English Language Teaching in China: An Update on the State of the Art

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English language teachers who have been to China in the past may be in for a surprise when they return. As I observed on a recent research trip to China (during which I visited a variety of English classes at numerous educational institutions in various cities), many things—both inside and outside of the schools—have changed. This report highlights the most impressive and important changes I noticed relative to university-level teaching of English in the world’s most populous nation.

Past Reports: Difficult conditions, traditional methods, dominant teachers, passive learners, and a system resistant to change

Over the last thirty years, a variety of reports have been published about the state of English language teaching in China. Scovel (1979), an early post-Cultural Revolution teacher of English in China, wrote about the difficult classroom conditions that he endured while teaching in northern China in the late 1970s. These conditions included “the blaring loudspeakers across the street, the dry, dusty air penetrating our classroom, [and] the persistent cold” (p. 259). That same year, a team of TESOL specialists from the United States (Cowan, Light, Mathews, & Tucker, 1979) visited five cities and 21 educational institutions in China and reported both “an impressive commitment to the teaching of English” (p. 465) and various problematic conditions for doing so. They noted a “primary reliance on grammar-translation activities” (with some movement toward audiolingual oral repetition exercises and substitution drills) and “rigidly enforced teacher-as-dominant/student-as-submissive role relationships” (p. 474).

Fifteen years later, McKay (1994), one of the first Peace Corps volunteers to enter China, reported continuing, difficult conditions for English language teaching. He explained the challenging “conflict between a grammar-centered curriculum [and a ‘grammar-centered exam’ system] and an increasing desire and need for communicatively proficient students” (p. 3). At about the same time, a pair of experienced China teachers, Campbell and Yong (1993), decried the fact that “students spend a large portion of their time listening to explanations of the structure of language and engaging in dull and decontextualized pattern drills” (p. 4) leading to the sorry result that “even the most diligent students with the most responsible teachers often cannot
communicate effectively with the target language population after ten years of studying English" (p. 4). Weng (1996) agreed that despite the expansion of English language teaching in higher education in China, "the average Chinese college graduate has a limited command of English" (p. 9). Weng blamed the problem on the "traditional methodology—the so-called sentence-text approach" (p. 9) in which "the primary mode of teaching and learning is one in which the teacher talks and the students listen...the teacher dominates the class and the students are passive learners" (p. 9). Weng also lamented that "teachers have to teach according to an established college English syllabus for non-English majors [that 'focusses on reading, listening, grammar, and vocabulary' and that is] approved by the State Education Commission" (p. 9) and "students primarily study English to pass multiple-choice examinations aimed at testing their ability to deal with questions that reflect this fixed syllabus" (p. 9). Wang (1999) gave essentially the same assessment of the Chinese curriculum and the influence of the centralized and powerful College English Test and noted that Chinese EFL students "are said to have contracted the deaf-and-mute disease, an unavoidable result of the syllabus" (p. 48).

Commenting on language teacher education in China, Cowan, Light, Mathews, and Tucker (1979) explained that "systematic training in methodology of second language teaching was virtually non-existent" (p. 473) in the colleges and universities they visited. In a similar vein, a few years later, Maley (1983) lamented the fact that "teacher training" in China meant "language improvement" and "no notion of methodological improvement" was even considered. In addition, he noted problems with the memory-based learning approach taken by most Chinese students, the "very few courses with clearly defined objectives," the employment of foreign teachers with little knowledge of how to teach English, and the Chinese bureaucracy (pp. 103-107).

Because of its large size and long history, China has proven difficult to change—particularly from the outside (Spence, 1980). Discussing factors that hindered innovation and improvement in English language teaching in China, Liu (1988) cited "the traditional nature of China's educational system." This system included "China's traditional teaching method" (which emphasized mechanical memorization and detailed analysis of texts), "the Russian influence" (based on a teaching methodology that emphasized explanation of texts and fit nicely with the Chinese traditional approach), and "China's traditional culture" which was based in Confucianism and resisted "any radical changes" (pp. 72-76). In the same discouraging vein, Campbell and Yong (1993) concluded that "the prognosis for successful, large-scale implementation of communicative language strategies in English language classes in China [was] bleak but not terminal" (p. 5).

My experiences

Having taught and conducted research in China on four different occasions in the last 22 years (in 1985, 1993, 1998, and 2006), I have witnessed many of these conditions and difficulties. In contrast to the rather bleak prognoses offered by many earlier analysts of ELT in China, however, I have also noticed considerable change as I have visited the country, taking mental "snapshots" at 5-8 year intervals. On my most recent research trip (in May of 2006), I traveled to six cities (Beijing, Tianjin, Qingdao, Shanghai, Nanjing, and Guangzhou) and observed a total of twenty-one English classes on eleven different university campuses. The universities ranked among China's best, and so did the students and faculties. Most of the classes focused on oral English, and all were taught by expatriate Americans.

Recent observations on China's progress

On my recent trip, I noted that the Chinese have made dramatic progress in many respects since my first visit to China over 20 years ago. Other China analysts have also commented on the improvements, which are evident in many areas, including the national economy, the modernization of the infrastructure generally and educational facilities in particular, the variety and quality of English language teaching materials available, the influential English language examinations, the teaching/learning activities employed in English classrooms, and the use of English outside of school.

Economy, infrastructure, transportation, and communications

China has changed radically in the last two decades in terms of its economy and infrastructure, as well as its transportation and communication systems. In 1985, most people in China still belonged to communal work units, and there was virtually no free enterprise. Over the years, China's austere economic situation has improved dramatically—progressing from once-a-week "free markets" to sidewalk shops and then to fancy department stores and full-throttle consumerism. As I traveled through China in 2006, I could not help but notice how China's economy is booming. In fact, it is now "the world's fastest-growing large economy" (Zakaria, 2005, p. 29). Its gross domestic product is growing at a blazing rate—more than 8% annually for the last few years. A decade ago, China experts called its economy "an emerging powerhouse" (Spence & Chin, 1996, frontispiece), and today international reporters proclaim the arrival of that "economic powerhouse" (Elliott, 2005, p. 32). Over the past 15 years, China's exports to the United States have grown by 1,600 percent (Zakaria, 2005, p. 28), and in the last decade, foreign investment, retail sales, and car ownership in China have also mushroomed. New commercial enterprises can be observed everywhere. In sum, China
is now enjoying greater economic prosperity than at any time in the past 150 years (Elliott, 2005).

As a result of this prosperity, the country is modernizing rapidly. New buildings can be seen wherever one looks, and construction cranes dominate the skylines of every city—especially designated Olympic venues such as Beijing and Qingdao. In 1985, Beijing's wide streets were occupied mostly by bicycles, aging trucks, farm tractors, lumbering buses, and a few requisitioned work unit cars. Today, the streets in many Chinese cities are rivers of honking taxis sprinkled with impressive numbers of shiny, expensive BMWs, Toyotas, Volkswagens, and Buicks—private car ownership in China has nearly tripled in the last ten years (Elliott, 2005). Twenty years ago, the Chinese government's Xinhua news agency controlled the information that was available to the Chinese public. Today, everyone in every Chinese city seems to have a cell phone—the number of cell phone owners in China is calculated to be over 300 million (Elliott, 2005)—and many millions have access to the Internet and the World Wide Web.

Modernization in educational facilities

In connection with China's economic growth and modernization, much money has been put into education—especially English instruction. Campuses and classrooms used to be old, dusty, and grimy (with spittoons in early days and "no spitting" signs, which were often ignored, later on). The hard wooden seats and desks were fixed in rows and fastened down to the creaky wooden or hard concrete floors. Early expatriate English teachers lamented that these physical facilities (not to mention cultural and other factors) made it impossible for them to do group work in class, and they could only dream of using modern instructional media. Teweles (1998), who went to China in 1993-94, noted that "aside from a blackboard and chalk and the usual slogan emblazoned on the wall exhorting the students to do their best, there were no instructional aids or enhancements in the classroom. The one electrical outlet within reach of the teaching podium had not worked in several years. The classroom was by no means climate controlled, and the door often had to be kept closed to keep out hallway noise (and in early fall and late spring, the smell from the latrine next door)" (pp. 325-326). Cowan, Light, Mathews, and Tucker (1979) noted similar conditions regarding instructional technology. They saw only a couple of rather primitive language laboratories being used and visited some classes that used "radios and tape recorders" (p. 469) to bring native-speaker English into the classroom, but "the blackboard and magazine pictures [were]...the most sophisticated media" (p. 469) that average teachers used.

In contrast, in 2006, on many of the university campuses that I visited, I saw gleaming, modern buildings with polished floors, video projectors mounted on ceilings, and computer consoles standing at the front of many classrooms. In 11 of the 21 classes I observed, instructors used PowerPoint® presentations and digital photographs to get their teaching points across. While these classroom facilities may not have been typical of those at all universities in China, they are by no means unique. Zhang (2005) notes that one college recently "issued all its English teachers [sic] with a computer, a printer, and granted free Internet access. In the past, English teachers were armed only with a textbook, a piece of chalk and a blackboard. Now all English teachers at the college are expected to prepare lessons on their computers creating PowerPoint presentations to use in class" (p. 5).

Quality and variety of English teaching materials

English-teaching textbooks in China used to be few in number and poor in quality. Cowan, Light, Mathews, and Tucker (1979) reported "occasionally" discovering copies of "in-country-produced EFL textbooks" (p. 468). They added that "books in English available to the general public appeared to be limited. [Their] visits to bookstores in four cities turned up no original works in English and only a few English translations of books written by Chinese authors, primarily the poetry and thoughts of Mao Tse Tung" (p. 468). An expatriate teacher in Hunan Province several years later, in 1985, lamented that "Western goods...were very scarce. There was one foreign language bookstore that actually stocked no foreign language books except for a few musky simplified versions of Jane Eyre" (Jones, 1998, p. 404). Besides the decade-old English for Today (National Council of Teachers of English, 1975), which he was assigned to use in his classes, "the English department stocked no other texts and showed no willingness to order more resources" (p. 404). Cowan, Light, Mathews, and Tucker (1979) pointed out that the Chinese textbooks they examined seemed designed to serve political, not practical, purposes. They also noted that these books were pedagogically flawed because of their "rigid control of grammatical structures," (p. 470) resulting in "passages which often sound[ed] unnatural and artificial" (p. 471) and the fact that they "rarely if ever, present[ed] opportunities for students to engage in meaningful communication" (p. 471). In subsequent years, more English textbooks were published in China, but they were often characterized by outdated English, antiquated teaching procedures, and primitive, error-riddled typesetting. Zhang (2005) recalled that these textbooks "were loaded with political jargon" (p. 5) and granted learners "a very limited glimpse into the lives of native speakers" (p. 5).

Today, both the quality and the selection of materials for English language teaching are greatly improved. In classrooms and in bookstores throughout China, a multitude of modern textbooks (as well as audio, video, and computer software) can be found. My own observations agree with a recent report ("Language Takes on Chinese Flavour," 2004) that "if you walk into a large bookstore in any major mainland city, you'll be..."
amazed by the number and variety of titles that teach English to Chinese speakers" (p. 14). These include popular textbooks from abroad that are used worldwide, such as, *New American Streamline* (Viney, Hartley, Falla, & Frankel, 1994), *Passages* (Richards & Sandy, 1998), and *New Interchange* (Richards, Hull, & Proctor, 2001). They come from major, international ELT publishers (Oxford, Cambridge, Longman, Heinle, etc.), either in their original, expensive versions or in special, more affordable Chinese editions. In addition, locally produced English-teaching textbooks authored by teams of Chinese experts and published in China (by Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, Peking University Press, The Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, Higher Education Press, World Publishing Corporation, etc.) seem to be rising in quality in every respect—paper, printing, editing, and pedagogy—and are widely used. The more popular Chinese press publications include *College English* (Li, Wang, Xia, & Yu, 2001) (used at about 300 universities throughout China), *College Core English* (Yang, Zhang, & Zheng, 1992) (used at more than 300 universities), *Present-Day American English* (Chi & Poppen, 1990), and *21st Century College English* (Yu, 2001). Myriad other books (as well as instructional CDs) by less known authors and published by minor Chinese presses—some of them good; others not so good—are also available.

**Updated English-language examinations**

One thing that has not changed in China over the years is Chinese students' strong test-orientation, although most of the tests have new, updated versions. Like most English teachers in China, White (1998) experienced "high student concern with passing course exams and band exams in English" (p. 13). Today, major, nationwide, standardized English tests continue to be very important in China. Students and teachers alike focus heavily on preparation for these big exams. The venerable and powerful College English Test (CET) is still widely used. In fact, over eleven million examinees a year take the CET, making it "one of the world's largest test in terms of the number of examinees" (Zhang, 2005, p. 5). "The CET primarily targets college students whose majors are not English" (p. 5). (English majors now take a special Test for English Majors, the TEM.) The CET "has two levels, Band 4 and Band 6. ...[and] because of its wide recognition, almost all colleges in China require bachelor's degree students to pass the CET Band 4," (p. 5) usually at the end of their fourth semester (second year) at the university. Also, many employers, including foreign companies, prefer job applicants who have a certificate saying they have passed the CET ("CET Band 4 Test to be Revamped," 2005).

Traditionally, the CET had five parts: listening comprehension (20 minutes), reading comprehension (35 minutes), vocabulary and structure (20 minutes), short answer questions (which used to be a multiple-choice cloze passage) (15 minutes), and writing (30 minutes). Recently, however, the CET has been revamped (Zhang, 2005). The changes include the reorganization and reordering of the test's sections, the provision of more listening and oral sections (the speaking portion used to be administered only to students who scored high on the written exam), and the addition of new skimming, scanning, and translation sections. All these changes should produce salubrious "washback" effects on how English is taught in China, increasing the emphasis on developing students' practical language skills and oral English abilities. In addition, the new CET will have a new grading system. Before the reform, the maximum number of points an examinee could earn was 100. Now, scores will be curved so the highest is 710 and the lowest is 290 (a broader scale that not only is similar to that used on the paper-based TOEFL but also allows for greater differentiation among examinees). Finally, the revisions include the elimination of the test's "public service function." It used to be that anyone in China who needed certification of English skills could sign up, pay the fee, and take the test. Now, only university students will be able to take the CET (*College English Test, 2006*). This reduction in the number and range of examinees should allow for better quality control in the administration of the CET in the future.

As noted above, English majors take the Test for English Majors (TEM). This test tends to be more demanding, requiring English skills at a higher level (Zhang, 2006). Also, since fewer students take the TEM than take the CET, scoring the TEM is not such a time and labor intensive operation so there can be more flexibility in item formats. The TEM consists of six sections: dictation (15 minutes), listening comprehension (conversations, passages, and news broadcasts) (15 minutes), cloze (15 minutes), grammar and vocabulary (15 minutes), reading comprehension (five long passages with four comprehension questions each; all in 25 minutes), and writing (composition [35 minutes] and note writing [10 minutes] 45 minutes) (Chen, 2004).

International English examinations like the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication), and IELTS (International English Language Testing System) also have a presence in China, as do specialized courses to prepare students for them. Nevertheless, the relatively high cost of these foreign tests precludes many English learners from taking them unless they absolutely need them for admission to universities in English-speaking countries. The CET still reigns supreme in China in terms of the number of examinees who take it and the influence it wields on the teaching of English.

**Improvement in Chinese students' English speaking skills**

As I interacted with many Chinese students, my most promising observation (corroborated by the comments made by many of the teachers I visited and by reports that the national pass rate on the CET has increased from 10% in the past to over 70%
in this decade) had to do with how, on average, students' English abilities—especially in speaking and listening—seem to have improved greatly. More than ever before, many Chinese university students speak English confidently, correctly, and even naturally. Of course, there are still many who are shy and reluctant to speak up in a foreign tongue, and there is still a disparity between English majors and non-majors (students majoring in other subjects and taking a relatively few required English courses). Nevertheless, my recent experience was that it was not uncommon to find entering university freshman whose English speaking skills were better than those of older, Ph.D. students, who started taking English classes years ago.

Another noteworthy development was an increased emphasis on pronunciation teaching. Of the 21 classes I observed, 10 included some sort of direct pronunciation instruction or practice activities focusing primarily on pronunciation improvement. These activities ranged from simple repetition drills, minimal pair exercises, and tongue twisters to the presentation of useful phonological rules (e.g., how the pronunciation of the —ed ending in English varies depending on whether the preceding syllable ends in a voiced, voiceless, or [vð] sound). Pronunciation teaching points included not only English vowels and consonants but also suprasegmentals, such as the verb-noun stress pattern in final finance. Students participated in all these pronunciation-improvement activities eagerly. Obviously, the new generation of Chinese university students has a strong interest not just in reading and writing English but also in speaking it correctly.

Interactive communication in English classrooms

Most surprising of all, on my recent research trip I frequently observed a large amount of student-to-student, small-group interaction during English class activities. In fact, in 14 of the 21 classes that I visited, I saw Chinese students doing small-group or pair work in which they interacted with each other in English. The activities included student-delivered news reports followed by partner discussions and debates, interviews with classmates about their resumes, partner-discussion games, and other games requiring natural and communicative use of English. In addition, I saw students enthusiastically participating in small groups as they engaged in informal debates on assigned topics or extended simulations—all entirely in English. I also witnessed many students carrying out rehearsed and improvised mini-dramas and role plays. All these activities constituted a dramatic contrast to the traditional English-class pattern that so many earlier China observers have criticized. For example, after visiting scores of English classes at 21 institutions of higher education in China, Cowan, Light, Mathews, and Tucker (1979) reported, "One element which was consistently missing was any opportunity for students to practice communicative use of English. Students were rarely given the opportunity to use language to state their own opinions, express their own feelings, or communicate new information to their classmates" (p. 474). Instead, "there was a heavy reliance on rote memorization and the reproduction of carefully prepared lessons" (p. 474). Only ten years ago, Weng (1996) commented on this same pattern, in which there was "little chance in the classroom to ask questions or share ideas in conversation" (p. 9).

From these observations, it appears that many Chinese students and universities may actually be ready to meet the challenge issued in 2001 by the Chinese Ministry of Education "to use more English textbooks to keep up with the latest development of some subjects" and "to offer bilingual lectures in 5 to 10 per cent of their courses" in order to "better adapt the students to an increasingly globalized environment" ("English Textbooks Should Be Used," 2001; "Chinese Universities to use Textbooks Written in English," 2001). Moving in this direction, several of the classes I observed utilized some form of sustained content-based instruction in English.

Use of English outside of school

Outside the classroom, things have also changed, resulting in many more opportunities for Chinese students to experience authentic English. Twenty years ago, a Western foreigner was a rarity on the streets of most Chinese cities, even Beijing. Contact with the Western world was limited (and carefully controlled). Less than a decade ago, a returning expatriate teacher (White, 1998) reported that "English learners in China have few opportunities to speak and hear the language...The main source of spoken English is usually commercial language tapes" (p. 13). Today, however, expatriates and tourists are a common sight in most major cities. So are Western products and goods. DVDs of the latest Western movies are sold on many downtown street corners. It is not unusual for advertisements and the name signs for stores to employ English words. The mass media also bring English before the Chinese population with increasing frequency. Not many years ago, virtually all television broadcasts were in Chinese (except for a few minutes of English news at the end of the evening's Chinese news broadcast and a few programs designed for overt, explicit English teaching). Today, it is not difficult to find English-language CNN or BBC news and cultural programs, HBO movies, and American cartoon programs on the television in most major Chinese cities. Even government-sponsored CCTV (China Central Television) has its own English-language channel that broadcasts news and feature programs 24 hours a day ("CCTV International, n.d.). Furthermore, despite some government controls on the World Wide Web, it is not difficult for the Chinese to experience natural English via the Internet. The days when English learners would flock to "English Corners" in expatriate teachers' apartments or in public parks just so they could be exposed to English spoken by natives seem to be on their way out. When China hosts the Olympics in 2008, and foreigners inundate the country, English will also flood the media and the streets—especially in the Olympic venue cities. The Chinese have
been preparing for this linguistic eventuality for many years now ("Practising English for Olympic Bid," 2001), and the Olympics' effect on English-language teaching and use in China has already been significant.

Conclusion

As I observed in 2006 in China and as other China ELT analysts have noted, "great changes have taken place in the English classroom" (Zhang 2005, p. 5). These observations provide cause for hope that English language instruction in China is improving despite the difficulties experienced and foreseen by English-teaching experts in past decades.

It should be emphasized, of course, that what I observed is probably not typical or representative of all English classes throughout China. Many of the universities I went to were among the best in the nation. In fact, 8 of the 11 campuses I visited (Tsinghua University, Peking University, Nanjing University, Nankai University, Shanghai Jiaotong University, Tongji University, South China University of Technology, and Nanjing University of Science and Technology) ranked in the top forty Chinese universities in the "general and science schools" category ("Asia's Best Universities," 2000). Furthermore, all the classes I observed were taught by expatiate American "foreign experts" and foreign teachers. For these reasons, what I observed may not accurately represent what happens in English classes taught by native English instructors or at less prestigious universities. Also, the observations I have reported on were all personal and subject to individual bias. What this means is that, compared to the actual state of affairs in outlying areas, my conclusions may be overly optimistic. Nevertheless, my data sources and data-gathering methods were comparable to those employed by reputable scholars who have investigated English language teaching in China in the past.1 Equally important, as the additional sources I have cited above demonstrate, my observations seem to be corroborated by other experts. Finally, even if my findings reflect only what is currently happening at top-level universities in China, it is likely that in the future other Chinese universities will follow the lead of these highly ranked ones.

In sum, despite the possible drawbacks to my data-gathering methods, these observations are very encouraging. The traditional English-teaching methods used in China seem to be changing and modernizing along with the rest of the country, and the forces that were supposed to hinder innovation appear to have been overcome. As China moves forward in the 21st century, it will be exciting to see what further changes the coming decades will bring to English language teaching in this great nation.

References


^Cowan, Light, Mathews, & Tucker, for instance, visited “21 educational institutions in 5 cities” (p. 465), Beijing, Nanjing, Suzhou, Shanghai, and Guangzhou over a period of 19 days in May (1979). In May, 2006, I visited 21 English classes at eleven different universities in six Chinese cities—Beijing, Tianjin, Qingdao, Shanghai, Nanjing, and Guangzhou.


About the Author

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A Teaching Situation Analysis for Requalifying Teachers

Who Will Teach English as a Foreign Language in the People's Republic of China

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M.A. Degree, June 1995

ABSTRACT

A growing number of American teachers are requalifying as ESL or EFL teachers. For example, Brigham Young University's David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies sends 25-30 requalifying teachers to the People's Republic of China each year to teach English. These teachers face teaching situations that are generally unfamiliar. Learning about these situations from experienced teachers can help future teachers to better prepare for their teaching situations. Based on interviews with former teachers, this study analyzes those teaching situations.

The study reveals similarities in the teaching situations in China. For instance, the teachers had difficulty dealing with the issues of the fear of "losing face," of vocal class participation, and of different teaching methods. The teachers also described typical classes which generally have 25-45 students in each class. The class periods are two hours long, and the teachers are usually asked to emphasize conversation. Additionally, the teachers explained that they were often observed and some of them took on teacher training roles. The teachers also mentioned the lack in teaching resources such as textbooks and media materials. The Communist party and its influence on the teaching situation were also discussed.

Lynn E. Henrichsen, Committee Chair

Melvin J. Luthy, Committee Member

Cynthia Hallen, Committee Member

Melvin J. Luthy, Department Chair
They had never been to an English class before, so they were not prepared to speak. The teacher told the students to speak in groups. They were not used to speaking in such a way. The Chinese teacher used a different approach. She explained that the students would be asked to speak in English, but they were not used to speaking in English.

Daniel's classroom (1995) says that his students were very unprepared and participated poorly in the discussion. They were not used to asking questions or participating in class discussions. The students in his class were used to being passive and not involving themselves. He explains that the class was not designed to involve the students.

Mary's teacher (1995) explained the frustration of helping students to overcome their fear of speaking. He used games and activities to help the students feel more comfortable speaking in English.

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Another difference in the styles of the two groups is the Chinese inclination to work in groups. Barbara Jacobs (1995) notes that the students will participate if they can speak and work in groups, but not individually:

It took me the entire nine months. The very last month I got one student to raise his hand and ask a question. They were so timid, and they had been taught to do things as a group. They would call out as a group to ask something; but, for one person to raise his hand and take it upon himself, that was major. (p. 2)

The students' fear of individual participation was a challenging problem for the American teachers. It led to misunderstandings and confusion about the students' language ability and about how the teachers could help the students to improve.

Even so, some of the teachers explain that they developed ways to reduce the fear and increase individual participation. For instance, Audra Moss (1995) mentions the importance of drama and private lessons to help the students relax and trust the teacher (discussed in the drama section). Connie Blakemore (1995) says that games helped her students to relax and participate more freely.

Losing Face

While activities may help the students to overcome their fears of participation, the teachers may also need to understand the students' fear of participation is related to the concept of "losing face." The fear of public embarrassment, or "losing face" is very strong in the Chinese culture. Thus, the students are afraid of taking risks that may cause embarrassment. Therefore, according to Audra Moss (1995), the teachers must make the adjustments by minimizing the students' risk of "losing face." One method is to avoid correcting the student in front of the other students in the class. The teacher must find other ways to guide the students. Katie Broadbent (1995) describes her correction methods:

If they do make a mistake, you either don't pay any attention to it, or make a mental note of it later and then some of the mistakes that the others may make, you just put them all together, so nobody loses face. (Broadbent, K. p. 2)

Drama

There are other methods in addition to Katie Broadbent's method to help students avoid "losing face." One is the use of drama in the classroom. Audra Moss (1995) explains her way to alleviate the problems associated with "losing face" and correction. She says that drama is a very effective method to help the students overcome their fears because the teacher can correct the characters' actions instead of the students' actions.

Drama in the classroom was useful for other reasons. Louise Holt (1995), Audra Moss (1995), and Barbara Jacobs (1995), all talked about plays and/or reader's theaters. They said that the activities helped to unify the students and helped build the students' self-confidence.

Putting on plays was not always easy. The schools did not usually have costumes or props. Many schools did not have stages. Even so, Ruth Holland (1995) explains, drama activities can still be done successfully. She describes her class' experience putting on the play, The Legend of Sleepy Hollow:

It was the first time that that university had ever put on an English play. It was anything but perfect. And the stage! We had to go clean the stage, and we
Most of the class consisted of undergraduate students, many of them English majors. In this undergraduate class, there were 90 students, the class size ranged from 25 to 45 students. In this undergraduate class, there were 90 students, the class size ranged from 25 to 45 students. Chances are really compelling, there are many similarities. For instance, except for two areas. Although many (5) of the teachers emphasized that no two teaching situations in this section included many areas including class size, length, frequency, and subject.

**Classes**

Measuring home, learn about American culture, and improve their reading skills.

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**Louise Hohl (1969)**

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Holland (1969) says that the measure of critical thinking was helpful because the students had good, real examples of western critical thinking techniques on emotional authority.

**Reader's Digest**

Another popular suggestion for future teachers was to bring a collection of "nonfiction" to classes. Many teachers (5) liked autobiography as one of their most popular reading activities. In their previous work, writers had assigned students to read "nonfiction." This, through their weren't always easy, drama activities helped the students avoid feelings.
Holt explains that his class of 90 was unusually large because the school combined two classes so that he wouldn't teach more than his contracted hours.

All of the classes in China are two hours long. Connie Blakemore notes that "classes over there are two hours. We're geared to an hour here" (p. 1). The extra hour can be hard to prepare for. Danielle Christensen (1995) and Barbara Jacobs (1995) both mentioned their frustration at the difficulty of creating enough activities to keep students interested and learning during the whole class period.

The classes also generally met one to three days every week. Connie Blakemore (1995) explains that her classes only met once a week and her students typically would not study English during the interim. This made progress difficult and necessitated much review time.

The teachers all taught integrated skills English classes. While some (2) of them focused more specifically on content areas such as history or science, all of the teachers emphasized conversation. Most (12) of the teachers did not know what they would teach until they had been in China for at least two weeks. Even so, their experiences indicate that if future teachers go prepared with intermediate to advanced conversation lesson materials, they will be well prepared.

Bryant Jacobs (1995) explains that the Chinese teachers teach topics like writing and grammar. The school administrators want the Americans to teach speaking and conversation. They want to expose the students to native English speakers. Ruth Holland (1995) adds that she doesn't think the schools care what the American teachers teach. The exposure is what is important to them. She explains her situation:

I made my own outline, picked and choosed [sic], let them ask me what they wanted to hear about, and I would lecture on those topics. During that class I taught culture, taught manners, taught them how you take a girl to a restaurant, taught them how to use a knife, fork, and a spoon. (p. 12)

Classes like Holland’s that were based on teaching American culture were not unusual. Iviv Holt (1995) adds that it is very useful to take American music and information about American states and holidays to China.

As mentioned, none of the American teachers were asked to teach grammar classes. Danielle Christensen (1995) and Iviv Holt (1995) both state that their students knew more about English grammar than they did. Bryant Jacobs (1995) adds that the students needed help with fluency. He explains: "They really knew their grammar quite well, but if you asked them what a paragraph means or to cast a sentence on the spot, they couldn't" (p. 1).

Thus, the classes were typically conversation classes that lasted two hours per class period. Furthermore, the teachers were usually responsible for designing their own curricula.

Grades

While the teachers were responsible for designing their own curricula, they were surprised to learn that they could not use their own grading systems. They were told that although they could give letter grades, they could not fail any students. When they asked about students who did not pass the final exams or did not attend class, the administrators said that the students still could not be failed. Essentially, if the students could be
and I found out later they were trying to learn from me. But I didn't know that in
classes. All of the teachers would show up all during that week, and hardly at the
time I was where my teachers were. I remember the first time when I would read, in one of my
classes, my teacher sat in my class. I was very interested in that. I knew I had
improve their own teaching. Connie Blackmore (1995) describes her experience:
I told the teachers that they were doing the opposite of Chinese teachers who wanted to know how to
supposedly have been observed by Chinese teachers: they were not observed by Chinese
teachers. Chinese teachers' classes are more regular than American teachers' classes. Although some (2)
of the American teachers' classes were observed by the teacher, the Chinese teachers' classes
were not. Even though the grading system and teaching methods varied greatly from the
American system and methods, the American teachers were not given any form of
Inservice Training/Obervation.

Therefore, the teachers learned their grades, either as examinations in the

they don't pass the class. If they don't pass the class, you
are not allowed to fail a student. So if the student did not pass your test,
otherwise, the students did not care about their grades. They knew they would pass.
and the university basically said you can't fail anybody, no one can fail in college.
and I had my own grading system, but the university was not allowed to grade in college.

Dunham-Christmas (1995) explains that the grading system she created was
determined by their performance on examination scores.
Blakemore's experience was not unusual. Many (7) other teachers report that Chinese teachers came into their classrooms often. The Chinese teachers did not introduce themselves, but simply observed and took notes.

While so many of the teachers were observed by other teachers without knowing it, others were specifically asked to train teachers. Danielle Christensen (1995) taught American teaching seminars to teachers. Ruth Holland (1995) went to schools and observed her students while they were teaching. She critiqued and offered suggestions. She also taught seminars. Audra Moss (1995) and Louise Holt (1995) were also asked to teach teachers how to teach more effectively.

Considering the fact that 13 of the teachers had no TESL/TEFL training, it is ironic that so many of the teachers acted as role models and trainers.

Library

When the American teachers prepared courses and training sessions, library resources would have been useful. Some (6) of the teachers talked about the libraries at their universities. They were not impressed by the libraries. In fact, they said that the libraries were not helpful because they did not have useful books and were not easy to use. Katie Broadbent (1995) explains that it was not simple to take advantage of the library's resources:

They had all of their books locked up, and if you go to the library and try to check out a book, you had to pay 100 yuan (Chinese currency) to be able to check books out, and then if you brought the books back, then you got your 100 yuan back again. (p. 6)

Perhaps because of the libraries' inadequate resources or inaccessibility, only one of the six teachers who mentioned the library said he used it. Richard Nelson (1995) said that he used it for his own personal reading, not for his classes. Thus, none of the teachers found the library helpful for teaching purposes.

Media equipment

In addition to the library, the teachers also described the media equipment they had or were allowed to use at their universities. Richard Nelson (1995) explains that although the university had a copy machine, the teachers were not allowed to use it. He was told that he could get copies made on a ditto machine, but that he must make the order three weeks in advance. Ivlin Holt (1995) adds that at his university, the teachers were allowed to make three copies at a time. Thus, making copies for entire classes was not a viable option.

Only two teachers had access to overhead projectors, but they could not use them on a regular basis. Louise Holt (1995) shared her experience:

They had an overhead transparency machine and it was working beautifully. But they have such a terrible electrical system there. I mean they get this surge of power that will come, and everything will go off, and so it blew out all of the bulbs and the bulbs are expensive, and it blew out, oh, we must have blown out three or four the first month we were there. So they just finally said we can't let you use this. (p. 19)

Other equipment, such as audio and video cassette players were sometimes available. Diana Nelson (1995) says that if the teachers already had tapes, they could use the
32

It was very careful. I didn't want to say too much about anything. I was very careful, and that was very

polite. I explained that they were not allowed to discuss with the Chinese. I explained that they were not

allowed to discuss with the Chinese. I explained that they were not allowed to discuss with the Chinese.

All of the teachers were told before they went to China. And then after they got to

All the textbooks were never even given textbooks. The books in their classes. The other textbooks were never even given textbooks.


33

Alison Holland, Louise Holm (1969) and Louise Holm (1969) said that the textbooks for their classes were small and not useful. The One they were given. Kyle Bremner (1969), Diana Nelson (1969), and Donald text books. The American teachers reported either not receiving a textbook or not using

textbooks. The decisions in media resources were further exacerbated by inadequate

textbooks on these issues, not on the chalkboards.

problem by bringing over English textbooks that stick to the walls. She then taught all of

the Chinese chalk. Blackboards slyly, it was really powerful. She solved the chalk

board problem. Two teachers, 2.5. Bremner (1969) and Diana Nelson (1968) explained that they
decided to use everyone came to class, this was important. We asked the teacher, if

The teachers knew that every classroom had a student monitor. The monitor

checked to see if everyone came to class. This was important. We asked the teacher, if
they wanted to practice English. They claim that people did not want to help them improve their Chinese because they did not have many opportunities to practice. They claim that although they were in China, they did not have many opportunities to practice.

Two morning drills although they were in China, they did not have many opportunities to practice. They say that the language was too difficult. The teachers say that language study was very, most (1/2) of them did not continue their studies after the first two or three months. All of the teachers studied Chinese at least part of the time they were in China.

Chinese Language Study

Two morning drills although they were in China, they did not have many opportunities to practice. They say that the language was too difficult. The teachers say that language study was very, most (1/2) of them did not continue their studies after the first two or three months. All of the teachers studied Chinese at least part of the time they were in China.

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helped her to shop more efficiently.
products. The few words she learned did help her, but a few more words could have
not known how to say more of less than that. So she always bought one kilo of
explained that when she shopped in the markets, she knew how to say one kilo. She did
learn classroom, some did find it useful in their daily routine. For instance, 'Paper
with their language study because she had also struggled
also mentioned that English study helped her to understand the structure of
In addition to helping her to identify the cause of her students’ errors, Blachman’s
understand how they speak. In that, they don’t have
in Chinese and how it was in English. That was really helpful because it’s just
Toward the end, when I could speak in Chinese, and tell them how the sentence was
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Lamplugh. Diana Nemon (1995) explains that the students were pleased with the teacher
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Lamplugh. Diana Nemon (1995) explains that the students were pleased with the teacher
However, some (4) teachers did talk about the advantages of learning the
Teachers learned to be flexible. Their experience can also teach future teachers.

Teachers learned from different teaching styles and different grading requirements. The
From indestructible (or nondestructive) textbooks and locked libraries, the teachers learned to
and colleagues visiting them in the classrooms. The teachers learned about Chinese culture.
China as being great. Learning experiences, from students visiting them in their apartments.

The Kennedy Center's teachers often describe their situations as EFL teachers in
A YEAR IN CHINA

We're gazing out the window now; the tears still in our eyes.
We see our family, those we love; we've said our last good-byes.
The flight is long and tiring. -- Two questions cross our mind:
Do we want the life that's up ahead, or the one we've left behind?

A year seemed like a long, long time in this exotic place
Of thirteen hundred million souls, and no familiar face.
Then as we stepped down off the plane, home's pleasures out of reach,
They greeted us with friendly smiles, and said in broken speech:

"Vee welcome you. -- Now come viss us. -- Help our pronunciations.
Vee need you. Teach us speak your words, without some hesitations."
Their heartfelt smiles, their almond eyes, their gentle loving way
Made fear take flight. In fact, we might enjoy our year-long stay.

We would have shared the gospel, too; but now we are forbidden.
So, we taught "values" of the Lord, but kept the gospel hidden.
The students' love and kindliness was from the start a blessing.
But how to best fulfill our task would always keep us guessing.

Through stories, songs, debates and games, and countless English drills,
We always tried as best we could to hone their speaking skills.
Their shy sweet voice and innocence would melt a heart of stone.
They taught us more than we taught them; that truth is clearly known.

These precious youth already have a quick and open mind
That surely will embrace the Truth, when Truth they someday find.
The Spirit whispers to their souls. The questions in their eyes,
When answered, will be gifts from God they don't yet realize.

"You taught us more than English, Sir; you taught us how to live.
You gave us hope, encouragement -- the finest gifts to give!
We'll treasure every single day. Could we forget you? Never!
You've built a 'bridge' with China, Sir. We'll love you both forever."

And now we pause while looking back, since this day is our last.
Amazed, it's hard to comprehend that time has flown so fast.
How sad that we'll grow old and die before we'll meet again.
"We love you, kind and gentle friends. Xie Xie, Dear Ones. Zai Jian!"
(Thank you) (Goodbye)

We're gazing out the window now; the tears still in our eyes.
We see our friends and those we love; we've said our last good-byes.
The flight is long and tiring. -- Two questions cross our mind:
Do we want the life that's up ahead, or the one we've left behind?

Adapted by L. Melvin Ward
## Evaluation Form for Quality of Teaching of Foreign Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of Evaluation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Grades of Excellent</th>
<th>Grades of Good</th>
<th>Grades of Average</th>
<th>Grades of Below Average</th>
<th>Average Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>教学态度 Teacher's attitude</td>
<td>教师能够严于律己，教风严谨，严格遵守教学作息时间，上课不迟到，下课不早退，态度友好，Self-disciplined, disciplines students well, keeps to the schedules, no absenteeism problems, friendly to students.</td>
<td>优 excellent 10</td>
<td>良 good 8</td>
<td>中 average 5</td>
<td>差 Below average 2</td>
<td>9.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>教学内容 Class contents</td>
<td>课堂传授知识量大，技能训练程度高，逻辑性强，重点突出。Large quantity of classroom knowledge, high degree of technical training, strong logical reasoning, and outstanding point of salience.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>9.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>教学准备 Class preparation</td>
<td>认真选择教材，备课内容丰富，难度、深度适宜。Good choice of teaching material, variety of preparation with appropriate breadth and depth.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>9.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>教学环节 Lesson plans</td>
<td>根据课程需要，认真安排辅导讨论与多种教学环节，教学进度安排适当。Arrangement of guided discussions and lesson plans according to needs and appropriate progression of</td>
<td></td>
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<td>9.80</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lessons.</td>
<td>9.84</td>
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<tr>
<td>教学能力</td>
<td>语言表达精炼生动，富于启发性，课堂组织严密，板书清晰，层次分明。Use of clear and precise expressions and motivating teaching with good organization and clear progression.</td>
<td>9.36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching ability</td>
<td>教学方法生动灵活，对不同程度的学生能采取相应的措施，注重培养学生的能力。Lively and animated teaching with appropriate consideration for students of various abilities and learning capacities, with emphasis on cultivating the ability of students.</td>
<td>8.76</td>
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<td>9.76</td>
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<tr>
<td>辅导答疑</td>
<td>能坚持每周安排1-2次的课外答疑，善于个别指导，启发学生积极思维。Consistently arrange 1-2 times of outside classroom answering sessions with special counseling needed to develop positive thinking on the part of the students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Counseling and answering questions</td>
<td>能坚持每周安排1-2次的课外答疑，善于个别指导，启发学生积极思维。Consistently arrange 1-2 times of outside classroom answering sessions with special counseling needed to develop positive thinking on the part of the students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>作业情况</td>
<td>按时布置与收集学生的作业，内容的难度及份量适中，批改认真。Regularly arrange and collect homework that are appropriate and grade them conscientiously.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework assignments</td>
<td>按时布置与收集学生的作业，内容的难度及份量适中，批改认真。Regularly arrange and collect homework that are appropriate and grade them conscientiously.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>课堂纪律</td>
<td>严格按照教学计划进行授课，不随意停课调课，严格管理课堂纪律，学生听课率高。Teach according to the curriculum and do not depart from it easily. Tightly control classroom discipline with high attendance and attention span.</td>
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<tr>
<td>教学效果</td>
<td>Teaching effect</td>
<td>认真完成教学计划，学生知识水平提高幅度大，实际能力提高程度高。Complete the curriculum with high level of retention of knowledge as well as increase of practical ability in the subject.</td>
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<td>合 计</td>
<td>Totals</td>
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<td>9.608</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

注：在所对应的空格处打 “√”。
Note: put a check mark in the blank.
### Evaluation Form for Work of Foreign Experts

**Course Name:** oral English class for undergraduate students  
**Teacher Name:**  

**Name of class**  
**Major**  
**Discipline**  
**Year**  
**Class No.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Areas</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Below Average</th>
<th>Average Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 备课认真，讲课内容充实。</td>
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<td>9.91</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality preparation, substantial class content.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. 课后布置作业，并及时认真批改。</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homework assignments graded on time and well.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. 了解学生学习上的长处与不足。</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understands students’ good and bad points.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. 课外给予必要的辅导质疑。</td>
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<td>8.55</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outside-classroom counseling provided when needed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. 听取学生建议，注意改进教学方法和内容。</td>
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<tr>
<td>Willing to listen to suggestions from students to change teaching content and methodology when needed.</td>
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<td>6. 关心学生身心健康的培养。</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cares enough for the whole well-being of students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. 对本课程及有关方面的知识了解深入广泛。</td>
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<td>9.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding of the subject matter.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. 能正确清楚地解答学生的问题。</td>
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<td>9.71</td>
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<tr>
<td>Able to answer students’ questions clearly and precisely.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. 讲课重点突出，条理清楚。</td>
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<td>9.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logical and well-developed lectures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Score</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>注意调动学生积极性，课堂气氛生动活泼。Lively and animated classes with active participation.</td>
<td>9.65</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>引导学生独立思考，培养学生分析问题的能力。Able to guide students to independent thinking and cultivate their analytical abilities.</td>
<td>9.23</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>重视实践，注意培养学生的语言能力。Emphasis on practical application of students’ speaking ability.</td>
<td>9.63</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>考试或考查反映了课程重点。Quizzes and examinations correctly reflect salient points of the class.</td>
<td>9.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>学生收获大，学习兴趣进一步提高。Students are motivated and effectively taught.</td>
<td>9.60</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>按时上课，不迟到不早退。Starts classes on time and end on time.</td>
<td>9.86</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>课堂用语深入浅出，语言风趣，使学生加深理解。Humorous and clear presentations deepens students’ understanding and knowledge.</td>
<td>9.91</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

注：1. 此表由学生填写。
   Note: 1. This form to be filled out by the students.
   2. 在所对应的空格处打“√”。
   2. put a check mark in the blank.

请给出你对外教教学方面的意见或你所希望的教学方式等，以帮助外教改进教学。
Please give your suggestions on foreign teachers teaching or the teaching way you expected and so on, to help him/her improve his/her teaching.

1. Play more interesting games in class
2. Give more writing skills suggestions
3. Enlarge the students’ vision of the world