
CHINA EFL: The Unqualified, Teaching (sic) The Unmotivated, In A Hostile Environment

By: Niu Qiang and Martin Wolff

ABSTRACT:

This article launches a frontal assault on the current EFL teaching program in China that recruits unqualified people to teach (sic) EFL in China to unmotivated students who, for the most part, are assigned to English classes against their will and are expected to acquire English in a hostile environment.

Throughout China's institutions of higher learning, numerous false assumptions provide the EFL program foundation:

1. Everyone in China needs to learn English.
2. Everyone in China wants to learn English.
3. Everyone who speaks English can teach English as a foreign language.
4. Anyone can administer a TEFL program,
5. The time honored TEFL methodology and pedagogy which has failed China over the past 20 years will eventually work if applied diligently.
6. There is no difference between second language learning and second language acquisition.

EFL teaching in China is not a program in need of fine tuning, as some suggest. It is a program that needs to be scrapped, thrown on the rubble heap of failed programs. A complete overhaul is required, commencing with the basic EFL philosophy, including the foreign teacher recruitment and the student assignment systems. China needs to implement modern second language acquisition theories; concepts such as comprehensible input, comprehensible output and immersionⁱ to create a friendly English acquisition environment.ⁱⁱ

We conclude that the proposed major overhaul would not increase the economic outlay but would in fact save limited financial resources and apply them in a far more productive manner.

I. THE UNQUALIFIED

Why does China have so many backpackersⁱⁱⁱ teaching English?

The following are representative recruiting advertisements:

Who can do it?
You can teach English overseas if:
you are at least 19 years old or you have finished high school
you have a passport from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, America, Great Britain, Ireland or South Africa
you speak English fluently, with minimal accent
you are interested in travel & other cultures
you are comfortable with strangers and have good social skills
http://www.teachinternational.com/who_can_doit.php

[http://www.planetedu.com/listings/internationaljobs/5647/x/x/teach/e](http://www.planetedu.com/listings/internationaljobs/5647/x/x/teach/english:7:5:d)

[nglish:7:5:d](http://www.planetedu.com/listings/internationaljobs/5647/x/x/teach/english:7:5:d)

“Travel and Teach English in China

Colorado China Council

Visit Their Web Site”

<http://www.1-language.com/cgi-bin/jobcenter.pl?noframes;read=250>

1-language.com ESL Job Center

Teach & Travel in Exotic Inner Mongolia, China

Posted By: veronica <eslcn1@yahoo.com.cn>

Date: Friday, 16 January 2004, at 1:18 p.m.

The China EFL teacher recruiting emphasis is on coming to China for a good time, even if you are not trained or qualified to teach EFL/ESL.

The Government has “guidelines for recruiting, or does it?

SAFEA [Ministry of Foreign Affairs PRC, State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs] Guidelines with respect to pre-qualification, to wit:

1. Foreign educational, scientific, cultural and medical experts.

These refer to those experts who are employed by the Chinese schools and other educational establishments in such fields as publication, medicine, scientific research, culture and art, and sports. They should hold bachelor's degrees and have more than two years of experience. http://www.china-tesol.org/SAFEA_Guide/safea_guide.html

Please keep in mind the Regulations state in Chinese ‘ying juyou’ or translated ‘should have’; this has been translated as ‘should hold’. The Chinese [original] Regulation uses the character for ‘should or ought to’, not the character for ‘must’. Thus the Regulation must be viewed as embodying some flexibility, albeit becoming more rigid, and must be read in conjunction with the Education, Higher Education and Vocational Laws and provincial regulations and by-laws, not to mention the Constitution.

SAFEA is the Central Government’s control authority for all matters pertaining to the employment of foreign experts, however, Chinese Law bears little semblance to Western Law, and because of China’s Constitution^{iv} promulgations and edicts from the Central Government are subject to interpretation by local authorities in the 32 Provinces, Autonomous Regions and Municipalities, which ultimately trickles down to the People’s Governments of cities. Thus, one Regulation may have over 600 interpretations, subject to perceived local circumstances.

However, matters pertaining to issues of national interest, such as those controlled by the Central Government's Public Security Bureau [PSB], e.g.: Border Patrol [which includes Immigration], are under the jurisdiction of the Central Government. Therefore, Residency Permits must be registered with the Central Government; however, other than entry and exit, the issue and policing of such is administered at a local level.

Furthermore, the administration of Foreign Affairs is controlled directly by the Provincial and Autonomous Region Authorities, but not by the three Municipalities under the direct control of Beijing. As a result, Beijing, Chongqing and Shanghai [theoretically] must adhere to the Regulations; however, Chongqing and Shanghai do not, circumventing the Education and Foreign Experts laws by implementing their own local "measures".

With respect to the employment of foreigners, and that includes the issue of "Foreign Experts Certificate", by any employer in China, one has to remember that the Regulations are Central Government guidelines, and therefore subject to interpretation and the perceived "benefit" the applicant may bring to China. No, it is NOT absolutely essential that persons wishing to teach in China hold a 1st Degree, albeit desirable. Many an older person, with their experience and wisdom, can offer considerably more than a twenty-three year old graduate with limited experience. However, having said that, the possibility of an appointment without [at least] a 1st Degree is very limited, and is being conscientiously discouraged by SAFEA.

Authorized and approved education institutions can legally recruit direct, and that includes posting vacancies to sites on the Internet. If the local FAO has approved the employment of a person without qualifications, so be it.

This phenomenon of recruiting unqualified EFL teachers for China is discussed by foreign EFL teachers throughout China on a thread at www.eslcafe.com China Job Forums "Hiring Practices."^v
<http://www.eslcafe.com/forums/job/viewtopic.php?t=10449&highlight=hiring+practices>

Then there is also the issue of non-native or L2 English speakers being recruited to teach English in China. This has also been discussed by foreign EFL teachers in a thread at www.eslcafe.com China Job Forum "Filipino English Teacher."
<http://www.eslcafe.com/forums/job/viewtopic.php?p=99061&highlight=#99061>

China's justification for hiring L2 English speakers is the need to expose the Chinese students to various regional accents. This ignores the established fact that learning a "standard English" equips one to understand any and all regional English accents; while being exposed to a regional English accent only equips one to understand that particular regional accent. The justifications aside, the real reason China is hiring L2

English speakers is because they work much cheaper and they do not ask questions, state objections, or write articles like this one.

It appears that China is regressive rather than progressive in its modernization efforts when it comes to English education. EFL teaching is not seriously considered as a profession. It is assumed that every English speaker can teach English.^{vi} In reality, EFL teaching requires a complex array of knowledge which can not be obtained through a quickie, 30 day TEFL course.^{vii}

Three dangerous trends are clearly emerging. First, China is actively recruiting and employing young unqualified native speakers and L2 speakers to teach EFL. Second, China is actively pressing foreign exchange students into active service as EFL teachers and English Corner facilitators. (see English Corner supra) Third, foreign native English teachers who are simultaneously learning Chinese are doing so in the classroom at the expense of the Chinese students learning English, which is the very reason the foreign teacher is in the classroom in the first place. (see Foreign English Teachers supra)

II. THE UNMOTIVATED

A survey of 600 Business English majors at a 3rd tier college in Henan Province revealed that none of the students were attending the college of their choice and none of the students were satisfied with their school. Only 48 of the 600 students were satisfied with their major and wanted to be studying Business English.

During the 2003-2004 academic year, 3,000 non-English majors at a 2nd tier Shanghai university, who were required to take their first conversation English class in their third year, had an overall average attendance rate of just fewer than 76%.^{viii} The students have neither intrinsic nor extrinsic motivation.^{ix}

Foreign EFL teachers in China commenting on www.eslcafe.com China Job Forum "Missing Students" noted the lack of motivation and poor attendance of English students throughout China. (See Exhibit "C")
<http://www.eslcafe.com/forums/job/viewtopic.php?p=92420&highlight=>

Data collected over the past five years at six Chinese colleges and universities clearly establishes that the female students have greater motivation than the male students, have better attendance records, come to class having completed their homework assignments more often and actively participate in class discussions more often. The female students also achieve higher grades. In June 2004, after all final grades had been submitted, an email survey was sent to 240 (an equal number of males and females) junior level EFL students at a major Shanghai university, asking the

following:

Using no more than one paragraph, please tell me why the girls attend class more regularly than the boys; why the girls seem more motivated than the boys; why the girls come to class prepared while the boys do not; and why the girls participate in the class discussions more than the boys.

There were six female responses to each male response. The following are some of the most representative (original - unedited) answers from both the male and female perspectives:

FEMALE RESPONSES

I think the boys are more like to play. Nowadays, computer games are very popular. The boys always play games very late at night, so they have no more energy to behave activity in the class. And have no more time to prepare for the class. And if they play games all the night, they would rather to sleep than to attend class. And another point is that the English Class is not a class which has much relationship with their major, (I don't know how to express) It means that it is enough to get an C or 60, and it will not affect them to get the Bachelor Degree. And they think you're kind enough to give them the score at least C. So they don't worry about your class and their score. The last but not the least is that girls are more mature than the boys, we have realized the importance of English when we find a job, but the boys don't. All they know in the college, I think, is playing and love. J___

Dear _____:

I'm so happy that you still miss us!

About the question why girls are more diligent than boys in the study not only English what I think is that boys think they are more clever than girls and if only they can do well in the test is enough. The boys just want to pass the exam when the girls want to get good mark in the exam. The boys prefer play to study though the girls also like play. The girls know what is more important for them. On the other hand, there are still a part of some boys study hard and get good mark in the college. Unfortunately only a little boys do.

If a girl can study English well then she can find a good job just because her English well but the boy can find job easier than the girl. The pressure make girls study English hard than boys. L___

i think it has been a trend that girls work harder than boys.
in some old people's mind ,they think that the gene of girls and boys r different.they

think boys have better talent than girls.,so if boys and girls do the same thing at the same time,they think boys will do it better and use the less time.and it has been a common sence in a lot of people's mind.maybe this is the reason that some girls want to prove themselves.and with the time going on,it has been a trend.

another aspect,maybe the difference of the personality.girls r much more careful and kinder and quieter.so girls maybe r easier to calm down to study.and use more time to study.and in the end,girls do better than boys.

now,more and more girls work hard and their performances r better than boys.

so professor,what i said is just my opinion,i hope what i said can give u some help.

A__

Dear _____,

I used to be your student in _____ University. Thank you for your teaching and helping.

In China girls are more diligent than boys, because we think that only learning can change our life. But boys they have many other talents. They are more stronger than girls, so can do many hard works, which girls can't do. And they maybe think they are smarter than girls.

Second, In China a lot of knowledge must be remembered. Boys can't pay more attention on tests. That's why boys are always good at math while girls are good at language.

Why are girls always chatting in class? This reason is very easy. All the women in the world like talking. They can talk in everywhere and in every time.

I hope that my ideas can help you to know more about Chinese students.

Wish your new job happy!

Keep in touch! L__

P.S. Give you a picture of mine, hope you will like it!

L__ 😊

maybe girls do not dare to defy their teachers.we prefer to be praised than to be punished.boys want to show that they have grown up and they care nothing.in China,girls are always so sweet:) C__

Dear Dr. Wolff,

It's a good question, but unfortunately I don't know the correct answer. I just try my best.

As we all know, girls are always more patient and diligent. They prepared regularly and finished the homework more earnest while boys played the football and PC games. Almost in every class girls seem more motivated than the boys, coming to class prepared while the boys do not and participating in the class discussions more than the boys.

The only way that can make boys come to class regularly is rollcalling every class. And tell them, if you don't attend the class,

you lose your score. But sometimes some boys even didn't afraid of failing.

Of course, if the class is really attract students, all of them would coming and attend actively. But English is not our mother lanuage, so it's difficult to enjoy the lessons.

May you be more succeed.

S_____

MALE RESPONSES

Dear Professor _____,

Long time no see. I am dreamed of taking your lesson again.

Thank you for giving us so many wonderful moments.

There are many causes for the problem. But they come down to four majors:

Firstly, it is much easier for the boys to find jobs than the girls. Because girls should do a lot of things such as being pregnant while boys shouldn't. That might influence the job. So the boss would like to employ a boy rather than a girl. Therefore, girls must study really hard to meet the requirements of the society.

Secondly, boys are very immature. They will not think too much of their future. Only they know is relaxation, playing games, surfing on the net, sleeping etc. On the contrary, girls make their effort to learn everything well so that they can lay a solid foundation for their future.

Thirdly, girls have much more talent in learning languages. They have some gift of learning languages. So they become very interested in English and pay much attention to learning it. Maybe they are eager to find a foreign husband by learning English well.

Finally, boys have a high stress. After graduation, they must find a good job and set up their own family. They try their best to support the whole family. They think now is the best time of their life. They try to grasp this opportunity to enjoy their lives. And they don't like to consider too much.

In conclusion, I think boys need more help and care. In an Oral English Class, you should pay much attention to them.

Wish you happy all day!

Yours,

H_____

Because the different educational menthod and cutural in china. Nowdays boys are becoming more and more timid while the girls are becoming more and more powerful.They got the higher grades. Because the girls know that their future will be harder than the boys. When girls graduates from the schools, in the same situation, the same certificates, the same experience, the companies would rather choice the boys.The problem is the sexual discrimination.So if girls want to get a good job,they shall pay more than boys.Second. With the Women's Lib, the girls want to be more powerful than boys.They want to get much more things than boys do.So they study

harder .Third.The boys are attivte,they wold rather spend time on ports and games than just listen the teachers.They want a stage to show themselves. But when you ask the girls to answer the question,they will feel that just girls' bussiness.They will not be interested in that. So if you give more oppourtunities for boys to talk,they will do a perfect job.And the fourth,yuu did spend more time for the students on the net. The boys will feel dull and not spend every minutes in the class. But the girls are more patient.That's the problems.

Best regard

R_____

Dear _____,

The answers for the questions you bring out,in my opinion,have a lot to do with the boys'indivisual habitants.Maybe they don't regard them as one of our family,because they are very independant.Most boys are interested in PC games and some other sports ones.They may spend lots of time on them.Thus they will set aside little on class.Some boys'goal is just to pass the lesson.So they don't care how much they learn,which shows that the boys participate in the class discussions little than the girls.

L_____

Girls are easier to supervise.They come to class regularly does not mean they are favour of the class,they just strickly comform to the rules.Boys are more energetic,they usually want to do something to show their unique.The difference between boys and girls are their attitude towards study.In my opinion,girls focus too much on grade while boys study for abilities.That is why boys often miss class or do not prepare.

W_____

because you are a gentleman, a handsome man.if a wonderful lady,boys will have more interests.and in china boys are always have less word than girls,they wont be willing to speak in the class,even they prepare for it. you can see that if a boy look at you ,he will have the answer.if the boy low his head,you should dont ask him,excpt you want punish him.at last, thank you for teach me.byee bye

B_____

We look to our colleague Dr. Michael Denson for an analysis of these student responses.

The disproportionately small number of responses from male students would, at first glance, seem to subtract validity from the student survey. But, actually, this small response---coupled with the unexpected insightfulness of some of the male students who did respond---underscores

a point made elsewhere by this writer: that despite genuine attempts by Chairman Mao to promote equality of the sexes, China remains a fundamentally a sexist society, in which narcissism figures prominently in the personality makeup of a preponderance of its males.

Perhaps most disturbing to a Westerner is the fact that the women's responses quoted here all show an acceptance of the status quo . . . a quiet acceptance of the expected submissive role of most women in this society. Even the presumably more sensitive males who responded seem to readily accept the idea that women's primary role in Chinese society is still that of childbearing and housekeeping. Attempts by a handful of feminists in China appear to have done little in the way of consciousness-raising.

All considerations of social roles aside, these responses are also interesting in light of what seems to be a common misconception among foreign teachers: that although oral/aural skills are frequently abysmal, most Chinese university students, because they have had English grammar hammered into them for a number of years, are capable, given time, of producing coherent writing, with well-formed sentences. These responses do not support
s u c h a b e l i e f .

What short-range teaching guideline might be derived from the survey results? Chinese university administrators seem largely resistant to organizing classes according to levels of competence---to a Westerner, the most logical route. These administrators persist in organizing (if the word "organizing" can be used) classes according to major field of study. But given that most of the studious, self-disciplined students are female and most of the show-offs and smart alecks are male, perhaps Western teachers should instead be pushing for sexually segregated classes. It seems worth a try.

John M. Keller^x proposed four conditions that must be met for a learner to be motivated to learn. Attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction (ARCS) are the conditions that, when integrated, motivate someone to learn. Moreover, Keller suggests that the ARCS conditions occur as a sequential process (Driscoll, 1993, p. 312^{xi}). The conditions should be sustained to keep the learner interested in the topic.

Once a learner's attention is lost, motivation is lost, and learning does not occur.

Class attendance, particularly for a conversation English class, is a prerequisite for application of the ARCS model. In China we regularly see unmotivated male students who attend the first class of the semester, to make certain they are on the roll, and then disappear until the final examination. This is one reason that attendance must be included in the grading system because the teacher can not get the attention (the "A" in ARCS) of an absent student.

In June of 2004 a professor at a major university in Shanghai when confronted with a male student who attended the first class only and then showed up for the final exam explained that the student could not take the final exam due to lack of attendance. The student responded that his father was rich and could cause the teacher great difficulties. The professor was aware that the student's father had purchased a house just off campus for his son to use instead of living in the school dormitory. The professor was also aware that the student was failing all of his classes due to staying home to play computer games rather than attend any of his classes. When the professor refused to change the student's grade to the demanded "B," the student became physically threatening. After all was said and done, the student received an "F" grade from the professor. However, the author has previously documented that grades are known to be changed by school administrators in China.^{xii}

III. THE HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT^{xiii}

You are forced to trudge up three to five flights of cold concrete stairs, (past the stench of open trench, self-cleaning bathrooms reeking of urine and feces,) to reach your assigned concrete cubicle where you are required to sit on a 17" high backless wooden stool with an 8 1/2" x 11" seat, in front of a 30" high wooden bench, enclosed on three sides with glass partitions. The cold concrete floor is swept daily by merely pushing the dirt into a corner where it stacks up. Water is splashed on the floor to keep the dust down. There is no heat to ward off the freezing cold of winter, nor air conditioning to provide relief from the sweltering heat of summer. The walls are dingy-yellowed with time, dirty and in disrepair. The lighting is bare fluorescent tubes just like a sweatshop. In the front of the room is a Chinese language sign that roughly translated means [only speak mandarin in this room]. There is a second Chinese language sign on a sidewall that roughly translated says [no talking in this room].

This cold, dank, concrete box is surrounded by construction noises on one side, and from another side the machine-gun rapid-fire pops of hundreds of dribbled basketballs on the concrete exercise yard and the sound of popcorn popping as 50 ping pong balls

are slapped with bare wooden paddles and bounced on concrete tables located underneath your windows; and from yet another side the sounds of people noisily clomping up and down the adjacent stairs or people in an adjacent concrete cubicle playing a Chinese movie on the television loud enough for the entire building to participate in the audio bombardment.

Inside the concrete cubicle you sit theater style facing the front of the room, in a semi-isolation cubicle if in a sound lab, for nine hours each day. There are no English signs or notices posted on the walls, no decorations to instill any thoughts about the West, its culture, or its language. There are two Chinese signs on the front wall, one says, “No Talking In Class” and the other says, “When You Speak Use Mandarin Only.” There are no maps or globe of the outside world. You are deprived of any and all English newspapers, magazines or periodicals. There is no western music or television. And worst of all, no one speaks to you in English, not even those sitting next to you, let alone any of the other forty plus occupants of the cubicle. You are forced to watch Chinese movies or be completely bored.

Suddenly, but on cue, an authority figure enters your cubicle and announces that you will now learn English as a foreign/second language and you are snapped into the reality that you are now in an environment where you are required to not only learn but to “master” English as a foreign/second language. Your English teacher stands in front of the two Chinese signs that advise against talking in class or when you must, only use Mandarin. Your teacher commences to teach you English using Mandarin.

No, this is not punishment, not a prison, not a concentration camp, not a re-education camp or some other type of detention facility. You are a free spirit! Free that is to “master” English and do it within the next three years or four years by memorizing a vocabulary of 1,000 to 5,000 words, memorizing grammatical rules and memorizing set phrases or language patterns.

Outside your cubical you are constantly bombarded with Mandarin over the campus-wide loudspeaker system and in the written notices and bulletins posted on the public information boards around the campus, but nothing in English. Even the posted notice advising of an impending English Corner is written in Chinese characters. You note the absence of English reading materials in the brand new \$3.5 mil. College library; the absence of English music CDs, English DVD movies or television programs; the blaring Chinese movies in the cafeteria; the total absence of English signs or decoration anywhere on campus; and the lack of any inducement to speak English. When you go to the English department offices, all of the staff and students are communicating in Mandarin. You observe that the English department staff meetings are held in Mandarin. There are no staffs in the college library, cafeteria or store that speak English. No staff in the College President’s Office or other college administrative offices speaks English. The campus medical clinic and post office staffs also speak only in Mandarin.

There is nothing special or attractive about being an English major and there is no inducement to acquire English as a foreign/second language, just learn it as it is taught to you by your Mandarin speaking teachers who predominantly speak and teach in their L1 using a “chalk and talk” methodology.

The above-described environment violates every principle set forth by Krashen for establishing a friendly English acquisition environment. (Krashen 1989)

Acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language - natural communication - in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding. ... The best methods are therefore those that supply 'comprehensible input' in low anxiety situations, containing messages that students really want to hear. These methods do not force early production in the second language, but allow students to produce when they are 'ready', recognizing that improvement comes from supplying communicative and comprehensible input, and not from forcing and correcting production. Stephen Krashen

It also constitutes Chinese immersion rather than English immersion.

Learning English needs a language environment. Without it, people have to spend a lot more time on memorizing. For many of the learners, even they have tried hard, they still achieve very little. ... Here is the dilemma: on the one hand English is compulsory in school, on the other hand, there is no language environment in the society. Professor Gu Haibing, National Economic Management Department, Remin University. (China Daily, 11/3/03)^{xiv}

EFL/ESL students require comprehensible input within a friendly, no stress environment, to acquire the target language, which should be taught in the target language. (Krashen 1997) Chinese English majors with adequate financial resources study abroad where there is a friendly English language environment. By studying abroad the Chinese student is immersed in an English language environment.

In the real world, conversations with sympathetic native speakers who are willing to help the acquirer understand are very helpful. Stephen Krashen

But for the majority of Chinese students this approach is not realistic. As Professor Haibing points out and the above described English language environment at a Chinese college portrays; Chinese colleges not only fail to provide a friendly English acquisition environment, they actually seem to go out of their way, either through design or ignorance, to create an environment that is hostile to English acquisition.

Why don't Chinese colleges and universities make the most modest attempt to create a friendly English acquisition environment for their English majors? It seems to us a matter of common sense that if going abroad is the preferred manner of learning English due to immersion in a friendly English environment, then for those who are financially embarrassed, the Chinese college should at least make a modest attempt to bring "abroad" to the Chinese college campus.

Merely hiring a few foreign experts to visit with the students a couple of hours a week does not constitute the creation of a friendly English acquisition environment when all of the other daily input is Chinese. Students must have free library access to diverse English reading materials (books for all ages and language development stages including comic books, magazines, newspapers, novels, journals, classics, as opposed to English textbooks) since comprehensible input will be different for each student based upon their stage of English language development and learning speed differentials. They must also have free library access to English music (English CDs at 8 rmb each), movies (English DVDs at 6 rmb each), and television (CCTV Channel 9 (English) International). Free access in this sense means freedom to choose interesting and understandable materials (comprehensible input); freedom to decide when to access the materials; and freedom from the stress of doing assignments in preparation for a test (friendly environment).

Acquiring English should become a matter of enjoyment and fun in the sense of little children finding themselves alone and unsupervised in a candy store. The student should receive as much daily comprehensible input in the target language as possible which means the college should have bilingual signage; the English department should have English only signage; the English department should conduct all of its business in English; within the English department there should be a "communicate in English only" rule; class schedules, class rosters, notices to students and memoranda and other communications with staff should all be in English; the English department should be decorated with things English; the English department should be readily identifiable as a "little English enclave" even to the casual observer. Walking into the English department should be like walking into another world, an English-speaking world.

When a Chinese student goes abroad, they are forced to acquire English very rapidly or face the probability that their basic needs will go unmet. This is made easier due to

the immersion in everything English. The same should be true in the Chinese college English department.

China's teaching methodology makes no distinction between 2nd language learning and 2nd language acquisition.

IV. A NEW SHANGHAI HIGHER EDUCATION

PROGRAM WHICH IS DOOMED TO FAILURE

A. THE PROGRAM

This new program, instituted by one of Shanghai's largest, richest and most progressive public universities during the 2003-2004 school year, requires 3,000 non-English majors to take a conversation English class with a foreign teacher in the 3rd year of their 4 year college education.

The "Syllabus for the Spoken Course" provides:

"Course Description and General Goals: The course, which aims at developing students' skills in spoken English, uses a broad range of activities to develop language skills and proficiency. Students also focus on the cultural knowledge and attitudes needed to use English effectively in a variety of settings. In the long run they can improve their communicative competency to meet the requirements of the development of Shanghai – an international metropolis."

In reality, the "broad range of activities" and "variety of settings" is nothing more than classroom regurgitation of an inappropriate textbook. This is simply a repeat of middle school.

This program requires 3rd year college students who have not been in an oral English classroom for 2 ½ years, have never been in an English speaking environment, and have never previously had a foreign teacher, to suddenly produce oral English. Forced or compelled production of this sort is actually counter-productive and may inflict serious and permanent damage to the students' language acquisition ability. (Krashen)

Normally, even Freshman English majors spend the first year of oral English classes adjusting to their first experience with a foreign teacher and their first experience of

being required to produce oral English. It takes time to create a friendly English environment, to convince the Chinese student to forget about saving face, and to bring the students to the point where they are ready, willing and able to produce oral English voluntarily.

It is simply unrealistic to throw 3rd year non-English major University students, who have had no oral English classes for two years, into a first-time oral English class with a foreign teacher and expect any appreciable positive results. This effort must begin at the freshman level.

There appears to be an erroneous assumption that all university students, having completed English courses in middle and senior-middle school, are competent English speakers. Nothing could be further from the truth. (“China's ESL Goals and Objectives: Are They Being Met?” (2003) Niu Qiang & Martin Wolff, paper presented at The 2nd International Annual Conference of IATEFL China, Jilin, PRC; “EFL/ESL Teaching In China: Questions – Questions – Questions” (2004) Niu Qiang & Martin Wolff, Sixth International Symposium on Applied Linguistics and Language Teaching, Shanghai, PRC)

B. THE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR

The Program Administrator (PA) is know within the Chinese English Department as unapproachable, untrainable, unteachable, poorly informed, not acquainted with current research in second language acquisition, and closed to new ideas. This account is from subordinates and colleagues.

The foreign English teachers made numerous suggestions for improvement of the program. The PA’s response to every suggestion for improvement and modernization of the non-English major English teaching program was always an excuse or reason for not accepting the suggestion.

Excerpt from one foreign teacher’s letter to PA:

“Dear Dean _____:

>

>I am disappointed by your reply.

>

>I would have expected an apology for your failure to attend to this administrative matter long ago. This is not something that should fall on a foreign teacher.

>

>I also would have expected you to state that you would notify all of the Chinese English teachers of the library's accommodation for our students benefit and encourage them to give

their students homework assignments that would cause the students to make use of the library resource.

>

>I also would have expected you to survey the materials available in the English reading room and request the library to acquire resources aimed at assisting our students with their 2nd language acquisition and assist our teachers to learn more about current 2nd language acquisition theory and models.

>

>I am also disappointed by your response to the suggestion that we need to do more to provide English films to our students at night, every night. You stated that the English club shows movies at noon and the library also shows movies. Both statements are partially true but both are an unfortunate attempt to shift your responsibility to others who are in fact failing to provide adequately for the needs and requirements of our oral English students. Neither the English Club nor the library is providing English movies on a regular basis nor are they coordinated with the foreign teachers to provide a classroom discussion topic.

>

>I am here on a one semester contract and I will not extend to participate further in your program. Therefore I am being very blunt with you in stating my disappointment in the many failings of your program.

>

>Sincerely,

_____ ”

>

It did also appear that the PA's knowledge of 2nd language acquisition stopped about twenty years ago.

C. THE STUDENTS

The non-English majors were from the following disciplines: Administration; Applied Chemistry; Biology and Pharmacy; Chinese History; Chinese Literature; Computer Science Technology; Drama, Film and TV Literature; E-Business; Electronic Information; Science; Economics; Numerical Control; Politics; Geographical Information Systems; Physical Education; History; Chemistry; Civil Engineering; Sports Administration; Computer Control, Mechanical Design; Physics; Tourism Management; etc.

The students are assigned to conversation English classes by major rather than by English competency. This may be a quick and easy administrative solution to class scheduling but it shows a total ignorance of modern 2nd language acquisition theory. No attempt is made to tailor the program to the needs of the students in any particular major by teaching “English for a Special Purpose,” ie. sports English for the physical

education majors, tourism English for the tourism management majors, etc.

The attendance record of these students speaks volumes about their lack of motivation.

(See “UNMOTIVATED” section above) The student’s lack of motivation may also be a by-product what they perceive to be a boring and irrelevant program.

One of the more highly educated and experienced foreign teachers evaluated his students as “50% lazy, 25% I don’t care, and 25% clueless.” C.D., Ph.D. cand.

Another highly educated and experienced foreign teacher evaluated his students as “generally unmotivated.” R. H., B.Ed.

A third teacher evaluated his students: “What have these students been doing for the past 10 years that they have been studying English. You would expect them to have some competency in the language. They are lazy, without motivation. You have to treat them like little children.” D. D., B.A.

In one class, a third year Chinese English student opined that no Chinese man should get married until he owned a “horse” and “cow.” After the laughter died down, he was asked to state his position again. He repeated that in his opinion no Chinese man should get married until he owned a horse and cow. The teacher then asked him to write this on the board. The student went to the board and wrote, “No Chinese man should get married until he owns a house and car.” Yes, pronunciation is critical. No, unqualified EFL teachers are not what China needs.

D. THE FOREIGN TEACHERS

There are 17 teachers from the UK, United States, Holland, Canada, Australia, and Singapore.

Bachelor degrees	17
English/Linguistics undergraduate degrees	2
Advanced degrees	
Master	3
Doctorate	2
At least 2 years prior EFL/ESL teaching experience	6
L2 English speaker	2 (One speaks Singlish and is from Singapore)

The demographics of this teacher group are consistent with the incorrect but prevailing assumption that any English speaker is competent to teach EFL/ESL. (Qiang/Wolff “English or Chinglish”)

It is assumed that all of the foreign teachers know how to teach and no instruction or guidance is offered. Of the seventeen teachers, only two claimed to know the difference between 2nd language learning and 2nd language acquisition. The expression "language learning" includes two clearly distinct, though rarely understood, concepts. One involves receiving information about the language, transforming it into knowledge through intellectual effort and storing it through memorization. The other involves developing the skill of interacting with foreigners to understand and speak their language. The first concept is called "language learning," while the other is referred to as "language acquisition." These are separate ideas and we will show that neither is the consequence of the other. The distinction between acquisition and learning is one of the hypotheses (the most important) established by Stephen Krashen in his highly regarded theory of foreign language learning.

When one of these teachers was confronted with a class which was completely unprepared to discuss the topic of the day, the teacher simply asked the students what they would like to do since they had not read the homework assignment. The students stated their preference was to play cards and that is how they spent two periods, playing cards. Another teacher showed films at every class meeting. Another teacher sat at the front of the class and only spoke with those students who came forward to engage him one-on-one.

The written instructions to the Chinese co-teachers provide:

“Dean of the foreign Language College and Director of the Teaching and Research Section will observe the classes and there are going to be meetings to exchange experience and discuss common problems for the teachers.” (Quoted exactly)

In fact there were no class observations by the Dean or the Director during the first year of the program.

The first exchange meeting occurred eight weeks into the second semester. At this first exchange meeting there was no advance preparation for either group in terms of what to expect or how to act so the Chinese co-teachers sat in a group on one side of the room and the foreign teachers sat in a group on the other side of the room. Throughout the event there was very little exchange between the two groups.

One of the foreign teachers is from Singapore and speaks “Singlish” but was invited to extend the employment contract.

One of the foreign teachers is committed to an alternative lifestyle and some Chinese students complained that he openly advocates the “gay” lifestyle to the Chinese students during English corner. This teacher was invited to extend the employment contract.

Several of the teachers find nothing immoral about engaging in sexual relationships with their students, and do so. One of these teachers was invited to extend the employment contract.

One of the foreign teachers is heard to loudly argue with himself, at all hours of the early morning in the solitude of his apartment, which disturbs the immediate neighbors. This same teacher is observed walking around the campus engaged in a lively conversation with himself. He has also appointed himself to be in control of the teachers' computers, assuming the administrator role and issuing accounts, passwords, and controlling what can and can not be downloaded.

Three of the younger teachers spend a lot of their free time playing noisy computer shoot- 'em-up war games to the distraction of those using the computers for serious academic purposes. They do not even have sufficient manners to use earphones.

Several of the foreign teachers are simultaneously learning Chinese. They are constantly incorporating their Chinese into the English classroom and requiring their Chinese students to assist them in their Chinese acquisition. They are completely ignorant of the need to teach in the target language.^{xv}

E. THE CHINESE CO-TEACHERS

The written instructions given to the Chinese co-teachers included the following statement:

“Co-teachers should be really helpful to the foreign teachers in their orientation at the beginning and bridge the gap between teach and students (Don't say good words to them only). And give help to get meal card, etc.” (Original Chinglish quoted)

Most of the co-teachers' English is so poor they are never heard to use it except when communicating with their foreign co-teacher, “which winds up constituting a free English lesson for the Chinese co-teacher” according to one foreign teacher. A couple of foreign English teachers complained that they never heard from their Chinese co-teacher after the initial introductory meeting.

Most of the foreign English teachers complained that their Chinese co-teachers were untimely in transmitting information or in providing required assistance.

Only two out of 17 Chinese co-teachers regularly attended their foreign co-teacher's class.

The Chinese co-teachers are still utilizing the time honored but unsuccessful “Grammar Translation”^{xvi} teaching methodology. This includes the following

elements:

1. Classes are taught in the mother tongue, with little active use of the target language.
2. Much vocabulary is taught in the form of lists of isolated words.
3. Long elaborate explanations of the intricacies of grammar are given.
4. Grammar provides the rules for putting words together, and instructions often focus on the form and inflection of words.
5. Reading of difficult classical texts is begun early.
6. Little attention is paid to the content of texts, which are treated as exercises in grammatical analysis.
7. Often the only drills are exercises in translating disconnected sentences from the target language into the mother tongue.
8. Little or no attention is given to pronunciation.

This methodology is of little or no use in enhancing a student's communicative ability in the target language but is the preferred teaching methodology because it requires few skills of the teacher and can be objectively evaluated and graded. However, there is absolutely no support for this teaching methodology, no rational or justification, in any of the second language acquisition literature.^{xvii}

F. THE TEXT AND TEACHING MATERIALS

The required text is "Functioning in an Intercultural Community." Only one of the 17 foreign English teachers actually utilized the required text. The other 16 foreign English teachers soundly rejected the text as boring. Some of the foreign teachers reeled at the anti-American tone of the text, particularly that which is found at page 154:

Moral values in China's large cities are changing. Urban divorce rates have jumped to over 25% of all divorces. More people are beginning to blame the influence of Western morality and the influence of Hollywood for the dilemma that urban dwellers face. This imitation of the Western lifestyle is dragging the Chinese youngsters and urban businessmen and women down the path of immorality and divorce. ... The vices of Western society are becoming the vices of large cities in China.

The 3,000 students unanimously rejected the required text as boring. Stephen Krashen suggests that teachers should be allowed to choose their own texts which they deem best suited to the level of English proficiency of the class and of interest to the

students, i.e. comprehensible input. Notwithstanding that this opposition to the required text was conveyed to the PA, the PA steadfastly insisted that the required text be used by all of the foreign teachers. Fortunately the foreign teachers ignored the PA's admonition.

The justification for using the required text was that the students needed to learn English in a systematic manner as provided in the text. The PA showed an ignorance of 2nd language acquisition as distinguished from 2nd language learning. Oral English classes are a matter of language acquisition, not language learning. (Krashen)

Apparently the PA's strong defense of the required textbook was predicated upon a desire to save face (apparently having made the text choice) rather than being based upon sound human resource management principles and sound 2nd language acquisition theory.

Modern 2nd language acquisition theory provides that the teacher should be free to select the text or teaching materials that will be comprehensible for the particular class. (Krashen) This is particularly important in a situation, like the one at hand, where the students are not segregated according to 2nd language skills or development and any given class contains students of varying abilities and 2nd language acquisition proficiency.

Aside from the required text the university provided absolutely no additional teaching material. Although multi-media rooms were located throughout the campus, they were not available to this program without arduous advance arrangements. No tape players or CD players were provided for use by the foreign English teachers.

Photocopies were feely provided but only with one week advanced request. The written instructions to the Chinese co-teachers states:

“Anyone who wants print supplementary materials and use the language lab should ask the co-teacher to arrange at least one week in advance.” (Original Chinglish quoted)

1. Library

On the 4th floor of the library is a room with a Chinese sign above the door with an English translation which reads, “Reference-room on Foreign Edition.” (It is interesting to note that a University with an English Department officially condones the use of Chinglish.)

This “English Reading Room” is only open Monday – Friday 8:0 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and again from 1:00 p.m. until 4:30 p.m. The room is visited by no more than 10

students a day. The reason for this may be very simple – the students are in assigned classes during the hours the library is open. Essentially, a student must skip a class to use the “English Reading Room.”

A voice poll of 240 non-English majors taking conversation English revealed that only 3 students were aware of the English room on the 4th floor of the library but no student had ever visited the room.

A poll of the foreign English teachers revealed that only one was aware of the English collection on the 4th floor of the library but had neither personal knowledge of the material available nor the hours of operation.

The most current book on 2nd language acquisition in the library collection appears to have been published in 1981. This is consistent with the impression that the PA’s knowledge or learning about this subject stopped about 20 years ago.

The collection does not include English reading materials for persons of varying English comprehension capabilities and does not contain the types of materials that may be chosen for free or recreational reading which are so necessary for 2nd language acquisition. (Krashen) The Chinese Professors are afforded an annual opportunity to suggest titles for library acquisition but the foreign English teachers are not given the same opportunity. The Chinese leadership made no effort to obtain appropriate library materials to support the 2nd language acquisition program for non-English majors.

A poll of the foreign teachers revealed that only one of them was aware of the 4th floor English reading room.

The chief librarian (CL) stated that there is a great deal of information posted about the library services and collections on the web and that information is available to everyone, including the foreign teachers. However, the CL also admitted that the web site is only in Chinese and that unless the foreign teachers read Chinese; this information is not really available to them.

The CL also stated that there is not enough staff or money to open the English reading room at night or on weekends when students are free to access the resource. It was suggested that the CL merely needed to utilize existing staff at more opportune times when the resource can be utilized by the interested students and faculty. It was pointed out that essentially by opening when the interested staff and students could not possibly access the resource, staff and money was being wasted.

Within 24 hours of the foreign teacher discussing this matter with the CL, the English Reading Room was opened on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The questions remain why the PA did not make this arrangement at the beginning of the first semester of the program and why did a foreign teacher have to

make this arrangement mid-way through the second semester of the program?

This library resource was simply not available to the foreign English teacher until the PA was circumvented.

2. English Corner

English Corner is held once a week. Unfortunately the announcement posted on the campus is in Chinese as is the entire bulletin board of the English Club. Apparently the faculty advisor to the English Club is unfamiliar with modern 2nd language acquisition theory of prompting and cues. (MacWhinney)

The university is utilizing the foreign exchange students to facilitate the English corners. They have absolutely no EFL training and are unaware of the damage that can be done by requiring premature production.

3. Multi-Media Rooms

There are numerous multi-media rooms which could be utilized as a venue for an English movie house.

The PA admitted that showing English movies was a good idea “but” claimed that movies are shown by the University every week. When pressed for the location the PA admitted that all of the information was posted on a chalkboard located in front of the English teaching building. When pressed with the fact that the chalkboard notices were always in Chinese and hence incomprehensible to the foreign English teachers, the PA replied “but” the announcement is put out by the English club and not the University. This is another example of the faculty advisor failing the English Club. The PA also admitted that the movies are not always English nor regularly scheduled. This is a useless resource for the foreign English teacher.

When pressed to initiate an English movie house every night and charge the students 1 rmb to attend, thus creating a potential income to pay a lecturer to staff the movie house, The PA said, “but” the library shows movies. Inquiry of the library brought forth the information contained in the next section “Audio-visual Room.”

4. Audio-visual Room

This audio-visual room is on the second floor of the old library building. It is open from 8:00 a.m. until 9:30 p.m., seven days a week. Students and faculty may pay a 2 rmb fee to watch one of the many available movies. The vast majority of movies are Chinese while only a handful is in English. Even the handful of English movies is useless for second language listening comprehension purposes because the movie

index is all in Chinese.

The Chinese leadership made no effort to obtain appropriate English movies to support the 2nd language acquisition program for non-English majors nor did they make any effort to create an English index of available titles.

This resource is simply not available to the foreign English teacher. The foreign teacher can not assign a particular movie either for listening comprehension or for a discussion topic in a conversation English class. The PA's information about the library showing movies was totally incorrect. The PA made no attempt to take the necessary steps to insure that this resource would either be available or be meaningful to the foreign teachers.

It was also discovered that there is a 190 seat theatre and a 25 seat theatre which remain largely unused and attempts to use them were discouraged.

5. Computer Room

The University provides the 17 foreign English teachers with an office which contains 8 desks and 4 computers with printers and Internet access. The instructions to the Chinese co-teachers provide:

“Make sure everyone get the key to the computer room” (Original Chinglish quoted)

Aside from the inadequacy of the facilities, several of the male teachers utilized the secluded office to provide dinner and computer/printer use and internet access to female students as part of the seduction process. Although this immoral and unethical conduct, which is not tolerated in the foreign teacher's home country, was reported to the Chinese University authorities, the sole and limited response was to place the room off-limits to students. No comment was made about proper or improper standards of teacher-student relationships.

Even after the admonition that students are not to be allowed into the teachers' computer room, students were still allowed in to play computer games and at least one teacher still used the room for female student seduction purposes. One teacher continues to teach (sic one his classes in the teachers' office every week and also allows his wife free access to the teachers' computer for game playing.

Some of the younger teachers use the computers for recreational purposes including playing loud music and playing noisy war games. This is incompatible with the simultaneous academic use of the computers by the professional teachers.

There are no supplemental teaching materials, tape players, audio tapes, books, games,

DVDs or anything of use in teaching EFL available in the room.

6. English speaking/Acquisition Environment

Simply stated, there isn't any English speaking/acquisition environment!

Although the environment is not as hostile as that portrayed in the above section, "Hostile Environment," this is primarily due to the fact that the two campuses are built to different standards at different times, in different parts of China. But aside from the Shanghai facilities being newer, the atmosphere is just as hostile to English acquisition, including the constant construction noises just outside of the conversation English classrooms.

The PA has made no effort to create an English friendly environment in support of this new program.

7. Field Trips

The PA advised that students should not be taken off campus for field trips. This admonition was made notwithstanding that the PA's required textbook urged the utilization of field trips. (pg. 357)

Several of the foreign teachers ignored the PA's field trip prohibition and submitted the following summary:

"Dear Dean _____:

The average daily attendance of the physical education majors has dropped below 10%.

The physical education majors' attendance jumped to 100% when shown an English movie. Their classroom English production improved when subsequently discussing the movie. However, this is true of all of my classes.

The physical education majors' attendance also improved when 4 of the classes were combined and moved to a local billiard parlour. Their English production also increased in this informal environment. It should also be noted that English production seemed to increase due to the presence of multiple foreign teachers rather than the typical sole classroom authority figure presence. The students also seemed to relate better to the two teachers closer in age to them than to the two older teachers.

On the other hand, my chemistry majors, whose classroom English production is adequate, lapsed completely into Chinese when the class was relocated to the local billiard parlour. This particular different environment impeded rather than improved their English production.

At the [other] campus my Civil Engineer class has excellent English production in the classroom and is by far my best class. When the class was moved to the local billiard parlour their English production increased. This may have something to do with the remoteness of the campus and the general boredom the students claim to experience.

Please also be advised that I have taken all of my classes to the Shanghai Urban Planning Museum at People's Square for their make up classes while I am presenting EFL Teaching papers at Beijing and Jilin May 21 - 29. I have also made observations about my students' behavior and English production while at the museum.

The history and public administration majors showed the most interest in the museum and produced the most English during the visit. This is consistent with the museum presenting things of interest to them while the other majors did not find the museum very interesting and their English production at the museum reflected this. Subsequent classroom discussions about the museum visit reflected the amount of interest shown during the trip.

It was further observed that the physical education majors, history majors, and public administration majors produced more English during field trips to the local free market, the bowling alley and the flower market while producing less English at the university museum. On the contrary, the Chemistry majors refused to produce English in any environment other than the formal classroom.

I am sharing this information in the hope that you will realize that 3,000 English students can not be treated alike; that different people acquire English better in different environments; that different resources must be utilized for different groups; that each class has a distinct group psychology and mentality; and that English acquisition is not a matter of assembly line production. We are not creating robots!

Teachers must assess their student groups' English level and design an approach, utilizing all available resources that best suits each particular class. Classes must be grouped by English accomplishment and capability rather than by major. This is consistent with Dr. Stephen Krashen's "Optimal Input" theory of second language acquisition.^{xviii}

Hoping this information will help,

_____”

G. ADMINISTRATIVE FAILINGS

The employment contract requires the foreign teacher to comply with the applicable laws of China and the University rules and policies. Yet, neither a Chinese nor English

version of either is ever made available to the foreign teachers. There is also no manual or brochure to introduce the new foreign teacher to the University, the City, the Country or the students.

The foreign teachers were provided attendance books to record the students' individual attendance for the semester. Unfortunately, these record books were not provided until two weeks prior to the end of the semester.

The teachers were never given any guidance on grading methodology, other than that they should not give more than 20% "A" and 30% "B" to their students. The teachers must make a written report explaining their individual grading methodology. One teacher simply asked his students what grade they would like and that was the grade they were given, there was no final exam.

The students were given survey forms asking them to grade their teacher and the course. The students were not instructed as to the criteria to use in their evaluations and the result was a popularity contest. These English students were given two questionnaires written in Chinese and asked to take English class time to fill them out. The foreign teachers were unable to answer the student's request for explanation or help since the forms were in Chinese. Attempts were made to locate the author of the forms but no one seemed to know who had written the forms which had been in use for some time.

An English translation was made of the forms and the poor quality of the questions and their ambiguity left their use and value in serious doubt.

H. RECIPE FOR DISASTER

The underlying assumption that 1.4 billion Chinese need to learn English as the justification for this program is dubious.^{xix}

The choice for a program administrator was typically inappropriate.^{xx}

The teacher recruitment process did not follow established Government guidelines^{xxi} and erroneously assumed that all English speakers, both L1 and L2, are competent to teach EFL.

The majority of the teachers did not have the recommended prior language teaching experience. Two of the teachers are not native English speakers. The salary schedule failed to follow the Government recommendations and hence the best possible foreign teachers were not interested in the offered positions.

There was little or no teacher support or supervision.

The students were not motivated, intrinsically or extrinsically.

The required textbook was boring and offensive and there was no supplemental academic infrastructure.

There was no English speaking or acquisition environment.

These factors constitute a recipe for disaster.

This new program is just more of the same old thing offered throughout China's institutions of higher education. Its foundation is inappropriately based upon the following wrong assumptions:

1. Everyone in China needs to learn English.
2. Everyone in China wants to learn English.
3. Everyone who speaks English can teach English as a foreign language.
4. Anyone can administer a TEFL program,
5. The time honored TEFL methodology and pedagogy, which has failed China over the past 20 years, will eventually work if applied diligently.
6. There is no difference between second language learning and second language acquisition ability.

Even though this "new program" was initiated in China's richest and most progressive city, Shanghai, it still suffers from what is wrong with EFL education throughout China, ie. a failure to use modern 2nd language acquisition teaching methodology and pedagogy; a failure to create an English speaking environment; a failure to create an English acquisition environment; and a failure to utilize available human and physical resources effectively. Even a University with all of the advantages is unable to deliver a modern and advantageous English acquisition program to its students.

It appears that this program was poorly planned, hastily implemented and poorly supervised. Appropriate supporting academic infrastructure was not put into place and there was a complete lack of quality control. This program appears to have been conceived on a Sunday and implemented, by the first available person, on the following Monday; although in a letter dated May 31st, 2004, the President of the University stated, "We launched this program after a very short period of preparation, less than two months actually." Yes Mr. President, it is so obvious! Unfortunately your baby was stillborn and no amount of life support systems will revive it. You need to begin anew with real second language acquisition experts designing and implementing the program!

I. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE PROGRAM

1. Appoint a project administrator with current 2nd language acquisition knowledge and management skills in a cross-cultural context.
2. Re-write the course goals and objectives to be realistic and meaningful.
3. Institute the program at the freshman level.
4. Make conversation English an elective course rather than a required course.
5. Recruit foreign teachers in accordance with the Government guidelines.
6. Create a friendly English speaking/acquisition environment.
7. Develop the required academic infrastructure.
8. Provide student oral skill testing and assign the students to classes based upon their achievement level rather than by major.
9. Acquaint the Chinese English teachers with modern second language acquisition theory.
10. Conduct weekly meetings with the foreign and Chinese English teachers.
11. Provide regular and proper project supervision, coordination, follow-up and evaluation.
12. Change the course name from “Oral English” to “Conversational English” in order to create the initial impression required for a friendly English acquisition environment rather than a speech class mentality.

Unless there are major changes made to this program, it will have no credibility and the results will be disastrous, a complete waste of time and resources. Even worse, the Chinese English students will suffer from retardation of their English acquisition.

V. CONCLUSION:

It is our considered opinion that China should abandon its current EFL educational philosophy which seeks to place a foreign English speaker in every classroom including primary school, middle school, senior middle school and college. The utility, productivity and efficacy of this practice are not born out by linguistic studies. There are insufficient numbers of qualified native English teachers to meet the demands of this philosophy which leads to untrained and unqualified people who speak English as a second language being hired to teach (sic) EFL in China.

The limited number of native English speakers trained and qualified to teach EFL should be utilized to teach in China’s Normal (teacher training) Universities which train China’s future teachers and also provide continuing education for existing teachers.

This would reduce the demand for native English speaking EFL teachers to well within the supply capabilities of the UK, USA, Canada and Australia. This

fundamental shift in educational philosophy would eliminate the perceived need to hire 18 year old high school graduates from Cameroon and Nigeria in Africa, Philippines, Pakistan, India, Russia, Romania, Holland, etc. etc. etc. who have no teacher training, no teaching experience, and no college education, let alone any knowledge of second language acquisition theory.

It is also our considered opinion that attempts to require all university students to learn English are misdirected and that only those students interested in learning and acquiring English as a second means of oral communication should be enrolled in EFL programs.

And finally, we recognize the need for China to acquire a better understanding of EFL immersion and second language acquisition theories so that the current pedagogy and methodology can be replaced with modern and effective ones in use throughout the modern world. In brief, China needs to modernize its EFL teaching program.

LANGUAGE LEARNING

The concept of language learning is linked to the traditional approach to the study of languages and today is still generally practiced in high schools worldwide. Attention is focused on the language in its written form and the objective is for the student to understand the structure and rules of the language through the application of intellect and logical deductive reasoning. The form is of greater importance than communication. Teaching and learning are technical and governed by a formal instructional plan with a predetermined syllabus. One studies the theory in the absence of the practical. One values the correct and represses the incorrect. There is little room for spontaneity. The teacher is an authority figure and the participation of the student is predominantly passive. In the teaching of English in Brazil, for example, the student will study the function of the interrogative and negative modes, irregular verbs, modals, etc. The student learns to construct sentences in the perfect tense, but only learns with difficulty when to use it. It's a progressive and cumulative process, normally tied to a preset syllabus that includes memorization of vocabulary. It seeks to transmit to the student knowledge about the language, its functioning and grammatical structure with its irregularities, its contrasts with the student's native language, knowledge that hopefully will produce the practical skills of understanding and speaking the language. This effort of accumulating knowledge becomes frustrating because of the lack of familiarity with the language.

Innumerable graduates with arts degrees in English are classic examples of language learning. They often are trained and theoretically able to teach a language that they can communicate in only with extreme difficulty. (Krashen)

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Language acquisition refers to the process of natural assimilation, involving intuition and subconscious learning, which is the product of real interactions between people where the learner is an active participant. It is similar to the way children learn their native tongue, a process that produces functional skill in the spoken language without theoretical knowledge; develops familiarity with the phonetic characteristics of the language as well as its structure and vocabulary, is responsible for oral understanding, the capability for creative communication and for the identification of cultural values. Teaching and learning are viewed as activities that happen in a personal psychological plane. The acquisition approach praises the communicative act and develops self-confidence in the learner.

A classic example of language acquisition involves adolescents and young adults who live abroad for a year in an exchange program, attaining near native fluency, while knowing little about the language in the majority of cases. They have a good pronunciation without a notion of phonology, don't know what the perfect tense is, modal or phrasal verbs are, but they intuitively recognize and know how to use all the structures. (Krashen)

The authors are joined by their colleague Michael Denson, Ph.D. in urging major reforms in the teaching of EFL in China,

“The writer has seen at close hand and over a protracted period of time the dysfunctional program described by Drs. Niu Qiang and Martin Wolff and concurs with their observations. The writer suggests a root cause for the problem in this and other Chinese universities, but sees efforts for correction futile in the foreseeable future.

The first clue to the cause of the problem rests in how the program at this school was created: by presidential fiat, with scant months to go, and with little apparent thought given to the establishment of infrastructure. Suggestions that the program might be flawed have been not only rejected but also met with blanket denials and hostility.

Several teachers at this school have commented jocularly that the president suffers from a Jehovah Complex. While perhaps unscientific, the metaphor is apt and can be mixed and extended. On the First Day the program was created by the Word of the president, who then fast-forwarded to the Seventh Day and took a rest. (There were no intervening steps.)

The writer--who has a background not only in English and pedagogy but also in clinical psychology--sees the president as a victim of what may be a common psychopathology among some managers in modern China, namely, what are classified in the West as narcissistic traits if not full-blown narcissistic personality disorder. Evidence of this disorder has been observed by the writer in the leadership of two other Chinese universities. He is also aware of a mass of anecdotal evidence concerning the leadership of other educational institutions in China as well as business and governmental organizations in this country.

Symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder, East or West, present in a triad of grandiosity (including a belief that change can be effected purely through force of will), need for admiration, and sense of entitlement. They tend to take anything less than unquestioning obedience as a sign of disloyalty. (These symptoms, however, appear to be the result of overcompensation for an underlying sense of inferiority.)

Do narcissistic traits militate against successful leadership? Not at all. Provided that there are competent support personnel to implement the whims and edicts of the narcissist, these same traits may be applauded as "strong leadership" and even as "charisma." The writer suggests that this lack of personnel to "make it work" has brought the problems at this university to the fore.

(These same traits may be seen, although perhaps to a lesser extent, among educational, governmental, and business leaders in the United States and other western countries. Probably some of the most striking cases are among second- and third-generation heads of family-controlled businesses.)

The etiology of the disorder both in the East and the West appears to spring largely from parental overindulgence, producing children--notably males in China--who are spoiled and idealized. In fact, the phenomenon is so prevalent in China that these children are popularly referred to (although probably not within earshot of the

parents) as *xiao huang di* or "little emperors." Many commentators note that China's One Child Policy promulgated in 1979 will, if anything, make the phenomenon more pronounced.

The overvaluing of males figures prominently in the 5,000-year history of China. where even today the disproportionate percentage of males in the population suggests that female infanticide is still common in the countryside.

Returning to the diagnosis of narcissistic personality traits/disorder, what can be said of the prognosis for these individuals? The answer can be summarized in one word: dismal. The roots of the disorder, as noted, begin in childhood. Typically, the sufferer himself does not see it as a problem--he will not seek professional attention unless he is forced to by family and associates. Lastly, even if help is sought, the disorder is particularly resistant to treatment.

Thus it would appear that this national psychopathology, particularly as it affects the teaching of English in China, will endure."

ⁱ "TWO WAY IMMERSION: A VIABLE MODEL FOR SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING IN QUEBEC?" (2001) Céline Brault, SLLT, Vol. 1

ⁱⁱ Krashen, Stephen D., (1987), Prentice-Hall International, "Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition",
Krashen, Stephen D., (1988), Prentice-Hall International, "Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning"

Krashen, Stephen D., (1997) Crane Publishing Co. Ltd., "Foreign Language Education"

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in Bilingual Education, 3. National Clearing House for Bilingual Education. Retrieved October 10,

2000 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/ncbepubs/focus/focus3.htm>.

ⁱⁱⁱ People who come to China primarily for a vacation to see and experience China and only interrupt their

vacation experience to teach English due to economic necessities.

^{iv} http://www.chinatesol.org/Regulations/The_Constitution/the_constitution.html

^v A web site for expat teachers to discuss various issues.

^{vi} "English or Chinglish" (2004) Niu Qiang and Martin Wolff The Fourth International Conference on

ELT in China, Beijing, PRC

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- vii Teaching By Principles, An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy, H. Douglas Brown, Prentice Hall
- viii Less than 76% of the registered students attended any given class on any given day
- ix Teaching By Principles, An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy, H. Douglas Brown, Prentice Hall
- x Keller, J.M. (1983). "Motivational design of instruction. In C.M. Reigeluth (Ed.). Instructional design theories and models: An overview of their current status." Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Keller, J.M. (1987a, Oct.). Strategies for stimulating the motivation to learn. "Performance and Instruction," 26(8), 1-7. (EJ 362 632)
- Keller, J.M. (1987b). "IMMS: Instructional materials motivation survey." Florida State University.
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- xi Driscoll, M. (1993). Psychology of learning for instruction. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon
- xii Qiang & Wolff, Chinese University Diploma: Can Its International Image Be Improved, Asian EFL Journal (June 2004); (in press) Progress in Education Vol. __ Ch. __
- xiii Xinyang Agricultural Collge (2003)
- xiv China Daily, 11/3/03 "Is English Invading Chinese Culture?"
- xv Krashen, Stephen D. (1981) Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition. English Language Teaching series. London: Prentice-Hall International (UK) Ltd
- xvi Teaching By Principles, An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy, H. Douglas Brown, Prentice Hall
- xvii Teaching By Principles, An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy, H. Douglas Brown, Prentice Hall
- xviii "Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition", Stephen Krashen, 1982
"What theory implies, quite simply, is that language acquisition, first or second, occurs when comprehension of real messages occurs, and when the acquirer is not 'on the defensive'...
Language acquisition does not require extensive use of conscious grammatical rules, and does not require tedious drill. It does not occur overnight, however. Real language acquisition develops slowly, and speaking skills emerge significantly later than listening skills, even when conditions are perfect. The best methods are therefore those that supply 'comprehensible input' in low anxiety situations, containing messages that students really want to hear. These methods do not force early production in the second language, but allow students to produce when they are 'ready', recognizing that improvement comes from supplying communicative and comprehensible input, and not from forcing and correcting production."
- xix "China and Chinese, or Chingland and Chinglish?" (4/03) Niu Qiang & Martin Wolff, English Today, Cambridge University Press;
China Daily, 3/25/04, "English Equation Unbalanced", Xie Kechang;
China Daily, 3/25/04 "Is it Conscionable for Chinese to immerse in an 'all English' environment?" Wei Chao
- xx "EFL/ESL Teaching In China: Questions – Questions – Questions" (2004) Niu Qiang & Martin Wolff, Sixth International Symposium on Applied Linguistics and Language Teaching, Shanghai, PRC
- xxi "CHINA EFL/ESL JOBS: a Case of False Advertising" (1/04) Niu Qiang & Martin Wolff,
<http://www.esl-lounge.com/qiang-wolff-index.shtml>
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