
Chinese-Western “Contact Zone”: Students’ Resistance and Teachers’ Adaptation to Local Needs

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Many universities in Mainland China hire native-speaking teachers of English annually to teach English writing. Having been trained in Western Europe or North America, these native-speaking teachers of English are on the front line of global education contact zones as they introduce their writing instruction in an English as a foreign language (EFL) country where education strongly reflects different cultural values. This interview study examines the perceptions of 12 expatriate writing instructors about their teaching at 10 universities in China. The participating teachers practiced what they believed to be good teaching activities to teach Chinese students to think critically and write in a direct Western style. However, some encountered resistance from students who felt disadvantaged by having an expatriate instructor who did not know how they learned English and how they should be prepared for structure-oriented local tests. The study suggests that teaching in global education contact zones can be a process of finding ways to interweave the local culture of learning with one’s own.

Chaque année, plusieurs universités de la Chine continentale embauchent des locuteurs natifs d’anglais comme enseignants de la rédaction en anglais. Formés en Europe occidentale ou en Amérique du Nord, ces enseignants d’anglais sont au front des zones de contact de l’éducation planétaire quand ils enseignent la rédaction dans un contexte d’anglais comme langue étrangère et dans un pays où l’éducation reflète clairement des valeurs culturelles différentes. Cette étude repose sur des entrevues auprès de douze expatriés qui enseignent la rédaction et qui offrent leurs perceptions quant à leur enseignement dans dix universités chinoises. Ces enseignants emploient ce qu’ils croient être de bonnes activités d’enseignement pour apprendre aux étudiants chinois la pensée critique et la rédaction dans le style direct de l’Ouest. Certains, par contre, ont fait face à une résistance de la part d’étudiants qui s’estimaient défavorisés par le fait d’avoir un enseignant expatrié qui ne savait pas comment ils avaient appris l’anglais et qui ignorait comment ils devaient se préparer pour passer les examens locaux orientés sur la structure. Cette étude laisse supposer que l’enseignement dans les zones de contact de l’éducation planétaire peut constituer une occasion de rechercher des stratégies pour entrelacer la culture d’apprentissage locale avec la sienne.

Global Education Contact Zones

Commenting on how writing and texts from varied cultures may come together, Pratt (1998) proposed the concept of the *contact zone* to refer to “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other” (p. 173). The idea of the contact zone as a site of cultural appropriation and resistance leads to the theory of global education contact zones where teachers and students with disparate cultural backgrounds and identities meet as active agents to “produce, coconstruct, and challenge the design of ... programs in and through day-to-day pedagogic interactions” (Singh & Doherty, 2004, p. 12). In a study documenting how preparatory or foundation programs for international students in a Western university may be viewed as global education contact zones that pose moral dilemmas for instructors between their professional respect for non-Western cultures and the curricula-based Western standard, Singh and Doherty observed that some instructors informed their students explicitly about the Western academic culture, whereas others protected their students by avoiding culturally controversial topics in class. If instructors represent the dominant discourse in the academic contact zone, minority students represent the subordinate group. As a subordinate group, African-American students in a United States university, as Canagarajah (1997) observed, may create social networks or safe houses to seek cultural and psychological support and to retain their preferred identity and values while outwardly conforming to the pedagogical requirements of the university.

Western instructors teaching overseas in an English as a foreign language (EFL) context are also on the front line of the global education contact zones. These instructors, compared with their counterparts at home, face a dilemma as they try to export Western pedagogy to a non-Western culture. Many are involved in teaching English writing. Western writing approaches tend to impart attitudes, values, beliefs, and practices related to Western culture; in a study situated in Turkey, Clachar (2002) observed local teachers’ oppositional attitudes that rested on the perceived disjuncture between Western writing pedagogy and Turkish literacy practices: the former emphasized students’ ability to criticize and question others’ work, whereas the latter valued appreciation over criticism and reproduction over questioning. Sharing some Eastern literary traditions with Turkey, Mainland China has also been a tension spot where expatriate writing instructors struggle with pedagogical diversity. Some have gone with high hopes, but have left with feelings of “bitterness and rancour” (Maley, 1990, p. 103). Such negative experiences, viewed from a critical perspective, suggest unsuccessful attempts at forcing an unfamiliar Anglo-centric pedagogical culture onto local language practices (Guo & Beckett, 2007; Kubota, 2004). Canagarajah (2005) has called for “a more pronounced place for the local in disciplinary discourses” (p. xv).

The current mainstream TESOL methodologies, which are mainly informed by Anglo societies, need to be reshaped by “a deeper understanding of diverse local pedagogical practices and beliefs” (Lin, Wang, Akamatsu, & Riazi, 2005, p. 218) or “more inclusive and egalitarian” language practices representing local interests and traditions (Canagarajah, p. xxix)

Chinese-Western Contact Zone

The Chinese culture of learning is deeply rooted in Confucius’ understanding of what constitutes good learning. Starting in kindergarten and elementary school, Chinese students are guided to learn through “memory, imitation and repetitive practice” (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996, p. 181). The learning culture of China, as Hu (2002) pointed out, stresses the textbook and teacher as sources of knowledge, a painstaking learning process to accumulate knowledge, and the importance of learners being mentally rather than orally active. In a typical university English course known as Intensive Reading, students study passages of literature through listening for comprehension, reading aloud to imitate the recording, and absorbing the teacher’s explanations of difficult points of grammar and vocabulary followed by sentence translation exercises and drills focusing on accuracy and rote memorization (Cortazzi & Jin; Dzau, 1990).

In order to help students develop an adequate level of communicative competence in English for modernization and international exchange, the Chinese government has since the 1980s carried out a top-down education reform in English-language teaching designed to replace the traditional Grammar-Translation Method and Audiolingualism with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT, Hu, 2002; Liao, 2004). As an example of Western-style pedagogy, CLT advocates student-centeredness and experience-based practice focusing on the interdependence between form and meaning; students as contributors of knowledge; lighthearted communicative activities; and the priority of self-expression. However, these characteristics of CLT are in contrast to traditional English teaching in China, which prioritizes teacher dominance and rote learning with a focus on structural patterns. Many Chinese teachers resist CLT because a focus on the use of the language may reveal their own inadequacies in using English and, therefore, put their authority at risk (Dzau, 1990). Many Chinese students also complain about the teaching of Western teachers in terms of lack of systematic organization and inadequate delivery of discrete and countable pieces of knowledge using standard textbooks (Ouyang, 2003). These negative reactions suggest that CLT might not be the best or most appropriate way of teaching English in the Chinese context. To replace CLT, Bax (2003) suggests the Context Approach, which prioritizes the local needs of teachers and students.

If the clash between CLT and the traditional Chinese culture of learning reflects the Western-Chinese contact zone in English-language teaching in

general, the differences between Western and Chinese literacy traditions characterizes the contact zone in the teaching of English writing. Intertwined with the Chinese literacy tradition is the process of acquiring the Chinese language, which requires memorizing characters and set phrases. These linguistic tendencies lead to a Chinese rhetoric that relies on repeating set phrases and imitating texts. Similarly, writing pedagogy is seen to be based on a product, for example, the correct forms and test-taking skills achieved through modeling and memorization (Erbaugh, 1990; You, 2004). Books are regarded as sources of knowledge rather than of ideas for discussion (Maley, 1990), and product-focused writing instruction is popular among local Chinese teachers (Yu, 2001). Expatriate instructors have observed that Chinese students tend to repeat assertions rather than explaining and proving them (Matalene, 1985). Some, therefore, give low scores to top Chinese students because of a lack of opinions and critical stance in their writing (Ouyang, 2003).

With an increase in plagiarism among university students (see a review of relevant research by Flowerdew & Li, 2007), many expatriate writing instructors in China have reported encountering Chinese students who copy or plagiarize heavily. Among them, Pennycook (1996) described how one student produced an assignment by repeating a whole text that he had memorized, suggesting differing cultural understandings of the relationship between text, memory, and learning. Reflecting on similar experiences, Jochowitz (1986) believed that his Chinese students resorted to wholesale copying because they had little experience in independent thinking and free classroom discussions. In contrast, Matalene (1985) traced how some Chinese students wrote from memory in their belief that writing was meant to manipulate one's memory bank of phrases and that "the more set phrases and literary allusions the speaker [or writer] use[d], the more eloquent the discourse" (p. 795). Some Chinese students reportedly found plagiarism a means of imitation and learning; others considered it unfair that they were discouraged from regurgitating ideas in writing but were required to do so in the other foreign-language learning skill areas (Pennycook). Sapp (2002) noted that in some Chinese universities plagiarism was actually tolerated by administrators, ignored by many instructors, and widely endorsed among students because learning was considered to be cooperative, collaborative, and supportive. In addition, some Chinese students were reported to use plagiarism as a strategy to register their dissatisfaction with the quality of teaching (Pennycook) and to resist a local system that prioritized learning to pass tests (Sapp) and imposed English in their lives (Pennycook).

The above review suggests that teaching EFL in education contact zones foregrounds how expatriate instructors may struggle to introduce their writing instruction into a local culture. However, earlier findings about the challenges of teaching in China have mostly been based on personal anecdotal

notes published in the 1980s and 1990s. It is important to investigate systematically whether expatriate instructors currently teaching in China are experiencing similar or new challenges. This study is thus based on interviews conducted in 2005 with 12 native-English-speaking writing instructors in 10 universities in China. Following the call of Cortazzi and Jin (1996) that "Western teachers working in China need to move towards the Chinese culture of learning" (p. 202), the purpose of the study is to draw implications from the participants' perceptions of their experiences in the light of teaching in global education contact zones. The study was supported by a small Humanities and Social Studies grant (University of British Columbia) intended to lead to a larger in-depth study in the area. Two questions guided the study:

1. Did the participants encounter any problems and challenges as they taught English writing in local classrooms?
2. How did the participants handle the challenges if there were any?

Methods

Participants

At the time of the interviews, the 12 participating instructors were teaching at 10 universities in three cities in China. Four of these were ranked as top or key universities in China. I first contacted some local Chinese professors of English to identify their native-English-speaking colleagues who might be interested in the study. I then contacted about 15 potential participants, of whom 12 said they were willing to participate. The participants each taught an average of 12-16 hours per week. All were teaching an undergraduate writing course for English majors at the time of the interview, although most had taught or were teaching other undergraduate courses such as speaking and reading or some graduate courses on literature, linguistics, and thesis-writing.

Of the 12 participants, seven were male and five were female (Table 1). Most ($n=9$) were from the United States. Although 11 participants held graduate degrees, only four had a graduate degree in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL). At the time of the interviews, the participants had taught in China for a minimum of three months and a maximum of 15 years. However, the two instructors (Sophie and Zack) who had taught for only a few months in China had many years of teaching experience (20 and 10 years respectively) before coming to China. Both had taught in US colleges: Sophie taught English literature, business English, creative writing, and technical education; Zack taught Japanese and public speaking. By contrast to Sophie, Zack had also taught EFL in elementary and high schools in Japan and France.

Table 1
Participants' Profiles

<i>ID (pseudonyms)</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Highest degree</i>	<i>Native country</i>	<i>Years of teaching English</i>	<i>Years of Teaching in China</i>	<i>Reason for coming</i>
Allen	30s	BA in English literature	Canada, but grew up in South Africa	6	1.5	Likes the Chinese people
Collin	20s	Master in TESOL	US	2	1	Lots of opportunities in China
Frank	60s	Master in TESOL	US	(Had taught American history for 30 years)	10 (off and on)	Likes adventure
Helen	20s	Master in TESOL	US	1.5	1.5	Husband is Chinese
Jean	50s	Master in French and linguistics	Britain	1	14	To see China in person
John	30s	PhD in social science	US	10	3	Fewer hours of teaching
Sheila	60s	Master in TESOL	US	5 (Had been a paralegal)	1	Likes traveling
Sophie	50s	Master in Creative writing	US	20	0.25	To leave the US
Sue	40s	Teaching diploma in French	Ireland, but grew up in England	16 (Was also a teacher trainer)	3	Watched TV about China
Tom	60s	JD degree in law	US	(Had been a lawyer)	15	Has special interest in the Chinese people
William	60s	PhD in communication	US	(Had taught communication for 45 years)	3	Recommended by Chinese friends after retirement
Zack	30s	Master in	US	10	0.33	To know the rich culture

Interviews

Each participant was interviewed for an hour and a half. Apart from some background information, the semistructured interview invited participants to describe teaching activities and to articulate their rationale for particular practices, to reflect on the problems and challenges they had encountered, and to relate how they handled relevant challenges (see Appendix for the interview guide). The interviews were conducted over a year. Although the participants who were new to China (Sophie and Zack) were interviewed after three or four months into their first teaching term, those who had taught in China for longer were interviewed at any time during the academic year based on their availability. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Both typical and salient responses from the participants were identified to

answer the research questions. I originally expected differences among participants based on their length of time teaching in China. However, the interview data show that the current participants made similar comments. This is perhaps due to the rich teaching background shared by many participants who had taught either in their home countries or other countries if not in China. The only difference in their comments lay in the fact that those who had taught longer in China commented more on how they tried to adapt to the local Chinese system. An earlier draft of the article was sent to nine participants whom I was able to re-contact. It was interesting that neither Sophie nor Zack, whom I interviewed in their first term in China, made any comments about how they had changed their perceptions over time.

Findings and Discussion

Teaching in Local Classrooms

Describing how they taught in the local situation, nine of the 12 participants stated that their role was to help Chinese students experience the writing instruction they had received in their home universities. Although there is no single way of teaching writing that everyone in the Western world follows, most participants claimed that their aim was to help students learn to think critically and to write directly, with a thesis statement in the introduction. Zack said he focused on a direct writing style because many Chinese in the US, both his classmates and his students, had a good grasp of grammar and vocabulary but seemed to have problems putting them together in a Western essay format. Reflecting on their decision to teach according to how they wrote in English, the participants believed that they had the freedom to choose what and how to teach because there was little guidance from the local universities about the curriculum and the graduation criteria (Collin, Frank, Helen, Jean, Sheila, William, Zack).

The participants were aware that their writing classes were different from those of their Chinese colleagues. Frank sometimes stood outside their classrooms to watch and found that the Chinese teachers did not create a lively, interesting class: "They just stand up, read something or sit down and read something." The Chinese teachers, as Collin commented, were "still very interested in rote memorization so the value of discussion, the value of sharing opinions, the value of learning language through authentic situations and contexts [was] foreign to them." In the following quote, Sophie compared her writing classes with those taught by the local teachers.

I think I am more casual than their Chinese teachers. In the writing course, for example, I had them all in a circle, and they were talking to each other and I was trying to have them talk to each other as much as to me. So they talk to the other writers about their writing, which is difficult for them and new for them.

Like Sophie, other participants said that they followed the communicative approach, trying to keep students active all the time and serving as facilitators and mediators (Collin, John, Sheila, Tom, Zack). Some said that they focused on the writing process rather than the product, conducting prewriting activities with slide shows (Frank), practicing brainstorming ideas (Sheila), demonstrating and modeling how to write (Allen), pushing students to think for themselves rather than repeating others' sentences (Sophie, Sue), and doing multiple drafts and conducting peer reviews to check each other's writing (Collin, Zack). Explaining how she tried to practice process writing as she had been trained to do in her master's program in the US, Sheila said,

My role is to show them there is another way of writing and another way of thinking. Writing is a process and maybe it's a process of discovery ... You do some brainstorming and you write some notes. Maybe make a list or an outline.... And I want them to know that their voices are just as important as anybody's voices. They can pick a topic and they can make their own topic.... I learnt it when I was at my graduate school.

The participants' descriptions illustrate how they, like other Western instructors observed by Cheng (2000), conducted writing classes that involved much discussion work. They had certainly learned the dominant discourse that language teaching should be learner-centered and communicative. Their negative comments on the teacher-centered and product-focused approach used by Chinese teachers suggested how pedagogical assumptions developed in the West have become, as Kubota (1998) put it, "extreme, exclusive, and dogmatic" (p. 395). Based on the Western notion of teaching and learning, the classes conducted by Chinese teachers were seen as problematic and inferior. The paternalistic attitude of the participants appeared to lead to the challenges they encountered.

Challenges: Resistance From Students and Plagiarism in Writing

The challenges encountered by the participants seem to relate to teaching English in general rather than to teaching writing specifically. Although it was not the experience of all the participants that their teaching approaches were unpopular, several (6) commented on how some students resisted their teaching by showing, as Helen put it, "no sign of interest." A few found it difficult to get students to interact (Frank, Sue, Zack) or to volunteer (Sheila, Tom). Some said they had to pick individuals and force them to participate although they felt really uncomfortable doing this (Allen, Collin, John, Helen, Sheila, Sue). Not sure that it was accurate to perceive students' non-participation as resistance to their teaching, two participants suggested that it was rote learning that made the students uninquisitive (Frank, John), and

others believed that Chinese students were trained to respect rather than challenge authority (Helen, Sheila, Sophie, Sue). As Helen summarized it for all, "It is challenging because the students are so different than the American students."

Believing that Chinese students lacked critical thinking, a few participants (Collin, Helen, Jean, Sophie, Zack) were stunned when some of their students were not timid in resisting and critiquing their teaching. For example, Jean's students told her that they absolutely hated doing outlines despite her explanation that outlines would help them organize their thoughts more "in the way [Westerners] would write." Similarly, Zack described how one student, when being taught to follow "the rules of the box" and write "to tell people what you are going to tell them, tell them, and tell them what you have told them," said he did not like to have such shackles and wanted to break out of the box. In addition, several students, when being told not to use flowery language or metaphorical ways of saying things as they did in Chinese writing, complained that English writing was repetitive, flat, and boring (Helen, Sophie). Reflecting on the challenge of how to "keep [the Western] teaching style and how that could reach the students," Helen said that her students only wanted to get the final paper done, and so they resisted her suggestion of going through the process of selecting a topic, going to the library, taking notes, writing the outline, doing peer review, and revising. One student in Helen's class actually told her that she hated the English writing course. Helen believed that many of her students could not see any practical reason for learning English and did not enjoy learning it solely to pass the test.

Reflecting on students' resistance, Sue believed that students who complained bitterly and were resistant to her teaching approach were actually grateful for the opportunity to have her as a native-speaking teacher to help them improve their communication skills and broaden their cultural understanding. In contrast, Collin felt that he was resented by his students; he described how they asked him on the first day about his teaching methodology and training background. Collin said the questions made him very conscious about his teaching methods. Curious about students' attitudes to his teaching, Collin decided to be vulnerable and did a short survey at the end of the course, asking questions such as "Has the class met your expectations? Do you find the class beneficial?" As a result, he received much negative feedback. Collin was not prepared when students criticized his ignorance of the local situation: "You should know more about the Chinese testing system. You should know more about our requirements. You should know more about the way that we have learnt English." Collin was also disappointed that the students felt that they were disadvantaged by having him as a teacher. In his words,

A lot of the feedback was negative because there was too much communication [using the communicative approach]. Although I am a native speaker, they weren't valuing me using the language in the authentic context in a communicative fashion. For example, I wasn't doing the vocabulary exercises in the book with them; other Chinese teachers were. I wasn't presenting the text in Chinese on the overhead and other classes were.... The students are motivated by the exam, which focused on language structure and vocabulary. They feel a disadvantage of having me as their teacher because I can't tell them what's on the exam, while other Chinese teachers can prepare the students well.

Reflecting on the students' resistance, Collin and other participants blamed the local system, which had "the assessment as the end goal" (Collin). Sophie found that her students memorized the structures because "the examinations [were] timed and they worr[ie]d about being able to write without having time to think it through." Several participants also commented on how their students could memorize many of the things, but did not know how to use them (Collin, Frank, Helen, John). Some mentioned that they were approached by the students and Chinese colleagues with technical grammar questions that were, as John put it, "nitpicking." Frank gave an example of how students were asked to choose between sentences such as "I am thinking of you" or "I am thinking about you," which did not matter to him as a native speaker. Although the "nitpicking" questions could be interpreted positively as a show of inquisitiveness, the participants said that they were fortunate because they did not have to deal with grammar and exams (Jean, Tom, William). There was a division of labor, as Jean and Tom commented, such that the Western teachers taught writing whereas the Chinese teachers taught grammar skills. The above comments illustrate that participants like Jean, Tom, and William might have regarded it as a challenge to integrate grammar into their writing instruction to prepare students for the examinations.

Another challenge for the participating writing instructors was to deal with plagiarism. All except John and Sophie commented on how plagiarism was rampant among Chinese students. For example, William said that on one occasion, 35 out of 100 students in his classes copied and cheated on their research paper assignment. And on another occasion, 16 students downloaded the same Internet material for their essay assignment. Trying to understand the generality of this misconduct, Frank believed that "the Chinese people [were] followers" and had "a mentality that whatever the group [was] doing [was] okay." The participants also commented on how when challenged and asked to rewrite an assignment, students either found it not a big deal (Jean, William) or would get angry (Sheila). When seeking help from the department, Sheila said that the Dean was uncomfortable with

the topic and did not wish to deal with it. Similarly, William was told by his Dean, "It is your problem, not our problem." "Very interesting philosophy," William said with a sigh. I infer that the Dean did not wish to become involved, perhaps because there was no clear university policy on how to handle such cases (based a personal conversation with a Chinese professor in the same university). Unsure of the university policy, William could not understand why he was left on his own to deal with the case.

Students' resistance and plagiarism reported by the participants suggests that when the two cultures of learning met, both the expatriate teachers and the Chinese students were affected and their belief systems threatened. One feels sorry and sympathetic for both sides. Following Pennycook (1989), who states that teaching practices are socially constructed to represent the interests of certain cultures, I believe that some teaching practices such as text modeling and teacher modeling—though common in both Western and Chinese contexts—may entail different values and lead to different learning behaviors. For example, the Chinese value of teacher modeling perhaps explains why it is difficult for Western instructors to get Chinese students to volunteer in class and to peer review each other's writing. In addition, the Chinese value of text modeling can be seen to conflict with critical thinking about printed texts and the notion of plagiarism. It is, therefore, not surprising that these expatriate instructors experienced challenges similar to those faced by their peers in earlier years (Jochowitz, 1986; Matalene, 1985; Pennycook, 1996; Sapp, 2002).

Adaptation

Responding to the question of how they handled these challenges, several participants said that they understood that they could not simply change the culture and students' learning habits, so they would adapt their teaching to meet the needs of the students (Allen, Collin, Frank, John). Some commented on how they had come to understand that the Western model of education was not universal and how things could be done differently in another culture (Collin, Frank, Sophie, Zack). Compared with those who had recently arrived and were struggling just to keep afloat, participants who had taught for longer commented on how they had come to understand the local system and tried not to break away too much from how local teachers taught. For example, Collin, trying to balance his own and his students' expectations, described how he helped students to practice or apply the grammar they had learned from their Chinese English teachers. In the following quote, Collin reflected how he tried to incorporate students' needs into his communicative teaching style.

The methodology in America is very communicative, very student-centered, and [has] a lot of interaction. In the universities here, it's different. The expectation from the students to the teachers is

authority.... It is difficult to see the value of communicative language learning. So I am in the process of learning how to balance their expectations and my expectations but at the same time have an effective course.... You know this [test] is how they measure success.... So now I am honoring their demand[s] and request[s] and we are focusing on grammar. I started with a very communicative style, but now I want to honor their desire for more traditional methods. So now I am finding the balance. I am trying to ease them into communication. Okay, now we have drilled these vocabulary words and I want you to use them.... You know if their mind is set on assessment, it is difficult to value the class time that is not centered around the preparation.

If Collin changed his teaching to stress modeling and products, other participants described how they gradually eased their students into practices of critical thinking, process writing, and academic honesty. Tom, for example, used examples of quotations from Chinese leaders such as Mao Ze Dong and Zhou En Lai in teaching students how to use citations. Tom believed that this made a big difference in helping students understand how to avoid plagiarism. Sheila said that her students were mystified about brainstorming ideas and about free writing at the beginning, but after a few practices “knew exactly how to brainstorm and turn that into essays.” Similarly, Sue said that her students—although initially feeling uncomfortable working in groups—were gradually facilitated to do “what students would do in the Western classroom.” Sue also reflected on how her students thought she wanted them to attack each other when she first introduced critical thinking. She then trained them by using examples of how experts criticized each other and encouraged them also to “challenge not only someone old and in authority, but also something printed in black and white.” Later, whenever a student questioned what others were saying, Sue would say, “That is exactly what I want you to do.” Echoing the voice of Sue, Sophie described how she managed in her first term teaching in China to facilitate students to think and talk about each other’s writing critically.

It was difficult for them at first. They stayed quiet and didn’t want to respond. They said in their journals, “We’ve never sat in a circle like this.” But over the weeks, it seemed to be more comfortable for them. They started to talk to each other and they were talking about their writing. I saw them pass their work back and forth to each other. We haven’t done peer review yet. We’ll actually start talking about it next week and we’ll have peer reviews. We’ll see. I think they are ready to try it. I feel that I have created a feeling of safety in the room. But I’ve noticed they are talking more and I don’t have to pick volunteers.

Commenting on how they adapted their teaching to the local system, many participants said they would, as Zack put it, “be a good guest in this

country." Some said they would avoid saying anything critical about the Chinese government or mentioning sensitive issues related to Tibet, Taiwan, or religion (Frank, John, Zack, Tom). Others made an effort to collaborate with Chinese colleagues whom they believed were qualified people with high levels of English. Among them, Tom team-taught a class with a Chinese colleague, and Allen regularly shared teaching ideas with his Chinese colleagues. Collin said that he was asked to do a demonstration class in the department and would also observe classes given by local teachers. Unfortunately, other participants, in contrast to the above, said that they operated independently and wished that they could have more interaction with Chinese teachers to discuss mutual problems and exchange teaching ideas (Jean, Frank, Sophie, Sue, William, Zack).

Adaptation into the local system illustrates an important move made by the participants to "validate other, local forms of knowledge about language and teaching" (Pennycook, 1989, p. 613). As Collin quoted from one of his students, Western teachers need to "know more about the way [the local students] learnt English." They need to learn, as Burnaby and Sun (1989) pointed out, how local Chinese teachers have produced competent language users following their own scholarly practice focusing on "grammar, literature, and in-depth analysis of literary texts" (p. 222). In her feedback on an earlier version of the paper, Helen said how she understood that Chinese students might learn better by seeing and analyzing models based on observations of how her son studied in a Chinese school. The efforts made by the participating teachers to improve their teaching suggests that they were trying not to export their own practices, values, attitudes, and beliefs in any kind of negative way, but to help students communicate better to the Western world.

Reflecting on how they adapted to the local system, several participants believed that they had made important contributions to China. For example, Allen said that by introducing Western instruction, he was doing an important job to bridge the gap between Eastern and Western education and to facilitate the process of globalization. Another participant, William, having spoken on TV and published in local newspapers and magazines about education and culture in China and the West, believed that he had been doing "something very important for China." Feeling good about their contributions, many participants said that they enjoyed teaching in China despite the challenges. Both Frank and William said they had become close friends with some of the students. Collin said he enjoyed being treated as a professor in a good university at a young age. In the same tone, Sue said, "I really like it ... because my teaching in China is part of my life and I really enjoy living here much more than living in the West." Compared with the above participants, Tom had been in China for 15 years and had become, in his words "part Chinese." Tom became emotional when commenting on

how he loved China: "I understand a lot of Chinese culture. I care a lot about China. I care about its people; I don't take the American point of view all the time. One of my students said to me, 'You are part Chinese.' That's meaningful to me."

Summary and Implications

This study illustrates how some Western writing instructors perceive their teaching in global education contact zones. Following communicative and process writing approaches, the participating teachers were teaching the Chinese students to think critically and write directly by creating Western classrooms in Chinese universities. However, some encountered resistance, either initially or still ongoing at the time of their interview, from students who felt disadvantaged by having an expatriate teacher who could not help them prepare well for structure-oriented local exams. In coping with such challenges, some participants adapted their teaching to incorporate grammar teaching into their communicative and process-oriented writing instructions. A few also took steps to ease students gradually into thinking and writing as they themselves had been trained in the West.

The study implies that teaching in a global education contact zone means searching for intersections or points of interface between Western and local cultures of learning. An example of the intersection suggested by Hu (2002), is how CLT or Western notions of "collaborative learning, cultivation of sociolinguistic competence, use of authentic teaching materials, and learning strategy training" match the Chinese emphasis on "collective orientation, socially appropriate behaviors, and concern for the right way of doing things" (pp. 102-103). To interweave other cultures of learning, Western pedagogy needs to change and serve diverse needs in new teaching contexts such as in China. Ouyang (2003) reported examples of how some expatriate teachers in China went native to meet both the Western and local expectations for excellence, and how CLT had been creolized in a Chinese university. Indeed, when considering how the concept of good learning and teaching is cultivated in a specific social context, there is no reason, as Cortazzi and Jin (1996) put it, "to suppose that one culture of learning is superior to another" (p. 174). In cases where the two cultures do contrast, local teachers should regard Western instruction as an add-on, and Western teachers should not feel that they must do away with the local way of teaching. The global education contact zone provides opportunities for TESL practitioners to reexamine and reorientate their teaching practices from diverse perspectives.

This study is limited to interviews with a number of participants who had little in common in their educational backgrounds. A couple of instructors (Sophie and Zack) had had little experience in China, which may have affected their quality as informants. In addition, the interview data were unable to show how much time it had taken some teachers to change; neither

could it show whether the teacher factor played a role in the resistance from students. However, the major finding about the participants' claim that their students were critical of and resistant to Western teachers' teaching has led to a follow-up study supported by a larger grant to follow several teachers for a whole academic term and to triangulate the interview data with classroom observations, teaching materials, students' writing samples, and input from local students, Chinese teachers, and administrators. The study aims to explore further the "pedagogical arts of the contact zone" (Pratt, 1998, p. 184), where the disciplinary knowledge of teaching English is reoriented and developed through negotiation between mainstream Anglo-centric and local teaching practices.

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Appendix: Interview Guide

A. Background information

1. Where are you from? Do you mind telling me your age range?
2. What is your highest degree? When did you get it? What was your major?
3. Did you have any teaching experience in your home country? If you did, please describe the students or programs you taught.
4. Why did you decide to come to China? How long have you been teaching in China? What courses (programs) have you taught?

B. Writing instructions and teaching activities

6. How do you conduct your writing classes?
7. If you have taught in your home country, can you compare your teaching experiences at home and in China? How do your Chinese colleagues conduct their classes?
8. Have you ever felt at odds with curricula here? Have you experienced situations when the values or teaching methods you presented in class were perceived as alien or unappreciated by the Chinese students?
9. How do you perceive your role in the present teaching context?
10. Do you collaborate with your Chinese colleagues in teaching?
11. Did you find your previous education or training helpful in the present situation?
12. What advice would you give to student teachers in the West who plan to teach overseas in countries like China?