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## Understanding Chinese Language and Culture: A Guidebook for Teachers of English in China

Austin Cody Pack  
*Brigham Young University - Provo*

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Understanding Chinese Language and Culture:

A Guidebook for Teachers of

English in China

Austin Pack

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Lynn E. Henrichsen, Chair  
Mark Tanner  
Norman Evans

Department of Linguistics and English Language

Brigham Young University

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## ABSTRACT

### Understanding Chinese Language and Culture: A Guidebook for Teachers of English in China

Austin Pack

Department of Linguistics and English Language, BYU  
Master of Arts

Many experts on English teaching in China argue that native-English-speaking teachers are too unfamiliar with Chinese culture and the Chinese language. Many of the resources available for these teachers do not address these issues and are not adequately tailored to the native-English-speaking teachers' specific needs. This 35 page guidebook in printable pdf form addresses three key issues with English teaching in China. First, the guidebook helps teachers understand how to bridge the gap that exists between their teaching styles and their Chinese students' learning styles. Second, the guidebook provides explanations of common errors Chinese students make in English because of interference from their native language, Chinese. Lastly, the guidebook answers some of the most common cultural questions that teachers have concerning China, Chinese students, and language teaching in China. The guidebook is available free to download at [austinpak.wordpress.com](http://austinpak.wordpress.com).

Keywords: English teaching, China, novice teachers, Chinese language, Chinese culture, Interference

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Thanks to Dr. Tanner for having a listening ear and a caring heart.

Thanks to Dr. Evans who showed me how to teach by action and not by word.

Thanks to my parents, Wesley and Jeanne Pack. Their *never* ending love has been and continues to be an anchor in my life.

Most of all, thanks to my beautiful and talented wife, Ray. Your sacrifices during these “difficult times” will never be forgotten. 我希望我们的感情会地久天长。

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Imagine for a moment that you are a recent college graduate. You are proud of yourself, having received your Bachelor's degree, and yet you feel unsure about what to do with yourself now. No jobs are lined up and you're not sure graduate school is what you really want to do. You keep asking yourself "What's next?" You see on campus or perhaps on the Internet an advertisement to teach English in China. The school that placed the advertisement will cover living expenses, the airplane ticket, and will pay you 10,000 RMB per month, whatever that means. You don't speak Chinese and don't know much about China. You've never taught English before, but it sounds fun. It's a chance to travel and make the world a better place. You decide that this is a good opportunity to give you time to think about what you want to do next in your life.

Since you don't speak Chinese, getting to your school after the plane landed was quite a challenging adventure. After a couple of weeks you're starting to get used to your new life in China. You find teaching English fun, but difficult! You think it's a bit strange how much some Chinese students struggle with English. Sometimes it's so hard to get them to volunteer an answer! And who would have thought Chinese students would struggle with simple things like pronouns? Is it really that confusing to say "he" for males and "she" for females? Why can't they get articles right? The words "a" and "the" are probably the shortest words in English, what's so hard about them? You have a lot of questions about how to better teach English to your students, but you also know you're trying your best.

Towards the end of your first semester teaching English in China, the mother of one of your students comes to your office after class. In broken English she thanks you for teaching her

daughter. She places a gift on your desk before she leaves. Initially, you think to yourself how wonderful and kind the Chinese people are. As you look at the gift you begin to wonder if the mother who gave you this gift has other intentions other than thanking you. Could it be that she is giving this gift to actually bribe you? Does she want you to be lenient on her daughter and give her a better grade than she deserves? You begin to wonder if it's correct to accept this gift. You don't want to accept the gift if it's a bribe, but you also don't want to be impolite and reject the gift. What is the culturally correct thing to do?

Like the teacher in the story above, many native English speaking (NES) teachers in China are unfamiliar with the Chinese language and culture. Some of these teachers are TESOL professionals who, although not familiar with the Chinese language and culture, are experienced and well trained. Many of these professional teachers have taught Chinese students before. Other teachers in China may be volunteer teachers. Many volunteer teachers work with foundations and organizations like The Amity Foundation to improve the lives of Chinese by teaching them English. Sometimes living expenses are paid by the organization and sometimes not. Sometimes these volunteer teachers may have a lot of English teaching experience, other times they will be novice teachers. Novice teachers are inexperienced in teaching English to speakers of other languages. Although some volunteer teachers are also novice teachers, not all novice teachers are volunteer teachers. Many novice teachers in China are for-profit teachers that receive an income. There are many kinds of NES teachers in China. All teachers that are unfamiliar with the Chinese language and culture, no matter if they are professional or novice, would benefit greatly by learning about their Chinese students' language and culture.

There are many resources available to NES teachers to help them in their teaching endeavors in China. There are a number of these resources, however, that do not address the

linguistic and cultural challenges that NES teachers often face in China. *Understanding Chinese language and culture: A guidebook for teachers of English in China (UCLC)* is a free 35 page printable pdf file easily accessible on the web ([austinpack.wordpress.com](http://austinpack.wordpress.com)). It helps NES teachers to understand the least they should know about problems that arise in the English classroom due to linguistic and cultural differences. Throughout the guidebook are many links to other sources that NES teachers can explore if they want to learn more. *UCLC* is not an exhaustive source on Chinese culture and language. China is a large country with many complex cultures and dialects. *UCLC* does not address all problems NES teachers will encounter. This being said, because *UCLC* is specific to NES teachers' needs in China, and because of its simplicity, the guidebook fulfills the needs of NES teachers in China in ways that existing resources are unable to do. Although *UCLC* is specifically written with novice NES teachers in mind, all teachers unfamiliar with Chinese culture and language, no matter their amount of experience teaching English, will benefit from *UCLC*. In the remainder of this chapter I will discuss the rationale behind *UCLC*.

Each year thousands of novice native English speaking (NES) teachers are recruited to teach English in cities throughout China. Over the period of one month, from September to October 2012, there were 1,197 job postings listed on the China Job Board on Dave's ESL Café. The China Job Board on Dave's ESL Café is a frequently used website for employers and employees with interest in English language teaching in China. Each month hundreds of schools throughout China post job openings. Previously, at one moment in time, in November of 2011, I looked at a month's worth of postings of what employers required of the novice NES teachers they were recruiting. Fifteen out of twenty job postings on the China Job Board on Dave's ESL Café required no ESL or EFL certification. Most often the employers required applicants only to be a NES with a Bachelor's degree.

These results led me to wonder if these NES teachers are qualified to teach English in China. Many of these teachers have no background in linguistics, language teaching, the Chinese language, or Chinese culture. For many, it may be their first time teaching English in an EFL setting. I grew curious about what difficulties these teachers would come across and I began to explore available resources to help teachers through these difficulties.

Having obtained a BA in Mandarin Chinese and then furthering my studies in linguistics and TESOL as a graduate student, I felt that NES teachers, without an understanding of the Chinese language and culture, would be unable to reach their full potential as English teachers in China. I began to contemplate what questions NES teachers in China might have as they taught. Why are Chinese students so quiet? Why is it so hard to get Chinese students to participate? Why do Chinese students struggle so much with verb tenses? Why do students often say *she* when they should say *he*?

As I mulled over these questions and reflected on my own experience as a student learning Mandarin in China, I thought that novice NES teachers, without a background in the Chinese language and culture, would find it difficult to cross the gulf that exists between them and their students. I began to search for resources available to NES teachers in China.

The remainder of this introduction covers what resources are available for teachers, outlines some of the drawbacks of existing resources, and establishes the rationale behind *UCLC*.

### **Available Resources**

One resource specifically written for novice NES is Don Snow's book (1996) *More than a native speaker: An introduction for volunteers teaching abroad*. The three hundred page book is divided into three parts. The first part, "Preparing to Teach", focuses on giving teachers the

bare minimum skills needed to survive in the classroom. The second part, “Aspects of Language Teaching,” addresses how to teach grammar, vocabulary and culture in addition to the four language skills. The third and last part contains suggestions on how to adapt to the host culture and how to further develop professionally. Snow purposefully keeps his explanations simple enough so that new or inexperienced teachers as well as those who have not studied linguistics or had formal training in language teaching are still able to grasp the concepts outlined in the book. Snow, who received a PhD in East Asian Language and Culture from Indiana University as well as an MA in ESL from Michigan State University, has extensive experience teaching English and American culture in Taiwan, China, and Hong Kong. Despite the author being an authoritative figure on English teaching in China, and despite Snow pulling most of his examples from his English teaching experience in China, I feel that *his book* is lacking in one crucial area: specificity to a particular culture and language. I will clarify how and why this is an issue after I discuss another useful resource that has limitations in the same way.

Lynn Henrichsen’s *Basic training and resources for teaching English to speakers of other languages* or *BTR-TESOL* (pronounced “better TESOL”) is another resource that deserves attention. *BTR-TESOL* is a free resource available on the web at [www.btrtesol.com](http://www.btrtesol.com). *BTR-TESOL* is designed for novice level English teachers who are on the verge of teaching in ESL or EFL settings. The website contains nearly fifty units, divided into ten major sections. These sections focus on “the least you should know and where to go to learn more” (Henrichsen, n.d., homepage heading). The website is simple in design and concise in its explanations, ensuring that it remains easily readable for novice NES teachers. The website is designed so that novice NES teachers, no matter what country they teach in, can feel confident in their English teaching

because they have a basic understanding of the most crucial and important principles of English language teaching.

Both *More than a native speaker* and *BTR-TESOL* demonstrate the need for the creation of *UCLC*. *More than a native speaker* and *BTR-TESOL* aim to help all novice English teachers no matter where they teach in the world. With such a broad audience, these resources can only talk in general terms that are applicable across all host languages and cultures. For example, they may discuss how important it is to teach culture and to be aware of differences between the teacher's culture and the students' culture. However, what these resources do *not* do is explain the specific problems that novice teachers will encounter in specific countries and cultures. Although both Snow and Henrichsen have a strong connection with China, their programs do not discuss specific aspects of Chinese language and culture that cause problems in the English classroom in China.

*UCLC* is an attempt to cover this need for specificity. The guidebook focuses on the least that NES teachers should know about Chinese language and culture in order to be able to overcome challenges unique to English language teaching in China. It also helps NES teachers understand where they can go to learn more by providing links to online and print resources that relate to the material contained in the guidebook. The guidebook focuses only on those aspects of Chinese language and culture that relate to the struggles that Chinese students experience while studying English and that NES teachers experience while teaching English to Chinese students. It does not serve as an exhaustive, comprehensive explanation of Chinese language and culture.

## Drawbacks to Existing Resources that Discuss Chinese Language and Culture

Many articles and books already exist that lay out how aspects of the Chinese language and culture are the root of misunderstandings and difficulties in English language learning and communication in China. *Teaching American English pronunciation* (2008), *Learner English: A teacher's guide to interference and other problems* (2001), and *Communicating effectively with the Chinese* (1998) are a few examples of resources available. For several reasons, however, these resources fail to cover the needs of novice NES teachers in China.

First, many of these resources are scholarly works that are written with the academic audience of their profession in mind. Linguistic works that detail the concept of transfer from Chinese to English are written for the audience of other linguists. Novice NES teachers may have no background in linguistics and therefore find linguistic explanations of transfer difficult to understand.

One such book that illustrates this drawback is *Learner English: A teacher's guide to interference and other problems* (2001). Each chapter of the book addresses a specific language and how that language interferes with students' learning of English. The chapter on Chinese speakers, written by Jung Chang, does an excellent job in explaining what aspects of English are difficult for Chinese students to pick up and how these problems relate to the students' L1. The chapter is written for teachers and linguists who have an understanding of linguistic terms. In her explanations, Chang uses terms such as *monosyllabicity*, *phonemes*, and *aspect*. Novice NES teachers, who most likely have not taken a course in linguistics, would have a hard time understanding these linguistic explanations of transfer.

In addition to the problem of jargon and readability, *Learner English* and *Teaching American English Pronunciation* are too broad in their coverage. The chapter on Chinese speakers in *Learner English* is only one of twenty-one chapters devoted to covering languages throughout the world. Is it reasonable to expect novice NES teachers to purchase a book that only contains one chapter that they will use?

### **Summary**

In summary, existing materials, although helpful, do not meet all the needs of novice NES teachers that will teach English in China. Materials either spread themselves thin by addressing English teaching throughout the whole world, or the readers get bogged down in academic and linguistic terms and explanations.

*UCLC* fulfills the needs of novice NES teachers that these other resources cannot. It is an attempt to blend the easily readable resources like *BTR-TESOL* and *More than a native speaker* with the complex and language specific resources like *Learner English*. It is a free 35 page printable pdf file easily accessible on the web. The guidebook follows Harmer's (2007) suggestion to be simple, true, clear, and relevant (p. 225). It was designed so that novice NES teachers, regardless of their education, would see immediate application of the guidebook to their English classrooms in China. Although the guidebook was created with novice NES teachers in mind, professional English teachers in China may still find the guidebook useful and applicable to their teaching situations.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Review of Literature**

In this section, I will review the literature that has been most helpful in the process of creating *Understanding Chinese language and culture: A guidebook for teachers of English in China (UCLC)*. For each authoritative source, I will explain who the author is and why that person is an authority on the topic. Next I will summarize what the authority figure says on the topic being discussed. Lastly, I will explain how the authority has influenced the guidebook and in what ways I have modified their work to fit the needs of the guidebook.

#### **Three Problems of ELT in China**

The work of Zhenhui Rao, a professor at Jiangxi Normal University, has been the most helpful source for the inspiration for and creation of *UCLC*. Rao, who received a Ph.D. at the University of South Australia, has published numerous articles in reputable journals such as *TESOL Journal*, *System*, *Language Learning Journal* and many others. His research focuses on English teaching and language learning styles and strategies in China.

Perhaps the most influential article of Zhenhui Rao in the conceptualization of *UCLC* has been his *TESOL Journal* article entitled “Reflecting on native-English speaking teachers in China” (2008). From his experience of co-teaching with native English speaking (NES) teachers at a Chinese university for five years and from his collection of student feedback concerning NES teachers’ English teaching in China, Rao concludes that there are three barriers that hinder language learning in the English classroom in China.

The first of these barriers is the NES teachers' insensitivity to their Chinese students' linguistic needs. Rao concludes from an analysis of his collection of student feedback about NES teachers that "NES teachers lack insight into typical problems that Chinese students face in the process of learning English" (p. 23). As a result of NES teachers' lack of understanding of the Chinese language, NES teachers are not able to perceive many of the language difficulties Chinese students experience as they study English. This leads to disappointment and frustration on the part of the Chinese students because they feel that NES teachers are not able to teach effectively to their needs. Being unaware of how the Chinese language differs from English is a major source of frustration and misunderstanding for both teachers and students in the English classroom in China.

The second barrier that Rao points out is the mismatch between teaching styles and learning styles that Western NES teachers and Chinese students prefer and are accustomed to. Chinese students may feel uneasy towards the learner-centered, hands-on approach to teaching that NES teachers tend to prefer. Many Chinese students instead prefer more traditional Chinese teaching methodologies that are focused on the teacher. The highly structured, grammar focused teaching patterns of Chinese teachers stands in contrast to what Rao calls the "intuitive-random style" (p. 23) that many NES teachers tend to favor. This mismatch of teaching and learning styles seems to be the source of many Chinese students' anxiety and hesitancy to participate in NES teachers' lessons.

Although Rao is correct in his assessment that Western and Chinese teachers often prefer different teaching styles, it is important to note that these differences should only be understood in general, and not absolute terms. Li (2007), conducted a COLT analysis and interviews with American and Chinese English teachers in China. Li argues that the differences in teaching styles

between Western and Chinese teachers aren't that extreme. Both Western and Chinese teachers observed by Li sought to employ Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodologies, and both groups of teachers struggled to varying degrees. Throughout *UCLC* are side by side comparisons that explain differences in approaches to learning and teaching in China and the West. These explanations should be understood as general differences. Not all Chinese teachers shy away from CLT and not all Western teachers prefer CLT methodologies.

The third and last barrier Rao discusses is the gulf that exists between the Chinese educational system and culture and their western counterparts. Because "NES teachers are not familiar with the Chinese educational system and fail to match their instruction with the school's expectation or their students' needs" (p. 23). NES teachers are unaware of entrance and exit exams that Chinese students take at high school, undergraduate, and graduate levels. Because NES teachers are unaware of tests such as the National Matriculation English Test (NMET), and the Chinese English Test (CET), the tests material isn't necessarily covered in class. Chinese students become anxious and worried that they will be unable to perform well on English tests administered by the school.

Because the traditional Chinese style of teaching and studying does not always produce fluent, proficient speakers of English, the counter-argument might be proposed that administrators at Chinese educational institutions recruit NES teachers because they will teach differently. This argument does have merit. Western teachers are hired because they do have different educational backgrounds and teaching strengths from their Chinese counterparts. The key point here is that both Western teachers and Chinese students need to work together to overcome their differences. Western teachers should not abandon their teaching styles. Rather, western teachers must both engage in style stretching (that is to say adapt their teaching to fit the

needs of their Chinese students) and encourage their students to style stretch (to experiment with learning styles other than those they prefer).

Rao is not alone in his assessment of the need for English teachers to gain a better understanding of their Chinese students. Many other authors argue similar points. Yi'an Wu, who holds a Cambridge Ph.D. in applied linguistics and has been professor and associate director of the National Research Centre for Foreign Language Education, which is based at Beijing Foreign Studies University, argues that English Language Teaching (ELT) is falling short of meeting the needs of Chinese students. Wu (2001) believes teaching methodology as well as “a lack of full understanding of Chinese learner’s learning process in the formal school environment” (p. 193) are critical problems that need to be overcome for ELT to progress in China. Wu concludes that the key to successful ELT in China is teacher education. Liming Yu (2001), essentially argues the same point that “to fundamentally change the [current ELT] situation [in China], teachers must undergo training that will promote their theoretical awareness as well as their linguistic abilities” (p. 197).

Although the works of all these authors have contributed to the conceptualization of *UCLC*, Rao’s article “Reflecting on native-English-speaking teachers in China” (2008) remains the most impactful. The three sections of the guidebook are organized around the three problems of ELT in China that Rao identifies:

- Teaching and Learning Styles
- Linguistic Differences
- Chinese Culture in the Classroom

To come to this decision to settle on these three major topic areas for my guidebook I relied on a series of guiding questions. First, what do experts say are the major problems that NES teachers experience in China? Second, what do experts say about these problems? What are the causes of these problems and what are some solutions to these problems? Third, how do the answers to the two previous questions relate to my experience as a NES teacher who has had Chinese students in my class, as a NES who has studied Chinese language and culture, and as a NES who has lived with and interacted with Chinese on a daily basis both inside and outside of China? In short, the works of the experts mentioned in this chapter have been placed through the “filter of my own experience.” My own experience communicating with Chinese, both as a teacher and a student, agrees with Rao’s assessment of difficulties NES teachers experience when teaching English to Chinese students.

### **Teaching and Learning Styles**

The article “Bridging the gap between teaching and learning styles in East Asian contexts” (2002) by Zhenhui Rao provided the skeleton for the first section of the guidebook. Other works by He & Zhang (2010), Xie (2010), and Zhang (2008) have helped flesh out the details. The overarching purpose of the “Teaching and Learning Styles” section of *UCLC* is to not only enable teachers to evaluate their own teaching and learning styles and compare those to the preferred teaching and learning styles of Chinese students, but to help teachers understand how they can bridge the differences that exist between the preferred teaching and learning styles.

Rao (2002) explains that the traditional English teaching styles in China have “been dominated by a teacher-centered, book-centered, grammar-translation method and an emphasis on rote memory” (p. 5). Rao outlines six common learning styles of Chinese students:

- Introverted – Students that work well by themselves and dislike working in groups.
- Closure-oriented – Students that dislike ambiguity and uncertainty. Dependent on authority figures. Prefer clear and detailed rules and deadlines.
- Analytic and field-independent – Students that prefer analyzing, and logically dissecting texts, grammar, or the language in general.
- Visual – Students are used to receiving visual stimulation while the lesson is ongoing. Students like teachers to put a lot of information on the blackboard as they listen as well as provide auditory input while reading.
- Thinking-oriented and reflective – Students are uncomfortable guessing. Instead they prefer to have time to think, reflect, and formulate a well thought out answer.
- Concrete sequential – Students prefer learning in a concrete, sequential and linear manner. Students tend to avoid compensation strategies.

One of the problems with the way that Rao outlines these learning styles is that many novice NES teachers would find the definitions and explanations of the learning styles to be difficult to understand. I have modified both the name and the description of the learning styles outlined by Rao so that NES teachers will find them easier to understand. For example, I renamed the “Closure-oriented learning style” to “Teacher dependent learning style”. Another influential article in the creation of the “Learning Styles” section of *UCLC* is Zhang’s (2008) article “Raising awareness of cultural differences in language classrooms.” Zhang, a professor of English at Yanshan Univeristy in China, argues that “the key to developing students’ English speaking skills, with the help of Western teachers, is to raise both the Chinese students and Western teachers’ awareness of cultural differences” (p. 39). Zhang compares how the roles of

teachers, students, learning materials, communication, and language learning differ for Chinese and Westerners. This means that there is much more than teaching and learning styles that NES teachers in China need to understand. NES teachers need to understand the broader picture that shows more of the educational background of their Chinese students. Teachers need to know the differences in the educational philosophies of Chinese and Western educational systems.

Because of Zhang's (2008) work, I decided that even before I explain what learning styles Chinese students of English tend to prefer, I needed to outline the differences in Chinese and Western approaches to obtaining knowledge, as well as the role of teachers and students. It is for this reason that the "Teaching and Learning Styles" of the guidebook contains a side by side comparison of how Chinese and Western educational philosophies differ on how to obtain knowledge, the role of teachers, and the role of students.

### **Linguistic Differences**

Chang's (2001) chapter in *Learner English: A teacher's guide to interference and other problems* and Avery and Ehrlich's (2008) book *Teaching American English pronunciation* are two sources that led to the creation of the second section of the guidebook "Linguistic Differences."

Chang (2001) identified common mistakes by Chinese students learning English and organized them into four categories: Phonology, orthography, grammar, and vocabulary. Chang explains how each error type is affected by the students' L1. Although Chang's explanations are clear and well organized, the language that is used is intended for linguistic scholars. Novice NES teachers would struggle with the linguistic explanations of interference.

Avery and Ehrlich (2008) focus only on pronunciation, but their explanations are not that useful for novice NES teachers because of the same reason mentioned for Chang's work. Avery and Ehrlich's explanations are written for an academic, linguistic audience. Novice NES teachers would struggle with such words as *palatalization*, *mnemonic devices*, and *subjunctive mood*.

Because the explanations of transfer in these two books are too linguistically dense for novice NES teachers, I selected the most important explanations and simplified them so that novice NES teachers will be able to understand the explanations. It is impossible to include all errors that Chinese students of English make. Therefore, in selecting what errors to focus on I have used the following questions as criteria.

1. What errors do experts say Chinese students of English make?
2. What do the experts say about the errors?
  - Why do Chinese make these errors?
  - What can teachers do to help their students overcome these errors?
3. How do answers to the above questions relate to my experience:
  - as an English speaker having studied Chinese as a second language?
  - living in China and interacting with Chinese people?
  - as an English teacher who has had Chinese students in my classes?
4. Can the error be explained in a simple, concise way that will keep the guidebook to simple, true, clear, and relevant?

The guidebook does not include an exhaustive list of English errors that Chinese students make. The guidebook focuses on the most common and most important errors that Chinese

students of English make. Besides negative transfer from their L1, Chinese students make English errors for various reasons. If Chinese students have received incorrect instruction, they might make induced errors, assuming that the way they are speaking is correct because a previous teacher had taught them that way. Chinese students will also make developmental errors. Through the natural process of learning English, students' understanding of English rules change. Students' mistakes may change over time as their understanding of the rules of English evolves. Because *UCLC* is written with novice NES teachers in mind, it is not concerned with whether the errors are a result of negative transfer, induction, or developmental processes.

The purpose of the section Linguistic Differences in *UCLC* is to make teachers alert of some of the most common and most important errors that their Chinese students make. Rao (2008) argues that NES teachers that demonstrate even a very basic understanding of the Chinese language impress their students and find it easier to establish good rapport with their students. My personal experience as a NES teacher with Chinese students supports Rao's findings.

### **Chinese Culture in the Classroom**

Cortazzi and Jin (1996), both experts on culture learning in China, point out that Chinese students' hesitancy to participate in class goes beyond just preferred learning styles. Chinese students are reluctant to participate in class due to deeply embedded cultural values that have roots in Confucianism. Cortazzi and Jin point out Confucian values such as modesty, saving face, respecting authority figures, and putting collective benefits before individual interests as reasons for Chinese students' reluctance to participate in class. Based on Cortazzi and Jin's work, I decided I needed to address specific aspects of Chinese culture (like saving face) that did not get mentioned in the first section "Teaching and Learning Styles" of the guidebook.

Another aspect of culture in the English classroom in China that needs to be addressed is language assessment. Sun and Henrichsen (2012), argue that because entrance and exit exams at the high school and university levels in China determine what opportunities students have for studying and working, the tests make “most educational activities in China very exam-oriented... teachers focus on helping their students to pass these tests, and the students focus on passing them” (p. 7). Sun and Henrichsen outline four tests that English teachers in China should be aware of:

1. National Matriculation English Test (NMET)
2. Graduate School Entrance English Exam (GSEEE)
3. Chinese English Test (CET)
4. Test for English Majors (TEM)

Because these tests are so important in opening opportunities for students, Sun and Henrichsen point out that educational institutions, administrators, and teachers all adapt their teaching to cover the material on the test. Every English teacher in China should know about the purpose and content of these tests. A summarized, more concise version of Sun and Henrichsen’s description of the tests is included in the third section of the guidebook “Chinese Culture in the Classroom.”

## **Summary**

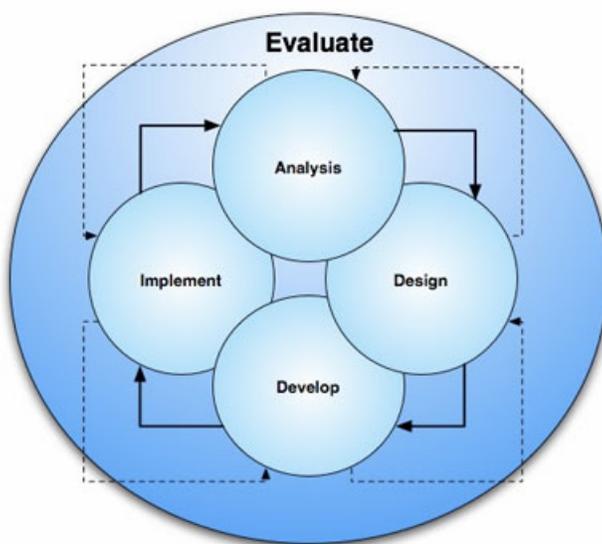
The literature reviewed in this chapter shows that many of the difficulties English teachers face in China are a result of differences in preferred learning and teaching styles, the Chinese and English languages, and culture. *UCLC* is organized according to these three areas. Many of the available resources that address these problems do not meet the specific needs of

NES teachers in China. In the development of *UCLC* the books and articles that have been discussed in this chapter of this thesis have been modified and adapted to fit the needs of NES teachers in China.

## Chapter 3 Developmental Process

### Introduction

This chapter will explain the developmental process behind *Understanding Chinese language and culture: A guidebook for teachers of English in China (UCLC)*. The ADDIE model guided the developmental process of *UCLC*. Clark (1995) explains that ADDIE stands for analyze, design, develop, implement, and evaluate. The ADDIE model was created at Florida State University in 1975. According to Clark, the ADDIE model has evolved over time from a linear model to a more dynamic, cyclical model.



*Figure 1.* Clark's diagram of a cyclical version of the ADDIE Model

Clark's cyclical version of the ADDIE model allows for materials developers to revisit earlier steps in the process as needed, while simultaneously allowing the developers to evaluate the product. Materials developers may need to cycle through the steps of the ADDIE multiple

times before the materials are ready for implementation and evaluation. Once the product has been implemented and evaluated, earlier steps of the ADDIE model can be revisited as needed.

Throughout the development of *UCLC*, it has been necessary to reanalyze the needs of NES teachers, tweak the design of the guidebook, and develop new portions of the guidebook. *UCLC*, at its current stage, is ready to be implemented and evaluated on a full scale. The implementation and evaluation of *UCLC* is beyond the scope of this thesis. The remainder of this chapter will outline how the analysis, design, and development steps of the ADDIE model have been applied to the creation of *UCLC*.

### **Analyze**

To conduct a credible analysis for the need of teaching materials for novice NES teachers in China I followed Mackey and Gass's (2005) suggestion of using methodological triangulation. I used "multiple, independent methods of obtaining data in a single investigation in order to arrive at the same research findings" (p. 181). To begin with, I attended the TEFL workshop for the China Teachers Program (CTP) at Brigham Young University in August 2012. Over a two week period these novice NES teachers attend classes taught by various professors of the university. The CTP teachers received instruction on TEFL, the Chinese language, Chinese culture, and Chinese history. In 2012, there were 56 CTP teachers in attendance. Only four teachers had lived in China or Taiwan, four teachers had studied a dialect of Chinese. Only two teachers had previous ESL experience. All of the CTP teachers are retired educators with extensive experience teaching various subjects in English. I observed these novice EFL teachers over a two week period. I sat in on their training, conversed with them during breaks, and took notes on questions they had about English teaching and Chinese culture. In addition to this, I

held semistructured, adaptive interviews with several of the teachers. The following questions were used to conduct the semistructured interviews:

- 1) How much experience do you have with teaching English to speakers of other languages?
- 2) What anxieties do you have about teaching English in China?
- 3) Would you consider yourself familiar with Chinese culture?
- 4) What questions do you have about Chinese culture?
- 5) What do you think has been the most valuable thing you have learned from your classes during this two week training?
- 6) If you were to be given a handbook on how to teach English to Chinese students upon your arrival in China, what questions would you want it to answer?

It became apparent from holding these interviews that the CTP teachers were more concerned about what classes and what level of students they would be teaching than learning to deal with problems they might encounter in their classroom. The CTP teachers, at that time, had not received their teaching assignments yet from the universities that they were to teach at. Many teachers expressed that they didn't know what questions about English teaching in China should be included in a guidebook. They explained that they would have a better idea of what questions on Chinese culture they would like answers to once they had a chance to experience teaching English in China.

It was necessary to reanalyze the needs of the CTP teachers once they had a chance to teach English in China and be exposed to Chinese culture. During the CTP teachers' second semester I conducted another analysis by sending all 56 CTP teachers a Qualtrics® survey. The

survey questions and responses can be found in “Appendix A”. The purpose and results of the survey, as well as how the results influenced the development of *UCLC* are explained in the “Develop section” of this chapter. In addition to interviewing CTP teachers and developing a survey, I read what experts on ELT in China had to say about NES teachers struggles in China. The works of Rao (2008), He and Zhang (2010), Wu (2001), Yu (2001), and Zhang (2008) outline common problems that NES teachers experience in China. First, because NES teachers are unfamiliar with the Chinese language, many NES teachers are insensitive to their Chinese students’ linguistic needs. Second, many NES teachers prefer teaching styles that do not match well with their Chinese students learning styles. Lastly, because many NES teachers are unfamiliar with Chinese culture and the Chinese educational system, they fail to live up to the expectations of their students and employers. These three problems of ELT in China became the skeleton for *UCLC*.

### **Design and Develop**

According to Clark (1995), the Design and Develop phases of the ADDIE model are often combined together. After an initial analysis is done, a blue print of the instructional material is designed. Once a blueprint or outline has been designed, the content of each section is fleshed out and an actual product is created.

From a design standpoint, two aspects were taken into consideration: the organization of the content, and the visual design of the guidebook. I organized the content of the guidebook according to the three problems of ELT in China mentioned previously. The guidebook is comprised of three main sections: Teaching and Learning Styles, Linguistic Differences, and Chinese Culture in the Classroom.

For the visual design of the *UCLC*, I took Williams' (2004) book *The non-designer's design book: Design and typographic principles for the visual novice* as a guide. Williams suggests that any well-designed piece of visual work contains four basic principles. These principles are contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity. All four of these principles have been applied throughout the guidebook. For example, contrast, alignment, and proximity are all used on the cover page and repetition is used in the format throughout the guidebook.

In regards to the development of the first section, "Teaching and Learning Styles", it starts with an explanation of some of the general differences between Western and Chinese educational philosophies. Following this is an explanation of learning styles that Chinese students generally prefer. The next subsection offers ways teachers can identify what specific learning styles their own students have. I then explained several ways NES teachers can bridge the gap that may exist between their teaching styles and their students' learning styles. Lastly, I include an example lesson plan that demonstrates how teachers can put into use the material they have just learned.

The second section, "Linguistic Differences", is also organized in a similar manner. To begin with, I include a simple and general explanation of what constitutes the Chinese language. I then explain some of the general differences between English and Chinese. The content then narrows down to specific English pronunciation and grammar errors that Chinese students often make. For more information on how I decided what errors to include in this section, see chapter two of this thesis.

The third section, "Chinese Culture in the Classroom", is structured differently than the first two. In this section on culture I decided to use a question and answer format. The questions

on Chinese culture that are answered are questions that CTP teachers asked while responding to the Qualtrics® survey that was administered during their second semester of teaching in China. The survey includes 13 questions and can be found in “Appendix A”.

The purpose of the survey was twofold. First, I wanted CTP teachers to implement and evaluate the first section of the guidebook, “Teaching and Learning Styles”. I wanted to know what CTP teachers thought about the visual design, readability, and usefulness of the first section. Based on their responses, I decided to continue to use the same visual design and writing style for the remaining two sections of the guidebook. The second purpose of the survey was to analyze again the needs of NES teachers. Because CTP teachers had now had an opportunity to see and experience the cultural differences between themselves and their students, they were better able to discuss what aspects of Chinese culture should be discussed in a guidebook for NES teachers in China. The third section, Chinese Culture in the Classroom, was designed and developed based on the survey responses of CTP teachers.

The survey was emailed to 56 CTP teachers, who at that time, were all teaching at universities throughout China. Twenty-four teachers began the survey and 16 finished the survey. The response rate fluctuated from question to question. Besides teachers not having enough time to take or finish the survey, it is possible that teachers did not respond to a particular question because they had not implemented the portion of the guidebook that the question addresses and hence did not feel comfortable answering the question. The survey responses were instrumental in the revision and continual development of *UCLC*.

The responses to survey questions two, three, and four indicated that teachers liked the visual design of the guidebook and that only a few changes to the visual design of the guidebook

needed to occur. First, the font size was increased to 12 points to increase readability. Second, I reorganized the learning styles on pages 4-7 of the guidebook. To make them easier to understand I created more white space and followed William's (2004) suggestion to organize the material according to the principles of contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity.

Questions five through ten on the survey address the usefulness and readability of the guidebook's first section, "Teaching and Learning styles". As mentioned previously, the questions and responses can be found in "Appendix A". Two suggestions from teachers deserve particular attention. In response to question seven, "What suggestions do you have to improve the readability of the explanations?", one teacher said "For a group like the BYU China Teachers who had an overwhelming training and not much time to prepare afterwards, the guidebook was excessively wordy. For a group of young adults coming to China from BYU or elsewhere it was excellent". Similarly, in a response to question 10, "What suggestions do you have to improve the guidebook so that it is more useful for future English teachers in China?", one teacher said:

"I think this is an outstanding guidebook for the tens of thousands of Americans teaching English in China in for-profit institutions for elementary and middle school students. Not so much so for those of us teaching college English majors and graduate students. Our students are much more academically mature and motivated than this guidebook would suggest and we mostly only have them once a week for from 9-18 weeks."

These two responses are important because they show that although, CTP teachers benefited from the guidebook, the material covered in the guidebook seemed repetitive and excessive. This is understandable considering CTP teachers had received two weeks' worth of instruction that included discussions on Chinese students' preferred learning styles and

discussions on Chinese culture. As both of the responses quoted above indicate, the CTP teachers agree that other NES teachers who have not received previous training would find the material more helpful. In the Implement and Evaluate section of this chapter, I discuss the need for *UCLC*, as a whole, to be implemented and evaluated by NES teachers in China that are not a part of the CTP program.

In regards to the second purpose of the survey, to identify what questions about Chinese culture should be included in the guidebook, the teachers' responses were particularly helpful. Two questions on the survey asked regarding what questions CTP teachers had about Chinese culture when they first arrived in China, and questions they had during their second semester of teaching. The questions and responses are listed below:

Question 11: When you first arrived in China and began teaching, what questions did you have about Chinese culture? (Write only those that apply to your experience of teaching in the classroom.)

- I had heard the students were quiet, shy. I wondered how to overcome this.
- What is the process from beginning to ultimately obtaining their desired degree?
- Why were students reluctant to raise their hands or ask questions? Students said they wanted American-style teaching, but did they really? Was I teaching things they needed to pass their tests? How much should I be concerned about that? How can I get them to respond and participate in class questions?
- How do Chinese English professors teach? What guidelines should I use for a grading rubric? What will the university expect my students to learn?

Question 12: Now that you have experience teaching English in China, what other questions about Chinese culture do you think English teachers in China should know the answers to?

- I think there should be more understanding about the differences in culture that make it ok for Chinese students to plagiarize and to help one another on tests.
- At each level (PhD, Masters, Undergrad), what tests will the students likely encounter?
- How important are grades to Chinese students? Do they take precedence over improved speaking ability?
- Are Chinese parents too hard on their child

From the teachers' questions regarding Chinese culture, it became apparent that I needed to address the following areas in the third section of the guidebook that focused on Chinese culture in the classroom:

1. Why are Chinese so quiet? Why do they hesitate to participate in class?
2. Why do Chinese students care more about their grades and tests than their actual English speaking ability?
3. What tests are Chinese students required to take?
4. Why are Chinese willing to risk plagiarizing when they know they will be punished if they get caught?

Many of these questions relate to the Chinese idea of "saving face." Chinese students care about grades because for them grades are the outward manifestation of their English abilities that their parents and administrators at university see. Saving face is also another reason why Chinese students are hesitant to participate in class by asking questions or offering answers. For

this reason I decided that in the third section of *UCLC* I needed to first make clear what “saving face” means. The third section is organized as follows:

1. What is the Chinese idea of “saving face”?
2. Why are Chinese students so quiet in my classroom? How come it’s so hard to get them to ask questions or offer answers?
3. Why are Chinese students so focused on tests? They seem to care more about getting good grades on tests than being able to speak good English. Why?
4. What English tests are my students required to take at the high school, undergraduate, and graduate levels?
5. Why do my students often plagiarize? Even when I tell them they will be punished they still plagiarize. Why?

### **Implement and Evaluate**

Now that *UCLC* has been developed, it needs to be implemented and evaluated as a whole. The implementation and evaluation of *UCLC* is beyond the scope of this thesis. This being said, I have several suggestions for the future implementation and evaluation of *UCLC*.

First, I suggest that *UCLC* be implemented and evaluated by novice NES teachers in China that are not a part of the CTP. Because the guidebook was developed for NES teachers that have not had previous instruction about ELT and culture in China, it should be implemented and evaluated by such teachers.

Second, for future research and evaluation of the usefulness of the design and explanations of *UCLC*, I recommend that future surveys include a few questions that allow the researcher to gain insight into what level of experience NES teachers have with teaching in

China and how familiar they are with Chinese culture. These questions will enable the researcher to see what connections there are between the teachers' level of experience and understanding of ELT and culture in China and how useful teachers find the guidebook.

### **Summary**

The ADDIE model worked well for the development of *UCLC*. The development of this guidebook was not strictly a linear progression from one step to the next in the ADDIE model, but rather a cyclical process of visiting and revisiting the analyze, design, and develop steps. *UCLC* in its current state is ready to be implemented and evaluated as a whole by NES teachers in China.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Insights Gained and the Future of *UCLC***

*Understanding Chinese language and culture: A guidebook for teachers of English in China (UCLC)* now stands as a completed first edition. *UCLC* fulfills the needs of NES teachers in China in a way other resources can't. The guidebook is specific to the unique challenges that NES teachers experience while teaching English in China. The explanations throughout the guidebook are written simply and concisely so that even novice NES teachers, unfamiliar with linguistic jargon, can understand it. The purpose of the guidebook is to enable NES teachers in China to more fully understand their Chinese students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds. *UCLC* is not an exhaustive source on the Chinese language and culture. It introduces NES teachers to some of the most basic and important aspects of the Chinese language and culture that often cause problems within the English classroom in China. With links located throughout the guidebook to other helpful resources on ELT and culture in China, *UCLC* acts as a spring board for NES teachers to explore the complexities of ELT in China and become a more effective English teacher. To conclude, I will explain what insights I have gained from the process of developing *UCLC*, what limitations I had to work within while developing *UCLC*, and explain what the future holds for *UCLC*.

#### **What I Have Learned**

In the coursework for my MA TESOL degree at BYU, I was taught that as teachers the needs of our students and stakeholders are of utmost importance. I learned that before lesson plans, materials, syllabi, or curricula are developed, one must conduct a needs analysis of both students and stakeholders. I also learned about the ADDIE model and Richards' (1990) curriculum development model.

Whereas in class I learned *about* these models and practices, in developing *UCLC* I actually *experienced* them. Bloom's (1956) taxonomy essentially states that learners will retain what is taught when they move beyond obtaining a knowledge and comprehension of a principle to higher levels of learning like analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Such has been the case for me in the MA TESOL program. First, in class, I obtained a knowledge about and comprehension of pedagogical models and practices. But it was through the development of *UCLC* that I have analyzed, synthesized, and evaluated pedagogical models as I put them into practice.

Through developing *UCLC*, I have learned many lessons as a materials developer. First, the ADDIE model is an excellent model to use in developing materials. It does not, however, address what to do with the materials once they are created. Other models like Greer's (1988) Instructional Design Project Management Model take into consideration the mass production and distribution of products. I learned that it is unlikely that one model for materials production will cover all your needs. Being aware of and using multiple models helps with the development and distribution processes of materials development.

Second, I learned that as a materials developer it is important to be connected to, and interact with other materials developers who share similar interests. Other materials developers who have worked on the same topic can offer timesaving and helpful advice. An example of this is Henrichsen's (n. d.) resource *Basic training and resources for teaching English to speakers of other languages*. Many of the explanations in *UCLC* follow Henrichsen's advice to keep explanations simple and provide readers with links to other resources if they want to learn more. I modeled my explanations in *UCLC* after BTR-TESOL's approach of "the least you should know and where to go to learn more" (Henrichsen, n.d., homepage heading). Some materials developers are happy to permit you to adapt their materials to your needs. For example, while

developing *UCLC*, I came across Kinsella's (2011) Classroom Collaboration Survey. The survey allows for teachers and students to identify which students prefer to work alone, in pairs, and in groups. Upon explaining the purpose and rationale behind *UCLC* to Dr. Kinsella, she graciously permitted me to use her Classroom Collaboration Survey in my guidebook.

I learned that it is very helpful to get feedback from experienced materials developers who are willing to look at your materials. The insight of Dr. Henrichsen, because of his experience as an editor and materials developer, has been invaluable to the development of *UCLC*. For example, it was Dr. Henrichsen who informed me of Williams' (2004) book *The non-designer's design book: Design and typographic principles for the visual novice*. The four principles of good design (contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity) that are outlined by Williams have been applied to the visual design and text throughout *UCLC*.

I have learned much about teacher education. The primary purpose of *UCLC* is to educate NES teachers in China in regards to key differences between them and their Chinese students. I have learned that the advice of teachers that you educate can be very insightful and useful in the creation of materials. Although the teachers I worked with did not know as much as I did about Chinese culture and language, they were able to participate in and help with the process of the development of *UCLC*. In other words, in teacher education you should seek for the advice of the teachers that you are responsible to educate. Their feedback will help you to better be able to help them.

### **Limitations in the Development of *UCLC***

One of the major limitations in the development of *UCLC* is the feedback received on the guidebook. The first section Teaching and Learning styles, and the visual design of the

guidebook was evaluated by NES teachers who were in China on behalf of Brigham Young University's China Teachers Program (CTP). The feedback received from the CTP teachers was adequate enough in deciding on a visual design for the whole guidebook and determining what content to include in the third section of the guidebook, Chinese Culture in the classroom. Despite the usefulness of the feedback received, more needs to be done in regards to the implementation and evaluation of *UCLC* as a whole.

The CTP teachers' backgrounds are very different from the backgrounds of other NES teachers in China. The CTP teachers are retired educators that teach at prestigious universities throughout China. In general most of them have a lot of teaching experience, but they have very little ESL/EFL experience. Other NES teachers in China may be very different. They might be volunteers from church organizations, recent graduates from college that are seeking adventure, or TESOL professionals. These different types of teachers have different needs. In addition to this, these teachers may teach students at different levels. While many CTP teachers are assigned to teach Chinese students pursuing English majors, other teachers with less experience may teach at private schools, middle schools, or high schools. Because these teachers end up in different institutions, they teach students that are very different. In other words, the students' of many NES teachers in China vary greatly from the students of CTP teachers. *UCLC* should be implemented and evaluated by NES teachers in China that are not associated with the CTP

Another limitation of *UCLC* is the guidebook's length. From the beginning of the creation of *UCLC* the goal was to keep the guidebook around thirty pages long. Fully compiled with an appendix, the guidebook is now thirtyfive pages long. This limitation has been both a blessing and a curse. It has been difficult to narrow down the amount of material that should be covered in the guidebook. It has also been difficult to state things simply and concisely in order

to conserve space. One solution to this difficulty is the hyperlinks to helpful resources that are found throughout the guidebook. Although *UCLC* does not discuss all aspects of Chinese language and culture that interfere with Chinese students' ability to learn English, *UCLC* does a good job in explaining the most basic and important aspects of Chinese language and culture that teachers should be aware of, and the guidebook points teachers to other resources that they can go to learn more if they have additional questions.

### **What's next for *UCLC*?**

NES teachers in China need to hear about *UCLC*. The guidebook will be of no use if it sits on a dusty electronic shelf. I have several suggestions for how to help teachers become aware of *UCLC*. First, *UCLC* can be made available at various websites of organizations that have an interest in English teaching in China. *UCLC* is currently available on my online portfolio at [www.austinpack.wordpress.com](http://www.austinpack.wordpress.com). If the guidebook was also available on other websites like [www.linguistics.byu.edu](http://www.linguistics.byu.edu), or teacher education forums at [www.eslcafe.com](http://www.eslcafe.com) (Dave's ESL Café), many NES teachers would have easier access to the guidebook.

*UCLC* should be presented at conferences both inside and outside of China. Conferences such as the TESOL convention or the Christians in English Language Teaching conference would be useful venues to get *UCLC*'s name out to NES teachers interested in teaching English in China. Many NES teachers in China are volunteer teachers from Christian organizations such as the Amity Foundation. An article that highlights the need for and design of *UCLC* should be submitted for publication. In these conference presentations and journal articles, listeners and readers would be referred to the guidebook and the websites that host it.

As the culminating work of my studies here at Brigham Young University, *UCLC* is not an end. Rather, it is a beginning. Much work remains in the continual development and implementation of *UCLC*. For me personally, *UCLC* will be my springboard into the profession of English teaching in China. After completing my MA degree I plan to open my own English school in Inner Mongolia, China. As the school grows and I hire other NES teachers to work at the school, I will use *UCLC* as a training tool as I help these teachers adjust to the needs of their Chinese students. Using *UCLC* to hold NES orientation sessions would be a great way to attract NES teachers to my school. It is my hope that the guidebook will go through further revisions, and be of use to many current and future NES teachers in China.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Survey used to evaluate *UCLC* (with results)

1. Implied Consent I am a graduate student at Brigham Young University, and I am conducting this survey to find out what features of my guidebook *Understanding Chinese Language and Culture: a Guidebook to Teaching English in China* are most useful. Completion of this survey should take less than 10 minutes of your time. Your participation will be anonymous. You will not be paid for participating in this study. This survey involves minimal risk to you. You are not obligated to participate in this study, but your responses will help me produce a better guidebook that will help other teachers like you. If you have questions regarding this study you may contact me (Austin Pack) at 801-615-4017 and at [austincp@byu.edu](mailto:austincp@byu.edu) The completion of this survey implies your consent to participate. If you choose to participate, please press continue and complete the survey. Thank you!

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Continue		24	100%
	Total		24	100%

2. Questions on the visual design of the guidebook: 1. From the design of the guidebook, how easy is it to grasp the most important points?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Very easy		15	83%
2	Somewhat easy		3	17%
3	Neutral		0	0%
4	Somewhat difficult		0	0%
5	Very difficult		0	0%
	Total		18	100%

### 3. How would you rate the way the learning styles on pages 4-7 are organized?

Answer		Response
Very well organized and easy to follow visually		10
Somewhat organized and easy to follow visually		5
Neutral		2
Somewhat disorganized and difficult to follow visually		1
Very disorganized and difficult to follow visually		0
Total		18

#### 4. What suggestions do you have to improve the visual design of the guidebook?

Text Response	
Print size seemed small.	
1. 4th to last word of 2nd paragraph of 1st page should be students and not teachers 2. Last 2 words of 1st page are missing rest of sentence 3. Under sequential learning styles, needs space in 5th bullet between andlists	
None	
No suggestions. The layout is pleasant and easy to read. (There are a few typos still.)	
I don't have any suggestions, I thought it was well organized and presented.	
Just check for the few typo's in the paper	
Nonimprovements at this time.	
Sometimes it is a little difficult to find the page being discussed. Perhaps better tabbing.	
Don't talk so long about the problem at the beginning. Get into the core concept faster.	
the design is good	
none	
I would like to see learning styles grouped in a circle to show that there is no "right or wrong" way to learn. Otherwise, I usually think that what's listed first is best or most important.	
Color! Maybe some clip art characters for fun.	
It could be that it was not formatted for my computer, but their were formatting errors. I couldn't read all of it.	
none	
It's just a text document. In some ways, it seemed to be stereotypical generalizations. My students may have found my teaching style different from that of Chinese teachers but they seemed to have little difficulty adjusting to participating in group activities of various sizes, giving presentations or even participating in ad hoc role playing activities. In fact, they seemed to relish it. Nervous during the first meeting in the semester but much more relaxed in succeeding class meetings. Perhaps the younger Chinese are becoming more aware of the world outside China. I don't know.	
No change needed.	
As a general guidebook I thought it was excellent. The visuals made it especially read-able	

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	18

Questions on readability of the guidebook:

5. Overall, how easy was the the text of the guidebook to understand?

Answer	Response
Very easy	13
Somewhat easy	3
Neutral	0
Somewhat difficult	0
Very Difficult	0
Total	16

6. How easy were the following sections of the guidebook to understand?

Question	Very Easy	Somewhat Easy	Neutral	Somewhat Difficult	Very Difficult	Total Responses
Introduction	14	2	0	0	0	16
Understanding differences in educational philosophies	13	3	0	0	0	16
Summary of differences in educational philosophies	12	3	1	0	0	16
Understanding Chinese students' learning styles	12	2	1	0	0	15
Identifying your students' learning styles	9	6	1	0	0	16
How to bridge teaching styles and learning styles	8	7	1	0	0	16
The example lesson plan	11	4	1	0	0	16

## 7. What suggestions do you have to improve the readability of the explanations?

Text Response
none
nice job
None
Great job!
I don't have any specific suggestions. I have seen these traits in the students I teach.
The lesson plan needs time information. How much time is to be spent on each activity? It seemed that this lesson might take more than one class period.
I really like the lesson plan. I geneally dislike making lesson plans.
It was excellent. We use it a lot.
Note somewhere about transitional styles that are developing because of more westernization in some schools and subjects.
none
none
None
No suggestions
It seemed a bit simplistic for me. Or it could be that I just have a hard time putting people in categories.
The explanations are a little repititious.
For a group like the BYU China Teachers who had an overwhelming training and not much time to prepare afterwards, the guidebook was excessively wordy. For a group of young adults coming to China from BYU or elsewhere it was excellent. I did think the lesson plans were a bit too long. But then I have been teaching for years and most of my lesson plans are in my head with a few sketchy words to guide me.

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	16

8. Usefulness of the section "Teaching and Learning Styles": How would you rate the usefulness of the following sections of the guidebook?

Question	Very useful	Somewhat Useful	Neutral	Somewhat Useless	Very Useless	Total Responses
How to bridge teaching styles and learning styles	6	7	2	1	0	16
Identifying your students' learning styles	5	7	3	1	0	16
Introduction	9	3	4	0	0	16
Summary of differences in educational philosophies	6	8	1	0	0	15
The example lesson plan	8	6	1	1	0	16
Understanding Chinese students' learning styles	9	6	1	0	0	16
Understanding differences in educational philosophies	9	5	2	0	0	16

9. How likely would you be to recommend this guidebook to a friend who would be teaching English in China?

Answer	Response
Very Likely	7
Somewhat Likely	5
Neutral	3
Somewhat Unlikely	0
Very Unlikely	0
Total	15

## 10. What suggestions do you have to improve the guidebook so that it is more useful for future English teachers in China?

### Text Response

none

What I will tell my friends who are coming next year: "This guidebook is way too long and wordy and does not apply to the majority of the teaching situations we are placed in, but since we are all desperate for more knowledge and information and suggestions, it is worth reading. The information on learning styles is important to understand. The students tend to love the stimulation and respect of the American teaching style but need to understand how each activity is a relevant learning activity because our learning activities are so different from what they are use to. But the "Bridging" and "Lesson Plan" do not reflect the realities of my classroom situations nor of that of most of the teachers I have talked to. Our students are much more academically mature and motivated than this guidebook would suggest and we mostly only have them once a week for from 9-18 weeks. This is generally very fast and intense. Some of us teach 18-24 year olds; most teach teach 25-35 year olds." Austin, I think this is an outstanding guidebook for the tens of thousands of Americans teaching English in China in for-profit institutions for elementary and middle school students. I can imagine most of them would love to buy one copy (and in the very Chinese way) distribute it to all their teachers. It would be very helpful to them. Put it on Amazon. There are so many for-profit teachers to younger students. Not so much so for those of us teaching college English majors and graduate students. The detailing of learning styles for those of us who may not be aware is very useful. But as for the adapting and lesson plans, does BYU teach such material to its new professors who will teach graduate students? I surely never felt much concern or adaptation to learning styles in my college and graduate education.

None

Many of us are not English teachers by profession. I would like you to include a link to some high-quality instructions of how to structure a debate.

I liked the Amish example. This could lead to very interesting thoughts and discussions. I liked the "bridging" styles, I already use this method.

No suggestions at this time.

None

Show three brief examples (one each at beginning, middle and end) how bridging the problems had benefitted someone.

I think it is very good for making the new teacher aware of the different teaching and learning philosophies of the two cultures but I am not so sure that surveying the students is necessary. There most likely will be all learning styles represented and the teachers will need to use different types in every classroom whether they've conducted the survey or not.

none

None

I have found that I have so many students that I must use all varieties of activities in all classes in order to engage all students at some time. I cannot rely on one teaching style for the whole period. I don't know how that can be incorporated into the guidebook except to reiterate that fact.

I liked the idea of using the Amish and technology for class debate and discussion. Where is the Technology picture handout. Maybe a sample debate rules would be helpful.

I think the sample lesson plan is excellent and doesn't really need any improvement. However, if I must make a suggestion for an improvement it would be to point out how the lesson techniques become more "risky" as the lesson progresses.

It would depend on the target audience. In general it is excellent. I would suggest adding a bit on speaking

speed. We were discussing this today with a group and said, we should speak like general authorities, a phrase and pause a phrase and pause to give the students time to make meaning of what has been said. A section of power points making them clear and concise rather than busy would be another excellent section. Again it would depend on the audience.

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	15

Questions to help develop the section on Chinese culture:

11. When you first arrived in China and began teaching, what questions did you have about Chinese culture? (Write only those that apply to your experience of teaching in the classroom.)

Text Response

I had heard the students were quiet, shy. I wondered how to overcome this. I wondered how important it was to learn everyone's name and how to accomplish this.

What is the process from beginning to ultimately obtaining their desired degree.

How can I get Chinese students to volunteer with answers they know the answer to

Students arrive early...sometimes very early. I arrive early to set up, allowing ample time for tech difficulties. What do the Chinese students arriving early really want? Do they want quiet time to study or do they want friendly conversation with their professor?

How can I get them to respond and participate in class questions. I have learned that when I ask a question and get some mumbling in answer from the class, I say, Yes, I heard the answer somewhere (even if I didn't) and then repeat what I think I heard, or what I think they are saying, answer included. Then the next time, they are more willing to say things. It builds on itself, so that by the end of the semester, I do get responses from the students to my prompts and questions.

Why were students reluctant to raise their hands or ask questions? Students said they wanted American-style teaching, but did they really? Was I teaching things they needed to pass their tests? How much should I be concerned about that?

The extreme competition and pressure that students have to attend a university in China. And only a small percentage actual attend a university.

We still struggle with the apparent disorganization of the University--no roster, no guidelines. Students sometimes failed to follow through or do assignments. Is disorganization an aspect of Chinese culture?

How versed are my students in English?

I think the training held at BYU made me aware of most of the differences between our cultures.

How to motivate the students. How to make myself understood by the students.

Will the students understand me? How can I tell? How do I deal with grouping students?

How do Chinese English professors teach? What guidelines should I use for a grading rubric? What will the university expect my students to learn? How much dictionary translation should I allow students using their cell phones?

I was curious about their living conditions - dorm life, and family sacrifices or circumstances that brought them to my school. Also about the college entrance exam and where they might have scored on it. Just some general understanding of their academic accomplishments. I think I may have insulted a few classes at first, because their level was beyond my expectation, and I wasn't challenging them enough. Also in giving students time to respond, and if they don't respond to move on. I know I embarrassed one student who I thought was refusing to answer my simple question, but he told me at break that he just didn't know what to say and that is why he said nothing.

I was curious about why the students seem so reluctant to speak up or ask/answer a question. After I had been teaching in China for a couple of weeks I asked a foreign teacher - who had been here several years - why. He quoted a saying that goes something like this, "An intelligent man lets a less-intelligent man speak. The most intelligent man always lets others speak." (I cannot remember the exact words, but hearing that helped me to understand my students' reluctance to speak up.) I spoke to each of my classes about the need for them to take risks. I assured them that we would all make mistakes, but that within the walls of the classroom they were safe and could learn, and then be less embarrassed someday outside the classroom.

We have been invited to many dinners. a section on dinner etiquette and especially how to give a toast and how to

receive a gift (don't open in the presence of the giver) would have been the most helpful. As teachers we do get invited out a lot by the university and later by people we meet. also an index sized card to tell basic technology signs like screen up, volume up, computer on, etc would have been immensely helpful.

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	16

12. Below are several questions on Chinese culture that teachers in China often ask. Which ones do you feel are important?

Question	Very important	Somewhat important	Neutral	Somewhat unimportant	Very unimportant	Total Responses
Why are Chinese students so quiet?	6	4	4	2	0	16
Why are Chinese students so focused on the test?	7	5	2	2	0	16
Why do many Chinese students seem to plagiarize a lot?	10	4	2	0	0	16
What is the Chinese idea of "face saving"?	8	7	1	0	0	16
What tests are my Chinese students required to take in their schooling?	9	6	1	0	0	16

13. Now that you have experience teaching English in China, what other questions about Chinese culture do you think English teachers in China should know the answers to?

#### Text Response

I think there should be more understanding about the differences in culture that make it ok for Chinese students to plagiarize and to help one another on tests.

Need much more on TEM 4 and TEM 8. The sections on writing and oral for undergrads needs to focus on helping acquire skills to succeed on those tests. Why do we even talk about creative writing when the undergraduates need academic writing skills to succeed at 4&8. Why do we talk creative writing for graduate students when they need writing skills for business or for writing journal articles. You would do better in the guidebook to focus less to adapting to styles and instead talk about adapting to students academic needs - especially since the BYU instruction is more about the creative writing that is less relevant to our students.

None

1. At each level (PhD, Masters, Undergrad), what tests will the students likely encounter? Which items on each test should I address in class and which are best left to internet practice? (Effective use of time question.) 2. What are the national holidays and what are the family customs surrounding them? 3. My students tell me they are keenly aware that they are not to copy another's work without giving credit. They resent being known as people who copy. However, they do not cite their sources when required to do so. I am experimenting with rubrics and the requirement to cite sources this semester, including specific instructions on citation. It will be interesting to see if they continue to copy directly from the internet when they experience deduction of points on the rubric for doing so. I would love to understand why they take the risk of receiving no points on an assignment for copying.

Why is there such a "disconnect" between their tidy appearance and the trash they leave everywhere? Why do they not take more pride in keeping their environment / classroom neat and clean? Learning is affected by our surroundings, why do they not see and understand this?

How important are grades to Chinese students? Do they take precedence over improved speaking ability?

Specific activities on how to bridge the different learning styles of Chinese students. And practice on using activities in the classroom before we come to China.

How to motivate students to interact.

What is the future the students envision for themselves and how will my class play into supporting their goals.

I think everything was very well covered at the BYU training. I think the students in China have changed dramatically since the beginning of the teaching program in 1989. They all have cell phones, they can get on the internet and see the world, they are not nearly as quiet and afraid as we've been led to believe. They are changing and they want to be just like their American counterparts.

You have covered the most important ones.

None

How do the Chinese go about getting a job once they graduate? How do you help a student who has been "placed" into a major that they don't enjoy? What options do the Chinese students have for changing their major? How can I psychologically help the students who are under such great pressure to excel?

Are Chinese parents too hard on their child?

How has the one-child policy influenced the students? How much say do the students have in choosing their majors/careers? Why are the class groups kept together for all their classes? How can there be such diversity of (for example: speaking) skills within one class?

again dinners. but more, table manners and is it ok to slurp and spit and so on. bathroom etiquette.

**Appendix B: Permission to use Kate Kinsella's Classroom Work Style Survey**

Dear Mr. Pack,

You are welcome to utilize my Classroom Work Style Survey in your guidebook. It has recently been republished in a curriculum I developed with Scholastic called English 3D. You should credit that source. I am on the road now, but when I return this weekend, I will send you the guidelines I wrote for administering and scoring the survey. There you will find the current citation. I am giving a plenary address at a conference in April in Provo organized by BYU.

Best regards.

Kate Kinsella

**Appendix C: Understanding Chinese Language and Culture: A Guidebook for Teachers of English in China**

*Understanding Chinese  
Language and Culture:*

*A Guidebook for  
for Teachers of  
English in China*



# Introduction

*“How delightful it is to have friends visiting us from afar!”*

*-Confucious*

Teaching English to Chinese students is an extremely rewarding, yet demanding experience. Thousands of native English speakers go to China to teach every year. Many of them don't speak Chinese and don't know very much about Chinese culture. If this sounds like you, read on! I wrote this guidebook with people like you in mind. The guidebook is designed for teachers that will be teaching adult learners (high school students and older). It is divided into three sections: Teaching and Learning styles, Linguistic Differences, and Chinese Culture in the Classroom. After reading this guidebook you will be able to:

- 1) Recognize differences that exist between how you prefer to teach and how your Chinese students generally prefer to learn.
- 2) Adapt your teaching to better fit your students' learning preferences, and encourage your students to experiment with different learning styles.
- 3) Identify key areas of the Chinese language that interfere with your students' ability to learn English.
- 4) Find answers to questions that you might have about Chinese culture and the Chinese educational system.

Certainly this guidebook will not answer every question you have about the Chinese language and culture. It is not designed to be a “fix all” bicycle tire patch. Rather, its purpose is to *introduce* you to some of the most basic and important aspects of the Chinese educational system, language, and culture that relate to English teaching in China. China is a large country with many complex cultures and dialects. Remember that not all Chinese students are the same. Each student's English proficiency, no matter if the student is in high school or in college, can range from beginning to advanced. If you get to know each of your students and teach to their needs you will do great!

I hope that this guidebook is useful for you, and I wish you the best of luck in your teaching endeavors in China.

*Austin Pack*

*June 2013*

# Teaching and Learning Styles

*“Many times, ineffectiveness in the English language classroom is not the result of bad students or bad teachers, but rather the result of different approaches to learning and the lack of awareness of each other’s cultural differences.”*

*-Xiuqin Zhang<sup>1</sup>*

In the English classroom in China you may find yourself standing on one side of a cultural canyon while your Chinese students stand on the other. The differences in your educational and cultural backgrounds can lead to frustration and confusion for both you and your students. Your teaching style may be very different from the learning styles of your students. To be a more effective teacher, you will need to work together with your students to bridge the cultural gap that exists between you.

At first you will need to be an example as you begin to build a bridge towards their side of the cultural canyon. As you adapt your teaching to the preferences of your students, and as you encourage your students to ‘style stretch’, you can meet your students on middle ground. When you work together with your students to overcome differences in educational and cultural backgrounds, both you and your students will be more effective.

In this section you will learn about some general differences in educational philosophies as well as teaching and learning styles in China and in the West. You will learn how you can know what your students’ preferred learning styles may be. You will also learn ways to work together with your students to build a bridge over the cultural crevice that exists between you.

## Introduction

Chinese students often prefer to learn English in a way that is very different from the way that Western teachers tend to teach. If your teaching styles do not match the learning styles of your students, many problems may occur:

- Students may consider classroom activities to be a waste of time and so become bored easily.
- Students may perform poorly on end of year tests, resulting in students, parents, and school administrators feeling frustrated and disappointed.
- As a teacher you may feel frustrated with your students’ low participation and low test grades.
- You may become too critical of your students or even yourself.



One of the most important things you can do as a teacher is to gain a better understanding about how your preferred teaching and learning styles compare to the preferred teaching and learning styles of your Chinese students. In order to build a bridge to reach your students, you must first know where they are coming from. Remember, each student is different!

There are many benefits when teachers and students work together to bridge the gap of teaching and learning styles in your classroom. You will have a more enjoyable experience because:

- Your students will be more likely to be excited and actively participate in class.
- Your students will perform better on their assignments and tests.
- You will have a sense of accomplishment because of your students' success.
- You will become a more able, well rounded teacher.
- You will have a stronger and more meaningful bond with your students.

Because understanding our students is so important, let's first begin with understanding the educational background that Chinese students come from.

### **Understanding Differences in Educational Philosophies**

Here are a couple of side by side comparisons that will help you to understand how the approach to obtaining knowledge, the roles of teachers and students, and the purpose of language learning generally differs between China and the West. These explanations are to be understood and applied in general terms only. Do not assume that all Chinese are like this and all Westerners are like that!

#### **The Chinese approach to obtaining knowledge:**

- Knowledge is not something discovered, rather it is something transferred.
- Teachers and books are the source of knowledge.
- Knowledge is best transferred from teacher to student or from the book to the student.
- Knowledge is concrete and clear; there is no room for ambiguity. Each question has a clear, specific, unambiguous answer.

#### **The Western approach to obtaining knowledge:**

- Knowledge is discovered by students.
- Teachers and books are resources that help students discover knowledge.
- Students learn best by discovering concepts and answers rather than having a teacher defining a concept or giving the answer.
- Each question may have more than one correct answer, ambiguous answer, or no answer at all



These differences in approaches to obtaining knowledge influence what roles we expect teachers, students, and books to fill in language learning. Let's look at the different roles teachers and students play in China and the West.

### **Role of the teachers and students in China**

- Teachers are the authority on the subject, they should not be questioned.
- Teachers teach, students listen and take notes.
- Students answer only if called upon; asking questions on their own would interrupt the teacher and be impolite.
- Teachers evaluate students on how well they have understood and are able to explain the teacher's point of view.

### **Role of the teachers and students in the West**

- Teachers are guides and facilitators of learning. They point students in the right direction.
- Teachers teach, but there is more interaction between teacher and student.
- Students are responsible for taking the initiative to ask for clarification when they don't understand.
- Teachers evaluate students on how well they can explain their own point of view.

Think of the difference in educational philosophies in this way. In China, each student represents an empty bucket that is waiting to be filled with water. The bucket represents an open mind and the water represents the knowledge that each student can receive. The teacher fills each student's bucket with water to the brim. Students focus on memorizing what the teacher has given them and try their best to not lose any of the water. At a later point the teacher tests the students and examines how much knowledge they were able to comprehend and retain. This educational philosophy focuses on language knowledge, grammar and rote memorization.

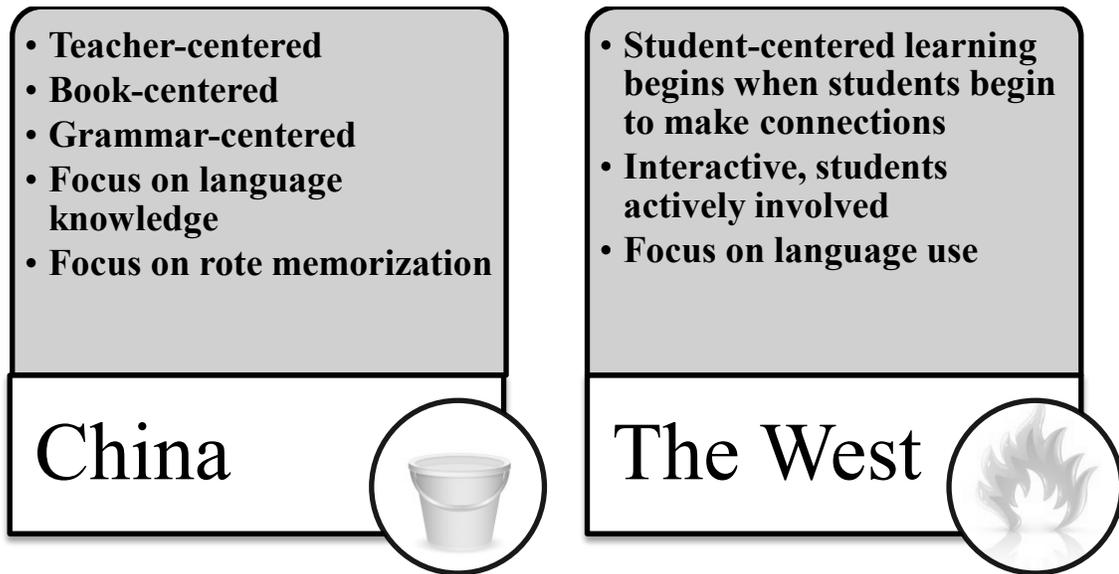
The mindset of Western education is more like the making of a fire. The student is a fire that will grow on its own with the help of the teacher. The teacher must make a suitable environment for the fire to grow. The teacher adds some kindling to the fire and allows for some wind to help the fire grow. The fire grows on its own as long as the teacher is there to supply it with its needs. Teachers at the end of the semester look for which students burn the brightest and hottest. This educational philosophy focuses on language use, and performance. One thing that many Chinese students expect out of their teachers is plenty of direct feedback. Many Chinese students become frustrated when Western teachers give feedback that is watered down. You're students may find feedback such as "good job!", "don't worry about it, you're doing fine" disappointing. Chinese



students are used to their teachers being very direct and pointing out specific errors that they make.

Remember that each teacher and student is different! Never assume that Western teachers and students are better than their Chinese counterparts. Some Westerners may prefer traditional teacher-centered styles of teaching and learning. On the other hand, some Chinese may prefer student-centered styles of teaching and learning rather than traditional teacher-centered teaching and learning.

### Summary of differences in educational philosophies



### Understanding Chinese Students' Learning Styles

Now that you've got a basic understanding of what educational background your Chinese students are coming from, let's look at some typical learning styles of Chinese students. Below is a summary of typical learning styles that your Chinese students may or may not have. Don't assume that all Chinese students' preferred learning styles will be the same! Some of your Chinese students may have several of the following learning styles; whereas other students may just have a few.



### Inward focused learning style

- Students tend to be reserved, quiet and shy.
- They usually enjoy working alone or with a partner that they know well.
- They dislike working in larger groups.
- They don't like expressing their opinions or emotions.

### Teacher dependent learning style

- Students dislike ambiguity and uncertainty.
- These students are generally more willing to follow rules and deadlines.
- They prefer to have constant correction from their teacher.

### Detail focused learning style

- Students prefer to analyze details of passages rather than look at the overall picture of the passage.
- They enjoy looking for contrasts and finding cause-effect relationships



## Visual learning style

- Students prefer to absorb material visually.
- These students find it much easier to understand lessons, lectures, conversations and reading passages if they are accompanied by some kind of visual display.
- They enjoy it when the teacher keeps a clean and well organized blackboard that will help them take notes on what the teacher is saying.
- When practicing listening skills, they prefer to have written text in front of them so that they can follow along easier.

## Reflective learning style

- Students prefer to think and reflect on what they have learned before they offer an answer.
- They are often uncomfortable making guesses.
- They want adequate time to think of an answer and think of a way to express this answer in a well thought out way.

## Sequential learning style

- Students prefer lessons, assignments, and learning materials to be sequential.
- They like teachers to be highly structured.
- They focus on rote memorization.
- They may not be willing to move on to a new topic if they don't fully understand the topic at hand.
- They may find detailed outlines and lists that can be memorized to be helpful.
- They also enjoy and benefit a lot from structured reviews.



## Identifying Your Students' Learning Styles

*“Bridging the gap between teaching and learning styles can only be achieved when teachers are, first of all, aware of their learners’ needs, capacities, potentials, and learning style preferences in meeting these needs.”*

*-Zhenhui Rao<sup>2</sup>*

Understanding the common learning styles that Chinese students prefer is helpful, but we need to take it one step further and identify what specific learning styles your students prefer. Remember, not all students are the same. Let’s talk about how to identify your students’ learning styles.

The Classroom Collaboration Survey, created by Dr. Kate Kinsella of San Francisco State University, is a useful survey that can help you and your students learn about their learning styles. The survey contains 25 questions that aim to help students and teachers understand whether the students prefer to work individually, in pairs, or in groups. An English and Chinese version of the survey is located in the appendix of this guidebook.

Dr. Kinsella suggests that before giving the survey to the students you should explain the following:

1. What learning styles are
2. How understanding learning styles will help both students and teachers
3. What general terms found in the survey mean (survey, questionnaire, tally)
4. How to tally the results of the survey

The survey will only help you to identify which students prefer individual, pair, or group work. The survey does not tell you if your students are visual learners, teacher dependent, etc. For this reason, after administering the survey to your students consider holding a class discussion on learning styles. The purpose of the class discussion is to eliminate potential conflicts that may exist between your teaching style and the students’ learning styles. In addition to this, having such a discussion will help students to become more self-aware of their learning styles and allow them to see ways that they could style stretch. Consider taking the following steps in leading a discussion with your students about learning styles:

1. Write the major learning styles on the board (these are on pages 4-6 of this guidebook).
2. Explain what each of the major learning styles is. (You could list under the name of the learning style a few of the most important characteristics of that learning style)
3. Ask students to write their names under the learning style that suit them best.



4. Ask the students what challenges they think you might have as a teacher in teaching students with different learning styles.
5. Ask the students what challenges they might face trying to learn English in a classroom full of students with different learning styles.
6. Ask the students what ideas they might have on how to bridge the gap between your teaching style and the students' learning styles.
7. Explain to the students that both you and they should try their best to be flexible and be willing to style-stretch.

## **How to Bridge Teaching Styles and Learning Styles**

After you have an understanding of the different learning styles your students prefer, you can begin to plan how to bridge the gap that may exist between your teaching style and your students' learning styles. You will need to adapt your own teaching style by providing a variety of activities that meet the needs of your students. Here are several things you can do:

- Encourage students to “style-stretch” by experimenting and trying new learning styles
- Conduct a variety of activities with different levels of participation (individual work, pair work, group work, class discussions)
- Organize activities from low risk to high risk
- Plan for different learning styles in your lesson plans

Let's discuss a few of these in greater detail.

### **Conduct activities with different levels of participation**

As discussed earlier, some students may prefer to work by themselves or in pairs, while other students may prefer to work in groups. The activities planned each day for your class should reflect this balance. If your lesson plan has only activities done in groups, then those students who tend to learn individually or in pairs will be at a disadvantage. These students might not be as willing to participate and not learn as much as they would have if the activities had been more balanced. While planning lessons, try to incorporate activities where students can work individually, in pairs, and in groups.

### **Organize activities from low risk to high risk**

Chinese students are very concerned with what their teachers and fellow classmates think about them. For this reason, many Chinese are hesitant to participate in activities where they could make mistakes in front of the class. For example, Chinese students, without the proper preparation, may feel very uncomfortable giving a presentation in class. If students are likely to make mistakes during the activity, or if students are required to perform in front of the class, we could say these activities are high risk activities.



Just because Chinese students may not be comfortable completing high risk activities does not mean that high risk activities should never be done in class. Activities such as presentations, speeches, and debates are very effective in learning English. Students *need* to do these high risk activities. You as a teacher can help them prepare so that they are more comfortable and more willing to do these kinds of activities. At the end of this learning styles section there is an example lesson plan that will help you understand how you can help your students to overcome their anxieties.

One thing that you can do as a teacher to help is to arrange activities in a low to high risk order. Students should begin with low risk activities and slowly build towards high risk activities. By the time students are confronted with the high risk activity, they will have already built up some self-confidence from their success in the easier, lower risk activities.



### Plan for different learning styles

When planning lessons, you should take into consideration the learning styles of all your students. Look at the following lesson plan and look for ways that the teacher has taken in consideration the different needs of students.



## Lesson Plan – Does Technology Bring Us Closer Together?

**Objective:** 1) Students will gain confidence in public speaking by preparing for and participating in a debate.  
2) Students will appropriately use transition words (first, second, in conclusion) in a well thought argument.  
3) Students will demonstrate mastery of this week’s vocabulary, by using at least five vocabulary items in their argument. (Technology, Internet, Skype, text, SMS, communicate, globalization, connection, Facebook, blog (verb & noun), social media)

**Materials:** Blackboard, Amish Picture, Technology Picture Handout, Debate Rules handout.

**Overview:** Explain your desire for your students to speak English well and with confidence. Explain that the class will be holding a debate at the end of this week. Help the students to see how holding a debate on technology will help them to learn vocabulary, structure an argument, and build confidence in public speaking. Reassure the students that although it looks like a daunting task, they will have time to prepare and you will be there to help.

### Activity 1 – Class Discussion (Visual learning style - Pictures)

- Show students the picture of Amish men and boys working ([http://i.telegraph.co.uk/multimedia/archive/01115/amish2\\_1115783c.jpg](http://i.telegraph.co.uk/multimedia/archive/01115/amish2_1115783c.jpg))
- Ask students the following questions
  - What’s happening in this picture?
  - Where do you think this picture was taken? What country?
  - How long ago was this picture taken?
  - Do you see any use of technology in the picture?
- Explain that the picture was taken in America and that it was taken within the past ten years.
- Explain that the people in the picture are Amish people and that they consciously decide to not use certain forms of technology like cell phones and cars
- Ask why students think a community of people would ever agree to not use cell phones and cars.
- Explain the debate will be centered around this question: “Does technology bring us closer together or make us further apart?” Write it on the board.

### Activity 2 – Individual Work (inward focused learning style)

- Give students the Technology Picture Handout (This is a hand out that has several pictures of different ways we communicate using technology. For example this can include a picture of a cell phone, a computer, a car, the Skype logo, Facebook,



a text message, or Chinese social media websites and programs like QQ and Renren).

- Ask students to look through the page and circle the types of technology they use.

### **Activity 3 – Pair work (information exchange)**

- Have students discuss in pairs the following questions
  - What types of technology do you use to stay in touch with your family and friends?
  - Do you think technology brings us closer together or do you think technology makes us further apart?
  - In what ways does technology bring us closer together? (try to think of at least 3)
  - In what ways does technology make us further apart? (try to think of at least 3)
  - Would you want to live in a community like the Amish? Why or why not?

### **Activity 4 – Class Discussion (visual learning style – black board)**

- Write on the board in two columns “Ways technology brings us closer together” and “Ways technology makes us further apart”.
- Invite each pair of students to write one of their examples under one of the columns (encourage students to keep it balanced).
- Lead a class discussion on some of the pros and cons of using technology as a way of continuing our relationships. Try to make sure both sides of the issue are discussed.

### **Activity 5 – Teacher instruction (teacher dependent learning style - explaining rules of debate)**

- Explain the rules of the debate. How you want to run the debate is up to you. I suggest debate groups to include no more than 4 people. Each person assumes a role, introduction, main arguments, and conclusion.
- Be sure to make clear rules on turn taking and how much time is allowed.
- Make sure you clarify how they will be graded. I like requiring students to use at least three vocabulary and three transition words throughout their argument.
- Remind the students the debate will be held at the end of the week. They will have some time in class today to prepare, but they will also need to prepare outside of class.

### **Activity 6 – Group work (Preparing for the debate)**

- Divide the class into groups. Take into consideration the skill level of students, conflicts that may exist, and what side students prefer to argue.



- Have students make a 2x2 table where they list the pros and cons of both sides.
- Give them ample time to discuss and structure their argument.
- Circle from group to group, encouraging all members to participate, reminding students of vocabulary and transition words they could use, and asking thought provoking questions to help them analyze the situation. Reassure struggling students.



# Linguistic Differences

*“The more Native-English-Speaking teachers learn about the host language, the more effectively they will be able to teach.”*

*-Zhenhui Rao<sup>3</sup>*

## Introduction

Many Chinese students and program administrators feel that Western teachers are insensitive to their linguistic needs. Some feel that Western teachers have a difficult time helping them overcome linguistic challenges. They feel this way because many Western teachers are unaware of important differences between English and Chinese.

Although becoming fluent in Chinese during your stay in China may not be practical or realistic, showing your students that you are putting forth effort to understand their linguistic background will impress your students. Learning some basic Chinese is an effective way to help you improve your relationship with your students.

In this section you will learn some basic differences between the Chinese language and English. The main focus will be on common pronunciation and grammar errors that Chinese students make when speaking English. This section will help you to understand the source of their errors that they make in English. Teaching suggestions will also help you to understand how to help your students overcome these errors. Speaking errors, not writing errors, are the focus of this guidebook. If you want to learn about errors beyond those listed in this section, Michael Swan's [Learner English](#) and Peter Avery's [Teaching American English Pronunciation](#) are two helpful books.

## Quiz on Linguistic Differences

How much do you know about Chinese? Take this short quiz to find out.

- 1) Why do Chinese struggle with 'a' and 'the'?
  - a. In Chinese 'a' and 'the' are the same word.
  - b. The words 'a' and 'the' don't exist in Chinese.
  - c. The words 'a' and 'the' sound like Chinese words that have the same meaning.
  - d. In Chinese 'a' and 'the' aren't used as often as in English.

- 2) Which dialect of Chinese does Standard Chinese come from?
  - a. Cantonese
  - b. Hakka
  - c. Wu
  - d. Mandarin
  
- 3) What is the standard word order for a Chinese sentence?
  - a. Subject → Time → Verb → Object → Place
  - b. Time → Place → Subject → Verb → Object
  - c. Object → Subject → Verb → Place → Time
  - d. Place → Object → Verb → Subject → Time
  
- 4) Why do Chinese struggle with verb conjugations?
  - a. In Chinese verbs don't change.
  - b. Verbs in English are much longer than verbs in Chinese.
  - c. In Chinese you change the prefix of verbs, not the suffix.
  - d. Chinese verbs all have the same ending.
  
- 5) Why do Chinese students find changing their intonation (pitch) throughout a sentence difficult?
  - a. In Chinese only male speakers are supposed to change their intonation.
  - b. It is rude to change your intonation in Chinese.
  - c. In Chinese, intonation is used to distinguish words, not sentence meaning.
  - d. Only individuals of high status are supposed to change their intonation in China.

Answers: 1) b 2) d 3) a 4) a 5) c

## What is Chinese?

What Westerners call the Chinese language can actually be broken down into numerous different spoken dialects. These dialects are different enough that people who speak them can't understand each other. Although these dialects are very different when spoken, they do share ties to the same written language. The written language has two forms: traditional and simplified. Traditional characters are used in Hong Kong and Taiwan, while simplified characters (developed in the 1950's to increase literacy) are used in Mainland China.

The dialects of Chinese can be categorized into eight different groups. The two most commonly used dialects in China are Mandarin and Cantonese. Mandarin has become the official language of China. Most northern Chinese are accustomed to speaking Mandarin. Cantonese is used in Hong Kong and its surrounding areas. Other dialects include: Wu, Hsiang, Kan, Hakka, Northern Min, and Southern Min.

Because Mandarin is the official language of China, it is used for school instruction and news broadcasts throughout the country. Because of this, students throughout China grow up learning Mandarin in school. When they return home or hang out with friends they prefer to use their regional dialect. For this reason, although most young Chinese understand Mandarin, they are more comfortable and confident in using their regional dialect.

All Chinese dialects share important basic features. These basic features are very different from English. In the remainder of this section you will learn about some of the key features of Chinese that make it difficult for Chinese students to learn English.

Map of Dialects in China



Used with permission from Wikipedia

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Map\\_of\\_sinitic\\_dialect\\_-\\_English\\_version.svg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_sinitic_dialect_-_English_version.svg)

## General differences between English and Chinese

You should understand some of the general differences between English and Chinese before we jump to the specific mistakes that many Chinese students make when speaking English.

The most obvious difference between English and Chinese is the writing system. Unlike English, Chinese does not use an alphabet. Each Chinese character is written with a set stroke order. Characters can be written left to right, right to left, or top to bottom.

Chinese does not allow for much inflection. Inflection is when we change the meaning of a word by changing the beginning (prefix) or end (suffix) of a word. In English we change the form of verbs to convey different tenses. For example, we add *-ed* on to many verbs to make them past tense. *I walk* becomes *I walked*. Chinese doesn't do this. For this reason many Chinese may incorrectly say that Chinese has no grammar. Every language has grammar, including Chinese. Some aspects of Chinese grammar are similar to English grammar, while others are very different.

Take for example Chinese sentence structure (syntax). Chinese sentence structure is very similar to English sentence structure. The standard sentence structure for Chinese is Subject Time Verb Object Place. English also shares this Subject Verb Object order in sentences.

Some aspects of Chinese grammar that are very different from English grammar are inflection and parts of speech. In English we change the form of a word in order to change its word class. In other words we can change the prefix or suffix of a word to change it from a noun, to a verb, adjective, or other part of speech. In Chinese, on the other hand, parts of speech are not as distinguished as in English. A Chinese word can be a noun, verb, or another part of speech. This means that many Chinese struggle with related words in English like *difficult* and *difficulty*.

Another important distinction between English and Chinese that deserves attention is the role that pitch plays. In English we change our pitch over the duration of a sentence. We do this convey how we feel or think about what we are saying. In Chinese, pitch is used not at the sentence level, but at the word level. Many words in Chinese are pronounced exactly the same way, except for the pitch. We call these pitch changes 'tones'.

Although these aren't all the differences between English and Chinese, they are the most important ones. Many of your students will struggle with these differences. Now let's take a closer look at some pronunciation and grammar errors you might hear your Chinese students make when they use English. Both sections on pronunciation and grammar errors are organized by the errors that Chinese students make, the sources of those errors, and a teaching suggestion or two.

## Pronunciation Errors

### Sounds that Chinese students struggle with

Chinese struggle with many sounds of English. Sometimes it's because the English sounds aren't used at all in Chinese. Other times it's because the sounds are very similar, but still different, from sounds in Chinese. This section on pronunciation errors contains many, but not all, of the sounds that Chinese students struggle with. For more information on other errors and suggestions on how to fix these pronunciation errors, see Peter Avery and Susan Ehrlich's [Teaching American English Pronunciation](#), Judy Gilbert's [Clear Speech](#), and Lynn Henrichsen's [Pronunciation Matters](#).

### My students have a hard time distinguishing between vowel sounds like *beat* and *bit*.

English vowels can be categorized as tense vowels or lax vowels. Say *beat* slowly a few times. Now say *bit* slowly a few times. Notice how when saying *beat* the muscles in and around your mouth are more tense than when you say *bit*. The words *beat*, *bait*, *boot*, *boat*, and *bought* are all pronounced with tense vowels. *Bit*, *bet*, *bat*, *but*, and *book* are all pronounced with lax vowels. Chinese does not have as many vowel sounds as English does. Chinese especially struggle with the contrast between *beat* and *bit*, as well as *pool* and *pull*.

### My students struggle with the TH sounds in words like *think* and *that*.

The only difference between the TH sounds in *think* and *that* is what we do with our vocal chords. Sounds that require our vocal chords to shake are called voiced sounds. Sounds that are made without our vocal chords vibrating are called voiceless sounds. Put your hand over your throat and make the TH sound in *that*. Feel it the vibrations? Now make the TH sound in *think*. Your vocal chords don't shake. Neither of these TH sounds exists in Chinese. As a result, students struggle to distinguish between these sounds. Your students might replace the voiceless TH sound with an S, T, or F. *Think* might be pronounced *sink*, *tink*, or *fink*. The voiced TH sound may be replaced by D or Z. Your students might say *dis* or *zis* instead of *this*. Because these sounds don't exist in Chinese you will need to help your students understand what to do with their tongue and mouth in order to make this sound. The TH sound is made by placing your tongue between your teeth. Then you pull back your tongue while exhaling. You will then need to help your students understand how to make voiced and voiceless sounds.

### Why do my students mistakenly use W or F sounds instead the appropriate V sound?

The V sound doesn't exist in many dialects of Chinese. Sometimes Chinese will make a W or F sound instead of a V sound. For example, *live* might be pronounced *lif*. Help them to understand how W, F and V are pronounced differently. V is pronounced by putting your bottom

lip to your upper teeth. Then you let air vibrate between your bottom lip and your upper teeth. You also let your vocal chords vibrate. The F sound is made in exactly the same way except it is voiceless, that is to say your vocal chords do not vibrate. W is made by bringing your two lips close together until they form a small circle. It is also a voiced sound.

**Why is it hard for my students to say the Z sound? They often say things like *rice* instead of *rise*.**

Most of the Chinese dialects do not have the Z sound. As a result many Chinese will replace a Z sound with an S sound. The Z and S sounds are both made at the gums just behind your front teeth. Your tongue allows only a small amount of air to pass over it. Z is voiced and S is voiceless.

**Some of my students struggle with their L and R sounds, how can I help them?**

Especially in southern China, Chinese have a difficult time distinguishing between the L sound and the R sound. Students especially struggle to pronounce L correctly when it comes at the end of a word. Sometimes students will drop the L sound or replace it with an R sound. *Mill* becomes *meh* or *mere*. The L sound is made by curling your tongue back and touching the top of your mouth. Air passes around the sides of your tongue to make the L sound. The R sound is also made by curling the tongue back. The tip of your tongue doesn't touch the top of your mouth however. The air passes between the top of your mouth and the tip of your tongue.

**My students struggle with a lot of words that end in consonants like *knife*.**

Typically, Chinese syllables consist of a vowel or a consonant followed by a vowel. Few words in Chinese end with consonants. For this reason, many students often add an extra vowel to the end of words that end in consonants. *Knife* may become *knifu*. Students may also just drop the consonant sound.

**My Chinese students have a hard time stressing words with multiple syllables correctly. Instead of pronouncing one syllable louder and longer than others, many students stress each syllable of each word. Why?**

Many Chinese dialects (especially Cantonese) require the speaker to stress each syllable equally. Because they are used to this Chinese stress pattern, students do the same thing in English. Students struggle to lengthen the stressed syllable and reduce the length of the unstressed syllables. For example, instead of saying *distribute normally*, your students might say *distribúte* with each syllable stressed equally.

To overcome this problem, give students a list related words with stress marked. Have them practice stressing the words correctly. They can tap the table or clap their hands when

stressing a syllable more than others. You can also distribute rubber bands to the students. The students can place the rubber band around their thumbs. When students come to the stressed syllable of the word they pull on the rubber band.

fóssil	fossilizáció
phótograph	photógraphy photogáphic
distribute	distribútion

Make sure when you teach new vocabulary that you demonstrate to your students how to properly stress the vocabulary items.

**My students can't seem to grasp "the flow" of English. They can pronounce words with the correct stress when words are isolated, but they struggle to say a whole sentence with a natural flow. Instead they sound choppy. Why is this?**

In English we make the most important words in the sentence longer and louder than less important words. In other words, nouns, verbs, and adjectives are pronounced longer than determiners (a and the) and prepositions. Mandarin Chinese works in a similar way to English, but to a much lesser extent. Other dialects of Chinese (like Cantonese) do not do this at all. When Chinese speak English, they often pronounce each syllable with the same stress. In addition to this, each word is pronounced with roughly the same length. This results in a choppy staccato rhythm. Many Chinese tend to separate English words rather than linking the words together and creating a "flow of speech."

To remedy this problem consider using rhythmic expressions of spoken English. Nursery rhymes, for example, are a fun and effective way to help your students acquire the rhythm of English. Nursery rhymes are also easily accessible online. There are many YouTube [playlists](#) have both music and words. Poetry can also be used. Jazz Chants® can also be used. Jazz Chants® are short sentences that flow together in a jazzy, rhythmic fashion. The creator of these chants, Carolyn Graham, has a website with useful [examples](#) and [instructions](#) on how to make your own jazz chants. See [jazzchants.net](http://jazzchants.net) for more information.

**My students do not change their intonation throughout a sentence. This makes it seem that there is no emotion behind what they are saying.**

In English we change the pitch of our voice to express how we feel about what we are saying. Take for an example the sentence *You left the car keys in the refrigerator?* We can change the intonation of our voice to let the listener know that we are angry, amused, or surprised about what we are saying. In addition to this we use intonation to convey whether we are making a statement or making a question. The sentence *The homework was difficult, wasn't it?* could be a question or a statement, depending on the intonation used.

Of course Chinese do speak with emotion, but they do not use intonation to do this. Instead they use particles (extra sounds placed carefully in the sentence to express emotion). In Chinese intonation plays a completely different role. Many words in Chinese, whose meanings are very different, use the exact same consonants and vowels. Chinese can tell the words apart because they use different tones, or pitch changes. In Mandarin the word *Ma* has five different meanings. It can mean *horse, mother, hemp, to scold*. *Ma* can also turn a statement into a question. Chinese use intonation, or pitch changes, to distinguish between the words. Chinese could say *Ma* five times with different pitch changes to say *Did mom scold the hemp horse?* All that our Western ears might hear is *Ma Ma Ma Ma Ma*. The important thing to remember is that because Chinese change the pitch of their voice at a word level and not a sentence level, their speech may sound flat, emotionless, or choppy to Westerners.

Give students a couple of sentences that could be read different ways. For example ‘You left the car keys in the refrigerator?’ could be by someone that was angry, amused, confused, or even bored. Demonstrate how to change your intonation by reading the sentence using different emotions. Ask the students what you are doing so that it sounds angry, amused, etc. In pairs have the students read the sentences. One partner reads the sentence, choosing a particular emotion. The partner guesses which emotion the first student was trying to express through their intonation. You can also practice with sentences with tag questions like *The homework was difficult, wasn't it?* to help our students understand how to use intonation to convey the meaning behind the sentence (is it a question or a statement).

## Grammar Errors

**My Chinese students often struggle to use the correct parts of speech. They might use an adjective form of a word when they should use the noun form. For example, they might say *It is very difficulty to speak English. Why?***

Parts of speech in Chinese are not as distinguished by word endings as in English. A word doesn't necessarily have to change its form to be used in as a different part of speech. In other words, Chinese can use a noun as a verb or an adjective without changing the form of the word. For this reason it may be difficult for your Chinese students to distinguish between related words like difficult and difficulty.

Help students learn that the ending, or suffix, of a word will often tell you what part of speech the word belongs to. For example words that end in ‘ist’ and ‘ism’ (like socialist and socialism) are usually nouns. Words that end in ‘ize’ and ‘ify’ (like harmonize and horrify) are usually verbs. For a list of more suffixes in English go to <http://www.michigan-proficiency-exams.com/parts-of-speech.html>.

**Why do my students use present tense verbs when they should use past tense verbs (or vice versa)? For example one student said *He sleep too much yesterday*.**

In English we change the form of verbs so that the listener knows if something is happening in the present, past and future. For example *walk* becomes *walked* in the past and *will walk* in the future.

Chinese do not change the form of verbs to show if something happened in the present, past, or future. Instead, Chinese use time markers (words like today, tomorrow, and last week) to express when something occurs. Chinese use the same character for a verb whether it is used in the present, past, or future.

**Why is it that my students use verb forms that don't agree with their subjects. They say things like *She walk to school every day*.**

Unlike in English, Chinese verbs don't change form. For this reason there is no subject-verb agreement in Chinese. Your Chinese students aren't used having to think if the form of the verb they are using matches the subject of the sentence.

One activity you could do to give your students practice with subject-verb agreement is to create a short story. Underline all the verbs in the story. Change most of the verbs so that they do not agree with the subject. Have the students look at each verb and decide if it agrees with the subject. Have them fix the verbs they feel are incorrect.

**Some of my Chinese students struggle to use articles consistently and correctly. Often they don't use the articles, use articles when they shouldn't, or confuse definite (*the*) and indefinite (*a/an*) articles. My students say things like *Let's play game* or *They played piano in the harmony*.**

In the Chinese language there are no articles. The closest thing that resembles article in Chinese are classifier words like *piece* (piece of cake) or *sheet* (sheet of paper). Because Chinese students have never used articles before, they struggle with understanding why they are necessary and how to use them.

Be upfront and honest with your students. Let them know that this will be a grammar principle that they will struggle with and continue to make mistakes. Tell them they shouldn't get discouraged. Be patient as a teacher when they keep making mistakes. Although articles in English seems simple (its only three words and one of them is one letter long!), the usage of articles in English is very complicated and difficult to master.

**My students struggle when using passive structures in English. They say things like *A new book is writing this year* instead of *A new book is being written this year*.**

Passives, in Chinese are rarely used, and inflection (the changing of verbs) doesn't exist in Chinese. Despite this, your Chinese students are still able to use Chinese to express the same idea as passive voice in English, but they do not use a passive structure like we do in English. For example, to say "this book was written in 2005" Chinese actually say "This book is 2005 year write." It really is different!

Because Chinese are not accustomed to changing verbs, you should provide lots and lots of examples when teaching passives. In addition to helping students change verbs from active to passive voice, also have them change verbs from passive to active voice. It isn't enough for the students to learn the rules or forms of passive verbs. Make sure that they can always associate the form of the verb with its correct meaning.

**My Chinese students confuse pronouns like he, she, and it. Why do they make mistakes like *My girlfriend, he doesn't like it* or *That's my sister, do you know him*?**

The Chinese words for he (他), she (她), and it (它) are pronounced exactly the same way (*Tā*). The words are written in three distinct ways, but are pronounced with the same sound and tones.

Chinese students will continue to make this mistake, even at advanced levels of English. When students say 'she' when they mean 'he,' simply correct them. Students need to be corrected over and over until they get into the habit of thinking about which pronoun to use before they speak.

**My students often don't add *s* onto nouns. They say things like *I have many movie at my house*.**

In Chinese, nouns can be both singular and plural without having to change them. 车 (*chē*) can mean both *car* or *cars*. You know if it is singular or plural by the context around the noun (words like many or some). Because your Chinese students don't have to change their Chinese nouns to make them plural, when speaking in English they may often forget to add the plural ending *s*.

When students fail to add *s* onto nouns, use "echo correction." Echo correction is when you politely restate what a student said, but in the correct form. If a student forgets to add an *s* to the word they want to make plural, then simply say the word with an *s*. Students need to be corrected over and over until they get into the habit of thinking about how to change a noun into its plural form.

**My students often drop pronouns in the middle of a sentence. For example, one student said *I went to the store after finished my homework*. The student forgot to add *I* before *finished*.**

In Chinese, when talking about a particular subject, you only need to state the subject once. Having established who or what you are talking about, you are free to drop any pronouns that refer back to the subject. It is OK in Chinese to say *I went to the store after finished my homework*.

Explain to students that in English we repeat pronouns more often in Chinese. Gentle echo correction will remind students to not drop pronouns.

# Chinese Culture in the Classroom

*“The apparent passivity of the students in the classroom is not a lack of involvement in the lesson, but respect for the teacher’s greater knowledge and wisdom... This passivity of students can be a major obstacle to improving speaking skills in the language classroom.”*

*-Xiuqin Zhang<sup>†</sup>*

## Introduction

Your ability to understand your Chinese students requires more than an understanding of their educational and linguistic background. Many of the misunderstandings you will have with your students are the result of deeply embedded cultural differences. In this section you will read answers to questions that previous English teachers in China have had regarding Chinese culture in the classroom. The more you can understand how your Chinese students think and feel, the more able you will be to help them.

## What is the Chinese idea of “saving face”?

To save face means to preserve one's image and honor. Chinese are less individualistic than Westerners. When Chinese think of themselves, they think of themselves as a part of a larger whole in the context of their other relationships. What one does or says will be seen and heard by others. Face (image, reputation, or honor) depends on how a person acts in front of their community. If they do or say something inappropriate then their reputation is harmed. Because the Chinese self is tied to other relationships, when a person does something shameful and loses face, then those tied to that person also lose face. For this reason, Chinese are always thinking about how their actions and words will reflect on themselves and those associated with them (friends, family, work associates, bosses, etc.). The end result is that Chinese are much more conscious and careful of what they do and say than their Western counterparts.

*“Chinese often are concerned with what others will say, and this concern has a controlling effect on Chinese behavior.”*

*- Ge Gao and Stella Ting-Toome<sup>†</sup>*



## **Why are Chinese students so quiet in my classroom? How come it's so hard to get them to ask questions or offer answers?**

Chinese students in the classroom may be quiet and hesitant to ask questions or offer answers partly because they are afraid of losing face. Your Chinese students' self-esteem is most often formed by the opinions and remarks of others. If a student offers an incorrect answer, then that student will feel ashamed. He or she has lost face in front of others. The fear of making a mistake a losing face discourages students from asking questions or offering answers.

*“Chinese regard one's ideas as entangled with one's identity or sense of personal worth; an attack on one's ideas is therefore an attack on one's self, or, more specifically, one's face.”*  
– Linda Young<sup>5</sup>

In addition to being afraid of making mistakes, Chinese students are quiet because they want to show respect to the teacher. Chinese students are used to listening to the teacher, taking notes, reflecting on what has been taught, and obeying the teacher. Asking questions or volunteering answers without being called upon would be interrupting the teacher. In other words, your Chinese students might seem passive or uninterested, but they are actually showing you respect as they sit quietly and take notes.

## **Why are Chinese students so focused on tests? They seem to care more about getting good grades on tests than being able to speak good English. Why?**

Testing has been crucial to the Chinese educational system for thousands of years. In 605 AD the Imperial Examination (*kējǔ*) was established. Chinese that passed this test were given prestigious and well paying positions in the Chinese government. Although the Imperial Examination ended in 1905, the importance of tests in China remains very strong. Today the tests are different, but they still determine the future opportunities that are available for students that pass or fail them.

If high school students do not pass the National Matriculation English Test (NMET) then they are not permitted to study at a college or university in China. Likewise, if university students fail to pass the Chinese English Test – Band 4 (CET-4) then they will be unable to get a bachelor's degree. Similar tests exist for graduate students and English Major students. Many of these tests do not assess the students' ability to speak. Instead they focus on reading and listening comprehension, writing, and translation.

These tests are considered high-stakes tests. That is to say, a lot of opportunities (to study at a university or to get a nice job) depend on passing these tests. Some jobs even require the applicants to pass these tests. Because there is so much at stake, students want to make sure they



are prepared for these tests. Because many of these tests do not test your students' ability to speak English, you may have some students that don't care about their ability to speak. Rather, they focus on those things that will be on the test they are preparing for.

*“The high-stakes nature of these tests makes most educational activities in China very exam-oriented... Teachers focus on helping their students to pass these tests, and the students focus on passing them.”*

*– Caiping Sun<sup>6</sup>*

### **What English tests are my students required to take at the high school, undergraduate, and graduate levels?**

The tests that you should know about can be divided into two categories: entrance exams and certificate exams. Entrance exams are those tests that students must pass in order to gain entrance into a university or graduate school. Certificate exams are tests that students must pass in order to earn a degree and graduate from university or graduate school. The following tests are the major ones that your students may face.

#### **Entrance Exams:**

The National Matriculation English Test (NMET)

The NMET (*gāokǎo yīngyǔ* in Chinese) is actually just one part of the University Entrance Exam to Higher Education (*gāokǎo*). The NMET is the most important test for high school students because it determines what universities (if any) those students can attend. It is a norm-referenced standardized test. This means that it works in a similar way to the SAT or ACT in America. The purpose of the test is to predict how well students will perform in English in university level classes. The NMET is administered annually in June throughout China. Students are tested on listening, grammar and structure, reading comprehension, and writing.

#### **The Graduate School Entrance English Exam (GSEEE)**

The GSEEE is taken by undergraduate university students that want to continue their studies in graduate schools in China. It is the English portion of the Graduate School Entrance Exam (GSEE). The GSEE is administered annually in January and February. The test assesses grammar and structure, reading comprehension, and writing.



## **Certification**

### **The Chinese English Test (CET)**

The CET is for all undergraduate who are non-English majors. English majors, in contrast, take the Test for English Majors (TEM). The CET is a national standardized test administered biannually in June and December/January. The CET can actually be broken down into different tests that are taken after each semester of English. Chinese university students take it after each semester. The most important CET to pass is administered at the end of their sophomore year. It is called the CET-Band 4 (CET-4). Students who fail to pass this test will not be given a degree. The test assesses listening, reading comprehension, error correction, translation, and writing.

The CET is a very important and influential test in China. Because the CET determines whether or not college students can graduate, it has become the standard for other tests (and hence English programs) throughout China. What is assessed in the CET is what students want to learn. Because of this, the CET influences what is taught in English classrooms throughout China.

### **The Test for English Majors (TEM)**

The TEM is designed for students who are pursuing an English major. English majors take the TEM-4 at the end of their sophomore year and the TEM-8 at the end of their senior year. These tests are more difficult than their CET counterparts. The TEM-4 is administered every May, while the TEM-8 is administered every March. Both tests assess listening, reading comprehension, grammar and structure, and writing. In addition to these areas, the TEM-8 also assesses students' ability to proofread.

It is important to distinguish between English major students and non-English major students. There are sharp differences in these students' language proficiency. English major students are held to higher expectations and are expected to perform at higher levels. Expectations for non-English major students may be much lower and they may be required to perform much simpler tasks. Getting to know what expectations administrators have for students at the institution you teach at will help you to tailor your teaching to the needs of your students.



### Summary of tests

Test name	Test takers	Purpose of test	Content of test	Time of the test
NMET	High School graduates	College entrance	Listening, grammar, reading comprehension, writing	Annual – June
GSEEE	College graduates	Graduate school entrance	Grammar, reading comprehension, writing	Annual – January/February
CET-4	Sophomore non-English majors	College certificate	Listening, reading comprehension, error correction, translation, writing	Biannual – January/June
TEM-4	Sophomore English majors	Certificate	Listening, grammar, reading comprehension, writing	Annual - May
TEM-8	Senior English majors	Certificate	Listening, reading comprehension, proofreading, grammar, writing	Annual - March

For more information on standardized tests in China, see Caiping Sun's MA thesis located at <http://etd.lib.byu.edu/>.



## **Why do my students often plagiarize? Even when I tell them they will be punished they still plagiarize. Why?**

What westerners call plagiarism is much more common in China than it is in America and other Western countries. Even when told they will be seriously punished for this form of “cheating,” many Chinese students are willing to take the risk and plagiarize. Why?

Plagiarizing is copying. Unfortunately, the habit of copying is instilled in Chinese students throughout their education. Let me share a story to illustrate this point. An American friend of mine (let’s call him Aaron) studied in Nanjing, China for a year. Aaron enrolled in a normal Chinese university and sat in classes with normal Chinese university students. Class instruction and homework were done in Chinese. On his history class’s final exam was the essay prompt “Please explain your view of the One Child policy”. Aaron wrote an essay detailing his view of the advantages and disadvantages of the One Child policy. When he received his exam back from the professor he was quite upset with his low grade. He asked his professor why he received such a low score. The professor explained that the reason why he received such a low score was because none of the things that Aaron argued in his essay reflected the professor’s view of the One Child policy. Confused and a bit angry, Aaron argued that the essay question asked specifically for his own point of view. The professor refused to change the grade. You can see how the expectation that students regurgitate information that their professors have passed on to them can lead to students’ willingness to plagiarize.

Another reason why many Chinese students plagiarize is because the concept of plagiarism isn’t clearly defined in the academia in China. Many students don’t understand what plagiarism is. They may not think that it’s wrong. In addition to this, incidents of plagiarism aren’t necessarily punished. Part of the problem lies in the fact that the students aren’t the only ones plagiarizing. It’s not rare that Chinese professors are also caught plagiarizing.

The competition to get into good universities as students or professors is brutal. When graduate students and professors are evaluated on how many articles they publish, many graduate students and professors turn to plagiarism to meet the demands of their evaluators.

In addition to this, Chinese students plagiarize often because they want to make sure they are correct. Students who fear their English isn’t good enough to complete an assignment may turn to plagiarism as a way to insure their homework looks good. If they are required to give a news report in English class then they may go directly to an English news source online and copy it word for word. Some may fail to realize that in the pursuit of getting the right answer, they have missed an opportunity to truly learn the material.



# Appendix

## References

The red quotations throughout the guidebook come from useful sources. Here they are listed below:

- 1) Xiuqin Zhang, *Raising Awareness of Cultural Differences in Language Classrooms*, in Chinese EFL Journal, volume 1, issue 1, 2008.
- 2) Zhenhui Rao, *Bridging the Gap Between Teaching and Learning Styles in East Asian Conexts*, in TESOL Journal, volume 11, issue 2, 2002.
- 3) Zhenhui Rao, *Reflecting on Native-English-Speaking Teachers in China*, in Essential Teacher, volume 5, issue 1, 2008.
- 4) Ge Gao and Stella Ting-Toomey, *Communicating Effectively with the Chinese*, Sage Publications, Inc., 1998.
- 5) Linda Young, *Crosstalk and Culture in Sino-American Communication*, Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- 6) Caiping Sun and Lynn Henrichsen, *Major University Tests in China: Their Importance, Nature, and Development*, in TESL Reporter, volume 44, issues 1 and 2, 2011.

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Lastly, thanks to Kate Kinsella for permitting me to use her Classroom Collaboration Survey. You can find the survey on the next page. I have provided a Chinese translation for your convenience. I suggest using the English version, using the Chinese version only if your students' reading comprehension is poor.

## Classroom Collaboration Survey

**Directions:** This survey has been designed to help you and your teacher better understand **the way you prefer to work on assignments in class**. Please read each statement, then taking into consideration your past and present educational experiences, decide whether you **mostly agree** or **mostly disagree** with each statement.

	AGREE	DISAGREE
1. When I work on assignments by myself, I often feel frustrated or bored.	_____	_____
2. When I work by myself on assignments (instead of with a partner or a small group), I usually do a better job.	_____	_____
3. I enjoy having opportunities to share opinions and experiences, compare answers, and solve problems with a group of classmates.	_____	_____
4. When I work by myself on assignments, I usually concentrate better and learn more.	_____	_____
5. I prefer working on assignments in class with a single partner rather than with a group of classmates.	_____	_____
6. Most of the time, I prefer to work by myself in class rather than with a partner or a small group.	_____	_____
7. I enjoy having opportunities to share opinions and experiences, compare answers, and solve problems with a single partner more than with a group.	_____	_____
8. When I work with a partner or a small group in class instead of by myself, I often feel frustrated or like I am wasting time.	_____	_____
9. When I work with a small group in class, I usually learn more and do a better job on the assignment.	_____	_____
10. Most of the time, I would prefer to work in class with a single partner rather than by myself.	_____	_____
11. Most of the time, I would prefer to work with a group rather than with a single partner or by myself.	_____	_____
12. When I work with a partner in class, I usually learn more and do a better job on the assignment.	_____	_____

- 13. I am more comfortable working with classmates when I can select the partner or group with whom I will be working. \_\_\_\_\_
- 14. Usually, I prefer that the instructor select the partner or the group of classmates with whom I will be working. \_\_\_\_\_
- 15. Usually, I find working with a partner to be more interesting and productive than working alone in class. \_\_\_\_\_
- 16. I prefer working in groups when there is a mixture of students from different backgrounds. \_\_\_\_\_
- 17. I hope we will have regular opportunities in this class to work in groups. \_\_\_\_\_
- 18. I generally get more accomplished when I work with a partner on a task in class. \_\_\_\_\_
- 19. I hope we will not do too much group work in this class. \_\_\_\_\_
- 20. I prefer working with classmates from my same background. \_\_\_\_\_
- 21. I hope we will have regular opportunities in this class to work with a partner. \_\_\_\_\_
- 22. I mainly want my teacher to give us classroom assignments that we can work on by ourselves. \_\_\_\_\_
- 23. Usually, I find working in a group to be more interesting and productive than working alone in class. \_\_\_\_\_
- 24. Usually, I find working in a group to be a waste of time. \_\_\_\_\_
- 25. I generally get more accomplished when I work with a group on a task in class. \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Give yourself 1 point if you **AGREED** with the following survey items and 0 points if you **DISAGREED**. Next, add the points under each heading. The greatest total indicates the way you usually prefer to work in class.

**INDEPENDENTLY**

- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. \_\_\_\_\_
- 19. \_\_\_\_\_
- 22. \_\_\_\_\_
- 24. \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

**WITH A PARTNER**

- 5. \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. \_\_\_\_\_
- 10. \_\_\_\_\_
- 12. \_\_\_\_\_
- 15. \_\_\_\_\_
- 18. \_\_\_\_\_
- 21. \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

**WITH A GROUP**

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 9. \_\_\_\_\_
- 11. \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. \_\_\_\_\_
- 23. \_\_\_\_\_
- 25. \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

## 课堂偏好调查

导言：这项调查至于帮助您和您的老师更好的了解您选择课堂作业的倾向。请阅读每一项，参照您过去和现在的经历，勾出您（相对）同意或（相对）不同意选项。

- |   | 同意    | 不同意   |
|---|-------|-------|
| 1. 当我独自做作业的时候，我感到很困难或无聊。                  | _____ | _____ |
| 2. 当我独自做作业时（而不是和学习伙伴或小组时，我做的更好。           | _____ | _____ |
| 3. 比起跟小组一起回答问题或是解决问题，我更喜欢分享我的见解或经验。       | _____ | _____ |
| 4. 我独自工作时，学的更专心也更快更好。                     | _____ | _____ |
| 5. 比起多人团队，我比较喜欢和一个学习伙伴合作。                 | _____ | _____ |
| 6. 大多时候我喜欢独自学习而不是和一个伙伴或一群人学习。             | _____ | _____ |
| 7. 比起跟小组一起回答问题或是解决问题，我更喜欢分享我的见解或经验。       | _____ | _____ |
| 8. 当我和一个伙伴或一群人工作时而不是自己完成，我时常觉得很困难或是在浪费时间。 | _____ | _____ |
| 9. 当我和一个小团队合作时，我学到更多也能把作业做得更好。            | _____ | _____ |
| 10. 大多数时候我愿意和一个伙伴学习而非独自一人。                | _____ | _____ |
| 11. 大多数时候我更愿意和小团队学习而非和一个合作伙伴或是独自一人。       | _____ | _____ |
| 12. 当我和一个伙伴学习时，我学到更多也能把作业做得更好。            | _____ | _____ |
| 13. 在能选择合作伙伴的前提下，我更倾向选择同班同学。              | _____ | _____ |

14. 通常，我更乐意导师帮我们选择合作伙伴。

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

15. 通常，我认为与一个伙伴在课堂学习比独自一人更有趣也有效。

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

16. 我喜欢与有不同文化背景的团队合作。

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

17. 我希望我们每个人在课堂都有均等的机会进行团队合作。

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

18. 我认为与一个伙伴在课堂完成学习任务更加有效。

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

19. 我希望不要在课堂上有太多的团队合作。

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

20. 我倾向跟与我有相同背景的人合作。

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

21. 我希望在课堂上有均等机会与一个伙伴合作。

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

22. 基本上我希望老师布置给我们可以独自完成的作业。

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

23. 通常，我认为团队合作比独自完成更加高效、有趣。

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

24. 通常，我认为团队合作是浪费时间。

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

25. 当我和团队合作完成课堂任务时，我感到任务完成的更多更快。

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

如果您同意，请填写 1 分。如果您不同意，请填写 0 分。请将每一竖行的分数相加，最高分则是您在此项调查中的偏好。

独立完成

与一个伙伴合作

与团队合作

2. \_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_

8. \_\_\_\_

12. \_\_\_\_

11. \_\_\_\_

19. \_\_\_\_

15. \_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_

22. \_\_\_\_

18. \_\_\_\_

23. \_\_\_\_

24. \_\_\_\_

21. \_\_\_\_

25. \_\_\_\_

总分 \_\_\_\_

总分 \_\_\_\_

总分 \_\_\_\_