



Why do they want to become English teachers: A case study of Taiwanese EFL teachers

Abstract

Although it has been argued that knowledge on initial motivation for choosing teaching as a career is necessary for improving teacher education programmes and teacher education policies, there is a lack of research investigating this issue in the fields of English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL). Grounded in Watt and Richardson's (2007) Factors Influencing Teaching Choice (FIT Choice) framework, which laid its foundation on expectancy-value theory, this study fills that research gap by examining why EFL teachers chose teaching as a career. Thirty-eight EFL teachers with diverse backgrounds were interviewed. The results indicated that the participants became EFL teachers mainly for complicated, multi-layered reasons. They were attracted to teaching because of its intrinsic career value and its salary. The former refers to the fact that they enjoyed English or that they wanted to become a teacher since childhood. The latter applied to those who were either pleased with the salary or who could strike a balance between work and life, work and study or work and health while earning a competitive salary. Surprisingly, the participants rarely mentioned personal utility value (e.g., job security) as motivation. This study suggests that ESL/EFL teachers require intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to commit to teaching.

Keywords: EFL teacher, initial motivation for teaching, Taiwan, career, Factors Influencing Teaching Choice framework

1. Introduction

Understanding initial motivation to become a teacher has been considered an important knowledge base for refining teacher education policies and developing teacher education programmes (Lin *et al.*, 2012). Although numerous studies in general education have investigated this subject and the *Asia Pacific Journal of Teacher Education* even published a special issue on it (Watt & Richardson, 2012), relevant research was scarce in English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL). Given that there is a lack of studies on this neglected but important subject, the present study intends to further the knowledge of this field, focusing on EFL teachers in Taiwan. Applying Watt and Richardson's (2007) Factors Influencing Teaching Choice framework (FIT-Choice framework), this study examined 38 EFL teachers' lives to understand their motivation in becoming English teachers. Results indicated that the intrinsic career values and competitive salary were the primary factors that attracted these participants to become teachers.

2. Literature review

Kyriacou and Kobori (1998) analysed empirical studies on foreign language teacher motivation and enumerated altruistic, intrinsic and extrinsic factors that attracted university students to join the teaching workforce. This tripartite division of motivational factors has been broadly adopted in ESL/EFL research. The altruistic factors include considering teaching as a critical job that helps students succeed (Kyriacou & Kobori, 1998; Zhao, 2008), improves the education system (Hayes, 2008; Zhao, 2008) and helps improve society (Hettiarachchi, 2010). The most critical intrinsic factor in kindling EFL teachers' interest in teaching English has been that they are fond of the language (Gao, 2010; Gao & Trent, 2009; Hayes, 2008; Hettiarachchi, 2010; Kyriacou & Kobori, 1998; Zhao, 2008). Other intrinsic motivations included wanting to become a teacher (Hettiarachchi, 2010), positive experiences teaching other subjects (Mullock, 2009) and enjoying working with children (Hettiarachchi, 2010) or with young people (Tziava, 2003). The most commonly mentioned extrinsic factor was job stability (Gao & Trent, 2009; Zhao, 2008), which was especially common among women (Gao & Trent, 2009; Hayes, 2008; Hettiarachchi, 2010; Zhao, 2008). In addition, long vacations (Gao & Trent, 2009) and overseas travel (Mullock, 2009) were mentioned as incentives for ESL/EFL teachers to choose teaching as a career.

However, this categorisation cannot fully expound why people become ESL/EFL teachers. For example, some participants entered teaching by accident (Zhao, 2008) or were even forced to choose teaching because it was the only job available (Hettiarachchi, 2010). Mullock (2009: 8) referred to such situations as being governed by "circumstantial factors" and Zhao (2008: 189) used the term "by default" to denote a scenario in which becoming a teacher was not the individual's choice. Another weakness of the tripartite classification is that it overlooks the impact of socio-cultural dimensions. For example, Hayes (2008) pointed out that people from lower socio-economic classes and from small villages favoured English teaching. However, the tripartite classification system fails to explain this finding.

Watt and Richardson (2007: 168) disapproved of dividing the motivational factors into altruistic, intrinsic and extrinsic categories because of its "lack of definitional precision and overlapping categorizations from one study to another". To delineate the full reasons for choosing teaching as a career, they proposed the Factors Influencing Teaching Choice framework (FIT-Choice framework) and empirically validated it. In this framework, prior teaching and learning experiences, social influences and social dissuasion are acknowledged as social constructs, which affect the individual's decision to become a teacher. The first construct acknowledges the influence of teaching and schooling experience and the remaining two recognise the positive and negative impact of broader social contexts and significant others.

Except for the social constructs, the task demand component and the task return component in this framework refer to the individual's views of the teaching job. The former comprises the expert career and high demand constructs delineates whether individuals perceive that teaching requires highly specialised knowledge and whether teaching is a physically and emotionally demanding task. The latter, which includes social status, teacher morale and salary, investigates the individual's views on whether teaching has a high social status, is valued by society and offers a decent paycheck. In addition, the other aspect of perceptions in this framework is the perceived teaching ability which refers to how teachers perceive their own teaching capabilities.

Another core component of the framework deals with several values imbedded in the teaching profession. Intrinsic career value includes motivations such as choosing a teaching career due to an intrinsic interest in teaching. Personal utility value comprises job security, job transferability, time for family and 'bludging'. Job security suggests that teaching is considered a stable career with a steady income and job transferability indicates that teaching provides the opportunity to work or travel overseas. By "time for family", Watt and Richardson (2007) meant that teaching allows practitioners to have more time to fulfil their family commitments. 'Bludging' is a colloquial term in Australia, which might have negative connotations. In this paper, it is considered neutral and acknowledges that certain teachers choose the profession for the short working days and long holidays. The last category of values in the framework is social utility value, which consists of four constructs, namely desires to shape the future of children and adolescents, enhance social equity, make a social contribution and work with children and adolescents.

Finally, the fallback career component denotes that individuals slip into teaching because they cannot secure their first choice of career or are unsure about what they want to be. All of the abovementioned factors in this framework may contribute to the choice of a teaching career.

3. The present study

As Watt and Richardson (2007) indicated, researchers had not applied existing theoretical models to the systematic analysis of initial motivation to become teachers. I intended to fill this research gap, focusing on EFL teachers in Taiwan.

4. The Taiwanese context

Teaching has a high social status in Taiwan. According to Fwu and Wang (2002), the social status of secondary school teachers was ranked ninth and primary school teachers eleventh among 26 occupations. This is higher than dentists (12th), central government legislators (13th) and accountants (14th). In addition, schoolteachers enjoy a paid three-week winter vacation, a two-month summer vacation and a one and a half month salary bonus every year. For decades, primary school and junior high school teachers have been exempted from income tax and public schoolteachers are entitled to a monthly pension when they retire.

An educational phenomenon peculiar to Taiwan and some other Asian countries is the popularity of cram schools, which are established for people to acquire various skills, including English. Some English cram schools recruit students who intend to complement their English study at school or to prepare for the English test in the Senior High School Entrance Examination or Joint College Entrance Examination (JCEE). Adult learners may attend other English cram schools to enhance their English skills to meet the needs of their work. Because numerous English teachers in Taiwan work at cram schools, their initial motivation to become a teacher will also be considered in this study.

5. Methods

The study was grounded in Watt and Richardson's (2007) FIT-Choice framework and formed part of a large research project that investigated the life stories of EFL teachers in Taiwan. When recruiting participants, I used the strategy of maximum variation sampling (Dörnyei, 2007) so that they manifested the diverse backgrounds of EFL teachers in Taiwan. I identified seven categories of schools: cram schools, kindergartens, primary schools, junior

high schools, senior high schools, vocational high schools and universities. Hereafter, I recruited 5-6 teachers from each of the categories. I also considered gender, age, nationality, race, teaching experience, type of schools (public school, private school) and the location of the school where the participant was teaching (i.e., northern Taiwan, central Taiwan, southern Taiwan, eastern Taiwan and outlying islands). Recruitment remained iterative until it reached saturation, a stage when further interviews could not elicit more information (Dörnyei, 2007). Eventually, 38 teachers, including 22 male teachers and 16 female teachers, participated in the study. Their ages ranged from their 20s to 60s. Among the participants, 28 were local teachers whose first languages were Mandarin Chinese, Taiwanese Southern Min or aboriginal languages in Taiwan. Ten were expatriate teachers whose first languages were English, Ukrainian or Southern Min.

Before the interviews, I described to the participants what the purposes of the study were, how I would store and use the research data and what their rights as participants were. Then, they chose a pseudonym to assure confidentiality and signed a written consent form to acknowledge that they were aware of the nature of the study. Each participant was interviewed once. Twenty-eight local teachers were interviewed in Mandarin Chinese and ten expatriate teachers in English. All interviews were audio-recorded and were fully transcribed for later analysis. The “two-part process” guided data collection and analysis (Atkinson, 2007: 234). First, at the data collection stage, I used a semi-structured interview protocol with open-ended questions, which provided guidance and directions in the interviews. However, participants were encouraged to describe and discuss any interesting issues relevant to the research topic in an explanatory manner. As an interviewer, I helped them to elaborate on their lives, stories, anecdotes and experiences that they felt were crucial for them. Depending on their abilities to elaborate on their life stories as a teacher and their motivation in becoming a teacher, the interviews lasted between 40 minutes to one hour. Secondly, at the data-analysis stage, I read participants’ stories several times to understand their lives and experiences. Hereafter, I highlighted and teased out the themes that emerged from the interview transcriptions and that could answer the research question. These themes were later categorised based on Watt and Richardson’s (2007) FIT-Choice framework. I also investigated how often these themes had been mentioned among interviewees and whether there were any patterns among individual themes. For example, I found that salary drove almost one third of my participants to select English teaching as their career. I also found that these participants were from diverse backgrounds. They were local and expatriate teachers, public school and private school teachers and cram school and formal schoolteachers. This pattern suggested that salary was a critical factor for English teachers in Taiwan who chose teaching as a career. When I present results in this manuscript, interview excerpts in Chinese are translated into English semantically and those in English remained unchanged despite grammatical errors.

6. Results

Two caveats need to be mentioned. First, different factors that motivated participants to become English teachers should not be considered in isolation. More often than not, one became a teacher for several reasons. As Mullock (2009: 8) indicated, “the reasons for entering TESOL were complex, multi-layered, and varied”. Second, some participants did not differentiate teaching in general from teaching English. That is, they were pleased that they had become teachers regardless of the subjects they taught. Therefore, when asked why they became English teachers, many discursively talked about why they decided to become

teachers and then why they chose English out of the possible subjects. In the following paragraphs, I elaborate my findings and categorise the factors that attracted Taiwanese EFL teachers according to Watt and Richardson's (2007) FIT-Choice framework.

Prior teaching and learning experiences

Four participants did not intend to be English teachers until they had a chance to teach English. A common pattern was that they embarked on their teaching part-time. Before their first day of teaching, some even had negative perceptions of teaching; one of the four participants thought that teaching must have been quite a boring job and another was reluctant to become a teacher. Yet, once they tried it, they found that they enjoyed teaching. For example, Ken originally did business with his father in the Philippines and visited his mother who worked in Taipei at the time. He described his first day of English teaching, which was at the request of his mother's friend who ran a cram school. After a few days, he decided to become an English teacher. He said:

If I'm not exaggerating, I was on the floor, rolling and laughing... Something happened in class was so funny... And the kids were laughing with me, you know? And, and after that... I found... some kind of happiness I never had before. Somehow I connected... I was actually happy doing this, you know? I was playing with the kids. I didn't feel that I was teaching at all. I was playing, you know... After three more days of happy teaching, if that's what you want to call it, teaching, I remember I called my mom, and I told her I wanted to call my dad. And I don't want to go back to the Philippines and do the business anymore.

These teachers embraced teaching because of their prior teaching experiences. Another three participants said that they wanted to become teachers/English teachers because they had previously encountered very good teachers/English teachers. For example, Pearl, a cram school teacher, said that her academic performance in English was not outstanding. It was not until she met an excellent English teacher that her interest in English was awakened and her English was improved. Given that being a teacher could help other people and that she was interested in English, Pearl decided to become an English teacher. She said,

Originally my English was not good. Later I had a very good English teacher who changed my attitude toward English learning... Because the teacher changed my life, I thought that being a teacher was a meaningful job which could really help other people. So when I took the JCEE, I thought about being a teacher. But originally my target area of study was not English, but Chinese because my mom was a Chinese teacher. So my Chinese was very, very good. Then I met the very good English teacher, and my English improved. So I became more interested in English. So I applied for admission only to English departments. I wanted to learn English well.

Social influences and social dissuasion

Being a teacher could be a family heritage. Two interviewees said that they were influenced by the fact that their parents were teachers. For example, when asked why she wanted to become a teacher, Pearl replied, "Because my parents are teachers... I always admire my parents' devotion to their students, and then students also respect them." It seems as if her parents' dedication to education and the positive feedback from her parents' students influenced her, prompting her interest in teaching.

Pearl's parents did not coerce her into teaching and their impact seemed to have been relatively mild. On the contrary, four other participants mentioned that their parents either coaxed them into English teaching or decided for them. For example, when asked why she

wanted to become an English teacher, Kikilala replied, "The most significant factor was my family, my father. When I took my JCEE, the first four departments on my wish list were filled out by my father." This is similar to other studies conducted in other East Asian countries (Gao & Trent, 2009; Hayes, 2008). Kikilala concurred with the decision because she was interested in English and teaching was one of her dream jobs. In addition to the influence of parents, Richard, a primary school English teacher, said that his younger brother and wife always disseminated information on English teaching vacancies to him and proactively assisted him with job applications. His case demonstrated that family members could be critical factors in involving a person in the teaching profession.

Social influences were not confined to family impact on the participants but could be extended to society. People with certain ethnic backgrounds might not be fortunate enough to select their jobs from the full repertoire of professions due to their ethnicity. They might have limited choices of professions from which they could choose. For example, Dipuo said:

When I was growing up in South Africa, the only professions which were deemed, you know, fit for black people were maybe teaching, nursing, and being a policeman. So I didn't have much of a choice really. Yeah, you know during that time in South Africa, there was a separate development, like black education and white education. So for us, it was designed in such a way that the best job would be teaching.

As a black South African who grew up during the apartheid era, Dipuo had to choose her career from a limited number of professions, among which teaching was perceived as the best option. Similarly, teaching was perceived as being advantageous to aboriginal people in Taiwan. Tali Hayung, a local aboriginal English teacher, considered teaching a favourable job. He had the following to say,

At that time we were poor, so many people studied at teachers' colleges or normal universities. The environment was the most influential factor. Also, many senior people in my tribe were teachers. I thought that they had a stable job which was helpful for aboriginal people. So I chose this job.

According to Tali Hayung, poverty was the primary problem among aboriginal people, so many chose teaching because it was a stable career. Tali Hayung witnessed their stable careers and perceived this profession as conducive to aboriginal people. He therefore decided to devote himself to it. Not only participants with certain ethnic backgrounds but also those from certain geographic regions preferred teaching jobs. Kikilala, who resided on an outlying island, said that being a teacher or a public servant was considered an ideal job for islanders. She said, "My father thought that being a public servant or a teacher is a very good option here in Penghu [an outlying island]". The cases of Kikilala and Tali Hayung were consistent with Hayes' (2008) findings that people from the lower socio-economic classes or small villages favoured teaching.

Another dimension of social influence for the participants was compulsory military service. Some participants who were proficient in English and opted for substitute military service were assigned to remote areas or outlying islands to teach English. Sam was a case in point. His initial motivation to join the education service as his substitute military service was not because he was interested in English teaching. He joined the teaching force simply because the nature of the job was less complicated and there were more vacancies. He had this to say,

I heard from upperclassmen and relatives who were discharged from the substitute military service that the education service had more vacancies, and that the nature of these jobs was relatively not so complicated. This is why I chose the education service.

The last factor in this category was the social atmosphere. In the 1990s, English learning gained momentum in Taiwan, an atmosphere that affected Toby, who earned his Master's degree in TESOL from a university in the United States. He had been a journalist and flight attendant for several years in North America after his Master's degree was conferred. When asked why he returned to Taiwan and switched his career to English teaching, he said,

In fact, being a flight attendant is very tiring. Also, all my family and friends are there [in Taiwan], so I decided to come back to contribute to the society. I studied English teaching, which happened to be popular at that time, so I thought I could come back to give it a try. Luckily I got a full-time job at a school in northern Taiwan.

In his testimony, family reunion was his motivation to move back to Taiwan. When it came to jobs, he did not resume either of his previous careers but instead sought an English teaching position because English learning gained its popularity, which seemed to have an impact on his decision to capitalise on his expertise in TESOL.

Salary

The most significant finding of the study is that salary was the most critical factor that attracted the participants into becoming EFL teachers. Unlike their counterparts in China and Greece, who said that salary was a demotivating factor (Gao & Trent, 2009; Tziava, 2003), 12 out of the 38 participants in this study said explicitly that remuneration was the primary or critical incentive for them in joining this profession. Although teaching English was not as lucrative as other professions such as medicine, it was a job with a relatively good salary in Taiwan. This discourse emerged not only in a specific group of teachers but among expatriate and local teachers, cram school and formal school teachers and public school and private school teachers. The pattern suggested that a wide spectrum of English teaching posts offered competitive salaries. For example, when I inquired why he wanted to become an English teacher, Graf, an African American teaching at a local cram school and kindergarten, replied bluntly, "Think of the pay. It's actually pretty good".

The other phenomenon connected to salary was that teaching English allowed participants to strike a balance between work and life, work and study or work and health. The participants suggested that even if teaching English did not offer a very high salary, it involved fewer working hours or was more flexible in its nature. For example, Sandy had worked for an international trade company in the daytime while studying English at a university at night. Because her boss was reluctant to let her knock off early to attend her courses, she quit and became a kindergarten English teacher. She said,

When I studied at my university, I always had conflicts with my boss and could not go to school. Then, one of my classmates taught at a kindergarten in the daytime, so I asked her for relevant information... And I thought this was more flexible and the salary was not bad. I actually got paid similarly when I worked at the trade company... After I tried to look for a job, I got it. So I quit my job at the trade company. From then, I started to teach English.

Sandy switched to English teaching to strike a balance between her work and study. Eunice, a certified junior high school English teacher, did not join the teaching force after

graduation but sought employment in a high-tech electronics company as an assistant. After one year, she compared her job with English teaching and decided that she would like to become an English teacher. She recounted,

The reason why I wanted to quit was because of salary and health... Now in the private sector, everybody's salary is not good. Even if you have a Master's degree from Chiao-Tung or Tsing-Hua [prestigious universities in Taiwan], your salary is not outstanding. To put it bluntly, your salary is more or less like high school teachers'... But the workload might be so heavy that your body can't afford it.

The other monetary factor mentioned by the participants was that retired schoolteachers enjoy pensions. In fact, teaching at public schools is one of the few careers in Taiwan that entitles employees to a monthly pension. Angela, a vocational high school teacher, recalled why she had wanted to become an English teacher as follows,

When I was a student at a two-year college, my mom knew a retired teacher. She thought retired teachers had a stable salary, and had quite a good vocation. And my school had a teacher education programme, so she asked me to give it a try.

Self-perceptions

Three teachers claimed that English was their best performing subject at school. This did not necessarily mean that English was their favourite subject. For example, a junior high school teacher, Charlie, said:

In fact, English was not the subject I was most interested in, but my English was quite good. I should say that I did the best in English among all of the subjects in terms of academic performance.

In fact, Charlie's perception of teaching was unique. He attended the most prestigious senior high school in Taiwan, which only the top one per cent of junior high school students were admitted to. Coming from a family with several patriotic military officers, he thought that he should use his talents to become a teacher. He said,

At that time I was a senior high school student, so I wasn't knowledgeable. I thought I was a talent. Then I was full of enthusiasm, and thought that talents should become teachers.

Intrinsic career value

In addition to salary, intrinsic career values played an equally pivotal role in motivating the participants to become EFL teachers. Nine out of the 38 participants reported that they became English teachers because they liked English. This finding echoed results from previous studies conducted in China, Thailand, Slovenia and Sri Lanka (Gao, 2010; Gao & Trent, 2009; Hayes, 2008; Hettiarachchi, 2010; Kyriacou & Koberi, 1998). For example, Kikilala said,

English has been my best subject since junior high school. In fact, I didn't like to study, but I was very interested in English, and had a sense of achievement.

In addition, being a teacher was a dream job since childhood for three participants. Toby said:

Since I was young, I wanted to be a teacher. At that time I thought about being a teacher. After I completed my compulsory military service, I thought about looking for relevant positions. Luckily I got it.

Personal utility value

Surprisingly, personal utility value was rarely mentioned in the interviews. Only one junior high school teacher mentioned job security as his motivation. Moreover, this discourse emerged from a male teacher's interview, not from a female teacher's interview. He said that his family was in debt, so he needed a steady flow of income. Were it not for his family's economic condition, he would not have become an English teacher. He said that he would have still majored in English but would have become a translator or would have sought employment in business. He said,

Basically my father hasn't been working since he was young... Yeah, he hasn't been working, so [the household] depends on my mom who does some cleaning jobs. This was why I chose teaching, because it is more stable.

In addition to job security, one teacher mentioned time for family as an important factor. Dipuo said, "I hope, well, maybe it's a good job. When I one day get married, I have a lot of time with my children and with my family". Similarly, only one teacher referred to job transferability. This British teacher said that he had become fed up with the British weather and had sought a sun-drenched place to work. A critical motivating factor for him was that teaching English allowed him to travel. He said,

I love traveling... I've done quite a lot in my life but it's very expensive. And I was fed up with English weather, you know. I enjoy hot weather and sunshine... I thought teaching English is a good way to experience different countries and cultures and well you know, working at the same time.

Make a social contribution

One of the interviewees, Richard Bachman, was a young American missionary. He viewed service as a significant component of his faith and observed that Taiwanese people were interested in learning English. Therefore, he taught English to Taiwanese people to link his service and faith with local people's interests. He said,

It seems like a lot of people in Taiwan are interested in learning English, and being the service is one of our top priorities. Service is really a very large part of our faith, and it seems like in places like Taiwan, English is a very appropriate type of service, so and sometimes it's difficult to find opportunities to help people with their personal affairs whatever they may be, so English is a good way to see that we can serve people but it's also something they're still interested in.

Other than the expatriate missionary, local participants rarely mentioned this type of factor in their interviews. Pearl and Toby vaguely talked about it and, interestingly, the other two who raised this motivation were Tali Hayung and Kikilala. The former was an aboriginal teacher and the latter lived on an outlying island. Their common characteristic was that they were considered on the periphery in certain respects. They both mentioned that they were motivated to become teachers partly because they wanted to contribute to education in their hometowns. For example, Tali Hayung said,

I thought if I would come back to serve my fellow villagers, I could help students improve their studies and inculcate their characters. This idea further affirmed my decision to choose this job.

Fallback career

Five participants said that they became English teachers by accident. For example, Miles, a senior high school English teacher, said that his favourite subject was history. However, because his score on the JCEE fell in the range of the English department at a normal university, he became an English teacher. Phyllis, a university English teacher, said that she became an English teacher simply because she was offered a teaching position. If she had had another career option, she might have taken it. She said,

There was no specific reason at that time. There were several <possibilities>¹ for a graduate from an English department. This is just one of the <options>... If there had been other offers like working at a translation company, I might have taken it. But it happened that there was an opportunity in teaching English. Then I have never doubted about it. I thought I was <okay> to teach English. I have never doubted about myself. I have never doubted about the career path of English teaching. So I chose this job, and then I walked along the road. I like teaching.

7. Discussion

Applying the FIT-Choice framework, this study investigated Taiwanese EFL teachers' motivation to choose this career. As shown in table 1, it is surprising that salary seems to be the most critical factor, which attracted them to the English teaching profession. The second most important factor, which swayed Taiwanese EFL teachers to choose this career, was that they are fond of English. On the contrary, participants rarely mentioned factors under personal utility value, such as job security, job transferability, and time for family.

In comparison with previous research, this study generates similar and different findings. As other researchers found (e.g., Gao, 2010; Gao & Trent, 2009; Hayes, 2008; Hettiarachchi, 2010; Kyriacou & Kobori, 1998), the most critical intrinsic career value for the participants in this study was that they were interested in English. In addition, fallback factors emerged in the present study as in other research (Hettiarachchi, 2010; Mullock, 2009; Zhao, 2008). On the contrary, this study presents certain findings that differ from previous ones. The most strikingly different finding is that salary was the most often-mentioned motivation for teaching English. Unlike their counterparts in previous studies who said that salary was a demotivating factor (Gao & Trent, 2009; Tziava, 2003), the participants in this study perceived that English teaching was a well-paid job or that it allowed them to strike a balance between their work and lives, work and studies and work and health. The other finding that differed from previous studies in other parts of Asia (Gao & Trent, 2009; Hayes, 2008; Hettiarachchi, 2010) is that none of the participants in this study suggested that teaching was an appropriate job for women, indicating that teaching is no longer considered a women's job in the Taiwanese society. This extrapolation is further corroborated by the fact that none of the male teachers were dissuaded by their friends or families from becoming teachers. Richard, a primary school teacher, was even urged to take the teacher recruitment test by his wife and brother.

The other aspect of motivation that has been neglected by previous research is the social dimension of initial motivation in becoming English teachers. This study shows that the mania for learning English in Taiwan has attracted people to EFL teaching. In addition, people from aboriginal tribes or outlying islands are inclined to teach English. This seems to resonate with Hayes' (2008) study, which showed that people from small villages and lower socio-economic

1 <> means code-switching from Mandarin Chinese to English

backgrounds preferred English teaching. Being a teacher was conceived as a way to move into a better social class.

The present study suggests that ESL/EFL teachers need to be intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to commit to and enjoy teaching as a career. To date, research has shown that ESL/EFL teachers in many countries suffer from low morale and a high rate of attrition (Johnston, 1997; McKnight, 1992). Studies on initial motivation to become English teachers could partially explain this educational issue; most of them have revealed that ESL/EFL teachers are more intrinsically than extrinsically motivated (Hettiarachchi, 2010; Yau, 2010). For example, EFL teachers in China had very complicated sentiments toward teaching (Gao, 2010; Gao & Trent, 2009). Although attracted by English, they were reluctant to become English teachers because they perceived teaching as a profession with low pay and social status (Gao & Trent, 2009). Similarly, Tziava (2003) indicated that EFL teachers in Greece enjoyed working with young people but were demotivated by the low remuneration. In contrast, EFL teaching in Taiwan has a completely different landscape; most EFL teachers are intrinsically and extrinsically motivated. As a result, seeking a full-time teaching position at a public school in Taiwan has become very competitive.

My study is considered case study research, which has been criticised for its lack of generalisability (Dörnyei, 2007). Findings of the present study cannot be generalised to all EFL teachers in Taiwan and their counterparts in other countries. Since research has shown that initial motivation to become an English teacher differs from country to country, more research is needed to understand why ESL/EFL teachers in each country join the teaching force. In addition, given that ESL/EFL teachers in most countries are intrinsically motivated but extrinsically demotivated, further studies should be conducted to investigate how to attract prospective teachers to commit to ESL/EFL education under a limited educational budget.

Table 1

Summary of results	No. of participants
Prior teaching and learning experiences	
Prior teaching experiences	4
Prior learning experiences	3
Social influences and dissuasions	
Parents were teachers	2
Social persuasions	4
Good/Limited choice for some ethnic groups or remote areas	3
Military service	1
Social atmosphere	1
Salary	12
Self perceptions	3
Intrinsic career value	

Summary of results	No. of participants
Like English	9
Dream job	3
Personal utility value	
Job security	1
Job transferability	1
Time for family	1
Social utility value	
Make a social contribution	5
Fallback career	5

8. Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my participants, the anonymous peer reviewers and the generous research funding from the Taiwanese Ministry of Science of Technology (NSC96-2411-H-167-002).

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