you need to know the simple present tense. Do you still remember this tense?"

All students say, "No!" and giggle.

Kasemsiri smiles while explaining the concept of the simple present tense. She describes the rules of this tense and gives examples by writing some sentences on the board. The examples are relevant and immediate to the students' lives. After she has finished describing the tense, she asks the students to complete Exercise One. In this exercise, the students need to change grammatically incorrect sentences into correct ones. She gives two examples for the students and lets them do the exercise by themselves. When the students start working on their own, Kasemsiri and I walk around to monitor the students. After the students complete the exercise, Kasemsiri randomly selects a student to answer by choosing a name card that the students wrote at the beginning of the class. The selected students read the sentences and tell the class their answers.

After giving all the correct answers to the students, Kasemsiri asks in the Thai language, "What do you think about the exercise? Does it help you recall your knowledge about the present simple tense you learned when you were in the first year?"

"Yes!" all voices answer and giggle.

Kasemsiri asks the students to complete Exercise Two and discuss the correct answer with the whole class. After that, Kasemsiri assigns the students to complete Exercise Three at home and write in their learning logs at the back of their notebooks.

"What is a learning log?" a student raises his hand and asks.

Kasemsiri smiles and responds in the Thai language, "It is your reflection on what you learned today. You need to write in English, approximately one or two paragraphs." The students moan.

One of them complains with a smile, "That's too long, Teacher!"

Kasemsiri replies, "Well, I believe you can do it. Try your best. I will not focus on your grammar. You don't need to worry about that, okay?" The students smile. Kasemsiri continues, "Next week, we are going to write about ourselves in class, so please bring a dictionary with you. We are also going to do peer review and editing. Any more question or concern for today?" No one asks any question, and Kasemsiri discusses the class.

One of the students says in English, "Stand up, please." All students stand up and say simultaneously in English, "Thank you, Teacher. See you again next time."

I walk to the front of the class to help Kasemsiri carry her teaching materials. We walk out of the class together. While we are walking downstairs, Kasemsiri suggests having lunch together at the university cafeteria. We drop our stuff at her office and head to the cafeteria at the back of her office.

After-Class Discussion

"What do you think about your teaching?" I ask Kasemsiri in the Thai language after we have our own food. I have spicy and sour noodle, and Kasemsiri has fried vegetables with rice.

Kasemsiri tries to finish chewing her food and answers, "I don't know. That is the first class, and it is hard to tell. I think the first class is the most exciting and

important period because I typically use it to assess my students' backgrounds and their

learning styles. Then, I will modify my teaching based on my students' needs."

"It seems like you have your lessons planned out before going to class. Can you

tell me a little bit more about that?" I inquire.

"Do you mean how I prepare for the class or a lesson?"

"Let's talk about preparation for the class first."

Kasemsiri smiles and answers, "Well, I have been assigned to teach writing

classes by the department head because I have taught writing for several years, but I did

not know in advance which writing class that I will teach. The classes can be academic

writing, writing for specific purposes, or formulaic writing. This year, I was assigned to

teach writing for specific purposes. I started developing this class by looking at course

descriptions prescribed from the department and . . . "

"Wait a minute. What do you mean by 'prescribed from the department'?" I

interrupt.

Kasemsiri continues, "In 2010, before the academic year started, we had a staff

meeting to go over the curriculum together. At this meeting, all teachers wrote course

descriptions together, and I typically used those descriptions to develop my classes. I

consider the descriptions to make sure that they are current. After that, I break down the

course descriptions into weekly units. In each unit, I develop teaching materials to use in

my classes."

"I see. How about a lesson preparation?" I ask.

"I normally have warm-up activities, in-class exercises, and wrap-up activities. I also plan to teach a lot of vocabulary because I feel that my students need them. I need to have enough vocabulary to be able to write."

"What do you expect from your students?"

Kasemsiri laughs before answering, "I have a lot of expectations! I expect them to be responsible, disciplined, helpful, and attentive to class. I want my students to come to class prepared. I also want my students to work collaboratively, rather than individually." As I listen to Kasemsiri's stories, I can see that her expectations are similar to Lertluck's and Chutima's. These three successful English teachers seem to expect their students to behave well in class first and acquire excellent English skills later.

Kasemsiri and I continue eating silently until we finish our lunch. We come back to her office and continue our interview. The air-conditioning room decreases the heat from outside. I sip water and start asking questions.

Teaching is Part of Me

When I ask Kasemsiri to reflect on reasons why she stays in the teaching profession, she immediately says, "Teaching is part of me." She reported that teaching is the right career for her, and it is the reasons that she wakes up every morning. She has enjoyed teaching her students and helping them become successful. In each day, she cannot imagine herself without teaching. In other words, Kasemsiri internalizes her experiences into the self, the identity that she develops over time.

Apart from teaching, Kasemsiri also heard successful stories from her students. "When my students shared their successful stories with me, and they thanked me for helping them, I felt really proud. This pride makes me stay in the teaching profession.

Last month, one of my students was selected to be an exchange student in Vietnam. She told me that she used knowledge in my writing class to write an essay, and she was selected based on the quality of her essay," says Kasemsiri. Her eyes shine with happiness as she narrates about her students.

"Are there anything else that makes you stay in the teaching profession?" I interrupt.

Kasemsiri replies immediately, "Yes. My hometown is also another reason why I stay in the teaching profession. It is my goal to teach at my hometown because I want to give back to the society. I want to take care of my parents and my family. With these reasons, I continue working in the teaching profession."

The sun gradually moves away from to east and heads to the west. I say "thank you" to Kasemsiri that she allows me to follow her like a shadow. At the end of the day, I ask her to come up with words to describe her journey to become a university teacher.

"I only have three words," says Kasemsiri with a smile. "Opportunity. Destiny. Pride."

Kasemsiri walks me to my car. "Good luck with your dissertation," she says. After that we say goodbye. I drive away back to my hometown.

A Collective Portrait of Becoming

In the previous sections, I presented individual portraits of becoming a Thai English teacher by using alternative data representation techniques in order to make this dissertation "less boring" (Caulley, 2008, p. 424). When researchers use alternative data representation in other forms of writings such as in a journal article, they have a choice whether or not to explain their alternative forms. However, as a doctoral student, I have

to explain the research results of this dissertation explicitly because a dissertation is a unique writing genre, written for a particular audience with a goal to meet the requirements for a doctoral graduation (Duke & Beck, 1999). Because of this high-stake writing, I would like to address the "so what?" question in this chapter. In doing so, I am open to and encourage other interpretations.

In trying to understand the journey to becoming a Thai English teacher, I positioned myself through the lens of goodness as a theoretical perspective (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983). Through this lens, I was able to understand the multidimensionality and complexity of this journey. However, I wanted to be upfront that this new understanding was partial and incomplete, as suggested by the concept of crystallization (Ellingson, 2009; Richardson, 1994; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005).

Guided by narrative epistemology, I conceptualized the journey to becoming a Thai English teacher as a collective set of stories that the teachers used to define who they are. These stories consist of major life events that teachers used to tell, modify, and retell to others, and they internalized those stories as a part of them. I chose to focus on three major life incidents: (a) inspirations of becoming (reasons to become an English teacher), (b) journey of becoming (teaching experience), and (c) inspiration of staying (reasons to stay in the teaching profession) (Rinke, 2008). Figure 5 illustrates incidents of the journey to becoming an English teacher.
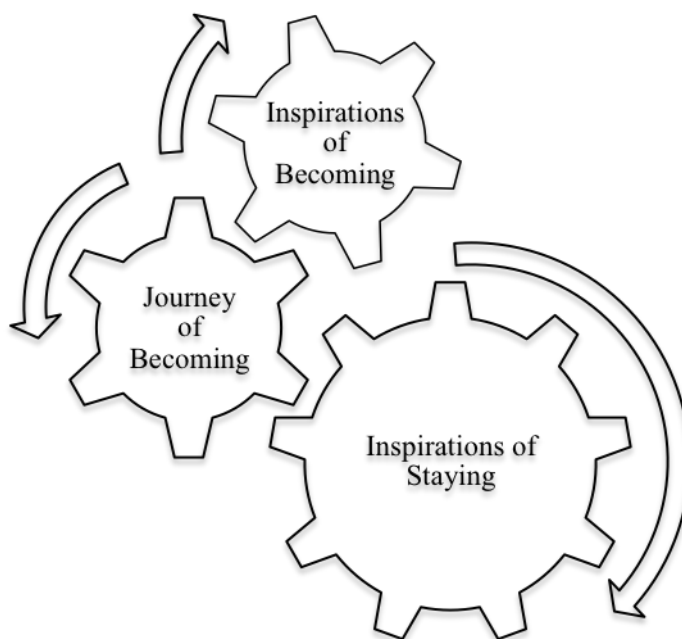
Figure 5. The journey to becoming an English teacher.

As shown in Figure 5, the cogs illustrate the notion of the journey to becoming a

Thai English teacher as an ongoing, interwoven, interrelated, and relational (Rinke, 2008).

Based on the teachers' stories, I learned that their journeys were a paradox of struggle

and success, routine and reward, boredom and delight. Throughout their journeys, the

three Thai English teachers were engaged in professional reflections and meanings, and

they centered those on their students, missions, and careers.

Inspirations of Becoming

In this section, I will answer the first research question:

Q1　How do Thai teachers describe their journey to becoming a successful
　　English teacher?

In this question, I sought to understand Thai English teachers' perspectives in describing

their inspirations of becoming a teacher. The data revealed seven themes as follows: (a)

destiny, (b) pride, (c) schooling, (d) mother, (e) job security, (f) society, and (g) resisting

an affront. Figure 6 presents the Venn diagram of the themes that emerged from the three

Thai English teachers.
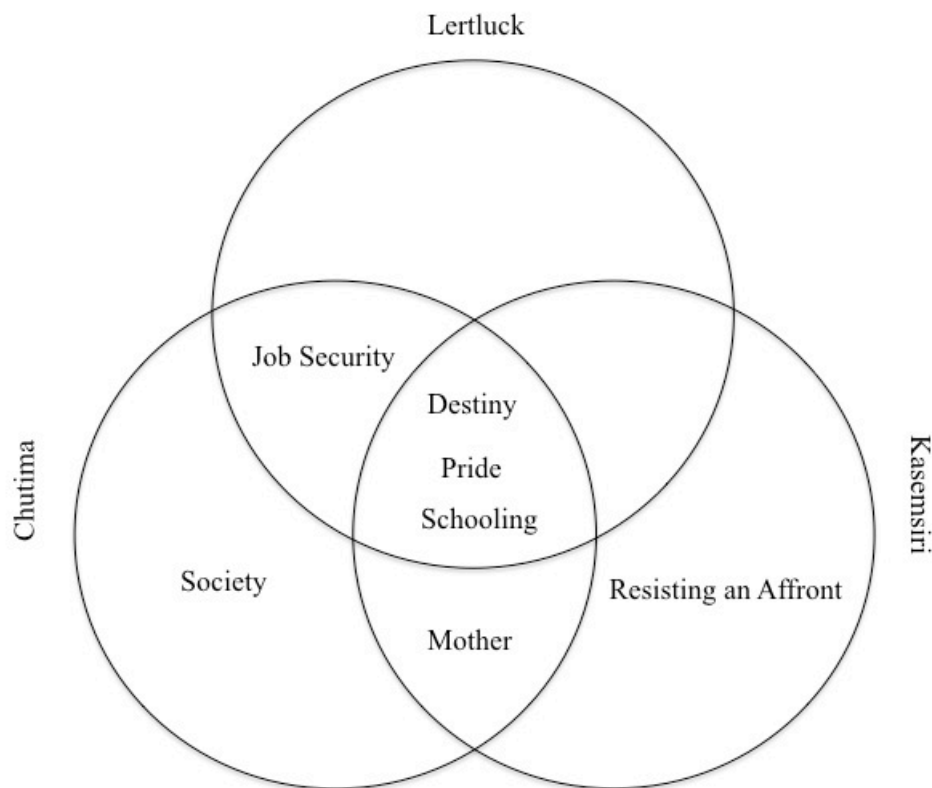
Figure 6. Venn diagram of inspirations of becoming.

As shown in Figure 6, the three teachers described their inspirations of becoming

English teachers similarly through the themes of destiny, pride, and schooling. There

were also emergent themes across two teachers. Chutima and Kasemsiri attributed their

inspirations of becoming to their mothers. Lertluck and Chutima talked about job

security as a motivation to enter the teaching profession. Additionally, there were unique

themes from individual teachers: society and resisting an affront.

It should be noted that these emergent themes are not mutually exclusive, nor

linear. They contributed to the inspirations of becoming teachers with no particular order,

creating the complexity and multidimensionality of the journey to becoming an English teacher. The Venn diagram presented above could not present the complicated, ongoing, and developmental nature of this journey. In deciphering and presenting each theme separately, I do not attempt to simplify this complicated and developmental nature of the journey. I will present the themes across three teachers, the ones that were shared between two teachers, and the unique themes, respectively.

Destiny. All three Thai English teachers described their journeys to becoming an English teacher as destiny. Based on the description by the three Thai English teachers, destiny means different things to them. Lertluck described her destiny as a source from the Devas, a member of class of divine beings in Buddhism. Chutima and Kasemsiri did not mention any source of destiny. Both of them reported, "It is just my destiny." There were several incidents that made the three Thai English teachers attribute their journeys to becoming an English teacher to destiny because they felt those incidents were accidental, difficult to explain by using logic, and beyond their expectations.

Lertluck, a middle school Thai English teacher, expressed her strong belief in becoming an English teacher as a destiny that was predestined by multiple Devas. She said, "It seemed like I was born to be an English teacher. Multiple Devas have threaded my life destiny, putting me into places with the end goal to be an English teacher." She described her birth in the family of teachers as the Devas' blessings. She also said that the Devas inspired her to love English because, given the nature of her hometown where it was difficult to access English, it seemed impossible for her to love English.

Throughout her life, Lertluck felt that she was given blessings from the Devas to have education. She started her schooling at the kindergarten level, which was not

typical for anyone at that time. She mentioned that the Devas inspired her to like school.

When she was in middle school, the Devas took her to see Benchama Maharat, where she

was impressed with the majestic school building while carrying a letter to her teacher's

husband. During her practicum teaching when Lertluck was studying the certificate of

higher education, she believed that the Devas offered blessings for her to pursue a

bachelor's degree, and she felt that she was accepted to the best teacher preparation

school in Thailand because the Devas listened to her wishes.

When Lertluck did not pass a selective examination to major in English during

her bachelor's degree, she was disappointed and lost her self-confidence. Luckily, she

met a friend who suggested that Lertluck write a letter to the dean for consideration of

changing her major from geography to English. Lertluck finally got into an English

major. "If I had not met this friend, I would not have become an English teacher. Who

knows? I think only the Devas could make that happen," concluded Lertluck.

Lertluck decided to take a selective examination to teach at Benchama Maharat on

a dare. She was not confident that she would pass the exam, so she prayed for blessings

from the Devas. When Lertluck passed the selective examination in the first rank, she

attributed this success to the Devas. After teaching at Benchama Maharat, Lertluck

wanted to teach at a university. She passed a written exam, but failed during the

interview. She ascribed this failing to her destiny; the Devas did not want her to teach at

the university level. Based on all of these unexplainable incidents, Lertluck felt that she

became an English teacher because of her destiny, prescribed by the Devas.

Chutima, a high school Thai English teacher, described two accidental events as

her destiny. The first incident was when she decided on a major while she was pursuing

a certificate of higher education program, now equivalent to high school. Initially, she intended to major in science because she performed well. However, her friends dragged her into the English major. "It was meant to be," Chuatima said with a smile. The second incident was when she decided to transfer from a rural school to a city school. Chutima did not expect to teach at Benchama because she thought it was a privilege. At first, she decided to go to another school, but there was no vacancy. Chutima went to Benchama and found out that there was only one seat available. "It was unbelievable, but I think it was my fate," summarized Chutima.

Kasemsiri felt that her whole journey of becoming a university English teacher was predestined. When she was in high school, she knew that she wanted to become a schoolteacher. However, Kasemsiri changed her determination to become a university teacher during college. Because a university teacher required at least a master's degree, Kasemsiri was determined that she would become a university teacher after working at a school. "By the age of 30, I would become a university teacher," narrated Kasemsiri. Luckily, she was given an opportunity to apply for a teaching position in her hometown after she was newly graduated. She felt that it was beyond her expectation to become a university English teacher so early. "That must be destiny," Kasemsiri concluded.

The theme of destiny in this study seems contradictory to previous studies in the western, Christian context. Nieto (2003) argued that the journey to become an English teacher is not about destiny. She argued that being a member of a specific group, such as a family of teachers, did not limit or guarantee one's only possibilities in life. Nieto seems to describe destiny as a fixed, limited, and unchangeable circumstance that is prescribed by external sources, such as God, and individuals cannot take control over

their destiny. However, the three successful Thai English teachers in this study seemed to describe destiny as a direct result of their endeavors, actions, and behaviors. In other words, their destinies were alterable, and they had power to change their destinies. This view is derived from a Buddhism perspective based on the law of Karma.

In Buddhism, Karma (action) is the principle of causality in which individuals' past and present actions will influence their future. The Buddha taught that destiny relies on Karma and is governed by one's past and present actions in creating the future. Based on the notion of destiny from a Buddhist perspective, when the three Thai English teachers attributed their inspirations of becoming to destiny, they did not wait passively for their destiny. Indeed, they had a goal to become English teachers, gradually created their own courses of action, collected pieces of experience, and persevered in creating their journeys to becoming English teachers.

After the teachers worked hard and achieved their goals, why did they not claim that they became teachers because of their actions and efforts? Why did they attribute their journeys to destiny? Was it because of gender, that they are females? Perhaps Kasemsiri's response was an answer to these questions. She reported, "Because it is beyond my expectation." All three successful Thai English teachers felt that their journeys were beyond what they expected. As a result of these unexplainable events, the teachers used Buddhism to explain their consequences.

Pride. The three English teachers in this study all mentioned that they became an English teacher because they thought teaching is equivalent to pride. The notion of pride as described by the teachers was made up of collective, emotional, and pleasurable

moments that they gradually internalized from several external sources, such as family heritages, personal interaction with others, verbal compliments, and society.

From a sociocultural perspective, the notion of pride in the Thai context seems to be relatively different from the western context. In Thailand, pride is not something to express verbally because it is not appropriate and is perceived as arrogant if one shows pride in public. When the three Thai English teachers talked about pride, they meant they quietly felt proud on the inside. They let the feeling of pride sink in and tried to process pleasurable moments. In other words, pride in the Thai context is appreciative, rather than expressive.

Lertluck is a person who takes pride in her life. As a young child, she remembered she was proud to grow up in "the family of pride." Her grandfather was a nobleman who was given his title by the King. Her grandfather donated his personal property to establish a school. The school acknowledged her grandfather's contribution by inscribing his name on the school's plaque. Every time she visited that school, she felt proud. Her father was a school principal, who was well respected by other villagers.

Apart from the family heritage, Lertluck was also a source of pride for her family because she was an exceptional student. When she was in elementary school, she was always in the top of her class. During middle school, she passed a selective examination to study at the best school in her hometown, Ubon Ratchathani. When she pursued her bachelor's degree, she was studying in the best teacher preparation program in Thailand. These schooling experiences brought pride to her family as well as herself.

The moment that Lertluck felt the most proud was being an English teacher at Benchama Maharat. It was her determination when she was in middle school to become

a teacher at Benchama Maharat because she liked the school. "I wanted to work at Benchama Maharat because it was a privilege and filled with dignity," said Lertluck with a smile and continued, "I wanted to work at a good place, where people dressed up well, and they were polite. Benchama Maharat matched perfectly with my expectation."

For Chutima, she decided to become a teacher because she was born in a family of teachers. Both of her parents were elementary school teachers in a rural area. Growing up, she experienced several moments of pride. In the rural area context, when her parents were invited to a community get-together event, Chutima and her parents were treated specially. The locals respected her parents. Many of them called her "the daughter of teachers." Those moments brought pride to her, and the moments had an impact on her decisions to become a teacher.

Unlike Lertluck and Chutima, Kasemsiri did not take pride in growing up in a family of teachers. Her father was an engineer, and her mother was a schoolteacher in the metropolitan area where the teaching job was not popular. Her source of pride was her schooling experience. Kasemsiri was proud that she went to a school where she learned to become a person who loved English and a person with good manners. This school affected Kasemsiri personally and professionally; she is organized and loves English because of this school.

Kasemsiri decided to become a university English teacher because that job is regarded as high-status, which brings pride and dignity to her and the family. It is difficult to become a university teacher in Thailand because individuals need to have at least a master's degree, and the competition is high stakes. She initially wanted to be a

schoolteacher, but she changed her determination to become a university teacher due to the pride this job provides.

The three English teachers were gradually internalizing a sense of pride, and this internalization process affected their decisions to become English teachers. The theme of pride was consistent with previous studies (Huberman, 1993; Lortie, 2002). In the study by Huberman (1993), teachers entered the teaching profession because they perceived teaching as a way to access higher status. The term "higher status" based on the stories of the three English teachers did not mean that they had low status and wanted to move up in their status by becoming English teachers. Instead, these teachers were already in high status, and they wanted to maintain this status to carry on their family heritage.

Schooling. The theme of schooling emerged from all three of the English teachers as an inspiration to becoming English teachers. From the three teachers' perspectives, schooling refers to a process of formal, informal, and non-formal education with which they grew up. This theme covered a wide range of schooling including their families, embodying the roles of teachers, excellent students, and teacher impressions. All teachers in this study grew up in a school atmosphere. Lertluck's father took her to school with him because her mother had to take care of other younger siblings. Chutima also followed her parents to school, and Kasemsiri tailed after her mother to school.

Growing up, the three English teachers embodied the role of teachers with their sibling and friends, such as teaching, maintaining discipline, and grading. Lertluck and Kasemsiri invited their siblings and friends from nearby houses to play, themselves in the role of teacher. Both of them reported that they had fun playing this role. Chutima did

not mention explicitly playing the role of teacher, but she helped her mother with school-related jobs, such as grading or filling out scores.

In his study, Olsen (2008) described the act of "playing teacher" (p. 27) as a gender-related influence. The teachers in his study dedicated part of their decisions to become teachers to their acting the role of teacher, particularly mimicking their female teachers. Olsen discussed this behavior as a "gender-appropriate form of play" (p. 28). He further argued that the teachers did not do role-playing of fire persons, police officers, or athletic coaches because those roles were not appropriate for females.

However, the results in this study do not support Olsen's argument. I argue that it is common for children to imitate their surroundings during their developmental stages. In this study, the actors mimicked the role of teachers because they grew up in a family of teachers who were in the school context. Lertluck was taken to the school by her father. Chutima helped her mother perform teachers' tasks. Kasemsiri grew up mostly with her mother because her father had to work at engineering sites. Teachers seemed to be an immediate resource for the teachers in this study to imitate. I argue that this has nothing to do with the traditional gender-related roles proposed by Olsen (2008).

Additionally, all three of the English teachers in this study liked school, and they performed well academically. Chutima was always in the top of her class, and she was particularly good at science and English subjects. Kasemsiri exceled in her English classes because her school emphasized the importance of learning English. Lertluck did not mention explicitly the content subject in which she performed exceptionally. She only said that she was always in the top of her class. Since these three English teachers exceled in school, they wanted to continue working in a school environment.

Chutima and Kasemsiri met their inspirational teachers at a young age. Both of them had a favorable impression of their favorite English teachers. Chutima said, "I still remember my favorite English teacher's name. She made English fun, and I really liked to learn with her." Similarly, Kemsiri met her favorite English teacher when she was in high school. She liked this teacher because the teacher was posh and elegant. "I wanted to be posh like my English teacher," said Kasemsiri lightheartedly. While Lertluck did not have a particularly favorite teacher, she liked school. "I always wanted to go to school. I loved the fun I had at school," Lertluck concluded.

The theme of schooling is aligned with previous literature (Burton & Johnson, 2010; Hayes, 2008; Huberman, 1993; Lortie, 2002). These studies found that positive learning experiences, inspirational teachers, and successful learning contributed to the decisions to becoming teachers. In this study, Lertluck, Chutima, and Kasemsiri were all successful learners, particularly in English, and they had positive schooling experiences. This finding showed that schooling was a process of forming the desire to enter into the teaching profession.

Mother. Chutima and Kasemsiri talked about their mothers as inspirational influences on their decisions to becoming English teachers. These two teachers grew up closer to their mothers than to their fathers. As an older child, Chutima was expected to be a role model for her siblings by her mother. Her mother taught her to take care of her siblings. Kasemsiri stayed mostly with her mother because her father worked outside, and he came back home late.

To Chutima, her mother was an idol. She remembered that her mother was an exceptional student. "My mother was always in the top of her class, and I wanted to

follow her path," said Chutima. Her mother had an influence on several of her decisions. For example, when Chutima was reluctant to make a decision about whether to go to a nursing college, her mother suggested she go to a teaching college. As an older child, she believed in her mother and decided to pursue a certificate of education.

Similar to Chuitma's, Kasemsiri's mother was influential in her life. Her mother chose "the only school" for her, where she learned to love English and became the person she is now. When Kasemsiri was young, her mother also took her to take extra classes, such as music, dance, and art, in attempts to prepare her to have exceptional talents. When Kasemsiri was in college and lived in a campus apartment, she called her mother to consult with her when she encountered problems. This close relationship with her mother may have influenced Kasemsiri's decision to become a university English teacher since her mother was also a schoolteacher.

On the contrary, Lertluck was reluctant to attribute her motivation to becoming an English teacher to her mother and other family members, even though she was born into a family of teachers. Her father was a school principal, and her oldest sister was a teacher. When I asked her whether her father expected her to become a teacher, Lertluck replied immediately, "Not really! I remembered my father told my sister to become a teacher. I guess it is kind of seeing and looking at both of them that made me want to become a teacher. I don't know."

Lertluck talked about the role of her mother as "a super woman." Her mother was a stay-at-home mom, raising and taking care of 11 children. Her father was the family head earning money to support the family. When her father passed away, the family received a pension from her father's death. "That pension was the only money we had to

support ourselves," Lertluck narrated and continued, "With my mother's long-term vision, she used a part of this money to buy a house in the city. This house was a place for me and my other siblings to stay when we were in middle school. Without my mother, I would not have a place to stay while pursuing my education in the city."

In a previous study, Hayes (2008) argued that family was a strong influence on the decision to become a teacher. However, in this dissertation, particularly in Chutima's and Kasemsiri's cases, the mother was the most influential person in their families. Even though Chutima's father was a teacher like her mother, Chutima did not talk about her father as an inspirational motive. Based on these two teachers' stories, motherhood seemed to be an inspirational motivation to enter the teaching profession.

Job Security. Huberman (1993) described job security as a type of motivation for becoming a teacher. In this dissertation, job security also emerged as a theme from the stories of Lertluck and Chutima. Even though this theme was not seen across the stories of the three English teachers, it was important for Lertluck and Chutima in entering the teaching profession. From these two teachers' perspectives, the notion of job security refers to the immediacy of getting a job (how fast they could get a job), rather than the stability of a job (how long they could hold a job).

One of the reasons that pushed Lertluck to decide on becoming a teacher was because she could get a job faster. Given the fact that there were so many people in her family, Lertluck was obligated to get a job as soon as possible in order to take care of her younger siblings. After middle school, Lertluck wanted to ease her family's financial burden, so she decided to pursue a certificate of education, equivalent to high school. Similarly, Chutima decided to pursue a certificate of education, equivalent to high school,

because her mother suggested that she would get a job faster. At that time, it took only

two years to graduate with that certificate, and the two teachers would have a chance to

take a selective examination to become a teacher.

Society. Chutima was the only teacher who attributed her inspiration of

becoming an English teacher to the society in which she grew up. She was born into a

family of teachers in the small rural village of Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand. In this

society, there were only two types of jobs: rice farmers and teachers. Among the two, the

teaching job was seen as a popular career because a farmer was regarded as a low-status

career. Given the fact that Chutima was a daughter of teachers, she was treated well by

the locals. The limited career opportunity in this society provided limited choices from

which Chutima could decide.

Lertluck and Kasemsiri did not talk explicitly about the society they grew up in as

a motivator to becoming an English teacher. However, Kasemsiri mentioned the society

as a way to do something different from social norms. Unlike Chutima, Kasemsiri grew

up in a big city where a teaching job was regarded as a low-paid career. "People in my

community wanted to work in a business company because of higher salary," said

Kasemsiri. From observing company officers while growing up, Kasemsiri decided that

she did not want a job like theirs. "I think it's boring to work in a company," she said.

Resisting an Affront. This theme refers to Kasemsiri. She was determined to

become a university English teacher because she wanted to resist an affront by her

grandfather and the society in which she grew up. The affront started when she was in

middle school, deciding which academic track to choose. Kasemsiri wanted to become

an English teacher, so she chose to study in an arts-math program. Her decision upset her

family, especially her grandfather, who wanted her to become a doctor, a profession that would need a science-math program as an academic track.

Kasemsiri insisted on studying in the Arts-Math program. She did not want to study physics, chemistry, or biology when she did not need those subjects to get into college. She said, "I did not need science because I did not want to be a doctor, a nurse, or a scientist." Her grandfather and other family members continued bugging her about her decision. One day, she felt annoyed and determined to become more than a schoolteacher. She wanted to become a university teacher, a job of high status, because she wanted to prove to herself that she made the right decision.

Journey of Becoming

In this section, I want to answer the first sub research question:

SQ1   What has been the teaching experience of successful English teachers in Thailand?

In other words, I wanted to examine how the three English teachers became successful. To answer this question, I want to go back to the time when these English teachers were students (educational journey) and their teaching experiences (professional journey). I also want to discuss the characteristics of the three English teachers in an attempt to contribute to the literature on successful teachers.

Educational journey of becoming. Before the three English teachers became teachers, they were students who went through the process of education. Table 1 summarizes the educational journey of the three English teachers.

Table 1

Educational Journey of Becoming

Educational Journey	Lertluck	Chutima	Kasemsiri
Start of educational journey	Kindergarten	Elementary	Nursery
Elementary school	7 years	7 years	6 years
3 years of middle school			
2 years of certificate of education			3 years of high school
2 years of certificate of higher education			N/A
Bachelor's degree	4 years	2 years	4 years
Master's degree	N/A	N/A	
Started learning English	Grade 5	Grade 5	Nursery
Teaching entry	Bachelor's degree	Certificate of higher education	Bachelor's degree
Living abroad experience	1 year in Australia 6 months in Canada 2 weeks in Oxford	2 weeks in Perth 4 months in Sydney	N/A

As shown in Table 1, the three Thai English teachers received their formal schooling differently. This difference paints a picture of an educational system and the history of teacher education in Thailand. There are both similarities and differences among these three English teachers. To begin, their educational journeys started differently. Lertluck started her education at the kindergarten level, while Chutima began

her education at the elementary level, and Kasemsiri started her educational journey at the nursery level. At the elementary school level, Lertluck and Chutima took seven years to finish, while Kasemsiri went through this elementary education in only six years.

Another major difference in the educational system was that Lertluck and Chutima received a two-year certificate of education for high school, which was equivalent to the three-year high school from which Kasemsiri graduated. With this two-year certificate of education, Lertluck and Chutima could take a selective examination to become a schoolteacher. However, Lertluck decided not to take the examination because she was motivated to pursue a bachelor's degree. Similarly, Chutima was not old enough, so she continued to pursue a two-year certificate of higher education.

After receiving a legitimate degree, the three English teachers decided to enter the teaching profession. All three English teachers became English teachers by taking a selective examination. Chutima took the selective examination after she finished her certificate of higher education. After two years of teaching, Chutima went back to school for a bachelor's degree. She got a scholarship from the government to purse this degree. Lertluck and Kasemsiri took a selective examination to become English teachers after they finished their bachelor's degrees. Both decided to pursue a master's degree, but Lertluck did not finish because she received a scholarship to study in Canada. Kasemsiri finished her master's degree while teaching at her university.

In regards to their learning English experiences, Kasemsiri started learning English at the earliest age, when she was in a nursery school, while Chutima and Lertluck started learning English when they were in fifth grade, which was more the norm of the time. During her school life, Kasemsiri went to a privileged school that emphasized the

importance of English. She was learning English every day, reciting vocabulary, dictating, and reading. The school was systematic and demanded high standards for the curricula and for the students. This made Kasemsiri fall in love with English. Chutima and Lertluck went to a school near their hometowns. Chutima loved English because she liked an English teacher, while Lertluck liked English because she loved English songs by Cliff Richard.

Among the three English teachers, Lertluck and Chutima had experiences living abroad, while Kasemsiri did not. Lertluck received scholarships to live in three English-speaking countries: Australia, Canada, and England. She went to Australia to pursue a certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), to Canada to take a short course in tourism, and to Oxford to develop her English skills. Chutima also received a scholarship to master her English in Perth and Sydney, Australia. Both reported that the experience of living abroad expanded their horizons.

Lertluck felt the experience of living in English-speaking countries helped develop her English proficiency. "I learned a lot when I lived in Australia, Canada, and England. Living abroad helped me develop my English proficiency," said Lertluck with a smile. Chutima did not talk about her English proficiency as a result of living abroad, but she felt that it helped her better understand English and Thai cultures. Unlike the other two teachers, Kasemsiri did not live abroad. Even though she did not live abroad, I still think that she has sound English language knowledge, especially vocabulary and grammar. When I observed her classes, I found myself learning a many vocabulary.

Professional journey of becoming. In this section, I want to highlight the journeys of becoming a successful English teacher after these English teachers started

working. I will address the question "how did they get there, being successful?" In order to do so, I will describe the schools where they have taught, the positions they have held, and the characteristics they possess. Table 2 summarizes their professional journeys.

Table 2

Professional Journey of Becoming

Teachers	Schools Taught	Positions Held
Lertluck	Benchama Maharat	English Teacher Head of English Department Secretary of ERIC Director of English Program
Chutima	Baan Kamin Muangsamsib Amphawanwittaya Khemarat Pittayakom Benchama Maharat	English Teacher English Teacher Extra-class Tutor English Teacher English Teacher Head of the Star of Language Project

Kasemsiri	Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat
	    University
		English Teacher
		Coordinator of General Education
		    (GE)
		Department Secretary

All three English teachers were promoted to occupy an important position at their schools because of their outstanding accomplishments, responsible characteristics, and work ethics. Throughout their professional journeys, Lertluck was appointed to take several administrative positions, while Chutima initiated several academic projects for her students, and Kasemsiri was a coordinator with her fellow teachers on several projects.

Unlike other teachers in this study, Lertluck started working at Benchama Maharat after she passed a selective examination, and she never moved to any other

school. She was determined to teach at Benchama Maharat since she was in middle school because she was impressed with the school's elegant look. After 40 years of teaching at Benchama Maharat, Lertluck is currently the director of the English Program. She was previously appointed to the position of head of the English Department and the Secretary of English Resources Instruction Center (ERIC).

Apart from administrative roles, Lertluck participated in all school-related activities. She was a cooperative and well-rounded person. Lertluck was interested in professional development workshops, sports, and Boy Scouts. As an ERIC secretary, Lertluck was given opportunities to participate in professional development workshops, and she was obligated to distribute knowledge gained from workshops to other network English teachers. With this role, Lertlcuk said, "I became a better teacher."

Additionally, Lertluck participated in all extra-curricular activities such as sport days and community services. She was a cheerleader during a teacher's sport day. She took her students to volunteer at a candle festival, a nationally famous festival in Ubon Ratchathani. Lertluck also loved to teach Boy Scouts, a subject that many teachers did not like. She participated in several Boy Scout trainings. When I asked her why she liked teaching Boy Scouts, Lertluck responded immediately, "It is because Boy Scouts teaches my students to be humble, self-sufficient, and ethical." Listening to her words, I was mesmerized by her simple, yet inspirational vision.

As a researcher, I felt that Lertluck enjoyed spending time at Benchama Maharat. Her motivation for becoming an English teacher did not go away. When I asked her why she did so many activities and why she was given many opportunities to lead in several projects, Lertluck smiled before answering, "It is because I am open to opportunity. I

grab the opportunity that the school gives me. I never say no." With this excitement at work, Lertluck was selected to be the director of the English Program, an important position in her "soon-retiring" phase of being an English teacher.

Contrary to Lertluck, Chutima moved to several schools before she was finally at Benchama Maharat. The first school with which she was affiliated was Baan Kamin, an elementary school. Chutima was at this school for a few months and decided to move to a high school, Muangsamsib Amphawanwittaya, because she wanted to teach at a secondary school. Chutima spent 10 years teaching at this school. She developed a free tutoring program for her students with a goal to help them master knowledge in order to compete with other students in the city.

After that, Chutima moved to Khemarat Pittayakom School and spent two years there. She finally moved to Benchama Maharat, where she developed "the star of language" program to offer certificates of achievement for students who received the highest scores in English and other foreign languages classes throughout the school. Based on my observations, Chutima is a cooperative teacher; she strictly follows the school's rules, directions, and legislations. She also shows initiative in helping her students learn to their best abilities.

Kasemsiri started working as an English teacher, teaching English in General Education (GE). This class was required for every student university-wide. After a few years, she was selected from her colleagues to be a coordinator of this GE English. As a coordinator, Kasemsiri developed systematic cooperation and meeting. She was the first person who created an answer sheet that was easier to grade, suggested having four versions of tests, and wrote directions, rules, and codes of dress on a test cover sheet.

What she designed when she was a GE coordinator was used and continues to be used even now. With her creativity and innovation, Kasemsiri was recently asked to serve as a department secretary. The secretary position in this context is similar to Lertluck's job. As a secretary, Kasemsiri serves as an assistant to the director in cooperating and communicating with fellow teachers in the department and across campus. She does not need to do clerical work because the department hires another staff member to do that. In Thailand, university teachers are required to not only teach and research, but to also contribute their time to outside responsibilities.

The three English teachers in this study did not become successful without effort. Rather, they possessed certain characteristics that facilitated this successful journey. Other teachers might want to learn from these English teachers' examples. To begin, all three English teachers were exertive in their teaching. They invested their energy and potential to help their students learn. They were also responsible, getting the job done while managing their other roles. In addition, these English teachers were innovative, coming up with new ways of teaching and administrating. These were common characteristics that I found among the three English teachers.

I also found unique characteristic of each teacher. Lertluck is a well-rounded person. She had many interests, such as professional development, sports, and Boy Scouts. She always described herself as a "front row" person. When the school had a meeting or when she participated in a workshop, Lertluck liked to sit in the front and pay attention to every detail. The school principal also described her as a leadership teacher. Lertluck was a leader in many school projects, such as training students to participate in English competitions and speaking during a national sport day. When Lertluck was with

her students, she expressed her kindheartedness to students. She would not teach while she was angry. She felt that negative emotions did not help her students learn.

Chutima was a well-mannered teacher. She was described by her students as "the most polite teacher." She never used profanity or acted aggressively toward her students. She said, "I don't like listening to bad words, so I would not say them to my students. I put myself in the students' shoes." Throughout my observations, I agreed with Chutima that she was calm and kind while teaching her students. When her students behaved inappropriately in class, such as talking in class or using cell phones, Chutima patiently told her students to stop the inappropriate behaviors.

Kasemsiri described herself as a sassy teacher who held her students to high standards and supported them in reaching those standards. She had several ways to deal with inappropriate behaviors and uniforms, such as telling dangerous stories of dressing inappropriately or setting clear consequences of violating rules. Kasemsiri was also an advocate for change. She was not trapped by the organizational status quo. She challenged the dress, revised examination rules, and created new answer sheets. During classroom instruction, Kasemsiri was also humorous; she made jokes on several occasions, which lightened up the learning atmosphere. As I sat in her classroom, I laughed many times at her jokes and thought she was smart and clever.

In conclusion, the following characteristics of these three English teachers helped them become successful: exertive, responsible, innovative, well-rounded, good leader, kindhearted, well-mannered, advocate for change, and humorous. These characteristics are consistent with previous studies (Ayers, 1989; Cambone, 1990; Esquith, 2003, 2007; Gordon, 1973; Huang, 2010; Miller, 2012; Nieto, 2005; Peshkin, 2001; Werbińska, 2009).

In presenting the characteristics in this section, I would like to make it explicit for readers to learn about these successful English teachers.

Inspirations of Staying

In this section, I would like to answer the second sub research question:

SQ2   What motivates successful English teachers in Thailand to stay in the teaching profession?

This question was conceptualized to contribute to the literature on the teacher shortage crisis and teachers' professional lives by shifting a perspective of investigating teacher attrition (e.g., Hahs-Vaughn & Scherff, 2008; Handcock & Scherff, 2010) to sustaining teachers (e.g., Freedman & Appleman, 2009; Rinke, 2008; Schaefer et al., 2012). The analysis of the data yielded six themes: (a) students, (b) pride, (c) teaching, (d) sense of belonging, (e) right career, and (f) hometown. Figure 7 summarizes the themes across the three English teachers.
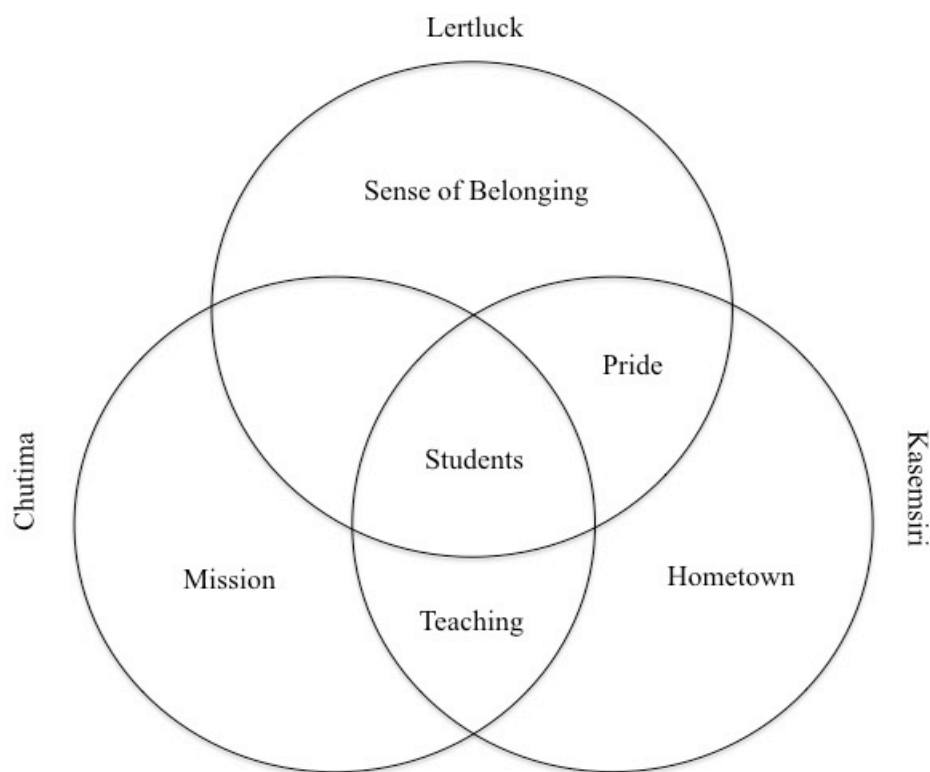
Figure 7. Venn diagram of inspirations of staying.

As shown in Figure 7, there is an overlapping theme across the three English teachers: students. There are two other themes that emerged from two teachers: pride and teaching. Finally, there are unique themes that emerged: sense of belonging, mission, and hometown. It should be noted again that the Venn diagram presented above could not capture the ongoing nature of the journey to becoming an English teacher. The figure is used to illustrate the commonality of themes among the teachers only.

The themes illustrated above are interrelated. There is a connectional device that glues these themes together, the act of revisiting those themes. To elaborate, the reasons that these English teachers stay in the teaching profession consist of the themes

mentioned above, and the teachers revisited those themes again and again in their stories, which helped them stay in the teaching profession. For example, when they were bored with teaching, they revisited the fun they had with students, the pride they felt in being a teacher, the teaching they enjoyed, the sense of belonging they had, and the hometown they wanted to service. The six themes will be discussed below, respectively.

Students. All three English teachers attributed an inspiration of staying in the teaching profession to students. They reported that they stayed in the teaching profession because they wanted to help their students become successful, and they learned about successful stories that their students shared with them. The students that these English teachers referred to were mostly those who graduated. Because the graduated students came back to visit them, the teachers learned about the success of their students.

Lertluck was determined to become a teacher because she wanted to have her own students. When she started teaching, she felt that she was given love and trust from students and their parents. When she learned that her students were successful, she felt she was part of their success. Similarly, Kasemsiri reported that she stayed in the teaching profession because of her students. When she received news of her students' success, she felt she was glad she helped them. Additionally, Chutima talked about the happiness that she had when she spent time with her students.

This theme was consistent with a study by Nieto (2003). She argued that some of the reasons that teachers stayed in the teaching profession were a desire to be part of students' success and the appreciation of their impacts on students. In this study, the relationship between students and teachers also contributed to an inspiration of staying.

Pride. Lertluck and Kasemsiri described their inspirations for staying in the teaching profession as pride. Between the two teachers, the notion of pride differed slightly. Lertluck was proud to teach at Benchama Maharat, but Kasemsiri took pride in learning that her students became successful. She also felt proud because she was a university English teacher. The theme of pride was not found in previous studies. This theme might be unique in the Thai context.

Lertluck attributed a reason for staying in the teaching profession to the school with which she was affiliated, Benchama Maharat. She was determined to teach at this school since she was in middle school, and she passed a selective examination in the first rank. These experiences contributed to her inspirations of staying. Contrary to Lertluck, Kasemsiri expressed the feeling of pride after learning that her students were successful and after they shared their successful stories with her. The teaching job made her want to stay and continue helping students become successful.

Teaching. Chutima and Kasemsiri mentioned the teaching job itself as an inspiration of staying in the teaching profession. Both of them loved the nature of the teacher profession including reading, preparing, teaching, communicating, assessing, evaluating, and grading. They do these jobs every day, and they enjoy it. That is why they never left this profession. This theme was not found in the literature.

When I asked why she stayed in the teaching profession, Kasemsiri immediately responded, "I have one life, and teaching has become part of me." She could not imagine doing other kinds of work. She loved teaching university students. She used the words "adult learners" to describe her students. Similar to Kasemsiri, Chutima enjoyed reading and preparing for lessons. She felt that she learned something new every day.

Sense of belonging. Lertluck talked about a sense of belonging as her inspiration for staying in the teaching profession. Throughout her 40 years of teaching, there were moments when she felt bored and wanted to quit. She was even thinking about early retirement because of this boredom, but what kept her in the teaching profession was the sense of belonging she had with others. This theme was not found in the literature.

Lertluck felt that she was part of the community of teachers, employed people, and students. This sense of belonging gave her energy and power to stay in the teaching profession. She imagined herself without work and compared that image to unemployed people. Lertluck narrated, "When I feel bored, I often think of the time that I have fellow teachers. I am at school. I have friends. When the school has a sport day, I can wear the same color outfit with my friends. We have fun. Why do I have to quit?"

Lertluck also felt that she was a valuable person. She thought students and their parents needed her. When she went to teach, she could talk to students. When the students' parents wanted to consult about their children, they came to talk to her. As a result of this interaction, Lertluck gained a sense of belonging. She said, "I felt like I was part of their lives." In other words, it seemed to me that Lertluck saw herself as part of a culture of schooling.

Mission. Chutima ascribed her inspiration of staying in the teaching profession to the mission she held. The mission was about helping her students become successful. As a result of this mission, Chutima devoted herself to teaching and stayed in the teaching profession. She spent a lot of time preparing lessons, reflecting on her teaching practices, and going through materials as if she were a student. As a teacher, Chutima also dedicated herself to professional development to find ways to teach her students.

This mission created a routine of reading, preparing, and reflecting. This routine became the nature of the job that she enjoyed. Chutima narrated, "I have a mission and a faith in the teaching profession that it would help my students become successful. I stayed in the teaching profession because it was the right career for me. I love every minute of it. I never count down to my retirement."

This theme of mission was consistent with a previous study by Freedman and Appleman (2009). They reported that teachers stayed in the teaching profession because of a sense of mission that they developed during the teacher preparation program. In this study, I argue that Chutima's sense of mission was developed a long time ago, back to her childhood experience growing up in a family of teachers, and this mission was internalized little by little through everyday life experience. The teacher preparation program might have helped develop the mission, but it was not a major source. Chutima did not attribute her source of mission to the teacher preparation program, even though I asked her explicitly. This showed me a sense of mission that developed over time, and it was still developing through everyday experience.

Hometown. Kasemsiri reported that she stayed in the teaching profession because of her hometown. After she got a job as a university English teacher in her hometown, Kasemsiri was determined to teach her students in this hometown to be equipped with necessary English knowledge. She felt that helping her hometown was part of her teaching mission. Kasemsiri narrated, "I cannot see myself living outside of my hometown. This is my place. This is my culture. This is where my parents and friends live. I want to stay in my hometown so that I can take care of my parents and my family."

It seemed to me that when Kasemsiri talked about her hometown, she more likely referred to her family than to the town itself. Teaching in the hometown gave her a chance to take care of her parents because she felt the need to pay back her parents' benevolence, raising her up. In Thailand, the value of gratitude is practiced in many families. Similar to Kasemsiri, when I was young, I grew up with the value of returning good deeds to others. At home, I learned to be grateful and to remember benevolence that others gave me. At school, the teachers emphasized the importance of returning favors.

Chapter Summary

In this Chapter, I presented individual teacher's portraits of their journey to becoming Thai English teachers. Based on the level of education at which the actors teach, I presented Lertluck's, Chutima's, and Kasemsiri's portrait, respectively. In each portrait, I used themes to create a central story and employed alternative data representation techniques. After individual portraits, I pulled out themes, presented them separately, and compared the findings across teachers. In the next chapter, I will summarize the results, discuss implications, and provide recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

"The best ways to learn about teaching is to see it up close."
(Gregory Michie, 2005, p. 183)

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the journey to becoming an English

teacher, including reasons of becoming an English teacher, teaching experiences, and

reasons for staying in the teaching profession. The following research questions were

used to guide the pursuit of knowledge.

> Q1   How do Thai teachers describe their journey to becoming a successful English teacher?
>
>> SQ1   What has been the teaching experience of successful English teachers in Thailand?
>>
>> SQ2   What motivates successful English teachers in Thailand to stay in the teaching profession?

To answer the above research questions, I recruited three successful Thai English

teachers from three different educational levels: middle school, high school, and

university. The teachers were identified by using several criteria: (a) uniqueness, (b)

interest, (c) easy to contact, (d) willingness to participate, (e) professional judgment from

a principal and a teacher at the Academic Affairs Office, (f) a department head's

feedback, and (g) students' course evaluations (Bain, 2004; Stake, 1995).

The data elicitation techniques consisted of life story interviews, classroom observations, photo-elicitations, shadowing, and artifact collections. In order to make sense of the data, the portraiture data analysis method (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) and the Zoom model (Pamphilon, 1999) were used to analyze the data. Themes emerged, and I used these themes to create a storyline of the teachers' life stories of becoming an English teacher. Findings in this study will further an understanding of the teacher shortage crisis and teachers' professional lives and will open a new window for research in the field of Second Language Teacher Education.

Research Implications

Stake (2000) argued that we do research because we want certain audiences to benefit, not just put our research on the shelf of documents. I agree with Stake, but the assumption of this argument is that we need to disseminate what we found, and someone needs to read our research in order to gain the benefits. Let's assume other people would read this dissertation. This study with its rich descriptions and analysis provides theoretical, practical, and methodological implications.

Theoretical Implications

Rethinking teacher preparation curriculum. The data in this study indicated that the journey to becoming a Thai English teacher is complicated, multilayered, messy, and ongoing. The three Thai English teachers started their journeys of becoming teachers long ago when they were children. They had preconceived ideas, pretty good ones, of what it meant to be a teacher. They established their biographies of teachers at a young age, and they brought these biographies into college. In other words, they did not enter college as an empty vessel or a blank slate; rather, they brought their rich histories with

them. Do our teacher preparation curricula make use of these rich histories? Do we, as teacher educators, help our students establish connections between their biographies and the real world of teaching? Can we reinforce their histories?

Generally, a teacher preparation curriculum in Thailand is a five-year program: four years of learning, and one year of practicum teaching. Mostly, the curriculum consists of four main compartmentalized areas: (a) general education, (b) pedagogy, (c) content, and (d) elective classes. For example, an English major student in a teacher preparation program would learn about teaching philosophies (general education), how to teach (pedagogical classes), the English language (content classes), and educational research (elective classes). These four areas are taught separately with an assumption that students will learn a set of skills and will be able to employ those skills in practice.

The findings in this study did not support the premise that the above curriculum model was effective in preparing students to enter the real world of teaching. Teacher educators in Thailand, and maybe other content areas, may need to rethink their curricula. Teacher educators might incorporate tools, activities, or other practices to help students develop their biographies of teachers, reflect upon their journeys of learning to become teachers, and revisit their biographies throughout the program, not just in one class. This practice may help students step into and stay in the teaching profession.

Rethinking professional development. In most teacher professional development, teachers are invited to attend a multi-day workshop with "expert" guest speaker(s), who have little understanding about the teachers' contexts of teaching. The typical purpose of professional development is to prepare teachers to learn something new and expect them to use the gained knowledge with their students. In other words,

most teacher professional development is operated under a deficit model with the assumption that teachers do not have adequate knowledge to teach their students, so they need to be exposed to ready-made pedagogical ideas.

The data in this dissertation did not confirm the view of a deficit model of teacher professional development. The three Thai English teachers were equipped with a rich repertoire of knowledge in content and pedagogy, and they understood their students and contexts of teaching extremely well, enabling them to effectively use their rich knowledge. Based on Shulman's term (1987, p. 8), these teachers have "pedagogical content knowledge," the knowledge about what is teachable and how to effectively present it to their students. As a result of this view, teacher professional development should be treated as a way to "empower" teachers and encourage them to reflect on their classrooms and their teaching practices while participating in professional development.

Practical Implications

Revisiting college admissions. At the time this dissertation was conducted, the practice of student admission into college in Thailand generally consisted of four windows: (a) regional quota, (b) national quota, (c) special admission, and (d) national admission. The proportion of each window depends on each university's policy. Among these windows, testing is a common practice to select qualified students. Universities are responsible for arranging tests in the regional quota, national quota, and special admission, while the national admission is organized by the Bureau of Educational Testing.

The data in this study revealed that the three Thai English teachers had a strong passion for becoming teachers before they entered the College of Education. After

graduation, they entered and stayed in the teaching profession. Based on this finding, it is likely that students who have a strong passion to become teachers tend to step into and stay in the teaching profession. In order to admit qualified students into colleges of education, testing may not be an appropriate practice. Those who are involved in this selective admission should revisit their practices in order to admit students who may actually step into and stay in the teaching profession.

Revisiting one's teaching journey. As a result of the presentation of these stories of becoming Thai English teachers, other teachers might become engaged in remembering their own story, provoking them to think about their journeys and allowing them to revisit the inspirations of their becoming a teacher. This reflection, in turn, might affect their inspirations of staying in the teaching profession. Additionally, school principals might annually encourage teachers to reflect on their journeys of becoming a teacher, helping develop a sense of resiliency, a sense of mission, and a sense of staying in the teaching profession.

Methodological Implications

Understanding oneself before understanding others. In order to understand a teacher's journey to becoming an English teacher, I find it is essential to understand my own teaching journey first. Therefore, I would suggest that future researchers examine themselves before the data collection starts. This examination may take different forms such as the researcher's stance or the researcher's portrait.

I wrote about my teaching journey in Chapter I. When I collected the data, I found that there were many stories similar to my own, and there were many stories different from mine. At times, I added my own experience into the interview and the

portraits. This created a co-constructed paradigm between the actors and me, and it helped each of us understand our own journey that, in turn, reinforced our motivations to becoming teachers and inspires us to stay in the teaching profession.

Making the familiar strange. Merriam (2009) distinguished two approaches to researching human beings: emic (insider's perspective) and etic (outsider's perspective). This binary researcher stance has its own benefits, may have access to different kinds of knowledge, and may be exposed to different methodological dangers (Mannay, 2010). On the one hand, researchers who work in an unfamiliar setting may have a fresh eye that insiders typically neglect, but the researchers may encounter difficulty collecting the data because they had to establish a relationship. On the other hand, as an insider, researchers can elicit richer data and greater understanding because participants were more open and eager to share, but the researchers might overlook certain aspects of the data because they were too familiar with their territory (Turgo, 2012).

In this study, even though the actors and I were different in gender and generation, my proximity to the research setting and the actors is regarded as an insider, more than an outsider. To begin, similar to the actors, I was born and raised in Thailand, and I belong to the Thai culture. I also had close relationships with the actors; Lertluck and Chutima were my former English teachers, and Kasemsiri was my friend. Similarly, I was a Thai English teacher, and from an insider's perspective, I was immediately able to understand the complexity of the actors' journeys. However, at times I had difficulty in communicating this complexity because the actors and the setting were too familiar for me. In other words, I was "overshadowed by the enclosed, self-contained world of common understanding" (Mannay, 2010, p. 94).

For future researchers who look through an emic perspective, I suggest that they consider using the ethnographic principle of "making the familiar strange" in their studies (Sikes, 2003, p. 534). Researchers need to be aware of their assumptions and ideologies that they bring to their research. Several researchers have attempted to suggest practical strategies to make the familiar strange. For example, Delamont and Atkinson (1995) suggested to simply study the unfamiliar and educational settings. Mannay (2010) recommended the use of creativity such as visual research methods. Turgo (2012) suggested that researchers pay attention to their "social reproduction" (p. 666).

It should be noted that the purpose of making the familiar strange is not to arrive at objectivity; rather, it should be for the purpose of helping readers to understand the sociocultural contexts of the study. Even though researchers attempted to make the familiar strange, their identities were not washed away completely. Therefore, it becomes difficult for some researchers, such as myself, to make this principle practical. I suggest that future researchers have other readers examine their findings because outsiders can often tell whether our findings provide adequate information.

Employing multiple data collection methods. As presented in Chapter III in this study, I employed five data elicitation techniques as follows: (a) the life story interviews, (b) classroom observations, (c) artifact collections, (d) photo-elicitations, and (e) shadowing. By using a combination of the five techniques, I was able to understand the complexity and multidimensionality of the journey to becoming an English teacher. I was also able to present portraits that are rich, clear, dimensional, multilayered, and aesthetic.

Researchers who attempt to conduct research that is complex in nature or researchers who would like to use portraiture methodology are encouraged to use multiple data collection methods. The more data researchers employ, the clearer the portraits are. Metaphorically, multiple data collection techniques are like different layers in a portrait. Adding one data collection method means adding one layer in the portrait, so the portrait becomes clearer. However, it should be noted that each data technique should elicit different kinds of data. Researchers should justify the reason for employing certain techniques and the kind of data that they might gain from using them.

Encouraging the use of shadowing as a method. Shadowing is a new research method in social science and education that has been supported as beneficial and valuable (e.g., Gilliat-Ray, 2011; McDonald, 2005; Quinlan, 2008). However, many researchers are reluctant to use this method to collect data. Rather, some researchers critique the shadowing method as more appropriately termed the "stalking method." After successfully using the shadowing method in this study, I argue that this method can be messy and awkward if the researcher does not use it properly; however, it can elicit the data that researcher cannot get from any other method.

First of all, researchers need to establish relationships with their participants because it is the key to success and helps the process of data collection go smoothly. In this study, I took a relational stance, creating relationships before the data collection process started. As the data collection continued, I still carried on positive relationships with the participants. In order to create positive relationships, I make my voice explicit, and I try to be helpful and generous as much as possible.

Researchers may start the shadowing technique by asking the participants to identify the most comfortable times for them to have someone follow them around. I suggest that researchers start shadowing a particular activity for a short time, rather than shadowing for one whole day. By using this technique during a short chunk of time, researchers will be able to figure out when to take notes and how to ask good questions. They could start shadowing one full day after they have mastered using this technique. In other words, I recommend using the shadowing method as a series of shadowing rather than a one-time thing. While shadowing, I encourage researchers to not take extensive notes because it is interruptive and looks odd or suspicious.

Limitations of the Study

Every research has at least one limitation, and that is the case in this study as well. Since this dissertation was conducted under a qualitative research paradigm, I would like to discuss limitations of this study through the lens of qualitative research. As a result, I will not discuss limitation issues in quantitative research such as the number of participants. In this section, I will discuss the issues of memory, truth, and perspective. I will also include my reflections for future researchers to consider. The issues and reflections presented in this section may be useful sources of knowledge for fellow researchers.

Memory

To begin, I rely heavily on the accuracy of the teachers' memory in recalling their stories during the data collection process. To elaborate, I investigated the journey to becoming an English teacher through the teachers' perspectives. During the life story interview, I included questions about the teachers' childhood experience, educational

experience, and family background. These types of questions required the teachers to recall long-past memories and retell their stories. How do I know that their memories are accurate? Did they experience the events by themselves, or did someone tell them about their experience? Is this what is most important about the story?

Bochner (2007, p. 200) described memory as "a form or representative of the past." It seemed to me that he emphasized the phrase "a form" as a way to illustrate that a memory is not a fixed, stable, and universal information storage. Memory is not a recording of the past (Bochner, 2007), and it is not "a warehouse of finished stories, not a gallery of frame pictures" (Hampl, 1999, p. 26). The act of retrieving memory always involves recreation, transformation, or adjustment (Hampl, 1999; Owen, McRae, Adams, & Vitale, 2009). When individuals recall their memories and retell them, they often change the details of events, such as adding plots, reorganizing details, or changing conversations (Owen et al., 2009). As a result of this transformative nature, the questions of memory accuracy mentioned above are inherently flawed.

Specific to this dissertation, I did not have absolute answers to those questions mentioned above. I respected the teachers' decisions to tell or not to tell certain stories, and I regarded those stories as a legitimate source of knowledge (Bruner, 1990). Before the data collection began, I anticipated the difficulty of retrieving memory, so I decided to send out interview questions to the teachers in advance so that they had time to retrieve, reorganize, and recollect their past. By sending out the questions in advance, I found the process of the interview went smoothly.

Truth

Another issue in this study is truth. I do not have a way to identify whether or not the teachers told the truth while narrating their stories to me. This issue is continuous from the issue of memory. How do I know that the teachers told me the truth? How do I know that the memory retrieved was the truth?

Spence (1982) distinguished two types of truth: narrative truth and historical truth. He said a narrative truth is the one that can capture an essence of a truth, while a historical truth is the one that is verifiable and factual. Cofer (1990) added the term *truth of art* as a type of truth created from an imagination of the past. Based on Spence's and Cofer's definitions, I valued a narrative truth and truth of art, rather than "a historical truth" because they match with the purpose of portraiture (to capture an essence of human experience) and narrative epistemology (Bruner, 1990).

Owen et al. (2009) argued that truth in memory is subjective and shifting, depending on situation, time, and person. In this study, I investigated "a truth," rather than "the truth." The stories that the teachers reported and the portraits that I crafted were products of our interpretations. The stories presented in this dissertation were a form of truth that is open to multiple interpretations.

Perspective

In this study, I investigated the journey to becoming an English teacher through the teachers' perspectives. Readers should keep in mind that these perspectives are influenced by their personal backgrounds. They examined the world through the lens of their lives. They had the right to choose (not) to tell a story. This view narrows other possible stories from other perspectives, such as family members or educational

institutions. If I include multiple perspectives such as teacher education program or

family members, I might have more complicated layers of the journey to becoming an

English teacher.

Recommendations for Future Research

In this study, I limited the focus to examining the journey to becoming an English

teacher through teachers' perspectives. I purposefully selected successful Thai English

teachers who were determined to become teachers, graduated with a degree from a

college of education, decided to become teachers after graduation, and stayed in the

teaching profession. The Thai English teachers in this study were selected from affluent

public schools. It would be beneficial to include successful Thai English teachers from

different contexts such as schools in remote areas or private schools.

To conduct follow-up research, I recommend that fellow researchers include other

perspectives such as the teachers' parents, families, colleagues, and students. The

involvement of multiple perspectives might enrich the data, promoting the concept of

crystallization (Ellingson, 2009; Richardson, 1994) and the multiple layers of an

understanding of the journey to becoming an English teacher. During the process of data

collection, the teachers in this study also suggested that I talk to other significant figures

in their lives. They felt that they might not remember the events correctly.

Another pivotal follow-up research area is to expand the scope of this study by

including different groups of English teachers in the study. Apart from English teachers

who had a strong determination to become teachers and finished their degrees in a college

of education, there are English teachers who majored in English and did not have a

degree in education, but they ended up teaching at a school through a one-year teaching

licensure or training. There are also English teachers who did not major in English, but they had a strong English proficiency and decided to join the teaching profession. There are also English teachers who were initially teachers, but decided to leave the profession. I think it would be interesting and important to include these unique groups of teachers in a research study in order to understand the demographics and the complexity of the journey to becoming an English teacher.

Epilogue

I started writing this dissertation with a story. Now, I am going to end this dissertation with a story as well.

As a soon-to-be teacher educator, I have been excited, determined, and persistent to engage in pursuing the knowledge on the journey to becoming an English teacher because I expect that this study will be beneficial to the field of Second Language Teacher Education. I also expect to use the knowledge to inform and inspire my future students to step into and stay in the teaching profession. In the future, I will definitely continue research in this area.

My experience in writing this dissertation has been defined by two words: adventurous and experimental. First of all, I felt adventurous because I did not know what was going to happen while writing this dissertation and what was waiting to be revealed. The excitement of "not knowing" intrigued me to engage in writing this dissertation, trying to pursue knowledge. There have been times that I enjoyed writing, day after day; there have been times that I did not enjoyed it, night after night. There have also been times that I got lost in the labyrinth of the complicated process of writing.

My experience in writing this dissertation has been defined by two words: adventurous and experimental. Reflecting back, I have felt like a geologist while writing this dissertation. When I would come up with a new writing idea, I would be excited to try it out. After I tried out the new idea and it did not work, I would throw it away and try to come up with a new idea. It was like an experiment in a lab; if my idea did not work, I would find a new one. Some ideas needed extra polishing so that they could be smooth and glowing.

My experience in writing this dissertation has been defined by two words: adventurous and experimental. I have also felt like an artist trying to communicate messy stories to public audiences. I have had to think like an artist, act like an artist, eat like an artist, and sleep like an artist in order to present the narrative arts in this dissertation.

My experience in writing this dissertation has been defined by two words: adventurous and experimental. Who am I? Am I a geologist? A scientist? A social scientist? An artist? What do you think after reading this dissertation?

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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORMS AND IRB

APPROVAL LETTER

Informed Consent for Participation in Research
University of Northern Colorado

Project title: The Journey to Become English Teachers in Thailand
Researcher: Denchai Prabjandee (prab3155@bears.unco.edu)
Research advisor: Madeline Milian, Ed.D. (madeline.milian@unco.edu)

I am a doctoral student at University of Northern Colorado (UNC) in Educational Studies
Program (Bilingual and ESL Education). I am interested in understanding the journey to
become English teachers.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to do five things. It will take
approximately 3 months to complete all of these five tasks. You will:
1) be interviewed two times in a room at the school in which you feel comfortable
   and one that is free from disturbances. The interviews will focus on motivations
   to become an English teacher, teaching experiences, and reasons to stay in the
   teaching profession. Each interview will take approximately 60 minutes. During
   the interview, if there are any questions you would rather not answer or that you
   do not feel comfortable answering, please say so and I will move on to the next
   question. The interview will be audio recorded and later transcribed for analysis.
2) identify a day representing your typical teacher's live. Then, I will follow you
   and take notes on your conversations from the school start until it ends. I will
   make every effort for this to be a comfortable process for you.
3) be observed 8 hours during your classroom instruction. I will sit in the class and
   take notes.
4) share existing photos that represent the journey to become teachers, or you will be
   asked to take photos around the school in case you do not have ones.
5) show samples of textbooks, curriculum, and teaching preparation documents. The
   samples will be used as a supplementary data and to foster our discussion.

I foresee no risk to you if you participate in this study other than what normally occurs in
educational settings of this kind. The five tasks mentioned above, however, will take
some of your time. If this feels uncomfortable, you can withdraw from the study at any
time without negative consequences. There are potential benefits to you. You might gain
a greater awareness of your teaching preparation and practices.

The data recorded in this study will be treated confidentially; identifying information will
not be obtained. You will be asked to choose a pseudonym as the identifier for your data

in which only I will have access to your true identity. However, you may use your real name. When you agree to use real name, I will use this name in all publications and you understand that readers may know you. When reporting the research findings, your background information will be reported accordingly to the agreement of choosing name. Identifiable data (e.g., signed consent forms and audio recording files) will be stored in my advisor's office on the UNC campus and only my adviser and I will have access to these data. Three years after this study, voice recordings and data that would identify you will be deleted.

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study, and even if the research begins, you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits.   Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a participant, please contact the Office of Sponsored Programs, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-2161.

_____   _____
Participant's Signature   Date

_____   _____
Researcher's Signature   Date

UNIVERSITY *of* NORTHERN COLORADO

Institutional Review Board

DATE: May 13, 2013

TO: Denchai Prabjandee
FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [456145-2] The Journey to Becoming English Teachers in Thailand
SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision

ACTION: APPROVAL/VERIFICATION OF
EXEMPT STATUS DECISION DATE: May 10, 2013

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB approves this project and verifies its status as EXEMPT according to federal IRB regulations.

Thank you for swiftly making the requested

modifications/revisions. Best wishes with your research.

Sincerely,

Dr. Megan Stellino, UNC IRB Co-Chair

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records for a duration of 4 years.

If you have any questions, please contact Sherry May at 970-351-1910 or Sherry.May@unco.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB's records.

APPENDIX B

IMPRESSIONNISTIC RECORDS

Week 1: May 27 – 31, 2013 (5 Days)

Directions: Respond to the following questions:
1. What lens/perspectives am I looking at the data?
2. What is going on in the data?
3. How does the data answer the research questions?
4. What are evidences to support this conclusion?
5. What are still unanswered?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCAL

Interview questions	Follow-up questions
Demographic information	
1. Please tell me about yourself	- What degree do you have? - How long have you been teaching? - What classes are you teaching now?
2. What fake name do you want to be identified?	
Early life	
3. Are there any family stories told about you as a baby?	
4. What is your earliest memory?	
5. What was growing up in your house and neighborhood like?	
Family background	
6. What was going on in your family at the time of your birth?	- What was a popular career at that time?
7. What was going on in your community at the time of your birth?	
8. What was going on in the world at the time of your birth?	
9. How would you describe your parents?	- What are they like? - What do they do for a living?
10. Growing up, what are the lessons, teachings, and values that your family emphasizes?	- Can you give examples?

Academic background	
11. What is your first memory of attending a school?	- Did you enjoy school in the beginning?
12. What do you remember most about elementary school or high school?	- Do you have favorite teachers? - What were classes you like or dislike?
13. What was your experience at school?	
14. How would you describe yourself as a student?	
15. What did you learn about yourself during these years?	
16. What do you remember most about college?	
17. Why did you decide to go to a school of teacher education?	
18. What was your experience like at the teacher education program?	- What classes did you take?
19. What did you learn about yourself during these years?	
20. What was your experience like when you did a practicum teaching?	
21. What was your experience like when you first taught in a school?	- Was it similar or different from your teaching practicum?

Reasons to become teachers	
22. What led you to become an English teacher?	- Can you think of a transformative experience that convinces you to become a teacher?
23. Do the reasons that you initially had in mind for becoming a teacher still exist? Why?	
24. How would you describe the journey to become an English teacher?	- What is the metaphor of becoming a teacher? - Can you give specific examples?

Future Orientation	
25. Where do you see yourself in 10 years?	
26. What make you want to stay in teaching?	
27. What types of teachers do you want to be in the future?	

Self-image	
28. How would you describe yourself as a teacher?	
29. How do others describe you as a teacher?	- To what extent do you agree with them? Why?

Self-esteem
30. How do you evaluate your teaching ability?
31. How do you evaluate your language ability?
32. How do others perceive you as a teacher?

Teaching practices	
33. What do you want your students to achieve?	- Knowledge, skills, and attitudes
34. How you do prepare your lessons?	
35. How do you treat your students?	
36. How do you conduct the class?	
37. How do you evaluate your students?	
38. How do you evaluate yourself?	

Others
39. What else would you like to tell me on this topic that I didn't think to ask?

APPENDIX D

TRANSCRIPT NOTATIONS

…	Pause
(laughing)	One person laughs
(laughter)	Laugh more than one persons
-	Interuptions
(overlapping)	Overlapping speech