

Understanding Faculty Resistance in Teaching Reform: A Case Study from a Foreign Language School in China

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Abstract: This study examines faculty resistance to teaching reforms at Foreign Language School of Huangshan University (HSU), specifically focusing on the factors contributing to resistance, its impact on the successful implementation of reforms, and potential strategies to mitigate this resistance. Using a qualitative case study approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight faculty members, providing rich, detailed insights into their experiences and perceptions of the reforms. The data analysis revealed five key themes: perceived threat to professional identity, workload and time constraints, lack of adequate training and support, resistance to technology integration, and concerns about the impact of reforms on teaching and student engagement. Faculty members expressed that the shift towards communicative, student-centered teaching methods and the integration of technology posed a threat to their established teaching practices and professional identities. Many faculty also reported feeling overwhelmed by the additional workload and inadequate support in terms of training and resources. The study suggests that effective reform implementation requires addressing these concerns by involving faculty early in the reform process, providing targeted and ongoing professional development, allocating additional time for adaptation, and ensuring continuous support for faculty. The findings contribute to the broader discourse on faculty resistance to educational reforms, particularly in foreign language education settings, and provide valuable recommendations for overcoming resistance. The study's results can be applied to other foreign language schools facing similar challenges, offering practical insights for successful reform implementation in specialized educational environments.

Keywords: Faculty Resistance, Teaching Reforms, Professional Identity, Foreign Language Education, Technology Integration.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Higher education institutions worldwide are undergoing significant transformation driven by technological innovation, changing learner expectations, and evolving educational policies. Among the main transformations is the shift towards educational reforms that could enhance the methodologies of teaching, the curriculum, and

the student outcomes in general. Hu (2002) says that the underlying idea of these reforms is to make the learning process more engaging, interactive and relevant to the contemporary students. These reforms are commonly characterized by the use of new teaching methods and assessment methods and integration of technology in teaching language and making the learning process enjoyable. Contemporary approaches, such as communicative and student-centered ones, are aimed at developing real-world language proficiency, cultural knowledge, and cooperation (Lei & Medwell, 2022). Technology, especially digital platforms and virtual classrooms, are at the core of such reforms, which provide opportunities and challenges to teachers. Nevertheless, even though such reforms may be beneficial, the effectiveness will depend on the level at which teachers embrace the reforms and apply them. According to Dean (2025), teacher buy-in is a key to the success of any reform and it is language teaching in particular because traditional methods have been institutionalized.

The growing demand in foreign language education in and out of China is to modernize the delivery of instructions and switch to more communicative and student-oriented approaches to teaching instead of the old grammar-centered approaches (Zhiyong, Sidhu & Muthukrishnan, 2020). It is especially noticeable in the context of the foreign language schools, when the necessity to change in accordance to the new trends in language teaching is paramount in the context of remaining relevant in the globalized education market. Nonetheless, the opposition to such changes is highly prevalent, in particular, among long-standing faculty that have mastered certain pedagogical approaches over the years. Huang (2018) cites this type of resistance as usually being based on the perceived risk to the established teacher-student relationship and fears about losing professional identity. Also, faculty members might be overwhelmed by the increased workload related to the implementation of new teaching methods and adoption of technology (Yan & Wang, 2022). That is especially true in foreign language schools, where the conservative teaching approach has long-standing cultural values and educational philosophy, and any effort to modernize such approaches is even more debatable.

Foreign Language School (FLS) of Huangshan University (HSU), a large organization in the teaching of the foreign language has been reforming its programs in order to improve the effectiveness of its foreign language programs. These reforms aim to implement communicative teaching methods more, use technology in the classroom, and revise the curriculum and assessment strategies (Lo, 2021). Nonetheless, as much as the changes are meant to enhance the student engagement and learning outcomes, the reaction of the faculty members has been in check. Others accept the reforms as an opportunity to professionally grow and get better interaction with students (Liu, Wang & Zhao, 2020). Other people, on the contrary, oppose it, referring to the risk of insufficient training, the necessity to work more, and the need to break the established traditions of teaching (Cheng & Wei, 2021). This change resistance is a reflection of what is a bigger problem in educational institutions throughout the world; addressing the issue of faculty resistance and still being able to guarantee the realization of reforms. Zhang, Wong and Wang (2022) argue that to establish long-term change, the reasons behind the resistance and the concerns of faculty members need to be addressed, which is especially true when it comes to such specialization as foreign language teaching, where traditional practices have been entrenched.

1.2. Problem Statement

Faculty resistance to teaching reforms poses a significant challenge to the successful implementation of innovative pedagogical changes, particularly in specialized educational settings like foreign language schools (Murray et al., 2023). In Foreign Language School of Huangshan University (HSU), introduction of new reforms in the curriculum, teaching practice, and technology has brought about opposition among some faculty members. The reasons behind this resistance are veiled in various factors, including the perceived danger to the current teaching practices and already existing pedagogical strategies, the fear of a lack of adequate support and training of new practices, and the additional workload that the change can impose (Feng & Xiao, 2024). The faculty members and especially those who have been accustomed to the traditional teaching structures may find it not easy to adopt the new modalities and will end up being frustrated and not willing to apply the reforms. The consequences of such resistance can be failure to adequately introduce the changes, which will ultimately remove the sought-after advantages of both faculty and students. Unless faculty members are on board with the reforms, they might have a smaller likelihood of engaging in the new strategies, which can adversely impact the entire teaching process and student learning outcomes (Knight, 2020). To eliminate these challenges, it is imperative to learn the factors behind the faculty resistance in FLS and enable more conducive environment and proper execution of education reforms that can enable the realization of the goals of the institution.

1.3. Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are:

- To explore the reasons behind faculty resistance to teaching reforms at Foreign Language School of Huangshan University (HSU).
- To understand the impact of this resistance on the implementation of the reforms and the teaching environment.
- To identify potential strategies to overcome faculty resistance and promote a more collaborative approach to educational reform at FLS.
- To provide insights and recommendations that can be applied to other Foreign Language Schools facing similar challenges in reform implementation.

1.4. Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What are the key factors contributing to faculty resistance to teaching reforms at Foreign Language School of Huangshan University (HSU)?
- How does faculty resistance affect the implementation and effectiveness of these reforms?
- What strategies can be employed to address faculty resistance and facilitate the successful adoption of teaching reforms at FLS?
- How do faculty members' personal teaching philosophies and experiences influence their resistance or support of the reforms?

1.5. Significance of the Study

This research work is important because of a number of reasons. To begin with, it offers a detailed insight into the particular issues that the faculty members in one of the Foreign Language Schools encounters, which sheds light on the overall problem of the faculty reluctance to accept changes in the educational framework. Second, through one of its schools, Foreign Language School of Huangshan University (HSU), which is one of the top schools in teaching the English language, the study provides important lessons that can be transferred to other schools that are implementing the same kind of reforms. Lastly, the research adds to the body of scholarly literature on change management in learning institutions, in this case, the area of language instruction. These findings can assist the policymakers, administrators, and educators to devise more constructive strategies in implementing teaching reforms and enhancing overall educational experience of the faculty and students.

2. Literature Review

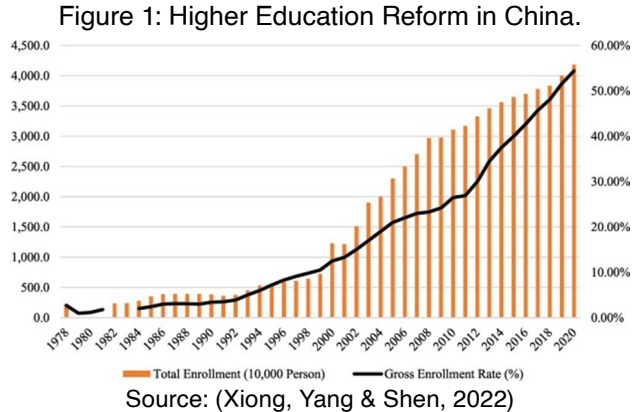
2.1. Introduction

Teaching reforms are crucial to the development and maturation of educational institutions all over the world. The reforms introduced in foreign language education, as in other subject areas, tend to be opposed, especially by the faculty members who are used to the traditional pedagogical practices. The opposition to the change is a well-explored educational research topic and can be identified as a major obstacle to effective changes implementation. It is important to understand what factors lead to faculty resistance in order to overcome these obstacles and make educational reforms produce the desired results. The objectives of the literature review are to present a generalized overview of available literature that has explored the faculty resistance towards teaching reforms, especially with regard to teaching foreign language. The review concentrates on a number of areas: what resistance is and why it occurs, how reform implementation has been affected by resistance, resistance mitigation strategies, and faculty role in reform processes.

2.2. Faculty Resistance to Educational Reforms

The phenomenon of faculty opposition to educational changes is not new in the educational research. Research indicates that resistance may take many forms starting with passive noncompliance to active opposition (Bao, Nejadghanbar & Feng, 2026). Among the main factors that contributed to this opposition is the risk that reforms will disrupt the long-established teaching practices. Reforms might be seen as an encroachment on the professional autonomy of faculty members who have years refining particular methods and techniques of teaching. Jatuporn (2025) proposes that the resistance is usually brought about by the uncomfortable feeling that educators get when expected to alter their well-established teaching lives, particularly when they feel that the new approaches to teaching might not fit their pedagogical ideology or even their students. The change to communicative and student-centered teaching methods as seen in the language schools of China, where traditional grammar-based

systems have prevailed over decades, can be met with resistance by the teachers who believe that the teaching of language is structural in nature and is based on rules. Figure 1 illustrates the steady growth in total enrollment and gross enrollment rate in China's higher education sector from 1980 to 2020, reflecting the impact of ongoing educational reforms;



Besides the perceived danger to the professional identity and teaching philosophy, the possibility of higher workload is also a reason why they can resist. New teaching methods are known to demand more time on part of faculty as they prepare new lessons, come up with new materials and also learn how to use new technologies. According to Quan et al. (2019), a considerable number of faculty members do not appreciate the advantages of these changes and think that the additional effort is not worth the outcomes. The emergence of digital tools, virtual learning classes, and interactive learning platforms, such as, might be considered as burdensome to those faculty who are not only unfamiliar with technology but are merely not well trained to utilize that technology effectively.

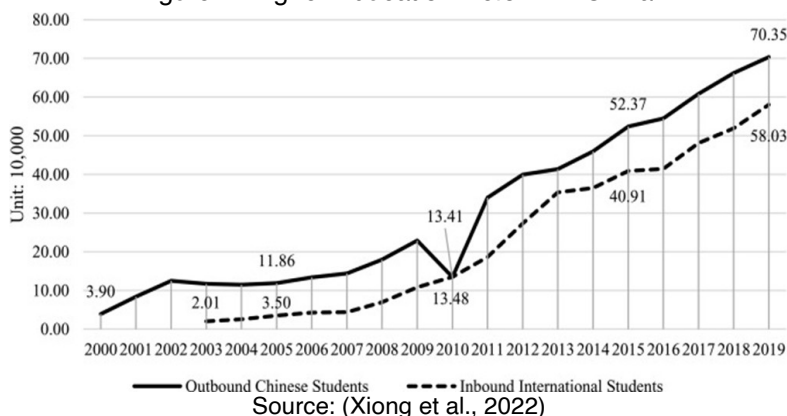
2.3. The Effect of Faculty Resistance on Reform Implementation

Faculty resistance can have far reaching consequences on teaching reforms. Studies indicate that faculty opposition to reforms may affect the intended benefits of reforms to be achieved according to their intentions (Rowe, Xiong & Tuomeiciren, 2020). Resistant members of the faculty might not embrace new teaching approaches, or might do so half-heartedly, causing outcome to suboptimal results in students. Resistance may also foster a climate of distrust and disconnection amongst faculty that may subsequently influence other individuals in the teaching community and eventually the entire educational institution (Bryant & Rao, 2019). Figure 2 shows the upward trend in both outbound Chinese students and inbound international students from 2000 to 2019, highlighting China's growing engagement in global education;

According to Fu and Clarke (2019), the success of any educational reform depends on faculty members' willingness to adopt new practices. Unless the faculty members are dedicated towards the reforms, the reforms will not be sustainable and the reform process might not meet its intended objectives. Resistance may have other implications

in the context of foreign language schools. The characteristics of language teaching particularly in a complicated language implies that the teaching techniques of the instructors can directly affect the learning of the students. Teachers who are opposed to reforms may result in an inconsistency in teaching practices, which consequently impacts student engagement and learning outcomes.

Figure 2: Higher Education Reform in China.



2.4. Strategies to Mitigate Resistance

With the potential influence that faculty resistance can play in teaching reform implementation, it is important to find approaches that can help alleviate resistance and promote faculty buy-in. Studies have indicated that among the best possible ways of curbing resistance is by ensuring that proper professional development and training is given. Nwisagbo, Osuji and Amachree (2025) argue that faculty members tend to accept the changes when they believe that they possess skills and knowledge to succeed in the implementation of changes. The training programs need to be tailored to the needs and concerns of the faculty members and must be provided in a way that is accessible and relevant. Rosenberg (2023) also believes that professional development programs can also offer faculty a chance to discuss the best practices with peers, get feedback on their methods of teaching. This interactive strategy would allow creating a feeling of community and connection among faculty, which can enable adopting new practices easier. Figure 3 illustrates the experiential learning model of teaching practicum, highlighting the sequential stages of preparation, practice, application, and reflection in teacher development;

The other key approach to resistance mitigation is by getting faculty members involved in the process of reform at the very beginning. According to Jing et al. (2025) faculty members tend to advocate reforms when they believe that their views and interests have been considered when making decisions and planning. Resistance may be minimized by making the faculty feel a sense of ownership and commitment to the changes by involving them in the reform process. In addition, engaging faculty to make decisions can also assist in discovering the challenges or barriers to implementation of reforms that could occur, which can be addressed by the institutions before it develops into a major problem.

Figure 3: Facilitating Reflection, Confidence, and Positive Mirror Effect in Teacher Practicum.



Source: (Ho, Lau & Li, 2025)

2.5. Faculty's Role in the Reform Process

The faculty members are strategic either in the success or failure of an educational reform particularly in a subject such as language education where teaching is the core of learning. As Wei and Chen (2019) observe, faculty members are not only reform implementers but they are actors in the direction and the success of the reform process. As noted by Wei and Chen (2019), faculty are not just implementers of reforms; they are active agents who shape the direction and outcome of the reform process. Their beliefs, attitudes and behavior may support or deter success of reforms. This is why it is important to know how the faculty feels about reforms and appease them to help in ensuring that the reforms become effective. Faculty opposition tends to lie in the belief that change is being forced on them without sufficient consultations and taking into account of their professional knowledge (Tao, 2022). To alleviate this, faculty members should be included in designing and implementing reforms. Faculty participation can contribute to making the reforms consistent with actualities of the classroom and the requirements of the teachers and students. Besides, the knowledge of faculty members in their professional areas may be invaluable in determining issues and solutions in the reform process.

2.6. Theoretical Framework

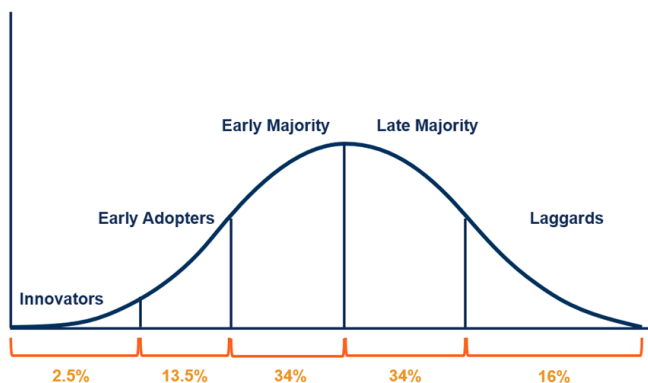
There are two important theories used in this work: Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 2003) and The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The theories assist in comprehending the variables that affect faculty resistance to teaching

reforms, especially in foreign language schools such as Foreign Language School of Huangshan University (HSU).

2.6.1. Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 2003)

The Diffusion of Innovations Theory describes the process, reasons and speed at which new knowledge and technology are diffused within a social system.

Figure 4: Diffusion of Innovations Theory.



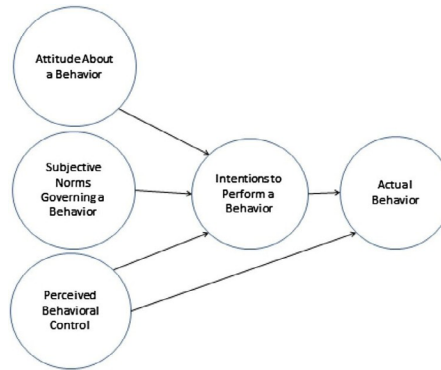
Source: (CFI Team, 2020)

According to Rogers (2003), five stages that determine the adoption of innovations include perceived relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. This theory can also be used in the context of faculty resistance to teaching reforms where it offers a good framework to understand why faculty members can be resistant or open to new teaching methodologies and technologies. As an example, faculty members might be opposed to reforms when they feel that new methods or technologies are too complicated or cannot fit in their current teaching practices. Also, Teets and Hasmath (2020), examined that as a faculty member, resistance may also occur, when I do not perceive that a particular change will provide a tangible benefit to the organisation, particularly when the perceived benefit is not worth the effort to achieve it. Also, the notion of trialability (the possibility to test new ideas on a small scale and then implement them on a large scale) is essential to comprehend how reforms may be also slowly accepted or dismissed by the faculty. Unless faculty members are provided a chance to experiment with new methodology or technology in their teaching, there is a greater likelihood of opposition because they may be worried about their efficiency or their ability to fit into the teaching style. This framework helps explain how perceived complexity, compatibility, relative advantage, and trialability influence faculty acceptance or resistance to teaching reforms.

2.6.2. The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991)

According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), human behavior can be determined using three variables, which are, attitudes towards the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control.

Figure 5: Theory of Planned Behavior.



Source: (Ishoy, 2016)

This theory can also be applied in the context of faculty resistance to teaching reforms whereby, attitudes of the faculties towards the reforms, peer pressure, and perceived capacity to implement the reforms influence the likelihood of these faculties adopting the changes. The willingness of faculty to adopt reforms in the teaching process, including the attitude that faculty have toward the reforms, including the belief that the reforms will enhance student learning or whether the faculty view and method of teaching is similar to the reform, are significant determinants of whether they will adopt the reforms. Also, Raza et al. (2018), examined that subjective norms or social pressure of colleagues, administrators or students are significant in influence of forming faculty attitudes. In case of a high peer or institutional anticipation to embrace new practices, faculty members might have a feeling that they are under pressure to comply, even though they might have individual scruples. Lastly, perceived behavioral control, or the assumption that the members of the faculty possess the resources, training and time to effectively implement the reforms, is a driving factor in the degree of resistance or acceptance of the reforms. Those faculty members who have confidence in their capacity to embrace new teaching practices or technologies are more apt to take up the reforms.

These two theories combined can thus present an all-encompassing perspective through which the dynamics of faculty resistance to educational changes can be examined especially as it relates to the learning of the foreign language. Innovation diffusion and planned behavior theories can also be used to understand the reactions of faculty members to changes in the teaching environment in an even deeper manner and illustrate the critical aspects that may impact the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of teaching reforms.

2.7. Literature Gap

Although faculty resistance to educational change has been widely examined in higher education, existing studies have primarily focused on general institutional settings, curriculum reform, or policy implementation. Comparatively little attention has been paid to how faculty members in Chinese university foreign language schools experience and respond to teaching reform initiatives. In particular, limited research has explored how concerns related to professional identity, workload, technology integration, and institutional support shape faculty responses to pedagogical change. Furthermore, few

studies have applied both Diffusion of Innovations Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior to explain faculty resistance within foreign language education contexts. This study addresses these gaps by examining faculty perceptions of teaching reform at the Foreign Language School of Huangshan University and by providing a theoretically informed understanding of resistance in a specialized educational setting.

2.8. Conclusion

One of the challenges in implementing teaching reforms in foreign language teaching is faculty resistance. It is imperative to understand elements that lead to resistance and effective strategies that can be used to resolve these issues so that reforms are successful. Using the theories like the Diffusion of Innovations Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior, this research will be used to create a holistic view of the faculty resistance and give recommendations on how to prevent the same. This study will also provide an important gap in the literature based on faculty resistance in foreign language schools and in the particular case of Foreign Language School of Huangshan University (HSU) which is an example of a foreign language school and will provide valuable information to be utilized in future reforms in this area.

3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This research aimed at examining the resistance of the faculty towards teaching reforms in Foreign Language School of Huangshan University (HSU) and how this resistance is affected, how it affects reforms implementation, and what can be done to overcome this resistance. To attain these aims, a qualitative research design was adopted and semi-structured interviews with members of the faculty were conducted with faculty members as the primary data collection method. This section provides the research design, methods of data collection, study participants, data analysis methods, and ethical considerations that were involved with the study.

3.2. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative case study design informed by a phenomenological perspective. The case study method is most appropriate in the study of intricate phenomena in a certain setting and in this case, it enables an indepth examination of faculty resistance to teaching changes at HSU. Cleland, MacLeod and Ellaway (2021) find the qualitative case studies especially handy when a researcher aims to find answers to how and why questions in the real world. Because the focus of this research is to establish the causal factors behind the faculty resistance, and the effects of faculty resistance on the implementation of reforms, qualitative research will offer the flexibility to study this phenomenon in a holistic way, whereby the rich, descriptive data can be collected.

3.3. Research Approach

Since the study is exploratory and aims at gaining insights into the views and

experiences of the members of the faculty, a phenomenological perspective is adopted within the broader qualitative case study design. Phenomenology is concerned with acquiring an insight into how people make sense of their lived lives, and it is in this manner that, in this case, an in-depth study of the experiences and perceptions of faculty members with regards to the teaching reforms at HSU can be done (Neubauer, Witkop & Varpio, 2019). This method will provide the researcher with an understanding of personal experiences and attitudes of the faculty members towards the reforms, and its impact on their classroom behaviour.

3.4. Data Collection

The most important data collection technique in this study is the semi-structured interviews that offers a middle ground in terms of structure and flexibility. Karatsareas (2022) argues that semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to adhere to a standardized list of questions but also provides the participants with the possibility to elaborate on their responses and bring up new issues. This is a method that is particularly helpful in analyzing perceptions, attitudes, and experience of individuals in detail. The interviews will be carried out either face-to-face or via video calls, depending on the possibilities and wishes of the participants. The interview questions will be elaborated on the literature review, and will revolve around the following themes:

- Faculty experiences with the teaching reforms: What changes have been implemented? How have faculty members responded to these changes?
- Perceived barriers to reform adoption: What factors contribute to resistance to the reforms? Are there any concerns about workload, training, or the compatibility of the reforms with established teaching methods?
- Impact of resistance on reform implementation: How does faculty resistance affect the adoption of reforms? What are the consequences of this resistance for the teaching and learning environment at FLS?
- Strategies to overcome resistance: What suggestions do faculty have for addressing resistance and ensuring the successful adoption of the reforms?

Eight members of the faculty working in various departments are interviewed in total. This is a suitable sample size in qualitative research since it will enable profiling of various viewpoints and yet the depth of analysis required to grasp the phenomenon. Faculty members will be selected according to their engagement of teaching reforms as well as different degrees of resistance and support of the changes.

3.5. Participant Selection

The participants are selected through purposive sampling since they will be in a position to offer varying and relevant views regarding the teaching reforms. Besides this, Khalefa and Selian (2021), noted that purposive sampling is a non-random methodological approach of conducting qualitative research, to choose individuals who are familiar with the theme under study and who may provide information regarding the studies phenomena. The participants will be chosen according to the following criteria:

- Experience in the teaching reforms: Those faculty members who have been directly engaged with the teaching reforms will be prioritized.
- Different views of the reforms: The sample will consist of faculty members, who

are resistant, neutral, and supportive of the reforms. This will give a detailed insight into the different elements that determine resistance and support.

- Diversity in teaching experience: Members of the teaching fraternity of diverse academic levels and language areas will be brought onboard to bring in a diversity of experiences and outlook.

The participants are contacted via formal invitations and will be informed to provide their consent in advance to the interviews. The study will uphold ethical considerations such as confidentiality and anonymity.

3.6. Data Analysis

To perform data analysis, the thematic analysis approach will be used which entails identifying and interpreting patterns or themes within data of the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is especially appropriate to be used in qualitative research because it enables explicit and implicit senses to be identified in the answers of the respondents. In the process of data analysis, the following steps will be adhered to:

Familiarization with the data: To get familiar with the content, the first step is to transcribe the interviews and read them a number of times.

Coding the data: The coding step will be to code the data by classifying the responses into main themes including resistance to change, perceived barriers and proposed strategies.

Identifying themes: Once the data is coded, the researcher will be grouping the codes into wider themes that summarize the data. As an illustration, themes could be the workload issues, training deficiency, or fitting with the existing practices.

Interpreting and reporting findings: Lastly, the themes will be discussed concerning the research questions and the results will be interpreted to make the conclusion on the nature of faculty resistance at FLS and the factors that can affect it.

The research will also make certain that the analytical process of data is high-quality and clear, and that the results can be used to present the experiences and opinions of the subjects.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

The research process involves issues of ethics especially when human subjects are involved. The ethical principles of the research institution and the foundations of informed consent and confidentiality as well as participant autonomy will be followed in this research. Particular ethical issues are:

Informed consent: An informed consent form is given to all participants which will contain the purpose of the study, voluntary nature of participation, the confidentiality of responses, and the right of participants to withdraw willfully without any penalty.

Confidentiality and anonymity: The identity of the participants is maintained in confidence and any identifying information will be eliminated in the transcripts. Anonymity in reporting of findings will be ensured by using pseudonyms.

Voluntary participation: The study is conducted on a voluntary basis and the participants will be made aware of the fact that, they will be free to quit the study at any given time without repercussions.

Data security: The data of the interviews is stored and only the researcher and approved personnel can access it.

3.8. Limitations

This study has a few limitations which should be noted. First, the sample will be rather small because only eight faculty members will be interviewed. This is fitting in qualitative research but findings might not be applicable in all foreign language schools. Also, the research is confined to a single research unit, Foreign Language School of Huangshan University (HSU), which can limit the generalizability of the results to other settings. Lastly, the research is based on self-reported data, which can be affected by the social desirability bias or biases of the participants.

3.9. Conclusion

The section has determined the methodology adopted to study the resistance among the faculty to teaching reforms at Foreign Language School of Huangshan University (HSU). Semi-structured interviews, thematic analysis and a qualitative case study design will assist the study in providing a detailed outline of the drivers of faculty resistance as well as the impact of the resistance to reforms implementation. The findings made in the study will be of help to the education research, in this case foreign language education setting and will offer a recommendation on how to overcome the resistance and foster a more collaborative approach towards teaching reform.

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Overview

The primary aim of this section is to present the detailed description of the information received during the semi-structured interviews done with eight participants of the Foreign Language School (FLS) of Huangshan University (HSU) faculty. These were interviews that explored experiences, views and responses of the faculty members on these new teaching reforms. The thematic analysis technique identified five significant themes within the data: Perceived Threat to Professional Identity, Workload and Time Constraints, Lack of Adequate Training and Support, Resistance to Technology Integration and Impact on Teaching and Student Engagement. These themes will be defined and analyzed in the next section and a comparison of real answers among the participants will be presented in detail. It will also comment on the peculiarities of the faculty resistance to reform and hint at some of the key factors that influence the attitudes.

Theme 1: Perceived Threat to Professional Identity

Among the most important themes that can be identified based on the interviews is the perceived danger to professional identity. Professors indicated the feeling of professional insecurity because of the changes. The implementation of new teaching practices and methods, especially those that do not oppose old-established methods, made some faculty feel that their knowledge and authority as educators were being threatened.

Participant 1 was much concerned with the professional menace to the reforms:

"I've spent years developing my own way of teaching, and now I'm being asked to

change it completely. Sometimes it feels like these new approaches don't really fit with what I believe effective English teaching should look like."

Participant 6, who admitted that this is not an easy task, put it in the context of growth:

"I won't say it's been easy. The reforms definitely challenge the way I've always taught, but I'm trying to see them as a chance to improve. At the same time, it's hard not to feel pushed out of my comfort zone, especially when there isn't much guidance available."

Participant 3 explained how the reforms made them lose their professional identities:

"These new approaches feel very unfamiliar to me. I'm not always sure they will help my students learn better, and sometimes it's difficult to reconcile them with my own teaching beliefs. To be honest, there are moments when I feel like I'm losing part of who I am as a teacher."

Participants 1 and 3 convey a more intensive feeling of threat to the professional identity because they believe that their decades of experience and the settled teaching practices are being undermined. On the other hand, Participant 6 recognizes the challenge but sees the reform as an opportunity for professional development. This comparison suggests that faculty members with a more fixed teaching philosophy or with longer teaching experience might have a harder time adapting to reforms, whereas those who consider change a way to learn and grow are more adaptable.

Theme 2: Workload and Time Constraints

The question of time and workload became one of the major problems of the faculty members. Most of the faculty members complained about how it added new responsibilities to their work to introduce new teaching methods which were usually not followed by sufficient time and resources to be well prepared. This theme is representative of the difficulties in being able to balance the traditional teaching duties with the needs of reform.

Participant 2 was frustrated about the increased workload:

The new instructional strategies sound perfect in theory, but preparing lessons, developing new materials and learning to use new technologies takes a lot of time, and there is already a full schedule without it."

Participant 5 expressed fear on the absence of institutional backing in dealing with this augmented workload:

"The problem with implementation of these reforms is that there is a massive workload increase and that we are supposed to learn the ropes on the job and it is not sustainable."

Participant 8 pointed to the impact of the work load on the quality of teaching:

"My problems are with getting everything managed. I feel in a hurry and that has been reflected on my teaching side as I am not able to provide the quality of education"

my students deserve since I am constantly engaged with the administration side of things, learning to use new tools."

The responses are indicative of a general grievance regarding the inadequacy of time and assistance provided to faculty to adequately work with the reforms. Participant 2 and 5 points to excessive workload, and Participant 8 adds that it affects the quality of teaching as concentration is less on pedagogy and more on administration. What this means is that, unless there is apparent support or even the structural adjustments to facilitate the change, the reforms are likely to burnout and frustrate members of the faculty, as such a move can destroy their effectiveness.

Theme 3: Lack of Adequate Training and Support

The lack of proper training and support was a major hindrance to the effective implementation of teaching reforms. Faculty members were often dissatisfied with the training offered and they felt that they were often inadequate or did not fit their teaching needs. Many were not ready to embrace the new ways and tools.

Participant 4 expressed his dissatisfaction with the initial training:

"They gave us with a couple of workshops, but they were so general and did not really address the specific challenges we face in foreign language teaching."

Participant 3 supported this concern, saying that no follow-up was a part of training:

"There was training, but no follow-up. We were simply supposed to be able to implement everything without additional directions. I still have several issues with the new curriculum."

Participant 7 emphasized the insufficiency of resources in spite of the fact that certain training materials were available:

"The university provides resources, but they do not get deep into the practical application of the reforms; one thing is in reading of changes in theory and another is putting them into the classroom."

The emotion of frustration that is conveyed by the Participant 4, Participant 3, and Participant 7 makes clear that faculty members are not well prepared to implement the reforms effectively. They feel that the training offered was too general, and there was a lack of support. In the absence of practical, continuing help, faculty find it difficult to see how to learn to apply theory into practical teaching.

Theme 4: Resistance to Technology Integration

Another important theme was the resistance to the technology integration. Some faculty members admitted that they found it advantageous to use technology; however, others were hesitant to use new technology or did not see how technology affected the nature of the language teaching process.

Participant 5 complained of being uncomfortable with the idea of using technology

in the classroom:

"I know technology is important, however, I am not yet at ease with all these new platforms. It is difficult to fit them in when I have no idea on the tools, and it feels like it erodes the content I am presenting."

Participant 2 provided a more moderate opinion, stating the positive sides but emphasizing the difficulties:

"I can see the benefits of technology usage, but the learning curve has been very steep, I am not convinced of the effectiveness of technology in foreign language teaching, and I have been in a constant race against the clock to learn how to do it."

Participant 1 had a greater resistance to technology:

"I'm not sure every class needs to be so technology-driven. Foreign language learning is complex, and I don't think digital tools can replace the interaction and engagement that happen in a face-to-face classroom."

The characterization of the divergence between Participants 5 and 2, who are open to some level of technological integration, and Participant 1, who is fiercely conservative, highlights the intergenerational difference between how technology is perceived by faculty. Long-term faculty that has not incorporated the use of technology in their instruction might find it harder to adopt the technology, and they may see it as an unwanted inconvenience.

Theme 5: Impact on Teaching and Student Engagement

The last theme in the interviews was how the reforms have influenced teaching and student engagements. Although there were faculty members who saw the possible advantages of the reforms especially in terms of improved student engagement, some were worried that the reforms could override the richness of the learning process especially by those students who learn better in a classroom environment.

Participant 8 has seen a beneficial effect on student engagement:

"Students seem to be more engaged with the new methods. It appears that they are more motivated when we involve real-life communication into lessons. It is a difficult change; however, it appears to be beneficial to students"

Participant 6 provided a more ambivalent response as he admitted both the benefits but also stated the difficulties:

"Some students do really well with the new approaches, particularly those who are more comfortable with technology, but I am concerned that some students will become confused and will become disconnected, and the reforms may leave some students behind."

Participant 4 raised the issue that the reforms may not be applicable to all the students:

"Although I am aware that we should modernize, I am worried that the move off

of the traditional approach would disorient some students who require a more structured and formal language learning. Not every student is ready to undergo such a big change."

This theme shows a division of the faculty attitude to the student engagement. Participant 8 is idealistic and is sure that the reforms involve students more, whereas Participants 6 and 4 are worried about the risks of isolation of those students who cannot adapt to the transition to more modern means of approach. This implies that the effectiveness of the reforms might be different according to the individual needs and preferences of the students, and the reforms might need to be adjusted toward effectively accommodate all learners.

Table 1: Comparison Table of Themes and Responses.

Theme	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6	Participant 7	Participant 8
Perceived Threat to Professional Identity	Strong resistance, views reforms as undermining authority	Open to growth, but feels challenged	Feels loss of identity, resistant	Believes reforms challenge their philosophy	Neutral, but sees opportunity for growth	Sees it as opportunity but acknowledges challenge	Sees threat, but willing to grow	Views reforms as a threat
Workload and Time Constraints	Concerned about lack of time	Overwhelmed with increased demands	Struggling to balance	Increased workload, no extra time	Time-consuming, but acknowledges it's necessary	Acknowledges workload but sees benefits	Overwhelmed by additional work	Feels rushed, quality of teaching suffers
Lack of Adequate Training and Support	Discontent with training, feels unprepared	Frustrated with generic training	No follow-up support, feels unprepared	Workshops were too basic, needs targeted support	Struggles to apply reforms due to insufficient training	Training inadequate for specific needs	Lacks proper training and resources	Needs more practical guidance
Resistance to Technology Integration	Highly resistant to tech	Neutral but sees value	Skeptical of technology	Uncomfortable with tech in classroom	Struggles to integrate tech but sees value	Feels tech disrupts teaching	Sees tech as valuable but challenging	Resistant to virtual tools, prefers traditional methods
Impact on Teaching and Student Engagement	Concerned that reforms disrupt student learning	Mixed feelings about student engagement	Feels reforms may confuse students	Worries about student confusion with reforms	Believes reforms positively engage students	Sees benefits but also challenges	Feels reforms help some students but alienate others	Feels reforms are engaging but problematic for some students

Source: Author

4.2. Conclusion

The response to the teaching reforms in FLS of Huangshan University (HSU) by the faculty members revealed a rather complex atmosphere of attitudes and experience, as the thematic analysis of answers shows. The dislike of the faculty members to the reforms is conditioned by several reasons, including a threat to professional identity, work overload, lack of training, unwillingness to operate with technologies, and concerns about an impact on student engagement. Staff members are more resistant to change as they hold the belief that change is experience and growth, on the other hand, others are strongly resistant to change as they think that reforms are a threat to their professionalism and the old-time tested methods of doing things. The answers indicate that the implementation of reforms at FLS will need a specific attention to the various interests of faculty members, and the targeted support and clear communications. It will be important to learn about these difficulties and tackle them in the most effective way to guarantee the success of the reforms and the

desired improvements in student outcomes.

5. Discussion

The interviews results show that the perceived threat to professional identity is one of the key factors that lead to faculty resistance to teaching reforms in Foreign Language School of Huangshan University (HSU). Faculty that has developed and perfected their instructional strategies over the years feel that the reforms are threat to their knowledge and control in the classroom. This is in line with the literature, which proposes that resistance is usually as a result of educators believing that reforms are a threat to their professional autonomy (Huang, 2018). The introduction of changes can be viewed by the faculty members as an existential threat since the new approaches can be incompatible with the well-developed teaching philosophies and values of the faculty. According to Jatuporn (2025), the pain caused by such a threat can be huge, particularly in situations when teachers believe that their status as competent professionals is threatened. The unwillingness to embrace the new methodologies can also be aggravated by the absence of effective communication about the need to implement these reforms and its advantages. This can be observed specifically in foreign language teaching, where old school has been reified, and professors can hardly adjust to newer, more interactive, student-wise methods (Zhiyong et al., 2020). Therefore, emphasizing psychological and professional implications of such changes is significant to reduce resistance so that faculty can perceive changes as not threats but as chances to achieve professional growth (Lei & Medwell, 2022).

The other important result of the analysis is the discrepancy in the faculty as to the increased workload and time limits in the implementation of the reforms. Most of the faculty members complained about additional time and energy spent to change their lessons, acquire new technologies, and invent new curricula. This result is consistent with the literature which indicates that the perceived growth in workload is one of the biggest impediments to adopting educational reforms (Quan et al., 2019). This problem is even acute within the framework of teaching the foreign language, in which faculty members are frequently asked to implement new technologies and techniques without further time or materials (Feng & Xiao, 2024). Faculty noted that they know changes are necessary, but the absence of institutional backing in the form of time to devote to the change and training only compounds the sense of being overwhelmed. These results are consistent with those provided by Nwisagbo et al. (2025) who claimed that the success of the educational reforms greatly depend on whether institutions assist their staff to adapt to new demands. This lack of balance of resources against the necessary workload affects the faculty involvement in the reforms, which may not allow them to be successfully implemented (Rosenberg, 2023). Thus, proper planning of professional development, supplementary resources, and time management are key issues that can minimize resistance on workload issues.

The research also revealed that there was a lot of opposition to the introduction of technology in language teaching at FLS. Although a portion of the faculty were willing to embrace digital tools and online platforms, others believed that these technologies were taking away the essential elements of language teaching. This result is aligned with the studies that indicate the general opposition to the use of new

technologies, particularly those that can be perceived as a disruption of the proven pedagogical methods. Face-to-face communication and traditional styles are greatly prized in foreign language instruction, so the transition to digital platforms and this new approach might seem like a drastic change. Lesser tech-savvy faculty might be overwhelmed by such a push in technological change as Knight (2020) observed that faculty resistance can also be aided by a deficiency in digital literacy. Also, according to the Participant 1, there are still some members of the faculty who do not believe that the virtual tools are effective in the language learning process, as they think that technology would not be able to provide the depth of face-to-face teaching (Hu, 2002). This perception is supported by technology resistance literature since faculty frequently raise concerns that online tools will not offer the rich, interactive learning experience that conventional methods offer (Zhang et al., 2022). The best way to counteract this resistance is the continuous training and the promotion of the pedagogical advantages of using technology in teaching a language, so that faculty members should perceive such means as supplements to their teaching efficiency, and not as something that negatively affects their work.

6. Conclusion

The study has examined the nature of faculty resistance in teaching reforms at Foreign Language School of Huangshan University (HSU), the important factors, which contribute to the resistance, the effect of resistance on the success of reforms implementation, and the strategies that could be used to overcome the challenges. In the interviews with eight faculty members, a total of five themes were identified, namely: Perceived Threat to Professional Identity, Workload and Time Constraints, Lack of Adequate Training and Support, Resistance to Technology Integration, and Impact on Teaching and Student Engagement. The results show that long-established faculty members used to the traditional teaching approach tend to be opposed to the change that threatens their long-established professional identity and pedagogical practices. A lot of respondents complained about the workload that comes with the adoption of new methods, technologies, and materials when there is no enough time and institutional support. Moreover, the absence of proper training and resources meant that not all the faculty members felt prepared to implement the reforms, which resulted in frustration and hesitation. Another important cause of resistance was the integration of technology, with the divide between the opinions of faculty members being whether the integration of new tools and platforms improved or harmed the language learning experience.

Although there are those who viewed potential positive outcomes in technology, others were not convinced, with most of them perceiving technology as a threat to the richness in student-teacher interaction, which was so important in language learning. These outcomes can be linked with the general literature on faculty resistance towards educational reforms which indicates that faculty are concerned about professional identity, workload, training, and the integration of technology. Faculty buy-in plays a significant role in determining any educational reform and this study shows that unless these fundamental issues are dealt with, the full potential of the reforms may not be achieved. This study assists in formulating more effective reform implementation strategies because of the awareness of the underlying causes behind faculty

resistance. To make sure that the new teaching methods and technologies are well adopted in FLS (and other institutions of its nature, the same applies to the latter), faculty engagement in the decision-making process, specific training sessions, and an inspiring institutional culture are crucial.

6.1. Recommendations

In accordance with the findings, the following recommendations are made in curbing faculty resistance and ensuring successful implementation of teaching reforms in Foreign Language School (FLS) of Huangshan University (HSU):

Provide Specialty Professional Training: Design training units and courses that address teaching specific needs and issues directly connected with the language teaching and the use of new methods and technologies.

Decision Making: Faculty: Involve faculty in reform process and seek their input during the process of developing and implementing reforms. This will make them feel that they own and are committed to changes.

Allow Adequate time to Adapt: More time should be provided to the faculty to deal with the changes and embrace new teaching methods. This will help in alleviating the sense of being overwhelmed and make sure the reforms are incorporated successfully in teaching practices.

Provide Continued Support and Feedback: Have a system of ongoing support which would involve peer cooperation, mentoring as well as frequent feedback as the new methods are implemented. This will assist the faculty members to be more assured of the reforms.

Create a Raisin of the Benefits of Technology: Show the usefulness of technology in language learning and give faculty practical training to enable them to develop their belief in the effectiveness of using digital tools in the classroom.

6.2. Limitations

Though this study has the potential to provide valuable data on faculty resistance in the Taiwanese FLS of Huangshan University (HSU), it has several drawbacks. First, it was only a small sample of members of the faculty and only eight of them which may not show the complete picture of the various perspectives of the entire institution. Second, the study focuses exclusively on one institution and this can undercut the generalization to other institutions of the foreign language. Finally, the research was based on self-reported data obtained through interviews, which can be influenced by the social desirability bias or personal prejudices.

6.3. Future Direction

Future studies would extend the sample size and also faculty members of various institutions could be incorporated to provide a more detailed insight of faculty resistance to teaching reforms in foreign language instruction. Moreover, longitudinal studies can be conducted to verify the shift in attitude and behaviors of the faculty with time as they are subjected to the reforms. A follow up of student views would also be an insightful course into the influence of faculty resistance on the learning experiences of students. Lastly, exploring the effectiveness of the strategies based on

overcoming resistance in the long-term would assist in optimizing the best practices in implementing the reforms in language schools.

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