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Reflections on Teaching and Host Mothering Chinese Secondary Students: A Novice ESL Teacher's Diary Study and Autoethnography

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Reflections on Teaching and Host Mothering Chinese Secondary Students:
A Novice ESL Teacher's Diary Study and Autoethnography

A Thesis
Presented to Eastern Washington University
Cheney, Washington

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree
Master of Arts: English
With an Emphasis in
Teaching English as a Second Language

By
Diane Thames
Spring 2014

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Master's Thesis

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Abstract

In the summer of 2012, 29 students ages 12-17 came from China to Spokane with a special three-week teaching program for intensive English language instruction and community field trips. Since they were middle and high school students, they had been studying English from four to 13 years in their home country. A mixed methodology of retrospective diary study, case study, and critical and autoethnography helped me to refine my teaching for this population and to prepare others to teach English to Chinese adolescents in the United States. The purpose of the present study, therefore, was to (1) describe the experience teaching in the program; (2) describe the experience of hosting two students in my home with my four children for the three weeks; (3) document classroom teaching, management, and materials; (4) explain students' behaviors, expectations, attitudes, and motivation; and (5) reflect on my communication style and how I adjusted it for them.

Dedication

I dedicate this oeuvre to my four wonderful children: Mathieu, a laconic young man, who makes the most of those words; Mercedes, whose kindness is never ending; Christian, whose smile lights up a room and warms my heart; and Elizabeth, whose hugs and kisses are always offered freely.

I also dedicate this work to my parents. Their love, support, and encouragement were instrumental in my success in completing my degree and thesis.

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Preface

Language Learning and Cross-cultural Experiences

I have always been fascinated with different cultures and languages. I cannot recall a particular moment or event that prompted or encouraged this love, so I can only assume it was a gradual process. If I were to guess as to how it all began, it would be due to my dad being in the Air Force and due to my love of books.

When I was five years-old, my family moved to the Australian Outback because my dad was assigned there for his Air Force deployment. I was introduced to a whole new world in this desert environment, one where kangaroos frequented our yard and neighborhood, giant lizards roamed freely, and dangerous and venomous creatures abounded, in particular, the infamous redback spider. I loved living in Australia and experiencing a new way of life and was saddened when my dad's deployment ended prematurely after one year. My parents hadn't been as enthused about living in such a harsh and pernicious environment, so my dad put in a request to no longer receive deployment orders for overseas. Despite my pleas over the years to cancel this request so that I could have another opportunity to travel abroad and experience another culture and way of life, he never did. One souvenir I returned with was an Australian accent. Unfortunately, my new school in Omaha, Nebraska was not as delighted, and I was subjected to speech lessons to "fix" this issue. Although they were fascinated with my accent, I was often told that I sounded weird. My speech instruction focused on pronouncing my R's.

I am an avid reader. Growing up, I would become entrenched in the lives of the characters in my books and pretend that I was also visiting these faraway and exotic

destinations. One of my favorite characters was Nancy Drew from the *Nancy Drew Mystery Stories* series by Carolyn Keene, the pseudonym for the authors. I would daydream that I was the intelligent and popular, mystery-solving girl who traveled the globe making new friends and discovering new lands, all the while solving a crime or mystery. These books continued to foster my desire and need to travel to the point that I would invent a language and practice speaking it so that I could converse with the natives of my intended destinations.

Junior High and High School

I love other languages and cultures and would dream of being in other countries and meeting these countries' native people. My dreams finally came to fruition! The summer before I entered high school, my family hosted a student from France for a month. I was so excited to learn firsthand from a French person about her culture as well as her thoughts on American life. I recall her being shocked that no one she met spoke French. She taught me my first French phrase, "I want to go to the movies." It is such a simple sentence, but I was hooked. My family continued to host two other French students into my high school years.

After hosting the first French student, I was given the opportunity to visit France! At that point, I had only studied French for one year. I had a longing to go and would not let my diminished French speaking ability deter me. I inherently knew that my love of France, along with my fierce determination to absorb as much French as possible, would counteract the language barrier after having only studied French for a year. When I would watch films describing France and its people, I would actually ache to be there with the feeling being close to homesickness. My first trip to France occurred in the summer of

1989 when France was celebrating her 200 years of independence. It was an amazing experience where I got to live with a French family for a month and learn more about the French culture. I did my best to immerse myself in the French way of life. In 1990, after studying French in high school for approximately one and half years, I took a French exam and won a partial scholarship to study in France. I was the only student in my high school or the surrounding high schools to win. My family could not afford the remaining cost of tuition. My determination to take part in this opportunity prompted me to seek a part-time after school job. I worked six months making cold-call appointments by phone for a local siding and roofing company in order to pay my way to France to study at the Université de Bourgogne in Dijon for one month in the summer of 1991.

In 1992 I started working again to pay my way to France for the summer of 1993. It was then that a representative from the foreign exchange program with whom I traveled to France on my first visit came to interview me for my trip, which is a routine event to make sure I was prepared for the trip and did not have unrealistic expectations. What was normally an hour interview lasted several hours because the interviewee was impressed with my maturity, interpersonal communication, and my ability to understand the challenges for Americans to visit other countries and the French person's perspectives of America. I was offered a commissioned-based job to do the same duties as he, but in eastern Washington. He lived in Seattle and couldn't adequately handle all of his responsibilities of finding host families for students from abroad as well as recruiting students to travel abroad. I was so excited! I was so captivated by how much fun it would be. The commission check was an added bonus because I would have done it for free. To me, this was a dream job!

My job responsibilities were to give presentations at middle schools and high schools in order to find potential families to host students from France and Spain. I would then contact the student's family and set up an interview with the family. At the interview, I explained what the family should expect from being a host family to an exchange student. I also met with and helped prepare American students for their stays in France and Spain.

In 1993, I returned to France in the dual role of student and representative because I was still working as a representative in the foreign exchange program for Eastern Washington. Due to my position with the company, I was given permission to visit without a chaperone the family of one of the exchange students who had previously lived with my family. It was a wonderful visit, and they invited me to stay with them for a month after my month concluded with the exchange program. My initial four-week trip turned into an eight-week trip, and I never wanted to return to Spokane. I recall feeling "homesick" for France during my initial few months back.

MATESL

When looking into a master's program, I was excited to learn that Teaching English as a Second Language was offered. The program presented everything in which I was interested: English, teaching, and cultural enrichment.

During my time in this program, I have been able to work with many different cultures and nationalities, including students from Japan, China, Korea, Saudi Arabia, El Salvador, and Mexico. I interned on three separate occasions in Dr. LaVona Reeves's English 112 class, Composition for Multilingual Writers.

Current Teaching Philosophy

Teachers are more than vessels of knowledge. Teachers foster students to become global citizens by promoting critical thinking, providing varying points of view on diverse topics, and encouraging independence and self-sufficiency skills that are essential to function well in life.

Chapter 1

Introduction

“Excuse-me, are you in charge of the Chinese group?” I look up from my lawn chair at the Splashdown manager who has just asked me the question. She appears quite agitated as she awaits my answer. As soon as I reply affirmatively, she states, “You need to go get those children before your group is kicked out. The children are endangering other people in the park. The kids are going down the slides in groups and are refusing to exit the pool.” I apologized profusely and told her that I would take care of the situation. I went in search of the coordinator of our group to inform him of the students’ behavior. He found me first, and he agreed to my plan to collect the children and leave an hour early; however, he could not help me because he had to go check on the health of one of our students who had left the water park without permission and nearly drowned at the neighboring pool.

A similar scenario may occur throughout the United States because of the thousands of Chinese high school students who are arriving every summer (Spencer, 2014; Levin, 2010; Bartlett & Fischer, 2011; Lai, 2012). In fact, Chinese students have been voyaging to the United States for over a hundred years (Hsu, 2014). In the summer of 2013, a *New York Times* article by Perlez and Gao, reported that Chinese high school students were “seeking an edge in academics” by coming to the United States for summer school:

By some estimates, more than 100,000 Chinese students, some as young as 10, flocked to the United States this summer to delve into American life and culture. Some studied diligently in programs intended to improve their

SAT scores. Others kicked back and enjoyed more leisurely pursuits, on group tours that visited Las Vegas, New York and Disneyland. Some attended outdoor camps.

In 2009, 127,628 students from China chose to study in the United States (Bodycott & Lai, 2012). Since China implemented its Open Door policy in 1979, Chinese students have been extending their education elsewhere, in particular, the United States. Studying in the United States, is not only for the wealthy, but also for the middle class.

The surge in students traveling to the United States for the summer is the latest iteration in China's booming multibillion-dollar overseas education business. Until recently, the vast number of Chinese education agencies that broker students' entry to American colleges and private high schools concentrated on preparing them at home in China. They coached well-off, fee-paying, and, in some cases, brilliant Chinese students in the intricacies of the American admissions process. (Perlez & Gao, web accessed 3 May 2014)

Ding Dapeng is father to Yinghan who studied in the United States. Mr. Dapeng, like many Chinese parents, considers the study abroad in the United States to be "a worthy sacrifice" and "a real miracle" (Levin, 2010, web accessed 3 May 2014; Lai, 2012). Mr. Dapeng understands that true education cannot be found within one's own borders, but by reaching out and enriching oneself with outside sources. He says, "Today the world is so small. Only by broadening his [Yinghan] knowledge with an international background can Yinghan really become a global citizen" (Levin, 2010). Regardless of a family's willingness to sacrifice financially in order to send their child to study in the United

States in hopes of getting an edge in the job market, the cost of these summer programs tends to limit the attendees to the wealthy or middle class (Lai, 2012).

Zhang Yang, who holds a master's degree in education from Harvard and is the director of the overseas education department of the EIC Group, an education agency in Beijing, confirms that these study abroad programs to the United States are catered mainly to the wealthy. He supports this notion by stating that the least expensive summer program is approximately \$5000. With prices being so high, it is only natural that parents were outraged by a particular photograph that appeared on Sina Weibo, an equivalent to Twitter. The photo depicted Chinese students eating hamburgers while their teachers browsed in a nearby shop, and this photo outraged readers of all socioeconomic classes in China—whether they had children studying in the United States or not. The parents who could afford these summer programs were angered by the thought that their children were not receiving the education that was promised by those agencies collecting the many dollars parents had paid for the programs. Likewise, other parents were envious of the opportunities afforded to children with parents who had financial means (Perlez & Gao, 2013, web).

Many parents who send their children to these summer programs do so to help their children prepare to enter top American universities where the competition is fierce. For instance, one program run by Elite Scholars of China and costing \$14,000, accepted 26 out of 100 applicants who were selected on the basis of interviews after attending a two-week academic course at Wellesley College in Massachusetts followed by a week of visits to a dozen top colleges that their admissions officers had arranged (Perlez & Gao, 2013, web).

Chinese undergraduates encompass the fastest-growing group of international students because of two main reasons: 1) There is more than 60 per cent of high school graduates attending college, a 20 percent increase from the 1980s and 2) The increase in college graduates has made it difficult to find jobs outside of the dominant, low-paying manufacturing jobs in China. An American degree gives the Chinese graduate an edge in the competitive job market.

‘The students are not just going to the big cities,’ said Robert R. Bimonte, the president of the National Catholic Educational Association, in Arlington, Virginia. ‘It’s rural; it’s suburban and it’s small towns’ (Levin, 2010, web). This thesis is a retrospective diary study for a 2012 three-week Spokane program in which I taught Chinese middle and high school students while acting as a host mother for two male students of the 29 enrolled in an intensive English language program.

In addition to the gains that the Chinese students receive, there are concerns that arise. There are matters that need to be considered in order to best teach and help these students. The most common and prevalent issue is the language barrier (Bodycott & Lai, 2012, Weng, 2009; Herman, 2010; Andrade, 2006; Barlett & Fischer, 2011). The comprehension challenges reflect in the students’ lives because it leads to “issues related to interacting with professors, levels of cultural difference, discrimination, and challenges of personal adjustment” (Bodycott and Lai, 2012, p. 266). Ultimately, immersion programs are beneficial; however, the reports about these programs do not take into account the teachers’ point of view. In the present study, the focus is a teacher’s experience—my own—both inside and outside the classroom as reported in the diary study of a novice teacher in Chapter 3 and my experience as a host parent as reported in

Chapter 4.

A Spokane Summer Course for Chinese Students

In the summer of 2012, 29 students came from China with a special three-week teaching program for intensive English language instruction and community field trips. The students had been studying English from four to 13 years in their home country. Before the students arrived in Spokane, they traveled to and toured historical sites in New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C. After the three-week program, the students traveled to Las Vegas and California. The particular program in which these 29 students participated was advertised on the program's website as summarized here:

- 1) Students are placed in a single homestay family.
- 2) There are qualified ESL teachers.
- 3) The curriculum can be either focused around activities or be more traditional.
- 4) The staff is proficient in issues that occur cross culturally.
- 5) A variety of activities such as sports and field trips are incorporated.
- 6) English instruction, activities, and the homestay is carefully monitored to certify the best experience possible for everybody.
- 7) There is access to a Chinese/English translator 24 hours a day/seven days a week.

To protect the identity of the sponsoring organization, I provided only a sampling of the advertisement in my own words and have intentionally not included the web address in the references of this thesis.

Assumptions

When I was hired a few weeks before the beginning of the program, I had made

several assumptions about this population based on cultural images—mostly in American media—as well as my own experience teaching Chinese college students. I will disclose these assumptions here and discuss them further in Chapters 3, Research Methods and Diary of a Novice Teacher; in Chapter 4, Diary of a Homestay Mother; and in Chapter 5, Reflection and Discussion.

Assumption 1)

I imagined they would all be well-mannered by Western standards—say please and thank you; volunteer to help at home before being asked; ask for something to eat or drink before helping themselves in a family with six children; know how to treat a guest—even if it is another Chinese visiting the home; listen to their elders and follow directions of an adult in charge to insure safety of one's self and others.

Assumption 2)

They would be really eager to learn, soak up the lessons, and do their best to speak English.

Assumption 3)

I would be able to balance the dual role of teacher and parent for this population.

Assumption 4)

I would have classroom management challenges with this age because of the media representation of American youth as well as hearsay from those working with American adolescents. I assumed the Chinese students would be somewhat similar to their American peers.

Assumption 5)

I would have backup resources from the program coordinators—both Americans.

Assumption 6)

The co-teacher would be able to lead group work related to lessons I gave.

Assumption 7)

The coordinator and the co-teacher would defer to me because I was the ESL specialist, and they were not ESL specialists, though the coordinator had considerable teaching experience in private schools, primarily in math and geography. The co-teacher was earning a master's degree in history and had limited college teaching experience.

Assumption 8)

As an experienced single parent of four children—ages five through 14 at the time, I assumed I would be able to handle anything that came up at home.

Assumption 9)

Conversely, I did not assume that my experience as a parent would help me as a teacher, though my thesis adviser insisted that this experience would be very valuable in the classroom.

Because I am using a mixed-methods approach in this thesis, I have followed TESOL guidelines that require researchers to disclose biases and assumptions that would shape and inform their research. At the end of this thesis, in Chapter 5, I will reflect on these assumptions and discuss where my assumptions proved accurate and/or inaccurate.

Research Questions

Upon completion of the Chinese summer program, I reflected on the experience,

and when I returned to intern in my thesis adviser's summer class in composition, she suggested that I write a retrospective diary about the summer teaching and hosting two male Chinese boys. Through the diary, it was my aim to answer the following research questions:

Research question 1 (RQ1)

What challenges might ESL teachers meet when teaching in an intensive, short-term English immersion program for Chinese middle and high school students in the United States?

Research question 2 (RQ2)

What are some of the best practices to meet these challenges?

Research question 3 (RQ3)

What should host families know about Chinese students' backgrounds and customs so they might guide them to fit in here and to enhance their learning of both academic and cultural expectations?

The purpose of the present study, therefore, is to

- 1) describe the experience teaching in the program;
- 2) describe the experience of hosting two students in my home with my four children for the three weeks;
- 3) document classroom teaching, management, and materials;
- 4) explain students' behaviors, expectations, attitudes, and motivation;
- 5) reflect on my communication style and how I adjusted it for them;
- 6) reflect on the modifications I made in the teaching approaches and materials;
- 7) discuss domestic issues that arose within the household as related to table

manners, respect for all family members--especially the head of the family (me as a single parent); requirement to do chores; limits on cell phones, game boys, X-Boxes, and I-pads;

8) provide a cultural framework for social expectations at home and in the classroom to identify and minimize anti-social behaviors; and

9) reflect on changes within myself as a teacher and host mother.

Research Methods

As stated, to achieve the research goals, I chose a mixed-methods approach: 1) retrospective diary study (Bailey & Nunan, 2011); 2) auto-ethnography (Canagarajah, 2012; Pratt, 1991), and 3) TESOL's critical ethnography. "More recently, TESOL case studies have adopted the more subjective and interpretive stance typical of case studies in education and other fields" (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996; Johnson, 1992; Stake, 1994, 1995 as summarized on TESOL.org accessed May 1, 2013),

with less emphasis on the acquisition of discrete linguistic elements and more emphasis on such issues as learners' and teachers' identities, skill development and its consequences for learners, teachers' professional development experiences, and the implementation of language policies in programs and countries. Both approaches are legitimate but require sufficient detail and contextualization. (TESOL.org, 2013)

This context and these details appear in the diaries and reflections in Chapters 3,4, and 5.

These methods will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Thesis Overview by Chapter

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter 2 is the Review of Literature

related to why Chinese students study abroad, Chinese culture, education in China, short-term Chinese programs (Scheffer, 2010; Weng, 2009; Hsu (Petty), 1997; Herman, 2010), critical thinking, and findings from earlier diary studies. Chapter 3 includes the research methods and the diary of a novice teacher—the primary investigator. Chapter 4 is the diary of the primary investigator as host mother. Chapter 5 is the discussion of findings, as well as reflections on the assumptions and research questions. Chapter 6 is the Conclusion—Summary, Limitations, and Recommendations for Future Research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Chapter 2 is a brief review of literature about (1) why Chinese study abroad; (2) Chinese culture; (3) teachers' roles and status in China; (4) students' daily schedules—extracurricular activities and study habits; (5) Chinese teaching approaches; (6) critical thinking; (7) Herman's diary study about teaching in China; and (8) other diary studies.

Why Study Abroad?

In "The Influence and Implications of Chinese Culture in the Decision to Undertake Cross-Border Higher Education" (2012), Bodycott and Lai explain:

Little is known about how a family in the People's Republic of China (PRC) makes decisions on cross-border study. International marketers and managers in higher education turn to research based on Chinese student preferences. However, such research ignores cultural traditions steeped in Confucian ideals of family and the subsequent roles and influence of parents. Using surveys and interviews with Chinese students our findings indicate that despite exponential financial and social development in contemporary Chinese society, traditional Confucian values are still largely upheld by parents. (p. 252)

Although the decision-making process is not clear, Chinese students who want a competitive edge in the aggressive job market as well as a higher desire for wealth flock to the United States to study (Bodycott and Lai, 2012; Lai, 2012, Herman, 2010). The Chinese are the largest international group to study in the United States (Bartlett & Fischer, 2011). There is a significant increase in students' status after studying in the United States. Students first traversed the Pacific Ocean to reach the United States over a

hundred years ago, with presidents, cabinet ministers, and the first elected president, Yuan Shikai from 1912-1916 being some of the most renowned Chinese people to have studied in the United States (Hsu, 2014).

One Chinese student's journal entry appeared in Ubaldo's 2010 thesis, and he interpreted her situation: "Chinese female, Writer 10, was in a crossroad one day whether or not she would stay in China or to come to the United States to continue her studies. The uncertainty of a new place like the U.S. was a big burden for her to bear. Also, not to minimize the loneliness she felt of being away from parents and loved ones, she spent countless hours of solitude ensuring that the choice she would be making would not be one that she would regret later" (p. 37). He reminds readers, "A resilient person with a future orientation trait, like Writer 10, would find a way to achieve her goal" (p. 37). The student wrote in her five-minute, unedited, in-class journal in English 112, Composition for Multilingual Writers:

My favorite words in the song is 'Walk on, Walk on with hope in your heart.' I can still clearly remember the time when my parents asked me to make a decision of going to the United States or study in China. I felt it was extremely hard to choose. I was not sure a lot of things like homesick or lack of English skills. However, if I choose to stay in China, I wouldn't make my dream come true. During night, I put myself in dark and thought every part of my life. I considered both side. Then, 'with hope in my heart', I choosed to go to the United States. (p. 37)

Writer 10's demeanor and countenance from spring 2009, the first time this primary investigator observed her, to spring 2010 showed new radiance on her

countenance and a considerable satisfaction in her present situation at EWU. She indicated that she had one more year to go and then she would return to China.

There are many reasons why Chinese students choose to study in the United States, but the main ones are summarized here.

- 1) Students and their families believe that the students will earn more money if they study abroad (Bodycott and Lai, 2012; Lai, 2012, Herman, 2010).
- 2) Students are influenced by what they hear from friends and family who have studied abroad (Bodycott & Lai, 2012).
- 3) Students want to experience a different cultural lifestyle.
- 4) A parent has studied abroad (Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Vaccarello, 2011).
- 5) Thousands of students are ineligible to enter a top-tier university in China due to their poor *gaokao* scores (entrance exam scores).
- 6) Some students wish to avoid taking the *gaokao* (Fischer, 2010) (Lai, 2012), and universities in the United States do not require it, so they opt for study abroad.
- 7) Students hope to improve their English through study abroad (“Chinese Student,” 2011) (Bartlett & Fischer, 2011).
- 8) Students believe that the United States has a great education system (Golden, 2010) (Bartlett & Fischer, 2011) (Lai, 2012).
- 9) High school students wish to have a competitive edge to get into a Chinese university, so they study in an American high school or in a summer program (Bartlett & Fischer, 2011) (Lai, 2012).

10) Parents want their children to go for many of the reasons already stated (Bartlett & Fischer, 2011).

11) The students want to go (Bartlett & Fischer, 2011) (Lai, 2012), so the parents acquiesce and let them go.

12) Parents and children desire to “advance Chinese modernity” (Hsu, 2014) and move the country ahead in technology, education, and industry.

Some students are swayed by stories of “freedom, prosperity and openness” (Bodycott and Lai, 2012, p. 259) told by friends, family, and peers who have already experienced the “ultimate goal of a life in a more open and affluent ‘Western’ society” (Bodycott and Lai, 2012, p. 255). Students are even more likely to travel abroad if a parent has done so in the past (Bodycott and Lai, 2012, p. 265; Vaccarello, 2011).

Other students may have earned a non-desirable score on the *gaokao*; China’s National Entrance Exam; consequently, they are ineligible to attend a prestigious Chinese university (Cockrain, 2011, p. 105). If students wish to avoid the entire *gaokao* process, they tend to decide to study in the United States (Bodycott and Lai, 2012; Lai, 2012).

Chinese Culture

One-child policy

China’s one-child policy was declared in 1979 for the purpose of controlling the rapid growth in population (Choi & Kane, 1999). In addition to curbing the rise in population, the government touts that the policy is in the best interests of the children because they will have enhanced prospects for an enriching education. In fact, China’s official slogan for the one-child policy is “*you sheng you yu* give birth to fewer children, but give them better care and education” (Yang, 2007). Despite the

government's positive outlook with this policy, a particular challenge has emerged from its implementation—who will care for China's aging population? China went from an extended-family structure of families having many children with several generations cohabitating in the same household to parents who have one child. Based on deep-rooted traditions, the younger generations oversee and take care of the older generations. With the One-Child Policy, the current family structure has shifted to become a 4:2:1 ratio—four grandparents, two parents, and one child (Li & Buechel, 2007; Cockrain, 2011; Zhang & Goza, 2007). For the first time in 35 years, China's older generation will be living in institutionalized care centers because one child and his/her spouse cannot care for the needs of one or both of his/her parents and his/her spouse's parents while continuing to work full-time and provide for the family's needs. Consequently, there has also been an ebbing of the sense of family obligation.

In "Who Will Care for the Elderly in China," Zhang and Goza, (2007) interviewed Mrs. Liu, who is an only child and a mother of one child, to gain her thoughts on the rising issue of who will care for the elderly. She was asked to discuss the likelihood of her son taking care of her, her husband, and her parents in the next twenty years. She replied:

Nowadays no one should count on their son to care for them when they get old. My mother-in-law relies on us to care for her since she doesn't have anyone else to count on. But my parents think differently since I am their only child. They have planned to care for themselves and they are now busy making additional arrangements. I remember the last time my mother was ill. My father was abroad and I was single then. I had no choice but to

care for her myself, all day and all night, unlike others who can share this type of burden with their siblings. At that time I was not even in good physical shape myself. It was really a difficult time for me until my father hurried back from abroad. It is so much easier if you can take turns with others. Once I married I was able to also count on my husband's assistance. I have thought about the problem you raised. Since I do not have any siblings I will have to care for my parents, and there is no possible escape or valid excuse. (p. 12)

Parents are no longer able rely on their sons or daughters to meet their needs as parents age. The family dynamic has changed, and with this change, children's family responsibilities have been altered.

The modern Chinese family now puts all of the family's hopes and dreams into the one child, including the parents' desire for the child to study abroad (Bodycott and Lai, 2012, p. 253). With all of the parents' attention being focused solely on their one child, single children are being negatively viewed by others as self-absorbed, spoiled "little suns" (Cockrain, 2011, p. 217) because their parents' lives revolve around the children. Other derogatory terms to describe China's youth are "precious lumps" and "little emperors" (p. 217). By the 1990s, university students were no longer considered as "favorites of society," and were instead scorned as a "a generation grown up in [their parents'] arms...[and] cultural orphans in a vacuum of values" (p. 217). Published studies from the late 1990s to the early 2000s, distinguished value transformations emphasizing "individualism and self-awareness" (p. 217). In conclusion, the One-Child Policy has altered the traditional Chinese family resulting in overindulged children who are "seen as

spoiled and lacking the ability to undergo any kind of hardship (p. 217) and who will not be to meet their aging parents' needs.

Filial piety

Filial piety (xiào, 孝) is a virtue of respect for one's parents and ancestors that is rooted in Confucianism which is comprised of philosophical teachings. For the Chinese, they proceed in life through a process of "self-cultivation" where their self extends to their family and eventually to a concern for everything "under heaven" (*tiānxià*, 天下) with the end result being a person of noble character (*jūnzǐ*, 君子) (Randell, 2014, p. 35). Family is a quintessential part of Chinese culture with more than fifty words to express familial relationships including terms to designate a cousin who is younger or older than the speaker and whether that cousin is on the maternal and paternal side of the family (Rendall, 2014, p. 32).

In China, the child and parent relationship is the most revered bond. The child parent relationship is so tightly bound that it is customary after a child's birth for a parent to address the other as his/her father (*tā diē*, 他/她) or his/her mother (*tā mā*, 他/她妈) (Rendall, 2014, p. 31). From the moment of the child's birth, all chief decisions about his/her education and future employment is determined by the parents (Bodycott and Lai, 2012, p. 253) because it is linked to the concept that a child's academic achievement reflects positively on the parents, especially fathers (Cockrain, 2011, p. 108). One traditional Chinese aspect of filial piety is the respect and honor from children to parents (Weeks, 2005; Schinkel, 2012, p.413). This respect will even transcend the child's desires in his/her own education to that of his/her parents (Bodycott and Lai, 2012, p. 263).

Education in China

Teachers

Teaching is considered an honorable profession (Dillon, 2010; Herman, 2010), and teachers earn top wages. A beginning qualified teacher nets tax free (Van Schaack, n.d.) about \$20,000 per month in Hong Kong dollars (cited in Lam 2014 p.159) or about \$2600 in U.S. dollars. They are celebrated nationwide on their own holiday—September 29 (Van Schaack, n.d.).

A teacher's value is deeply rooted in Confucianism which stresses to respect teachers (Wei& Chen, 2009, p. 425; Hsu, 2007), stresses teachers “to cultivate the students' moral character” (Lam, 2014, p.157), and teachers are viewed as a “parent-like figure” and students must adhere to their directives unfailingly (Wei& Chen, 2009, p. 425). Typically, teachers need to follow a strict dress code—skirts or dresses for females—and adhere to particular social norms of sitting erect at meetings with their hands resting on top of the table or walking around when fatigued at these meetings. The school employs complete control over the “way they teach, and even the way they mark homework” (Lam, 2014 p. 165). The Chinese created the term, “stuff-the-duck method” (*tiun yu shi*) to label this teaching practice, emphasizing the student's role as a passive (Weng, 2009; Herman, 2010) and silent receptor of the teacher's profound wisdom (Schoenhals, 1994 p. 401). A child-centered pedagogy is rejected because they cling to traditional Chinese cultural values of “discipline, authority, and regimentation” (Ng & Rao 2008), and “didactic teaching techniques are typical elements in the traditional classroom,” (as cited in Lam, 2011 p.23). Teachers devote about “70 percent of each week teaching and 30 percent developing teaching skills and lesson planning. They also

keep in contact with students' parents by phone or in person at least two to three times per week (Friedman, 2013).

Students

In 1986, China enacted a law for students to receive nine years of free education—six years of primary and three years of secondary schooling. At the end of every school year, tests are administered to ascertain whether students have attained the skills required to enter the next grade level. If students fail this exam, they are afforded the opportunity to take the exam until they pass; however, if they cannot pass, then they must disenroll (Van Schaack, n.d.). Although hours of school attendance may vary from school to school, students typically “study six days a week from 8 a.m. through a mandatory evening study hall ending at 10 p.m.” (Dillon, 2010; Hull, 2011). In addition to the long school days, to reach or to maintain a competitive edge, students are often forced by well-meaning parents to select extra-curricular activities that would be advantageous to their overall academic training or they are compelled to drop ones which they like if parents believe they are interfering with their grades (Cockrain, 2011, p. 103). Students' self-worth can be called into question when their worth is valued by their grades: “‘Good students’ (*hao xuesheng*) and ‘bad students’ (*cha xuesheng*) are defined solely by reference to academic achievement” (Cockrain, 2011, p. 110). In the following, Chinese students participating in action research with Ubaldo and Reeves report their feelings as students growing up in China. Their journals were written daily in five minutes in English 112 class in spring quarter of 2010 when Ubaldo was interning in Reeves' composition class. Multilingual writers were responding to prompts about the songs Ubaldo was teaching for his thesis project and were asked to connect the songs to

their own lives.

First, a female Chinese student wrote, when responding to the song, “When You Walk Through a Storm...,” taught by the researcher, EWU thesis writer, Dan Ubaldo (2010):

The hardest time I have ever met was my whole high school life. In China, if you want to enter a high school, you must take the exams. If you want to go to the best high schools, you must get the highest scores in the exams. I had the ability to get the highest scores, but failed. However, you can pay extra money as long as your scores are only few points then the scores they asked. That was my situation. Therefore, I entered the school, but I wasn't happy. I spent three grey years in high school. I had thought about drop[p]ing the study, but I didn't. ‘Walk on through the wind, walk on through the rain.’ At that time, I just kept on studying, and waiting for the last day of high school. (Ubaldo, 2010, p. 33)

Ubaldo explains that “[o]f the 16 students in class that day, she was the only one who stated she felt ‘alone and discouraged’ during high school but overcame the obstacles she faced” (p. 33) when he discussed Pipher’s traits of resilience he found in students’ journals about music.

In another entry, a Chinese student spoke of her frustration and her decision to follow her own path, not her parents’ path for her, demonstrating “future orientation, reassuring herself that “everything will be good and hopes are in front of me:”

As many Chinese children I am the only child in my family. My parents send me to school and put their dream on me. I always ask myself to

follow their rules. During high school, the only thing I did is study, I didn't do other things. One day I stopped my step and think of my dreams, not my parents' dreams. On that day, I found my dream and be myself. I made choices and don't always listen to others. Even though I met many troubles, I kept going. 'Walk on with hope in your heart.' If people have hope and dream in their heart, they will have the power to work hard. Dreams are so important for me and it is difficult to work without dreams. After that day, I encouraged myself and told myself everything will be good and hopes are in front of me. (Ubaldo, 2010, p. 34)

Ubaldo explains that "Writer 2 demonstrates a high level of self-awareness and maturity, one of the highest among the 16 students who wrote on this topic in Week 6" (p. 34).

Teaching

In China, the goal of education is to prepare students to take the *gaokao*, China's National College Entrance Examination (Lai, 2012; Cockain, 2011). Chinese teachers follow a teaching method of rote memorization [banking] rather than focusing on the analytical application of concepts (Herman, 2010; Weng, 2009; Vaccarello, 2011; Cockain, 2011; Schoenhals, 1994). In Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he makes reference to this style of teaching:

In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing....Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes

deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat.” (as cited in Tompkins, 1990, p. 253)

One main consequence of traditional teaching techniques, such as the banking system, is that students “tend to be very weak in listening and speaking and in writing continuous prose” (Ling et al, 2003; Herman, 2010, p. 32; Hsu, 1997, p. 2). Typically, interactive, student-centered classes are instructed by foreign teachers who tend to employ popular culture to relate the lesson with the students' lives (Lam. 211 p.29; Pennycook, 2005).

Critical Thinking

Definition

At the 8th Annual International Conference on Critical Thinking and Education Reform, in the summer of 1987, the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking defined critical thinking as

...the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action.
(Mihăilă-Lică, 2012, p.138)

Unlike American institutions, where critical thinking holds a high value, Leki (2004) shares in “Meaning and Development of Academic Literacy in Second Language” that other countries tend to find it challenging to approach texts with a critical view due to their educational system and cultural background.

ESL learners' challenges

English second language (ESL) learners face challenges in learning skills to encourage critical thinking because of their culture and their country's education system. Asian students have a more challenging time with critical thinking because the education system fosters students to revere authority, maintain harmony, and avoid conflicts in public. This has a significant impact on Asian students' cultural readiness to verbalize critical thinking (Chiu, 2000, p.42). The students have been instructed throughout their education to "value diligent study, social harmony, reverence for teachers' authority and avoidance of conflict in a face-to-face classroom environment" (Chiu, 2000, p.43). Chinese students come from a traditional test-instruction pedagogy that ensnares them in passive, unmoving learning (Lam, 2011) which discourages critical questioning of school-sanctioned texts and teachers' authority. As a result, students "fail to learn how to gather, analyze, synthesize, or assess information" (Garside, 1996, p. 212). Leki (2004) examines a cultural challenge of one Chinese graduate student at an American university, Fan Shen, who confronted his teacher about his difficulties in adjusting to American writing practices from Chinese ones.

Fan was given the advice to stop worrying, to be less academic in his writing, and to be himself. Fan had difficulty with following this advice because he did not think it was possible—as a Chinese person could neither reinvent himself as an American nor have the inclination. Fan Shen concluded that in order to succeed in his writing, he would have to pretend to be "self-confident and assertive instead of circumspect, tentative, and suggestive as he really was" (p. 333). In "Students' Ambivalence Toward Their Experiences in Secondary Education," Cockain (2011) shares one student's view who

preferred learning by rote as opposed to a more interactive teaching approach typically taught by foreign teachers. “I liked Chemistry because it is easy... You just have to follow rules in order to solve problems... I did not have to use my mind” (p. 113). Conversely, Yan Jielin, a Chinese teenager who took part in a summer program in the United States in order to gain a competitive edge in her academics when she returned to China, shares,

I really felt that I was figuring out what happened at that time [in history] by myself. That is so different from my previous ways of learning history.
(Perlez & Gao, 2013)

Understanding the challenges that ESL students face in acquiring how to learn critical thinking, several strategies need to be implemented to help overcome the hurdles in the education system and in culture.

Teaching methods

Despite the difficulties and challenges, a variety of intellectually stimulating skills can be implemented to aid in the development of critical thinking. It is imperative that there are activities that include “active student participation, meaningful interaction with material, and student-to-student verbal interaction” (Garside, 1996, p. 216) such as questioning, debate, role play and small group discussion. Chinese students who are accustomed to the teacher-centered education system can benefit from the seven strategies that Neve (1986) imparts to create an environment conducive to engaging in critical thinking:

- 1) create non-threatening environment;
- 2) provide a huge amount of input;
- 3) emphasize genuine communication;

- 4) provide for much manipulation;
- 5) emphasize reality;
- 6) address learning activities to actual, productive uses; and
- 7) respect natural thinking (as cited in Garside, 1996, p. 215-216).

Students feel more comfortable to ask questions and challenge other people's points of view. When generating standard questions to help students continue to think critically, it is helpful to ask such leading questions as 1) What would happen if...? because it pinpoints prediction and hypothesis; 2) What are the strength and weaknesses of...? or What is the difference between...? because they help demonstrate compare and contrast; 3) Why is ... important? because the question focusses on analysis and significance. Finally, taking other perspectives into account are actualized when the question, What is another way to look at...? is proposed (Courtney, 2008, p. 451). Regardless of whether critical thinking strategies are already implemented into classroom instruction, critical thinking skills can be taught.

David Herman

David Herman (2010) wrote his master's thesis on his reflections as an English teacher at a private school for Chinese adults. He shares how the cultural differences construct the most challenges for both teachers and students (p. 38).

Chinese directness

Herman promptly learned that there are conversational topics that are inappropriate to discuss with a Chinese person. Conversely, he had to explain to his Chinese students that their comments and questions would be categorized as inappropriate by American standards. For instance, students would ask him questions

such as “how many girlfriends...[he has] had, how many women...[he] had slept with, how much money...[he] earned each month, and how much...[he] had spent on a particular personal item” (pp. 42-43).

He retells a story of eating lunch with his coworkers when a Chinese man informs a plump American woman that she ‘should eat more slowly because she is fat’ (p. 43). When the Chinese man was notified that speaking about a person’s weight, especially when the comment would be considered derogatory, is considered rude in an American context, he was clearly astonished that the woman was upset by his statement. The Chinese man supplemented his statement by saying that he provided a helpful suggestion for a healthy lifestyle and that the woman should be appreciative instead of offended (p. 43). The Chinese directness was particularly exasperating to handle because the Chinese posed questions that would be considered inappropriate by American context with the “purest intentions” (p. 44).

Indirect as well

Herman recounts a situation where his lesson on the Chinese alphabet was misinterpreted by a student when he posed the following question in class: ‘Could it be possible that at some time in the distant future Chinese characters could be abandoned for complete dependence on the pinyin system of writing Chinese?’ (pp. 45-47) “An example of pinyin is the word ‘Beijing.’ This is the Romanized spelling of the nation’s capital...originally spelled with Chinese characters but carries the same pronunciation as its Romanization” (p. 45) The students had an enjoyable, interactive conversation, and Herman considered the lesson a success. He was later informed by a colleague that one of his students, Susie, was “upset...offended...[and] angry” because Herman wanted to

abolish Chinese characters. Herman was accused of being insensitive to Chinese culture and attempting to westernize China. Ultimately, he had a candid conversation with Susie with it resulting in her admitting that there had been a misunderstanding. The scenario was perplexing to Herman because the Chinese had appeared so direct, but this scenario depicted the opposite. Susie never approached Herman to share her frustration over the Chinese alphabet, instead he was criticized publically and ultimately embarrassed.

Burn-out

By the end of the year, Herman had begun to experience burn-out. It was becoming clear that the lack of cultural understanding of each other's cultural background had a profound effect on the learning environment. He realized that his "new, innovative teaching techniques were not being well received by...[his] Chinese students" (p. 59). He took Chinese during his entire teaching experience in order to better meet the needs of his students.

Comprehending that the Chinese education system focuses more on reading and writing, he "put a heavy focus on speaking and listening" into each lesson in his "student-centered classroom" (p. 59). "Students were provided with engaging activities to work on their language development in activities that mirrored real-life situations. Students were given more than enough opportunity to put the lessons taught to good, practical use in a safe and controlled environment" (p. 59). After all the work and thought that he inserted into his lessons, he came to the disheartening conclusion—the Chinese did not like the way he taught.

After feeling hopeless, he conducted a lesson based on his conception on how a Chinese instructor would conduct it. Despite being bored and ashamed for teaching a

lesson with little regard for the content or the lesson being student-centered, he was amazed to discover that his students loved it. One student said that ‘it was the best lesson...in a long time’ (p. 62). Although Herman was confused as to why his “subpar” lessons were loved and his lessons where he “gave it all” were hated, he continued with his “subpar” teaching methods to please the students.

Diary Studies

Definition

“On Becoming a Language Teacher: Insights from Diary Studies,” Numrich (1996)—uses diary studies interchangeably with journal studies—defines diary studies as “a first-person case study that is reported in a journal, an introspective account of an L2 experience that reports on effective factors normally hidden or inaccessible to an external observer” (Numrich, 1996. P. 131). Bailey (1990) further defines diary studies in “The Use of Diary Studies in Teacher Education Programs” as

a first-person account of a language learning or teaching experience,
documented through regular, candid entries in a personal journal and then
analyzed for recurring patterns or salient events. (p. 215)

She stresses that these diary entries must be completely candid because the novice teacher must feel “free to reflect, experiment, criticize, doubt, express frustration, and raise questions in the journal,” (p. 218) including their “*real* voice...[or] innermost feelings and anxieties” (Carter, 2010, p. 43). Diary studies are instrumental in documenting 1) “language learning experiences 2) student teachers’ reactions to academic courses and 3) language teaching experiences” (Bailey, 1900, p. 215).

Importance for teachers

In “Teacher-learners’ Voices: Not the Same Old Song,” Carter (2010) depicts the outcomes of journaling. In this particular case, she is referencing how journaling is helpful to her students, in particular students who

are willing and able to reflect on the origins, purposes, and consequences of their actions, as well as the material and ideological constraints embedded in the classroom, school and societal contexts in which they live. These goals are directed toward enabling teachers to develop the pedagogical habits and skills necessary for self-directed growth and toward preparing them individually and collectively, to participate as full partners in their making of educational policies. Often to their surprise, that journaling and reflection lead them to rich insights about their personal and professional lives. (p. 36)

Diary studies can be a helpful means of revealing the progression from novice to expert teacher as well as a more insightful approach than observations and interviews (Numrich, 1996, p. 132). In their diaries, students and teachers can write about their course material, their personal and/or professional development, interaction with students, and anything that they feel is noteworthy (Carter, 2010, p. 36). Diary studies can also be helpful in “generating behavioral changes and in developing self-confidence” (Bailey, 1990, p. 217).

In “Student Needs: Cognitive as Well as Communicative,” Tyacke and Mendelsohn (1986) focus on student diaries as opposed to teacher diaries. Since their focus was on student behavior in ESL learners, they discussed some variables that would

most likely occur in the research. For instance, when discussing Asian behaviors in a classroom setting, They were less likely to be model students based on traditional standards due to their cultural background, i.e. “asking the teacher questions, volunteering, asking for help, asking others to repeat, and correcting other students” (p. 173). Regardless of research variables, effective teachers will reflect on their teaching and the best means to foster student learning (Carter, 2010, p. 41) and be responsive to their students’ needs.

Common themes

Common themes have emerged through diary studies (Numrich, 1996, p. 132; Carter, 2010, p. 38; Tyacke & Mendelsohn, 1986, p. 175; Bailey, 1990, p. 218). Here are some of the most common themes:

- 1) Teachers being preoccupied with their teaching, whether that be in their skills or method of teaching (Numrich, 1996, p. 131).
- 2) Teachers teaching or rejecting teaching skills that were used in their own second language learning (Numrich, 1996, p. 131; Carter, 210, p. 38).
- 3) Teachers experiencing continual exasperation and disappointment in their own teaching (Numrich, 1996, p. 131).
- 4) Teachers experienced unanticipated findings about successful teaching (Numrih, 1996, p. 131).
- 5) Teachers’ “journals...focused on issues related to lesson planning and creativity, time management, problems faced by non-native teachers of English, classroom control, group work, and difficult-student teacher relations” (Bailey, 1990, p. 217; Numrich, 1996, p. 142).

- 6) Teachers experiencing loss of control in the classroom (Numrich, 1996, p. 135).

Seeing themes by other teachers can help the novice teacher better understand the most urgent needs of new teachers.

Chapter 3

Research Methods & Diary Study of a Novice Teacher

Overview of Chapter 3

I would never have imagined that I would write a master's thesis on my first official paid teaching job. This teaching experience has had a profound effect on me. I want to share all the knowledge that I acquired with others to help them gain 1) a better understanding of the Chinese culture, 2) insight into their own teaching, and 3) knowledge of methods and teaching concepts for educating ESL students. In this chapter, I will discuss the research methods and reflect on this experience. My main goals in reflecting on my teaching were to find methods to improve my teaching and ways to avoid my mistakes to ensure optimal performance in the future. I will explain my experience while describing my feelings, revealing the rationale behind my teaching and discovering ways for future improvement.

Chapter 3 encompasses my reflections as an English teacher for a three-week intensive language program for 29 Chinese students. This chapter is organized by day. Each day is comprised of one or more of the following: the summary of the lesson, the summary of the afternoon activity, a challenge, and a reflection. The diary format will vary somewhat because the schedule changed from day to day, and sometimes I included afternoon activities that I supervised and that I imagined would be of interest to readers of the thesis. At the end of each week, there will be my reflections on the week. I have also included a key of the people to whom will be referenced the most. These people will be listed in the order in which they appear in my diary. Further reflections on specific areas that need more in-depth consideration will be discussed in chapter 5 on Discussion and Reflection.

Research Methods

To achieve the research goals, I chose a mixed-methods approach: (1) retrospective diary study (Bailey & Nunan, 2011); (2) auto-ethnography (Canagarajah, 2012; Pratt, 1991; Reeves, 2012), and (3) some aspects of TESOL's critical ethnography (2013, web).

Retrospective diary study

Throughout my teaching experience and the many months since, I have consistently reflected upon my three weeks of teaching. I did not make journal entries or notes during that time. Instead, for this thesis, I am using stimulated recall. According to Nunan and Bailey (2009), stimulated recall is described as

...as a procedure for generating introspective data, but it is used after the event under investigations instead of concurrently. The researcher uses data that were collected during the event (eg. a videotape, audiotape, field notes, etc.) to stimulate the recollection of the people who participated in the event. In this way, the participants will not be distracted by having to introspect during the task, but it is hoped that the record of the original event will stimulate the memories sufficiently to produce good introspective data after the fact. (as cited in Herman, 2010, p. 8)

I have written down all my memories of this time.

Auto-ethnography

Mary Louise Pratt (1991) defined autoethnography as

...a text in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with the representations others have made of them. Thus if

ethnographic texts are those in which European metropolitan subjects represent to themselves their others (usually their conquered others), autoethnographic texts are representations that the so-defined others construct *in response to* or in dialogue with those texts. (p. 35; emphasis in original)

Conversely, A. Suresh Canagarajah defines autoethnography by breaking down the word into three terms: auto, ethno, and graphy.

Auto: This form of research is conducted and represented from the point of view of the self, whether studying one's own experiences or those of one's community. *Ethno*: The objective of this research is and writing is to bring out how culture shapes and is shaped by the personal. Finally, *graphy*: Writing is not only the means of disseminating one's knowledge and experiences; there is an emphasis on the creative resources of writing, especially narrative, for generating, recording, and analyzing data.

Critical ethnography

According to Carol Numrich (1996), a diary study is a "first-person case study that is reported in a journal, an introspective account for a second language (L2) experience that reports on affective factors normally hidden from or inaccessible to an external observer." (as cited in Bailey & Ochsner, 1983) Another definition by Kathleen M. Bailey (1990) describes a diary study as a

first person account of a language learning or teaching experience, documented through regular, candid entries in a personal journal and then analyzed for recurring patterns or salient events. (p. 215)

However, in TESOL,

a case typically refers to a person, either a learner or a teacher, or an entity, such as a school, a university, a classroom, or a program (Faltis, 1997; Johnson, 1992; Nunan, 1992). Acknowledging multiple realities in qualitative case studies, as is now commonly done, involves discerning the various perspectives of the researcher, the case/participant, and others, which may or may not converge (Yin, 1994). As an interpretive, inductive form of research, case studies explore the details and meanings of experience and do not usually attempt to test a priori hypotheses. Instead, the researcher attempts to identify important patterns and themes in the data. The richness of case studies is related to the amount of detail and contextualization that is possible when only one or a small number of focal cases and issues are analyzed. The writer's ability to provide a compelling and engaging profile of the case, with suitable examples and linkages to broader issues, is also very important. (TESOL, 2013, web)

In Critical Ethnography,

ethnography (and critical ethnography in particular) adopts a complex theoretical orientation toward culture. Culture—in collectives of differing magnitude, whether educational institutions, student communities, classrooms, or activity groups--is treated as heterogeneous, conflictual, negotiated, and evolving, as distinct from unified, cohesive, fixed, and static. (TESOL.org)

In the present study, the primary investigator/diarist/ethnographer takes special care not

to generalize her experiences with 29 students to all Chinese students and culture. In other words, Chinese culture is not viewed as “unified...and static” but as changing and “evolving” over time.

Also, in contrast with a relativistic view of cultures as different-but-equal, critical ethnography explicitly assumes that cultures are positioned unequally in power relations. (TESOL.org)

The researcher in the present study would not argue that China and the United States are equal, particularly regarding the native language because English is a universal language, and most Americans speak English as a first language. This puts Americans and other Anglophones in a position of power over those who do not speak English as a first language.

Furthermore, critical ethnography sees descriptions of culture as shaped by the interests of the researcher, the sponsors of the project, the audience, and the dominant communities. Therefore, cultural representations are acknowledged as always being somewhat partial and partisan. Studies that claim to adopt an ethnographic approach should be informed by the theoretical assumptions motivating this research practice. (TESOL.org, 2013, web)

It should be noted that the “interests of the researcher”—her biases and assumptions—are disclosed in Chapter 1 and discussed again in Chapters 5 and 6.

Main Participants in the Diary Study

In order to make my retelling of the events easier to follow as well as to have a better understanding of each participant mentioned in the diary, I am including a brief

description of the main people to whom I refer in this thesis. Their names have been changed.

Travis

Travis was the area coordinator of the Inland Northwest. His main job was to organize the study abroad program for these students in the United States and to help find host families for those students. This was a recurring job for him since he had the same job the previous summer. During the rest of the year, he was an adjunct professor of history at one of the area universities. He also conducted my initial interview for this job. He is married with a child under two-years of age at that time.

Lydia

Lydia is the person with whom I had my second employment interview via telephone. She is also my point of contact during my reprimand and consequent follow-up of this reprimand.

Trent

Trent was the afternoon activities coordinator for this three-week teaching program. His role was to provide active, hands-on activities for three hours in the afternoon. He worked for the organization the previous year. During the school year, he worked as a math and social studies teacher at a local, private high school. He is married and has two young foster children with special needs who he was in the process of adopting. He also hosted both female Chinese teachers and provided transportation for the male Chinese teacher to and from the school—his host Dad would drop him off at Trent's and pick him up from there.

John

John was hired to be my teaching assistant. His role was to aid me in my teaching and to help enforce my instructions to the students. During some afternoons, he would help plan the lessons for the next teaching day. He was a second-year graduate student in history. He had been teaching history as a graduate instructor to native-speaking college students at a nearby university. He was newly married and had no children.

Joy

Joy was one of the three Chinese teachers who accompanied the students to the United States. Among the Chinese teachers, she spoke the best English and could easily carry on a conversation both in English fluency and in comprehension. She was instrumental in helping me understand the Chinese culture, which greatly assisted me in my teaching as well as promoting a more relaxed and understanding hosting experience to my two Chinese sons. I considered her to be my cultural broker (Pipher, 2002). Pipher states that many people can be cultural brokers, but tend to be school teachers who have a direct knowledge of the culture in question. She helped me understand some of the challenges and cultural issues that I faced as a teacher and host mother to my two Chinese sons. She was married and had a teenage son who chose to take an intensive English-writing workshop in China instead of joining her with this program.

Alvin

Alvin was one of my Chinese host sons. Since I will be going into detail about him in my Chapter 4, *Diary of a Host Mother*, I will briefly describe his personality and work ethic. Alvin had a vivacious personality and tended to be the class clown. He had a *joie de vivre*—joy of living life—and a child-like sense of wonder. For the most part, he

did not take his classwork seriously, and his main desire was to play any kind of electronic video game.

Quinn

Quinn was my second Chinese host son and Alvin's best friend. He was not as carefree as Alvin and tended to be more serious about school and in general.

Derek

Derek was my adopted Chinese host son. I considered him to be adopted because I had him spend the night several times during the three weeks. Sometimes he would come home with me in the evenings or spend the day with my family on a weekend.

April

April was the second female Chinese teacher. She spoke English moderately well and could carry on a general, but not detailed conversation. She was married with a five-year-old daughter. It was extremely rare that she would initiate a conversation, and when she did, it would be on a superficial conversation topic such as the weather. She was always impeccably dressed in beautiful, floral dresses and high heels.

Charles

Charles was the third Chinese teacher. He spoke absolutely no English and could not understand it either. During class, he spent the entire time either sitting down on a bench in the classroom or lying down on the bench sleeping.

Although there will be more people to whom I will specifically refer, I will give a brief description of the person at the time the person is first mentioned.

The Hiring Process

I remember the first time I heard about the job to teach a three-week intensive

English language program to Chinese students was through a recommendation by Dr. LaVona Reeves, the MATESL Program director at an area university and my internship supervisor in her ESL classroom and mentor. She had forwarded me an email from a person to whom she had given the recommendation, Travis. My initial reaction was one of trepidation, for I had never taught an entire class for more than an hour at a time, and as a result, my self-confidence was low. However, I knew deep down that I could do it because Dr. Reeves would never have recommended someone whom she felt could not do the work and do the work well.

The Interviews

The first interview

In June, I had my initial interview with the Eastern Washington coordinator, Travis. By his request, we met at a local coffee shop and eatery. Although I have had many interviews in the past with other jobs, I was surprised that he chose to order a complete meal and proceeded to conduct the interview while eating. He stated that he had never hired a teacher with ESL (English as a Second Language) experience but had decided to for this year. The interview went well, and he said that he would put through my application to the main office, which was a formality; the hiring was determined by him, and he approved me. I would still need to have a second interview via telephone by Lydia from the main office.

The second interview

I scheduled the interview over the phone. This interview had to be done via phone because the headquarters for the program was on the western side of the state in Tacoma. I called her at the prearranged time, and the interview went quite well. I have had

extensive experience doing business and customer service over the phone, so my personality and confidence were easily portrayed. By being completely at ease, I was able to explain succinctly and with enthusiasm my background knowledge of Chinese students based on my former and current Chinese university students and my course work with the MATESL program. I shared that Chinese students typically excelled in their writing but needed improvement in their verbal skills. They also needed to work on critical thinking. I further explained that I would focus on verbal skills while promoting individuality as opposed to group thinking. The interviewer appeared very happy that I had children, in particular, a teenage boy and a preteen girl. Lydia strongly encouraged me to bring my children daily to class. I was astonished by how often she continually brought this point up during the remaining interview. This confused me because I considered it to be unprofessional to bring my kids to classes. I asked how the classes were to be taught and organized. I would work with an assistant teacher who would help implement my lessons and support my teachings. School would start at nine in the morning, and I would teach until noon. Lunch would be from noon until one. Table 1 is a general schedule that we would be following. The event coordinator, Trent, was the third and final teacher, who would coordinate activities for the afternoons with field trips occurring every Wednesday. I was officially hired after the interview.

Table 1. A typical school day divided by activity

9 AM – 12:00 PM	Instruction by me
12 PM – 1:00 PM	Lunch
1 PM – 5 PM	Afternoon activities

Before Classes Commenced

First meeting with Trent

Before my official day of teaching, I met with the activities and event coordinator, Trent, to determine the teaching curriculum and to schedule a time go shopping for any additional supplies. This itinerary was predetermined by a prior conversation via phone because Travis had recommended that I call and introduce myself (Appendix A). When we met, he showed me the itinerary that he had already put together listing the topics that would be taught each day. He stated that he went by the previous year's itinerary. Although he had a list of what would be taught, he did not have any suggestions for how to implement these topics. He also would not discuss what the previous teachers had done with their lessons. During the one hour that we spent together, I looked through the materials that had been used, or at least accumulated, from the previous summer teaching programs.

Second meeting: Shopping with Trent

Our second meeting involved a trip to the Dollar Store to get the necessary supplies to help implement my lessons. The cost of the supplies would be covered by the teaching program. I followed Trent's lead, for I had never decided upon classroom teaching aids by showing up at a store and looking at what I might possibly need. I looked at the different items and tried to ascertain which ones would be most useful and helpful. Based on the itinerary that Trent had prepared, I decided to choose items that could help cover topics about money and government, as well as items to promote and to reward good behavior. I selected giant-sized paper coins and bills for the money lesson. For government, I chose a form to be filled in by the students asking such questions as

which laws the students would enact if they were president. Finally, I opted for a variety of stickers to give out when the students did particularly well for my reward system. It was during this meeting that I learned that many students still did not have a host family.

Sunday, July 22—Welcome Students

Twenty-nine Chinese students arrived in Spokane. Since they arrived earlier than had been anticipated, there was a gap in time where there was nothing planned. I felt unprepared and was unsure about what to do. Since my purpose for this meeting was to check in the host parents and answer any questions that they might have. Within minutes I needed to come up with an activity for the students. One of my main goals was to learn the students' names as soon as possible. I felt by learning their names, it would make them feel like a cohesive group and have a sense of belonging. I decided to play hangman on the dry erase board while we waited for the host families to arrive. I was pleased that the students participated for the most part. Based on my previous teaching experience with Chinese students, I knew that some students would always participate and others simply would not, but this can be said for many different demographic groups, including Americans. I wanted my students to learn immediately that non-participation was not an option. Any student who declined in participating in any aspect of the game was gently encouraged with a smile and verbal prodding to make an attempt. By the time the host families arrived for the welcome party and to be united with their Chinese sons and daughters, I knew each student's name.

During this time, the students sat with their new families and had a dinner of pizza, chips, soda, and cookies. Beforehand, Trent had explained that he wanted to do the entire welcome meeting. I had no information stating each person's role for the meeting,

so I let him do the talking. Trent spent about 45 minutes explaining to the host families to treat the children like their own and to enforce their Chinese children to wear their lanyards—the lanyards contained their personal information and medical insurance. The rest of the time was placing the last couple of students with existing families since some students still did not have host families.

Monday, July 23 (Week 1—Day 1)

First day of class

Lesson

The classes took place in a large foyer of a local church, which was where all the classwork took place. In this “classroom,” there were six round tables that could be easily disassembled when more room was needed. Since each table could seat five or six students, I designated each table to be a group. When students entered the classroom that morning, they sat at one of the six tables. For the first day of class, I decided to focus on the basics—class rules: participate, raise hand to speak, speak English, have fun, and smile. With these rules, I hoped the students would grasp that they could take part in the day’s activities while having fun. Each table chose a group name from one of the five states given from which to select: New York, Texas, California, Florida, and Washington. Students used markers and a large poster board to draw their state and decorate their board. The boards were adhered to one of the walls of the class. Also, each student received a composition book in order to take notes. The main lesson was to teach the students about American money. Initially, I thought that this exercise would be a reminder of what I would assume they had already learned in China about American money. Each group received an assortment of play money: bills, consisting of one, 100

dollars, two 20s, three 10s, and five ones; and large coins, one quarter, one dime, one nickel, and one penny. Each coin was projected onto the overhead. The monetary value of each was explained. I demonstrated how to combine the money to purchase different items. Afterwards, each group worked together to make exact change for imaginary purchases. This activity went hand-in-hand with the activity planned in the afternoon, finding pre-selected items at a grocery store. After teaching them about money, I explained the layout of a grocery store, while drawing a mock grocery store with its isles and different food sections such as the deli, produce, and bakery.

Afternoon activity

The entire classroom walked to a nearby grocery store to partake in a scavenger hunt. Students worked in their state groups to find the products and to write down the cost of each item. Since this was an afternoon activity, Trent, the activities coordinator, planned this event. In the store, all of the teachers facilitated the students as needed. Some students quickly learned that they could find the items faster by asking for help. If the students actually asked for help, they would typically say, “I’m looking for” and then point to the item on the handout or point to the item, say nothing, and look lost.

Reflection on afternoon activity

The students returned to the classroom in groups. In my group, I took the time to speak with one of the students, Leah. Leah appeared to be a shy, yet kind girl. Although we had some difficulty conversing, I could tell that she was trying really hard and doing her best. To help ameliorate her comprehension of English, I made sure to speak slower than I normally would, but not where it would stand out to native speakers. I also altered my vocabulary. I used simpler words and avoided colloquialisms. Instead of asking,

“What do you enjoy doing?” I asked, “What do you like to do?” I used basic verb constructions. Despite the language barrier, I hoped that by trying to converse with her, she would realize that I valued her and wanted to get to know her better

Tuesday, July 24 (Week 1—Day 2)

The American teenager and water fun

Lesson

The students were introduced to a day in the life of an American teenager. Trent went through a list of teenage slang terms such as peeps and newbie. He did an excellent job of acting out the terms and using great facial expressions. From there, I explained the structure of the American school system while focusing on middle school and high school. I elucidated further by sharing in which activities teenagers partake after school, with their families, and on the weekends. At the end of the lesson, there were three American female teenagers who answered questions from the students. These students were Trent’s own students from the private school where he taught. The Chinese students appeared to be most intrigued with American teenagers who worked. This is most likely due to Chinese students not working while they are in high school. A teenage high school student who worked was a concept that was difficult to comprehend.

Afternoon activity

The afternoon consisted of water activities. Trent had mentioned to me that morning that based on his experience with the program, the students were initially hesitant to participate, but once they did, they absolutely loved it. This year followed the same pattern. Many of the students approached me and explained that they would not participate in the water activities for various reasons: 1) Many girls would not because of

their menstrual cycles, 2) Both boys and girls said that they did not like water activities, and 3) They simply refused. The water activities consisted of several games, one of which was tossing water balloons back and forth between partners. The last remaining team that did not drop the balloon was considered the winner. There was also water balloon volleyball; the water balloon was tossed over the net and the goal was to catch the balloon without it breaking. By this time, most students were participating, and those who were not, were actively engaged in watching. Students had to quickly fill two cups each with as much water as possible from a large bucket. Then they had to carry the filled water cups about 100 yards and empty them in another bucket—one receptacle per two-person group. The group who had the most water in the bucket at the end of the allotted time, was the winner. The activities concluded with students playing on a slip and slide; this activity caused students to eventually become quite soaked with water. The girls did not participate with the water slide, but the boys actively did. Soon, it became a challenge among the boys to discover which of them could slide the furthest. It was rewarding to see the students become so involved in the water activities, especially when they were quite hesitant in the beginning.

Wednesday, July 25 (Week 1—Day 3)

The first field trip

Wednesdays were for field trips. The first field trip was an all-day shopping extravaganza. We first went to Northtown, one of the local malls. Trent instructed the students to go out and shop and to return to the agreed-upon meeting place at the designated time. The students all arrived at the meeting place on time and ready to go to the next shopping location.

The second half of the shopping day did not go as smoothly as the first. By school bus, we traveled downtown and parked. During the short walk from the parked bus through Riverfront Park to the downtown shopping mall, students got separated from the group. These students either stopped to look around, to go to the bathroom, or to go a different direction. John and I ended up staying with these stragglers to corral them to the mall. Again, Trent indicated the designated meeting place and time. Unfortunately, all the students did not arrive on time. Approximately one third of them were late, and two female students did not arrive until 30 minutes past the designated meeting time. Those 30 minutes were quite stressful because no other student knew where these girls were or could remember seeing them at the shopping complex. One of the students had one of the two missing girl's phone numbers; Trent called her, but there was no response. When the girls finally arrived about 30 minutes past the designated time, Trent admonished them by explaining that we were all worried because they were not there. He explained to them that all students needed to arrive on time for safety reasons and so that everyone wouldn't miss the bus ride back to the school. He asked Joy to explain this to the girls in Chinese.

Reflection

I felt conflicted about this field trip because essentially I was not supposed to teach anything, but it felt odd not contributing to the children's learning yet was getting paid. I had about two hours to spend time in the mall. I ended up staying in the Barnes and Noble. Most of the students ended up going to this store, so I was able to say hello to them. I also helped one of the girls choose some books to read. Initially, she was choosing books based on the book jacket's attractiveness. One of these books had a paranormal mystical theme, and I encouraged her to choose a different one. I felt that the

book would be difficult for her to understand because of the cultural disparity on the afterlife. She was pleased with her final book selections.

Thursday, July 26 (Week 1—Day 4)

American holidays and Christmas in July

Lesson

This lesson focused on covering some of the main American holidays, starting at the beginning of the calendar year and progressing chronologically: President's Day, Valentine's Day, Easter, Memorial Day, 4th of July, Labor Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. For each holiday, the historical significance and the most popular and common festivities that occur were mentioned. My two main references for this lesson were a book on holidays for teaching ESL students that I found from the previous programs' materials and my own knowledge as an American.

Valentine's Day

I chose some holidays to have an activity. After discussing the confections and baubles that are gifted to loved ones and cherished friends and family, the students were asked to design and decorate a Valentine's Day card, and then give the card to the person for whom it had been designated.

Halloween

Students had been told the previous day that this lesson would be on holidays. The students were encouraged to wear a costume for Halloween, providing that it was neither vulgar nor gory. Prizes were going to be awarded to the winners of the costume contest. After the students went trick-or-treating among their classmates and consumed some delicious confections, those students who had not worn a costume were given the

choice of designing one from a variety of clothing and accessories that had been brought in by Trent and me.

I loved how each student's personality was easily portrayed by the student's choice of accouterments. For instance, one flamboyant, extrovert male student wore a red boa and a large black felt hat adorned with a single long grey feather attached to a ribbon encircling the base of the hat. With the additional embellishment of black sunglasses and black skinny jeans, he personified a flashy character who commanded a room's attention.

For additional amusement, I had planned a group activity. Since students continued to not consistently volunteer, I chose two students from each state group for this activity. Participation was a requirement. The students were chosen based on previous participation and whom I thought was next due to have an active role in the group. One student was to be the mummy and the other was to be the mummy's personal designer. With toilet paper, the mummy designer with the rest of the group's input got to design a costume with only toilet paper. The students were quite creative, and it was fun to watch them be so engaged with their clothing designs.

Thanksgiving

Students were instructed to write in English, five things for which they were grateful. Due to time constraints because the previous activities took longer than I had anticipated, each student was not able to mention every item for which they were grateful. I called upon selected students to read three of the five things that they had written. I could have asked each student to share an example, but, I did not want students to each say the same example.

Christmas

The last holiday discussed was Christmas. It was briefly introduced, and the students were informed that a more detailed explanation would take place after lunch along with a gift exchange.

Afternoon activity

Students were a buzz of excitement in the afternoon. There were plenty of gifts under the tree because the students were told to bring a wrapped, inexpensive gift with the maximum cost of one dollar. The teachers had brought extra in case some students forgot theirs. The purpose of the gift exchange was 1) to take part in a popular, family-oriented activity that occurs during the Christmas season, 2) to learn how the game works and 3) to focus on the act of giving instead of receiving. In this particular gift exchange, each gift could be “stolen” from another student, but a gift could only be stolen up to three times. Various items were wrapped; there were gag gifts of noxious fumes in containers and faux vomit, and there were lotions, candy, and books. A pair of socks, mugs, and candles were also included in the plethora of gifts. This gift exchange would be considered tranquil and tame compared to some I have seen. There were a couple of students who helped to portray the spirit of the game by continuing to steal back the coveted miniature picture frames. All in all, it was a fun time for everybody.

Reflection

I was a little nervous to present that day’s lesson because I still only had use of an overhead projector, I used it to show the information on each holiday. Although there was an overhead, it was difficult and cumbersome to use. Despite my trepidation and technical difficulties, I greatly enjoyed the lesson. It was so rewarding to see the students

be involved in what they were learning as well as be active participants.

Friday, July 27 (Week 1—Day 5)

Let's play ball

Lesson

The main theme for the day was American sports and game shows. The afternoon activity consisted of taking the students to a nearby park to partake in a variety of sports. Trent had spoken to me the day before about this lesson. He wanted to teach the students the rules of several popular games in order to better prepare them for the games that afternoon. For instance, he explained football by drawing an arena and the different players. He explained the players, the different plays that could be performed, and how certain plays would be referred to in the game as “first down.” Since there was no large chalkboard or dry erase board, he used an overhead projector to explain the sports with hand-drawn figures. He encouraged the students to draw what he did and to take notes.

Reflection

Since I was still a novice teacher and I was and am always striving to learn as much as I can about teaching in order to improve, I paid attention to Trent's teaching as well as the students' reactions to his teachings. I was interested in seeing if I noticed any distinct differences in his teaching style and those teachers who have ESL knowledge. While listening to his lesson, I had difficulty following what he said. I then paid extra close attention because sports did not interest me much, so it made it more challenging to understand the rules. Even after fervently listening and trying to follow these rules, I found it difficult. I think the students felt the same way. Some students' eyes had a glazed-over appearance. One girl gave an exasperated sigh, dropped the pencil she was

using to take notes, rolled her eyes, and appeared to stop listening. It was obvious that Trent was really involved in his lesson and was doing his best, but the majority of the students gave up because they could either not follow the rules of the game or keep up with the English language.

Week One Challenges and Observations

This was a difficult week for me because it was my first time as a teacher teaching a class of students and doing it full-time. During my final interview from the main office, I had been informed that the students had an intermediate level English ability. I had asked if there was a particular evaluation tool that they used to measure the students' English proficiency and was told that there was not. My interviewer had recommended speaking with the students to help determine their proficiency. During the week, I actively engaged each of the students verbally. I spoke with them one-on-one during class and during lunch. In class, I would ask individual students to recast what I had just taught or what another student had just said. I would also ask the students to help a student who was unable to answer the question. Based on my discussions with the students, I learned that the majority of the students had a low level English speaking proficiency. This was not a surprise to me because I knew that most Chinese students in China allocated their English time to written English and not verbal.

I also found it challenging with the technical aspects offered. There was only an overhead projector and no sound ability. Most of my teaching was verbally explaining and teaching. I tried to build upon what was previously taught during the week. For instance, on one day I focused on American game shows such as the Price is Right and Jeopardy. Information that had previously been taught was asked following the game

show format.

It was also frustrating because the students refused to speak English at their tables or in their small group activities. The only thing that was somewhat affective in reducing their Chinese was standing next to them and constantly reminding them that it was English only.

The students had difficulty staying on track with a given task. Since I could not monitor every group, I asked my teaching assistant, John, to help supervise the groups to make sure that they were following the task guidelines as well as speaking English. John appeared to have difficulty in doing this. He often appeared lost, and I noticed that the students would disregard him.

Since John had such difficulties with aiding the students, I would sometimes have him help teach while I took a more active role in group and one on-one on teaching. I knew that it was in these tasks that the students would put to work what had been taught, which would lead to more being learned.

Monday, July 30 (Week 2—Day 1)

My birthday

I cannot remember what was taught this day, but I recall how kind and loving the students were, especially when they learned that it was my birthday. The class learned that it was my birthday because one of my host sons mentioned it to one of the Chinese teachers, Joy. She led the entire class singing “Happy Birthday” to me. Throughout the day, the students came up to me and told me that they loved me and mentioned what they liked about me. They put together little gifts of fruit or candy.

Tuesday, July 31 (Week 2—Day 2)

American government

The topic that was scheduled to be taught was American government. John was a second year master's graduate student in history. We had discussed the day before him doing the teaching because he loved government so much. I also thought that since he was getting a master's in history and was teaching it at the college level, that he had a passion for it and would also know how to convey potentially confusing information in an easy to understand format. Trent had been able to get some technical equipment from the private school where he worked during the year, so we now had the capability of showing video and PowerPoint presentations with sound. John decided to do a PowerPoint on government. While he went through the slides, I monitored the students making sure that they were paying attention. While John was presenting the material, Travis, the area coordinator for the Inland Northwest arrived. He did not say why he was there. He simply went and took a seat. He stayed for about 20 minutes and left without speaking to any of the Chinese or American teachers.

The reprimand

After lunch, Trent received a phone call from Lydia at the main office requesting to speak with me. Lydia informed me that the Chinese office was not satisfied with my work thus far. She stated that it appeared that I was acting more as an assistant teacher as opposed to the main teacher and that John was doing more work than I. I was told that I needed to email her all my lesson plans for the previous week and the current week and to be as specific as possible. She treated me with a hostile attitude and said that there

should be no difficulty for me to send her those items since they should have already been prepared. Under no circumstances was I not to send them to her. I explained that I would send the information to her as soon as I could that evening. She stated that she would also be requesting the same information from the other two teachers.

I spoke to John to determine his thoughts. He said that he did not like how we had been working together. He said that when he took on the position, he did not know that he would be doing any teaching at all or that he would have to spend time working on the lesson. He said that it had taken him five hours to construct the slide presentation that he did that day. I thanked him for expressing his opinion and that it would have been helpful if he had shared his thoughts with me beforehand. I felt ganged up on. Since I had been hired and worked with Trent, he would tell me that he wished that he could have done his own hiring. He would tell me that it was nothing against John or me, but he could have worked better with others. Also, Travis was John's cousin and they grew up together.

Reflection

I felt embarrassed, hurt, and betrayed. It had never occurred to me that office politics would come into play. I felt that the person or people who did not think that I was effective enough, did not have the entire picture. I was giving my all to the students. I wondered what would be the consequence if the head office was not satisfied with the documents that I would send them that evening. Would I be fired? If so, how would I explain that to the students? How would I show my face each morning when I took my two Chinese sons to school each day? I was kind of confused about the situation because there was only a two hundred dollar difference in pay between the main teacher and the assistant teacher.

Over the previous weekend, I met with Jane, one of my students from the University who I tutored. During my visit, she introduced me to the woman with whom she lived, Pamela. Pamela was currently on a two-month vacation from her job as a principal at a Chinese school in China. The two had met when Jane worked for Pamela in China. When Jane decided to attend school in the United States, Pamela invited her to reside at her house. I shared with the two women that many of the Chinese students had indicated an interest in attending an American university. Since Pamela had an inside perspective on Chinese students, I asked if she would come to the class and speak to the students. Due to the importance of the topics being discussed, we decided that Jane would translate what she said into Chinese. Since the two could not come in the morning, they had only about an hour to speak because the afternoon had already been scheduled with a visit from the police office and the fire department. Pamela understood that the students did not have many, if any, responsibilities, so in addition to discussing American universities, she also explained the importance of being independent.

My written response

In addition to my lesson plans and handouts, I included this letter in my email to Lydia.

Lydia,

I appreciate our conversation today. I want the best possible learning environment for the Chinese students, one in which they can learn, have fun, and retain the information. As I mentioned to you today, if there is a particular teaching method the Chinese client would like implemented or additional topics besides the ones of which I was originally informed to be taught, I will strive to meet those conditions.

As you have requested, I am sending the lesson plans and material to you. It is not reaching you as early as I would have desired because I left the school later than usual due to waiting for parents. I compiled the information as quickly as possible after performing my duties as a mother and host mother. Upon being hired as well as after having reviewed my manual, I was unaware that detailed lesson plans were required. If you and/or the Chinese client would like to receive a meticulous hour-by-hour lesson plan for each day on a daily basis, please let me know.

Teaching the Chinese students is an honor, and I love coming to class each day and working with them. In my opinion, their English has greatly improved, and they are becoming more and more comfortable speaking in group situations and individually. Many of the children have expressed a desire, either to me or in front of the class, to attend an American university. My teaching method of having students speak often, in groups or otherwise, is not only a means to improve their oral and listening comprehension, but as a way to ease into the understanding of how American classrooms, in particular mainstream university classes, operate.

If I can be of any further assistance, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Diane Thames

Wednesday, August 1 (Week 2—Day 3)

Water, water, and too much water

I was apprehensive because this was the day that I would learn what was to happen to me in reference to my job. I had finally resolved myself to whatever my fate would be that it would be okay because I had done everything to the best of my ability

without compromising my values or beliefs. I was scheduled to speak with the main office that evening after arriving home from teaching to learn my fate.

Our second field trip was scheduled later that morning. In the meantime, I had brought applications to a nearby university and a community college and explained what they would need to do in order to attend. I had also spoken with the representative at the community college who was in charge of international students. I explained that program as well. I brought in information from that school that was in Chinese and gave it to two students who were most challenged with English.

We arrived and were the first to enter the water park. Both Trent and John had decided to enjoy the water slides as well. While the kids enjoyed the slides, I spent the time chatting with one of the Chinese teachers, Joy. Our conversation eventually turned to the Chinese language, and she taught me some basic Chinese. I was captivated with the language. It was so much fun to speak; I felt like I was doing an intricate dance. What I found particularly intriguing was how I could actually understand some of what the students said. I know that my accent was not the best, but I was not trying to prove my amazing ability. I hoped that by doing my best to speak and learn Chinese, despite how many errors that I might make and my atrocious accent, I would help encourage the students in their English pursuits. I had noticed that the students tended to make fun of each other when they spoke English. If a student made any errors while speaking English, other students would laugh at them.

After being at the water park for a few hours, the manager of the park came to me and asked if I was part of the Chinese group. When I indicated that I was, she said that many of the Chinese students were putting themselves and other patrons at risk for harm.

The manager had already warned and spoken with the students many times, but their behavior had not improved, mainly because the students would ignore her or walk away. I decided to round up the students to speak with them as a whole. I did not know which particular students were the offenders. As I went closer to the slides, I found Trent. He was unable to help gather the students because he had to leave the water slides to go to the outlying neighborhood pool. The reason was because some of the Chinese students left the water park, went to the pool, and one of them almost drowned and only survived because he was rescued by a lifeguard. It took an hour to round up everyone. I had John and one of the Chinese boys help me gather all the students. I chose this particular boy because he had a good grasp of the language and based on our previous conversations and his classroom performance, I trusted him to help me. Since it took over an hour to get all the students together, we ended up leaving and returning to the classroom.

I was devastated at what almost happened to one of the students. I had never heard about something like this happening in a school setting. Plus, I was unsure as to what to do since these students had left the school group. I felt that the coordinators should be notified. I had just finished speaking with Travis when Lydia from the main office called me to follow up on my teaching position.

I informed her about the near drowning incident, and she said that it was not as bad as what normally happens when these Chinese students come to America. I was not sure how to take that because I thought the situation should be taken more seriously. The majority of the conversation was about the incident. For whatever reason, her entire behavior was completely different because she was cordial and kind this time. I was not chastised in any way and was told that if I have any teaching questions to please feel free

to contact her.

Thursday, August 2 (Week 2—Day 4)

Anything? Anything at all?

Since Trent usually started off the class with a warm-up game, I expected him to bring up the issues that had occurred the day before. I thought that the students' behavior at the water park would have been discussed as well as students leaving the water park. Nothing was brought up at all.

Friday, August 3 (Week 2—Day 5)

Are you having fun yet?

One of the complaints that I had received from the Chinese office was that the students had nothing to do while I interacted with the students during class. The Chinese representative wanted the students to have constant interaction, no down-time, and to be entertained throughout the lesson. I was unsure as to what to do to meet all of these requests, but I did make changes to my teaching.

My first change was to design a colorful, interactive PowerPoint presentation. This particular presentation was about main events and fashions throughout the ages, from the 50s to the present. To help keep the children engaged, I included material that would interest them such as the progression of electronics such as game devices and cell phones. The PowerPoint was visually stimulating with pictures appearing at different times, written text showing up at different speeds and panning in though spinning, bouncing, and other visual ways. I made sure to keep the text simple, yet grammatically correct. There were also videos. One of the most loved videos was Michael Jackson's "Thriller" video. It was refreshing to see the students appear to enjoy the PowerPoint,

especially since it took me such a long time. Afterwards, Trent said, “good job.” That was the only positive comment that Trent ever told me up to that point or any time thereafter. Secondly, I incorporated quizzes. Before the lesson, I told the students to pay close attention and take notes because they would receive a quiz at the end. The team that received the best score would receive points. The point system was introduced by Trent at the beginning of the program. The kids seemed to also enjoy having quizzes. Perhaps it was because it made them more comfortable because they are used to quizzes and tests in China. The third change was that I introduced handouts. The handout could be a word search or additional information about the topic to be taught that day.

Afternoon activity

The afternoon activity was tie-dyeing t-shirts. Four tables were placed outside and a set of paints were placed at each table. Trent had a personal matter to attend, so John and I supervised the students. Initially, the students were able to take turns, but as they became more involved with the project, they became rambunctious and less patient. They required constant supervision and redirection when they were encroaching into another person’s space or the majority of them taking over a table. John observed but did not try to help keep the students on task or assist in another capacity in order to help the activity run smoothly.

I asked a conscientious student who had careful and precise penmanship if she would write something in Chinese on the back of my t-shirt. She was honored to help. With painstaking detail, she wrote, “I love my Chinese students.”

Week Two Challenges and Observations

This was a stressful week. I spent over 24 hours wondering if I would still have a

job by the end of the week.

The students were still not speaking English at their tables or during group work. The only time that they would speak English is when I would ask them questions in front of the class, and they would respond. Even when the assistant teacher or I would stand next to the table, the students would speak Chinese instead of English. I felt as if I was constantly saying, “speak English,” probably because I was.

The students’ electronic gadgets were now interfering in the classroom learning environment. The disruption didn’t seem so apparent the first week. With the interruption midweek about my job and the near death experience of one of the students, I did not address the electronic issue until the end of the week. I had wanted to address it sooner, but I was feeling insecure in my teaching due to being reprimanded by the main office and feeling some hostility from my co-teachers. Finally, I realized that the possibility of any negative feedback from any other teachers would be worth me dealing with the electronic issue due to its detrimental effect on the classroom. When the host families picked up their children, I informed them that the children were not able to have their electronic gadgets in class. I recommended that the students keep them at their host families’ homes. The parents either responded that the gadgets would be kept at home or they would stay in the students’ backpacks/handbags. Despite my limited new-found confidence, I did not tell the students about this change. I let Trent know right before I left for the day. I was relieved when he thought that it was a good idea because I didn’t think that I could handle any more negativity towards my teaching ideas. I wished that I was less insecure in my teaching and my decision-making, but I took comfort in the idea that with more experience would come more confidence.

Monday, August 6 (Week 3—Day 1)

Famous and infamous Americans, past and present

Lesson

This lesson focused on famous and infamous Americans from the past to the present. The PowerPoint presentation began with the criminals/infamous Americans who included Jesse James, Al Capone, and O.J. Simpson. The next section was titled entrepreneurs and inventors. Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell, and Henry Ford composed this category. Amelia Earhart had her own category in explorers and adventurers. Under empowering women, there was Helen Keller, Eleanor Roosevelt, Marian Anderson, and Alice Paul. George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Franklin D. Roosevelt comprised the presidents section. Mark Twain, Edgar Allen Poe, and Stephanie Meyer were the authors included. The various athletes were Babe Ruth, Jesse Owens, and Michael Jordan. Actress and model, Marilyn Monroe, and director, Steven Spielberg were under the section, actress/director. The last section was composed of Michael Jackson, Taylor Swift, Eminem, and Lady Gaga.

Just as I did in my other PowerPoint presentation on the 50s through the present, the presentation was visually appealing. Words would pan in in an assortment of ways, cartoon pictures would move around such as a couple of ravens flying on the slide representing Edgar Allen Poe, and film, sports, and movie clips peppered the presentation. The people who were represented have impacted or currently impact American history and culture. I chose people with different backgrounds and people who appeal to the Chinese students such as Michael Jackson and Stephanie Meyer.

There were two activities during the lesson. The first was after the empowering women section and was on Helen Keller. The students received a double-sided handout. On one side, there was information about Helen Keller—a picture of each letter of the sign language alphabet and a section about a student's thoughts. The students were to answer the question, "Which do you think would be harder to manage: a visual disability or a hearing disability?" Then they were to explain why they chose that answer. Every student, but one, said that a visual disability would be harder to manage.

The second activity took place after the presidents' section. The activity had two parts. The first part was the second side of the Helen Keller handout and was on integrity. I chose to do an activity on integrity because one aspect of being successful, for presidents and for everyone, is to be true to oneself, the definition of integrity. This activity asked students to answer the following questions about themselves: What three words best describe you? What are your three favorite things to do? Of what are you most proud? What promise have you made to yourself? and What would you do if a friend told you to be different than who you are? The second part of the activity was to write down what would they do if they were elected president.

Reflection

The students seemed to enjoy the different activities, as well as the engaging PowerPoint presentation. They liked watching the presentation, especially the different video clips, in particular the video clip of Martin Luther King's "I have a Dream" speech. In the future, if I were to present the same presentation, I would divide the PowerPoint presentation in half in order to cover the same material over two days instead of one. It was too much information to absorb at once. I was still feeling insecure in my teaching,

and I was focusing on an entertaining and interesting lesson. I would also add another activity.

Afternoon Activity

Trent had water games planned for the afternoon. The weather was slightly overcast and not as warm as it had been. He decided to cancel the water activities and give the kids some downtime since the students had been so active lately. Most all of the boy students and many of the girl students expressed their displeasure about the water activities being cancelled. I found this interesting because they had been adamantly against it the first time. I think this is important to note because students are not always aware of what they may or may not enjoy in class.

Tuesday, August 7 (Week 3—Day 2)

Talent show

Lesson

This was my last lesson before the students continued on to sightsee in Las Vegas and California before they returned to China. For the lesson, I had compiled a list of questions for the students to take part in an American trivia game. The trivia questions were comprised on information that had been taught in previous lessons. The students were divided into teams, the same teams as their seating groups. A question would be on the overhead, the first group that could successfully answer the question would receive a point.

Reflection

The content and concept of the trivia game was good, but for whatever the reason(s), the students had difficulties paying attention. The majority of the students were

restless and would not pay attention. My usual techniques of reigning the students back in were ineffective. I asked John if he had any suggestion for the students to complete the lesson, but he said no. Finally, I abandoned the lesson and told them that they could begin working on their talent show skits.

Afternoon activity

Trent had thought it would be a good idea to have a talent show. The group put one on the year before, and he said that the students thoroughly enjoyed it, and it was a big success. Students were able to choose their own groups and decide what they would like to do for the talent show. It could be a play, dance, song, or whatever they would like to do. Trent had brought this topic up to me briefly at the beginning of the program, and he made it clear that he would be in charge of it. The students seemed to be excited about this new task and immediately formed groups.

There was one person, Derek, who did not have a group. I thought that I could talk to another group and that the group would accept him. He was close friends, his only two friends, with my two Chinese sons. All three would sit together at lunch and sometimes on the field trips. I thought that it would not be an issue for Derek to be with the same group; however, the group refused to accept him. I even spoke to the group without Derek to determine what the problem was and they refused to speak about it and adamantly refused him to be on the team.

I was quite disappointed in the students' behavior, so I took matters in my own hands. I spoke with Trent. He had planned to have us American teachers do our own little talent show, and he said that Derek could join us.

Wednesday, August 8 (Week 3—Day 3)

The final field trip

For the final field trip, the class went by bus to Coeur d'Alene in order to take part in shopping, the beach, and the park. This field trip went the smoothest of them all because no one nearly died and everyone returned to the rendezvous point on time. When we arrived at our location, Trent told the students when to return to the bus. The students had approximately six hours to stroll around Coeur d'Alene, to eat lunch, to partake in park activities coordinated by Trent, to soak up the sun or the beach, or to go shopping.

Thursday, August 9 (Week 3—Day 4)

The talent show and potluck

Today was the final class day. There was a mixture of excitement for the talent show and sadness since it was the last day of class since the students would be continuing their journey the next day. I could tell that the students put a lot of effort into their skits, but unfortunately, all of the skits were in Chinese. I don't know why, but it did not occur to me to insist that all the skits were to be done in English. With the students' propensity to speak in Chinese, perhaps it would have been better to have each group perform two skits—one in English and one in Chinese.

A potluck was scheduled for one in the afternoon. Trent, John, and I took turns driving the students to the park where the potluck was to occur. All host parents, who were not at work, and their families arrived at one to the park. Because there was supposed to be food, no one, including the students, had eaten. When I asked Trent about

the food, he said that we were eating in the evening. Trent said that he would be staying at the park waiting for the rest of the host families to arrive. Since the students needed to eat, he sent the students to the mall that was across the street from the park and told them to return in a couple of hours. I went to a nearby fast food company with a host family mom and her six children. As can be expected, she was not happy that she had to purchase lunch for her entire family. She would have returned home, but the family lived an hour away.

When everyone arrived at the event, it was enjoyed by all. It seemed that the longer that I was around the students, the better I understood them, even when they spoke in Chinese. I went around to all the students in order to introduce them to my children. At one table where a group of girls were sitting, one of them said something in Chinese to her three companions. Intrinsically I understood that she had said, “He sure is tall,” in reference to my 16-year-old son. I immediately responded with “Yes, he is tall.” Her eyes grew wide and a look of sheer astonishment crossed her face. She asked me if I understood Chinese. My response was a large smile, and I continued on with my introductions.

Friday, August 10 (Week 3—Day 5)

Farewell

I couldn’t believe that three weeks had already passed, and the students were leaving. I arrived at the school by 6:30, and the students were to leave by bus for the airport at 8 AM. As the students arrived, their luggage was loaded onto the bus. I followed the bus to the airport because I was Trent’s ride back to the school for him to retrieve his car.

Reflection

I was surprised how emotional I was. I tried really hard not to cry, but by the time the students went to their gate, the tears were flowing.

Week Three Challenges and Observations

By the end of the teaching program, I felt a myriad of emotions. Overall, there was a sense of sadness. I had become so close to the students that I missed them. It was as if my closest friends all moved away at the same time, yet I knew that the likelihood of seeing them again was minimal.

I was also exhausted, for I had not had a full night's sleep since I had started teaching them. It was an oxymoron because I felt replete with emptiness. How could it be possible to be filled yet empty at the same time? It was as if all the creativity, drive, and mental fortitude had left me. There was nothing left, just an empty shell. I struggled with questions. Is this normal? Should I miss my students this much? What do I do now? How could I have improved my teaching and the experience in general in order to make the three weeks less stressful and more enjoyable?

Chapter 4

Diary Study of a Host Mother

Chapter 4 begins with how I became a host mother, and this is followed by an introduction to each of the teens who lived with my family—their physical descriptions, personalities, strengths, challenges, English ability, interactions with others, and a farewell letter to each one.

Journey to Becoming a Host Mother

Trent was in charge of finding host families for the twenty-nine Chinese students and the three accompanying Chinese teachers. At the time of my second meeting with Trent, the one where we went shopping for teaching supplies, he still needed to place eleven more students within a seven-day period. I had not hosted any foreign students for almost 20 years, and those students had been from France and during the time I lived at home with my parents. As a single mother of four, I was uncertain if I would qualify to be a host mother because I was not part of a traditional American family and because of my small accommodations. I lived in (and still do) a three-bedroom apartment—my two daughters shared a room, my two sons shared a room, and I had my own. Despite my thoughts of potentially being disqualified, I pursued hosting.

I really wanted to help out. There were not enough families volunteering, and many families were hosting two or three students to meet the need. Regardless, I knew I would need my children's help and support for the best possible hosting experience. Living on a tight budget of child support, I was relieved when Trent mentioned that host families would receive \$50 per week for each student hosted; the money would arrive after the students left as a VISA debit card. Originally, I chose to host a male student who

had a little sister back in China, and he was the only student to have a sibling. I was particularly intrigued with him because Chinese families can only have one child due to the One-Child Policy. I had already decided to host a boy because my 11-year-old girl was adamant that she would not share her room with anyone else. With only days remaining before the students' arrival, more families were still needed to host. Due to this, I changed my decision from hosting one boy to hosting two boys. I felt privileged that Trent let me choose from the stack of male applicants—to me, it was a pleasant perk of my new job. I chose two students who were close friends and wanted to be placed together, if at all possible.

I have compiled a case study on each of the two boys I hosted and on the boy whom I had originally chosen to host and whom I consider my adopted Chinese son. Fortunately, my adopted son became close friends with my Chinese sons, even before I ever thought of him as one of my own Chinese sons.

Case Study One: My Host Son, Alvin

Physical description

Alvin has short dark brown hair. It looked as if it had once been a long buzz cut, but it had grown out during his journey to the United States before he arrived at my house. He is about five foot two inches tall, and he has a slight frame with no excess fat or defined muscles. He has a carefree sense of style. He wears thick black prescription glasses, the ones that are quintessential for the nerd look.

Personality

When selecting pseudonyms for my Chinese sons, it was easy for me to choose Alvin's. I opted for Alvin because his personality reminded me of Alvin from the cartoon

series and movie, *Alvin and the Chipmunks*. Just like the famous, renowned chipmunk, my Alvin was animated, super curious, and had a knack of getting into trouble, although that was never his intention. And like the celebrity chipmunk, I couldn't help but love him even in his more exasperating moments. He was a sweet boy who strived for and relished attention. For instance, at the farewell potluck for host families and students, he wore a large black plastic cowboy hat that could hold a 12-ounce beverage can from which it could be drunk with the attached long flexible plastic straw. Concurrently, he wore a t-shirt which he had recently purchased that showed a chest of a body builder on the front and the body builder's back on the posterior of the t-shirt. The entire day he referred to himself as "muscle man."

Alvin is a bright boy with a quick smile, a joy for life, and a sense of adventure. He is always ready with a smile. In his letter to his host family, he said that he was outgoing but shy—I never saw his shy side.

He was a friend to all. People were attracted to his welcoming personality and warm smile. I think people could sense his zest for life and his desire to experience life to its fullest.

Strengths

One of his most admirable qualities is his child-like sense of wonder. He has the ability to enjoy the small things in life; he is an embodiment of the proverb "to take time to smell the roses." While watching him enjoy a family activity such as playing cards, I could not help but smile and feel that sense of awe. I hope that he never loses this unique trait.

It was rare that he would express interest in activities in which he would like to

participate before his return to China. However, he expressed his life-long dream to play at a McDonald's Playland, a play structure for ages three to 12 located in some McDonald's, consisting of several slides and a series of tubes through which to crawl. Since on most school days we wouldn't arrive home until a few minutes after 6 PM, it was challenging to incorporate this activity into the already over-filled schedule, especially a time when my children could accompany us (My children visited their dad every Wednesday evening and every other weekend.). Ultimately, we went to McDonald's on a Wednesday, so I did not have my kids; Alvin could not be deterred in his excitement. I loved that he expressed such enthusiasm, especially to an activity besides playing video games. He and Quinn played for several hours. Alvin continued to play when Quinn took about a 15 minute break. He was not discouraged when the smaller children followed him around the play structure. On the contrary, he happily included these children in his exploration of the tunnel system and slides.

In the evenings after dinner, when time allowed, he would play with my kids. His favorite card game was Go Fish and would often play this game with my 11-year-old daughter and my seven-year-old son. He could easily spend an hour playing this one game. As in all things he did, he would be giddy when he would win, which he usually did. He would extend his right arm up into the air and yell out a "Yes" as he quickly tucked his arm back down to his side, all the while grinning with wicked humor.

Despite Alvin being a teenage boy, he enjoyed playing with my five-year-old daughter. He would sit at the dining-room table and play "make believe" with her by indulging in a tea party. At the end of the program's going away potluck for the students and host families, Alvin would chase my daughter around the park's jungle gym while

they both laughed and giggled. My daughter would scream out, “Alvin, come and get me!” And he would happily comply.

Challenges

Alvin had several challenges while he lived with my family. I think the challenges can be rationalized by his upbringing and lifestyle in China. He was an only child from divorced parents, and he attended boarding school full-time with weekend visits to his mom’s. His only responsibilities living in the boarding school were to complete his homework and to attend classes.

Alvin tended to have a low threshold for patience. When he wanted or needed something, he expected to get his needs met immediately. For instance, after class one day, he showed me that one of his sneakers, which contained a mesh overlay, had a tear in the mesh, but the tear did not reach the structure of the shoe. He insisted that we rush to a shoe store to purchase another pair. Realizing that he was quite distraught, I explained to him that I understood his desire for another pair of shoes, but that I could not go to a store that evening because of my obligations as a mother. I further expounded that my children were waiting at home and were hungry, and my smaller children would have a short time—less than two hours—after my arrival to eat, prepare for bed, spend time with me, and then go to sleep. I knew that it would take a minimum of an hour in the shoe store since he had never shopped in an American one before and could be overwhelmed with the selection. It would also take time to try on the different styles and sizes of shoes. He immediately started sulking and continued to complain about his shoes without attempting to understand the needs of my family. I was able to take him to the shoe store that weekend.

Because Alvin's whims were always immediately met in China, it was difficult for me to tell when he had a legitimate need. During his stay, my entire family celebrated his birthday. We went to a nearby facility that contained many trampolines. He jumped for about two hours and did not have any issues during this time. Upon leaving, he started complaining that his foot hurt, and he proceeded to limp. I was concerned because he did look uncomfortable and in pain. I knew his predisposition to exaggerate his troubles, but if there was a serious issue then I wanted it to be resolved. I deduced that since he did not start complaining about his foot until the fun ended, then it probably was just strain from not being used to physical exertion. I further decided that if he continued to complain the next day, I would seek medical attention. Fortunately, he did not complain further.

English ability

According to his application to the program, Alvin had studied English for 12 years before his arrival in the United States. The writing in his letter to his prospective host family, appeared to be at an intermediate English level, although he personally rated his English ability as poor. I knew that this writing selection was not necessarily a direct correlation with his English speaking ability because of several reasons: 1) Chinese students traditionally wrote English better than spoke it due to teachers focusing more on writing, 2) he would have had plenty of time to write the letter, allowing him to portray a higher English proficiency level, and 3) he would have had access to a dictionary, translation device, or someone who had a higher English ability to review what he wrote.

Sometimes, I thought he understood more than he portrayed, but if so, he refused to acknowledge his understanding. Perhaps it was coincidental, but his lack of comprehension usually occurred when he was being admonished because of his behavior.

Alvin would try to use his best friend and my other Chinese son, Quinn, as a crutch for his English. He wanted his friend to translate what he said. His reasoning for this was because Quinn spoke better English. I explained to him that his English would improve by speaking English more. I also shared that I was very patient and would be willing to wait until he could convey his thought.

Sometimes, even as an ESL teacher, I would be confused as to why he could not understand me. For example, on one school day, the students needed to bring a towel to get dry after taking part in the water activities in the afternoon. I reminded both boys to get a towel. I said the word *towel* and explained the definition, a cloth used to get dry after being wet from taking a shower or swimming. Comprehension covered his face, and he went upstairs to procure a towel. On the way to school, I mentioned the towel again. He looked confused. I explained it again, and he said that neither he nor Quinn brought a towel. I turned the car around and went home to get towels. We arrived at school a few minutes before class was to start. I have been an exchange student to France three times. The first time that I went, I had only taken about six months of the language. If I were told a single word, like towel, I could have figured out that I needed to bring one. Even with his limited English, it seems unlikely that he could not understand simple single words.

Of course, Alvin's all-time favorite activity was playing video games. He could play video games non-stop, to the point of forgetting to eat. My two sons, 14-year-old son, Mathieu, and seven-year-old son, Christian, would take turns playing with Alvin and our other Chinese son, Quinn. A language barrier never was an issue when playing these video games.

Interactions with others

Alvin got along well with everyone. In the United States, in a classroom setting, he might be described as a class clown. I would notice in class how other students would often unconsciously and consciously drift toward him. He had no problems talking to or socializing with every person in class. He even became close friends with my adoptive Chinese son, Derek, who was ostracized by the rest of the class except for Alvin and his friend, Quinn.

My farewell letter

Alvin was a great addition to my family. My kids loved him, and my oldest wanted him to live with us longer. I wanted him to understand how much he meant to us, so I wrote him and my other Chinese sons a farewell letter. I did not try to alter my writing so that he could definitely understand it because I did not think I could adequately portray all that was on my heart in simple terms. I hoped that he would have a teacher translate the card in order to understand the meaning.

The letter

Dear Alvin,

I have greatly enjoyed having you not only as my student, but also as a member of my family for the last three weeks. You have been a joyful addition to my home. It brings me joy to see your face become so animated when you are happy. My children love having you with them, and I know you will be missed very much. Elizabeth is so fond of you, and you make everyone around you happier. I have loved laughing heartily at the amusing and funny comments, expressions, and gestures you make. You have given my children a positive and lasting experience that they will not forget. My family and I look

forward to staying in contact with you when you leave by emailing, writing, and Skyping. I am very thankful and honored to have you stay with my family.

Love,

Your American mom, Diane

Case Study Two – My Host Student, Quinn

Physical Description

Quinn was about five feet five inches tall with a thin, lanky frame. He had dark brown hair styled into a short bowl cut. He appeared to be unconcerned in how he dressed. He wore clothes that were comfortable where he liked the individual pieces of clothing. For instance, he would wear long blue shorts with large white flowers on it matched with a checkered pink and black short sleeved shirt.

Personality

Quinn tended to be quiet and shy. His disposition was to only speak when he felt there was something important to say. Quinn didn't like to stand out in the crowd or be in the forefront of whatever activity was currently taking place. He let his best friend, Alvin, take the lead, and Quinn was willing to follow Alvin anywhere.

Strengths

Quinn was extremely expressive with his facial features. I did not realize this amazing attribute until he was trying to express himself, and I could not quite understand what he was trying to say. As a result, he acted out the aspect that I did not understand. He acted out Cupid shooting his arrow of love and then being the recipient of the arrow. The concept sounds easy to perform, but to see Quinn act this out was an act to behold.

Due to Quinn's ability to have such great facial features when acting, I created a

game for my Chinese sons and my children to do at home. In order to build upon Quinn's talent as well as to teach a variety of different feelings all the while spending time as a family. For this particular game, I did let the boys use an electronic translation device to make sure that they understood the exact emotion what was being represented.

Challenges

Just as Alvin would use Quinn as a crutch, Quinn would willingly let him. Quinn was a follower. His opinion was whatever Alvin's opinion was. If Alvin was not available and I would ask Quinn his thoughts, he would respond by saying whatever I want.

English ability

Quinn had studied English for 12 years. He listed on his information packet about himself to his future American host family that he thought he had a poor English speaking ability.

Although it was rare that I would have one student translate for another, there were times that I had Quinn translate for Alvin. These times were normally when I had spent a long time communicating with Alvin but the message was not getting across and vice versa. At times, Quinn seemed to be able to translate with ease and at others, he appeared to not be able to understand. After reviewing both scenarios, it was when Alvin was the most frustrated that Quinn seemed to have more difficulty translating. It is unclear whether Quinn pretended to have difficulty in translating in the hopes that I would drop the conversation.

Interactions with others

From my observations, Quinn got along with most people. He did not try to

interact with others. He preferred to interact with his two closest friends, Alvin and Derek. If someone were to talk to him, he would interact appropriately, but did not try to prolong the interaction.

If left to his devices, he would spend the time alone. When Alvin would spend time playing games with my children, Quinn would either spend time alone in his room or go to bed early.

My farewell letter

Dear Quinn,

It has been an immense pleasure to have you part of my family these past few weeks. It has been so much fun and rewarding, and I cannot imagine you staying with any other family. You have brought to my family such joy and happiness. I have especially enjoyed your acting abilities. I still smile and laugh a little when I think about your portrayal of cupid – a perfect example of your acting talent! Your gentle spirit and contemplative measure were great characteristics to bring to my family. I wish you much happiness today, tomorrow, and forever.

Love,

Your American mom, Diane

Case Study Three – My Adopted Host Student, Derek

Physical description

Derek was a good looking boy who was about five feet six inches tall. He had a solid build, but not ripped. His friend, Alvin, described him as strong while striking a pose of a body builder. He had dark brown hair worn in a popular style with the hair spiked tall.

Personality

Derek is inherently kind, compassionate, and caring. He is very mature. He always paid attention in class and followed all instructions given. He worked hard at what he would do and he gave every activity and moment his all. With his limited English, he did not talk that much, but he could draw a person in with his charisma. It was obvious that he genuinely cared for others.

Strengths

One of Derek's main strengths was his perseverance. He faced many challenges, yet despite them, he never let those challenges stop him. Derek rarely spoke in front of others since the students would mock him. When my Chinese student, Jane, came and did a presentation for the students, he was courageous and asked a question in front of the class. He knew the repercussions of speaking aloud, yet he persevered because he wanted to learn more about attending an American university.

He was considerate of others. On one of the weekends that Derek stayed with my family, he said that he would like to make us an authentic Chinese dinner. Since he did not have any recipes with him, he called his mom to obtain the recipes. While he spoke with his mom, he even introduced me to her. He made an amazing meal of cooked sliced pieces of beef with cucumbers, cooked eggs, and sticky rice.

English ability

I do not know how many years Derek studied English, but I would give him an advanced beginner level. Although he could not speak English well, I think he understood it better than he could speak it.

Interactions with others

Derek did not get along with everyone. This is not because he did not try or was socially inept, but due to the prejudices of others. Besides Alvin and Quinn, the other students ostracized him to the point that they wouldn't let him in any group work, such as the talent show. Even his own table would completely ignore him as if he were invisible.

I spoke to Joy, one of the Chinese teachers and the person I considered my cultural broker, about Derek. I could not understand why the other students treated him so terribly, especially when I could not detect what he could have done to be so excluded. I thought Joy could provide some insight. Joy didn't seem to notice how ostracized Derek really was. The few times that he would speak in front of the class, students would giggle and be rude. According to Joy, the only explanation for students mocking Derek when he spoke was because he spoke a different dialect.

I consider Derek my adopted Chinese son. It took a week or so after teaching for me to realize that he was the boy who I had originally chosen as a host student until I decided to host two students.

My farewell letter

Dear Derek,

It has given me great pleasure to be your teacher these past few weeks. I admire your strong character and the drive to do your best despite the obstacles. Your English has improved tremendously in a very short time. I have enjoyed our conversations and learning more about you and your family. It was an honor to have you as a guest to my home. There have been few people who have ever cooked me a meal, especially one so fabulous! To have had the opportunity to eat an authentic Chinese meal cooked with such

care and love will be an experience that I will always cherish and never forget. Your politeness, kindness, and thoughtfulness have made my life more enjoyable, and I am thankful to have such a smart and loving student. I wish you much happiness today, tomorrow, and forever.

Love,

Your American mom, Diane

Diary

Why I Chose to Host

I wanted my American children to learn about other cultures. My friends and children tend to think that I am a strict parent. I feel that I am raising my children to live out in the world armed with the tools they need to be successful, both personally and professionally, while having positive self-esteem. I wanted my kids to see that there were other ways of living and other languages. I wanted them to see that the values I work on instilling into my children are important to me to the point that I share these with my new family—my two Chinese boys.

Organization

Unlike my Diary of a Novice Teacher chapter, I am not organizing this section based on a particular timeline. I included information that I thought would be relevant to potential host families or to anyone who wanted an inside-perspective of the Chinese culture. I chose to include information on situations that were challenging and interesting, along with corresponding ways of dealing with these.

Etiquette 101—At the Table

Prior to hosting, I was under the assumption that Chinese people had a strict code

of etiquette. With this code, I anticipated that the main difference dining at the table is the use of chopsticks as opposed to forks. My experience was the complete opposite to my expectations. While eating, both boys chewed their food with their mouths open and ate with minimal bites. For instance, a fried egg was consumed by picking up the entire egg with the fork and taking one or two bites while holding the fork. An entire meal could easily be consumed within five minutes while making slurping and smacking sounds. While eating, they talked with food in their mouths. In addition to their lack of food manners, they either did not know how to act at the table or chose not to act appropriately.

For instance, they put their elbows on the table and started to eat before everyone was at the table. They leaned across the table to grab food items, all the while never saying please nor thank you. When getting seconds, they never asked if anyone else would want more as well in order to make sure everyone could have part of the remaining meal. The boys left the table without asking permission or stating that they were done and often spoke to each other in Chinese. With this kind of undesirable behavior occurring at the table, I struggled with how to handle it. Do I dismiss the behavior because it is the Chinese way? Do I explain the appropriate and polite ways to eat at the table so that they can better understand American culture as well as not be a source of ridicule by American onlookers? I also had to take into account my own children. My children look to me for guidance. I work hard to teach them what is right and wrong and to provide and teach them the skills needed to function successfully in society. How can my children believe that the values that I teach them are important if I let opposing values take place in the home? After much consideration, I decided to teach my host sons how to eat

politely and to eat without drawing any negative unwarranted attention from others. I prefaced my teaching the boys by explaining that by following proper eating guidelines in the United States, they would have a better understanding of American culture. I also explained that their way of eating could cause ridicule from others and by following some eating guidelines would negate this from happening.

Responsibility

I soon learned that my Chinese sons did not know basic life skills. One such example is washing dishes. Since they had never washed dishes before, I had my oldest son help them while I watched from the other room to supervise. Each of my Chinese sons took turns washing, drying, and putting the dishes away. The boys detested chores and would try to get out of doing the dishes by asking if they could be done, complaining about how difficult the task was, and by taking their time in hopes that I would say that they could be done. Because this was their first time doing the dishes, my son and I worked directly with them in a step by step process to ensure that they would learn the task in the easiest way possible. The first task was for them to do their absolute best. As long as they did their best to accomplish their task, then they were doing well. They were then instructed to remove any remaining food left on the plates after having finished by scraping the food into the trash. Mathieu then explained verbally and physically how to wash the dishes with soap and a sponge, rinse the dishes, and put the dishes in the dish drain. My son and I explained that the dish would be clean when there were neither visual remnants of food or drink nor a tactile remnant of food or drink.

I am not sure if the American standard of washing the dishes is the same in China. One of the few times that Trent gave insight on his host experience with the two female

Chinese teachers was when he explained how they washed their dishes. He said that when the women finished eating cereal in the morning, they would rinse their dishes under running water and immediately place those dishes in the cupboard. He would then discreetly remove those dishes so that they could be later washed.

How My Children Were Affected by the Hosting Experience

I decided to host Chinese students. I knew that my children would be affected in ways that I had not imagined, but could only hope for. I knew it would be challenging for my kids and I because I had not worked part-time or full-time for the last 11 years. This teaching job would be more challenging because I would be a full-time working single mother of four children ages 5, 7, 11, and 14. My children would have to share their time with me and with two Chinese boys. As a result, I expected my kids to complain about the long hours working as well as the time I spent with these children. I expected my natural children to be jealous of this time. I was excited that this did not happen. At first I contributed it to the newness of the situation and them being on their best behavior because of having guests, but the positive behavior continued throughout the Chinese students' entire stay.

My kids were a huge help to me, even more than they normally were. It was as if on an unconscious level, my kids knew that doing their best would help teach their Chinese brothers.

My children made sure to follow proper etiquette at the table. They had always been good and didn't need many reminders. However, during the three weeks, they always said please, thank you, and other polite table etiquette words.

My kids got along with the students. I knew that they would do their best, but they

genuinely bonded with the boys. It was refreshing to see how the kids could become so close and not be separated by the obvious language barrier.

I was the most pleased with my oldest child. He can be rather reserved and hold in his emotions, yet he came alive and easily expressed his happiness and other positive emotions. They laughed and played. My oldest child even asked me if Alvin could stay longer. Mathieu became interested in Chinese and started learning certain expressions. My youngest enjoyed Alvin's company and loved playing with the Chinese boys.

Chapter 5

Discussion & Reflection

Chapter 5 is a discussion of (1) tensions in researcher identities, (2) answers to research questions, and (3) original assumptions disclosed in Chapter 1. In addition, there is reflection on what I learned from doing the diary and autoethnography.

Tensions in Researcher's Identities

In “Teacher Development in a Global Profession: An Autoethnography,” Canagarajah (2012) confesses that his American colleagues told him that he had an identity problem. This was mentioned after he told them about several American “experts” who had criticized his teaching methods after observing his English class in Sri Lanka. When he was observed later in his career in the United States, he was once again critiqued for allowing students to switch back and forth from Chinese to English during group work. Canagarajah then provided his chair/observer a copy of an article that fostered the use of the native language in some situations in English classes in the United States. After the chair read the article, he changed his observation letter to reflect current theory on L1 use and Canagarajah wrote,

Though I was relieved, the incident left me shaken. It appeared as if I was proven an imposter once again. I was made to look like I didn't know what I was doing or didn't belong to this profession. In an eerie case of *déjà vu*, it was code-switching that seemed to have put me into trouble with Western professionals. There were other things about my teaching that made me different. Attempts to prove myself only ended up with me

looking more comical. I gradually gave up trying to fit in. (p. 269)

Unlike Canagarajah, I kept trying to prove myself because I wanted to prove myself to non-ESL American colleagues and the company who had hired me. The more I tried to alter my teaching approaches and materials to accommodate their expectations, the more “comical” I probably looked to all of them. Canagarajah continued to explain:

I became so dejected that some of my colleagues attempted to help me.

After some consultation, they said: ‘We know your problem. You are a nonnative English speaker in a profession that belongs to native speakers.

You have an identity crisis.’ The last phrase worried me. It made me imagine that I needed psychiatric counseling. I was not used to such language or analysis. (p. 269)

Although I am a native English speaker, I think I may also have an “identity crisis” because my supervisors didn’t have an ESL background and did not trust or respect what I was doing in my classroom. The Chinese representatives wanted me to stand at the front of the class at all times and give direct, one-way instruction in English with no interaction with students all morning, followed by a quiz or a test. My American colleagues wanted me to stop having one-on-one interaction with students because the colleagues did not find it beneficial to the whole group when the rest of the group was sitting and doing “nothing.” The Chinese students were not accustomed to having their English teachers ask individuals questions, and they had not been trained to listen to the American teacher who was asking individuals questions. To do well in a United States classroom, students need to listen to everybody, not just the teacher, because it is widely believed that we can learn from peers. What I am beginning to understand is that the construction of

knowledge varies across cultures. In the United States, depending on the school, many k-12 students are taught to listen to peers and to learn from them, whether they agree or not.

David Herman (2010) also believed this as he began teaching in China, but he soon discovered that the Chinese students wanted nothing but direct instruction and testing—no pair work, no group work, no interactive lessons, no videos, no guest speakers. Herman, however, was in China, so he adapted his approaches accordingly, but my question remains: “Do I alter my teaching to meet the expectations of students, parents, colleagues, and employers even when I know that what they are asking is not considered best practice in TESOL, our international teachers’ organization?” In a short, three-week course with only 29 Chinese students in Spokane, as soon as I realized that no one seemed to appreciate my approaches and materials, I made immediate changes to save my job and to attempt to meet expectations—both stated and unstated. However, my cultural brokers, Jane, a Chinese university student living and studying in Spokane, and her American host mother, Pamela, who worked as a high school principal in China, urged me to continue to teach in the ways I had been trained—communicative approaches with writing taught in context and speaking encouraged throughout the lessons—speaking with the teacher, with peers, and with guests in their environment as well as on field trips out into the community. After talking with Jane and Pamela, I decided not to eliminate all communicative activities but to give direct instruction in front of the class about 75% of the time that remained.

Like Canagarajah (2013), I did not give up all of my basic values but I did make some changes, using “other identities that made me different....rather than treating my multiple identities as a problem” he had to “treat them as resources” (p. 269). Rather than

trying to perfectly match others' expectations, I drew upon my multiple identities that were shaping my professional identity: parent, teacher, home school teacher from 2004-2009, emic perspective because of working with Chinese students, scholar of French and English, ESL teacher. Mine was streamlined compared to Canagarajah's because his list had dozens of identities—NYC professional connections, "friendship circles in rural Jaffna," "intellectually postmodern," "avid reader of Western intellectual history," "champion of local knowledge," "scholar of English," "activist for Tamil [local language of Sri Lanka]," ESL academic writing specialist, "recovering Marxist revolutionary," "struggling evangelical Christian," "culturally conservative South Asian" (p. 270-271). Clearly, both Kanagarajah and I felt "tensions in identities" and "brokering—the use of multimembership to transfer some elements of one practice into another" (p. 271), but these tensions helped both of us grow personally and professionally, though these tensions "may never be resolved" (p. 271). For me, writing this diary study and autoethnography has helped me resolve some of the tensions in identity, but I expect more resolution as I gain more teaching experience in years to come. For both of us, writing helped clarify and resolve some of the tensions in identity because there is power in reflection and in autoethnography.

Answers to Research Questions

There were three research questions stated prior to my writing of the diaries and the autoethnography, and I must confess that none has been answered definitively. Still, I continue to reflect on the teaching experience, and as I continue to teach and to learn, I hope to have clearer answers. I read David Herman's thesis about teaching in China, and he, too, was left wondering how to best teach English to Chinese students. We both made

major changes in our teaching to meet learner and peer expectations. But we also both felt that by abandoning best practices as defined in American terms, we let the students down—though they were happy with our changes.

Research question 1 (RQ1)

What challenges might ESL teachers meet when teaching in an intensive, short-term English immersion program for Chinese middle and high school students in the United States?

There are four principal challenges that I believe would most likely occur in teaching in an intensive, short-term English immersion program for Chinese students. The main challenge would be introducing the students to the cultural differences between American and Chinese cultures and then helping the students to acclimate to those differences. The second challenge is the language barrier. Most likely the Chinese students will have studied English from six to nine years; however, their English ability can range from beginner to intermediate level due to their English classes in China focusing on writing instead of speaking or English fluency. Thirdly, the American or any teacher teaching Chinese must have an in-depth understanding of Chinese culture. This will help the teacher to not only help meet the students' needs, but will help the teacher be more confident in teaching, especially if criticized or confronted by a Chinese representative from the company from which the teacher was hired. The final challenge is the Chinese students speaking only Chinese in class, even when instructed to speak only English.

Research question 2 (RQ2)

What are some of the best practices to meet these challenges?

In the following, I will focus on one challenge and one way to meet the challenge listed in numerical order as referenced in RQ1.

Reflecting on this teaching experience, I would make several changes in order to help meet these challenges.

- 1) Upfront communication—the American teacher would explain to the Chinese students that she would be following an American teaching model. This information would be presented verbally and in writing, both in English and Chinese. If there is not a Chinese chaperone speaker present and one cannot be obtained, then there can be time for the students to read the Chinese translation in class. In addition to the American teacher's role being defined, the students' in-class roles would be defined as well, in particular participation. In addition to following an American model, to help the students acclimate to the American classroom, short segments following a Chinese teaching format can be incorporated into the lesson, especially if it involves new vocabulary. American culture would be taught in mini-lessons during instruction time. If the students stay with a host family in the evening, the teacher would explain to the parents the American culture aspect taught so that it can be reinforced at home.
- 2) Since there will be varying English-speaking abilities in the classroom, the teacher's lesson plans should have flexible plans to adjust to each student's needs. If, for example, five of 29 students still cannot form the simple past tense of the ten most common irregular verbs in English (saw, went, heard, made, had, was/were), then the teacher can work with these five for ten

minutes while the remaining 24 students form pairs and interview the partner using original—Who? What? Where? When? Why?—questions such as “Where did you go on your senior trip?” The partner has to use the simple past in the answer. Both write the question and the answer and then submit it for a grade. This is an example of differentiated instruction in the United States, but it is not done in China, so students will not understand why the teacher is working with this small group and why they are working in pairs to complete a task collaboratively. So the translator will need to explain why this learning arrangement is being done. On different days, the teacher will work with different combinations of students to insure that all students receive some individualized instruction from the teacher.

- 3) Chinese teachers follow precise lesson plans and never deviate from them regardless of students’ comprehension. The American teacher needs to explain her own teaching approaches to a Chinese representative of the sponsoring agency who may not know the cultural differences between Chinese and American teaching styles. This person needs to know because he or she will be in a position to explain to parents, students, and Chinese teachers what to expect in the classroom. The American teacher should also have concise lesson plans to show what she is planning to do, including the objectives to be learned, the activity or activities, adjustments for English proficiency, handouts, and an evaluation of student learning outcomes—to see if objectives were met.
- 4) Standing immediately next to a Chinese student in order to remind the student

to speak English, is neither very effective nor practical. It should be explained on the first day of class and reiterated daily the requirement to speak English. The best way to explain this would be following filial piety guidelines. The teacher reminds the students that he/she is the authority in the classroom, regardless of the style of teaching, and will be respected. Also, the students can be reminded that their parents are paying a lot of money for the students to learn English, and it is their duty to learn it as best as possible.

Research question 3 (RQ3)

What should host families know about Chinese students' backgrounds and customs so they might guide them to enhance their learning of both academic and cultural expectations?

There are three main points that I would express to host parents. Firstly, I would advise them to verify verbal understanding by having the students restate what is being said. If students cannot understand or cannot repeat what they have understood, the message can be written in simple English. In some cases, a picture or charades may be helpful for comprehension. In Chapter 3, *Diary of a Novice Teacher*, I retell the incident when I explained in simple English for my host Chinese boys to bring a towel to school. They explained that they understood, but in reality they did not. If I had shown them a towel or a picture of one, it would have been clearer.

Secondly, it is important to explain clearly and in detail the host parents' household rules and to enforce those rules. If there is a rule not to have electronic devices at the table, then the device could be taken away for the evening as a consequence if it is brought to the table.

Thirdly, every activity, no matter how mundane it may be considered in America, can be a learning and fun activity. One activity that I did with my host sons was make sugar cookies. I taught the boys how to follow a recipe and made them do all the measuring and reading. They were excited to make the different shapes. With the leftover dough, they formed different Chinese characters and combined those characters to make words. For them, making words out of cookie dough was a novel experience.

Assumptions Revisited

Assumption 1)

I imagined they would all be well-mannered by Western standards—say please and thank you; volunteer to help at home before being asked; ask for something to eat or drink before helping themselves in a family with six children; know how to treat a guest—even if it is another Chinese visiting the home; listen to their elders and follow directions of an adult in charge to insure safety of one's self and others.

Assumption 1 revisited

Based on my experiences teaching 29 Chinese students and hosting two of those students in my home, this assumption was not accurate. The majority of the students would consistently say please and thank you and would say these terms in appropriate situations. They would say thank you after receiving a handout, and they would say please when posing a question.

My two host sons did not offer to help in the household. There are a couple of reasons that could account for not offering. First, my two Chinese sons lived most of the year in a boarding school, so they only had to think of their own needs. Second, when they would return to their homes on certain weekends and holidays, they had live-in

maids who took care of any household chores. However, when my adopted Chinese son, Derek, would visit, he would offer several times to help me clear the table, do the dishes, or accomplish any task. Since I considered him a guest, I would explain to him that I wanted him to enjoy himself with his friends and declined his help.

On one occasion, my two Chinese sons helped themselves to some soda without first asking permission. I may not have noticed, but they left their empty cans in the living room without throwing them away. I explained to them that they needed to ask permission to get a snack or a beverage—unless it was water—and they followed this rule afterwards. This situation may not have occurred, but I failed to bring it up when I initially explained the house rules.

My Chinese sons did not know how to treat a guest by Western standards. Again, this could in part be attributed to the boys residing most of the school year in a boarding school. Since I was unaware of how the Chinese would treat house guests, I explained some American guest guidelines when needed. For instance, since I live in a three-bedroom apartment, my Chinese sons would have to share my two sons' room. In order to give the older boys more privacy and room, my then seven-year-old son moved into my room until the Chinese boys left Spokane. The two Chinese boys shared a bunk bed while my teenage son slept on a roll-out bed that was stored under the bunk beds.

Initially I assumed that the Chinese students would listen to their elders and follow directions of the adult in charge. This did not consistently happen. The students had all been told to stay at the water park that we visited on a field trip; however, approximately one third of the group left the park and went to a nearby pool.

Assumption 2)

They would be really eager to learn, soak up the lessons, and do their best to speak English.

Assumption 2 revisited

Based on my experiences with the 29 Chinese students, they did not appear or act eager to learn. If a lesson or activity interested them, they were more focused and attentive. The majority of the students only spoke English when absolutely necessary. Since my observations are in direct opposition to how the majority of Chinese students respond to their classes in China, there are five reasons that may account for their change in behavior. Firstly, the students had the opportunity to ignore their parents' wishes and desires because their parents were not around (Bodycott and Lai, 2012, p. 263). Secondly, they looked upon their trip to the United States as an opportunity to have a break from their heavy school load in China and from the pressures placed on them by family, parents, and teachers (Cockrain, 2011 p. 102). Thirdly, the students were not receiving a grade for any aspect of the English program, so they may have felt that they did not have to work as hard because it would not negatively affect them. Fourthly, students who had wished to rebel in China because they disagreed with the rules may have felt more comfortable rebelling in an American classroom (Cockrain, 2011 p. 106). Finally, the Chinese students may have been trying to act like how American students are portrayed in some American shows and movies (Herman, 2010).

Assumption 3)

I would be able to balance the dual role of teacher and parent for this population.

Assumption 3 revisited

For the most part, I was able to balance the dual role of teacher and parent for this population. At times, I did realize that I “mothered” my two Chinese sons at school by disciplining and correcting their behavior more often, such as during the lunch break.

Assumption 4)

I would have classroom management challenges with this age because of the media representation of American youth as well as hearsay from those working with American adolescents. I assumed the Chinese students would be somewhat similar to their American peers.

Assumption 4 revisited

Although I highly anticipated behavioral issues, I rarely had to address any. On one occasion I did temporarily move a student to a different group when he would not stop talking after I had admonished his behavior.

Assumption 5)

I would have backup resources from the program coordinators—both Americans.

Assumption 5 revisited

The only resources that I had been provided were a few leftover books on teaching ESL learners and some decorations. Perhaps it is my naivety, but I truly thought the other teachers would provide some resources, even if it was only an article that they found in a teaching journal or a local newspaper.

Assumption 6)

The co-teacher would be able to lead group work related to lessons I gave.

Assumption 6 revisited

The co-teacher had difficulty in keeping the students on task, in particular during group and pair work. This could be in part because the Chinese students were not accustomed to group work. The co-teacher also appeared hesitant to correct the students when needed, such as if they started working on a different task or discussing a non-related topic.

Assumption 7)

The coordinator and the co-teacher would defer to me because I was the ESL specialist, and they were not ESL specialists, though the coordinator had considerable teaching experience in private schools, primarily in math and geography. The co-teacher was earning a master's degree in history and had limited college teaching experience.

Assumption 7 revisited

Based on the coordinator and co-teacher's actions and statements, they did not believe that an ESL specialist was needed or required. The coordinator boldly told me that he would have chosen one of his fellow co-workers from the private school where he taught during the school year.

Several times, I thought that they both viewed me as a babysitter or as an unequal colleague. For instance, I would arrive to class when the other teachers did in the morning, but I was always required to stay until all the students left. It was rare that I left class before six at night. If I hadn't been so concerned about my job, I would have spoken to the other teachers about this. The co-teacher had none of his own children, and he was not hosting a Chinese student. The coordinator had two foster children under age five and a wife who stayed home with those children. He also hosted the two female Chinese

teachers. He always left immediately at five o'clock stating that the Chinese teachers needed to get home. Meanwhile I had four children, who were in a daycare type setting at a local boys and girls club, hosted two Chinese students, and did not have a spouse to help. I do not explain these differences because of feelings of bitterness or entitlement, which I did not feel. I use this as an example of how in my opinion, I was not valued the same as the other two teachers.

Assumption 8)

As an experienced single parent of four children—ages 5 through 14 at the time, I assumed I would be able to handle anything that came up at home.

Assumption 8 revisited

This assumption proved accurate. At the water park, I was able to immediately devise a plan and carry out the plan even in a stressful situation. The water park manager was irate about the Chinese students' inappropriate behavior and demanded immediate disciplinary action. Also, I was not aware if there were any lingering health issues for the student who nearly drowned at the nearby pool. Despite the stressful circumstances, I carried out my plan in a calm and methodical manner.

Assumption 9)

Conversely, I did not assume that my experience as a parent would help me as a teacher, though my thesis adviser insisted that this experience would be very valuable in the classroom.

Assumption 9 revisited

I found my experience as a parent helpful in the classroom, particularly as a

parent to a preteen girl and a teenage boy. Usually I was able to ascertain when a student was pretending to not have understood a class rule or was simply trying to avoid disciplinary action.

How this project has changed me as a parent and as a teacher

How I changed as a parent

I think that I have become a better parent. By trying to incorporate ways to teach my Chinese sons at home, I learned how teaching opportunities can be easily incorporated into the day. I was also able to reinforce and support my family values by verbally expressing them to my Chinese sons and by demonstrating them through my actions. I have always told my children that I do my best to teach them life skills to help them when they no longer live at home. They were clearly able to see this value upheld when I taught my Chinese sons to wash dishes and to pick up after themselves.

How I changed as a teacher

When I started teaching the Chinese students I was nervous, but I knew that I could ultimately do a good job. However, by the end of those three weeks, my confidence as a teacher was at an all-time low. I doubted my teaching ability and effectiveness in the classroom because I had been criticized on my teaching during the majority of that time. After I started researching for this thesis, my self-confidence in teaching has slowly started to return.

Through reflection, I realize the biggest challenge that impacted my confidence was believing that there is a “right” way to teach. Kumaravadivelu (2006) declares

the modernist search for the one best method has been abandoned and we are now developing methods from the ground up, from the needs and interests of local communities.” (as cited in Canagarajah, 2012, p.274)

Kumaravadivelu clearly asserts that there is no one way or even “right” way to teach. Students’ needs can vary greatly; teachers need to create lesson plans that cater to those unique needs. Wenger (1998) presents one approach for “developing methods from the ground up,” (as cited in Canagarajah, 2012, p.277)—“attempt to bring two practices together” (p. 277). For instance, the grammar approach and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) could be combined to help the Chinese students acclimate to an American classroom. I learned that it is important not to put teaching in a box, but to realize that teaching is continually evolving, even on a day-to-day basis.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Recommendations

On one hand, I would encourage staff, teachers, and host families to follow Jane Tompkins' suggestions in (1990) "Pedagogy of the Distressed,"—all of which apply to this program and to my experience both as teacher and as host mother:

- 1) Offer what you have. Don't waste time worrying that your thoughts aren't good enough.
- 2) Don't be afraid to try new things.
- 3) Let go. Don't hang on to what's just happened, good or bad. (p. 659)

On the other hand, like Liao (1999) and Weng (2009), both of whom worked with Chinese speakers in an academic setting, I strongly recommend that teachers, teachers' assistants, students, and their host and Chinese parents be informed of and required to sign an agreement about expectations for classroom, home, and field trip behavior.

Classroom behavioral expectations for teachers

Teachers—both those returning from prior years and new ones—must be informed in writing what the organization expects them to do before they are hired in order to know in advance whether philosophically and ethically they are able to comply with the following expectations:

- 1) Know and understand the program goals and objectives, having received them in writing prior to commencing service.
- 2) Be able to create materials to help learners meet these goals and objectives.

- 3) Be able to write program-specific lesson plans in a specific format and have them approved prior to teaching the lesson/s.
- 4) Be able to explain to the immediate supervisor—who should be identified before the first day of class—what lessons are being planned to lessons to follow as models.
- 5) Be introduced to the Chinese teachers/experts who are accompanying the students and be told how to best utilize their expertise and gain insight about the learners on a regular and as-needed basis.
- 6) Be required to attend daily meetings at a given time to discuss any issues that are arising related to classroom activities, curriculum, and management. This would be a whole team meeting where supervisors, teachers, teachers' assistants, and Chinese teachers would attend. In these meetings, anyone could raise an issue or ask for help with anything. For example, if students are not signing out and traveling with a buddy to go to the corner store at noon, then the team might decide that for two days no one can leave campus for any reason. This would mean that host parents or community volunteers would be positioned at every exit and would not allow anyone to leave for those two days. Students would be informed of the two-day closed campus policy, and it would be enforced without fail.
- 7) Beyond the scheduled meetings, be able to consult with a cultural broker (Pipher, 2002) on a daily basis about the learners' experience with English in China and progress in the program to see if they are meeting

goals and objectives or if the teacher needs to change the approaches and/or materials for their levels and interests.

Classroom behavioral expectations for teachers' assistants

Teachers' assistants—both those returning from prior years and new ones—must be informed in writing what the organization expects them to do before they are hired in order to know in advance whether philosophically and ethically they are able to comply with the following expectations:

- 1) Know and understand the program goals and objectives, having received them in writing prior to commencing service.
- 2) Be able to help learners meet the goals and objectives from the teacher's lesson plans.
- 3) Be able to follow the program-specific lesson plans created by the teacher.
- 4) Be introduced to the Chinese teachers/experts who are accompanying the students and be told how to best utilize their expertise and gain insight about the learners on a regular and as-needed basis.
- 5) Be required to attend daily meetings at a given time to discuss any issues that are arising related to classroom activities, curriculum, and management. This would be a whole team meeting where supervisors, teachers, teachers' assistants, and Chinese teachers would attend. In these meetings, anyone could raise an issue or ask for help with anything. For example, if students are not signing out and traveling with a buddy to go to the corner store at noon, then the team might

decide that for two days no one can leave campus for any reason. This would mean that host parents or community volunteers would be positioned at every exit and would not allow anyone to leave for those two days. Students would be informed of the two-day closed campus policy, and it would be enforced without fail.

- 6) Beyond the scheduled meetings, be able to consult with a cultural broker (Pipher, 2002) on a daily basis about the learners' experience with English in China and progress in the program to see if they are meeting goals and objectives or if the teacher needs to change the approaches and/or materials for their levels and interests.

Classroom behavioral expectations for students

Students—both those returning from prior years and new ones—must be informed in writing what the organization expects of them to do and how to act before they are allowed to travel on this program to know in advance whether philosophically and ethically they are able to comply with the following expectations:

- 1) All students will participate in some capacity on a daily basis. If the students do not volunteer to answer a question or participate in group discussion, the students must participate when called upon.
- 2) Students will listen attentively to teachers and fellow students.
- 3) Students will respect everyone in the class—students will keep their hands to themselves and also will not mock or criticize others.
- 4) Students will not leave school unless the student has permission from the teacher. Each student must have a buddy, and sign in and out from

the designated teacher—failure to do so will revoke off campus privileges for the buddy pair.

- 5) Students must speak in English the entire time during class instruction, including group discussion.
- 6) Electronic devices of any kind should not come to class. If students require translation help, a dictionary in paperback or hardback form will be allowed.

Homestay behavioral expectations for students

Homestay expectations—both those returning from prior years and new ones—must be informed in writing what the organization expects them to do before they are placed in a host family in order to know in advance whether philosophically and ethically they are able to comply with the following expectations:

- 1) Students will follow the host families' household rules.
- 2) Students will help with household chores.
- 3) Students will interact with members of the family.
- 4) Students will be respectful to host parents and family members.
- 5) Students will have dirty laundry presented for cleaning once a week—or per host parents' household rules.
- 6) Students will not have electronic devices at the dining room table or at bedtime.
- 7) Students will made every effort to learn about American culture. If they are confused or need clarification on a particular aspect of the culture, then they will ask either a teacher or a host parent.

Homestay behavioral expectations for host parents

Homestay expectations—both those returning from prior years and new ones—must be informed in writing what the organization expects them to do before they are allowed to host in order to know in advance whether philosophically and ethically they are able to comply with the following expectations:

- 1) Host parents will explain household rules to students, and then will enforce those rules.
- 2) There will only be one Chinese student per host family.
- 3) Host families will explain and/or demonstrate American culture. For instance, if students are not aware of how to eat American style, the host family will demonstrate.

Expectations for Chinese parents before Chinese children leave China

Chinese parents' expectations—both those returning from prior years and new ones—must be informed in writing what the organization expects them to know before their children are allowed join this program in order to know in advance whether philosophically and ethically they are able to comply with the following expectations:

- 1) Chinese parents will know that electronic devices are now allowed. Students who choose to purchase electronic devices in the United States will have to keep those items contained in their unopened boxes.
- 2) Chinese parents will be informed that lessons will be conducted following an American teaching format—classes will be interactive and follow a student-centered format.

- 3) Chinese parents will be informed of their child's behavioral expectations at school and at their host parents' home.

Field trip behavior and procedures

Field trip behavior and procedures are an essential aspect in the recommendations, for the safety of the students is at stake. In order to best ensure the students' safety, the following procedures would be followed:

- 1) Students will be assigned or will be allowed to choose a buddy during the three-week program. If there is an extra person, then one group will have three people in their group. Each teacher will have a listing of the buddy pairs.
- 2) On outings and field trips, the teacher, assistant teacher, and activities coordinator will be assigned approximately five buddy groups—not to exceed ten people—and will have that group with them for the remainder of the outing.
- 3) Students are not to have electronic devices with them on field trips.
- 4) Students will only go where they are permitted. If they are to stay in a particular store, they may not leave it and go to a nearby one.

Future research for this kind

More research is needed in this area. The present study involved an intensive three-week English language program. Students were not informed unanimously beforehand of cultural expectations in an American family or in an American classroom. The American teachers were not as culturally aware of Chinese traditions and customs. Providing that each country knew more about it each other and had followed the

recommendation set forth in this thesis, I believe the outcome would be different.

Limitations of This Study

Unlike Liao (1999), Weng (2009), Lu (2010) and Ubaldo (2010), I did not have students' written feedback about their experiences studying in the United States in cohort programs. In the literature about Chinese high school and college students who were studying in the United States, very few student voices are included except for the theses written in this master's program which added depth and multivocality—voices that animated and helped bring understanding of Chinese culture.

Changes I Made in my Teaching

One of the main reasons I decided to write the thesis on my teaching and hosting experiences was to critique my teaching. Like Canagarajah, I hoped to discover why I had received a poor evaluation when I was observed. I wanted to intrinsically understand the “why” behind my teaching so that I could confidently defend communicative teaching methods, whether to friend or foe. And like Canagarajah (2013), through my “ethnographic self-reconstruction...[I] negotiated the differing teaching practices and professional cultures...in an effort to develop a strategic professional identity” (p. 258) and to keep my job. When a novice teacher's supervisor's values and background is different from hers, the novice teacher struggles to balance her own values and training with Chinese students' and teachers' cultural expectations for teachers.

I knew that I could not change the events from the past, but I could use the information that I learned to change my ways of teaching, seeing the students, managing challenges such as the near drowning that arose, and viewing Chinese culture. Jim Rohn, author and motivational speaker, shares,

You must take personal responsibility. You cannot change the circumstance, the seasons, or the wind, but you can change yourself. That is something you have charge of.

What I was able to change made me feel more that I was meeting administrators' expectations but did not reflect my philosophy of teaching or my ESL graduate training.

These changes included the following:

- 1) focusing less on classroom management by staying in front of the classroom instead of moving around to the different tables while teaching—which is what they required me to do;
- 2) entertaining the students and keeping their interest by using videos and pop culture (Appendix B);
- 3) requiring less interaction and making it a less communicative classroom because administrators—not ESL specialists—did not see the value of teacher-learner interaction or learner-learner interaction;
- 4) trying to be more Chinese by giving quizzes after each lesson; and
- 5) preparing and giving out handouts/worksheets for them to fill in before or during the lesson.

A Chinese student who participated in Ubaldo's research on resilience wrote:

People need to go through the troubles to let themselves become stronger. If everything is just wonderful in one's life, in my opinion, it is not a fortune at all. People should experience different kinds of feelings and enjoy all of the process the life

has. To be strong to go through the troubles no matter it is – wind or rain just go through it. (2010, p. 37)

I agree with this Chinese student. I faced challenges teaching and hosting two Chinese sons, but I am now a stronger person as a result. In order to grow and to develop as a better person, it is necessary to face challenges and “just go through” them.

Final Reflections

When people learn of my teaching and hosting experiences with these Chinese students, they invariably ask me a variation of the following: “How did you manage to do all of that as a single mom of four children?” Then before I can respond, they ask with horror and awe lacing their tone as they stumble to pose the words to the question, “Wait..., don’t you only have one bathroom? How on earth did you and your family ever survive?” After a chuckle escapes me, I immediately think of the Chinese proverb, “A journey of a thousand miles begins with one small step,” and I reply, “I took each day one at a time.” I fully admit that the experience was challenging—the bathroom situation being merely a blip marking that time. The rewards unquestionably outweighed any challenges.

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Appendix A

<div>  <p>3 Week Summer English-Language Program Calendar</p> <p>July 22, 2012—August 10, 2012</p> </div>						
<p>Figure 1. Chinese graduates</p>						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
7/22 Welcome students— potlatch	7/23 Rules, American money & grocery stores Grocery store scavenger hunt	7/24 American teenagers— slang, activities, & guests Water activities	7/25 First field trip— shopping, shopping, and shopping	7/26 American holidays Christmas in July & a Christmas movie	7/27 Sports, games, & T.V. shows Sport activities	7/28
7/29	7/30 Cannot recollect	7/31 American landscape Guest speakers Police, Ambu- lance, Fire Depts.	8/1 Second field trip— Splashdown Water Park	8/2 American govt. SFCC— Planetarium, game room, & bowling	8/3 American eras from the 50s to today Tye-dye shirts	8/4
8/5	8/6 Famous & In- famous Americans Water games	8/7 Trivia Practice for talent show	8/8 Last field trip— Coeur d'Alene, ID	8/9 Thank you notes for host families, Talent show Farewell potlatch	8/10 Final farewell Airport	

Appendix B

Through the Ages

50's, 60's, 70's, 80's, & 90's

A neon sign with the text "BACK TO THE 50's" in a stylized, cursive font. The sign is illuminated with a mix of blue, green, and yellow light, giving it a vibrant, retro appearance. The sign is set against a dark background, which is framed by a thick orange border.

BACK TO
THE 50's

Facts about this decade:

Population: 151,684,000

Average Salary: \$2,992/year

Life expectancy: Women 71.1, men 65.6

Labor Force male/female: 5/2

Cost of a loaf of bread: \$0.14

Fashion: Women



Fashion: Men



Music: The start of Rock 'n Roll



Jerry Lee
Lewis



Bill Haley



Elvis Presley



But wait! Not just Rock 'n Roll →



Frank Sinatra



Nat King Cole

"Jailhouse Rock," 1957

ELVIS



Movies:



Inventions:



Inventions: First computer game



In the News: 1952



Immigration and Nationality Act

This act removed racial and ethnic barriers to becoming a U.S. citizen.

In the News: 1955



Civil Rights Movement

Rosa Parks

She refused a white man her bus seat.



In the News: 1956 & 1959



In 1956 highway system begins construction.



Alaska and Hawaii are added to the United States in 1959.



In the News: 1959



The Vietnam War began.

THE 1960S

FACTS about this decade:

Population 177,830,000

Average Salary \$4,743/year

Minimum Wage \$1.00/hour

Life Expectancy: Males 66.6 years, Females 73.1 years

Fashion: Women



Fashion: Men



All about hippies:



Music:



"Hey Jude," 1968



In the News: "I have a dream..." (1963)



Movies:



Inventions:



First Computer mouse 1964



ATM 1969

In the News: 1963

President John F. Kennedy was assassinated.



In the News: 1969



Americans
landed on the
moon.



FACTS about this decade

Population: 204,879,000

Unemployed in 1970: 4,088,000

Average salary: \$7,564 /year

Food prices: milk, 33 cents a qt.; bread, 24 cents a loaf; round steak, \$1.30 a pound

Life Expectancy: Male, 67.1; Female, 74.8

Fashion: Women



Fashion: Men



Music:



The Bee Gees



John Lennon



Bob Marley



Elton John

Music: The Village People, "YMCA," (1978)



Disco dancing in
Saturday Night Fever,
(1977)



Movies:



Inventions:



First Sony Walkman



The Rubik's Cube



Cell Phone

In the News:

The Vietnam War ends in 1975.



First Earth Day celebrated





FACTS about this decade

Population: 226,546,000

Average salary: \$15,757/year

Life Expectancy: Male 69.9 Female 77.6

Minimum Wage: \$3.10 /hour

Fashion: Women



Fashion: Men



Music: Rap is cool



LL Cool J



Vanilla Ice



Run DMC

Michael Jackson: "Thriller," (1982)



Movies:



Inventions:



Game Boy 1989



Pac Man 1980, first released in Japan then in the United States

First Apple computer



Laptop computer, 1981

News: 1986



Space Shuttle
Challenger
explodes after
take-off

News: 1987



Bill Gates, 32
year old
founder of
Microsoft
becomes first
billionaire.



FACTS ABOUT THIS DECADE

Population: 281,421,906 (2000 Census)

Average Salary: \$13.37/hr (1999)

Minimum Wage: \$5.15/hr (1997)

Life Expectancy: Male 73.1 Female 79.1(1997)

Fashion: Women



Fashion: Men



Music:



Madonna



Will Smith



Janet Jackson



Music: New Kids on the Block



Movies:



Inventions:



Most popular toy



Cell phones become more compact, as well as other electronics such as the computer.



1991 WiFi was invented and later released to the public in 1997.



News: 1990



Hubble
Telescope
Launched
Into Space

News: 1999

JFK Jr. Dies in
Plane Accident



News: 1999



Fear of Y2K

THE END



VITA

Author: Diane Thames

Place of Birth: Caldwell, Idaho

Universities Attended: Université de Bourgogne (undergraduate)
Eastern Washington University (undergraduate and graduate)

Degrees Awarded: Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies, 2008,
Eastern Washington University

Certification for Teaching English Writing, 2013
Eastern Washington University

Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Second Language,
2014, Eastern Washington University

Honors and Awards: Graduated Cum Laude, 2014, Eastern Washington
University

Presentations: Student Research and Creative Works Symposium,
Cheney, WA

- *Reflections on Teaching and Host Mothering Chinese
Secondary Students: A Novice ESL Teacher's Diary
Study and Autoethnography*, Spring 2013

Spokane Women's Retreat, Spokane, WA

- *Perseverance*, September 2010
- *Unity in Diversity*, April 2010

Northwest Single's Conference, Spokane, WA

- *Recognizing and Overcoming Stereotypes*, May 2010

Professional Experience: Intern, English 112 (Writing for Multilingual Students)
Eastern Washington University, Cheney, WA
Spring 2012, Summer 2012, Spring 2013, Fall 2013

English Conversation Partner
World Relief Spokane
Spring 2012-Spring 2013

English (ESL) Teacher
Spokane, WA
Summer 2012

Intern, English 459 (Grammar for Teachers)
Eastern Washington University, Cheney, WA
Fall 2013