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A dialogic approach to promoting professional development: Understanding change in Hong Kong language teachers' beliefs and practices regarding vocabulary teaching and learning

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A B S T R A C T

Adopting a sociocultural perspective, this paper reports on a case study that examined how a dialogic approach contributed to Hong Kong English teachers' professional development in methods of vocabulary instruction. Data were drawn from interviews, lesson observations, professional dialogues, and reflective writing to present two in-depth contrasting cases. While one teacher reported marked change in her beliefs and practice, the other adapted her practice minimally despite reporting belief changes. The findings revealed the role of dialogic reflection in facilitating professional learning and noted the potential impact of Chinese culture on teachers' dialogic reflection. Further, they showed that changes in practice are mediated by internalising new ideas, linking teacher beliefs with clear goals and contextual factors including institutional policies, time constraints, and learner feedback. Teachers' verbal participation in professional dialogues, for example, showing agreement with the suggestions of others, was insufficient for generating changes in practices. Implications, including the important roles of reflexivity and sociocultural contexts in teacher professional development programmes, along with directions for future research, are considered.

1. Introduction

Teachers' commitment to continuous professional learning is fundamental for pedagogical improvement and student achievement (Haneda et al., 2017). Possibly because 'understanding the unobservable dimension of teaching is key to making sense of the process of becoming, being, and developing as a teacher' (Borg & Sanchez, 2020), teacher cognition research—research that seeks not only to describe what teachers know, think and believe, but also to examine the factors that influence what teachers do and how they develop—is crucial for understanding professional learning and practice (Borg, 2019). Guo et al. (2019), in their recent review of *System*'s contributions to language teacher education research, further highlight the importance of such research by suggesting that 'language teacher cognition and teacher learning to effect cognitive changes' are considered to be 'two central issues' that merit further research attention (p. 138). While professional development (PD) interventions commonly target changes in teachers' beliefs, viewing them as a prerequisite to behaviour changes that may help create long-term impact (Borg, 2018), the developmental shifts in teacher beliefs can be highly complex. In the field of teacher education, numerous researchers (e.g. Li, 2020; Mann & Walsh, 2017; Tao & Gao,

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2021) have emphasised the key role played by social interaction in shaping professional changes, and sociocultural theory, which advocates the 'social, dynamic, and collaborative dimensions of learning' (Walsh, 2013, p. 8), has attracted considerable research efforts. Nevertheless, a sociocultural perspective is 'rarely taken up by researchers as a lens to study teacher cognition' and it is unclear how teachers make sense of learning and teaching through the co-construction of their beliefs (Li, 2020, p. 33). Further, how we may support language teachers to undergo cognitive changes prior to behavioural changes 'remains a critical question for language teacher educators' (Guo et al., 2019, p. 137).

This study responded to researchers' calls for investigations that promote teacher learning and focused on how language teachers' beliefs shape their practice, how professional development influences belief formation and, importantly, how this belief change might lead to changes in practices. Several research gaps have led to the conceptualization of this study: (1) In terms of language teacher cognition, research evidence has shown that teachers' learning is socially-mediated and can be affected by such factors as their personal practical knowledge, prior learning experiences, and their interactions with others (Li, 2020). It should, however, be noted that relevant studies have focused on grammar and literacy instruction (Basturkmen, 2012; Bergström et al., 2021; Li, 2017), with relatively little attention paid to teacher cognition in vocabulary teaching (Bergström et al., 2021; López-Barrios et al., 2021; Newton, 2021). While the past two decades have witnessed a growing interest in the area (see, e.g. Macalister, 2012; Hermagustiana et al., 2017; López-Barrios et al., 2021) and the impact of professional development on teachers' vocabulary instruction (e.g. Bowne et al., 2016; Kennedy et al., 2018), it has been suggested that future research should continue exploring the relationship between teachers' self-reported beliefs and practices in different contexts (López-Barrios et al., 2021), and to explore the factors that contribute to teachers' changes regarding this specific language teaching aspect (Bowne et al., 2016). (2) Despite extensive research on prospective teachers' beliefs, research on in-service teachers' language education-related beliefs is 'still in its infancy' (Song, 2015, p. 267). (3) While some studies have examined the impact of reflective PD experiences on change among frontline teachers (see, e.g. Ha & Murray, 2021; Mak, 2019; Moorhouse & Harfitt, 2021), they have focused on belief changes, but neglected the extent to which the changes can be translated into actual practice. Some dissonance between teachers' beliefs and practices is not necessarily undesirable as teachers adapt to the 'continually changing nature of classroom dynamics' and consider 'what learners bring to the classroom' (Li, 2020, p. 140). It is, however, crucial to target both teachers' beliefs and their practices in professional development and examine the implications for belief-practice incongruity, if any. Doing so enables us to better evaluate the impact of professional development, prepare teachers to make informed decisions, and help them address internal barriers (e.g. lack of pedagogical content knowledge, low teaching efficacy beliefs, maladaptive beliefs about learners) that preclude them from acting on their beliefs and adopting new practices in a particular context (Buehl & Beck, 2015). (4) Dialogic reflection—the reflection that occurs when individuals seek to 'challenge, explore, appropriate, and eventually develop their practice' through the use of dialogue (Haneda et al., 2017, p. 46)—and its contribution to teacher development have formed the focus of growing research (see, e.g. Ab Rashid, 2018; Caughlan et al., 2013; He & Prater, 2014; Hepple, 2012). Dialogic reflection-related research in the Asian context, however, is relatively scarce, even though several features of, for example, the Chinese context, render such PD potentially problematic. These include: the avoidance of 'face-threatening' acts, such as showing disagreement (Tang & Chung, 2016); the correlational and social nature of reflective thinking under Confucian values (Li, 2015); and the emphasis on knowledge transmission in teacher education and PD (Lee, 2011). Given that the development of beliefs, understanding, and knowledge is situated, negotiated, and mediated (Li, 2020), studying teacher cognition and dialogic reflection in the context of Asia, which has one of the largest populations for language learning worldwide, is of particular importance.

To contribute to the growing area of research on teacher cognition in vocabulary teaching and address some of the aforementioned research gaps, this paper presents an exploratory case study investigating the development of vocabulary teaching-related beliefs and practices among Hong Kong in-service secondary English language teachers through their participation in a dialogic reflection-oriented PD programme. Its significance lies in its examination, through the lens of sociocultural theory, of the PD intervention, which drew practitioners' attention to distorted or incomplete aspects of their assumptions regarding vocabulary teaching by using multiple pathways (engagement in self-reflection, professional exchanges with colleagues, exploration of students' beliefs, and analysis of theoretical literature) for dialogic reflection, thereby facilitating the development of their beliefs. The study incorporated a longitudinal dimension, focusing on change in practice in vocabulary teaching, not only ascertained through the participants' self-reports, but also through classroom observations. Its findings could benefit those seeking to produce or reshape teacher development programmes and may have particular implications for Asian and international English language educators.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Professional development and change in teachers' beliefs

Teacher cognition research seeks to describe the extent of teachers' knowledge and beliefs and examines how different factors influence teachers' work and their development; it is crucial for understanding professional learning and practice (Borg, 2019). Given that beliefs—psychologically held understandings or propositions subjectively accepted as true—often guide teachers' action (Borg, 2011), PD interventions target changes in teachers' beliefs, as they often indicate behaviour changes that may create long-term impact (Borg, 2018). Empirical studies, however, have reported mixed results concerning the extent of professional training's altering impact on in-service teachers' beliefs. Several studies (e.g. Kim, 2008; Phipps, 2007; Phipps, 2010) have shown that in-service teacher education has minimal impact on language teachers' beliefs. For example, Phipps (2007), investigating how a teacher education programme in Turkey influenced an English teacher's grammar teaching-related beliefs, found that while 'existing beliefs were confirmed, deepened and strengthened', changes in existing beliefs were limited (p. 13). Other studies demonstrated more positive results after

reviewing the impact of continuing PD programmes on language teachers' beliefs (see, e.g. Borg, 2011; Borg et al., 2020; Ha & Murray, 2021). In his longitudinal study examining the effects of an eight-week teacher education programme, Borg (2011) found that in-service English language teachers' prior beliefs changed and recommended that teachers should receive opportunities to concretise their beliefs and space for questioning and doubting such beliefs while considering 'powerful alternative conceptions' (Woolfolk et al., 2006, p. 728). Tam (2015) also found that collaborative learning activities, including professional dialogues and reflections, induced five self-reported change areas among L2 Chinese language teachers at a Hong Kong secondary school: curriculum, teaching, student learning, teachers' roles, and learning to teach. Similarly, Ha and Murray's (2021) study analysing a PD programme targeting oral corrective feedback-related beliefs found that ten in-service teachers reshaped their oral corrective feedback-related beliefs. Emerging evidence suggests that education courses could have greater impact on change in teacher beliefs when they encourage teachers to collaborate and share expertise, focus on inquiry and reflection as central professional learning processes, promote teacher self-awareness, and provide alternative thinking approaches (Borg et al., 2020; Borg & Parnham, 2020; Borg & Sanchez, 2020). Further research, however, is required on how PD interventions that promote teachers' dialogic reflection could contribute to belief change and, especially, to practice-related change in specific aspects of language teaching (Chung, 2021). This current study, by investigating a dialogic reflection-oriented PD programme's facilitation of language teachers' development by examining their vocabulary teaching-related beliefs and practices, addresses the gap.

2.2. Dialogic approaches to developing teachers' beliefs and practice

Studies over the past few decades have shown that the use of dialogue can help to promote learning and growth. As a discursive practice involving 'a relation constituted in a web of relations among multiple forms of communication, human practices, and mediating objects or texts' (Burbules, 2000, pp. 263–265), dialogue's chief intention lies in its process, which requires individuals to be 'critically conscious of their own thinking', rather than its results. In particular, participants' dialogic engagement facilitates their participation in genuine communication and self-disclosure to the other person as they try to accept and consider the other's viewpoint (Sfard, 2019). Reciprocity and reflexivity can, therefore, be achieved by 'interpreting, questioning, answering, commenting on, and rethinking an issue or problem of immediate concern' (Haneda et al., 2017, p. 48). Given that 'development is *in* and *through* interaction' (Li, 2020, p. 42), examining teachers' engagement in professional interaction and reflection enables researchers and teachers themselves to understand the relationship between teachers' thoughts and deeds in professional contexts, thus promoting learning and growth (Li, 2020).

The use of dialogue to promote teacher development is highly relevant to sociocultural learning approaches, which emphasise how human cognition operates based on cultural processes enacted through social interactions. This intermental engagement, established through activities such as professional dialogues involving explicit discussions of personal and external beliefs, can create opportunities for teachers' consideration. Teachers' learning and (belief) development can be facilitated through 'internalisation' (Bakhtin, 1981) or individual activities that involve 'making something one's own' (Daniels, 2008, p. 66). Under a Vygotskian sociocultural theoretical perspective, language teacher education pedagogy containing structured mediational spaces should provide teachers with opportunities to 'make their everyday concepts explicit, to reflect on and critique them, and to externalise their current understandings of what, how, and why they teach the way they do' through dialogic interactions (Johnson & Golombek, 2020, p. 123). The concept of 'expert' is important here; sociocultural theory emphasises the role of 'social, dynamic, and collaborative dimensions of learning' (Walsh, 2013, p. 8) in creating 'uniquely human forms of higher-level thinking' (Johnson, 2009, p. 1) and suggests that expert-novice interactions foster learning in the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD)—the difference between what an individual has already mastered (actual development level) and what that individual can achieve with the guidance or collaboration opportunities involving more capable peers (Mann & Walsh, 2017). Although researchers have frequently used teaching experience to compare 'expert' and 'novice' teachers, a very experienced teacher may not know more than a relatively inexperienced teacher (Chung, 2018a). Tsui's (2003, 2005) seminal work on teaching expertise clarifies that 'experience' and 'expertise' are not synonymous. One critical difference between expert and non-expert teachers, Tsui (2009, p. 429) argues, involves their ability to engage in reflection and conscious deliberation, where tacit knowledge gained from experience is made explicit (i.e. 'theorising their practice') and personal interpretations of formal knowledge are made through one's own practice (i.e. 'practicalising their knowledge'). Expert mediation that is responsive to teachers' needs thus seems crucial for professional learning (Johnson & Golombek, 2016, 2020).

3. The study's significance

While the use of professional dialogue appears to be positively related to teacher development (Fisher & Kim, 2013; Haneda et al., 2017; Talbot et al., 2018), dialogue and shared reflection amongst teachers have been researched mostly in western contexts. An exploration is necessary in the Asian context for three main reasons. First, dialogic engagement may be hampered by 'face saving', a traditional approach to preserve social harmony in Chinese culture, as individuals may avoid disagreements and suggestions to remain polite (Chung & Tang, 2022; Tang & Chung, 2016). Second, correlational and social reflective thinking under Confucianism differs from the dominant Western style of thinking (Li & Wegerif, 2014), where critical and creative thinking involve individual development (Li, 2015). Third, teacher education and continuing PD activities undertaken by Chinese teachers largely involve knowledge transmission influenced by cultural and societal norms (Zhan, 2008). Most continuing PD activities in Hong Kong often relegate teachers to 'passive receptacles of knowledge' (Lee, 2011, p. 32), and teachers in Hong Kong remain concerned about their ability to translate knowledge gained from PD programmes into practice despite finding it useful and effective (Mak, 2019). Considering the importance of helping in-service teachers with new changes and practices (Harfitt, 2020) and the value of dialogic approaches for professional

development, we must understand how teachers think and learn through dialogic reflection in the Chinese context to facilitate Asian and global professional development.

The investigated PD programme focused on teachers' vocabulary teaching-related beliefs as vocabulary development is crucial, but challenging, in language acquisition (Chung, 2018a). Schmitt and Schmitt (2020) noted that teachers are unsure about the appropriate approach for vocabulary teaching as it depends on various factors, and there is no 'best' method to teach it. Questions such as 'what words do learners need to know', 'what does it mean to know a word', 'which aspects of word knowledge should be addressed', 'how vocabulary should be taught', and 'whether translations should be used to facilitate vocabulary learning and teaching' are thus often raised (for more on vocabulary learning and teaching, see, e.g. Nation, 2013; Schmitt & Schmitt, 2020; Webb & Nation, 2017). Taken together, teachers' vocabulary learning and teaching-related beliefs are likely to be central to their practice. It is, however, important to note that most studies on teacher cognition have focused on grammar and literacy instruction (Basturkmen, 2012; Bergström et al., 2021; Li, 2017), with less focus on vocabulary (Bergström et al., 2021; López-Barrios et al., 2021; Newton, 2021). Specifically, only a handful of studies have exclusively examined in-service teachers' beliefs about vocabulary learning and/or teaching in the Chinese context. Gao and Ma (2011) identified four vocabulary teaching belief categories (i.e. beliefs about teaching content, teaching approach, teaching aims, and teaching resources) from content analysis of open-ended question survey responses of 250 teachers in Hong Kong and mainland China, and found that contextual conditions and educational experiences mediate such beliefs. They recommended that English language teachers in both locales should enhance pedagogical activities applied to vocabulary learning. Chung (2018a) shared this view and highlighted the need for ongoing teacher support to identify additional improvement areas and make informed decisions for improving student vocabulary. She found that Hong Kong in-service English language teachers lacked understanding of what constitutes word knowledge and lexical instruction. In a later study, Chung (2022) examined how two frontline English language teachers in Hong Kong developed their beliefs about vocabulary learning and teaching through dialogic reflection. The study focused on the relationship between knowledge enhancement through professional dialogue and subsequent belief changes, but did not examine in detail how the dialogues led to teachers' development, nor how belief changes can be translated into actual practice. Accordingly, this research aimed to answer two questions: (1) To what extent did a dialogic reflection-based PD programme shape in-service teachers' vocabulary teaching and learning-related beliefs and practices? (2) What key factors contributed to changes in teachers' beliefs and/or practices regarding vocabulary teaching and learning?

4. Methodology

This qualitative and longitudinal study adopted an exploratory case study approach to build a 'tentative theory' (Ridder, 2017, p. 302) through analysis of the characteristics of teachers' dialogic reflection and indications of changes in their beliefs and behaviours through multiple data collected over a ten-month period. The approach facilitates in-depth, multi-faceted, and highly contextualised explorations of complex issues (see, e.g. Creswell & Poth, 2018; Duff, 2020; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Moreover, it can provide insights into situations where the investigated intervention has no clear and single set of outcomes (Yin, 2018) and allows for the generation of useful guidance and professional support provision for teaching practitioners (see, e.g. Lim & Nguyen, 2021, Liu et al., 2020, and Moore et al., 2018 for recent studies that have adopted similar case study methods in the applied linguistics field).

4.1. Research context and participants

The research setting was a Hong Kong English-medium secondary school, selected for its strong educational research participation track record. In addition, senior staff were supportive of teachers' professional learning, which usually involved the staff 'receiving' knowledge about different pedagogical approaches. Prior to data collection, formal invitations for a vocabulary teaching and learning-oriented PD programme were sent to the school's principal and its twelve English language teachers. Four teachers (Laura, Louise, Lydia, and Michelle [pseudonyms])— all Hong Kong-educated indigenous Chinese teachers of English—agreed to participate (see Table 1 for participants' biographical information).

Two cases (Lydia and Michelle) are presented as theoretical replications (Yin, 2018). As the table shows, Lydia and Michelle share some similar features (both are mid-career teachers, have departmental responsibilities, and hold master's degrees); however, they differ in terms of their reasons for joining the PD programme, their levels of engagement during the programme, and their attitudes toward receiving feedback or criticism from their colleagues, as explained in Section 4.3.5. Given that the findings gathered also suggest differences in terms of the participants' changes in beliefs and practices as a result of the intervention, the contrastive analysis of the two cases made it possible to explain *how* and *why* the PD programme worked, or not (Yin, 2018).

Table 1
Biographical information on participants.

Teachers	Nationality	Years of teaching	Educational qualifications	Other positions
Laura	Chinese	5	BA, BEd, MA	N/A
Louise	Chinese	6	BA, BEd, MA	N/A
Lydia	Chinese	8	BA, PGDE, MEd, MA	Department head
Michelle	Chinese	15	BA, PGDE, MA	Department head

Remarks: BA refers to Bachelor of Arts; BEd to Bachelor of Education; and MA and MEd to Master of Arts and Master of Education, respectively. PGDE stands for Postgraduate Diploma in Education.

4.2. The teacher development programme

The PD programme adopted a bottom-up approach towards teacher development, focusing on the co-construction of vocabulary teaching and learning-related beliefs through dialogic reflection, seeking to direct the teachers' attention to their own assumptions (distorted or incomplete aspects) that warranted further examination. Drawing on sociocultural perspectives, it opened dialogic spaces for teachers to explicitly reflect on their beliefs and practices based on four perspectives recommended by Brookfield's (2017) work on critical reflection: (1) 'autobiographies'—teachers' self-reflection on their experiences as both learners and teachers and on their experience of the development programme itself; (2) 'colleagues' experiences'—the sharing of thoughts and experiences; (3) 'students' eyes'—presenting teachers with their own students' understanding of vocabulary learning; and (4) 'theoretical literature'—explorations of scholarly works published by key researchers in the second language vocabulary teaching and learning field (e.g. Chacón-Beltrán et al., 2010; Coxhead, 2006; Nation, 2013). Further, it utilised Alexander's (2020) work on dialogic teaching and guided teachers' dialogic reflection based on six major principles (see Fig. 1).

The three-day programme involved seven sessions, lasting approximately 1.5–2 hours each. The participants were first introduced to the study's aims, topics to be covered and the overall session structure (see Appendix A for details) although the professional dialogue content was largely generated based on what teachers considered worthy of discussion and reflection. Teachers were instructed to focus on issues that they found to be significant, brainstorm ideas, share beliefs and experiences in pairs and as a group, build on others' contributions, request elaborations, and consider alternative viewpoints. The first author of the paper acted as a facilitator rather than an expert (explaining the programme to the participants before its commencement, inviting participation, asking questions to facilitate in-depth discussion, and sharing her understanding of vocabulary teaching and learning-related issues if asked).

A structured reflection approach (Mann & Walsh, 2017) was adopted to organise the dialogues which included: (1) a brief topic introduction, (2) self-reflection and sharing thoughts on guiding questions, (3) exploration of student beliefs (teachers were asked to examine and discuss both quantitative and qualitative data from a student questionnaire [N = 572] administered earlier at their school), (4) individual readings of theoretical literature, followed by discussions on ideas that they considered to be novel, confusing, interesting, or useful, and (5) teachers' sharing of what they had learned or found impressive.

4.3. Data collection and analysis

Data collection comprised three phases (see Table 2). Four major data collection methods were used for the case study: semi-structured interviews, lesson observations, teachers' professional dialogues, and reflective writing. Multiple data sources and different analytical frameworks were used for examining teachers' vocabulary teaching and learning-related beliefs, mapping changes in classroom behaviour, and exploring dialogic reflection's role in shaping such changes.

4.3.1. Lesson observations and audio recordings

To investigate the relationship between beliefs and practices, all four participating teachers audiotaped their lessons across all three phases (N = 186) as they expressed discomfort with video recording. In addition, the first author conducted non-participant observations (N = 24; each of the four participants was observed twice during each phase); field notes were taken to record vocabulary teaching-related aspects that may have been missed by the recorder (e.g. use of physical action for teaching vocabulary items and examining students' in-class behaviour for indications of their engagement in class). The audiotaped lessons were selectively coded for parts that concerned the explicit treatment of vocabulary (see Appendix B for further details). To comprehensively understand the teachers' (reported) practices, other forms of data, including classroom teaching materials and vocabulary assessment tasks, were also collected and examined.

Dialogic reflection for teacher development is:

– *Collective*: Teachers collaboratively explore educational issues and co-construct meaning, rather than in isolation.
– *Supportive*: Teachers feel able to express ideas freely, without risk of being judged, and they help each other to achieve understanding.
– *Reciprocal*: Teachers listen to each other, exchange ideas, ask questions, and consider exploring various perspectives on teaching and learning.
– *Deliberative*: Teachers critically reflect on different educational issues, seeking to resolve alternative viewpoints and make informed pedagogical decisions by discussing and evaluating arguments.
– *Cumulative*: Teachers build on their own and each other's ideas to formulate coherent methods of thinking, enquiry, and understanding.
– *Purposeful*: Teachers seek to develop their beliefs and/or practices through dialogic reflection with specific educational goals in mind.

Fig. 1. Six principles guiding teachers' dialogic reflection.

Table 2
Different phases of the study.

Phase	Duration	Major aim	Data collection methods
1	3 months	To establish, through naturalistic and elicited data collection techniques, an understanding of the teachers' beliefs that could constitute 'a baseline against which future understandings and/or behaviours [could] be compared' (Faltis, 1997, p. 148).	- Lesson observations - Semi-structured interviews
2	3 months	To conduct a teacher development intervention and collect data for the description and interpretation of the teachers' dialogic reflection.	- Teachers' professional dialogues - Reflective writing - Lesson observations - Semi-structured interviews
3	4 months	To determine whether dialogic reflection (or parts thereof) could account for any notable belief and behaviour change(s) identified.	- Lesson observations - Semi-structured interviews

4.3.2. Semi-structured interviews

Following lesson analysis, semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants (N = 12) at the end of each phase. These explored the 'hows' and 'whys' of the different issues (Yin, 2018) relating to dialogic approaches and examined teachers' language teaching-related beliefs (Li, 2017). Each interview lasted around 90 minutes. The interview protocols (Appendix C) were based on Gao and Ma (2011) and Zhang (2008), two seminal studies investigating teachers' vocabulary teaching and learning-related beliefs in an Asian context. The interviews were transcribed verbatim for content analysis. Open coding was used to categorise the responses; then, through axial coding, some open codes created or extracted from interview data were combined to connect themes.

4.3.3. Teachers' professional dialogue

The teachers' discursive practices during the PD programme were analysed to chart their beliefs and/or practice development and examine the salient features of individual teachers' dialogic reflection that might have shaped such development. The seven sessions (approximately 15 hours) were audiotaped and transcribed, and conversation stretches representing each teacher's contributions were extracted for in-depth content analysis; these included discourse functions identified from interlocutory moves (e.g. asking for opinions, sharing experiences, making suggestions, and making positive and negative evaluations; see Tang & Chung, 2016). The number of utterances were recorded in relation to Brookfield's (2017) four critical lenses.

4.3.4. Reflective writing

Reflective writing serves as a record of reflection and constitutes reflection in itself (Mann & Walsh, 2017). Within two weeks of the PD sessions, teachers were required to produce reflective written accounts regarding any personal vocabulary teaching and learning-related insights and how such insights could inform their future teaching practices. This helped the researchers to understand the participants' beliefs and experiences during the PD programme and to 'bring their beliefs to the level of awareness' (Farrell & Ives, 2015, p. 605), thus clarifying and/or shaping teachers' own understanding of their PD experiences (Chung, 2021). For the analysis of the reflective entries, the teachers' reported beliefs—for example, regarding the importance of vocabulary, the notion of a word, the use of lexical instruction, the implementation of vocabulary activities, the design of vocabulary assessment, and so on—were categorised and compared across the interviews of each study phase to identify evidences of change. Cabaroglu and Roberts' (2000) framework, based on data from a student teachers' course on modern foreign language teaching, was used to further examine the identified belief change processes.

4.3.5. Selection of the two cases

Considering beliefs and practice-related changes and their contributing factors, a thematic data organisation-oriented framework was constructed (following Spencer et al., 2014). This was followed by indexing (in-depth reading of phrases, sentences, and paragraphs to determine how sections of data could be indexed according to the framework) and sorting (the process of re-assembling fractured discourse) through word tables. Each individual case's comments and quotations were summarised for descriptive analysis and cross-case comparisons.

Two cases (Lydia and Michelle) functioning as theoretical replications were selected for presentation. Due to the longitudinal nature of our project, the cases, despite having similar backgrounds, were predicted to have contrasting findings but for anticipatable reasons: 1. Different reasons for joining the PD programme—Lydia was highly motivated to improve her vocabulary teaching because her formal teacher education 'provided [her] with limited insights into vocabulary teaching' (I-1); she noticed that her students had problems retaining the words she taught despite the class activities she designed to promote vocabulary teaching and learning, and this had 'troubled her for years' (I-1). Michelle was fairly 'confident' about her knowledge and vocabulary teaching capability, suggesting that she considered her vocabulary teaching to be 'better than an average teacher' (I-1), but she joined the programme to 'set a good

example' for other English language teachers and to show them 'the importance of devoting time and effort to improving teaching effectiveness' (I-3). 2. Different levels of engagement during the programme—Lydia was quiet and did not consider it necessary to express her ideas during PD programmes, as reflected in her comment 'Being quiet is not a problem … It is fine as long as [teachers] are spending time exploring issues relating to vocabulary teaching' (I-3); however, Michelle appeared to be active in expressing her ideas because she 'enjoy[s] talking to [her] colleagues' and sees a need to do so, thinking that 'nobody will say anything' if she does not take the initiative to do so (I-3). 3. Different attitudes toward receiving feedback or criticism from colleagues—Lydia suggested that she 'does not mind being judged' in the PD programme as long as she is given 'new ideas and comments' to reflect on 'ways to improve teaching' (I-3), whereas Michelle commented that she 'does not mind being criticised' because she can 'always defend' herself (I-3). Given that 'systematic comparisons reveal patterns and relationships resulting in a tentative theory' (Ridder, 2017, p. 292), detailed examination of the similarities and differences of the two selected cases, in addition to the changes in their beliefs and practices as a result of the intervention, offered opportunities for theory building that advanced our understanding of how PD programmes promoting a dialogic approach to teacher development can induce change.

4.3.6. Validity and reliability

The first author conducted inter-coder reliability assessment on approximately 30% of the interviews and professional dialogues with two research assistants. These assistants received standardized instructions and training in coding qualitative data to ensure the communicability and transparency of the coding process and to promote reflexivity and dialogue within the research team (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Due to the sheer volume of data, the data collection and analysis process was ongoing and recursive (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Changes in beliefs and practices were initially identified by analysing the interviews and lesson observations across the three study phases, before the professional dialogues and reflective writing were analysed for factors that could have influenced change. Validity was strengthened through data triangulation (Yin, 2018), and a systematic qualitative interpretive approach ensured that the salient features of the cases were highlighted, while all data fit the derived conclusions. Participants were invited to read and comment on the final report to ensure accurate descriptions and reasonable interpretations of their beliefs and practices.

5. Findings

To present salient findings on each participant, codes were used to denote data sources: i.e. interviews (I) and reflective entries (RE). The number following each code indicates the chronological sequence of the data collection. For instance, I-1 and I-2 refer to the interview data gathered in Phases One and Two, respectively. For each case, self-reported changes in beliefs are presented first, followed by evidence of any changes in classroom practice and possible factors that could explain them.

5.1. Case one: Lydia

5.1.1. Self-reported changes in beliefs regarding notion of a word, first language (L1) translation use, and related pedagogical beliefs

Interviews, reflective writing, and recorded lessons showed that Lydia's beliefs and practice developed in two key areas—notion of a word and first language (L1) translation use. Prior to the PD programme, Lydia associated knowing a word with five lexical knowledge aspects: 'pronunciation', 'spelling', 'meaning', 'associations', and 'constraints on use' (I-1). As she 'was aware of only very few aspects of word knowledge before the discussion on the notion of a word with other teachers' (I-2), she confessed that she was 'shocked' to realise how she 'had neglected so many aspects of word knowledge for so long' (I-3). In the study's final interview, however, she cited four additional aspects of such knowledge: 'word parts', 'concept and referents', 'word form', and 'collocation' (I-3).

Lydia's pedagogical beliefs regarding the aims and content of vocabulary teaching also showed development; whereas in interview one, she stated that English language 'teachers should focus only on the teaching of pronunciation, meaning, and spelling' (I-1), after the intervention she clearly emphasised the need to 'cover all the aspects [of word knowledge] in a school year so that students' vocabulary learning can be consolidated' (I-3). Although Lydia acknowledged that her students may not find such a thorough explanation meaningful, largely because language awareness is hardly ever tested in public examinations in Hong Kong, she still reported changing her beliefs and practice, explaining: 'I [then] learn[t] more about different aspects of word knowledge, and that changed my beliefs and teaching […]. I am trying to give interesting facts about words more often […] and be creative when teaching vocabulary' (I-3).

One final instance of belief change concerns her gradual reconstruction of deeply rooted beliefs (I-2) regarding L1 translation avoidance in vocabulary teaching. Owing to school-level English instruction policies (I-1) and her prior belief that such use would 'limit students' exposure to the English language', leading to the 'misunderstanding' (I-1), she was opposed to the use of translation in the English language classroom (I-1). In early discussions with colleagues and her reflective entry, she even stated that she found it 'disturbing' to learn about 'students' [positive] attitude towards the use of L1 translations in vocabulary learning' (RE-3). In the second and third interviews, however, Lydia admitted that her 'belief had changed' (I-2) and that she had gradually become 'more tolerant' towards L1 use in vocabulary learning (I-3).

5.1.2. Observable changes in practice

Lydia's reported belief change was reflected in her classroom practice. For example, Lydia gradually devoted extra time in class to teach different vocabulary items' word parts across the three study phases. Further, while in Phase One she did not teach concepts and referents, she did this in Phases Two and Three (e.g. 'horse' as an animal and a piece of sports equipment; 'remote' in terms of distance and electrical appliances; 'back' in relation to return and support). Interestingly, Lydia taught the word 'Turkey' by drawing students' attention to its multiple meanings, as seen in Excerpt 1:

Excerpt 1 (Extracted from a lesson in Phase 3)

Lydia:	*So, 'Turkey' can be a country name. It can also refer to [...]?*
Student:	*Fire chicken* [Chinglish for turkey, created based on the word's Chinese translation 火雞 fo[2] gai[1]].
Lydia:	*Fire chicken. Yes [...]. That's festive food at Christmas. Now, make sure you use a capital letter for Turkey when you're talking about the country, okay? When it's the small letter, it's about the animal.*

Commenting on these teaching-related observations, Lydia said, 'I deliberately changed my approach to teaching vocabulary and devoted more time to teaching students different aspects of vocabulary knowledge [...]. I tried to draw students' attention to the different word parts more often [...] and started to focus on the teaching of concept and referents, which I never covered in my class before [the PD programme]' (I-3).

Similarly, while Lydia often prohibited L1 translation use in Phase One, in later phases, she stopped discouraging her students from using Cantonese to explain the meaning of lexical items, such as 'snooker', 'amateur', and 'sanitation'. She even provided her students with L1 translations for 'guts', 'stroke', and 'veggie' to facilitate their understanding in Phase Two (Excerpt 3) and demonstrated further change in Phase Three, where she asked her students for L1 translations to assist her teaching (Excerpt 4). Excerpts 2–4 reflect Lydia's change in practice regarding L1 translation use:

Excerpt 2 (Extracted from a lesson in Phase 1)

Lydia:	*What's the meaning of 'distraction'?*
Student:	分心 [fan[1] sam[1]].
Lydia:	*In English!*

Excerpt 3 (Extracted from a lesson in Phase 2)

Lydia:	*Do you know what a 'stroke' is? [...]*
Student:	*Medium wind* (Chinglish for stroke).
Student:	中風 [zung[3] fung[1]].
Lydia:	*That's the Chinese translation. You're right!*

Excerpt 4 (Extracted from a lesson in Phase 3)

Lydia:	*'Hurricane'. It's a storm [...]. What's the Chinese meaning?*
Student:	颶風 [geoi[6] fung[1]].
Lydia:	*This is a noun. Okay!*

In the stimulated recall, Lydia stated: 'If they [students] give the correct Chinese translation, I do not ask for English paraphrasing any more [...]. That actually helps save time' (I-2). In the final interview, she commented that rather than rigidly implementing the school policies regarding using only English for instruction, she preferred incorporating L1 translations into her teaching as 'a straightforward way for students to learn words' (I-3). She suggested that 'teachers should exercise professional judgement and make pedagogical decisions to maximise learning' (I-3).

5.1.3. Factors relating to change

Lydia's interviews and reflective entries suggest that her exposure to perspectives from learners, colleagues, and scholars during the intervention helped her develop her understanding and practice. For instance, one reflective entry records how she learned by exploring theoretical literature that 'there are many aspects to be covered when teaching vocabulary' (RE-1). Furthermore, analysing students' beliefs provided 'a glimpse into another approach' towards introducing new words in class, which prompted her to 'try [...] explain[ing] the meaning of the different parts [of a word] to students' to help them consolidate their vocabulary learning' (RE-1) and to initiate concrete plans for adjusting her classroom practices.

Lydia did not express her views often during the teacher development programme. Compared to her colleagues' extensive contributions (i.e. 421 contributions made by Louise and 618 contributions made by Michelle), Lydia only made 167 contributions, possibly because she intended to maintain a harmonious relationship with them and 'did not feel comfortable about commenting on [her] colleagues' suggestions sometimes' (I-3). She said, 'I don't mind being judged, but I don't want to appear judgemental. Other teachers may feel uneasy if their views are challenged. I'd rather give more positive evaluations regarding my colleagues' suggestions' (I-3). Nonetheless, she reported being engaged in the programme through attentive listening, followed by critical self-reflection (I-3). For instance, she acknowledged her learnings from her colleagues: 'From Michelle, I learned that creativity and lexical development are closely related. Michelle's strategy for teaching students the difference between *quite* and *quiet*, two commonly confused words, is interesting and useful' (I-3). Excerpt 5 describes the third session of the PD programme, where Michelle shared her thoughts about the usefulness of creativity for teaching vocabulary with other teachers.

Excerpt 5 (Extracted from PD-3)

Michelle:	*Students always get '**quiet**' and '**quite**' wrong. They spell them wrongly, and they don't know which is which. So, I try to ask them to remember, 'E.T. [extra-terrestrials] don't speak human language. They don't speak, and they are **quiet**'… As a student, I always mixed them up, and I thought of this.*
Louise:	*Oh, you thought of this on your own?*
Michelle:	*Yes. And I have remembered it forever.*
Researcher:	*Right. 'Quiet' ends with 'et'. This is interesting.*
Louise:	*Yes, it works.*
Michelle:	*Sometimes, we may have to make good use of our creativity to teach vocabulary effectively.*

Though Lydia did not voice her opinions during the session, her interview comments show that Michelle's ideas resonated with her. Similarly, Lydia did not contribute to the dialogue exploring the pros of L1 translation, but she cited changing her long-held beliefs about its use after discussing 'students' feedback on Chinese translations' (I-2). In the second interview, she noted: 'I [have become] even more tolerant of L1 translation now […]. Some scholars commented that it's a straightforward way for students to really learn the words' (I-3). This suggests that, although teachers might only serve as 'active listeners' in a professional dialogue or even initially reject new perspectives that contradict existing deeply rooted beliefs, these can change.

Lydia attributed her change in beliefs largely to her self-reflection, suggesting that it exerted the greatest impact: 'Self-reflection is the most effective [way] to initiate change. When performing self-reflection, you really have to organise your thoughts about the new ideas […]. Without really thinking about the new teaching methods in detail, I will not feel comfortable using them in my lessons' (I-3). Other data confirm this; Lydia's self-reflection often included concrete plans to adjust her classroom practices—for example, 'I *often reminded* myself that I should be more tolerant with the use of L1 translation'—and a deliberate intention to make changes—for example, 'I *deliberately changed* my approach to teaching vocabulary and devoted more time to teaching students different aspects of vocabulary knowledge'. Overall, the data suggested that Lydia's belief change appeared to stem from the juxtaposition of new perspectives with her own beliefs and/or practices through the professional dialogues and the subsequent self-reflection.

5.2. Case two: Michelle

5.2.1. Self-reported belief and practice-related change regarding the notion of a word, the teaching of word knowledge, and autonomous vocabulary learning

After the intervention, Michelle seemingly experienced changes in her conception of the following areas: the notion of a word; the need to address various word knowledge aspects; and autonomous vocabulary learning. In the initial interview, she mentioned that teachers should focus on teaching meaning and pronunciation in the English language classroom (I-1), while in the second interview, she commented on the importance of devoting attention to teaching collocations (I-2). Further, Michelle reported her heightened awareness regarding different aspects of word knowledge, and in the final interview emphasised that 'every single aspect' of word knowledge should be addressed in class if possible (I-3).

Michelle also seemingly experienced belief development regarding the need for autonomous vocabulary learning. She admitted that she 'did not pay much attention' to the promotion of autonomous vocabulary learning before the study (I-1) but reported attaching more importance to it afterwards. For example, she once considered direct vocabulary teaching 'essential' (I-1), but in the final interview, she suggested that 'teachers should ask students to guess the word meaning from context'. She now tried to avoid using explicit instruction for teaching vocabulary (I-3) because of her realisation that 'students' active involvement in learning is vital' (I-3). She also highlighted the importance of helping students cultivate the habit of dictionary use by periodically demonstrating how different online dictionaries could be deployed. Regarding vocabulary assessment, Michelle reported finding individualised testing impressive, as she 'wasn't aware that vocabulary assessment can be done by students themselves' (RE-6). Furthermore, she found the use of vocabulary assessment to 'promote self-regulated learning and lifelong learning' 'fascinating' (I-3) (RE-6). Similar to Lydia, Michelle reported learning from the intervention and developed her beliefs regarding several vocabulary teaching and learning-related aspects.

5.2.2. Observable changes in practices

Unlike Lydia, however, there was little evidence that Michelle's reported belief changes modified her classroom practice. For example, although Michelle reported introducing more vocabulary-learning opportunities through word collocation (I-3), analysis of recorded lessons showed that she addressed collocation more often in her classes during Phase Two while hardly teaching collocation during Phase Three. Explaining this situation, she said that she 'just followed the textbook' and that the change did not represent her deliberate intention to teach or not to teach collocation (I-3). Similarly, despite her reported belief change regarding autonomous vocabulary learning, lesson analysis revealed that she rarely encouraged her students to discover the meanings of unfamiliar lexical items. Excerpts 6–8 illustrate Michelle's common practice in explaining the meanings of target vocabulary items for her students.

Excerpt 6 (Extracted from a lesson in Phase 1)

Michelle:	As an '**alternative**'. 'Alternative' means 'another choice that you can choose from'.

Excerpt 7 (Extracted from a lesson in Phase 2)

Michelle:	'**Nosiness**'. Do you know this word?
Student:	[Silence]
Michelle:	If you are 'nosy', […] you want to find out different things about other people. You like to find out people's secrets.

Excerpt 8 (Extracted from a lesson in Phase 3)

Student:	What does '**enthusiastic**' mean?
Michelle:	You don't know the word 'enthusiastic'? 'Passionate'.

As can be seen in the three excerpts, Michelle did not ask her students to guess the target vocabulary items' meanings by using contextual cues or analysing different word parts. Instead, she used paraphrasing (Excerpts 6 and 7) and synonyms (Excerpt 8) to explain word meanings; similar practices were commonly observed in her lessons during all phases. She said, 'asking students to guess the word meaning can be challenging. They may say they do not know the answer or that they cannot think. It is more time-consuming than asking them to write down the definition' (I-3). Furthermore, despite reporting that she advocated vocabulary testing for promoting self-regulated learning, she did not conduct individualised testing in class. In the final assessment, she conceded that she adhered to her usual vocabulary assessment practice and preferred conducting dictation and quizzes to assess her students' vocabulary knowledge because of school policies. Her only noticeable behavioural change was related to the use of online dictionaries. In one of her lessons, she used the Oxford Learner's Dictionary to teach words such as 'determination', 'inquisitive', and 'persist'. In the final interview, she highlighted that she had recently adopted her practice to develop learner autonomy (I-3).

5.2.3. Factors relating to change

Michelle's practice appeared to have only minimally changed, despite shifts in her stated beliefs. Her intention to help her students succeed in exams determined her actions: 'The students are weakest in vocabulary when they go for the examination. I want to help them build more vocabulary' (I-3). This could explain why the only practice that appeared to undergo change—developing student autonomy through the use of online dictionaries—was time-efficient and could be perceived as a 'quick-fix' solution to the problem of students' reliance on teachers to learn vocabulary. Otherwise, Michelle's tendency was to justify and consolidate her beliefs in support of existing practices and school policies.

Unlike Lydia, Michelle actively participated in the professional dialogues, largely sharing her experiences and contributing positive responses to her colleagues by highlighting similar practices. For example, Excerpt 9 outlines how Michelle justified her own beliefs and practices by agreeing with Louise, suggesting that they both used activities preferred by students to facilitate vocabulary learning and teaching in class.

Excerpt 9 (Extracted from PD-4)

Michelle:	As teachers, we have to include different kinds of activities to facilitate vocabulary learning and teaching in our lessons, right? Relying on chalk and talk doesn't work now […].
Louise:	I think it's important to strike a balance between the two.
Researcher:	Any other comments on the learner beliefs presented here?
Louise:	Games, movies, and songs are used to teach vocabulary in our classes, and it seems that our students like them.
Michelle:	I share your view. I think the most popular vocabulary activities are playing games, watching movies, and listening to songs, and the questionnaire results suggest that our students' beliefs are consistent with ours. They show that we understand our students well […]. We are doing something good, and our students do appreciate what we have been doing.

While participating in the PD programme, Michelle often indicated that the vocabulary teaching approaches she adopted aligned with those of her colleagues. She tended to justify her existing beliefs and practices for school policies; this tendency is further reflected in her reflective writing. Upon the completion of the PD programme, she wrote: 'After the discussion, I've found that I have been using some vocabulary activities suggested […]. I think I will keep on using these activities to boost students' vocabulary' (RE-4). Similarly, she interpreted students' voices as justification for maintaining the status quo: 'It is quite encouraging to know that, although our students think learning vocabulary is difficult, they still think that it is fun to learn. It seems that our teachers are teaching well, and our students are making good efforts in learning' (RE-5).

Some evidence from the interviews suggest that Michelle tended to justify her existing beliefs because of her identity as an experienced teacher: 'Teachers who have got many years of teaching experience like me may sometimes forget about what we've learned before […]. This kind of professional development is important—we have to refresh our memory of what we've learned' (I-2). Her comments about how culture influenced teachers' participation in dialogic reflection may also explain why she often made responsive contributions by highlighting the practices she shared with other teachers. Her remark that 'being humble is a virtue in Chinese culture. Some [teachers] may be reluctant to share [their innovative ideas or practices] because they don't want to show off […] we are all taught to be humble' (I-2) may suggest her intention to encourage information exchange by acknowledging her colleagues.

6. Discussion

In this section, the study's two research questions are discussed with reference to the key findings and the existing literature to provide insights into the complex nature of belief development, its relationship with action, and issues regarding dialogic approach-based teacher development. Section 6.1 addresses the first research question about the impact of a dialogic reflection-based PD programme, and Sections 6.2–6.4 address the second research question by examining the possible factors shaping change.

6.1. Development of in-service teachers' vocabulary teaching and learning-related beliefs and practices through dialogic reflection

Drawing on multiple data sources, this study provided evidence that the dialogic reflection-based PD programme facilitated teachers' belief development to a large extent, although not all such belief changes were observed in their classroom behaviours. Both teachers started by associating 'knowing a word' only with certain lexical knowledge aspects (e.g. pronunciation and meaning) but deepened their beliefs about the notion of a word and cited additional aspects of such knowledge after the programme, suggesting that all aspects of word knowledge should be covered in the English language classroom to consolidate vocabulary learning. Further, both teachers reported considerable changes in their pedagogical beliefs – Lydia reported attaching more importance to the use of interesting examples and creativity to enhance vocabulary instruction, as well as rejecting her deeply rooted beliefs about the avoidance of L1 translation when teaching vocabulary. Michelle reported realising the significance of autonomous vocabulary learning, which in turn enabled her to recognise the need to encourage the guessing of word meanings, promote dictionary use, and adopt individualised testing to assess vocabulary knowledge in class. Despite the participants' self-reported belief changes, it is noteworthy that the disparity between their changes in practice was obvious. Specifically, Lydia demonstrated marked change in her practice, as reflected in the increased time devoted to teaching the word parts of different vocabulary items, her new attempts to address concepts and referents in class, and the incorporation of L1 translations into her lessons to clarify word meanings across the three study phases. In contrast, Michelle adapted her practice minimally, with the only noticeable behavioural change being the increased use of online dictionaries in class. As noted, she taught collocation more often in Phrase Two, but hardly addressed this word knowledge aspect in Phase Three. In addition, she adhered to her usual practice, asking her students to discover word meanings of unfamiliar vocabulary items only sporadically and making no attempt to conduct individualised testing. Whereas the participants' self-reported belief changes are of great significance and can be used to support earlier findings which showed the positive impact of professional dialogue on teacher development (Fisher & Kim, 2013; Haneda et al., 2017; Talbot et al., 2018), the misalignment between the teachers' reported belief changes and actual practices highlights the need to examine the impact of the dialogic reflection-based PD programme by scrutinising the factors that served as facilitators or impediments to professional development.

6.2. Use of multiple lenses to enhance teachers' awareness of beliefs

Lydia's reconstruction of her L1 translation-related beliefs showed that dialogue involving an exploration of multiple perspectives (researchers in the area, students, colleagues, etc.) may provide teachers with an opportunity to compare their own beliefs with those of others, thus enabling them to reconsider and reconstruct their deeply rooted beliefs. Critical reflection through multiple lenses may have enabled teachers to become more aware of their own and others' vocabulary teaching-related beliefs, thereby facilitating changes in their beliefs. This confirms that drawing teachers' attention through reflective activities to distorted or incomplete aspects of their own assumptions aids critical reflection and belief development (Brookfield, 2017; Ha & Murray, 2021; Tam, 2015). While existing literature highlights the pivotal role of expert-novice interactions in learning (Johnson & Golombek, 2016, 2020; Mann & Walsh, 2017), in this study, neither the teachers nor the researcher acted as 'experts'; nevertheless, Michelle's (PD-3) instructional strategy, which helped her students to differentiate between 'quite' and 'quiet' resonated with Lydia and facilitated the latter's belief development regarding the importance of creativity for vocabulary teaching and learning. It therefore suggests that joint construction of meaning and co-construction of knowledge through dialogue amongst peers, rather than expert mediation, is crucial for belief development.

6.3. Importance of reflexivity and the role of internalisation in supporting professional development

While researchers (e.g. Fisher & Kim, 2013; Haneda et al., 2017; Talbot et al., 2018) have found that professional dialogues facilitate teachers' behavioural changes, this study's findings suggest that teachers' verbal participation in professional dialogues, for example agreeing with others' suggestions, does not necessarily generate changes in practice, and that reflexivity is key to professional development. For example, Lydia, while relatively reluctant to express her own ideas, demonstrated a greater degree of change in her beliefs and practice than Michelle, who commented on several ideas she found impressive (e.g. autonomous vocabulary learning and individualised testing) during the intervention, but demonstrated limited change in her lessons. Dialogic engagement, therefore, should be equated with active listening, critical consciousness of one's own thinking (Johns, 2002), and appropriation of ideas rather than with overt verbal participation in professional dialogues.

Furthermore, this study revealed the incremental nature of belief changes (Ambrose, 2004) and demonstrated that changes in practice are not necessarily linear. Lydia was initially sceptical about L1 translation use, but after reflexive practice and self-reminders to incorporate it into her classroom practice, she gradually reconstructed her beliefs and demonstrated corresponding behavioural changes (for example, by inviting her students to explain word meanings using their mother tongue). In contrast, Michelle's written reflections on the professional dialogues focused on insights gained, but not on any plan for implementing changes. This study's findings suggested two key factors contributing to changes in the teachers' beliefs and/or practices: 1. Establishing a link between beliefs and clear goals; and 2. Deep thinking, which involves multiple reflective processes (e.g. expressing feelings, performing evaluation, and planning for action) (see Chung, 2018b; Mak, 2019).

6.4. The influence of context on teachers' dialogic reflections and behavioural changes

Context formed a final important consideration in teacher beliefs and/or practice development. The findings suggested that Chinese culture played a significant role in teachers' dialogic exchanges of views; in particular, the social nature of reflective thinking under Confucian values (Li, 2015). For example, Michelle's tendency to highlight the practices she shared with her counterparts to encourage their participation appeared associated with modesty, a highly valued virtue in Chinese culture (Bond et al., 2012). As Tang and Chung (2016) suggest, social acts (e.g. disagreements and suggestions) tend to be avoided in Chinese communication and may have influenced Lydia's decision to avoid engaging in disagreements or asking critical questions when professionally interacting with her colleagues. Notable is that teachers in Anglophone contexts may be reluctant to exchange ideas with their counterparts (see, e.g. Able et al., 2018; Charteris & Smardon, 2015). A shared and mutually understood dialogic approach (see Chung, 2021) could help to overcome potentially obstructive cultural habits and facilitate collective scaffolding, thus enabling professionals to co-construct knowledge and common understanding through purposeful questions and meaningful discussions.

Contextual factors may also explain why reported belief changes may not translate to actual changes in practice for some teachers. Strong motivation appears to be crucial for enacting behavioural changes. Lydia's comments revealed that she was conscious about the need to change her practice regarding L1 translation use even though school policies precluded teachers from using Chinese translations to explain word meanings. Furthermore, Lydia's promotion of greater student autonomy regarding learning approaches in the classroom facilitated better engagement in class, further bolstering her belief change. However, Michelle continued to support existing school policies, maintained her usual practice, and demonstrated no motivation for change. The teachers cited other prohibitory factors (e.g. time constraints and examination pressure) to explain tension between what teachers think and do (e.g. Chung, 2018a; Li, 2020). Clearly, therefore, teachers' motivation and contextual factors play a fundamental role in shaping teachers' behavioural changes.

7. Conclusion

This study advanced understandings of a dialogic approach-based PD that encouraged language teachers to explicitly reflect on beliefs to develop their thinking and practice. Traditional professional development formats (e.g. seminars, one-off workshops, and event-based training courses) are often criticised for emphasising content, which results in de-contextualised and contrived learning that fails to enhance teaching effectiveness (Lee, 2017; Mak, 2019; Svendsen, 2016). Our research clarified the value of dialogic reflection in teacher development; the participants appeared to construct knowledge in a collaborative manner through questioning and the exchange of ideas, suggesting that it is possible for professional development to occur without hierarchically structured expert-novice interactions. The findings suggest that participative PD programmes incorporating multiple lenses (self-reflection, analysis of student beliefs, exploration of colleagues' opinions, and examination of theoretical perspectives) are necessary for supporting teachers' reflections and developing a deeper understanding of their own and alternative beliefs and practices. Due to the indispensable role of follow-up activities, such as reflective writing or teaching-outcome evaluations, the promotion of reflexivity and the internalisation of new ideas facilitate effective learning.

Further, our findings suggest that overt verbal participation in professional dialogues does not necessarily lead to teacher changes; rather, dialogic engagement entailing open-mindedness, active listening, and the appropriation of ideas is crucial. Considering the apparent importance of cultural values in shaping teachers' dialogues, it is crucial to equip teachers with appropriate linguistic resources and politeness strategies to develop a culture of openness, trust, and respect for establishing genuine communication. The use of warm-up activities, pair work, and small-group sharing, especially at the outset of a PD programme, can be used to help teachers develop a sense of community and rapport.

In conclusion, although the findings presented offer valuable insights into teacher professional development, the study had

limitations that warrant further investigation. First, the participants were invited to join the research project voluntarily. This could pose a potential limitation because the participants may have been more motivated to improve their vocabulary teaching practice and more prepared to embrace change compared to their peers who did not volunteer. Second, the study focused on the participants' beliefs and practice-related changes, but its scope did not include the impact of teacher changes on students' actual learning, if any. Third, the study's PD programme lasted only three school days; it has been suggested that ongoing and sustained professional development is more likely to implement changes among teachers (Borg & Parnham, 2020; Lee, 2017; Mak, 2019). A natural progression of this study could involve a larger number of participants over a prolonged period to evaluate the impact of such changes on students' actual learning outcomes.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Author contributions

Edsoulla Chung: Conceptualization; Methodology; Formal analysis; Investigation; Writing—Original draft; Writing—Review & Editing; Project administration; Funding acquisition. Linda Fisher: Conceptualization; Methodology; Writing—Review & Editing.

Declaration of competing interest

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Appendix A. The focus of the professional dialogues and the major questions for discussion

Session	Topic	Major discussion questions
1	The importance of vocabulary and the notion of a word	- How important is vocabulary knowledge? - What role does vocabulary play in second/foreign language acquisition? - What is meant by 'knowing a word'?
2	Vocabulary in the English language classroom	- How many words should be taught in class? - Should teachers select particular types of words to teach (or not teach)? If so, how? If not, why? - Can teachers, textbooks and curricula cover second language vocabulary adequately? - What are the most important issues concerning vocabulary instruction in the English language classroom?
3	Vocabulary instructional strategies	- How can teachers help students to learn words effectively in class? - What can be done to consolidate the learning of a word? - Should vocabulary be taught directly in class? Why (not)? - Should first language (L1) translation be used in the English language classroom to teach vocabulary?
4	Vocabulary enhancement activities	- How important is it to conduct vocabulary activities in English lessons? What can be achieved by conducting vocabulary activities in class? - What kinds of activities can be introduced in English lessons to facilitate vocabulary teaching and learning? - What should teachers consider when designing class activities for vocabulary teaching and learning? - What kind(s) of vocabulary activities do you think your students like/dislike? Why do they like/dislike them?
5	Autonomous vocabulary learning	- What difficulties do learners encounter when learning vocabulary? - What are some possible factors that make it challenging for Chinese learners of English to learn vocabulary? - What can be done to promote autonomous vocabulary learning? - What are some examples of effective strategies that may be conducive to autonomous vocabulary learning?
6	Vocabulary assessment	- How important is it for teachers to assess vocabulary learning? - How do you usually assess your students' lexical knowledge? - Do you think your students like the method(s) you use? - What should be taken into consideration when assessing vocabulary? - What should be taken into consideration when assessing vocabulary? - What are some effective ways to test vocabulary?

(continued)

Session	Topic	Major discussion questions
7	Review	- What do you think about our discussion on vocabulary teaching and learning?
		- What have you learned from the professional development programme?
		- What has impressed you the most/least?
		- What do you think about the writing of reflective entries?
		- Would you like to join this kind of professional development programme again? Why or why not?

Appendix B. Coding of audiotaped lessons

This study adopted Nation's (2013) model, which presented nine lexical knowledge aspects based on Larsen-Freeman's (2001) framework highlighting three major knowledge components including *form*, *meaning*, and *use*, to examine the word knowledge aspects addressed by teachers in class. Further, salient vocabulary teaching features (e.g. paraphrasing word meanings, asking students to discover new words' meanings from textual contexts, adopting L1 translation, using verbal repetition, etc.) were also identified through repeated readings and coded for analysis via an iterative process. The sample lesson except with coding below illustrates how the word knowledge aspects addressed by teachers and their vocabulary teaching strategies were coded.

Example lesson excerpt with coding (Lydia)

			Aspects	Features
1	Lydia:	Now, a budget of $5000. Should it be pronounced as bud-get/bʌdget/or budget/ˈbʌdʒ.ɪt/?	Pronunciation	Studying the sound of a word
2	Student:	Budget (/ˈbʌdʒ.ɪt/).		
3	Lydia:	That's right. Budget/ˈbʌdʒ.ɪt/. Budget.		Verbal repetition
4		Is it a noun or a verb here?	Grammatical	Analysing
5	Student:	Noun.	function	part of speech
6	Lydia:	Good. It's a noun which means the amount of money you can spend.	Meaning	Explaining word meaning

As shown, Lydia was teaching the word 'budget', and she addressed its pronunciation (line 1), grammatical function (line 4), and meaning (line 6). She drew the students' attention to the word's sound (lines 1–3) by analysing its part of speech with them (lines 4–6) and explaining its meaning (line 6).

Appendix C. Sample interview questions

1. What are your views on vocabulary teaching?
2. What do you think vocabulary teaching involves? How should vocabulary be taught?
3. What do you think are the most important issues concerning vocabulary instruction?
4. What kinds of vocabulary knowledge do you think English teachers should or should not teach in the secondary classroom?
5. What should teachers consider when choosing vocabulary items to be taught in class?
6. What types of vocabulary should English language teachers teach or not teach in class?
7. What should teachers consider when designing class activities for vocabulary development?
8. What materials should teachers use to foster vocabulary teaching and learning?
9. How should teachers assess their students' vocabulary knowledge and use?
10. What do you think are your students' expectations about vocabulary learning in the English language classroom?
11. What do you think teachers should do to promote autonomous vocabulary learning?
12. Could you describe to me your recent experience of vocabulary teaching?
13. How would you comment on your experience of vocabulary teaching in your classes?
14. Why did you teach these words explicitly in class?
15. If you could conduct the lessons again, what would you do the same with regard to vocabulary teaching? Why?
16. If you could conduct the lessons again, what would you do differently with regard to vocabulary teaching? Why?
17. Do you think you have changed your views on vocabulary teaching and learning since we began? If so, can you describe the changes to me? What about your practice?
18. These are the vocabulary teaching practices I summarised based on analysis of your recorded lessons. Could you take a brief look at the summary and comment on it?
19. It seems to me that you have undergone some changes in your beliefs and practice regarding vocabulary teaching. How would you comment on your students' recent vocabulary learning in general? Do you think they have learned various vocabulary items better owing to the recent changes you have made?
20. Are there any other questions you'd like to raise or comments you'd like to make regarding vocabulary teaching and learning?

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