

September 2014

# A Case Study on the Globalizing English Language Curriculum in One Chinese College -- How Western Pedagogies Are Adapted and Adopted in the Classroom

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Education

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A CASE STUDY ON THE GLOBALIZING ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM IN  
ONE CHINESE COLLEGE

HOW WESTERN PEDAGOGIES ARE ADAPTED AND ADOPTED IN THE  
CLASSROOM

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

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Faculty of Education

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
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London, Ontario, Canada  
August 2014

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## **Abstract**

Globalization intensifies international educational transfer; regional knowledge, values, and pedagogies flow across nations. Due to the unequal relations of power and influence between nations, Chinese educators typically favor knowledge and pedagogies from Western developed countries. Without enough careful consideration of the local context(s), undesirable learning effects appear to be generated. This study is motivated by the desire to enhance understanding on how Western knowledge and pedagogical practices could more optimally meet local college Chinese students' complex English language learning needs. To illuminate what actually happens in the processes of adoption and adaptation of Western language, knowledge, and pedagogy, I examined English language pedagogies in one Chinese college. I employed multi-staged interviews with six Chinese English language teachers and a small-scale survey for another seventeen participant-teachers. My study explores limits and possibilities for a non-coercive relationship between East and West, bottom-up influences, and more sensitivity and reflexivity in international educational transfer. It finds that Western knowledge as the curriculum content and Western pedagogy need to be adapted and modified according to students' uneven English language foundations, accustomed learning habits, learning goals and heterogeneous identities related to their socio-economic backgrounds.

Key words: Western pedagogy, English language pedagogy, international educational transfer, local contexts, Chinese college, transnational education

## **Acknowledgements**

This thesis involves support and encouragement from my supervisor, family and friends. I would like to give my deepest appreciation to Dr. Paul Tarc, my supervisor, who has provided kind support and valuable guidance for my whole thesis. Without his precious suggestions and patience, I couldn't have accomplished the thesis with its present quality. In addition, I would like to thank my committee member, Dr. Julie Byrd Clark, who gave me precise suggestions on English language teaching. Further, I also express my gratitude to my friends, who have shared their personal experience in my research. It is my honor to hear your points of view and stories about your personal teaching experiences. Finally, my thanks go to my dear parents, husband and son; they have given me emotional support during the process of writing the thesis.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

This chapter gives a brief introduction to the study. It begins with an overview of the background context in which the study is conducted as a rationale for my research. The purposes of the research are then defined. The chapter proceeds with explanations of the researcher's positioning, the hypothesis, the significance and some key terms of the study. At the end of the chapter, there is a brief summary and a chapter-by-chapter outline, illustrating how the thesis is organized.

#### **Background and rationale for the study**

In recent years, globalization seems an irreversible trend in modern society. Giddens (1990) has defined globalization as “the intensification of world-wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away” (p. 27). Globalization gives particular visibility to education, which is linked into the flow of knowledge, technology, and cultures (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 22-23). These are having impact on second language teaching (Block & Cameron, 2002). For instance, through textbooks, academic journals, teacher training programs, professional organizations, and high-tech facilities, Western language pedagogies are available to less developed regions (Canagarajah, 2002, p. 135). In my thesis, I use this term “the West” as a short form acknowledging that the West is a



construct. Regarding the geographical locations, Deng (2011) and Kachru (1992) pointed out that Western countries include developed countries in North America (USA and Canada), Europe (e.g. England and Ireland), Australia and New Zealand. “The East” in this thesis is referred to developing countries in Asia, such as China. The terms ‘developing’ and ‘developed’ suggest that “countries have achieved development while others are still in the process” (Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2008, p. 52). These terms not only refer to stages of Capitalist development and moving from authoritarian systems to democratic government, but also are also implicated in imperialist histories, as Western countries developed on the back of their colonial peripheries (Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2008, pp. 54, 106; Carnoy, 1974). Said (1978) explained the binary between the East and the West:

Orientalism as a form of thought for dealing with the foreign has typically shown the altogether regrettable tendency of any knowledge based on such hard-and-fast distinctions as ‘East’ and ‘West’: to channel thought into a West and East compartment. Because this tendency is right at the center of Orientalist theory, practice and values found in the West, the sense of Western power over the Orient is taken for granted as having the status of scientific truth. ( p. 46)

Andreotti (2011) emphasized that, for Said, the “Orient” represents Europe’s “other”, a political vision of reality that produces a binary between “them” (the Orient or the East) and “us” (Europe or the West). The stereotypes advanced in this binary affirmed the superiority of the West and the inferiority of the East. Nevertheless, postcolonial theory

emphasizes binaries (the East and the West), which distort the historical and ongoing relations and transfer between societies, such that the West already includes the East and vice-versa. Bhabha (1994) maintained that all cultures are already hybrid and proposed the recognition of this hybridity as the starting point for postcolonial analysis. The distinctions between East and West are becoming vague, though some typical traditions of different regions and communities may still exist. This study is more focused on the more recent intensification of Western-based “best practices” circulating globally, where orientalist ideology continues to have influence. My use of the ‘West’ is also quite literal, given the intensification of educational transfer from Europe and Anglo-Western countries to Asian countries. The dominant social imaginary of globalization and West to East transfer appears to be neo-liberalism, which emphasizes marketization, competition and efficiency (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Chinese universities and colleges employ different strategies to compete with each other in developing students with high English competencies who are seen as favorable in the global market. Marcus (2004) mentioned that “globalization is of several types: economic, political, and cultural” (p. 135). Some theorists argued that cultural globalization<sup>1</sup> involves the imposition of cultural uniformity, rather than an explosion of cultural exchange (Philippe, 2003). In this process, the positioning of English as a global language, is highly emphasized in Chinese higher

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<sup>1</sup> Marcus (2004) pointed out the communicational and cognitive layers of culture globalization. The first layer is related to the emergence of the new paradigm of information, communication and computation. The latter is a consequence of the globalization of the cognitive processes, characterized by the increasing interaction of different fields of knowledge and by the emergence of the so-called universal paradigms, such as space, information, communication, logic, language, model, symbol.

education for the cultivation of “global citizens” to accelerate foreign trade and promote economic growth (Chang, 2006). Further, Yang, Zhang and Wang (2006) argued that developing countries in the third world prefer to assimilate to Western worldview(s), values, and knowledge. Kraidy (2002) claimed that “Western technology is depicted as an instrument that undermines censorship in non-Western countries, and also as a fetish as Western slickness, modernity, and creativity to which foreign audiences aspire” (p. 325). He gave an example that “Hollywood is described as a source of learning, elevating the level of sophistication of worldwide views- foreign audiences are claimed to have developed a more refined artistic taste as a result of their exposure to American movies” (p. 327). Kubota (2002) also maintained that “[w]hile globalization projects the image of diversity, it also implies cultural homogenization influenced by global standardization of economic activities and a flow of cultural goods from the center to the periphery” (p. 13). Latouche (1996) claimed that “a fundamentally Western ideology and culture, best exemplified by the modern United States, is becoming the norm around the world” (cited in Block & Cameron, 2002, pp. 3-4). Though China's economy is growing very rapidly, China is still a developing country (“China Overview”, 2014). Since 1977, educational theories have been selected mostly from developed countries such as the US, the UK, Canada and were adapted to the special context of China in government educational planning reforms (Deng, 2011). Since 1997, the Chinese government has launched a series of basic education reforms. Those reforms have reoriented the system from traditional curricular orientations towards a focus on some knowledge and skills that are

perceived as requisite for globalized knowledge and information-saturated economies. The Chinese government has shifted the emphasis of teacher-centered pedagogy to student autonomy and from knowledge transmission to knowledge construction (Liu & Fang, 2009). The main emphases of Western pedagogies are teachers' professionalism and autonomy, learning based on students' interest and needs, active learning, and egalitarian relations (Spring, 2009). Zuhai (2012) and Spada (2007) emphasized that English language pedagogies focus on students' learning needs, responsibilities, and practical communicative English skills. I discuss the main qualities of Western pedagogy in Chapter two under the heading of "Main qualities of Western educational modes". By absorbing and utilizing Western teaching methods, Chinese teachers and students will get in touch with the interactive and heuristic teaching methods to realize complementary advantages (Xie, Hou & Li, 2011, p. 52). However, Wu (2011) highlighted a concern that "the Western educational system that accompanied Western knowledge became the only legitimate system of study and schooling" (p. 570). Many thousands of teachers and students in higher education in China have been affected by the adoption of Western English pedagogy with insufficient research into how such practices are or might be re-contextualized to optimize student learning. This study aims to offer insights into ways in which Western practices could deliver optimal results to meet the local students' complex English language learning needs due to their historic-cultural, geographical and socio-economic backgrounds.

If careful considerations are not given to the local context in English language

teaching, some undesirable learning effects may be generated (Ouyang, 2004), such as students' confusion in knowledge understanding, students' criticism for teachers' irresponsibility in those Western liberal class activities, and their resistance to participate because of the lack of interests and anxiety. The effects of importing Western English pedagogies and knowledge are typically less than desirable (Wei, 2007) for the following reasons: Chinese students' diverse levels of English proficiency, their English learning motivations that are related to the present academic and future career and life needs, their varied socio-economic and geographical backgrounds, and their language learning histories under dominant instructional modes and learning habits (Lu, 2011, p. 80). For example, one of the national cultural learning characteristics of Chinese students (Lu, 2008) are influenced by the dominant traditional Confucian values of modesty and implicitness; some Chinese students often prefer to observe silently and be more obedient to teachers instead of speaking out in class, questioning the teacher or having discussions with their classmates. Some of them may feel nervous when they are under the pressure to engage actively in Western liberal style classes<sup>2</sup> (pp. 80-81). Further, Ouyang (2004) and Hu (2003) both emphasized the hierarchical relationship between Asian teachers and students, which means students are accustomed to teachers' role as the authority or as master in English language classes. Ouyang also highlighted how Chinese university students prefer serious and systematic language learning modes rather than some Western

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<sup>2</sup>For Ouyang, "Western liberal style classes" are characterized by student-centered teaching and learning, a humanistic approach, and practical learning (Ouyang, 2004, p. 121).

liberal approaches, like games, which make them feel like children. Additionally, scholars like Hu (2003), Wu (2010) and Hayhoe and Mundy (2008) have mentioned the differences in Chinese students' English proficiencies and access to Western knowledge and pedagogies between students from wealthy developed areas and their counterparts from rural and distant areas. Further, Fu and Ma (2012) pointed out the substandard English language learning facilities and resources for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Chinese college students from disadvantaged backgrounds may not only be less competent in English, but also less aware of the cultures, habits and pedagogies of Western developed countries and thereby with fewer internal resources to support their English learning. The lack of access to educational resources results in their reliance on the teacher's instruction as the main source to obtain new knowledge. Generally speaking, Canagarajah (2002) asserted that learning strategies may differ from student to student according to their personal and community-based style of learning. More sensitivity needs to be given to the context in language teaching pedagogy (p. 142).

With the present development of China's economy and greater openness to the Western world, more educators in China are thinking critically about how to apply and modify Western knowledge and pedagogies in more sensible ways to meet the learning needs of the local students (Deng, 2011; Liu & Fang, 2009; Hu, 2003; Ouyang, 2004). This study aims to examine the conditions under which the adoption and adaptation of certain Western practices deliver more desirable results as attuned to complex local contexts (Philips & Schweisfurth, 2008, p. 20). I have implemented a case study as it

provides a unique example of real people in real situations that enable us to understand ideas more precisely (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). I selected a technical and vocational college, which accepts secondary school graduates from different regions of China with diverse socio-economic backgrounds. I had worked as an English language teacher in this college before; so, most of the teachers in my research are my former colleagues. I received the dean's permission to conduct research in the English program of that college. To start, I interviewed six of my former colleagues. I also surveyed the remaining teachers in the English department to triangulate the sources of data and verify my findings in the interviews. My research focuses on teachers' understandings and perspectives. Students are not involved in my study and admittedly their perspectives might be different from those of their teachers. My research is based on a discursive and constructive epistemology, which emphasizes that knowledge is constructed in a relational process. One of the analytic aims of this study is to unpack taken-for-granted assumptions of reality (Andreotti, 2011, p. 88).

### **Research purpose**

The broad purposes of my study are: 1) to illuminate current English language pedagogy in Chinese higher education due to the pursuit of "global" best practices, and 2) to explore the extent, limits and possibilities of Western educational transfer in supporting Chinese university and college students' learning. My research "emphasis is placed on [generating] knowledge that is useful in improving" (Cohen, Manion &

Morrison, 2011, p. 37) the English language studies of Chinese students with diverse needs. However, my approach is not instrumental; the knowledge generated may ultimately provide more implications rather than direct applications or correctives.

### **Researcher's positioning**

In this study, I position myself as a beginning researcher, an experienced Chinese English language teacher who wants to investigate some concerns and tensions arising from her personal teaching experiences and a graduate student who has experienced various challenges and cultural shock during her studies in a Canadian university. During my eight years English language teaching at the Chinese college under study, I had encountered some awkward situations whereby school administrators had convinced us that some Western pedagogies are so effective and advanced. However, those “advanced” knowledge and pedagogies did not generate desirable students’ learning results in the actual situation. My research focuses on the English language curriculum so Western knowledge in this thesis signifies those culture, customs, social habits and practices in Western developed countries that overlap with the English language curriculum. Similarities and differences may coexist in Western and Chinese knowledge. I always think about whether, how and to what extent that Western knowledge and pedagogies can be used to facilitate students’ English language learning.

After I arrived in Canada and studied in a Western university, I was unfamiliar with Western knowledge and pedagogies in the first few months. I felt very nervous



during the transition period. I recalled that when I had the policy course, sometimes I was lost in the unfamiliar learning content and flexible class modes that the teacher had used. I experienced constant pain in my stomach because of the panic. Through hard work and persistence, I received good academic grades after the first term; nevertheless, some curriculum content and pedagogies continued to make me uncomfortable. I felt better after I went through the hard transition period. Further, I also want to mention that the teaching styles of Canadian teachers vary a lot. Most of the classes are very westernized, in which constant interactions and various class activities are involved. I remembered that in some courses, students dominated the whole class, while teachers talked less. Nevertheless, there still exist some professors who like to use teacher-dominant instructions as the main class modes. My former experience in China and present study in Canada have inspired my passion to conduct this research on how Western knowledge and pedagogies can be used in the English language curriculum in China to help local students who may face similar challenges as me.

### **Research questions and hypotheses**

Given their significance in thoroughly understanding and interpreting the possibilities and limits of Western educational transfer in the English curriculum in China, I raise the following four main research questions:

1. What are some of the dominant representations of English language pedagogies being received under the globalization of Chinese higher education?

2. How do teachers and administrators understand and interpret Western knowledge and pedagogies as external pressures?
3. How do these pressures impact upon teachers' practices and students' learning?
4. What forms of English language curriculum content and pedagogies are most productive<sup>3</sup> for students from diverse backgrounds after they enter into higher education?

**Hypotheses:**

Globalization has accelerated flows of Western knowledge and practices into Chinese higher education, which has promoted the development and progress of English language education. Western language pedagogies appear to be liberal, student-centered, and progressive. The promotion and expanded opportunities for English language education and Western pedagogies likely produce positive outcomes, but they also come with complications and constraints that sometimes constrain teachers' practices and students' learning. On the one hand, teachers may face various pressures to use Western knowledge and pedagogies due to its status. On the other hand, local pressures dictate how the teacher must respond in the day-to-day. Consequently, pressures to adopt educational practices for the pursuit of so-called "advanced" Western educational

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<sup>3</sup> By "productive" I mean those approaches that best facilitate students' English language learning according to the goals of the courses and the aspirations of the students.

practices may produce a range of effects including such undesirable learning effects as the following: student confusion, teacher or student resistance, and students' lack of interest in English language learning or learning itself, etc. Chinese English language teachers may need to re-conceptualize how to use Western knowledge and pedagogies more sensibly and productively, which requires constant adaptations and modifications that are based on students' disparate economic, social and cultural identities.

### **Significance of my study**

Globalization is associated with the technological development in transport, communications and data processing, which creates a partial collapse of boundaries within national, cultural and political spaces (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). When borrowing knowledge, values and practices from the West, failures to “understand the other nation’s point of view can bring about in the fomenting of discord” (Meras, 1932, p. 251). Philips and Schweisfurth in 2008 emphasized that “it is important for comparativists to use their expertise in research to full effect to test the feasibility of the transfer of ideas in question and then to analyze what happens as the stages of its adoption and adaptation evolve” (p. 98).

My study examines how the pressures from the Western knowledge and pedagogies are and might be re-conceptualized by Chinese educators and administrators in a flexible way attuned to the local Chinese college students learning motivations, cultural learning habits and other needs, which are closely related to their diverse social,

family and educational backgrounds. I will also consider the transferability of my findings to practices of educational transfer and adaptation in other contexts.

### **Definitions of key term**

Definitions of the following terms are meant to help readers better understand this thesis:

Globalization: Jenson and Santos (2000, p. 11) proposed the following definition of globalization, which is “ a process by which a given local condition or entity succeeds in traversing borders and extending its reach over the global and, in doing so, develops the capacity to designate a rival social condition or entity as local” (cited in Stromquist, 2002, p. 3). Stromquist (2002) also mentioned that globalization has “multiple dimensions—economic, technological and political—all of which spill into culture and affect in all- encompassing ways the kinds of knowledge that are created, assigned merit, and distributed” (p. 3). My study involves how, why and to what extent knowledge and pedagogies of Western developed countries are flowing across global borders to the English language curriculum in China. Tarc (2012) emphasized that “globalization is more than a set of material (macro) processes (and more than a top-down neoliberal ideology), having entered into the social imaginary of individuals across many cultures and societies” (pp. 5-6). Here he is signaling that globalization also works from the bottom up as it is taken up by individuals, as English language teachers and learners, in their particular contexts. In my research, I address the concern about how global

economic, social and cultural ideologies and practices have reached and influenced the academic studies of college students, professional practices of teachers and educational administration.

Neo-liberalism: Shamir (2008, p. 3) defined neo-liberalism as “a complex, often incoherent, unstable, and even contradictory set of practices that are organized around a certain imagination of the ‘market’ as a basis for the universalization of market-based social relations, with the corresponding penetration in almost every single aspect of our lives of the discourse, and/or practice of commodification, capital-accumulation and profit-making”. Stromquist (2002) argued that neo-liberalism emphasizes “a development model based on the hegemony of the market and the role of the state as a key supporter of market decision” (p. 7)

Educational transfer: In the field of comparative education, ‘foreign influences’ have been studied through ‘educational transfer’ (Beech, 2006). Beech (2006) further defined educational transfer as “the movement of educational ideas, institutions or practices across international borders” (p. 2).

Global or local: Anderson-Levitt (2012) concluded that global refers to “the movement of people and ideas or things, which travel from *one locality* to another and require translation in the new setting” (p. 442). Schriewer (2004) used “ ‘local agency’ to refer to ‘regional’ level, to the ‘regional’ level, to ‘a group or nation’, or to socio-historical ‘contexts’ in general” (cited in Anderson-Levitt, 2012, p. 442).

Curriculum: Leask (2008) raised a more than holistic and complex view of

curriculum, which includes “content, pedagogy, assessment and competencies; planned and unplanned exercises; intention and actuality” (p. 12). I use this holistic view of curriculum to implement my further research on the English language education.

Multicultural awareness: multicultural awareness includes “open-mindedness and nonprejudiced attitudes in interacting with people with diverse racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds. These qualities encourage acceptance of unfamiliar beliefs as well as appreciation of foreign customs and artifacts” (Kubota, 2004, p. 31).

Motivation: Brown (1994) defines motivation as “the extent to which you make choices about (a) goals to pursue and (b) the effort you will devote to that pursuit” (p. 34). He highlights that education involves both extrinsic (e.g. parental expectations and test and exams) and intrinsic motivation (e.g. self-esteem, self-actualization, acceptance).

Discursive epistemology and practices: discursive epistemology and practices signify that all truth and realities are discursively located. Those truth and realities are tied to specific social, cultural and historical local contexts. Therefore knowledge is constructed in a relational process (Andreotti, 2011, p. 88). In this thesis, discursive practices means that realities appear to be constructed through the negotiations between educators and the constantly changing local context.

Non-coercive relationship/practice in education: This kind of practice means that educators listen to local students’ voices to understand their motivations rather than impose educators’ own vision of what kinds of knowledge are needed for learners and how those knowledge should be taught (Canagarajah, 2005, p. 935).

### **Summary and the structure of the thesis**

This chapter introduces the aims and background of my research and provides a set of definitions of the key terms that will appear throughout this thesis. The purpose of my study is to illuminate the limits and possibilities of Western pedagogies and English language curriculum content in Chinese higher education in a globalizing world. Local context is the main concern for educational actors' response to Western knowledge and pedagogies as external pressures, which will be the level I focus on through my case study. The results from my study may provide insights into how school administrators and educators adopt and adapt Western knowledge and pedagogies to better support students' English language learning.

This thesis is comprised of five chapters. Following this Introduction, Chapter Two reviews the relevant literature. Chapter Three elaborates the methodological approaches of the study and provides a rationale for their use. Chapter Four presents the findings of three turns of interviews, surveys and a follow-up turn interviews. The last chapter discusses the results, addresses the implications, raises limitations of the study, and points to some areas for further research.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature review**

The literature review is to set out the key issues in the field to be explored, which identify gaps that need to be researched (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 121). Many journal articles and published books advocate the effectiveness and usefulness of Western knowledge and pedagogies in the English language curriculum in China. Relatively little attention is given to the learning habits and needs of domestic university and college students, which results in some failures and ineffectiveness in students' English learning. Scholars like Wu (2011) and Liu and Fang (2009) have criticized the over-use of Western knowledge and pedagogies in China. I am interested in the flexible uses of Western knowledge, cultures and pedagogies in the English language curriculum attuned to the local context including Chinese students' complex geographical, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. My literature review is comprised of five dimensions upon which my study is built: (1) opportunities and challenges for the English curriculum and pedagogies in Chinese higher education under the influence of globalization; (2) main qualities of Western educational modes; (3) diverse concerns given the national and local contexts of English education; (4) how pedagogies are adapted to local contexts; and (5) socio-cultural dimensions of English language learning in the global context.



### **Framing global/comparative studies**

My examination of globalization and its influence on the English language curriculum and pedagogies in Chinese higher education is guided by postcolonial theory. Post-colonial theory “examines the after-effects, or continuation, of ideologies and discourses of imperialism, domination and repression, value system (e.g. the domination of western values and the delegitimization of non-western values), their effects on the daily lived experiences of participants” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 45). Stuart Hall in 1996 stated that post-colonialism consists of “a disruption of the domination of western ways of thinking and acting, a dominance that commenced with colonial expansion, conquest, and homogenization” (cited in Ninnes & Burnett, 2004, p. 183). Said (1978) foregrounded the heterogeneity in post-colonial society, the resistance to marginalization of groups within them and construction of identities in a post-colonial world. Yang, Zhang and Wang (2006) argued that post-colonialism examines globalization from the point of view of (de)colonization to further point out new arrangements of orientalizations and the cultural hegemony of the West to the East. Yang et al. reaffirmed Said and Bhabha’s “cultural ‘hybridity’ strategy” (p. 283), which tries to blend Eastern and Western cultures through dialogue between the East and the West to fight against cultural hegemony. Brady (1997) emphasized that in the post-colonial period it is important to “break down cultural divides and create a more equitable and harmonious relationship” (p. 418). He emphasized “the struggle over power, over what counts as knowledge and intellectual pursuit, over what is taught and how it is taught” (p.

416). Questions of power, hierarchy, directions of global flows are important given my focus on the take up of Western English pedagogy by a developing country. With a postcolonial lens, I am careful to examine how Western knowledge and pedagogy are influencing the present English language curriculum in Chinese higher education.

Bourdieu (1991) conceptualized language itself is a kind of symbolic power, which shapes people's vision of the world (p. 170). Globalization heightens the uses of English language as economic commodity. English, in many developing countries represents a kind of linguistic commodity with an exchange value in the global market (Block & Cameron, 2002, p. 7). Phillipson's theory of linguistic imperialism (1992, 1998) also suggests that "language-particularly English—is the means par excellence for economic and political domination by the West"(cited in Talbot, Atkinson, & Atkinson, 2003, p. 272). Boyle (1997, p. 169) commented that "English- under the innocuous guise of a helpful language for business and travel, has become a potent weapon for cultural and economic domination" (as cited in Talbot et al., 2003, p. 273). From the perspectives of the scholars mentioned above, English helps promote the dominant position and power of Western knowledge, culture and pedagogies in the contemporary world. Kachru (1992) put forward "concentric circles", which classifies countries, such as UK, Canada, the United States , Australia and New Zealand as inner circle nations. Kachru further noted that these inner circle nations can develop norms of English and claim the ownership rights of English. China belongs to the expanding circles or periphery community who acts like the followers in the use of English. The ranking of the circles exerts power over

not only the use of English, but also culture and norms in English language education (Mooney et al., 2011). Canagarajah (2002) adds:

Just as the technologically and economically developed nations of the West (or centre) hold unfair monopoly over less developed (or periphery) communities in industrial products, similar relations characterize the marketing of language teaching methods. The dominance of centre applied linguistic circles is helped by their resources for conducting sophisticated research with hi-tech facilities and then popularizing the knowledge globally through their publishing networks and academic institutions. (p. 135)

Canagarajah further emphasized that “[c]entre methods may make an assault on alternative styles of thinking, learning, and interacting preferred by other communities. They may limit critical thinking and impose homogeneous values and practices” (p. 136).

However, China is not a passive victim of the ‘hegemony’ of global English. Moreover, simply rejecting Western knowledge and pedagogy may not be a wise or feasible option. When referring to the situation in China, Deng (2011) argued that there exists valuable knowledge, cultures, and pedagogies in both China and Western countries. Noah (1983) reminded scholars that:

[t]he authentic use of comparative study resides not in wholesale appropriation and propagation of foreign practices but in careful analysis of the conditions under which certain foreign practices deliver desirable results, followed by consideration of ways to adapt those practices to conditions found at home (p.

12).

Further, complexities exist in the learning needs of Chinese universities and college students, such as their unbalanced English foundations, unequal access to Western knowledge and pedagogies, etc. English language curriculum setting and the choices of pedagogies could be an interpretative and transformational constructive process. Where best practices from the West to East are imposed, there will likely be undesirable effects on both teachers and students, such as students' low motivation in English language learning and resistance in participation, teachers' some resistance when encountering students' inactive reactions and chaotic classrooms in some Western teaching approaches, appear to be generated (Ouyang, 2000). I discuss this issue further in the chapter four and five.

My research is also based on theories of constructivist learning. Constructivists “such as Piaget (1954), Dewey (1929), and Vygotsky (1978) all maintained that students arrive in any learning situation with a range of prior knowledge and experience that influences how they respond to new information” (as cited in Hyslop-Margison & Strobel, 2008, p. 78). Cummins (2007) argued that first language and prior knowledge can function as stepping stones to scaffold more accomplished performance in the second language. “Words and ideas do not have inherent meanings apart from those created and negotiated by people in particular contexts” (Hyslop-Margison & Strobel, 2008, p. 81). Social constructivism supports the idea that knowledge is a cultural or negotiated product generated in the process of cooperation and negotiation with others. Language also

represents a social construction. According to Dewey (1956), education is a process of “continuous reconstruction” (p. 11) which means learning is based on and extends from one’s prior knowledge and former experience. Sutinen (2008) claimed that this reconstruction process by nature is “the educational activity in which an effort is made to connect the child’s own world of experiences to the educational contents conveyed by the educator” (p. 9). According to constructivism, which emphasizes the constant interpretative process (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 18), the extent of Western educational transfer may be unfixed and always change according to the continually developing local contexts and dynamics of external flows.

### **Globalization and its positive effects on English teaching in Chinese higher education**

In 2009, Spring mentioned that globalization of education “refers to the worldwide discussions, processes, and institutions affecting local educational practices and policies” (p. 1). Contemporary global discourses and trends have influenced the English education and policies in China profoundly. On the one hand, the development in English language education has been unprecedented due to China’s “reform and opening door” strategies and successful application to WTO (World Trade Organization) aimed at modernizing the country’s economy and at advancing geopolitical influence in the global world (Feng, 2009, pp. 86-89). Chang (2006) claimed that in order to cultivate qualified global citizens to accelerate foreign trade and promote economic growth, English as a

global language has been highly emphasized in Chinese higher education for more than twenty years. English education is highly emphasized by Chinese administrators, researchers and teaching practitioners (pp. 513-515). On the other hand, global advances in transportation, communication and information technology have generated global flows of ideas, practices, institutions, and people who interact with local population (Spring, 2009, p. 6). An important consequence is the “knowledge society”, which emphasizes that knowledge and skills are crossing country borders and into the marketplace (Stromquist, 2002, p. 15). This has affected English education in China, as more Western pedagogies and knowledge are available to Chinese teachers, students, and school administrators. Hayhoe and Mundy (2008) indicated that, since the 1930s, many Chinese scholars have taken great interest in learning progressive child-centered education promoted by Dewey and other educational leaders in American universities. In recent decades, more and more foreign engagements in higher education have brought about the “up-skills of the local workforce” (Ball, 2012, p, 128) in China. Through different forms of foreign engagements like training programs, cooperative educational programs and joint venture universities, Chinese teachers can get access to Western knowledge and various teaching methods (Ball, 2012) to apply to their English language teaching. According to Ball (2012), “the great pedagogy is potable, and educational quality is enhanced by international collaboration” (p. 123). Xie, Hou, and Li (2011) explained,

By absorbing foreign educational resources, utilizing advanced teaching methods

such as case teaching, class discussion, debate and demonstrative teaching, students will get in touch with and learn about the interactive and heuristic teaching methods adopted by foreign educational institutions and realize complementary advantages. (p. 52)

Many educational innovations and reforms are brought in under the influence of globalization, which result in the improvements in the quality of English education and more learning opportunities for students in higher education (Philips & Schweisfurth, 2008, pp. 42-46). Western knowledge and pedagogies are available and favored by teachers and students in the English curriculum in Chinese higher education, which leads to two questions. First, can Western knowledge and pedagogies facilitate Chinese students' engagement with English learning? For instance, some Western liberal educational models, like learner-centered pedagogies, are increasingly treated as the standard educational ideas worldwide. Bjork (2009) argued that Chinese education has changed from a focus on collective discipline to more individualized, student-centered approach to create a new generation (p. 266). These models "combine political concerns for democratization and rights with concerns for efficiency and value for money" (Carney, 2008, p. 68), which makes them so prevalent and standardized in different countries, including China. These Western educational ideas are regarded as the "best practices" and accepted knowledge in Chinese national educational arrangements (Carney, 2008, p. 72). The second question relates to whether Western models can respond to the English learning needs of Chinese students, which are closely related to the local cultural,

socio-economic and geographical contexts. These challenges are pressing for English education classes in Chinese colleges, which I discuss in the next part.

### **Challenges for the English curriculum and pedagogies of Chinese higher education under globalization**

Green (1997) stated that cultural globalization refers to “the emergence of the borderless world where national cultures are transformed by global communication and cultural hybridization” (cited in Tikly, 2001, p. 258). In this process, a key element of education like pedagogy becomes “a value-neutral transmission system rather than an expression of culture or locality” (Carney, 2008, p. 66). When referring to cultural globalization, scholars as Carnoy (1974) raised concerns that those who are most influential in the western metropole society control education. He explained that due to relations of dependency, underdeveloped countries are more likely to be involved in “cultural alienation” (p. 55), which means desired values and norms are taken from the Western metropolitan, not from the local experience. More recently, Nannes and Burnett suggested that “colonialism instills a sense of inferiority in the colonized” (2004, p. 186). China had once experienced the situation of semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. Different from other colonized countries in the third world, China had never been totally colonized by any single country. However, China had encountered the threat of being conquered by several different developed imperial countries, which to some extent, still results in the belief of Western superiority in the area of culture and knowledge (He,



2010).

Further, economic status is another decisive factor for academic knowledge production. Lo (2011) argued that universities of Western developed countries “occupy and control most of the means and resources of knowledge production, whereas those in the developing world can only play the role of consumer and follower in the global academia” (p. 209). Carney (2008) emphasized, “the ideologies of neoliberalism (with its focus on new economic relations) and liberalism (where the individual is centered in relation to the state) currently embedded in international reforms” (p.68). Carney also proclaimed that Western “advanced liberal” (p.69) knowledge and pedagogies are regarded by Chinese government as more efficient and effective strategies to improve the quality of education to achieve “glorious modernization” (p. 74) and help students compete in the global market. Since the late 1970s, the more liberal socio- political climate has allowed more Western pedagogies grafted on indigenous methods and other established pedagogies, which have influenced curriculum greatly in China (Adamson, 2004, p. 201). China, as a developing country, is less capable in the capacity to steer their education system (Ball, 2012, p. 139).

Many scholars in China have criticized the use of Western knowledge and pedagogies as best practices in China. Wu (2011) claimed that “the transformation of pedagogical discourse is perhaps the most pervasive: the Western education system that accompanied Western knowledge became the only legitimate system of study and schooling” (p. 570). Liu and Fang (2009) indicated that Chinese pedagogy is overly

driven by Western theories and far removed from actual school and classroom practices.

Teachers focus more on the use of Western knowledge in curriculum rather than students' responses, progress and diverse learning needs (pp. 408-410).

Through ethnographical longitudinal participant research, Ouyang (2004) provided detailed and convincing data from the voices of Chinese students, teachers and some foreign teachers, to explain the reasons why some “Western-imported advanced” (p. 138) educational modes, like communicative language teaching, cannot be applied successfully to the local Chinese education. He further argued that local students and teachers in Guangdong University of Foreign Studies criticized the more liberal-style English instructional modes of some Western foreign teachers, who were too arrogant to make any adjustments according to the local students' cultural learning habits and characteristics. For instance, some students mentioned that they need traditional teachers' systematic organization of the course, which includes detailed analysis and corrections of the mistakes in the English language used in class.

More and more scholars in recent years in China have realized and criticized the overuse of Western knowledge in curriculum. Will it result in the unwillingness to use Western knowledge and pedagogies in the future? My study investigates how teachers understand and respond to pressures of Western educational transfer.

### **Main qualities of Western educational modes**

As noted in the previous section, different scholars have emphasized that

Chinese educators and administrators prefer to use Western knowledge and pedagogies as the “best practices” in the English curriculum. What are the dominant common qualities of “advanced” Western knowledge and pedagogies? Spring (2008) indicated that the more liberal Western educational modes, such as the progressive educational model, focus on the following elements: teacher professionalism and autonomy, learning based on students’ interests and participation, active learning, protection of local language, and social justice (p. 18). Zuhai (2012) argued that the Western student-centered teaching is “the arrangement of the teaching experience focusing on the students' responsibilities and activities in the learning process which takes into consideration the students' interests, demands and needs”(p. 49). Spada (2007) claimed that the Western CLT(communitive language teaching) focuses on students’ practical English competencies, learning needs and interests. Savignon (2002, p. 3) emphasized that communicative language teaching puts the focus on the learner: “Learner communicative needs provide a framework for elaborating program goals in terms of functional competence”. Hiep (2007) further indicated that what CLT looks like in classroom practices might not be uniform as practices may vary depending on context, which “constructs the actual meaning of communicative competence as well as the tools to develop it” (p. 195). Nunan (1991) offered two important features of CLT, one of which emphasizes that the learner’s own experience is important to classroom learning. Another feature is that CLT links classroom language learning with language activation outside the classroom (p. 279).

From the above scholars’ perspectives, the emphases and some common

characteristics of those Western educational modes are the great flexibilities and constant adaptations according to the learning characteristics, interest and needs of the local students rather than the rigid copy of any instructional modes as best practices. Moreover, the learning content and class practices are related to students' life outside the class or the school. In my research, I have investigated teachers' perceptions of students' English learning needs and preferences of Chinese college students, which are closely tied to their past learning environments.

### **National and local contextual features shaping the adoption of English education**

Philips and Schweisfurth in 2008 suggested that it is “axiomatic to expect that comparativists will take into account the historic, cultural, social, economic” (p.12), geographical contexts in which educational phenomena are researched. Based on the studies of different scholars, such as Liu and Fang (2009), Ouyang (2004), Hu (2003), and Lu (2011), I will elaborate and analyze the English learning characteristics and requirements of Chinese college students from the following aspects, which provide the background and contextual foundation for my further research.

### **National economic development and its requirements for English education**

Beck in 1998 stated that today “an increasing number of employers seek multilingual professionals with knowledge of diverse cultural codes” (cited in Stier, 2004, p. 90). Kubota (2002) pointed out that “[s]imilar to the converging tendency towards

English in foreign language education, the model of English to emulate tends to be only the Inner Circle varieties of Anglo-English, particularly North American and British, rather than diverse varieties of World Englishes” (p. 21). Byrd Clark (2012) argued that “[w]ith globalization, immigration, new technologies, and the competitiveness of national and international markets, multilingualism is becoming the practical norm; it is a tool for local integration and international mobility” (p. 150). Liu and Fang in 2009 indicated that in the recent decade, China has opted for a globalized and market-oriented strategy to achieve its economic goals to maintain a fast-growing pace at an annual growth rate. The rapid economic growth is characterized by increasing industrialization, privatization, commodification of labor and so on. Jiang (2003) claimed that after its entry into the WTO (World Trade Organization), abundant multinational companies have poured into China, especially in the manufacturing fields in the coastal areas. Foreign invested companies and joint ventures urgently need a large amount of professional personnel who are proficient in English and able to work in a multicultural context with colleagues from different parts of the world.

According to the above analysis of the broad global and domestic economic contexts by different scholars, Chinese college students may not only need to be proficient in American or British English, but also possess the multicultural awareness, especially the knowledge about culture and norms of Inner Circle Western developed countries for future career needs. However, in the actual processes of Western knowledge transfer and English instructions, some local situations, such as students’ interest and

extent of familiarity with foreign cultures and knowledge, and their purpose in learning English still need to be fully considered.

### **National historic-cultural learning and instructional habits**

Hu (2003) has explained the most striking features in traditional Chinese learning: “the conceptualization of education [is] more as a process of knowledge accumulation than as a practical process of knowledge construction and use” (p. 306). Lu (2011) mentioned that English class instruction in China is more lecture-based and focuses on grammar, translation, and written exams, which means students’ communicative competencies are underdeveloped (pp. 80-81). Ouyang in 2004 maintained that most Chinese university students still rely on the traditional knowledge accumulation methods in English learning, which requires grammar analysis, intensive reading, note-taking and feedback for assignments from teachers. Through an ethnographical participant research, he found that more liberal Western pedagogies were not welcomed by Chinese university students who hoped to have a more systematic and serious teaching approach. Moreover, in traditional Chinese culture, learning encourages a hierarchical relationship between teachers and students (Hu, 2003). Ouyang (2004) claimed “Chinese students do not raise questions actively during class time, for they are concerned that both the teachers and they themselves might lose face” (p. 134). He further mentioned that Chinese teachers are prone to be the authoritarian figures in class lecturing, while more humanistic in after-class communications and instructions (p. 133).

LeVine (2001) described “ ‘cultural psychodynamics’ which refers to teachers’ culturally normative and divergent sense of self: that is simply ‘feel right’ to teach in certain ways as a fully acculturated member of a society” (cited in Bjork, 2009, p. 278). Influenced by the global political and economic structures, Chinese teachers are pushed to use Western-liberal style pedagogies, which are believed to be more effective. However, traditional culture still exerts a great influence on the overall curriculum planning and teaching as Chinese teachers are “resistant to change” (Bjork, 2009, p. 279). Carney in 2008 argued that in China, the reform of teaching methods encounters resistance from tradition:

Teacher-centered schooling represents a powerful cultural transmission system that is not easily broken by global or even national edicts.... The potential of the reform pedagogy is great, but it appears to be deeply undermined by another more established discourse of schooling as socialization for respect and conformity. (p. 82).

### **Family socio-economic factors**

Family socio-economic status largely determines students’ access to English cultural and language learning resources and the quality of English education. “The quantity and the nature of the schooling process can be and is used to maintain the hierarchical roles of different groups in the society” (Carnoy, 1974, p. 15). Philips and Schweisfurth (2008) stated that “poor children often receive a different education from

those of middle- and upper- class homes”(p. 74), especially in developing countries. Fu and Ma (2012) argued that compared to advantaged Chinese students, peers from economically disadvantaged families with lower social status have limited educational resources, such as extracurricular books, computers, and access to internet, to facilitate their English learning and acquisition of Western knowledge. Their research further observed that fewer communications between children and parents who are less educated result in students’ unwillingness to use English to express themselves in class. There have not been any effective reforms to tackle this problem.

### **Geographic and economic factors**

In most countries, there are “relatively developed area, and other areas which are less developed- and so regions of the same country may fall into different categories” (Philips & Schweisfurth, 2008, p. 52). Hu (2003) asserted that in China, the influence of socio-economic factors to education is closely related to the geographical location. There was “a great matter of concern for China, where modern schools were located in coastal areas and hinterland areas lagged far behind” (Hayhoe & Mundy, 2008, p. 7).

Hu (2003) argued that “in socially and economically advantaged areas, English materials which are not specially prepared for language teaching are also readily available” (p. 304). His report indicated that there exist sharp differences in students’ English proficiencies and their access to infrastructural resources, Western cultural knowledge and latest pedagogies worldwide between students from coastal areas, like



Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou and their peers from inland or distant areas. Hu made an analysis of the “professional training and competences of teachers working in different regions” (p. 305), which shows that prosperity and better living standard in coastal and urban areas have helped schools attract the most qualified English teachers who can either accept training overseas or attend other professional trainings. Feng (2009) also claimed that Chinese students from coastal regions, such as Shanghai, Beijing and Guangdong, have various opportunities to learn English and get in touch with Western knowledge and pedagogies through the latest technologies or educational programs (pp. 85, 92). By contrast, Wu (2010) mentioned that students from rural and distant areas have fewer contacts with English and Western knowledge before they enter into higher education due to the lack of sufficient learning resources, access to materials, and opportunities. The dominant learning modes are traditional ‘Asian’ rote learning and reliance on teachers’ Chinese dominant instructions in English class (p. 20). It takes more time for them to be familiar with Western knowledge, language and educational modes. Hu stated that “the less developed areas, especially rural places, have a much lower proportion of qualified teachers” (p. 305). Due to the lack of financial support, a very large proportion of teachers in these areas have not received any professional training”. From the empirical studies of different scholars, there exist disparities between students from wealthy coastal and urban areas and poor distant inland or rural areas.

What kind of English language curriculum and instructions need to be given to students from diverse backgrounds after they enter into higher education? This is a

worthwhile question to ponder deeply. In my thesis, I examine and discuss how teachers adapt and could adapt English language curriculum based on students' English foundations, students' learning status, learning goals, etc.

### **How pedagogies are adapted to local contexts**

As noted above, complexities exist in the Chinese students' academic, social and cultural backgrounds. In educational transfer, the specific local contexts should be taken into serious consideration for the understanding of how changes can be undertaken. Bai (2011) pointed out in comparative studies, "a common danger is a combination of frivolous generalizations and particularizations"(p. 616). Bache in 1968 explained that,

Differences in political and social organization, in habits and manners, require corresponding changes to adapt a system of education to the nation; and without such modifications, success in the institutions of one country is no guarantee for the same result in those of another. (p. 124)

Spring (2009) emphasized that local school officials and teachers shouldn't simply dance to the tune of global flows and networks. They need to give meanings to global flow of ideas and practices through the lens of their own cultural perspectives to adapt global educational policies and practices to the local conditions accordingly. Philips and Schweisfurth (2008) suggested researchers experience and investigate multiple contexts to "draw on a wider repertoire of observations, phenomena and explanations" (p. 55).

Molly Lee (2000) advised that "the impact of globalization on policies as well as content

and process of education should take into account the sociopolitical and economic context of each nation” (cited in Tarc, 2012, p. 13). Regarding western knowledge borrowing and transferability in China, Deng (2011) suggested,

In a non-Western country, it is inextricably associated with confrontations and competitions between Western educational thought and indigenous educational tradition. Both Western thinking and indigenous tradition have to undergo a process of modification, adaptation, and transformation in a particular socio-cultural context, creating hybrid kinds of pedagogy. (p. 561)

In my thesis, I have explored both the benefits and challenges that Chinese students encounter in Western pedagogy and curriculum content through the eyes of their teachers. Those challenges are closely tied to their former learning habits, English foundations, their familiar context, and English learning motivations. Under international educational transfer, English language teachers need to be sensitive to the needs and challenges of the local Chinese students to make appropriate modifications.

### **Socio-cultural dimensions of English language learning in the global context**

Appadurai (1996) argued that globalization does not necessary imply homogenization; it is better understood as a “deeply historical, uneven and even localizing process” (cited in Pennycook, 2005, p. 33). Fairclough (2006) reoriented the concept of ‘deterritorialization’ in cultural globalization, which does not necessarily weaken the ties between culture and places, as ‘global culture’ may be taken up

differently in diverse settings. He further argued that people might perceive global events according to what is significant for their own routine experience (p. 24). Norton and Vanderheyden (2004) claimed that if educators do not take local social and cultural contexts seriously, they would run the risk of negating and silencing their students (pp. 204- 205). They further suggested that teachers “validate the knowledge that students bring with them to the classroom, knowledge that is constructed within the practice of students’ everyday lives outside the classroom” (p. 205). Pennycook (2005) advocated that in the global context, educators need to understand the spaces and cultures students inhabit. Bourdieu (1977) reminded us that language learning and teaching are part of social and cultural life as teachers and students are using language to understand and negotiate meanings and express feelings. Language practices are actions with a history, which requires the considerations of time, space, history and location (cited in Pennycook, 2010, p. 2). Lightbrown and Spada (1999) explained that socio-cultural factors are relevant to “the influences of intelligence, attitude, personality and individuality, motivations, learner preferences and age in second language learning” (cited in Behera & Patra, 2012, pp. 28-29). Finally, Byrd Clark, in her recent article in 2012, proposed “a sociolinguistics of multilingualism” (p. 144) that incorporates ethno-linguistic hybridity. Acknowledging ethno-linguistic hybridity could lead to the development of transformative language pedagogies that truly engage heterogeneity in classroom spaces.

Based on the respect of the local socio-cultural context, Brown (1994) also proclaimed that language and culture are intricately intertwined, which means that when

students successfully learn English, they also need to learn something of the foreign culture in the global context. Brown further emphasized that “the success with which learners adapt to a new cultural milieu will affect their language acquisition success” (p. 25). However, in the process of my studies of the literature contributions of other scholars, I have realized that the so-called ‘foreign culture’ might be creolized. There might not exist any “pure” cultures that just belong to any specific regions. Western cultures in China may already contain some Chinese local elements. Fairclough (2006) explained that the phenomenon of cultural hybridity, which means the “mingling of cultures from different territorial location” (p. 24). Discourse is an important facet of cultural deterritorialization and reterritorialization, which refers to how people experience new ways of representing aspects of the world, including aspects of their own direct experience (Fairclough, 2006, p. 24). Meanwhile, he stated that cultures are never pure; “power relations can structure such mixtures in ways which give certain cultural elements salience over others” (p. 24). This point of view is related to the choices of the cultural learning styles and curriculum content in daily English education in China. Through my interviews and surveys, I have inquired about the socio-cultural factors to understand the present English learning situations and needs of Chinese college students in a global context. My research explores teachers’ perceptions about the pressures, proper use, switch or creolization of local or Western culture and cultural learning habits in daily English instructions and classroom assignments.

## **Summary**

This chapter discusses the academic literature as a framework for my study. The key components of my literature review are as follows: opportunities and challenges for the English language curriculum in Chinese higher education under the influence of globalization, main qualities of Western educational modes, how pedagogies are adapted to local contexts and socio-cultural dimensions of English learning in the global context and diverse concerns of the national and local contexts. This chapter illustrates the contributions of diverse scholars, which have helped me to conceptualize my research study.

## Chapter 3

### Methods/Methodology

#### Overview of my research methods

Curricula are “rich and relational, recursive, rigorous with an emphasis on emergence, process epistemology and constructivist psychology” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 36). In the process of receiving and translating Western knowledge and pedagogies to the English curriculum, the dynamic conditions of the classroom as well as characteristics and learning needs of college students need to be taken into consideration. A Case study method was used in my research as it “provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories or principles” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 289). I have selected a college, which accepts secondary school graduates from different regions of China with diverse socio-economic backgrounds. My unit of analysis of this case is the English department at this college. To illuminate processes of adoption and adaptation of Western language, knowledge, values, and norms, I have used two research methods.

First, I employed qualitative interviews as my main research method. Cresswell (1998) mentioned that,

[Q]ualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The

researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting (p. 15).

Cresswell (2009) emphasized that “[q]ualitative researchers tend to collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study” (p. 175).

I interviewed six experienced English language teachers, as they possess direct understanding about how Western English language pedagogy is adopted and adapted in Chinese higher education. Since my goal is a hermeneutic, interpretive and constructive, I believe that the qualitative interview is appropriate as a method because it “provides in-depth, intricate and detailed meaning, actions, non-observable as well as observable phenomena, attitudes, intentions and behaviors” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 219). My investigation was also based on “thick descriptions”, which require data on meanings, interpretations of situations and unobserved factors (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 220). All my interview questions in some way address my four main research questions: 1. What are the dominant representations of English pedagogies being received under the globalization of Chinese higher education? 2. How do teachers and administrators understand and interpret Western knowledge and pedagogies as external pressures? 3. How do these pressures impact upon teachers’ practices and students’ learning? 4. What forms of English language curriculum content and pedagogies are most productive for students from diverse backgrounds after they enter into higher education?

In the second place, a small-scale survey was carried on within all teachers of English Department who did not participate in interviews to triangulate the source of data



and to verify or further qualify the findings in the qualitative interview. Morrison (1993) stated that surveys provide descriptive, inferential and explanatory information, which can be processed statistically. My main purpose was to analyze the data in the survey qualitatively to augment and qualify the findings from the interviews.

Based on the first round of interviews and the survey, I conducted a follow-up set of interviews to explore the pertinent issues more deeply and to member check on first round interviews where necessary.

### **What is case study?**

Verma and Mallick (1999) defined a case study as “a detailed study of an individual or a group – however that group may be defined – or an event”(p. 114). Nisbet and Watt (1984) claimed that a case study is “a specific instance that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle (as cited in Cohen et al., 2011, p. 289). Case study investigates the real-life, complex, dynamic interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 289). Case study recognizes many variables within a single case, which requires more than one research tool for data collection and many sources of evidence. A case study may blend numerical and qualitative data (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 289).

### **Strengths and limitations of case study**

The most important strength of case study is that researchers can observe effects

in real life contexts. Researchers may generate in-depth understanding, which is required to do justice to the case (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 289). Meanwhile, the real situation of the case can help describe ideas more clearly as well as how ideas and abstract principles can fit together (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 289). Further, Hichcock and Hughes (1995, p. 319) argued that cases studies are “set in temporal, geographical, organizational, institutional, and other contexts that enable boundaries to be drawn around the case” (cited in Cohen et al., 2011, p. 290). My interpretation for this argument is that researchers need to investigate historic, social, geographical and other contextual factors of the issues of the case they study. I have investigated some specific socio-economic, geographical, and cultural and long-term accustomed learning habits of the students in my selected college.

Case studies have some limitations, one of which is that a particular finding cannot be generalized beyond the case under investigation. However, Robson (2002, p. 183) and Yin (2009, p. 15) both asserted that case studies opt for ‘analytic’ rather than ‘statistical’ generalization (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 294). My case is a medium size college, which is located in a developed region in China. Although it recruits teachers and students nationwide, still it is hard to tell how representative my case is. But my main purpose is to interpret and explore issues deeper in a specific context rather than just generalization.

### **Case setting**

I implemented my research in a prestigious technical and vocational college,

which accepts secondary school graduates from different regions of China with diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Though that college is one of the national demonstrative higher vocational institutions, students from this college may be somewhat different from their counterparts in the highest-ranking academic universities. Most of the students in the case institute have learned English for at least eight years; thus they have likely formed learning styles and habits due to the former academic and social backgrounds. The ages of students in the school vary from 17 to 23. Students are recruited from rural, distant and urban regions in different provinces in China, which means that their former social, living and academic backgrounds vary a lot. Their levels of English proficiencies are also uneven given their past exposure and access to English both at home and schools. Very small proportions of students have the experience of studying, training or even temporarily traveling in Western countries. Only a few students speak some English with their parents at home. Their English foundations are generally weaker than students in academic universities. In order to graduate, students majoring in science and business need to pass Practical English Test for Colleges (PRECTO) Level A or B. English majors are required to pass College English Test (CET) Band four.

All the teachers who participated in my interviews and surveys work at this college. The data from this school, to some extent, reflects the situation of the present globalizing approach to English language education as most research participants have studied and taught English in different universities and colleges nationwide. However, the insights derived cannot be taken as representative of the English language learning

situations of all Chinese college students, and the findings in this thesis may only be valid for the particular group and the particular context that I have investigated. For example, some of interviewees mentioned that the English language learning situations of students from academic Chinese universities are different from those counterparts of the target college that I have chosen. These limitations will be discussed further in last chapter of this thesis.

### **Participants**

In my qualitative interviews, six main participant-teachers (including one administrator) were involved. Based on the data collected and analyzed in interviews, a survey instrument was constructed and employed with another seventeen teachers to assess the perceptions of the faculty as a whole at the selected institution.

The selected participants have the necessary understanding of English language teaching and the learning characteristics of Chinese college students; are capable of reflecting on that knowledge and experience; have time to be involved and are willing to participate (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 234). Some of my participants, who had studied or trained abroad for a long period, have more direct experience with Western knowledge and pedagogies. Other participants completed master-level degrees in Chinese universities. Some have participated in trainings abroad for only a few days or weeks. This latter group not only have had little direct contact with the real teaching and learning situations of Western countries, but also lack real-life experience with Western

knowledge and culture in a Western country. Most of their knowledge and understandings about Western world are from books, media, or other channels in China. I have examined their perceptions of Western educational transfer in China. My participants, growing up in different regions in China, have abundant experience in teaching and learning English in different universities and colleges so that they are familiar with the present situations of English language education and characteristics of students from diverse backgrounds. My participants who voluntarily agreed to participate in my research have sufficient experience and knowledge to offer valuable data.

### **Data Collection**

During my research phase, data were “collected on an ongoing, iterative basis” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 599). Interviews were used to realize my research objectives. When collecting interview data, variables, unexpected answers and motivations of respondents are included so as to be traced deeper (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 411). Purposive sampling was used in order to get access to key actors. I have selected knowledgeable people who have in-depth knowledge about particular issue, access to networks, expertise or experiences (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 157). In this case, English language teaching is the area that all my participants have worked in for many years and thus are quite familiar with it.

My data collection approaches shifted across time. I completed three turns of interviews in the beginning three months. The interviews changed from unstructured to

more structured and controlled. Data from different participants, which provided a triangulation of sources of information, have resulted in multiple perspectives on the same issue. All interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese. While my participants were competent in English, they still felt more comfortable to make comments in their first language. The first turn was informal conversational interviews in which no predetermined questions were designed (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 413). I conversed with six participants respectively about the present situations of English education in China, their own educational and pedagogical training and backgrounds and the successes and challenges they perceived in their daily teaching practices. Based on the first turn of interviews, semi-structured interviews were employed in the second turn of interviews (see Appendix A). In the semi-structured interviews, I not only allowed myself to modify the sequences of questions according to the responses of my participants, but also allowed myself to explain my concerns to the participants (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 411). Based on the data of the first two turns, the third turn (Appendix A) was standardized open-ended interviews in which “the exact wording and sequence of questions are determined in advance” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 413). Open-ended questions were employed to make further and deeper explorations for more details about the key issues and striking differences in the first two turns. All the questions were predetermined, but formed in a way that allowed me to converse with participants. I asked the same questions for all the participants in the third turn.

After the interviews, a small-scale online survey (See Appendix B) was administered to assess the data in the interviews and check to what extent data in the interviews reached saturation. Survey data are used to describe “the nature of the existing conditions, or identifying standards against which existing conditions can be compared, or determining the relationship that exist between specific events” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 256). My main purpose for the survey was to further investigate how the pressures from Western knowledge and pedagogies are or could be re-conceptualized by Chinese educators and administrators for the considerations of the local contexts.

After preliminary analysis of the interviews and survey, I still found some disparities and interesting threads that needed to be explored further. For this reason, I implemented another standardized open-ended follow-up turn of interviews with my six participants. The interview questions are almost the same; but are asked in somewhat different ways according to the interviewees’ responses in the first three rounds of interviews.

In my research, I position myself as a researcher, an English teacher, and a former faculty member of the college. As a researcher from a Western university, and thereby outsider, I had to really be vigilant to listen to the voices of the participants and not assume that I knew the answers. As an insider as former member of that college, I resorted to my teaching experience and professional knowledge to interpret their responses and to develop further questions. The researcher’s position also afforded distance to raise concerns in relation to the limits and possibilities of Western pedagogies

in the Chinese classroom. Those concerns were explained to the participants for their reflections.

### **Data analysis**

Interviews were recorded and transcribed for close readings and deeper comparative analysis. Transcriptions were decontextualized, from the dynamics of the situations and from social, interactive, fluid dimensions of the sources (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 426). In my three turns of interviews with six participants, I firstly made coded of interviewees' remarks. In this process, all the data were dissembled, categorized and reassembled. Constant comparisons between new data and existing data were made (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 600) to decide on what needed further clarification. Data were compared continuously until little variation occurred, resonating with the objective of triangulation (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 600). Through constant comparisons, core variables were identified which "account for most of the data" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 601). The small survey in the second turn purported to check whether or not data in the first stage was saturated enough to support theories. Finally, a follow-up turn of interviews was also conducted to understand some emergent issues. "Saturation is achieved when the coding that has already been completed adequately supports and fills out the emerging theory" (as cited in Cohen et al., 2011, p. 601). For example, saturation on teachers' perceptions of what constitutes 'Western pedagogy' occurred after set of interviews for



participants about their understandings about the main characteristics of Western pedagogy.

Teachers also described some familiar Western pedagogy that they have used frequently. If significant variability, given the integrative approach, were found in teachers' perceptions about Western pedagogy, I would interview them further. This will be discussed more fully in the findings chapter. By comparing, synthesizing and interpreting of all the data to "maintain a sense of holism" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 427), my findings were less idiosyncratic, personally subjective and reliable.

### **Ethical Assurances**

I strictly adhered to Western's ethical protocol. The Letter of Information (See Appendix D) was sent to interview participants with some clarifying comments. Once the purposes and procedures of my research were made clear to the participants, they were invited to sign the Consent Form (Appendix D). For the survey, I sent all participants a Letter of Information (See Appendix E), which stated that the completion of the survey was the indication of their consent to participate. Other ethical issues involve risks, benefits, anonymity, confidentiality, etc (Cohen et al., 2011, pp. 75-104). No physical or mental risks were involved in my research. I have maintained the privacy and confidentiality of all of my participants. Participants' names and the case institution have not and will not be disclosed. The data has been stored in a secure way and is only accessible to my supervisor and me. Throughout my research, participants had the

opportunity to more explicitly reflect on Western knowledge transfer in the English language curriculum in relation to their practices at the college.

### **Reliability and validity of my data and analysis**

The reliability and validity of my data have been bolstered in multiple ways. In order to build up the reliability and validity of my data, I used multiple strategies to assess the accuracy of the findings. Triangulations of the sources of data were used to build a coherent justification for themes (Cresswell, 2009). Cresswell (2009) emphasized that the researcher should clarify the bias they bring to the study. He further claimed, “[r]eflectivity has been mentioned as a core characteristics of qualitative research. Good qualitative research contains comments by the researchers about how their interpretation of the findings is shaped by their background...”(p. 192). In my research, I have taken a discursive and constructive epistemology, which emphasizes that knowledge is constructed in a relational process. The orientation of my research analysis is to unpack taken-for granted assumptions of reality (Andreotti, 2011, p. 88). It was inevitable for me to make interpretations, which will be inflected by my former study and work background. I may have my own conscious and tacit views or perceptions on Western pedagogy and its adaptation and uses. I have used my insider status to better understand and inhabit the place from which other teachers were speaking. But I also attempted to bracket out my specific views or my own answers to research questions by careful listening, asking for clarifications and examples to avoid making assumptions, multiple

rounds of interviews, getting feedback from my supervisor on my emerging analytic themes and reflections on what are missing or need to be further explored. In the whole process of data collection and analysis, I tried my best to “keep a focus on meaning that participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that researchers bring to the research or writers express in the literature” (Cresswell, 2009, p. 175). For example, I asked participants to define the terms they were using, and to give specific examples and to share their personal stories as English language teachers.

### **Summary**

In my research, I considered the English-language program of my target College as a case study. My key informants were English language teachers with at least five years of teaching experience at this college. I used in-depth qualitative interviews as my main research method. In the qualitative interviews, it is inevitable that “each participant in an interview will define the situation in a particular way” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 410) so that different perspectives might be generated. As a researcher, I have used triangulation to deepen my analysis in developing and examining it from different angles. A small- scale survey based on the three turns of interviews was employed to triangulate and to further qualify the emerging findings.

I tried my best to keep a harmonious and cooperative relationship with all participants so as to obtain genuine and accurate data (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 409-410) and gain entry into their pedagogical contexts and viewpoints. All the participants

appeared to be quite “sincere and well-motivated,” and willing to provide reliable and accurate data (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 409).

## **Chapter 4**

### **Findings**

This chapter is organized around a key set of issues and tensions within Western educational transfer that emerge from my study. The data consists of three sets of interviews (see Appendix A), a survey (see Appendix B) and a follow-up set of interviews (see Appendix A) with six English teachers (including the administrator). For the most part, the interviews represent the richest data and the survey triangulates the source of data and verifies the interview findings. Seventeen English language teachers who did not participate in the interviews were invited to complete the survey via email. All seventeen teachers completed the survey. The survey is designed and based on the first three sets of interviews in order to verify and extend the findings. All the data are analyzed qualitatively rather than quantitatively. In order to preserve the confidentiality of the participants, particular letters of the English alphabet are used to identify and label interviewees. Further, all participants are referred to as ‘she’ to ensure that male participants cannot be identified. In this chapter, three main themes are discussed: conceptions of (Western) English language teaching pedagogy, limits and possibilities of Western educational transfer (including knowledge and pedagogy) in English language teaching and learning, and a set of three additional analytic threads generated from my former teaching experience in China and present learning in a Western university.

In summary, my interviewees focus a lot on what teacher-participants believe are the key factors for the success of English language classes; these factors can be summarized as follows: flexible and practical class modes; life and career related learning content; harmonious teaching and learning atmosphere; understanding the learning needs of students; finding students' interests; students' sense of self-fulfillment; design of classroom / study activities; consideration of students' competency levels in classroom tasks; and learning motivations. I state these factors up-front to avoid the perception of employing a deficit lens to teachers in this study. Clearly, the teachers are adapting Western pedagogies in nuanced ways in the classroom to the extent that they are successful as teachers are working in a complex and dynamic environment. In the interviews, they speak intelligently on these factors above. Based on these factors, the focus of my study below is still on how and to what extent Western knowledge and pedagogy can support Chinese students' English language learning.

## **Conceptions of (Western) English pedagogy**

### **1. What is (Western) English pedagogy?**

Some interviewees (like teacher E and F) labeled (Western) English pedagogy as “modern” pedagogy. Some of the Western pedagogies that participants name and report using in daily teaching are: communicative language teaching, interactive language teaching, cooperative language teaching in group work and student-centered language teaching. In some teachers' view, these Western pedagogies aim at developing

students' personal growth, learning needs, group cooperation, active participation, personal initiative, and a more relaxed class atmosphere through activities so as to help students make knowledge application.

Participants discussed the common characteristics of Western pedagogies. First, many research participants (e.g. teacher A, E and F) described Western pedagogy as more student-centred, where students' needs, capabilities and interest are emphasized. Teacher A claimed that Western pedagogy focuses more on students' learning needs rather than the syllabus, teacher instructions, or curriculum content. She further elaborated that Western pedagogy places more emphasis on students' personal career development and life needs rather than knowledge transmission. Some teachers in the survey claimed that in Western pedagogy, teachers try their best to use the content that suits the students' level and taste in order to inspire them to express their ideas. For example, teachers give questions around a topic to encourage and inspire students' learning interest.

Second, teachers A and D pointed out that Western pedagogy puts an emphasis on knowledge application rather than knowledge accumulation. Teacher B recalled some of the Western-styled classroom exercises that impressed her (e.g. story-telling, games and brain-storming activities) because those activities require a large amount of student participation and application of language knowledge. Additionally, Teacher E mentioned that in Western pedagogies, students can learn with initiative, instead of passively receiving knowledge from their teachers.

Third, participant-teachers indicated that more interaction, communication and cooperation are involved in Western pedagogy. Teacher F said that Western language pedagogy (e.g. communicative language teaching) aims to cultivate students' practical communicative English-usage abilities. Some survey participants mentioned that teacher-student, student-student interaction and cooperation are emphasized as both the means and the ultimate goal of study. Teamwork and group discussion in different projects are widely used in Western pedagogy. Students not only learn from teachers, but also from their peers. Teachers C and E report having used Western cooperative teaching frequently in daily teaching. Through cooperation, teacher C believes that the class atmosphere is more relaxed and students are more willing to participate.

Fourth, an authentic second language-learning environment is manifested in Western pedagogy, in the view of these teachers. For instance, one survey participant indicated that communicative language teaching emphasizes learning a language through genuine communication. Learners need to be able to use the language appropriately in real business or social contexts. Teacher C also shared her experience:

I have employed the form of one of Chinese TV-program named "Chinese good voice (a national wide singing competition in which the winner can be the best singer in China)" to class. My students enjoyed the form of competition to sing their favorite English song.

Almost all interviewees believe that real-life scenario not only purports to raise students' learning enthusiasm, but also cultivate their practical English abilities.

Fifth, five teachers (i.e. A, C, D, E and F) expressed the view that that Western



pedagogy requires self-motivated learners to prepare the learning content before classes and reflect on what they have learned after classes. For example, teacher A said that students are required to do a large amount of preparation (e.g. extensive reading, data collection, preparation for presentation, etc) in Western pedagogy so they can apply their knowledge in class. After classes, students need to summarize what they have learned in every class.

## **2. The relationship between Western and Chinese pedagogy**

My analysis of the research results show that teachers' perceptions of 'Western' pedagogy are at least partly based relationally against what they conceive as traditional or Chinese pedagogy. This section is included in order to illuminate these relations. Interviewees used the following terminology to describe traditional Chinese teaching methods: teacher-dominant, lectures, test-oriented, and serious learning. Many participants in the interviews and the survey express the belief that to some extent, traditional Chinese methods are helpful, but may be increasingly unsuitable for present English language teaching because, for example, students may get bored in class. Interviewees said that traditional Chinese instructional methods are not effective to stimulate students' learning initiative. However, most of the participating teachers in my research project still insist that traditional instructional methods need to exist and cannot be rejected totally for the following reasons.

First, compared with Western English pedagogy, Chinese pedagogy is more

teacher-dominant. Teachers B and C claimed that most of the classroom methods in their school are teacher-dominant, which signifies that teacher lecturing occupies most of the class time. Teachers C, E and F explained that in traditional Chinese teacher-dominant classroom methods, teachers give instruction and analyses on grammar, vocabulary and syntax, while the students' role is to be passive receptors. Survey participants mentioned that in traditional Chinese classrooms, teachers talk too much and the students don't need to talk. Research participants highlighted two main reasons for teacher-dominant class methods: one is that students need to pass standardized tests to graduate so a large amount of the class time belongs to teachers' explanations of the test practices; second, it is hard to implement flexible class activities in big classes with 50-60 students. A teacher-dominant class method is quite informative so it is seen as more efficient in some cases. According to interviews, to some extent, traditional class methods are helpful, but may increasingly be unsuitable for present English language teaching. Sometimes, students may get bored in class.

Second, teachers are of the view that traditional Chinese pedagogy puts more emphasis on knowledge transmission rather than knowledge application. Teachers A, C and E agree that in traditional Chinese classes, teachers usually make thorough preparations and search a lot of data to transmit to students. In teacher F's words:

Chinese traditional pedagogies are contributive to theoretical language input. Chinese traditional pedagogy offers students some logic and systematic explanations of language points so that it is effective to facilitate students' deeper understanding of grammar.

Teacher A elaborated:

The advantage for this traditional pedagogy is that teachers will analyze every language point to facilitate students' understanding. Successful Chinese pedagogies, like lectures, are based on students' confusions and life and career needs. In less meaningful lectures, teachers just give instructions without caring about students' needs and reactions. The main problem for some traditional teaching methods is that teachers do not take students' learning needs very seriously. For example, some teachers just enter into the classroom, turn to the pages that they plan to cover, and then begin to explain every single word and the grammar in the texts. However, this is less meaningful for the present students as they can get access to that information through Internet by themselves in an instant way.

Teacher B agreed that if teachers just keep their teaching schedules and transmit the language points in class without noticing the extent of students' acceptance, reactions, interests and needs, lectures are less meaningful and less helpful. Teacher F also mentioned that the quantity of lectures depends on the characteristics of the course. If the lesson's expectation is knowledge understanding rather than application, instructions are very effective. This point is important because it illustrates that ultimately the success of pedagogy cannot be determined by simply naming it—all lectures, for example, do not have identical impacts.

Third, according to the teachers interviewed, more teacher control is involved in traditional Chinese pedagogy. For example, from Teachers D's point of view:

Chinese class modes involve strict discipline, as some students are less able to control themselves. In order to let the classes proceed in a smooth way, I sometimes set up some rules for students and keep a serious class atmosphere: for instance, students cannot speak or chat with each other when I am teaching.

Her words reflect that the amount of teachers' control in classes largely depends on the learning habits and characteristics of the target students. For instance, teacher F mentioned that students can get access to the Internet through their cell phone, ipad, etc.

Consequently, these lures distract students' attention elsewhere. To some extent, students need discipline from teachers. Teacher E also explains that it seems that Chinese students need someone who can either be their parent or teacher to supervise their learning constantly.

Also noteworthy is that many interviewees (teachers A, D and E) think that there is no strict division between Western and Chinese pedagogies. For example, teacher A mentioned that present lecture-methods in China (like their western counterparts) involve a lot of interaction and communication to raise students' learning interest. Teachers E and D believe that lectures are also a very important class method utilized in the universities of Western countries.

## **Limits and possibilities of (Western) English pedagogy in English language teaching and learning**

### **1. Pressures to use Western English pedagogy**

Research participants mentioned that they face pressure to use Western pedagogy. In the interviews, all participants, including the administrator, claimed that the main pressures originate from students rather than from the institution. Similarly, results from the survey show that pressures from students rank first, which is the same as the findings in the interviews. Pressure from school administrators is also one of the main reasons.

Regarding the pressure from students, teachers A and B elaborated that there is a teacher term-performance evaluation, which is based mainly on students' views of their teachers. Some of the participating teachers claimed that Chinese students desire to escape from long-term, boring, and traditional teacher-dominant instructional methods.

For instance, teacher A said:

After suffering so many years of tedious teacher-dominant class modes, students have already got tired of those dull instructional methods. They want to absorb new knowledge, while meanwhile enjoy the learning process. That's the main reason why most teachers have to use some Western flexible and liberal pedagogy to motivate students' learning interest.

Teacher E remarked:

Class atmosphere of teacher-dominant class modes is very boring and less likely to raise students' learning interest. I design flexible activities to let students practice and meanwhile enjoy English language learning. In my view, teacher lectures as the main class mode cannot motivate students effectively.

In addition, teacher F claimed that students get access to different cultures, knowledge and pedagogies from the Internet so that some monotonous teaching methods would seem dull in comparison. Admittedly, the use of different pedagogies can stimulate students' interest and attention in learning.

Further, some interviewees said pressure also comes from teachers themselves as they hope to resort to different strategies to motivate students' learning interests.

Teachers E and F feel dull and less accomplished in teacher-dominant class methods, which they feel lack interaction, feedback and a harmonious atmosphere.

Again, research participants admitted that school administrators also, to some extent, advocate and push teachers to use Western pedagogies. Some participants (e.g.

teachers C, D, and E) mentioned that in staff meetings, principals and deans emphasize the advantages of student-centered class methods and other Western pedagogies. In my interviews, I further asked teachers about what is emphasized in demonstration lessons and term inspections. Term inspections are based on the dean's evaluation and students' interviews and online evaluations of their teachers' performance at the end of each term. Teachers A and E mentioned that successful demonstration lessons involve constant teacher-student interaction, as well as students' active participation. Teachers C and F indicated that demonstration lessons are usually equipped with modern facilities and center around Western liberal class activities, such as games, competitions and group work activities. Lectures do not usually dominate the entire demonstration lesson. Most of the interviewees said they have never used teacher-centered lecture methods as the dominant method in their demonstration lessons. What's more, all participants mentioned that in term teaching inspections, if the classes are totally teacher-dominant, administrators will suggest teachers make changes. Teacher B emphasized that lesson plans for term teaching inspections should focus more on students' reactions rather than delivering content. Further, teachers C, E and F claimed that school administrators observe the class atmosphere, teachers' abilities in organizing the class and students' reactions. If the class atmosphere is dull and insufficient class interactions are involved, school administrators will request that teachers make some improvements, such as using some activities to make the class more entertaining. However, all interviewees mentioned that though the school administration advocates for Western pedagogy, there are not any

significant consequences for noncompliance if students can accept their teachers' teaching style as indicated by the student evaluations of teachers.

## **2. Benefit of Western English pedagogy in practice**

Most teachers recognize some benefits in Western English pedagogy. Almost all the interviewees mentioned that students could participate more actively, to some extent, in Western classroom activities because they are more flexible, entertaining and liberal than traditional Chinese classroom activities. For example, teacher D claimed that some students prefer Western pedagogies as they can participate while learning in a relaxed and entertaining way. In the survey, some participants agreed that students are engaged in Western pedagogy they are more interested in and willing to take the initiative in their own learning.

Further, teachers in the survey mentioned that Western pedagogy not only focuses on students' needs and interests, but also creates more frequent opportunities for the students to apply the language they have acquired. Communicative tasks help develop students' practical language skills. Students can apply what they have learned to an authentic second language environment and thus learn more efficiently.

## **3. Challenges in using Western English pedagogy**

Some teachers in my research mentioned that they face significant challenges

when using Western pedagogy, which affect the results of real practice. Almost two thirds of the participants in the survey thought that their students are in favour of Western pedagogies. The rest of the participants are not sure about their students' preferences for Western class modes. Almost half of the teachers surveyed believe that their students can achieve better learning results through Western pedagogy. The rest of the participants are not sure about the effect of Western pedagogy. Interview and survey participants listed some reasons why students may not prefer Western pedagogy, including: former learning habits before higher education, weak English foundations, students' personality, their learning expectations, class sizes and facilities, teacher-students' relationship and test culture. Teachers view students' former learning habits and weak English foundations as the top two challenges for employing Western pedagogy.

### **Former learning habits**

The first and most significant challenge, from the teachers' perspectives, is students' long-term former learning habits. According to the teachers interviewed, Chinese students lack independent learning and self-discipline abilities and rely heavily on absorbing knowledge from teachers' lectures before higher education. First of all, most of Chinese students are less likely to learn with initiative out of classes. Teachers A and D pointed out that Westernized class modes usually involve a lot group work and discussion, which require students' to search for valuable data before classes and to reflect after classes. Teachers A, D and F argued that most Chinese students do not make



sufficient preparations before classes so that class discussion and activities are less meaningful. Teacher B said that some students only finish the assignments of the teachers and may never search any additional material with initiative. Consequently, teacher lectures become the major and necessary source for them to obtain knowledge.

Furthermore, teacher A and D claimed that many college students learn English in a mechanical and rigid way (e.g. rote learning), which results in their inability to apply what they have learned to other similar situations. Teacher D is of the opinion that Chinese students are less capable of summarizing and reflecting what they have learned. She explained:

Students have many ways of accessing knowledge; but they lack the ability to sort the data. They are not quite sure which data are important to them. Some students learn mechanically without thinking about the purposes for learning. A large proportion of students are less capable of applying what they have learned to other similar situations. Some students just listen to teachers' instructions and then finish all the assignments without any critical thinking and reflections. Students learn English in a very rigid, passive and less flexible way.

Additionally, teachers report that that Chinese college students lack self-discipline in English learning. For instance, teacher D said:

Enduring so many years of rigid and serious class modes, students, who aspire for freedom, just lack self-discipline. This is closely related to the long-term reliance on the control from teachers and parents before higher education. If they are given the right to learn more flexibly, they may just chat, text to others or even play computer games in class. Chinese teachers still have to act as the authority and controller in class.

In this chapter, I have already referred to this issue, which results in teachers' tighter control of the English language classes and their roles as dominators and controllers.

### **Students' weak English foundation**

The second important challenge referred by teachers is that some students have little English foundation. All interviewees agree that because of the popularization of higher education, the English requirements for being enrolled in the colleges are not so high. Teacher A explained:

The popularization of higher education makes the universities and colleges, compete with each other fiercely to recruit students to ensure the school's survival and development. The consequence is that the English foundations of students are less desirable. Besides, studying abroad becomes a choice for secondary school graduates. Some students with good English competencies and academic achievements prefer to study in Western famous universities. Students in some common colleges are less competent in English.

Both teacher B and C mentioned that students' English foundations are really poor so that it is very hard for students to participate actively in English. Teacher B gave an example that one of her recent group tasks was to ask students to be tour guides, but students did not participate actively. She guessed that the task was a bit too difficult for the students at that level of competence to handle. Teacher D, E and F mentioned that some Chinese students are less competent to make effective interaction, which results in the unbalanced participation in group work. Teacher C indicated that some may hope other students whose English are better in their groups to finish the tasks or help them. Teacher B, C and E claimed that if the English levels of most of the students in classes are low, they have to dominate the classes to explain the vocabulary and grammar in

English or Chinese to facilitate students' understanding. Teacher A further mentioned that because of students' weak English foundations, teachers may use simple teaching material, which make them feel very dull as the teaching material may not match the intelligence levels of students.

Furthermore, all participants agreed that some disadvantaged students from northwest, inland and rural areas struggle more with their weak English foundation and cannot be involved in the English language atmosphere. The main reason is still their limited access to learning resources and qualified teachers. Teacher A and C mentioned that students from north and west part of China face more difficulties in English learning, especially in the pronunciation. In teacher B's view, compared with students from developed regions, their counterparts from distant and rural regions have less access to English language knowledge, cultural knowledge, qualified teachers, facilities and parents' support. This lack in turn leads to students' poor English foundations and unfamiliarity with Western knowledge and pedagogy. Teacher C said that one of her students who comes from northeast part of China hasn't learned any English before higher education so that she definitely needs more English language support. Teacher D mentioned that the English foundations of students from inland areas, like Gan Su, Qing Hai, are really weak. But, in her opinion, some of them still can catch up with other students if they are diligent enough. Teacher E made reference to students from the north part of China, who seem to face more challenges in English pronunciation as some English words do not have the equivalent sounds in their dialects. English education

before higher education is not emphasized in some regions. The teaching methods are traditional and outdated.

### **Students' inward and modest personality**

Teachers interviewed report that some students are unwilling to participate in Western pedagogy because of their introverted and modest personality. Teacher A, D and F indicated that, indeed, a large proportion of students in their classes appear to be not brave and confident enough to express themselves in English class. In Teacher F's words, however:

30-40% of students in classes are not confident enough to express themselves in my English class. I guessed that one of the most important reasons is that teachers in middle schools seldom encouraged those students. Those teachers prefer to point out all the students' mistakes, which results in the lack of confidence in language learning. A large proportion of students are with conservative personality, which means they try all the possible means to defend their ego and never takes risks of losing face.

Teacher B claimed that most of her students are still too shy to participate actively. Some of them even feel less pressured in teacher-dominant instructions. This may be related to the national cultural personality.

### **School conditions**

Some interviewees complained that some undesirable conditions of the school, such as big class size, and outdated facilities also cause difficulties in implementing

Western pedagogy. Teacher D indicated that the class size is big and the desks are not easy to move to make suitable class settings. A majority of interviewees complained that class size is a big challenge for most of the English teachers in China. The present class sizes of teachers B, C and F vary from 35-60, 53-55 and 50-55 students respectively. Interviewees mentioned that with such big class sizes, it is very challenging to organize Western flexible class activities successfully as students' interest and preferences vary.

Further, half of the participants referred to the problem of the lack of facilities, such as acoustic equipment and projectors in class, which may contribute to the tedious class atmosphere. Teacher C, E and F mentioned that some class activities and content still need to be illustrated by PowerPoint, music or videos in an attractive way to facilitate students' understandings and maintain their learning enthusiasm.

### **Teachers' professional knowledge**

Another challenge in my research is that teachers themselves lack understanding of Western knowledge, cultures and pedagogy. The survey results show that over half of participants are not quite familiar with Western pedagogies, while the rest are familiar. In the interviews, teacher B, C and D also mentioned that they did not have a deep understanding of Western English pedagogy, which means that they may not use those pedagogies appropriately in classes. They hope the college can provide some pedagogical training. Further, a generational gap exists between teachers and students. Teacher A and D claimed that teachers need to improve professional abilities as present college students

grow up with Internet, which results in their abundant access to resources and different learning styles. Consequently, teachers are required to use different pedagogies and the latest knowledge to arouse students' learning interest.

### **Students' learning expectations**

Interviewees indicated that the effect of Western pedagogy is also connected to Chinese students' learning expectations. Teacher A mentioned that Chinese students, especially those excellent learners, have higher requirements for class efficiency. They hope to gain new language knowledge through a limited period. Therefore some liberal Western class activities with emphasis on knowledge application do not attend to their learning motivations. Teacher E asserted that some Chinese students might feel disappointed about classes without a large amount of knowledge transmission. Teacher F said:

Chinese students always want to learn something new through the course, which will give them the sense of self-fulfillment. Some Western language pedagogies requiring language processing and reproduction do not convey new knowledge so that they may think it is a waste of time. They do not have the concept that language organization and reproduction are also crucial elements in learning.

Consequently, many interviewees (e.g. teacher E and F) emphasized that teachers need to clarify the purpose of each activity beforehand so that students may understand what they can gain or improve.

### **Students' learning objectives and test culture**

Many participants stated that students' learning goals shape the extent and amount of their' active participation. They further argued that a large proportion of students in China learn English for passing tests rather than for practical usage. For example, teacher A said:

Although English is emphasized in the present higher education, it is seldom used in real life and work. The working environment in big multinational corporations is becoming localized, which means students may not need to use English frequently even if they will work in multinational companies in the future. Further, most students will not study or work in Western countries. Generally speaking, students cannot figure out why they need to learn English practically.

Almost all interviewees and survey participants agreed that passing test is the most important reason for college students to learn English. They also believe that traditional teacher-dominant pedagogy is more effective to raise students' test scores than Western flexible activities. Teacher F mentioned that Western pedagogy can be used in test-oriented training, but it requires more time and does not seem to be very efficient. Teachers' explanations of test questions may be more efficient than those flexible activities. Teachers B and C said that they prefer to lectures or give relevant instructions in test-oriented training. Research participants also insisted that a large proportion of students just hope their teachers will use lecture or test-oriented instructions as the main class modes.

Many interviewees pointed out that high-stakes standardized tests in China make the class less interactive and communicative. Teacher A pointed out that many

students just learn English for test results rather than knowledge application and learning process. Teacher B said that some students, though already have achieved high scores in exams, cannot use English fluently and practically in daily life. Teacher E mentioned that the test trainings focus a lot on language transmission rather than application. Students cannot cultivate their practical language competencies (e.g. listening and speaking) effectively. Teacher F believes that test-oriented trainings are more contributive to students' grammar learning than real-life use. As a result of this tedious teacher-dominant test-oriented training, teacher B, C, and D indicated that students may lose their interest in English language learning, which means that they are likely to stop learning upon passing the exams. Students may need other incentives, such as requirements in their future jobs, to stimulate them to learn English again.

Although test culture in Chinese higher education may result in tedious class atmosphere, teachers' test-oriented instructions and analysis, little communication, less interaction and practical use in English language classrooms, many interviewees still pointed out the necessity for the existence for tests. First, teacher A said:

Testing is the most efficient way to assess students' English competencies. Besides, if College Entrance Examination or College English Test is cancelled, some places may not open English courses. Students from disadvantaged families may lose the opportunity to learn English. Only wealthy students can have various opportunities to learn English. However, the reality is that students who are proficient in English are usually favoured in the future workplace, which will result in social inequality.

In this sense, tests help students from diverse backgrounds gain access to opportunities to



learn English so they have equal chances to compete for future jobs.

Additionally, teachers B and E mentioned that the College English Test certificate is very important for Chinese students to find a good job, which can be a very important motivation for them to learn English. Teacher E expounded that class time is so limited that students cannot obtain much knowledge. Tests make students spend a large amount of time learning English after class. They can also increase their vocabulary through the readings in the module test papers. Teacher D also agreed that if there is not a test, some less motivated students may never spend any time learning English.

How do the participant-teachers face the challenges brought about by test-oriented English language teaching and learning in Chinese higher education? As mentioned above, interviewees (as teachers B and D) indicated that the biggest problem is that students may totally lose their motivation to learn after they have passed examinations. Consequently, teacher D suggested that in the process of test-oriented instructions, some flexible learning activities and entertaining class forms can also be used to keep students' learning interest in English. Further, teacher E argued that the problem does not lie in the test itself but the forms of the tests. If the tests could focus on comprehensive English abilities, which involve listening, speaking, reading and writing, the negative effects would be lessened.

### **Teacher-student relationship**

When using Western pedagogy, hierarchical and serious Chinese teacher-student relationships, to some extent, also affect the use of Western pedagogy.

My interviews not only invited comparisons between Chinese and Western teacher-students relationships, but also asked for possible improvements. Many teachers in interviews explained the hierarchical relationship and authority in Chinese classrooms.

For instance, teacher A said:

In many Chinese classes, teachers, who are regarded as the only authority in classes, are highly respected by their students. Students need to obey all the requirements of their teachers. For example, if the teacher asks students to stand, he or she cannot sit.

Teacher C added:

In China, students need to respect their teachers. This “respect” sometimes implies that students cannot argue with their teachers. This authority comes from a hierarchical relationship rather than teachers’ knowledge. In China, “face” is very important, which means that pointing out teachers’ mistakes in front of students is not acceptable. But students can discuss with their teachers after class.

Their remarks illustrate the strong hierarchical relationship and the serious image of teachers in Chinese classrooms.

In reflecting on Western classrooms, interviewees said that students follow teachers’ instructions for the following two reasons: first, teacher A claimed that teachers are so professional that students trust their teachers. Teacher D argued that Western authority lies in teachers’ knowledge. Students respect and trust teachers because they are knowledgeable enough to convince their students. Second, teachers have charisma in

personality or somewhere else. In Western classrooms, teachers A and C mentioned that teachers show respect, love and care for their students and their academic and professional development. The respect signifies that students can argue with their teachers and refuse teachers' request. Students are allowed to use teachers' first names, discuss and explore issues and questions together. If they find teachers' mistakes, they can call them out. Teacher E said that in Western countries, teachers usually try to think from the students' standpoints. They may change the curriculum content and pedagogies according to students' preferences and needs.

From my participants' perspectives, teacher-students' relationship in Western language classroom is more equal than that in China. I further inquired interviewees about their understanding of the equal relationship. All interviewees agreed that the respect between teacher and students does not mean that the relationship is totally equal, especially in the local Chinese context. Teacher B stated:

It is also not good that teachers keep the totally equal relationship with students as the class may go out of control. For example, some students may make noises when teachers need a quiet teaching atmosphere. The equal relationship still means that teachers and students need to respect and care about each other.

In teacher C's words:

Equality means that students can discuss questions and argue with their teachers. The strength for equal relationship is that students are encouraged to express their ideas creatively and freely in a less pressured environment. A big challenge is that in big class sizes, class may be out of control if teachers keep an equal relationship with students. Students may say something very irrelevant to classes so that a lot of class time is wasted.

Teacher D also pointed out that equal relationship does not mean that students can do whatever they want to do in classes without teachers' control. Teachers still need to discipline students in a very organized way.

Nowadays, the hierarchical relationship in China has changed a lot, although the old concepts still exist. Teacher C said that some young teachers, who are influenced by Western ideologies of freedom and equality, pay much attention to class discussion and exploration of questions with their students. Teacher F expounded that present English teachers who learn English and are very familiar with Western pedagogies and knowledge are also willing to discuss and explore issues with students. Answers for some issues are quite open-ended. At the same time, teacher D claimed that with the development of Chinese society, students also require their own freedom in expressing in classes and keeping harmonious relationship with their teachers. Consequently, few teachers now in China take the role as authoritarians as their students fight strongly against that. However, though the situations have changed significantly in China, the old traditions still exist. For one thing, teacher A pointed out that some teachers who are not knowledgeable enough to convince students still request students to follow all their requirements without argument. Teacher F said that some students who are accustomed to absorb knowledge through teacher-dominant instructions may not like to discuss and explore knowledge with their teachers. It seems that the old tradition still exists for the habits of both teachers and students.

#### **4. Modifications for Western pedagogy and curriculum content**

In the survey, three quarters of teachers indicated that modifications are essential in using Western pedagogies. In the interviews, all participants maintained that modifications are required in the use of Western pedagogies for the following aspects: students' English levels, learning habits and capabilities, learning purpose, class atmosphere, students' learning moods, class sizes, etc. Some detailed explanations are as follows: the first modification is related to Chinese college students' learning expectation. As with the discussions above, teacher A and other interviewees mentioned that some good Chinese students have very high learning expectations. Modifications suggested by interviewees follow. For example, teacher E said:

English language learning is a kind of knowledge accumulation for Chinese students. When designing courses, I divide my courses into several parts. I usually give lectures for some language points, followed by some activities to let students practice. Finally, I summarize and give specific requirements for students to accomplish after class. Some Western liberal class modes, such as free discussion and games, cannot help them get abundant knowledge in a limited period. Good learners in Chinese higher education emphasize learning efficiency, which results in higher requirements for teachers' design of class activities. When using Western pedagogies, still a large amount of language information and skills need to be taught.

Teacher F stated:

A large percentage of Chinese students are still accustomed to grammar analysis and translations from teachers because they can realize what they have learned very instantly. In some Western communicative language-teaching mode, the learning effect can only be noticed gradually within a long period so

that many Chinese students are not sure what they have gained after one course. Consequently, before Western flexible activities, a clear statement of the learning goal from instructors is crucial to motivate students' participation. Students may begin to accept Western pedagogy if their specific skills can be improved after several classes. For example, if students have found they are capable to go shopping and bargain through different communicative activities, they will have the sense of self-fulfillment.

From the perspectives of the two interviewees above, knowledge transmission and skill improvements remain two important elements in the English classroom of Chinese higher education.

The second modification attends to students' learning habits. Teacher C said that Chinese students are very accustomed to teacher lectures and taking notes because this kind of class mode has been existing since their primary schools. Teachers report only a few students prefer to participate actively in class. Teacher C, D, E and F believe that English teachers could use Western liberal class mode as a segment of the whole course. For instance, teacher D likes to divide her class into several parts, which include teachers' lecture and activities. In the lecture part, students can take notes about important language knowledge and gain some knowledge from teachers. Teacher C also said that some students feel less pressured in the lecture parts in which they are not pushed to participate.

Third, modifications need to be made according to students' learning status. Teacher A, B and F believe some liberal and flexible class activities can be used to adjust class atmosphere. Teacher A said:

If we notice that students feel tired or are not in a good status to learn, we can use some activities to make the class atmosphere more relaxing or entertaining to attract students' attention. If students are in excellent status to learn, we can transmit more language knowledge.

Fourth, teacher F maintained that the choices of pedagogies are based on the teaching content and the learning goal of every course. For example, in oral training, teacher F usually designs several simple activities as small episodes in a course to help students get more practice. If students are not interested in some activities, then she will change to lectures. However, she may use a teacher-dominant approach more frequently in teaching grammar and writing. Likewise, survey participants mentioned that they use teacher-centred methods in vocabulary and grammar analysis. Cooperative methods and other flexible Western pedagogy may be employed more often in an oral English course.

Fifth, teachers say that modifications are required according to students' English foundations. For example, survey participants indicated that more teacher-dominant grammar and language point explanations need to be given to students with weak English foundation. Further, teacher E also claimed that tasks may be simplified and explained in a more detailed way for students who are less competent in English.

Furthermore, I am very interested in discovering whether or not Western knowledge and culture used as curriculum content can best facilitate students' English language learning. I asked my participants in interviews and in the survey. The results of interviews are very similar to the survey. Most of the participants agree that their students are interested in Western culture. Three quarters of participants support the

perspective that the use of Western cultures and knowledge can facilitate students' English learning. Only two participants disagree that using Western knowledge and cultures leads to better learning results. Interviewees said that most of the knowledge in the present textbooks is Westernized. Almost all of them agreed that present students have basic knowledge about Western culture and knowledge due to the Internet. Although, some teachers, like teacher C, D and F, indicated that most of the students, especially those from distant regions, have very superficial knowledge about Western knowledge. For example, teacher F said her students can name popular Western traditions as Christmas, but they often cannot explain the origin or the cultural connotations of these celebrations.

In terms of modifications, teachers in the survey indicated that teaching content should have a close relationship with students' daily life. Teachers need to think about students' learning interest and language foundation for curriculum content. The common way for some interviewees (e.g. teacher D and F) to teach Western culture and knowledge is to make comparisons between different nations so as to facilitate students' understandings. For example, teacher B usually teaches Western knowledge and cultures based on students' familiar knowledge in real life so as to generate better understandings. Teacher E elaborated that, when introducing a new topic, she usually first invites students to say something that are closer to their life to raise their learning interest, and then introduces some language points. Finally, students practice English language in familiar Chinese or Western real-life scenarios according to teacher E's observation of



students' interests and learning goals.

### **Follow-up discussion on the position of English, Western knowledge imposition and supports for diverse learners**

Given their prominence in the literature in Chapter Two, in the following section, I explore and discuss the following three themes: the position and power of English, Western knowledge and culture imposition and support for diverse learners.

#### **1. The position and power of English**

In my survey, eleven teachers agree that English is highly emphasized in the present higher education, although three believe that English education is less emphasized. Ten participants think that English needs to be the dominant class language to facilitate students' English learning. The remaining teachers, to some extent, believe that Chinese can also be used as class language. In my interviews, I also discussed with participants about the importance and the necessity of learning English. It seems that their perspectives diverge.

On the one hand, teacher D feels that it is unnecessary to emphasize English so highly in China. It is enough for Chinese college students to use English to make basic communication in daily life rather than being English experts. Teacher B believes that it is a waste of time for some students who are less interested in English and seldom use

English in their future life to learn English. However, it is not something teachers can control as China has very high requirements for students' English learning. Students may drop out of school if they do not learn English. Likewise, teacher E mentioned:

Many educators and students in China have realized the issue of the overemphasis of English education. That is the reason why some schools have already cut the total amount of English classes. Some students complain they seldom use English in the workplace. Students could begin to learn English when they feel it necessary. Some of them can even begin to learn English after they enter into the workplace that requires them to use it very frequently. In that way, the number of students will be largely reduced so that class sizes may be much smaller than now. More Western flexible activities can be introduced.

Like many scholars in China, interviewees (i.e. teacher B, C, D and E) challenged the necessity of emphasizing the position of English so highly. Teacher C and D even advocated that the English course can be changed into an elective course.

On the other hand, other teachers (e.g. teacher A) believe that the importance of English needs to be reinforced. Teacher A claimed that it is worthwhile to learn English as a large number of developed countries use English as the official language. From her perspective, learning English can help students get in touch with many latest technologies and cultures. Further, through English studies, students can gain access to new thinking modes to see the world from different angles. Although teachers C and D pointed out it is unnecessary to overemphasize the position of English in China, they still felt that it is necessary and worthwhile to learn some English. Teacher C commented:

At first glance, it seems that it is not worthwhile for students to study English. But two aspects also need to be considered. Firstly, English is now used as a criterion to evaluate students. Secondly, nobody can say that they will not use English for their whole life. Sometimes, proficiency in English can open some

job opportunities in a more globalized world.

Teacher D stated:

It is worthwhile for students to learn English. Many of my former students have mentioned that English is very important for their career development. Students' persistence and hard work in English learning are very meaningful for their future development.

I also asked my interviewees about whether the emphasis on English helps reinforce the superiority of Western knowledge and culture. All interviewees agree that it is a very debatable issue.

For one thing, interviewees (e.g. teacher B) support the view that language itself is a power. Teacher B indicated that Chinese culture and knowledge are not widely recognized by people all over the world as Chinese is not the global language. Teachers C, D and F supported the view that language is very powerful. English is the official language in some powerful countries, like USA and England. Western knowledge and cultures enjoy superior positions because of the power and superiority of English. Teachers D and E believe that Chinese people begin to realize that the superiority of English as a 'global' language affects college students' learning of Chinese and professional knowledge.

For another, teacher A thinks that many people learn English because they have a passion for English language and culture rather than the superior position of English. Although she has learned English for so many years, she loves both Chinese and Western cultures.

## **2. Western knowledge and culture imposition**

Western knowledge and culture imposition still exist in history and find manifestation in English curricula in China. This phenomenon can be explained in two ways. Western knowledge superiority is related to national economic status and less accesses to foreign knowledge and culture in recent history. First, teachers A and C said that “in the beginning of implementing the reform and opening policy in the late 1970s, the Chinese economy was not so good that many educators felt that knowledge and pedagogy in Western developed countries are superior”. Second, teacher C mentioned the famous Chinese saying that “dinners” in others’ home are more delicious than “the food” in our own “home”, which implies that people never reflect critically about the “food” in others’ home. Teacher B agreed and said that “if teachers or students never get exposed to those knowledge and pedagogies from Western countries, they might think the unfamiliar as superior”.

However, many research participants said that with the development of Chinese economy and more accesses to Western knowledge and pedagogy, this cultural imposition phenomenon has begun to change. Teacher A claimed that nowadays with the development of the Chinese economy, educators have built up confidence in Chinese knowledge and culture, including pedagogy. Educators in China, sometimes reflect critically about what is more appropriate for their students. Further, teachers B and C indicated that with the help of information technology, teachers and students now have more access to Western knowledge and pedagogies. Consequently, educators in China

begin to think about how to make modifications to Western knowledge and pedagogies according to the local contexts.

I also asked interviewees about the situations in the present institution where they work. They think Western knowledge and cultural imposition still exist as school administrators privilege all kinds of Western pedagogy. This is in accordance with what I have discussed and explored above. For instance, teacher D argued:

School administrators advocate cooperative learning and student-centered class modes in Western countries. Most of the language classes are considered to be successful and effective if more interactions and communications are involved. But I still think it is very hard to verify the learning effects of Western or Chinese pedagogy.

Teacher E claimed that teachers would be criticized if they use traditional lectures in those demonstration lessons. However, again, many English teachers claimed that they already reflect on how to use Western knowledge and pedagogy in a more sensible way and understand which modifications are essential.

### **3. Support for diverse learners**

In my survey, I invited participants to rank what types of students struggle most in Western knowledge and pedagogies. Students from poor families with fewer learning resources rank at the top, followed by students from rural and distant regions, students whose parents are illiterate and students whose parents cannot read or speak any English in a descending order.

Perspectives of interviewees diverge around the issue of whether or not more

supports need to be given to disadvantaged students. Teacher D argued that because of the popularization of the Internet, students from distant and rural areas could also get access to data easily so that they can catch up with other students very quickly. However, teacher B argued that more support needs to be given to some disadvantaged students who are unwilling to express themselves in class because of their weak English foundation. According to my survey and interview results, four kinds of supports can be offered.

Firstly, almost all participants (interview and survey) agreed that if disadvantaged students are motivated or interested in English language learning, they can still catch up with other students. Teacher D and other research participants indicated that it is very important for teachers to help disadvantaged students find their own interest to learn by themselves through Internet and books in the library. For example, Teacher F claimed that some students learn English because they are interested in Western culture, or the language itself. Teachers can resort to Western cultural stories, movies, and real scenarios to raise the interest of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Further, interviewees believe that they can use life and career dreams of disadvantaged students to motivate them. Teacher A argued that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are easily motivated in learning, as they want to change their destiny through high scores to win more opportunities in education and future career. The reasons for disadvantaged students' weak English foundations are their diminished access to appropriate teaching methods, qualified teachers, abundant learning resources and enjoyable learning

environments. If they maintain their learning motivation, they can catch up with other students. Teachers need to emphasize that English learning is contributive to their future studies or career. Teacher D agreed and pointed out that some disadvantaged students hope to resort to their English skills to find good jobs in multinational companies. Teachers can use students' career aspirations to motivate their English learning. Moreover, teacher B stated:

It is easier to motivate their learning interest, as they are very curious about new stuff in the school. A big challenge is how to motivate students' learning interest in a longer period. Teachers can ask those disadvantaged students why they want to learn English. For example, if they just want to pass exams to get higher education, some flexible Western pedagogy may not motivate their learning warmth. On the other hand, if some students want to learn English to work in multinational corporations, teachers can resort to some flexible and interactive Western pedagogy to help them learn practically.

From the views of interviewees, learning interest and life and career goals are crucial elements that can motivate the enthusiasm of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Second, teachers A, C, D, and E mentioned that increase school resources and teachers' instructions need to be given to disadvantaged students, because there are few differentiated supports for disadvantaged students in school. They can only be helped by more educational support given by teachers both in and out of classes. Teacher C mentioned that she would give more hints and Chinese explanations about unfamiliar Western knowledge and cultures for these students. Most often, students' English learning is based on their first language.

Third, teachers not only need to treat disadvantaged students equally, but also

encourage them constantly to build up their confidence. From teacher A's perspective:

The most important thing is to treat them equally to build up their confidence in learning. Those Western pedagogies require students to have a strong desire to participate so that confidence is very important. Some students from disadvantaged backgrounds are afraid of making mistakes or being treated unequally. They choose to be very silent in classes to avoid any embarrassment. Teachers need to build up students' confidence through encouragement or other ways gradually.

Teacher E added:

Some disadvantaged students might feel unaccustomed in the new environment and unfamiliar educational modes so that teachers need to encourage them more and create a comfortable learning environment.

Teacher F agreed, stating:

Some of the disadvantaged students are very shy and rely on their teachers due to their former educational mode. Teachers need to give tasks that they are capable of handling. Gradually, those students can build up self-confidence and get a sense of accomplishments. Meanwhile, constant encouragement also needs to be given.

Fourth, teachers B and D emphasized that more time and patience need to be given to disadvantaged students to get familiar with Western knowledge and pedagogy.

Teacher B further commented that one of the most important reasons is that those students are very sensitive. If they are forced to participate and fail, they may never want to be involved again.

Fifth, many interviewees believe that students with various backgrounds can help and support each other. Teacher E said that the class size is so big that teachers are less capable of giving additional help. When designing tasks, she may ask students in the same group to help each other. Teacher B said that, for instance, students from developed regions or cities may participate in those activities first. Then if those disadvantaged



students feel it is interesting, they will participate naturally. The teacher can encourage them to participate. When designing activities, teacher C prefers to divide her class into groups with students who are from developed regions and others from disadvantaged backgrounds. Students can cooperate and help each other. Besides, tasks can be simple and less complicated in the beginning so that those disadvantaged students are more willing to participate.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I have focused on the participants' perceptions of the uses of Western English pedagogy in Chinese higher education. In general, teachers understand the basic aims and approaches attributed to Western or modern pedagogy. They take on some of these to make the English classes more communicative, interactive and/or entertaining; students are to apply what they have learned to real situations. However, the use of Western English pedagogy comes with certain challenges. In particular, teachers named students' accustomed learning habits, weak English foundations, modest and inward personality, learning expectations, class sizes and conditions, the teacher-student relationship, and test culture. These challenges make modifications for the use of Western pedagogy essential. In the next chapter, I discuss the significance of my findings.

## **Chapter 5 - Discussion**

### **Paradoxes of Western pedagogy in the English Language Classroom**

This chapter discusses critical tensions around Western English pedagogy in the Chinese college classroom; it would seem that Western pedagogy represents both a problem and a solution to the English language curriculum. Generally speaking, teachers and students, in different ways, desire and resist Western pedagogy. Paradoxically, while Western pedagogy is oriented to promoting autonomy in learning and the application of knowledge and teachers' recognition of the importance of these aims, many of the teachers view the students as too dependent on direct teacher instruction for Western pedagogy to realize these aims. The limits and possibilities of Western pedagogy adoption and adaptation are discussed in relation to the literature, my research questions and my findings. To conclude, this chapter discusses limitations and key implications of my thesis.

### **Framing the findings: Western pedagogy as paradoxical**

In the process of educational transfer from the West to China, officials, administrators and teachers need to take the local academic, economic, social and historical contexts into serious consideration (Spring, 2009; Tarc, 2012; Bai, 2011). The local contexts shape how Western pedagogy is conceived and practiced. There exist divergent conceptions for Western pedagogy, for instance, whether or not progressive pedagogy's purpose is for motivating students or for deepening learning itself. In order to

further analyze and discuss the tensions in the use of Western pedagogy, I will review the main representations of Western pedagogy.

### **Representations of Western pedagogy**

For the most part, Western pedagogy is conceived as progressive, student-centered pedagogy; albeit, from the teachers' perspectives, the aims of this pedagogy and the requisite conditions for realizing these aims are somewhat divergent. After hearing different voices from academic scholars and my interviewees, I want to summarize the main representations. My findings are similar to Spring's findings in his 2009 study. Spring claimed that teacher professionalism and autonomy, learning based on students' interest and participation, active learning, and egalitarian relations are the key components of Western pedagogies (p. 18). Most of the teachers' perceptions align with this claim. First, many teachers in the interviews and surveys claimed that Western pedagogies are student-centered, which signifies that students' learning needs, motivations and interest are highly emphasized. For example, almost all the participants said that they use Western liberal class activities, such as story telling, and role-play to set up an entertaining and amusing learning environment to raise students' motivation and peak their interests in learning. Second, Spring emphasized that teacher professionalism and autonomy are important in the choices of pedagogy. Interviewees (e.g. teacher A) agreed and emphasized that in a Western curriculum, teachers choose the appropriate curriculum content and classroom activities in a flexible way according to

their own professional knowledge and class observation rather than stick to the fixed syllabus and lesson plan. Third, through the interviews with the teachers, egalitarianism has been emphasized in Western pedagogy. In my understanding of literature articles and research data, this involves two connotations: first, teachers are required to keep an equal relationship with students. Brown (1994) and other scholars claimed that in Western pedagogies, teachers may keep a more harmonious and equal relationship with students, which means that they do not take the role as “‘master’ controller who determines what students do, when they should speak and what language forms they should use” (p. 160). Teachers need to create a climate where students are given more freedom. The second connotation aligns with the interviewees’ perspective that teachers should treat each student, including students from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with weak foundations in English in an equal way. Teacher B emphasized that disadvantaged students are sensitive and afraid of being labeled as ‘less competent language learners and users’, and they therefore require more support, encouragement and recognition from teachers. Fourth, Zuhai (2012) argued that the Western pedagogy focuses on the students’ learning responsibilities, knowledge application abilities and practical English competencies. In my research, participants mentioned that Western pedagogies not only demand students’ abundant reading and other preparations before class discussions, presentations and other activities, but also require students’ review and reflections after classes. Furthermore, Spada (2007) and Savignon (2002) claimed that Western pedagogy focuses on students’ practical English communicative competencies. Research

participants have mentioned that in Western pedagogies, they use different real-life scenarios to let students participate and apply what they have learned.

After analyzing of the representations of Western pedagogy, I first want to discuss the question of Western pedagogy's fundamental purpose. Two different voices can be heard and are expounded in my following section.

### **1. The relationship between Western pedagogy, “real learning,” and learner foundations**

A significant paradox relates to whether or not Western pedagogy is regarded as a real way to learn that contributes to language acquisition. On the one hand, some interviewees (teachers C and E) believe that Western pedagogy is used primarily to engage students. It provides some relaxation in contrast to the “boring lecture.” However, it is not considered to be a real learning method or process. Likewise, some interviewees mentioned that their students who are cultivated through teacher-dominant lecturing paths may hold similar opinions. Here, progressive modes are seen as a bridge to ‘real’ learning, which will be accomplished by more direct, traditional methods. For instance, teacher C said that some students who are weak in English need more explanations from teachers to lay basic foundations. Teacher A emphasized that competent Chinese learners also hold high expectations for abundant knowledge transmission. Consequently for these students, only teachers’ lectures are regarded as real and helpful instructional practices. Teacher C and E said some students don’t take knowledge application activities seriously. These

students do not realize that Western language-application activities, though they may not transmit a large amount of language knowledge, can also contribute to their language competencies. Similar to Ouyang (2000), teacher A claimed that some students have complained that teachers who used Western pedagogy were irresponsible. Students in Ouyang's case study complained about communicative language teaching "because they felt a sense of confusion, anxiety, and a lack of solid and tangible achievements..." (p. 412). Whether or not Western pedagogy is regarded as a real way of learning is closely tied to students' accustomed learning habits, expectations and English language learning needs based on their English foundations.

On the other hand, other interviewees (teachers B and F) stressed using Western English pedagogy to provide more opportunities for students' deep learning of the English language. Here, deep learning implies that through a large amount of knowledge application activities, students can use English language in a flexible and appropriate way. Swain's output hypothesis (1985), asserted that learners must be pushed to produce output in the second language in order to develop grammatical accuracy. Some survey participants also believe that through a large amount of knowledge application, students can understand the language usage better so as to internalize what they have learned. According to my research and literature, Chinese English language teachers, to some extent, resist using Western pedagogies, citing obstacles such as: students' weak English foundations, and preferred teacher-dominant pedagogy, etc. Finally, teachers' perceptions of the aims of Western pedagogy affect their teaching practice. For example, if a teacher

just uses Western pedagogy as a kind of “seasoning” rather than the “real food”, they may barely focus on the adopted activity’s design and effect.

## **2. Western knowledge and pedagogies as external pressures**

Postcolonial critiques call for a non-coercive relationship between East and West, and object to the ethnocentric privileging of Western rationality and predefined rules of validation (Andreotti, 2011, p. 2). The ideology of Western superiority still exists in English curriculum in Chinese higher education as many research participants use words like “advanced” and “modern” to describe Western knowledge and pedagogy. Teachers face pressures to use Western pedagogy and curriculum content. My findings are somewhat mixed in relation to the degree and effects of external pressures.

Most of the participants claimed that the main pressures come from their students and the changing nature of society rather than school administrators or the government. Present Chinese college students push their teachers to use the diverse forms of pedagogies and hope to engage the latest knowledge worldwide. Global advances in transportation, communication and information technology have accelerated global flows of ideas and practices (Spring, 2009). University and college students can access Western knowledge and pedagogies through Internet so that many students have expanded expectations for language classes. Teacher E thinks that her students want interactive and multiple forms of activities. Teachers A and D believe that present students are influenced by the ideology of Western freedom and liberty in their out of school lives; so,

some of them lack enthusiasm for authoritarian and serious traditional Chinese class modes. Additionally, teacher F mentioned that after suffering so many years of boring and tedious teacher dominant instructions, students prefer relaxing class atmospheres, which she attributes to Western pedagogies. These findings align with Ouyang's (2000) study, where some students favored humane and inspiring methods in communicative language teaching over traditional methods.

Although the main push for the use of Western pedagogy may originate from students, there are also top-down institutional pressures. In the beginning, I was surprised to hear that most interviewees did not believe that the institution pushes them fiercely to use Western pedagogy. However, in the subsequent interviews, they did mention that school administrators privilege Western pedagogies, as when showcasing student-centered class modes in staff meetings among other occasions. There are also a number of pilot programs for the implementation of Western pedagogy initiated by administration. Most interviewees also emphasized that if they do not make use of a large amount of interaction or use Western flexible and entertaining class activities in demonstration lessons or school inspections, their teaching performance might be deemed unsuccessful by the dean, influential colleagues and/or school administrators. Nevertheless these pressures seem more symbolic than material, as no hard consequences result if the teacher's students accept her more traditional ways of teaching.

The very existence of the English language program in the case institution speaks to the dominance of English and Anglo-Western countries in a globalizing world.



Following Bourdieu (1991), language itself is a kind of symbolic power. Teacher B and D argued that the significant position of English also makes Western knowledge and pedagogies favorable in English language programs in China. I agree with the perspective of teacher D that as we are teaching English, much of the curriculum content is selected from the Western world. Internationally, Western language pedagogy is also regarded to be more effective in teaching English language. Teacher B added that if we taught Chinese as a global language, the same power/knowledge asymmetries would emerge.

### **3. Student participation**

Many interviewees (e.g. teacher E) asserted that Western pedagogy is used as an incentive for students' participation and initiative. However, in real class activities, all interviewees agreed that students participate unevenly in Western modes. In some cases, Western pedagogy seems to restrict some students' class participation. Teachers B and C argued that only highly motivated students with desirable English foundations participate actively. They not only want to practice their language skills, but also hope to have a sense of accomplishment through the recognition and appraisal from teachers and classmates. In contrast, students with weak English foundations are not confident to express themselves and keep silent most of the time. Teacher C said a few students with weak English foundations just play on their cell phone or ipad in knowledge application activities. Only a minority of competent language users, seem to engage happily and actively. Further, according to Krashen (1982), one obstacle that manifests itself during

language acquisition is the affective filter, which is a ‘screen’ that is influenced by emotional variables that can prevent learning. The affective filter can be prompted by many different variables including anxiety, self-confidence, motivation and stress. Teacher B mentioned that some students with weak English foundations keep silent in group work or other activities because of anxiety and uneasiness. These students feel less exposed by teacher lectures. Reflections of teacher A, D, and F support Lu (2008), who claimed that Chinese students are modest and prefer teachers to dominate the class time. They are afraid to make a scene in front of the whole class. The sense of insecurity drives them to hide away in different ways. Some students may prefer to concentrate and follow teachers’ lectures in a relatively “safe” learning environment.

#### **4. Gaps across diverse students**

As mentioned above, notwithstanding the intention to adjust class atmosphere to support students’ knowledge application, Western pedagogy can ironically amplify gaps between more competent and less competent language users. Teacher C and D said that some less competent English language learners may even lack interest and confidence in learning itself and remain mostly passive in their classes. Consequently, the gaps between competent and less competent English language users appear to become wider in using Western pedagogy. Further, interviews emphasize that students from rural and distant regions have less access to Western pedagogy and language learning resources long before their entry into higher education. Their over-reliance on teachers, modest

personalities and weak English foundations represent the main barriers to their participation in Western class modes. In some cases, these students are perceived by teachers and their classmates, as homogeneous weak students rather than students with complex life histories and individual experiences. Canagarajah (2005) argued that “students (especially those from marginalized backgrounds) come with personal experience and direct insight from their life that should shape a critical practice relevant to them” (p. 943). These disadvantaged students may face added challenges in English learning. Teacher B indicated that these students are extremely sensitive and afraid of being labeled as “incompetent learners” and treated unequally by teachers and classmates. Thus providing extra supports for these learners is complicated by their desires not to be treated differently. If students are not confident or active in learning, the gaps in English competencies between them and other students are likely to become wider.

##### **5. Students’ independent learning abilities**

My research participants mentioned that Western pedagogy both requires and is used to cultivate students’ independent English learning abilities, which is just the capacity that many Chinese students appear to be lacking. Teacher C and D emphasized that in some cases, Western pedagogy is ineffective because of college students’ reliance on their teachers. Teacher A, C and D emphasized that in Western modes, students need to make preparations before classes and reflections after classes. In comparison, in traditional Chinese pedagogy, students rely on teachers’ knowledge transmission in class

and seldom learn on their own. Teacher C said if students are required to do abundant independent learning after classes, some of them may just drop the course. The independent learning may involve the summary of the classes, additional reading and critical reflections, etc. Teacher D even doubts whether some students have developed any independent learning abilities. Almost all research participants indicated that some students are less capable to discipline themselves, which is related to their past learning experiences. In China, teachers' class dominance and role as "commander in the army" are also supported by the large class sizes and lack of modern facilities.

All interviewees asserted that it is impossible to keep a totally equal relationship with students. Context should be a serious consideration when designing, adopting and adapting Western pedagogies in China. No curriculum or pedagogy can be universal because context, and demographics all need to be given consideration. For instance, Ouyang (2000) highlighted in his case study that teachers complained that some big classes of their colleagues who used communicative language teaching were too noisy and chaotic. They did not want to teach close to those classrooms. Thus constraints come from within one's own classroom as well as from other teachers and in the context of the program as a whole. Teachers B, C and D also claimed that they constantly experienced chaos when using Western pedagogy in big classes with 55-60 students. They asserted that they have to dominate the class or set up strict class rules in order to ensure the classes proceed in a smooth and efficient way. With teachers' serious role, tight control and all-sided care and protection, students' independent learning abilities are restricted.

Even with the inclusion of Western class modes, students still want to rely on teachers or other classmates. Consequently, my interviewees' responses supports Ouyang's work (2000, 2004), given that they report students' complaints that they make limited language progress and encounter confusion in liberal class discussion and knowledge application activities, where they are required to learn and practice independently.

## **6. Test culture**

Almost all interviewees indicated that flexible, liberal, communicative and interactive Western "best" or "advanced" practices run counter to a dominant culture of testing (term exams, College English Examination, Practical English Tests for Colleges, IELTS, TOFEL, etc). In China, test results are closely tied to students' academic and career development. In test-oriented training, Western pedagogy is not deemed as efficient as teacher-dominant vocabulary, syntax and grammar explanations. Ouyang (2000) explained in his case study that teachers "got negative feedback suggesting that CLT produced students who could 'only speak loud in class, but scratch their heads in tests and exams'" (p. 410). Although some interviewees dislike the test culture, we, as English teachers, have little agency in changing national policy.

Nevertheless, if teachers only use lectures in test-oriented training, will students be more motivated in English language learning? Many interviewees (e.g. teacher B and D) were opposed to the 'teaching to the test,' given that, after passing the exams, some students may totally lose interest in English learning. They regard tests as terminal in

English learning, from which they seldom get pleasure. For this reason teacher D still insists on the necessity of using interesting and entertaining class activities to keep students' learning enthusiasm. Students have complicated learning motivations, which involve pleasure and preferences, academic success and career goals, etc. How to maintain students' love of learning in a culture of testing is an issue with which many teachers grapple across their careers.

### **7. The significance of tests**

It appears then that tests restrict teachers' use of Western class modes in English language teaching. However, from the teachers' perspectives tests still need to exist given certain realities in China. As teacher A mentioned, the test is an efficient way to assess students' English competencies. Without the College Entrance Examination or College English Test, students from disadvantaged families may lose the opportunity to learn English. Some schools in rural or distant regions would cancel English language lessons to students. In turn, they may lose many career and academic opportunities in the future as English is an essential skill for workers in China. Block and Cameron (2002) stated that "[p]eople have always learned language for economic reasons, but in a post-industrial economy it has been argued that linguistic skills of workers at all levels take on new importance" (p. 5). If disadvantaged students lose opportunities in English learning, social inequality may be further heightened.

## **8. The use of Western knowledge and culture as English curriculum content**

Pedagogy and curriculum content are interconnected and influence one another mutually. Interviewees said that most of the knowledge in the present textbooks is Westernized because of the cultivation of students' cross-culture awareness and the global position of English and Western knowledge. However, teacher C, D and F pointed out that students have superficial understanding about Western knowledge and culture and that they lose interest in foreign content. They may hold back when they are required to use Western knowledge as contextual information to express their meanings or make social communication in English. Further, teacher F said that some students are not capable to enjoy the beauty or fun in Western stories, as they don't own the background knowledge. I had a similar experience. I remember my first year studying in a Western university, all Canadian students laughed loudly for some jokes and stories; however, the Chinese students felt awkward, as we totally had no idea about what was so funny. Teacher C and F suggested that students' familiar knowledge can be used to explain some unfamiliar curriculum content. It appears that it is important for teachers to understand students' academic and social backgrounds.

### **Hybrid/blended forms of English curriculum and pedagogy**

Most of the research participants agree that Western pedagogy and cultures, to some extent, can and do motivate students' learning interest and enthusiasm. Western knowledge and pedagogy may work quite well in some situations rather than in all cases.

Teacher A, B, C and D said that with the development of Chinese economy and improvements of qualities of education in China, the advantage of Chinese pedagogy begins to be recognized by scholars from different countries. Chinese educators frequently reflect on the value and rationality of our traditional teaching methods. Though these traditional methods may be more teacher-dominant, they still work effectively under some specific local contexts. I agree with Deng (2011), who calls for educators to create hybrid kinds of pedagogies. Interviewees (like teacher A) indicated that traditional Chinese pedagogies have already been experiencing some changes. Resonant with de Souza's (2004) and Bhabha's (1994) positions, culture and values are already hybrid as formed under heterogeneous processes (as cited in Andreotti, 2011, p. 29). Byrd Clark has further argued that language is also a hybrid and heterogeneous construct comprised of complex practices (Byrd Clark, 2012). Almost all participants in interviews and surveys claimed that they prefer blended forms of pedagogies and curriculum content. What kind of blended forms are possible? What are the effects of the blended English curriculum?

First, many survey participants and teacher E and F think that the choices of curriculum content and pedagogy are related to the learning goals. For example, teacher F said that she would like to use Western flexible and liberal class modes in oral English language practice that requires a large amount of knowledge application. However, in grammar analysis or test-oriented training, teacher F and some other interviewees suggested that traditional Chinese pedagogy may be more effective. Interviewees teach



the Comprehensive College English course, which purports to train students' listening, speaking, reading, writing and translations abilities. In that course, teacher B, C and F emphasized that Western pedagogy and Chinese traditional pedagogy can be used in alternations in classes. To some extent, I agree with the perspectives of my participants, though still some concerns are worthwhile to note. For instance, in oral training, some students' weak English foundations may hinder them to make effective communication in Western-style activities. They need to resort to teachers' instructions constantly. With big class sizes of more than 50 students in Chinese higher education, it is almost impossible for teachers to give differentiated instruction to every student.

Second, the choices of curriculum content and pedagogies may be adjusted and modified according to the class atmosphere and students' learning status. Teacher A, C, D and F have indicated that they prefer to integrate different pedagogies into one class to make students learn English more effectively. For example, in English language teaching, teacher D prefers to use teacher's lecture and knowledge transmission first, followed by some flexible and relaxing activities, like games or role-play activities when students are tired or distracted. In the traditional lecture portion, Chinese students may find that they have gained new language input. In Western activities, students not only can apply what they have learned to real situations, but also draw upon their passions in learning. But again a possible consequence is that some students and teachers may just regard Western pedagogy as a kind of entertainment to be used when students tire. Teacher F suggested that before each activity, teacher needs to emphasize the purposes and goals clearly.

Meanwhile, during the whole process, teachers are required to keep a tight surveillance on the progress of students' performance. If they need help, instructions are given promptly. Nevertheless, again, my interviewees think that it is very hard to suit the needs and learning status of students with diverse identities in big classes.

Third, almost all the participants claimed that it is important to create an authentic language environment for students to practice English. Cummins (2001, 2009) has emphasized the importance of "pedagogies that include students' prior knowledge and incorporate their heterogeneous practices and identities can foster a deeper cognitive and social engagement (as cited in Byrd Clark, 2012, p.150). Authentic teaching content can signify the real situation in Western world or familiar contexts in China. I agree with most of interviewees that in order to build students' multicultural awareness, teachers could use Western curriculum content and pedagogy. However, if students show no interest, material and pedagogy closer to Chinese real life could be used to scaffold their understanding toward the foreign context. For example, teacher F sometimes asks students to describe traditional Chinese festivals in English if her students are unfamiliar with Western festivals. In that way, even students with weak English foundation can come up with stories or perspectives on their own worlds.

Fourth, similar to all interviewees, Canagarajah (2005) and Byrd Clark (2012) highlighted the multiple and heterogeneous students' identities that are related to their geographical, social, political and economic backgrounds. Their identities are connected with their learning needs in English language studies. What I have found in my teaching

practice is that some competent English language learners, who hope to work in multinational companies or study abroad, prefer Westernized curriculum content. They show less interest in the local knowledge and culture and hope teachers to speak more English in classes. However, students with weak English foundations or from distant regions undoubtedly face challenges in the unfamiliar knowledge, foreign culture and English dominant language environment. Hybrid English curriculum also highlights that teachers develop reflexivity of their own practices (Byrd Clark, 2012) to modify their pedagogies and curriculum content.

### **Implications**

This thesis aims to analyze the tensions, potentials and perils that Western knowledge and pedagogy has brought to the English language curriculum in one case of Chinese higher education. As the contemporary world is becoming more interdependent and interconnected, higher requirements are set up for university and college graduates as global citizens. Students need to cultivate multi-cultural awareness in order to work and live well in the present China where countless international communications and connections can be found. Meanwhile, the local situations and national characteristics are always indispensable parts of globalization. The extent of Western educational transfer is not an easy process as the complicated local socio-cultural, economic, and geographical situations shape how Western knowledge and pedagogy is “accepted, rejected, or creolized” (Ouyang, 2004, p. 139). What are the implications or recommendations for

English language education in Chinese higher education given my case findings?

First, a post-colonial perspective theorizes a non-coercive relationship between East and West. In this process, broad social, cultural and historical contexts need to be taken into consideration. China once encountered semi-colonial situation so that Western superiority still exists in the area of culture and knowledge (He, 2010). Many interviewees (like teacher A and C) claimed that in the late 1970s, China began to implement the Reform and Opening up policy to solve the economic backward situation. Many educators and policymakers hoped to resort to Western educational modes and knowledge to improve the quality of education in China. The economic and political hegemonic power of Western developed countries has made some imported advanced educational modes as parts of world cultures (Anderson-Levitt, 2012, p. 444).

In some contexts, Western knowledge and pedagogies can stimulate students' English learning interests and enthusiasm. Chinese university and college students who have endured long-term tedious and serious learning atmospheres can get some sense of balance and progress through Western pedagogy. However, all interviewees and survey participants maintained that the use of Western knowledge and pedagogy is not straightforward because of local conditions and dynamics, such as the test culture and historical and cultural learning habits. For instance, Carney (2008) argued that "teacher-centered schooling represents a powerful cultural transmission system that is not easily broken by global or even national edicts...." (p. 82). Adopting Western pedagogy may result in negative effects in pushing Chinese students and educators to accept

something from the West that does not quite work for them. Chinese students who are not accustomed to learn independently may resist inquiry forms of learning in different ways as I have discussed in my thesis. Further, students may feel pressured and anxious in participation because of their modest and inward personality and/or the lack of confidence in English language learning. Some students prefer to follow their teachers' instructions and take notes. Some teachers (teacher B, C and D) maintained that they occasionally resist using Western pedagogies because of their anxiety and frustration caused by the complicated realities and challenges in the English language classrooms.

Consequently, a non-coercive relationship between East and West—adoption as choice rather than imposition—needs to be emphasized in the internationalizing of the English language curriculum. The non-coercive relationship emphasizes non-imposition in the adaptation of ideas from elsewhere. Avoiding enforcing or advancing hierarchies or dependencies in international educational transfer. International educational transfer is a sensitive and ongoing process that prioritizes students' learning motivations, interest and capabilities. More reflexivity and constant modifications are needed so that English language teaching and learning become a recursive process. Western pedagogy (e.g. progressive pedagogy) focuses on teaching based on the real situations in the classroom (Spring, 2009). Enforcing some best practices actually runs counter to the advocated spirit of some Western pedagogy. Thus bottom-up forces and practices can determine the extent to which the Western culture should be “accepted, rejected, or creolized” (Ouyang, 2004, p. 139). For instance, in my interview and survey, the biggest challenge for

educational transfer between East and West is that the transfer is not attuned to the learning motivations of students in their local/national contexts. The pressures from national and provincial standardized tests restrict students' interests in flexible and liberal Western activities. As long as students are highly motivated, any educative modes can work quite well. Teacher A said students may even concentrate to listen to those tedious teacher-dominant lecture in order to pass the tests that are useful for their future career. However it is important to note again that after students' pass their exams, they may lose their motivations for further English learning. Consequently, Western class modes may be particularly useful to maintain students' learning enthusiasm. In these activities, teachers need to observe and figure out possible reasons for students' silence or inactive learning and adjust strategies accordingly. As Dewey (1929) insisted, "Education, therefore, must begin with a psychological insight into the child's capacities, interests, and habits" (p. 9).

International educational transfer is never a simple process, which means good strategies can only be constructed through constant teachers' observations and teacher-student communications. Almost all interviewees claimed that in staff meetings and professional development programs, school administrators always introduce "advanced" and "best" practices as coming from the West. In my work experience in China, teachers gather together in staff meetings, listening to the dean or principals' introduction of some "advanced" Western pedagogy. In the professional development programs that I have attended, hundreds of teachers just listen attentively and silently and

take notes from so-called experts' presentations around "effective" Western pedagogy. Those experts usually are governors of national educational systems (e.g. Ministry of Education) or professors of best universities in China. Some of them even haven't taught English language in classrooms for many years or are expert in other fields rather than language teaching. We, as front-line workers in the classroom, seldom own the opportunities to share our own teaching challenges (e.g. big class sizes, students' unbalanced English foundations, and low motivations) explicitly so as to explore how to use appropriate strategies under these challenging conditions. Non-coercive West-East relationship in curriculum means teachers' voices need to be heard and valued. Those voices reflect the real situations in the language classrooms and the needs of English language learners with diverse backgrounds, motivations and English foundations. They can inform how Western pedagogies can be adapted to the local context—what could be a key component of professional development.

Second, as Chinese and Western knowledge and ideology are influencing each other in the globalized world, the divisions between the West and East, although heightened in rhetoric, are actually becoming more blurred. Bhabha (2004) has maintained that culture and knowledge have already been hybrid. In accord, large proportions of interviewees (e.g. teacher A, E, F) insisted that Western pedagogy can only be called "modern" pedagogy. Many elements attributed to Western pedagogy are also found in present Chinese pedagogy. Constant interactions and communications are essential parts in the present Chinese successful lectures or teacher-dominant instructions.

I agree with the Chinese popular saying that translates as: it doesn't matter whether the cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice. In my view, the first concern for we educators to choose pedagogies and curriculum is not based on origins but on their suitability for students with different learning motivations, habits, and interests.

Third, the present Chinese teacher-students relationship has changed significantly, though the old tradition still appears to exist. Interviewees mentioned that influenced by Western equal ideology, the present hierarchical relationship also involves shifts in the following: expanded student freedom to express critically, harmonious class atmosphere, friendly relation with teachers and mutual respect. Additionally, some traditional approaches, such as teachers' use of their authority to keep class order, are still needed because Chinese students are accustomed to their teachers' role as parents or manager in the company. Besides, other complicated factors, such as big class sizes, limited class time and students' diverse English foundations and self-discipline abilities, not only restrict students from critical thinking and expressing, but also force teachers to be more serious and directive to ensure class efficiency and order.

Fourth, my interviewees and scholars like Feng (2009) and Wu (2010) claimed that students from poor, rural and distant regions have little access to Western knowledge, culture, and pedagogy. Many interviewees (e.g. teacher A and D) argued that those students are very motivated, as they desire to learn English language to get better jobs to change their own destiny. Further, many teacher-participants think that disadvantaged students have limited accesses to Western knowledge and flexible pedagogies and that



these students may indeed feel everything is so new and interesting. But obviously a significant challenge is how they can participate actively and confidently in the classroom. I agree with teacher B that English language teachers need to encourage them and treat them equally with other students. These students are usually more sensitive than their counterparts from urban regions. Additionally, more support can be given in discreet ways to help them catch up with other students so that they can gain more equal linguistic opportunities in the future.

### **Limitations of my study**

First, due to the limits of time and long distances with the research participants, my research was implemented through Skype or telephone interviews and email surveys. In this sense the data may not be as rich as in-situ ethnographic research or face-to-face interviews. Maybe I will include class observations in my future prospective research.

Second, the college I chose is located in a Suzhou, a major and highly developed internationalized city in the southeast of Jiangsu Province in Eastern China, located adjacent to Shanghai Municipality. Although teachers and students of the college are from different parts of China, my research does not access the most potentially negative aspects of importing Western English pedagogies or capture some of the complexities among teachers and learners from rural areas.

Third, I implemented my research in a technical and vocational college so that the results can reflect some present English language education situations in Chinese

higher education; therefore my findings may not resonate across all academic universities, especially for top-tier universities with excellent domestic and international prestige.

Fourth, in my research, it was inevitable for me to make personal interpretations, informed by my former study and work background. I may have my own strong views or perceptions on Western pedagogy and its adaptation and uses. But I have asked for clarification from participants, rather than assume meanings. I invited them to provide examples and elaborate on some specific educational practices that they have tried. In that way, I attempted to draw on the perceptions of my participants and bracket out my perspective.

Last but not least, my research focuses on teachers' understandings and perspectives. Students are not involved in my study. Their perspectives might be different from their teachers and also represent valuable voices to document and analyze.

### **Recommendation for possible future research**

This study purports to offer insights into some adaptable and flexible conditions under which Western practices could deliver more optimal results to meet the local students' complicated English language learning needs. As mentioned above, my research centers on teachers' points of view. In future research, I may start from students' standpoints and conduct ethnographic field research to obtain a richer, more in-depth picture.

In the meantime, as an immigrant student studying in a Western University, I also have experienced cultural shock, discomfort and tensions. With more international and immigrant students studying in Western universities, greater attention needs to be given to the kinds of curriculum and pedagogy that can best support their language and academic studies. When I began to study in a Western university, I felt pressured and scared about abundant preparations and reflections after classes, critical discussions in classes, unfamiliar culture and contextual curriculum content, and students' dominant role in classes, etc. During my studies, some teachers gave additional instructions and after-class guidance, which helped me resolve many confusions and doubts. Now, after almost two years of adaptation period, I am more accustomed to my academic studies, though I still encounter challenges frequently. Given my current role, I would like to conduct research on the sensitivities and modifications that Western universities need to consider in the curriculum to facilitate the academic studies of international and immigrant students.

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## Appendix A

### A Case Study on the Globalizing English Language Curriculum in One Chinese College -How Western Pedagogies Are Adapted and Adopted in the Classroom

**Student Researcher: Xi Wu**

Graduate Student, University of Western Ontario

**Supervisor: Dr. Paul Tarc**

University of Western Ontario

### Interview questions

#### Three turns of interviews

1. Could you please say something about your success in the present English language teaching?(your own stories, experience, etc)
2. How about the challenges you have met in the present College English language teaching? (your own stories, experience, etc)
3. How about the challenges for the students' English learning?
4. What are the characteristics of Western pedagogies? Or you may describe some familiar Western pedagogies.
5. How do you choose the curriculum content in western pedagogies?
6. How about the pressures to use Western pedagogies?
7. How about students' response to Western pedagogies in the English language curriculum?
8. Can students achieve better learning effect through western pedagogies? Or to what extent?
9. What are your ideal western class modes?
10. What are the constraints for the effect of Western knowledge and pedagogies?
11. How about students' preferences for Western curriculum content and pedagogies?
12. Can you describe some traditional Chinese pedagogies in English language classes?
13. Can you compare teacher-students relationship in Western pedagogies with traditional Chinese pedagogies?
14. How about the learning effect of traditional Chinese pedagogies?
15. Do you make modifications when using Western pedagogies and curriculum content? If yes, how do you make modifications? (your own stories, experience, etc)
16. How to facilitate the English learning of students from rural and distant area?
17. How about the situation of the use of Western knowledge and cultures in the English language curriculum?
18. What are the qualities of good English language teachers?
19. What are the qualities of good language learners in Chinese higher education?
20. What do you hope to improve for the present English education?

A follow-up turn of interviews

21. What kinds of students are more likely to lack of the enthusiasm and motivations in English learning?
22. How do Western pedagogies (e.g. interactive language teaching, cooperative learning, progressive teaching, etc) successfully motivate students' English learning enthusiasm?
23. When do those Western pedagogies fail to stimulate students' learning motivations? (Can you give me some examples?)
24. Many teachers argued that some Chinese traditional pedagogies, such as lectures, still need to be existed. How will Chinese pedagogies motivate students' English learning enthusiasm? When will those Chinese pedagogies fail to stimulate students' learning motivations? Can you give some examples?
25. A large amount of teachers claim that the best way to help disadvantaged students is to stimulate their learning motivations. Wu (2010) claimed that students from rural and distant areas have fewer contacts with English and western knowledge before they enter into higher education due to the lack of sufficient learning resources, access to materials, and opportunities. The dominant learning modes are traditional oriental rote learning and reliance on teachers' Chinese dominant instructions in English class (p. 20). Their parents may be totally illiterate in English. Some of their English foundation may be poor. Have you found this? How have you responded?
26. How to move disadvantaged students to be able to handle new teaching approaches and unfamiliar Western knowledge?
27. After devoting so much time and energy to English learning, some students may seldom use English in the workplace or future life. Do you think that it is worthwhile? What are the benefits and risks of their investments in English education?
28. How are these students the same and different from students who study English abroad?
29. A large amount of class time in China may be spent on test-oriented training, in which traditional Chinese pedagogy, like lecture, plays a significant role. Do you use flexible Western pedagogies in those test-oriented trainings? How so or why not? How about the benefits and payback for these instructions?
30. Yang, Zhang and Wang (2006) argued that in the process of cultural globalization, developing countries in the third world prefer to assimilate to western worldview(s), values, and knowledge. Carney also proclaimed that western "advanced liberal" (p.69) knowledge and pedagogies are regarded by Chinese government as more efficient and effective strategies to improve the quality of education to achieve "glorious modernization" (p. 74) and help students competitive in the global market. Do you witness this phenomenon in your work at the college?
31. Bourdieu (1991) pointed out language itself is a kind of symbolic power. Does this mean anything to you? Do you think there is a problem with china's uptake of English as a 'global' language? If so, can you explain a bit more?

32. In the survey, many teachers claimed that it is very important to establish an equal relationship between teachers and students. What does equal mean and what does this look like in the classroom? What are the strengths and drawbacks?
33. In your understanding, what are the differences between Western and Chinese understandings of teachers as authorities in classes? Where does the “authority” lie?
34. In my research, some teachers claim that Western pedagogies are very entertaining; while others believe those pedagogies are less informative. Do you agree? Can you give some explanations?
35. There exist some frequently mentioned obstacles to Western pedagogies in my research, such as class sizes, students’ diverse English competencies, and less serious learning attitude, which may be hardly to be solved in short period. How will you handle these issues? Can you give me some examples and stories about your successes and failures in dealing with these issues?
36. What kinds of students are more likely to lack of the enthusiasm and motivations in English learning?
37. How do Western pedagogies (e.g. interactive language teaching, cooperative learning, progressive teaching, etc) successfully motivate students’ English learning enthusiasm? When do those Western pedagogies fail to stimulate students’ learning motivations? (Can you give me some examples?)
38. Many teachers argued that some Chinese traditional pedagogies, such as lectures, still need to be existed. How will Chinese pedagogies motivate students’ English learning enthusiasm? When will those Chinese pedagogies fail to stimulate students’ learning motivations? Can you give some examples....
39. A large amount of teachers claim that the best way to help disadvantaged students is to stimulate their learning motivations. Wu (2010) claimed that students from rural and distant areas have fewer contacts with English and western knowledge before they enter into higher education due to the lack of sufficient learning resources, access to materials, and opportunities. The dominant learning modes are traditional oriental rote learning and reliance on teachers’ Chinese dominant instructions in English class (p. 20). Their parents may be totally illiterate in English. Some of their English foundation may be poor. have you found this? How have you responded? How to move disadvantaged students to be able to handle new teaching approaches and unfamiliar Western knowledge?
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44. Bourdieu (1991) pointed out language itself is a kind of symbolic power. Does this mean anything to you? Do you think there is a problem with China’s uptake of English as a ‘global’ language? If so, can you explain a bit more?
45. In the survey, many teachers claimed that it is very important to establish an equal relationship between teachers and students. What does equal mean and what does this look like in the classroom? What are the strengths and drawbacks? In your understanding, what are the differences between Western and Chinese understandings of teachers as authorities in classes? Where does the “authority” lie?
46. In my research, some teachers claim that Western pedagogies are very entertaining; while others believe those pedagogies are less informative. Do you agree? Can you give some explanations?
47. There exist some frequently mentioned obstacles to Western pedagogies in my research, such as class sizes, students’ diverse English competencies, and less serious learning attitude, which may be hardly to be solved in short period. How will you handle these issues? Can you give me some examples and stories about your successes and failures in dealing with these issues?

## Appendix B

### A Case Study on the Globalizing English Language Curriculum in One Chinese College -How Western Pedagogies Are Adapted and Adopted in the Classroom

**Student Researcher: Xi Wu**

**Supervisor: Dr. Paul Tarc**

Graduate Student, University of Western Ontario

University of Western Ontario

#### Instructions to be stated to participants:

This is an anonymous online survey for your perspectives on the English curriculum in your school. My main purpose is to understand the present situations of English education in your school to further explore the possibilities of western educational transfer in the English curriculum. Please answer the questions below in an honest way, thanks! In completing this survey you give your consent to be a participant.

#### Survey

- 1. How many years have you taught English in colleges or universities? \_\_\_\_\_**  
a. less than two years    b. two to five years    c. five to ten years    d. more than ten years
- 2. Estimate how many months you have lived in an English-speaking country.**  
a. 0    b. 1-4    c. 5- 12    d. 12-24    e. 24.....
- 3. Where did you get your highest degree? \_\_\_\_\_**  
a. China    b. North America    c. Europe    d. Australia
- 4. English is highly emphasized in the present higher education in China. \_\_\_\_\_**  
a. strongly agree    b. agree    c. undecided    d. disagree    e. strongly disagree
- 5. English as the dominant class language can best facilitate Chinese students' English learning. \_\_\_\_\_**  
a. strongly agree    b. agree    c. undecided    d. disagree    e. strongly disagree
- 6. What are the main challenges you meet in daily English language teaching? (please select a maximum of 4) \_\_\_\_\_**  
a. students' poor English foundation    b. class size    c. students' lack of interest  
d. students' lack of motivation because of less frequent use in daily life and their future career    e. lack of modern facilities  
f. students' lack of independent learning abilities    g. students' accustomed educative modes before higher education
- 7. According to your knowledge, what are the main challenges students may face in daily English learning? (please select a maximum of 4) \_\_\_\_\_**  
a. poor English foundation  
b. lack of independent learning abilities and reliance on teachers' instructions  
c. less persistent in English learning    d. lack of motivation    e. lack of initiative in participation    f. lack of interest    g. lack of confidence in expression    h. modest

personality

**8. As an English teacher, are you familiar with western pedagogies?** \_\_\_\_\_

a. very familiar      b. familiar      c. not quite familiar      d. totally unfamiliar

**9. Which western pedagogies and class modes below have you used frequently in daily teaching? (please select a maximum of 3)** \_\_\_\_\_

a. communicative language teaching      b. interactive language teaching      c. cooperative language teaching      d. students-centered class mode      e. others \_\_\_\_\_

**10. What are the characteristics of western pedagogies(以上提到的你常用的欧美的教学法的特征是什么)?**

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**11. What are your purposes of using western pedagogies (使用欧美教学法的目的是什么)?**

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**12. I feel pressured to use the above mentioned western pedagogies.** \_\_\_\_\_

a. strongly agree      b. agree      c. undecided      d. disagree      e. strongly disagree

**13. If your answer is a, b, or c, where are those pressures coming from? (please select a maximum of 2)** \_\_\_\_\_

a. teachers themselves      b. students      c. school administrators      d. society

**14. What are the constraints for using western pedagogies?**

哪些因素会影响欧美教学法的使用效果(please select a maximum of 3) \_\_\_\_\_

a. students English foundation      b. mechanical use of the forms of western pedagogies  
c. students' unbalanced participation      d. students' lack of self-discipline      e. students' low motivations and less enthusiasm in English learning  
f. big class size      g. inflexible class setting

**15. Are your students in favor of western pedagogies?** \_\_\_\_\_

a. strongly agree      b. agree      c. undecided      d. disagree      e. strongly disagree

**16. If your answer is c, d, e, why they may not like western pedagogies? (please select a maximum of 3)** \_\_\_\_\_

a. former learning habits      b. low motivations in English learning      c. the desire to obtain more knowledge from teachers' instructions      d. preference for serious learning  
e. modest personality      f. some western pedagogies are entertaining rather than



needs

c. constant interaction between teachers and students in lectures      d. others \_\_\_\_\_

**27. What kinds of lectures are less helpful?**

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**28. Your students are interested in the Western cultures.** \_\_\_\_\_

a. strongly agree      b. agree      c. undecided      d. disagree      e. strongly disagree

**29. The use of western cultures and knowledge in curriculum can best facilitate students' English learning.** \_\_\_\_\_

a. strongly agree      b. agree      c. undecided      d. disagree      e. strongly disagree

**30. What are the most important ways for English teachers to make the choices for curriculum content and pedagogies (老师在课堂上应该如何选择教学内容和教学手段)?**

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**31. What do you need to observe in classes (英语课堂上你会关注哪些方面)?**

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**32. Please rank the following choices 1-6 according to the extent of students' struggling with Western knowledge/pedagogies in the classroom. Please note: No 1 belongs to students who struggle most in all. (哪种类型的学生对欧美教学法和文化最不了解? 请排序)**

1      2      3      4      5      6

- a. Students from rural or distant regions
- b. Students from cities and coastal areas
- c. Students from poor families with fewer learning resources
- d. Students from rich families
- e. Students whose parents cannot read or speak any English
- f. Students whose parents are illiterate

**33. What actions should be taken to facilitate the English learning of students who rank first and second in question 32 (please select a maximum of 3)?**

- a. explore their English learning interest and motivation
- b. more academic guidance from teachers and other educators
- c. financial assistance
- d. provisions of more English learning resources and material
- e. emotional support to build up their confidence
- f. others \_\_\_\_\_

**34. The choices given in the various questions, made it very easy for me to convey my understandings of Western English pedagogy and my preferences as a teacher.**

a. strongly agree      b. agree      c. undecided      d. disagree      e. strongly disagree

**35. Please state in your own words anything you would like the researcher to know about the role and challenges of adopting or adapting Western pedagogies in your practice as an English teacher.**

[ \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ ]

**Appendix C**  
**Survey results summary**

1. a. 1    b. 1    c. 4    d. 10
2. a. 7    b. 6    c. 0    d. 2    e. 1
3. a. 15    b. 0    c. 2    d. 0
4. a. 2    b. 9    c. 3    d. 1    e.1
5. a. 3    b. 7    c. 5    d. 1
6. a. 13    b. 9    c. 9    d. 10    e. 1    f. 5    g. 1
7. a. 13    b. 5    c. 8    d.11    e. 3    f. 5    g. 5    h. 0
8. a. 0    b. 7    c. 9    d. 0
9. a. 7    b. 10    c. 8    d. 9    e. 1
10. Emphasis: teacher-student(s) and student(s)-student(s) communication, interaction and cooperation, students' learning interest and needs, authentic language-learning environment
11. Help students learn with initiative; create opportunities for students to use the language; help students make knowledge application
12. a. 1    b. 3    c. 2    d. 10    e. 0
13. a. 1    b. 6    c. 3    d. 0
14. a. 10    b. 1    c. 10    d. 4    e. 11    f. 4    g. 0
15. a. 0    b. 10    c. 6    d. 0
16. a. 4    b. 3    c. 3    d. 1    e. 0    f. 3    g. 1
17. a. 0    b. 7    c. 9    d. 0    e. 0
18. a. 6    b. 7    c. 3    d. 5    e. 0
19. a. 7    b. 4    c. 15    d. 2    e. 4    f. 5    g. 1
20. a. 13    b. 10    c. 0    d. 1
21. a. 2    b. 10    c. 1    d. 2
22. a. 8    b. 8    c. 3    d. 2    e. 2    f. 8
23. Class language; explanations about English language knowledge according to students' reactions; modifying pedagogies according to class atmosphere, students' English foundations, etc.
24. Informative, efficient, but boring
25. a. 1    b. 11    c. 3    d. 2
26. a. 10    b. 12    c. 12    d. 2    e. 0
27. Insufficient attention to students' reactions, feedback, students' life and career needs and interest; test-oriented
28. a. 1    b. 10    c. 4    d. 1    e. 0
29. a. 2    b. 10    c. 2    d. 2    e. 0
- 30 & 31. The consideration and observation of students' learning needs, interest, identities and language foundation, class sizes, and teaching goals

32. 1. c    2. a    3. f    4. e    5. b    6. d  
33. a. 10    b. 8    c. 2    d. 8    e. 7    f. 0  
34. a. 0    b. 10    c. 5    d. 0



## **Appendix D**

### **Project Title:**

A Case Study on the Globalizing English Language Curriculum in One Chinese College  
-How Western Pedagogies Are Adapted and Adopted in the Classroom

### **Principal Investigator:**

Paul Tarc, Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario

Student researcher:

Xi Wu, Master student of the Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario

### **Letter of Information**

#### **1. Invitation to Participate**

You are being invited to participate in this research study about globalization and its influence on the English curriculum of Chinese higher education, because you are knowledgeable and experienced enough to give views on the present situations of the English education of Chinese higher education.

#### **2. Purpose of the Letter**

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information required for you to make an informed decision regarding participation in this research. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be invited to take part in three turns of interviews about the English curriculum, your teaching and your students' learning over about two months through SKYPE or telephone in your mother tongue. Each interview may take about one hour. Please answer all the questions in an honest way.

#### **3. Purpose of this Study**

The purpose of this study is to illuminate the limits and possibilities of English language pedagogies and western curriculum content in Chinese higher education in a globalizing world.

#### **4. Study Procedures**

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to be involved in three turns of interviews. It is anticipated that the entire task will take two month. The tasks will be conducted through Skype or telephone. All the interviews will be audio-recorded for data collection and analysis. You may refuse to allow our interviews to be recorded. Xi Wu will translate and transcribe the main content of the interviews. There will be a total of six participants who will participate in the interviews.

#### **5. Possible Risks and Harms**

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study.

#### **6. Possible Benefits**

This research may help Chinese educators and policy makers re-conceptualize of the pressures from the western knowledge and pedagogies to the English curriculum and pedagogies for the considerations of the local Chinese contexts to facilitate Chinese students' English learning.

#### **7. Compensation**

You will not be compensated for your participation in this research.

#### **8. Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your future academic status or employment. Your free choice not to participate will not affect the student researcher (Xi Wu)'s academic progress in her programme.

#### **9. Confidentiality**

Your responses, as well as your participation or non-participation will be kept confidential. All data collected will remain accessible only to the investigators of this study. No agencies, groups and persons can have access to any participants' personal information and data in the interviews. If the results are published, your name will not be used. If you choose to withdraw from this study, your data will be removed and destroyed from our database. Representatives of The University of Western Ontario Ethics Board may contact you or require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

#### **10. Contacts for Further Information**

If you require any further information regarding this research project or your participation in the study you may contact Xi Wu and Paul Tarc.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Research Ethics (519) 661-3036, email: [ethics@uwo.ca](mailto:ethics@uwo.ca).

#### **11. Publication**

If the results of the study are published, your name will not be used. If you would like to receive a copy of any potential study results, please contact Xi Wu.

#### **12. Consent**

Written Consent Form is included with this letter. If you agree to participate, please sign.

*This letter is yours to keep for future reference.*

**Consent Form**

**Project Title:**

A Case Study on the Globalizing English Language Curriculum in One Chinese College  
-How Western Pedagogies Are Adapted and Adopted in the Classroom

**Study Investigators' Name:** Paul Tarc, Xi Wu

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Participant's Name (please print):

\_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (please print):

Paul Tarc , Xi Wu

Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix E**

### **Project Title:**

A Case Study on the Globalizing English Language Curriculum in One Chinese College  
-How Western Pedagogies Are Adapted and Adopted in the Classroom

### **Principal Investigator:**

Paul Tarc, Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario

Student researcher:

Xi Wu, Master student of the Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario

### **Letter of Information**

#### **1. Invitation to Participate**

You are being invited to participate in this research study about globalization and its influence on the English curriculum of Chinese higher education, because you are knowledgeable and experienced enough to give views on the present situations of the English education of Chinese higher education.

#### **2. Purpose of the Letter**

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information required for you to make an informed decision regarding participation in this research. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be invited to finish a survey according to your own teaching experience.

#### **3. Purpose of this Study**

The purpose of my study is to illuminate the limits and possibilities of English language pedagogies and western curriculum content in Chinese higher education in a globalizing world.

#### **4. Study Procedures**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be invited to finish a survey according to your own teaching experience. There will be a total of twenty participants who will participate in the survey. After you receive the survey, please finish it within one week.

#### **5. Possible Risks and Harms**

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study.

#### **6. Possible Benefits**

My research may help Chinese educators and policy makers re-conceptualize of the pressures from the western knowledge and pedagogies to the English curriculum and pedagogies for the considerations of the local Chinese contexts to facilitate Chinese students' English learning.

### **7. Compensation**

You will not be compensated for your participation in this research.

### **8. Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your future academic status or employment. Your free choice not to participate will not affect the student researcher (Xi Wu)'s academic progress in her programme.

### **9. Confidentiality**

Your responses, as well as your participation or non-participation will be kept confidential. All data collected will remain accessible only to the investigators of this study. No agencies, groups and persons can have access to any participants' personal information and data in the interviews. If the results are published, your name will not be used. If you choose to withdraw from this study, your data will be removed and destroyed from our database. Representatives of The University of Western Ontario Ethics Board may contact you or require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

### **10. Contacts for Further Information**

If you require any further information regarding this research project or your participation in the study you may contact Xi Wu and Paul Tarc.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Research Ethics (519) 661-3036, email: [ethics@uwo.ca](mailto:ethics@uwo.ca).

### **11. Publication**

If the results of the study are published, your name will not be used. If you would like to receive a copy of any potential study results, please contact Xi Wu.

### **12. Consent**

Completion of the survey is indication of your consent to participate.

*This letter is yours to keep for future reference.*

## XI WU

### Education

- 2012**     **Master of Education, Curriculum Studies**
- 2014:**    Thesis: A Case Study on the Globalizing English Language Curriculum in One Chinese College  
               -How Western Pedagogies Are Adapted and Adopted in the Classroom  
**The University of Western Ontario**
- 2005**     **Master of English language and literature (Applied linguistics)**
- 2008:**    Thesis: A Study of English Classroom Interaction in HTVE  
**Soochow University**
- 1999**     **Bachelor of Arts (English)**
- 2003**     **Soochow University**

### Work and Training Experience

- 2013.7**  
 TESOL Canada Certificate Training in London Language Institute
- 2012. 9**  
 Successfully completed The Teaching Assistant Training Program of The University of Western Ontario (TATP)
- 2004.6 -2012. 7**  
**College English teacher**  
 Job responsibility: teaching English for college students/dean assistant/students' affairs assistant
- 2003.4-2004.6**  
**Sales Assistant, HengRun Import & Export Corp., LTD**  
 Job responsibility: Communicating with the Canadian customers  
 /quotation/translation/quality control

### Publications

- Wu, X. (2007). Female's struggle to the mundane reality——the analysis of a rose for Emily. *Journal of LianYunGang Teachers College*, 3, 28-30.
- Wu, X. (2007). An exploration of college English classroom interactive teaching. *Journal of Changshu Institute of Technology (Education Science Edition)*, 21(12), 92-95.
- Wu, X. (2008). An exploration of college English classroom interactive teaching. *Journal of Suzhou College of Education*, 25(4), 104-106.
- Wu, X. (2010). An exploration of the application of CDIO mode to the improvement of college students' English public speaking skills. *Journal of Changshu Institute of Technology (Education Science Edition)*, 24(12), 76-78.

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**Skills**

Proficient in English and Mandarin (Mother tongue)

Excellent management skills (planning, coordinating, facilitating, issue resolution)

Superior written and verbal communications skills – Able to communicate at a level appropriate across a wide variety of participants.

Ability to work in a dynamic team environment

Proficient in Computer

Familiar with prezi, ppt, and other technologies

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**Certificate and qualifications**

TESOL Canada Certificate

Teacher Certificate in China (Higher education)

Mandarin Certificate

University Lecturer Certificate in China