Analysis of English Teachers' Roles as Facilitators and Leading Strategies in a Professional Book Discussion Group

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Abstract

This study analyzes five elementary school English teachers' roles as facilitators and their leading strategies in an English teachers' learning community in a suburban elementary school in northwest Taiwan. Based on the thematic data analysis of interview, document and observation fieldnotes, this study has the following major findings. These participants aspired to be facilitators, but their lack of linguistic competence and leading strategies in the design and delivery of content made them more like sharers. Luckily, other participating teachers' support and engagement helped them to be more like facilitators. Suggestions for effectively leading a teacher study group are provided.

Keywords

facilitator, leading strategy, professional book discussion group, professional learning, teacher learning community

1. Introduction

In order to help teachers gain basic knowledge of new approaches and the skills to apply them to the curriculum and instruction, schools and academic organizations often provide a variety of models for professional learning for teachers through study groups, teacher learning communities, action research, mentoring, and workshops (Guskey, 2000; Joyce & Calhoun, 2010). Study groups provide teachers with opportunities to think, share and examine their current classroom practice through book discussion. Teachers are empowered to be active thinkers and learners about their work (Huang, 2007, 2008; Lefever-Davis, Wilson, Moore, Kent, & Hopkins, 2003; Matlin & Short, 1991; Mullen & Hutinger, 2008). Moreover, leadership is shared, as teachers rotate in leading the study group (Crespo, 2002).

This study analyzes five elementary school English teachers' roles as facilitators and their leading strategies in an English teachers' learning community in a suburban elementary school in northwest Taiwan. This study discusses the following two questions. First, how did English teachers lead the book discussion? Second, what roles did English teachers play in this book discussion group? Based on the

data analysis, suggestions for effectively leading a teacher study group will be provided.

2. Literature Review

The term "study group" refers to faculty which gathers to discuss student work, instructional strategies, and school-wide goals or initiatives (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003). While Herner-Patnode (2009) defines an educator study group as "independent personal study paired with group study in areas that enhance professional knowledge" (p. 25), Zepeda (2008) defines a book study group as "a form of individually guided professional development that allows a small group of teachers to meet to have discussions centering around a topic and a book that gives insight about an area of professional interest" (p. 211). Richards and Farrell (2005) provide a vignette of a reading group as:

The coordinator … put together a set of articles for us to read and discuss in regular fortnightly meetings. Group members took turns preparing discussion questions … You learn a lot through discussing the readings with peers, and you get ideas for follow-up application in one's teaching (p. 57).

According to Birchak et al. (1998), study groups can be classified into seven types including school-based, job-alike, topic-centered, issues discussion, teacher research, readers and writers, and professional book discussion groups, as in Figure 1.
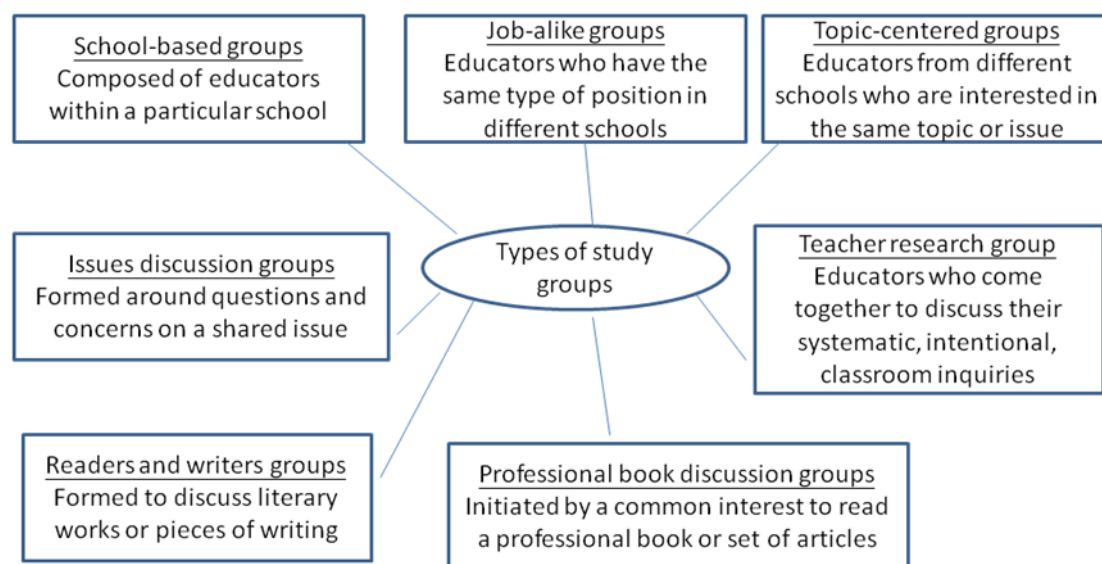

Figure 1. Types of Study Groups (Birchak et al., 1998, p. 19)

Scholars (Arikan, 2002; Herner-Patnode, 2009) recommend the following steps in successfully designing a teachers' study group, including gathering data about specific faculty interests and concerns, scheduling time, organizing meetings, regular assessment of members' progress, and sharing information about the study group with other teachers.

Scholars (Fogarty & Pete, 2007; Hock, 1998) also define different roles and tasks for teachers as

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facilitator or teacher leader in the study group, as in Table 1. Basically, facilitators in a study group share ideas, support other teachers' professional learning, ask questions, negotiate with other teachers, clarifying teachers' ideas, and have a sense of humor. Tichenor and Heins (2000) suggest that facilitators should plan small and large group activities that encourage active participation, so individuals will be encouraged to participate through sharing, discussion, reflection and practice. As adult learners, teachers are self-directed and ready to learn what they perceive they need. They also have a strong desire to be able to immediately apply their new acquired skills and knowledge (Knowles, 1990). Carroll (2005), as the leader, discussed this with five mentor teachers in a diverse urban elementary school cooperated with a teacher education program in a large mid-western university, based on a written text of his observation of a mentor teacher, and summarized his interview with an intern. These activities of practice could provide Carroll and the five mentor teachers with "opportunities to investigate and construct knowledge central to teaching" (p. 469).

Table 1. Facilitators' Roles and Tasks

Scholars	Facilitators' roles
Hock (1998)	Share, support, questioning, build community, negotiate clarify/summarize, humor
Fogarty and Pete (2007)	invite, involve authentically, interpret
Walpole and Beauchat (2008)	respect adult learners, incorporate choice, plan for voice, and think through strategies to deal productively with teacher reluctance
Crespo (2002)	collect mathematic problems, invite teachers to share, clarify and respond to ideas, invite teachers to reflect on their practice

Teacher leadership is intended to capitalize more fully on the instructional expertise of teachers by appointing teachers to roles such as curriculum leaders, staff developers, peer coach, grade level or subject area leader, facilitators, or mentors of new teachers (Gabriel, 2005; Silva, Gimbert, & Nolan, 2000). Teachers' expertise will become more widely available when expert teachers model effective instructional practice, encourage sharing best practices, mentor new teachers, and collaborate with other colleagues (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Teacher leaders in Crespo's (2002, 2006) studies facilitated teachers to report that which they had adopted into classroom practice by inviting them to share success, failures and confusion in a mathematics study group. Moreover, teacher leaders expected the teachers to view the group as a resource to help them make sense of challenges and figure out that which was still puzzling them. Through the study group, facilitators should empower teachers to be active thinkers about their work and accept changes occurring in their daily classroom practice (Matlin & Short, 1991). Murphy and Lick (2005) emphasize that leadership is shared in whole-faculty study groups, because every member of a study group serves as leader on a rotating basis. Therefore, study

groups can provide a means of distributed leadership, collective knowledge construction, and shared decision-making that move the school forward (Mullen & Hutinger, 2008).

Of the current empirical studies on teacher study groups, 18 and six of them focus on elementary schools and middle schools, respectively, as in Table 2. Eight studies involve collaboration between K-12 teachers and a university (Arnold, 2002; Carroll, 2005; Chiu, 2001; Grisham, 1999; Males, Otten, & Herbel-Eisenmann, 2010; Masuda, 2010; Stanley, 2009, 2011). Administrators as participants were included in three studies (Chiu, 2001; Hutinger & Mullen, 2007; Short, 1993).

Table 2. Analysis of Studies on Teacher Study Group

Studies	Settings		Participants	
	K-5	K6-12	collaboration	Administrators
Arbaugh (2003)		✓		
Arnold (2002)		✓	✓	
Carroll (2005)	✓		✓	
Chiu (2001)		✓	✓	✓
Crespo (2002, 2006)	✓			
Gersten, Dimino, Jayanthi, Kim and Santoro (2009, 2010)	✓			
Grisham (1999)	✓		✓	
Hasengawa (2002)		✓		
Hazelrigg (2002)	✓			
Hutinger and Mullen (2007)	✓			✓
Lefever-Davis, Wilson, Moore, Kent and Hopkins (2002)	✓			
Males, Otten and Herbel-Eisenmann (2010)		✓	✓	
Masuda (2010)		✓	✓	
Meyer (1996, 1998)	✓			
Passman and Duran-Klenclo (2002)	✓			
Saavedra (1996)	✓			
Short (1993)	✓			✓
Stanley (2009, 2011)	✓		✓	
Tichenor and Heins (2000)	✓			
Torres-Guzmán, Hunt, Torres, Madrigal, Flecha and Lukas (2006)	✓			

With regard to the subject matter, Arbaugh (2003) focuses on geometry and Stanley (2009, 2011) focuses on music. Three studies focus on mathematics (Crespo, 2002, 2006; Males et al., 2010) and three studies focus on literacy (Gersten, 2009, 2010; Grisham, 1999; Lefever-Davis et al., 2002). As in Table 3, two major themes discussed in these empirical studies include (1) profession and professional development, and (2) curriculum and instruction. Three studies focus on discourse (Carroll, 2005; Hasengawa, 2002; Males et al., 2010) and two studies focus on teachers' talk and conversation (Crespo, 2002, 2006).

Table 3. Analysis of Studies on Teacher Study Group

themes	Studies
profession	Arbaugh (2003); Arnold (2002); Chiu (2001); Grisham (1999); Hasengawa (2002); Hazelrigg (2002); Hutinger and Mullen (2007); Masuda (2010); Meyer (1996, 1998); Saavedra (1996); Short (1993); Stanley (2009, 2011); Tichenor and Heins (2000); Torres-Guzmán, Hunt, Torres, Madrigal, Flecha and Lukas (2006); Passman and Duran-Klenclo (2002)
curriculum and instruction	Arbaugh (2003); Chiu (2001); Gersten et al. (2009, 2010); Hazelrigg (2002); Lefever-Davis et al. (2002); Saavedra (1996); Short (1993); Stanley (2009, 2011)
discourse	Carroll (2005); Hasengawa (2002); Males et al. (2010) talk and conversation: Crespo (2002, 2006)

With regard to data collection, both quantitative and qualitative studies were employed in studies of teacher study groups. Quantitative data such as surveys were used in six studies (Chiu, 2001; Gersten et al., 2009, 2010; Grisham, 1999; Hutinger & Mullen, 2007; Tichenor & Heins, 2000). Student projects and scores were used only in three studies for analysis to prove the effective influence of the teacher study group on students' learning achievements (Gersten et al., 2009, 2010; Hazelrigg, 2002; Passman & Duran-Klenclo, 2002). Most studies used triangulation to include observation, interviews and teachers' reflection notes.

However, only four empirical studies focus on language teachers (Arikan, 2002; Huang, 2007, 2008; Yeh, 2005; Yeh, Hung, & Chen, 2012). Huang's (2007, 2008) study analyzed informal observations and interviews, focus group interviews, semi-structured individual interviews, documents and records among eight members of the English Teachers Club, which consisted of five English teachers, one Chemistry teacher, one Music teacher, and one guidance counselor in Taiwan. These teachers met once or twice per month for the English Teachers Club on Wednesday afternoons and they invited a native English speaker to lead the discussion. The study concluded that this English Teachers Club helped teachers to foster their English learning, gain ideas for improving classroom English instruction, share teaching experiences, stimulate positive dispositions to learning, and foster intellectual development.

Thirteen English as Foreign Language teachers in Turkey in Arikan's study (2002) felt that they shared their experiences and knowledge by engaging in a meaningful conversation with colleagues in a teachers' study group.

Yeh et al. (2012) analyzed a university professor's role in five leading Taiwanese primary school teachers, who were integrating reader's theater into the design and revision of the curriculum in a teacher's study group. Yeh et al. (2012) concluded that the university professor as the facilitator in the study group played five major roles: content expert, information provider, thought challenger, discussion facilitator, and caring listener.

The above studies mainly focus on the influence of a teacher study group on language teachers' profession and classroom practice. None of them focus on English teacher leadership and facilitators. This study mainly analyzes English teachers' roles as facilitators and their leading strategies and activities in a professional book discussion group.

3. Method

This study employs the descriptive case study approach. Case study research involves the study of a case within a real-life context or setting (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2009) and is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system (Merriam, 2009). In this study, the researcher explores English teachers' roles and leading strategies in book discussion in a real-life, contemporary, bounded system, through multiple sources of information (observation, handouts and PowerPoint slides, and interview). The case is the English teacher's professional book discussion group and the unit of analysis is English teachers' roles and leading strategies.

3.1 Participants

This study was conducted among an elementary school English teacher's learning community in a suburban elementary school in northwest Taiwan. Jasmine (a pseudonym) formed this English teachers' learning community in the 2011 fall semester, and the researcher knew Jasmine.

Eight elementary school English teachers participated in the English teachers' learning community. Pseudonyms were used throughout the data collection and analysis in order to protect the identities of the participants. Each participant was given a consent form which described the process and purpose of this study, as well as their rights as participants.

Jasmine, Margaret, Victor and Violet taught in the same school. Alice, Daisy, Patty and Stacy came from three different schools. Participants met every other week on Friday afternoons and each meeting lasted for more than three hours. They shared their lesson plans, activity designs, and issues they faced in their classroom practice.

Starting from the spring semester, Jasmine decided to include the book discussion on Paul's (2003) Teaching English to Children in Asia. Only five teachers led the book discussion and each teacher was responsible for one or two chapters, as in Table 2.

The demography is revealed in Table 4. Margaret, Victor and Patty had a bachelor's degree in English,

with a 26-credit elementary school teacher education program. While Violet had a bachelor's degree in early children education, Daisy received her degree in English education in a teacher training college. With regard to English teaching experience, Violet was the novice teacher, with only 0.5 year in this public elementary school, but two years of English teaching experience in a language school. The rest of the teachers had served as substitute English teachers for at least two years and later became full-time elementary school English teachers.

Table 4. Participants' Demography and Book Assignment

	Education	Years of English teaching	Chapters
Margaret	B.A. in English with 26-credit educational program	substitute teacher: 3 years full-time: 2 years	Chapter 4 Games and songs
Victor	B.A. in English with 26-credit educational program	substitute teacher: 3 years full-time: 2 years	Chapter 8 Classroom management
Patty	B. A. in English with 26-credit educational program	substitute teacher: 6 years full-time: 3 years	Chapter 6 Reading and writing
Violet	B. A. in early children education	Language cram school: 2.5 years substitute teacher: 0.5 year	Chapter 5 Listening and Speaking
Daisy	B.A. in English education	substitute teacher: 5 years full-time: 3 years	Chapter 2 and 3 Child-centered learning and approach

3.2 Data Collection

Data in this study included observation, handouts and PowerPoint slides, and interview. Data was collected over one semester, from February to June 2014. The first type of data was observation fieldnotes. Martin-Kniep's (2008) "Rubric for Professional Development Presentations" was used as the observation protocol. This rubric was originally designed to help professional development presenters examine their own leading and participants' learning. English teachers leading the study group were evaluated based on four categories in terms of engagement with audience: content, delivery system, use of time and media, and handouts, and on four levels (1 as the lowest, 4 as the highest). The second group of data was documents. Handouts and PowerPoint slides were important sources for probing participants' roles and leading strategies, and for recording the process of delivery of book chapters.

Semi-structured interviews were employed in this study and an interview protocol was designed. Interviews with participants were conducted at the end of each participant's leading session. The first part of the interviews focused on participants' backgrounds, and the second part focused on the issues related to participants' experiences during the design and delivery of the professional book discussion, as well as their perceptions about the roles they played during the professional book discussion group.

3.3 Data Analysis

The data were collected in the form of observation notes, handouts, PowerPoint slides, and interviews, and were transcribed into raw field notes. The data were coded in the following stages, as in Figure 2. First, emergent analytic categories (i.e., graphic organizers, facilitators) were sought to characterize participants' roles and strategies during the professional book discussion group. The emergent categories were compared in the search for patterns between them, such as designs of content, delivery, factors or roles.
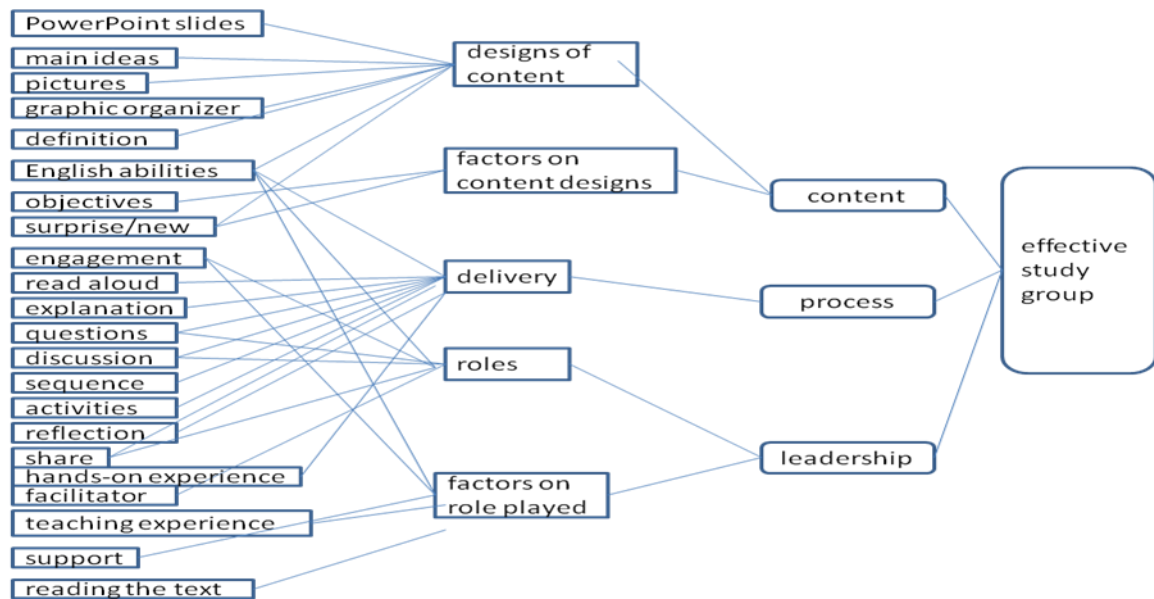

Figure 2. Data Analysis

A high level of validity is the goal for qualitative research. Peer examination is another strategy for promoting the validity of the study (Merriam, 2009). A colleague who is familiar with language teacher education scanned the raw data and assessed whether the findings were plausible, based on the data. The consistency and reliability of the analysis were ensured by the triangulation of data (interview, observation, handouts, PowerPoint slides) and people (researcher, researcher's fellow, participants).

4. Results

Based on the above data, the results and findings were discussed in terms of design of the content, delivery of the content, and the participants' roles.

4.1 Designs of the Slide Content

The five participants all created PowerPoint slides in English. The five participants included the main ideas from the assigned chapters, and presented these main ideas with pictures, graphics, definitions and explanations. Important concepts were highlighted or were in bold. Figure 3 is Victor's PowerPoint slide about classroom management. On this slide, he identified three key terms "self-image", "ideal self", and "self-esteem" under the heading "self-esteem". He also included definitions for each term and two figures of children on the bottom right corner of the slide.
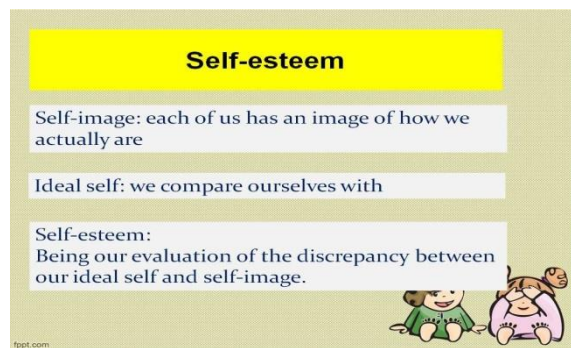

Figure 3. Victor's PowerPoint Slide

Figure 4 is Daisy's slide about the questioning cycle. She used a graph to explain the six elements of the questioning cycle. These six elements were put in sequence with arrows.
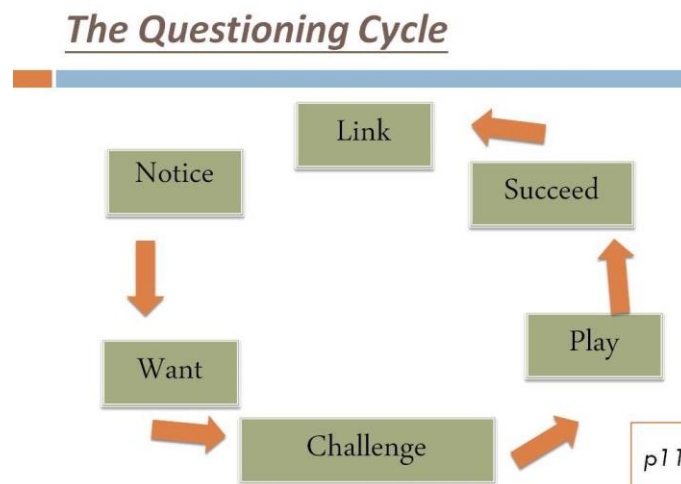

Figure 4. Daisy's Slide on Questioning Cycle

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In this study, English teachers did not finish reading all chapters each time before the professional book study group. This phenomenon happens in some of the study groups, so facilitators had to summarize the main ideas of the book chapters (Gersten et al., 2010). All participants created PowerPoint slides based on the main ideas from the book chapters. Patty said, "I tried to find the main ideas or the ideas that teachers already know or may not know". Moreover, while Daisy created the slides and chose the content, she considered the purpose of having this study group as follows:

At first I had more than 40 slides. I read the texts again and again. I asked myself "What's the purpose of this professional book discussion group and teacher's learning community?" We want to design lessons for a child-centered lesson, so I decided to focus my presentation on the child-centered lesson. I cut the slides to only 20.

In addition to putting the main ideas from the chapters on the slides, Violet included the sentences that surprised her on the slides, as she notes, "I copied down the sentences that surprised me the most and asked myself 'Why?' and also wondered if other teachers had thought of these issues before".

4.2 Delivery of the Content

All participants gave the presentations in English. While they read through the slides, Victor had the most difficulty in pronouncing words, in Episode 1, and as illustrated in Figure 3.

Episode 1. Victor's Presentation in Figure 3

Victor: self-imagine.

Daisy: image, not imagine.

Victor: self-image, each of us has an image of how we actually are.

Victor: ideal self: we compare ourselves with…

Victor: self-es…

Alice: self-esteem.

Victor: self-esteem: being our evaluation of the dis…

Alice: discrepancy.

Victor: discrepancy, discrepancy between our ideal self and self-image.

Daisy and Alice in Episode 1 tried to help Victor pronounce words such as image, esteem and discrepancy. Victor said, "I did not know how to pronounce some words. I was so nervous about giving the presentation in English. I should have looked up these words in the dictionary before the presentation". Victor felt supported and said, "I improved my English speaking abilities through other teachers' help".

Victor not only learned content knowledge of English instruction, but also developed his English linguistic competence through practicing pronouncing these words. Victor's case was similar to eight secondary English teachers in Huang's (2007, 2008) study. The study group fostered these eight teachers' English learning through reading English articles, discussing these articles in English, exchanging their ideas, taking notes, and presenting these articles.

In addition to summarizing the main ideas and explaining the key concepts, these five participants

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engaged with the audience through activities or asking questions for discussion, as in Table 5. Of all the participants, Margaret asked the most questions, followed by Daisy and Violet. "Sequencing" was the most popular activity used by both Patty and Daisy for engaging with the audience. Patty and Margaret used two activities for discussion. Violet did not use any activity while leading the study group.

Table 5. Activities for Engagement with the Audience

		Patty	Daisy	Victor	Violet	Margaret
Questioning		2	4	1	4	5
Activities	Sequencing	1	1			
	self-reflection	1				
	mind-mapping			1		
	true or false					1
	Assessment					1

The unique aspect of a study group is that each teacher can take turns in taking a facilitative role (Murphy & Lick, 2005; Walpole & Beauchat, 2008). Facilitators are given the chance to demonstrate their own expertise and develop their leadership in the learning community and study group (Walpole & Beauchat, 2008). In this study, five participants rotated as the facilitator for this book discussion group and designed different activities for teachers.

While leading the book discussion group, Margaret asked the following five questions: (1) When should teachers use games? (2) Which child is more motivated? (3) Should we use few or many different games with a class? (4) Should games be quiet or lively? and (5) When a child ___, it means we have succeeded. Episode 2 is the discussion led by Margaret on games. Margaret asked teachers about the quantity of games used with a class. Stacy answered, "It depends". Stacy further explained that using the same or only a few games may bore the students and Margaret concluded, "Lessons may become too predictable if we use too few games". Victor thought that teachers should use more games with a class, because learners may enjoy learning English through playing games. So Margaret used the quote from the book chapter as, "Students may enjoy learning English by playing different games".

Episode 2. Margaret's Discussion on Games

Margaret: Should teachers use too few or too many different games with a class?

Stacy: It depends.

Margaret: What do you mean?

Stacy: Students may get bored if we use the same or few games.

Margaret: Lessons may become too predictable if we use too few games.

Victor: Students may enjoy learning English by playing different games.

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Margaret: Students' stimulation may come from the variety of games.

A facilitator should ask reflective questions, especially Wh-questions, to extend and deepen the discussion among teachers (Birchak et al., 1998). In Crespo's study (2002) among mathematics teachers' learning in a study group, participating teachers claimed they benefited most from the study group leader's guiding them from conversation talk to reflective questions, such as, "What was hard about doing this mathematics problem with students?" Hence, a facilitator can also encourage other teachers to engage in the discussion by commenting on one another, such as, "I agree with what___ is saying. In my classroom, I noticed that…", or, "Your ideas remind me of something we read about___ " (Birchak et al., 1998).

Figure 4 is the sequencing activity used by Daisy. She first put these terms randomly and asked teachers to guess which one is the first and why. Finally, she moved the terms into the right order, as in Figure 3.

At the end of the study group, Patty asked teachers two questions for self-reflection: (1) How can I make reading and writing fun and achievable? and (2) How can I prepare the children to read with confidence and communicate meaningfully when they write?

Patty asked teachers the above two questions for reflection at the end of her leading the group. Teachers in a study group should be given time for reflection (Tichenor & Heins, 2000). Walpole and Beauchat (2008) suggest that one way to facilitate positive personal connections is the construction of guiding questions. Facilitators or teacher leaders of any study group can ask questions, such as, "What would be most challenging about trying this?" "What support would we need to try this?" "Why would it be worthwhile to try this?" or, "How could we adapt this idea to make it work best in our classrooms?" (p. 4). These questions can help participating teachers connect new ideas they have learned from the book chapters to the teachers' knowledge, expertise and classroom practice.

Victor asked teachers to answer the question, "What are the key elements of classroom management?", and teachers were given a piece of A4 paper to create a mind-map about classroom management. After two or three minutes, each teacher shared one element from their mind-map. Alice's mind-map about classroom management is revealed in Figure 5 with five elements.

Figure 5. Alice's Mind-Mapping

In this study, Daisy and Alice used different types of graphic organizers. In Chien's (2012) study, an instructional coach, Barbara, used different types of graphic organizers in a workshop, such as introducing themselves through synonym bubble maps, comparing and contrasting key concepts via T-charts, summarizing and concluding the main ideas through T-charts, or Taxonomy A-Z. Hence, graphic organizers can be employed in language teachers' professional development to help teachers process the new knowledge (Chien, 2012).

As for "True or False" activity, Margaret read the statement, "Games are simply for practicing language targets". Teachers were asked to make a circle for True or a cross for False and share their ideas, as in Episode 3.

Episode 3. Margaret's Activity on "True or False"

Margaret: Patty, why is it false?

Patty: Games are used not only for practising language targets, but also reviewing language or cooperative learning.

In order to help participating teachers build connections to the content and goals of the study group, Walpole and Beauchat (2008) suggest that the discussions can be structured with a protocol described as follows:

An individual first summarizes an author's idea or concept and then provides one way that it is similar to current knowledge and practice and one way that it is different. This very simple structure provides space for personal connections and for new ideas (p. 4).

Margaret asked teachers to assess games and songs in terms of three criteria: "Are the children involved?" "Are the children learning?" and "Are the children active?" on a five-point scale with 1 as the lowest and 5 as the highest, as in Figure 6 in Episode 4.

Episode 4: Discussion on Assessing Games

Margaret: The activity "Tic-tac-toe". Are the children reflecting and thinking?

Violet: Are the children active?

Margaret: Yes.

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Margaret: 1 to 5.

Stacy: 5.

Figure 6. Margaret's Activity on Assessing

Tichenor and Heins (2000) suggest that facilitators should plan activities that encourage active participation in a study group. Each meeting should include both small and large activities in which teachers are encouraged to participate through sharing, discussion, reflection and practice.

When responding to the question, "If you could lead the book discussion group again, how would you do it differently?" all teachers said that they would like to design more hands-on activities for teachers. Daisy said, "I would give all teachers ten minutes to design a child-centered teaching plan, so teachers can have hands-on experience". Violet also said, "My topics are listening and speaking. I would ask teachers to share some activities on teaching, listening and speaking, so we can collect all different activities".

Teachers should be given time for implementation (Tichenor & Heins, 2000). Through the facilitator's leading and inviting participating teachers to engage in reflective discussions with other teachers about their work, the professional book discussion group offers a means for English teachers to talk through the instructional practices that work well for them (Stanley, 2009, 2011). Hence, Walpole and Beauchat (2008) suggest that facilitators in study group should have a product in mind, such as a set of lesson plans (p. 2). Book discussions and dialogue with other teachers can help English teachers see the connections between theories, their beliefs, and practices. A study group is a space for teacher sharing (Ospina, 2010). A study group should integrate theory and practice, where teachers can exchange practice ideas and activities and discuss theories that underlie these activities (Birchak et al., 1998). A facilitator can ask teachers reflective questions such as, "Why do you like this activity?" or, "How is what you are doing different from ___?" (Birchak et al., 1998).

Participants felt that leading the book discussion group and designing activities in order to cater to teachers' different needs was challenging, because teachers in this book discussion group have different teaching styles, years of teaching experience, educational backgrounds, and background knowledge of English instruction. Daisy asked herself, "How can I make sure all the teachers learn and benefit from my leading the study group?"

The above finding was in accord with Walpole and Beauchat's (2008) claim that one of the most challenging aspects of teacher study group facilitation comes from the participating teachers' different experience. Moreover, in Arikan's (2002) study, inexperienced teachers could not participate in the discussions as much as they wanted to, since they did not have enough experience or knowledge of the topics to contribute to the discussion. Therefore, the discussion was dominated by the experienced teachers. Participants' teaching experience influences their participation in the study group and the facilitator's leading strategies (Arikan, 2002; Stanley, 2009, 2011). An effective facilitator should find ways to bring the expertise and collective wisdom out of each participating teacher as a rich resource (Stanley, 2009, 2011).

Herner-Patnode (2009) suggests that basic demography about participating teachers (i.e., teaching experience, educational background) and their knowledge and interests (i.e., concerns, classroom practice, expertise) should be provided to facilitators so that they might have basic information about their group members. Participating teachers' strengths and weaknesses should be evaluated and taken into consideration (Stanley, 2009, 2011). An effective facilitator should take time to reflect on the group discussion process by negotiating individual experiences and developing a shared group agenda (Birchak et al., 1998).

4.3 Roles that Participants Played

Of all these participants, only Victor had had the experience of leading the study group before. All of them viewed themselves as "facilitators", or "the one who shared", as claimed by Patty as follows:

I summarized the main ideas of the book chapter for the teachers. It's one way. Moreover, I wanted the discussion to be interactive. I wanted to be a facilitator. I want to ask teachers some questions and lead them to discuss these questions.

However, participants felt that they did not play the role of "facilitator" well because of their lack of experience. Patty said, "I prepared the PowerPoint slides last night. I hadn't totally understood the text and designed questions for discussion".

A facilitator of a study group should not dominate the talk all the time or simply summarize the ideas from the book. Instead, a facilitator should facilitate talk among teachers. According to Birchak et al. (1998), an effective facilitator should demonstrate behaviors such as developing strategies and language to support others in sharing their expertise, helping participants establish credibility by supporting their connections between theory and practice, keeping the conversation flowing, helping members reflect by asking questions and summarizing comments, and making available resources that enhance the conversation (p. 64).

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Participants felt that teachers' active engagement in discussion helped them become a better facilitator. Margaret said, "When one or two teachers began to respond to my questions, I felt that I was changed from being a sharer into a facilitator". According to Bercher (1994), "each member influences and is influenced by every other member to some degree" (p. 4). Participation's involvement and engagement influence the facilitator's role and leading strategies.

5. Discussion and Implications

This study analyzes five English teachers' roles as facilitators and their leading strategies in a professional book discussion group in a suburban elementary school in northwest Taiwan over the 2014 spring semester. Based on the thematic data analysis of interview, document and observation fieldnotes, this study has the following major findings. First, the facilitators summarized the main ideas from the book chapters with pictures, definitions or graphic organizers. Only a few activities were designed for leading participating teachers in discussions and reflection. Secondly, these participants expected themselves to be facilitators in the book discussion group. Participating teachers' support, responses, and teaching experience influenced their roles as facilitators.

Figure 7 reveals the framework of facilitators' effectively leading a professional book discussion group as a means for English teachers' professional learning. First, facilitators should take the characteristics of participating teachers and themselves into consideration. Participating teachers' teaching experience, their responses to facilitators' activities and questioning, engagement in the professional book discussion group, and their pre-reading of the book chapters all influence facilitators' leadership in designs of the content and process and their roles. Second, facilitators' teaching experience and their English abilities also affect their leadership in the professional book discussion group. Third, facilitators can share and facilitate during the professional book discussion group instead of lecturing or dominating the whole time. Based on the book chapters, the facilitators can present the content with pictures, graphics, main ideas, questions and definitions. Moreover, the facilitators can design a variety of activities for reflection, discussion, sharing, implications and reflective questions for critical thinking. Larner's (2007) book Tools for Leaders: Indispensable Graphic Organizers, Protocols and Planning Guidelines for Working and Learning Together can be used as a guideline for facilitators to lead a professional book discussion group. Facilitators should provide English teachers with the opportunities to reflect on implications for classroom practice. By doing so, English teachers can develop their professional learning in such professional book discussion groups.
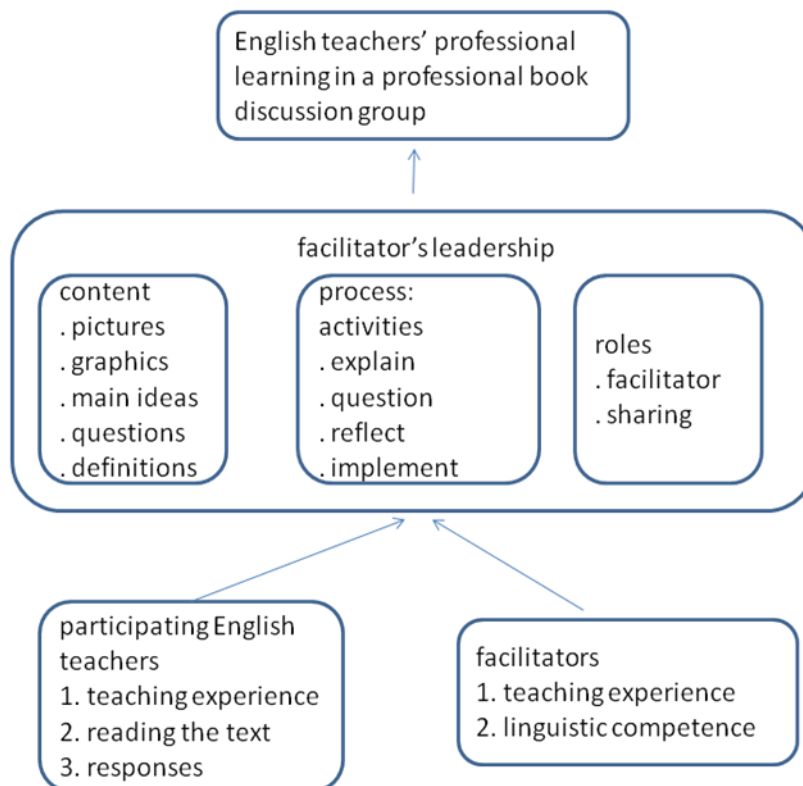
454

Figure 7. Effectively Leading Study Group

Teachers should be encouraged to be facilitators and take the lead when they have the expertise and knowledge in a teachers' learning community, such as the professional book discussion group (Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2007; Lambert, 2002). Carroll (2005) describes the roles of teacher's leadership as follows:

This kind of leadership also requires orchestrating such tasks flexibly, invoking inquiry norms and processes responsively, recognizing critical ideas as they arise in participants' comments, and maintaining an inquiry mode in managing the response to such issues (p. 471).

Therefore, in a teacher learning community, facilitators or teacher leaders can encourage a shared approach to pedagogy among colleagues, synthesize new ideas out of colleagues' dialogues, facilitate understanding among teachers, respect teachers' individual differences, and promote teachers' professional learning (Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2007; Gabriel, 2005).

6. Conclusion

This study explored five elementary school English teachers' roles and leading strategies in a professional book discussion group in an elementary school. These participants aspired to be facilitators, but their lack of linguistic competence and leading strategies in the design and delivery of content made them more like sharers. Luckily, other participating teachers' support and engagement helped them to be more like facilitators. In addition to summarizing the main ideas from the book

chapters, more activities and questioning strategies can be employed to guide participating teachers in integrating both theories from the book chapters with their classroom practice. From the perspective of language teacher education, this study provides a framework for facilitators to effectively lead a professional book discussion group as a means for English teachers' professional learning. This article illustrated how five elementary school English teachers' roles as facilitators and their leading strategies were developed through a professional book discussion group. By describing and analyzing the content and process of leading discussion, this article offered possibilities for other English teachers or teacher educators interested in learning to be facilitators and to effectively lead a professional book discussion group.

A limitation of this study was the small group of participants. A larger study population would be needed to allow results to be generalized. However, the study was intended to shed light on how English teachers led a professional book discussion group with regard to their roles and leading strategies. The findings provide insight into what leadership can look like or how it can be fostered among English teachers in order to stimulate their professional learning.

In this study, except for Victor, the other participants had not had a chance to lead a study group before. Training for facilitators can be provided and the content of the training can include questioning strategies, activity designs, protocols and graphic organizers. A further study can compare and contrast the influence of the training on English teachers' leading strategies and roles as facilitators.

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