AGENCY IN CONTEXT: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF CHINESE COLLEGE LEARNERS' INTERCULTURAL ENGAGEMENT WITH EXPATRIATE INSTRUCTORS

By

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ABSTRACT

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As China increasingly internationalizes its higher education system, growing numbers of Chinese learners and expatriate instructors meet in the classroom, engaging one another from their disparate cultural and pedagogical standpoints. Despite its widespread occurrence, the phenomenon of Chinese learners and Western instructors engaging one another in pedagogically and culturally Chinese institutions is largely neglected in research. Scholarly literature on Chinese learners is dominated by studies of their experiences as international students on Western campuses. In Chinese environments, authors most often examine perspectives of expatriate instructors on their cultural adjustments. The voice of the Chinese learner in China is rarely heard in research.

In this study, I turned a phenomenological lens toward 17 Chinese learners' lived experiences of intercultural classroom engagement at China's Southwest University. Drawing on works of Hall (1997a, 1997b), Said (1978), and Simmel (1971), I devised a Progression Model of Intercultural Engagement to frame participants' evolving perceptions of expatriate instructors as culturally foreign *Others*. I focused my analysis of learners' perceptions through three overlapping areas of inquiry: (a) learners' sense-making processes and management of intercultural teaching and learning; (b) their perceptions of the expatriate instructor as a physical, social, and cultural presence; and, (c) perceptions of expatriate instructor's course design and teaching. I collected data over a two-month period at Southwest University through methods

including classroom observations, Chinese language participant essays, and English language interviews.

Findings revealed learners exercised ownership and agency in interpreting and managing intercultural engagement with their instructors. Participants expressed ownership of a perceived physically, linguistically, and academically Chinese environment. Within that environment, they initially characterized expatriate instructor by *foreign-ness*. Learners made further sense of intercultural experience by situating their instructors' *foreign-ness* in constructed social, pedagogical, linguistic, and cultural roles. These roles assigned purpose to the expatriate instructor's foreign presence, and framed the meanings learners constructed from intercultural engagement. Finally, participants interpreted their relationships with written and spoken English through engagement with expatriate instructors perceived as social, pedagogical, and cultural embodiments of language. In sum, findings indicate perceived cultural context of the environment, and senses of ownership and agency learners exercised in this environment.

These findings contribute to the academic dialogue on intercultural teaching and learning, not only in Chinese institutional contexts, but anywhere knowledge construction must bridge cultural assumptions, epistemologies, and pedagogies. This study can inform further inquiry into international learners on Western campuses, multinational classes in education hubs, and Western learners studying abroad. I address these applications, and others, as I conclude this dissertation with recommendations for practice, and implications for research and theory.

Dedicated to the learners at ShengDa College, Classes of 2006 – 2008, who continue to be my partners in this inquiry.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Breezes from the open windows rustled papers on the learners' desks on a warm April

evening in Southern China. For the first time in eight years, I sat in a Chinese college classroom.

The setting was familiar, nearly identical to my own classrooms back in Henan Province –

learners aligned across rows of desks and seats all firmly bolted to the floor, the few male

students mostly clustered together at the rear, all facing the instructor's space at the front with its

lectern, whiteboard, and video screen. I watched as the instructor – a 28-year-old white

American woman named Katelyn – was using haiku to demonstrate the characteristics of concise

writing. She displayed Jennifer Knox's (2005) Vietnam War poem "Mekong," on a PowerPoint

slide at the front of the room:

> *They killed all the trees*
>
> *to see inside the forest*
>
> *Then the fog rolled in* (p. 28)

As the instructor read the poem aloud I watched the learners' expressions as they puzzled over its

subtle implications. Stripped of the American symbolism – the films, televisions shows, and

literature that render the word *Mekong* a cultural referent for a traumatic passage in our own

history – I wondered if the name was just a bit of geography lesson to the learners here, a river

running through their own Yunan Province, and then five smaller nations to its south. "So," the

instructor asked, "what is this poem about?"

A faint blended murmur of English and Chinese passed through the room. Some learners

turned their heads questioningly to classmates, while others looked studiously down at notebooks

they knew did not contain the answer. The instructor looked out into the room with an expression

of encouragement and pleading. Finally, one learner released the tension.

"The environment . . . about killing trees?" she ventured, her tone forming more of a question than an answer.

The instructor looked momentarily stunned, then responded, "Um . . . okay, maybe. Why is that?"

"Killing trees," another leaner assented with only marginally more assurance than the first. "Yes, the . . . the environment."

Pausing, the instructor drew in a breath. "Okay," she exhaled. "Anything else?"

This time, not even murmurs. The learners had given it their best shot. They had searched one another's faces, consulted with neighbors in English and Chinese, and tested out responses on the instructor, apparently to no avail. Now they were stymied. I tried not to feel uncomfortable in my safe observational researcher's bastion at the back of the room. I tried not to squirm or hold my breath, but was not entirely successful. I had stood where that instructor was, both physically and metaphorically. In my Henan classrooms, I had looked across that expanse of quizzical, uncomfortable expressions and tops of bowed heads and wondered what connection I was failing to make. That wondering was why I found myself in Katelyn's classroom ten years later.

I went back to ask.

Tertiary Intercultural Teaching and Learning in China

International currents throughout higher education bring together growing numbers of learners and instructors from disparate cultural and pedagogical backgrounds, engaging one another in a variety of contexts. Nowhere is this statement truer than in China, where over three decades of growing international engagement and education reform have drawn an increasing number of expatriate faculty and scholars to a variety of tertiary settings (Kapur & Perry, 2015;

2

D. Wang, 2014; D. Wu, 2013). As of January 2017 The Cross Border Higher Education Research Team (C-BERT) recognized 28 international branch campuses in China sponsored by institutions in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom (C-BERT, 2016). In an Institute of International Education (IIE) survey, U.S. institutions reported 62 joint and double degree programs with overseas institutions, with China being the most frequently partnered nation (Obst, Kuder, & Banks; 2011). In addition to transnational partnerships, Chinese institutions privately employ expatriate instructors in numbers estimated in 2008 at 34,000 (Jun Wang, 2011). Despite this substantial figure, the dynamic between expatriate faculty and their learners at Chinese institutions is one of the least examined in literature.

The Problem: Intercultural Engagement in a Neglected Context

For many Chinese learners classroom engagements with expatriate instructors presents foundational experiences with Western individuals, pedagogy, and ways of knowing. Such encounters exercise unexplored influence on these learners' educational goals, cultural perceptions, and future intercultural interactions. Experiences can lead to educational satisfaction or frustration, intercultural understanding or alienation, personal growth or disappointment. In this intercultural dynamic, learners must often navigate their own epistemological assumptions and those of their instructors, and reconcile divergent understandings of the roles and accompanying behaviors of *instructor* and *learner.*

Despite the number of classrooms where these dynamics take place in China, the college learner who encounters expatriate instructors in Chinese institutions is nearly absent from research. A body of literature exists examining intercultural teaching and learning in international branch campuses and the sites of twinning and joint degree programs (Gopal, 2011; Lane, 2011; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007; McNamee & Faulkner, 2001; Nguyen, Terlouw, &

Pilot, 2006; Ozturgut & Word, 2007; Roberts & Tuleja, 2008), but studies at these sites describe experiences in environments steeped in Western curricular and institutional systems. Authors present Western instructor's perspectives, largely addressing cultural and pedagogical adjustment (Kim, 2015; Lam 2013; Shi, 2009; Shi & Yang, 2014; Stanley, 2013), but instructor perspectives are only half of the teaching and learning equation. When Chinese learners take the forefront in research, it is most often in roles as international students on Western campuses (Clason, 2014; Lowinger, He, Lin, & Chang, 2014; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Zhou, Knoke, & Sakamoto, 2005; Newton, Matsuo, Wang, & Giovanoni, 2014; K. Wang et al., 2012; J. Zhang & Goodson, 2011; Zhou, 2014). Chinese learners and Western instructors engaging one another in pedagogically and culturally Chinese institutions is a largely neglected phenomenon in research despite its widespread occurrence. Further, the interactive dynamic, balance of cultural influence, and expectations instructor and learner bring to the experience would differ from those amongst Chinese learners and instructors in Western institutions and their overseas extensions. This study seeks to address that gap.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to bring Chinese college learners in home-nation encounters with Western instructors into academic discourse by addressing the question: *What are Chinese learners' perceptions of engagement with a Western expatriate instructor in the teaching and learning environment of an English composition class at a Chinese higher education institution?* Secondary questions supporting this inquiry are:

- By what processes do learners manage and make sense of culturally alternative methods, behaviors, and perspectives introduced by an expatriate instructor?

- What are learners' perceptions of the instructor as a physical, social, and cultural presence?

- What are learners' perceptions of course design elements such as assignments, presentation of content, and classroom management?

I chose to address these questions by exploring learners' experiences in composition courses at a Chinese institution – a setting characterized by distinct cultural, social, educational, and epistemological dynamics. Composition courses facilitate examination of content based teaching and learning (Foster & Stapleton, 2012; H. Li & Zhao, 2014) not present in the oral English courses frequently taught by expatriate instructors. Further, academic composition entails processing and expression of culturally based epistemological perspectives and academic values reflected in textual organization (Chien, 2015), argumentation (Anderson-Levitt, 2014; Aneas & Sandin, 2009; Chien, 2015; Lillis & Curry, 2006), and methods of instruction (Chien, 2015; Canagarajah, 2015). These elements lend salience to learners' intricate processes of sense-making in their intercultural experiences.

Definitions of key terms. In this study, the word *Western* does not refer exclusively to a geographical locus, but to cultural values and ways of knowing associated with educational traditions and current practices of Western Europe and North America. I occasionally refer to the instructors in this study as *Western* instructors, but most often use the term *expatriate* in deference to the instructors themselves. In our discussions, the instructors consistently referred to themselves as "expats", which is common parlance in the community of ESL instructors in China. This choice, therefore, is a reflection of the instructors' reflexive identities. The term *foreign* appears in participant's quotations, or in my own analytical text when it articulates Other-ness or exoticism expressed by participants.

As I describe the environment and dynamics in this study, the term *intercultural* is bounded by the environment's characteristics. I do not use the term to designate hybridity or blurred cultural distinctions; in fact "without distinctions the 'inter' in the 'intercultural' would be incomprehensible" (Marotta, 2009, p. 281). As I use it, the word *intercultural* to designate *inter*action between distinct *cultural* standpoints.

Throughout these pages *English as a Second Language* (ESL) refers to all English language instruction involving learners that are not native English speakers. Scholars and practitioners also use such terms as Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL), or Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), each signifying a disciplinary convention or reference to a particular aspect of language instruction. As I use the term here, ESL denotes connotations inherent across all of these labels. I will use TESOL when referring to educational programs for English instructors, as is the common use among institutions offering such programs.

Overview

By conducting this study among Chinese learners in a Chinese setting, the participants and I explored the role of environment in learners' experiences of agency in intercultural teaching and learning. In this dissertation, I present two intertwined arguments regarding agency and experience. First, learners in their home nation setting felt a sense of ownership over the environment and the experiences taking place in it. Conversely, they perceived the expatriate instructor as a foreign, and often disadvantaged, presence in the same environment. Second, I argue learners' ownership over environment and experience instilled agency in interpreting their experiences, and in managing their learning.

This study contributes to the academic dialogue on intercultural teaching and learning,

not only in Chinese institutional contexts, but anywhere knowledge construction must bridge cultural assumptions, epistemologies, and pedagogies. Purposefully contextualized analysis and findings of learners experience in these pages can further refine our understanding of international learners on Western campuses, multinational classes in education hubs, and Western learners studying abroad. It is my hope this research can inform continuing inquiry into academic teaching and learning in all contexts, and offer practical applications for pedagogical practices, and curriculum and program design.

In building these arguments, Chapter 2 provides national context by outlining effects of internationalization and growth in Chinese higher education, and the roles policy plays in managing these developments. In Chapter 3, I review relevant literature to situate my study within current dialogues on intercultural communication, theories of teaching and learning, Chinese learners, and globally mobile instructors. To lay the study's foundations for inquiry into learners' perceptions and interpretations in Chapter 4, I present the epistemological frameworks. First, I describe how phenomenology's epistemological constructs help to situate participants and phenomena in their cultural contexts without resorting to predefined, culturally base category systems. Second, I provide a model of intercultural engagement outlining learners' perceptions of the expatriate instructor as they progress from representation of a culturally Remote Other, to interaction with a Situated Other. In Chapter 5, I describe the hermeneutic phenomenological methods of data collection and analysis used to elicit learners' reflections on experience, place their reflections in context, and create a textual synthesis of their perceptions and reflections. Chapter 6 situates the study within its environmental context by describing the research site, Southwest University, moving descriptively inward from institution, to college, to department, then to classrooms. Following environmental description, I give brief portraits of the 17

participants and the three expatriate instructors who were the agents of the dynamics studied here.

Chapters 7 through 9 each present thematic findings. Chapter 7 examines participants' perceptions of a dominantly Chinese learning environment. I will further illustrate learners' senses of ownership and agency in this environment, and their perceptions of the expatriate instructor as a disadvantaged foreign presence. In Chapter 8, I follow learners' construction of contextually meaningful roles for the expatriate instructor, illustrating how making sense of the expatriate instructor's foreign presence was also making sense of intercultural experience. In Chapter 9, I describe participants turning their ownership and interpretive agency specifically toward language teaching and learning with an expatriate instructor. In this chapter I will examine learners exploring their relationships with English, and taking concrete agency in management of their learning. Finally, I begin Chapter 10 with a brief synthesis of findings, then present recommendations for practice and implications for research and theory, before offering my concluding thoughts.

CHAPTER 2: EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL EFFECTS OF GROWTH AND

POLICY IN CHINA

The conditions contemporary Chinese college learners and expatriate instructors encounter began taking their current form with Deng Xiaoping's opening of China in 1978. In this section, I will describe how ensuing decades of policy reform and growth have shaped educational and social conditions distilled into today's Chinese tertiary classrooms. First, I frame the policy context by describing three key initiatives of the late 1990s that continue to influence the nation's higher education. Second, I outline elements of massification in Chinese higher education's extraordinary growth that have increased expectations of opportunity and social mobility, learner diversity, and instructor demand. Third, I examine the manner in which increased international engagement and learners' desires for intercultural experience help create demand for Western contact in higher education. The fourth aspect, increased demand for English language instruction, goes hand-in-hand with international engagement, and highlights learners' pressurized environment of high stakes language testing. The effects of policy and growth described in the following sections flow into classrooms where they influence the intercultural experiences and perceptions of Chinese learners.

Defining Policies

According to Lixu (2004) by the late 1990s "the challenges of the information technology revolution and the intense competition of economic globalization of the new century" (p. 14) inspired foundational reform in Chinese higher education. Three key policy actions undertaken from 1996 to 1998 continue to shape higher education in today's China. Beginning with Project 211, followed by Project 895 and the Higher Education Law of 1998, this period of policy and reform arguably set the blueprint for the nation's current tertiary structure.

The Chinese State Council launched Project 211 with the goal of developing 100 key universities into comprehensive research institutions (Kapur & Perry, 2015; Lixu 2004; J. Lin, Li, & Taizhu, 2012; J. Liu, 2012; Zha, 2012). Universities meeting rigorously defined criteria obtained access to a massive infusion of funds from national and provincial governments (Mei. Li & Yang, 2014; Zha, 2012), estimated at 37.38 billion yuan from 1996 to 2007 (J. Liu, 2012, p. 655). In return for this investment, Lixu (2004) reported that during the initiative's first four years Project 211 institutions showed a 94% increase in producing papers included in the Science Citation Index (SCI), Engineering Index (EI), and Index to Scientific and Technical Proceedings (ISTP). Prestige attached to Project 211 institutions also translates into a factor in learners' institutional choices, fueling an already highly competitive environment (J. Liu, 2012).

Project 985 followed in 1998 with the goal of developing a few select institutions into "world class universities" (Kapur & Perry, 2015; Ngok & Guo, 2008). Although official figures remain unreleased, available information indicates that Beijing University and Tsinghua University each received 1.8 billion yuan during the first three years of Project 985 (J. Liu, 2012, p. 655; H. Zhang, Patton, & Kenney, 2013, p. 768). Originally including nine institutions, eventually the initiative grew to encompass 39 universities before Projects 985 and 211 were both closed to further inclusion in 2011 (H. Zhang et al., 2013).

The same year that saw the launch of Project 985 also brought the Higher Education Law of 1998, the first pervasive higher education legislation since 1949 (Hayhoe, 2012, p. 16). The law is particularly notable for establishing five key features of contemporary Chinese higher education: (a) institutional status as a legal entity, with accompanying elements of civil rights, liabilities, and institutional autonomy; (b) unified national guidance under the State Council "in the service of the socialist modernization"; (c) inclusive diversity regardless of financial

situation, physical ability, or ethnicity; and (d) international cooperation (Higher Education Law of 1998). These principles and others articulated in the law substantially defined the parameters of contemporary Chinese higher education as experienced by the learners in this study (Hayhoe, 2012; Mei Li & Yang, 2014).

The late-1990s era of rapid reform introduced features that now characterize Chinese higher education. Institutions continue to negotiate the balance between autonomy and broad state management (Mok, 2012). Institutional mergers have created comprehensive universities (Cai & Yang, 2015; J. Li, Lin, & Yibing, 2012; Mok, 2005; R. Yang, 2015; Zhu, Jesiek, & Gang, 2015) in the place of specialized vocationally oriented schools of the abandoned Soviet higher education model (D. Wu, 2013; Kapur & Perry, 2015). Projects 211 and 985 have increased research output and prestige, but at the cost of engendering a highly stratified system, and increasing competition among applicants vying for social capital accompanying degrees from these institutions (J. Liu, 2012; Zha, 2012; H. Zhang et al., 2013). These policies continue to the shape the massification, international engagement, and language study discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

Massification

China boasts the world's largest higher education system, surpassing the United States in 2003 with a six-fold increase in enrollment from 1997 to 2007 (D. Wu, 2013). From 1996 to 2006 the number of higher education institutions doubled (Hawkins, Jacob, & Wenli, 2009; H. Li, Loyalka, Rozelle, Wu, & Xie, 2015), and according to the Ministry of Education (MoE; as cited in Jun Wang, 2011, p. 3) reached 2,004 by 2008. Institutional proliferation strives to keep pace with a steadily increasing student population, as the age cohort enrolled in higher education reached nearly 30% by 2015, up from 1.2% in 1978 (Kapur & Perry, 2015, p. 10). Massification

– defined by Altbach (2010) as the process by which academic systems accommodate growth –

has taken place in Chinese higher education through the interplay of intentional policy and

circumstantial elements. One can summarize these elements under the designations of *agency*,

diversity, and *demand.*

Expansion of higher education has introduced new actors with increased agency to the

scene, significantly parents and students (Akbik, Martens, & Zhang, 2014). Expectations of

academic excellence, social mobility, and post-graduation employment are high among learners

and their families, commensurate to the substantial proportion of savings commonly invested in

education (Akbik, et al., 2014; Hou, Montgomery, & McDowell, 2014; Kapur & Perry, 2015; F.

Li, 2008; Mei Li & Bray, 2007; J. Liu, 2012). Fierce competition begins escalating in high

school with preparation for the National Higher Education Entrance Examination, commonly

referred to as the *GaoKao*, (Chan, 2010), a test that substantially influences learners' institutional

and major possibilities (Hayhoe, Zha, & Zuxu, 2012). In these circumstances, expatriate

instructors encounter a generation of outcome-oriented learners working under significant

familiar pressure, and who are not averse to expressing dissatisfaction with instruction or policy

(Ha & Li, 2014; Mok, 2009; Tam, Heng, & Jiang, 2009).

Tertiary learners have also become more diverse in a Chinese system that is no longer the

elite bastion of exceptional achievers and well-connected families (Mei Li & Yang; 2014;

UNESCO, 2014; Jun Wang, 2011, Yeung, 2013). Expansion has brought greater diversity in

gender, socioeconomic background, and regional origin. By 2009 females had surpassed males

in overall tertiary enrollment (Chinese National Bureau of Statistics as cited in Yeung, 2013),

with substantial female majorities in social sciences and humanities at many institutions

(Hayhoe, Lin, Min, & Guangli, 2012, p. 314). Rural youth presence had grown by 2003 to

constitute 43% of those attending prestigious Project 211 institutions (H. Li, Loyalka, Rozelle, Wu, & Xie, 2015). Policies have also increased access for members of China's 56 officially recognized ethnic minorities, many of whom are also rural dwellers. For example, ethnic minorities went from comprising roughly 8.3% of enrollment at Southwest University in 1995 to approximately 11% in 2005 (J. Li, Lin, & Yibing, 2012).

Despite gains for many underrepresented groups, socioeconomic background continues to exert greater influence among rural populations, with percentage of urban youth attending top-tier institutions outstripping that of rural youth (J. Li, Lin, Yibing, 2012). In 2003, only 2% of economically disadvantaged rural youth could access four-year colleges compared to 16% of their urban counterparts, and only .6% of rural poor could access Project 211 schools as opposed to 7% of their urban counterparts (H. Li, Loyalka, Rozelle, Wu, & Xie, 2015, p. 8). In short, instructors continue to encounter predominantly urban and middle class learners despite increased diversity resulting from policy and burgeoning enrollment.

Growing enrollment has increased the need for instructors in a system overtaxed for faculty (Stanley, 2013), with particularly acute demand for qualified expatriate instructors. According to Jun Wang (2011) "The State Administration of Foreign Experts reported in 2009 that China needs roughly 100,000 foreign experts and foreign teachers annually" (p. 5) to satisfy heightened demand. Corresponding recruitment efforts have drawn expatriate faculty that match learners' in diversity, varying substantially in educational backgrounds, and professional and intercultural experience (S. Liu & Wang, 2012; Shi, 2009; Stanley, 2013).

Agency, diversity, and demand arising from massification form a web of causality in Chinese higher education. Greater agency on the part of increasingly numerous and diverse learners not only drives the demand for expatriate faculty, but also shapes the expectations,

abilities, and experiences both learners and instructors bring into the classroom. Additionally, globally mobile instructors find themselves amongst learners, policy makers, and administrators who are often acutely aware of their own roles on the international stage.

International Engagement

Policy reform in education, economics, and diplomatic relations converge in Chinese higher education's drive for international engagement. Policies target creation of "world class universities" (Akbik et al., 2014; Kapur & Perry, 2015; Mei Li & Chen, 2011; Ngok & Guo, 2008), increased status as a receiving nation for international students (Hou et al, 2014), and national economic growth through an active role in the global economy (Kapur & Perry, 2015). Many learners view intercultural classroom experiences as crucial to post-graduation employment in an increasingly internationalized Chinese job market (Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Botha, 2013; Fang & Wang, 2014; Mei Li & Bray, 2007). Intercultural opportunities among learners are not equal, and learners from relatively affluent urban backgrounds attending public universities, particularly those majoring in humanities, are more likely to directly experience effects of institutional internationalization (J. Li, 2012).

The combined forces of these developments have drawn overseas faculty and scholars to teach in the growing number of transnational higher education programs, and to fill positions at Chinese institutions in language instruction and other disciplines (Kapur & Perry, 2015; D. Wang, 2014; Jun Wang, 2011; D. Wu, 2013). Although transnational programs such as joint degree programs and international branch campuses provide one meeting ground for Chinese learners and expatriate faculty (Hou et al., 2014; Mei Li & Chen, 2011), long-term contact between learners and expatriate faculty can be rare in these environments. Faculty members from the home campus commonly teach at the site briefly before returning to their home institutions.

Long term contact between Chinese learners and expatriate instructors most frequently occurs when institutions directly employ expatriate instructors. Commonly working on one-year contracts with "foreign expert" status under Chinese immigration law, these educators teach in a widening variety of subjects to satisfy administrators' and learners' desires for an internationalized learning experience. Expatriate faculty at these institutions teach subjects as diverse as ESL, "linguistics, British and American literatures, Western culture and Western civilization, sociology, civil and business administration, cross-cultural communication and advanced English writing" (Jun Wang, 2011, p. 29). Managing this influx of overseas faculty became a substantial policy issue as early as 1991 when Article 15 of the Provisions of Employment of Foreign Cultural and Educational Experts in Institutions of Higher Education of 1991 called for institutions to establish "administrative departments . . . to take charge of foreign experts and teachers with full time staff". The Foreign Affairs Office (FAO) established at most institutions is one of the most enduring results of this policy and constitutes a definitive presence in expatriate instructors' lives, assisting with immigration and acting as liaison between institutional administration and expatriate faculty regarding policy and teaching (Jun Wang, 2011). Across all subjects taught by expatriate instructors, the goal of internationalizing learner experiences has situated expatriate faculty in the role of providing perceived cultural and linguistic authenticity.

Demand for English Instruction and Native Speaking Instructors

Massification and international engagement combine to make China today the world's largest market for English language instructors (Stanley, 2013). As a professor of Foreign Studies at China's Central South University explained:

The speeding-up globalization and increasing contacts between China and the outside

world have made it increasingly necessary for Chinese learners to be all-round English

professional who can directly contact native speakers, being able to engage themselves in

political, economic, cultural and academic exchanges with westerners, using English as a

serviceable tool in cross-cultural communication in their future career. (Fan, 2009, p. 27)

As the professor noted, increased English instruction, and the accompanying call for native

speaking instructors, arose in response to "increasing contacts between China and the outside

world" following Deng's opening of China in 1979. This was not always the case in a nation

where "language policy shifts were motivated mainly by the prevailing political agenda of the

time" (Chang, 2006; p. 516). For the first 15 years following the founding of the People's

Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, international allegiances positioned Russian as China's

primary second language. With souring Sino-Soviet relations, the MoE officially stipulated

English as the first foreign language, replacing Russian in 1964 (Chang, 2006; Wen, Xiang, &

Yang, 2016), although for the next 15 years English instruction remained the purview of local

Chinese instructors. Recruitment of native speaking expatriate instructors began almost

immediately upon Deng's renewed relations with the West, with the first English instructors

from Canada and the United States arriving in the fall of 1979 (Wen, Xiang, & Yang, 2016).

Today, thousands of expatriate instructors can encounter language learners from the

abundant ranks of China's English majors, or from among the remaining higher education

learners who all must complete a two-year course of study in English for graduation (Gao, 2010).

Figures on learners taking the required Chinese Test for English Majors (TEM) provide an

indicator of the number of Chinese learners majoring in English. According to Jin and Fan

(2011) as of 2010 numbers consistently fell at approximately 30,000 tested each year (p. 590).

Learners majoring in disciplines other than English have their own required measure of language proficiency, the Chinese English Test (CET; Gao, 2010; Sun & Henrichsen, 2011). Consequently, Chinese college learners' interaction with expatriate language instructors takes place in the pressurized environment of China's high-stakes testing system.

The perceived need for native-speaking college English instructors arises from three intertwined causes. First is widespread conviction that "native speaking" instructors embody Western culture, English language, and alternative language teaching and methodologies (Holliday, 2006, 2008; Lowe & Pinner. 2013). While some scholars dispute untrained native speakers' capacity for effective instruction (S. Liu & Wang, 2012; Stanley, 2013), many have also conceded that without native speakers "language learning in China often means learning *about* English in Chinese" (Stanley, 2013, p. 25). Related to beliefs regarding the inherent value of native speaking instructors, the second influential aspect is a pedagogical shift away from curricula of grammar-translation paired with the repeat-after-the-teacher method of *audiolingualism,* and the adoption of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT; Shi, 2009). In implementing CLT, language proficiency is understood as communicative competence gained through learners' meaningful language use, and through activities in which learners negotiate meaning in written and spoken language (East, 2012; Stanley, 2013). Administrators frequently believe native English speakers' mastery of their own language renders them invaluable to a CLT approach. Finally, expatriate instructors serve to relieve some burden on China's faculty pool, a problem especially acute in the field of English due to curricular requirements to teach the language at all educational levels (Stanley, 2013).

At institutions, the FAO defines much of an expatriate instructor's experience. Although the office's role theoretically facilitates expatriate faculty's administrative, educational, and

cultural adjustment, the frequently hands-off approach of foreign affairs officers leaves many expatriate faculty members loosely connected to the institution (Mei Li, 1999; Shi, 2009; Shi and Yang, 2014; Stanley, 2013; Jun Wang; 2011). Jun Wang (2011) argued outdated policies and lack of consistent standards result in a dearth of formal assessment and feedback to expatriate instructors regarding their performance. Consequently, expatriate faculty must frequently carry out their teaching duties based entirely on their own past educational and professional experience.

English language as a tool of domestic development and international engagement is one of the most influential forces bringing Chinese learners in contact with expatriate instructors at Chinese institutions. Adoption of CLT curricula often places native speaker status over teaching ability or background, and degrees of guidance from institutional leaders vary widely from one institutional to another. In tandem, practices lead to uneven educational, intercultural, and interpersonal experiences among learners.

Conclusion

The four elements discussed here – policy, massification, international engagement, and promotion of English instruction – intersect to help shape the teaching and learning dynamic, and to influence learners' perceptions of their engagement with faculty from overseas. The introduction of CLT methods and frequent lack of instructor direction by foreign affairs officers, combined with high stakes language testing and familial pressure for learners, imbues the experience with combined urgency and ambiguity for both learner and instructors. Policy, massification, international engagement, promotion of English, and institutional autonomy also converge to engender diversity amongst instructors and leaners, rendering each classroom a complex, unpredictable array of intercultural, interpersonal, and pedagogical possibilities.

To understand Chinese college learners' perceptions of their engagement with expatriate instructors one must first situate them within their broad, but influential contexts. Perceptions of an instructor's course design, communication, and physical, social, and cultural presence take place at a confluence of international, national, and institutional currents. The following review of literature tightens the focus to the personal and interpersonal levels by examining intercultural dynamics, and the Chinese learners and expatriate instructors who are the agents of this dynamic.

CHAPTER 3: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the following review I position my study within existing bodies of literature, both in terms of the supporting structure they provide, and the missing pieces that constitute a need for inquiry into the experiences of Chinese learners' in intercultural teaching and learning environments in China. Intercultural classrooms at Chinese institutions are nearly absent from the body of comparative higher education scholarship. As previously noted, a sizable body of research examines cultural adjustment and pedagogy from the instructor's perspective within institutional partnerships and branch campuses (Gopal, 2011; Lane, 2011; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007; McNamee & Faulkner, 2001; Nguyen et al., 2006; Ozturgut & Word, 2007; Roberts & Tuleja, 2008). In many of these studies the learner is a secondary subject, viewed through the lens of instructor experience. When Chinese learners take center stage in research, it is enacting the roles of international students in Western contexts (Lowinger, et al., 2014; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Newton et al., 2014; K. Wang et al., 2012; J. Zhang & Goodson, 2011; Zhou, 2014). Coffey (2013) asserted research perspectives must also address dynamics occurring when subjects confront perceptions and feelings regarding difference in home spaces. Examining Chinese learners' intercultural engagement within their home nation will facilitate greater understanding of the role of context in these experiences.

To outline the spaces where my inquiry takes place, I organize the literature around the primary elements to be described in my conceptual framework – the dynamics constituting intercultural teaching and learning, and the learners and instructors who act as agents shaping that dynamic. In the first section I will begin by reviewing literature presenting various means to define culture and studies that examine processes and possible outcomes of intercultural communication. I will then move to analysis of studies on intercultural teaching and learning.

These studies will provide a foundation in the dimensions of culture and the roles these dimensions play in intercultural engagement.

In the second section I review scholarship that analyzes the agents in the intercultural classroom. I first survey literature concerning Chinese learners in intercultural environments, encompassing inquiries into their ways of knowing and their navigation of diverse cultural learning experiences. I follow with studies describing backgrounds and experiences of the internationally mobile expatriate instructors that contribute to the learner's experience. In the conclusion, I argue existing works provide lenses and fundamental grounding for the research to follow, but there is no discernable body of literature that directly addresses the experiential perspective of Chinese learners' intercultural engagement in Chinese institutional classrooms.

Dynamics: Intercultural Engagement

Although no consensus exists in defining culture (Tung & Verbeke, 2010), most authors share core assertions that culture consists of shared knowledge and values learned through transmission within a large group (Lustig & Koester, 2006, Ting-Toomey, 2012). Hoftsede's (1980, 1984) cultural model remains one of the most frequently cited in social science and education research (Stahl & Tung, 2015; Tung & Verbeke, 2010). Hofstede (1980; 1986) constructed a rubric of five dimensions navigated in intercultural encounters: *power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivity*, *long-term versus short-term goal orientation*; and *"masculine" versus "feminine"*. While some authors have found the five-dimensional model a useful analytical tool, others are critical of its inherent "binaries of individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity or low vs. high power resistance" (Djerasimovic, 2014, p. 210). Berry, Guillen, and Zhou (2010) further critiqued Hofstede's work for ignoring complex national, economic, and political influence and for promoting an essentialist view of culture as easily categorized, static, and unchanging. Despite critiques of the

21

five-dimensional model, much literature on intercultural teaching and learning continues to draw on cultural binary perspectives and narrow contexts that often work toward placing subjects in pre-existing analytical compartments (Clason, 2014).

Hall's (1997a) definition of culture is more reflective of epistemological variation, casting culture as an ongoing process of meaning creation. According to Hall (1997a), "To say that two people belong to the same culture is to say that they interpret the world in roughly the same ways and can express themselves . . . about the world in ways that will be understood by each other" (p. 2). In a dynamic *circuit of culture* "meaning is constantly being produced and exchanged in every personal and social interaction" (1997a, p. 3). While Hall's (1997a, 1997b) understanding of culture is more fitting for studies of epistemological processes, some elements of Hofstede's (1980; 1986) work can complement analysis by providing means to dissect cultural exchange into analytical elements. Such cultural dissection may facilitate initial contextualization of Chinese learners' intercultural experiences, but only as a point of departure toward process-oriented analysis recognizing complex shifting elements in the discursive dynamic of meaning creation by individuals through intercultural experiences.

Intercultural Communication and Engagement

In the discursive process of communicating across cultures Ali (2014) asserted, "Intercultural communication involves people working towards the common channel of communication regardless of their differences" and the "interaction between people from distinctive cultural backgrounds which might influence or be influenced by their own cultural characteristics" (p. 72). While studies frequently spotlight purely linguistic aspects of communication (Baryshnikov, 2014; Bovee and Thill, 2010; Hofsdtede; 1986; Mcelligott, & Piller, 2011), research acknowledging the role of subjectivity in intercultural teaching and

learning also stresses its highly contextual nature (Canagarajah, 2015; Stahl & Tung, 2015; Ting-Toomey, 2012). Relevant context in the intercultural classroom includes dimensions such as "the roles of the players, the interaction goals, the scripts, the timing, and the physical/psychological features of the setting" (Ting-Toomey, 2012, p. 23). Even contextual aspects often considered universally understood, such as time and space, can be perceived in subjectively different ways by Western instructors and Chinese learners, leading to linguistic and behavioral dissonance between partners (Ali, 2014).

Baryshnikov's 2014 analytical study of power relations between native first language speakers and second language speakers addressed the linguistic negotiation of roles between partners in professional settings. The author argued that amidst such contextual conflict partners can either construct a co-created environment wherein "intercultural communication partners mark their belonging to different cultures and, at the same time, look for the common basis to achieve mutually acceptable communicative results, or vice versa, manifest differences in their positions and impossibility to achieve positive results" (p. 47). In their 2015 analysis of intercultural communication competence frameworks, Dai and Chen described an intersubjective process comprised of "the multiple connections between cultures, in which culturally different individuals endeavor to reduce cultural distance, negotiate shared meanings and mutually desired identities, and produce reciprocal relationships in order to achieve communication goals" (p. 101).

Like Dai and Chen (2015), authors addressing intercultural engagement depict this discursive process as a mechanism constructing identities of both self and other (Coffey, 2013; Cordella & Huang, 2014; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Martins & Griffith, 2014). Much literature on intercultural engagement and identity construction draws on Markus and Kitayama's (1991)

work on identity in cultural contexts. The authors emphasized the intersubjective nature of identity as "determined, contingent on, and, to a large extent, organized by what the actor perceives to be the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others in the relationship" (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 227). Expanding on Markus and Kitayama (1991), Dai and Chen (2015) argued that in intercultural encounters, "It is crucial for participants to specify each other's roles in interaction and negotiate the mutually acceptable identity in the process" (p. 107) thereby highlighting intercultural communication as a process of identity construction for both self and other.

Baryshnikov's (2014) work typifies international business studies prevalent in the field of intercultural communication. While business studies may present valuable insights into intercultural engagement, their contexts are not completely analogous to teaching and learning. The possible behaviors Baryshnikov and other authors have described also take place among Chinese learners and Western instructors, but additional complexities of instructor-learner roles in a language classroom require further layers of analysis. Related literature addressing cultural identity and relationships of self and cultural Other offer elements for analytical frameworks examining dynamics in intercultural engagement. These bodies of literature are primarily theoretical, however, and fall short on offering concrete experiential support for their concepts. Empirical studies of actors in intercultural engagement in well-defined classroom environments could add supporting substance to this largely conceptual literature by examining interactive processes of interaction, and communication.

Intercultural Teaching and Learning

When authors depict cultural divisions manifesting differences in teaching and learning they frequently draw on personal experience and empirical studies (Roberts & Tuleja, 2008; R.

Yang, 2013), literature from outside the field of education in such disciplines as history (Thanh, 2014), intercultural communication scholarship (Hofstede, 1980, 1986; Roberts & Tuleja, 2008; T. Tan & Weidman, 2013), and literature on theories of teaching and learning (Canagarajah, 2015; Hằng, Meijer, Bulte, & Pilot, 2015; H. Wu, 2015).

Alternative views have led scholars to explore new ways to disentangle conceptions of teaching and learning from culturally singular paradigms. Such scholarship recognizes a complex interplay of individual, environmental, and cultural factors (Anderson, 2014; Canagarajah, 2015; Clason, 2014; Cordella & Huang, 2014; Djerasimovic, 2014; Hamdan, 2014; Ming-sheng Li, 1999; Marginson, 2014; Marotta, 2009; Tange & Kastberg, 2013), with participants' subjectivity (Block, 2013; Coffey, 2013; Marotta, 2009) providing the interpretive crux in this matrix of factors. In these strains of scholarship authors depict agentive learners using "their creative capacity for surviving, accommodating to and enjoying unfamiliar and at times uncomfortable experiences as they move between study and living 'worlds'" (Anderson, 2014, p. 629). By acknowledging the intercultural learner's capacity to interpret and navigate the unfamiliar, authors create points of departure for understanding learners' perceptions of their instructors and the mutually created dynamic environment they share.

Theories of teaching and learning most often applied to examinations of Chinese learners employ behaviorist concepts originating in the work of Watson (1928), or cognitive and social constructivism associated with Piaget (1952) and Vygotsky (1978) respectively. Behaviorism, with its assertions of positivist, quantifiable content knowledge from authoritative sources, often underpins studies of Chinese learners' resistance to Western concepts of learner-centered pedagogy (Bambacas & Sanderson, 2011). For example, in Chen & Bennett's 2012 study of Chinese learners in an online course, the authors contended learners expressed dissatisfaction

with constructivist self-directed learning, favoring behaviorist content acquisition practices born of "the belief the larger the quantity of information that one collects, the deeper one's understanding of the object being studied" (p. 12). Like Chen and Bennett, other authors frequently invoke behaviorist concepts in deficit terms, using them to describe problems encountered, or to advocate for change and reform (J. Li, 2015). Scholars also employ social constructivist lenses when emphasizing the collectivist nature of traditional Confucian society, particularly when related to participatory knowledge construction in class discussion or group work (Chan, 2010; Hằng et al., 2015; Law et al., 2010; Xi, 2015). Perspectives in these works provide help bridge many of the perceived divisions in intercultural teaching and learning. In Chan's 2010 extensive mixed methods study of learners and instructors in Hong Kong, the author asserted participants demonstrated how various cultural "approaches can be implemented in the Chinese classroom, negotiating the tensions between cultural beliefs, contextual demands and Western ideas" (Chan, 2010, p. 173)

Perceived lines separating cognitive and social constructivism divide much literature in the field of intercultural teaching and learning. In J. Li's 2015 analysis of constructivist theories and tertiary ESL teaching and learning, the author described cognitive constructivism as the individual's attempt to maintain cognitive balance by assimilating new information into existing worldviews called *schema,* or creating entirely new schema in response to information that cannot be assimilated. Xi (2015) and others have criticized the manner in which "cognitive constructivist perspectives on learning begin and end with individuals" (p. 2), thereby ignoring contextual social and cultural influences of Vygotskian perspectives. In response, social constructivist perspectives emphasize learners' social, cultural, and historical contexts (Block, 2013; Galeh & Dorcheh, 2015; J. Li, 2015; Hằng et al., 2015; Xi, 2015). Scholars reflecting

cognitive constructivist perspectives place the center of complexity at the learner's internal cultural-cognitive level, while social constructivists tend to locate that complexity in elements of the external environment such as social dynamics and pedagogical methods.

Arguing for the individual's internal orientation, Hull (2004) contended teaching and learning across cultures ''is not in the first instance pedagogical'', but is a result of culturally based ''ontological…and epistemological'' (p. 105) engagement with alternative ways of knowing. Conversely, in Tange and Kastberg's 2013 qualitative study of Dutch instructors' engagement with international students the authors stressed skills and knowledge that facilitated learners' navigation of the classroom environment over internal cognitive-cultural factors. The authors argued "disciplinary knowledge, methodological awareness, learning style and classroom behavior" are essential to intercultural teaching and learning, and they insisted the internally focused cognitive "conventional cultural reading of student diversity may actually lead to marginalization of such issues" (p. 11). Tange and Kastberg's study may offer useful perspectives for answering questions regarding how Chinese learners balance knowledge construction with navigation of an intercultural environment in China, but such application should be approached with caution. Much like application of intercultural business studies to classroom dynamics, contextual nuance and complexity preclude tidy transferability from Western to Chinese settings.

Joy and Kolb situated their 2009 quantitative study amidst two of these binary divisions – *internal versus environmental* and *essentialist versus individual* – by applying distinctly essentialist constructs to an analysis of both internal and external aspects of learning styles. The authors surveyed 533 learners in 7 nations, selecting individual nations as quasi-essentialist representatives of multinational cultural "clusters based on the relative similarities" (p. 77),

groupings that had been devised in a previous study of organizational middle managers. In contrast to Tange and Kastberg's (2013) findings, Joy and Kolb concluded that culture showed significant influence on an individual's analytical-cognitive preference for abstract conceptualization over concrete experience, but only marginal effect on preference for pedagogical learning style (p. 83). Joy and Kolb's study displayed the complex array of vantage points from which one can study the intercultural classroom, as the authors grounded their frameworks and methods in elements of cultural essentialism while addressing the dichotomy of *internal cognition versus external environment*. This dichotomy is far from resolved in scholarship, and is only one of many choices to be made in conducting intercultural teaching and learning research. Even less frequently discussed is the possibility that binary distinctions obscure the roles of the external and internal as tandem components of unified experience.

Transformative learning literature presents possibilities for bridging the internal-versus-external binary. Scholars of transformative learning in intercultural contexts frequently depict processes that begin with an initially troubling experience of cultural dissonance in the environment, but ultimately lead to internal change (Bruen, 2015; Marotta, 2009; Savicki, 2008; Sercu et al., 2005). The transformative perspective recognizes elements of both cognitive and social constructivism as individuals construct new schema through co-created experience. Savicki (2008) differentiated between surface-level normative change in adaptive behaviors and deeper perceptual transformation in language echoing these theories. According to the author:

> Life experience that causes a student to reorganize existing schemas in order to
> accommodate new information and negotiate new environments represents learning that
> leads to normative development. On the other hand, life experience that challenges

28

students to reconsider the fundamental reasoning behind their most basic notions of the way the world works can precipitate an entire change in perspective. (p. 95)

In examining Chinese learners' intercultural engagement Savicki's observation points to a possible gray area between adopting behaviors to satisfy an expatriate instructor's expectations and reshaping fundamental beliefs and meanings in response to transformative experience. Coffey (2013) argued cultural identities existing prior to engagement retain integrity even as individual agents make use of situational social affordances in sense-making and navigation of the intercultural environment. Agents in such an environment may develop situational "proxy identities" (Uryu, Steffensen,, & Kramsch, 2014, p. 16) born out of relationships of self to other, and contextualized within the encounter they are striving to understand.

Some argue that through transformative intercultural experiences, learners and instructors transform the classroom environment into a *third space,* a co-created hybrid zone between two cultures leading to new positioning, perspectives, and responses (East, 2012; Liddicoat, 2005; Lo Bianco, Liddicoat & Crozet, 1999; Marotta, 2009). In a 2009 examination of intercultural hermeneutics, Marotta asserted "over the last two decades the ideas of hybridity and the cross-cultural subject have become the dominant explanatory concepts in studies of cross-cultural interaction" (p. 271). Authors such as Coffey (2013) have disputed the third space metaphor for its conceptual reliance on two monolithic cultures as the starting point for hybridity, thereby failing to recognize each individual agent in intercultural encounter as a "navigator of complex landscapes" possessing a cultural past, desires, goals, and fears (pp. 268-269). The predominantly theoretical literature on subjective construction of space points to learners' agency in sense-making and construction, even as it ironically presents few empirical studies of agents.

Sewell (1992) defined agency as being "capable of exerting some degree of control over the social relations in which one is enmeshed, which in turn implies the ability to transform those social relations to some degree" (p. 20). Agents within intercultural experience are constantly negotiating and responding to social and cultural parameters of learning spaces to make learning decisions (Block, 2013; Canagarajah, 2013; Djerasimovic, 2014; Leki & Carson, 1994). In a theoretical analysis of power relationships in transnational education Djerasimovic (2014) asserted learners "come to the educational situation with capital and discourses of their own (including their educational and cultural experience, skills, aptitudes, beliefs, desires, expectations and motivation) and with the power to transform foreign discourses and ideologies as much as they may be transformed by them" (p. 207). Djerasimovic's (2014) assertion hints at questions not fully addressed in literature regarding integrity of the individual's cultural constructed meanings and identity and the roles they play in intercultural experiences.

In this section, my survey of literature on intercultural engagement described a field struggling to expand beyond long-held conventions. Strands of cultural essentialism continue to impose cultural compartmentalization on much otherwise insightful research in intercultural communication and teaching and learning. Other authors strive to look beyond categorically bounded paradigms only to encounter constructivist dichotomies between the internal and external worlds of learners. Studies of transformative learning present alternative, more holistic perspectives as authors examine interplay between the external environment and internal sense-making by pointing to an agentive capacity on the part of learners to shape their environment as they encounter alternative ways of knowing. These perspectives offer complex means of understanding learners' engagement with expatriate instructors and their pedagogical goals, assignments, materials, and evaluation criteria. Further discussions on the concept of *third space*

highlight interplay between cultures, but often fail to acknowledge the significance of cultural identity, or the role its maintenance plays in intercultural encounters. Currently the most complex discussions of intercultural agents, and the environments and identities they construct are found in highly theoretical and philosophical works. Few empirical studies exist to give flesh and blood to the interplay between environment, interpersonal engagement, and cultural epistemologies that imbue learners' subjectivity with agency. New research giving voice to learners as they describe their processes in constructing understandings of their intercultural experiences, their instructors, and themselves could contribute connections across divisions and gaps currently existing in the literature.

I have evaluated literature on the dynamics of intercultural engagement, communication, and teaching and learning. Existing research holds both benefits and troubling assumptions related to my inquiry into Chinese college learners' intercultural experiences at a Chinese institution. To contextualize the interpersonal nature of dynamics examined in this section, I now move to literature inquiring into the learners and instructors who shape the intercultural environment.

Agents: Learners and Instructors

The dynamics of intercultural engagement in my study are driven by the Chinese learners and expatriate instructors who interact as co-creators of experience. In the following passages I first will examine literature employing various lenses to explore Chinese learners' ways of learning and knowing, and their responses to intercultural encounter. Next, I will review scholarship inquiring into the personal experiences of globally mobile instructors that underpin their pedagogical beliefs and engagement with learners across cultures.

The Chinese Learner

Since Watkins and Biggs (1996) first wrote of the Confucian heritage culture (CHC) learner the concept has occupied a contentious place in research. Rao and Chan (2010) described CHC learners as "influenced by Chinese belief systems, and particularly by Confucian values that emphasize academic achievement, diligence in academic pursuits, the belief that all . . . can do well through the exertion of effort, and the significance of education for personal improvement and moral self-cultivation" (p. 4). Authors writing about Chinese learners engage with CHC perspectives in multiple ways, from scholars that construct entire studies around CHC paradigms to those who devote research to refuting those paradigms' fundamental assumptions.

Many authors contend CHC paradigms instill oversimplified essentialist generalizations and deficit-based depictions of Chinese learners (Bambacas & Sanderson, 2011; Biggs, 2003; Chen & Bennett, 2012; Ha & Li, 2014; Jianli Wang, 2013a, 2013b). Essentialized views of CHC learners frequently depict them as engaging primarily in surface-level rote learning (Bambacas & Sanderson, 2011; Kingston & Forland, 2008; Roberts & Tuleja, 2008; Tian & Low, 2011; Jianli Wang, 2013a; Yu, 2014), excessively focused on testing (Bambacas & Sanderson, 2011; Biggs, 2003), cavalier regarding plagiarism (Bambacas & Sanderson, 2011; Biggs, 2003; Hu & Lei, 2014; Roberts & Tuleja, 2008; Jianli Wang, 2013a), passively uncommunicative in the classroom (Bambacas & Sanderson, 2011; Biggs, 2003; Ha & Li, 2014; Zheng, 2010), and overly reliant on perceived authoritative sources of knowledge (Bambacas & Sanderson, 2011; Biggs, 2003; Ha & Li, 2014). In Clason's 2014 study of Chinese international students at a U.S. university, the author asserted when researchers employ essentialist paradigms to address a learner's cross-cultural struggles "the focus is typically on the ways in which the learner is deficient (e.g., she's a surface learner)" (p. 124-125). Paradoxically, researchers structure many

studies on Chinese learners around essentialist concepts as a means of refuting or problematizing these very conventions and their deficit modelling.

Regarding textual memorization, authors contend practices many Western researchers and instructors mistake for rote surface learning *over* engagement are in fact engagement *through* memorization (Chan, 2010; Kingston & Forland, 2008; Law et al., 2010; Watkins, 2008; Yu, 2014). In P. Tan's 2011 quantitative study of learning practices among Malaysian Chinese learners, the author asserted that understanding through memorization is an intuitive form of cognition ingrained by memorization necessary to become functional in the thousands of characters comprising written Chinese. Tan argued learners' perception of memorization as a means of deep learning highlighted the possibility that "there is no distinct concretising or dichotomizing of the concepts of 'rote memory' and 'memory with understanding' as both processes . . . can interweave to ultimately become a balanced learning process" (p. 139-140). In Yu's 2014 study of ESL learners' at 15 Chinese schools the author made similar findings of substantive learning through memorization. Through semistructured interviews, Yu presented Chinese junior high, senior high, and college learners describing an array of deep learning outcomes ranging from confident self-efficacy to a more intuitive mastery of grammatical structure and idiomatic expression.

Similar misconceptions of prevalent Chinese views of textual learning also influence common beliefs Chinese learners' are enculturated to willfully engage in plagiarism (Hu & Lei, 2012; 2014; Ting, 2012). In their 2012 mixed methods study, Hu and Lei asked 270 college students in China to compare similarly written passages, and then provide a written evaluation of whether the passage designated as student work was plagiarized. Hu and Lei ascertained an intriguing pair of findings, showing that Chinese learners frequently did not recognize subtle

forms of plagiarism, but that when they identified plagiaristic passages participants condemned the writer, sometimes harshly. The authors concluded cultural values regarding epistemological use of text are not universally shared, and that Chinese culture thereby engendered different understandings of proprietary knowledge, rather than instilled willful, knowledgeable disregard. In a similar 2014 study, Hu and Lei concluded "apparent condoning of what is regarded as plagiarism in Western academic circles does not reflect a cultural acceptance of the act but may result from a lack of knowledge about the Anglo-American notion of plagiarism" (Hu & Lei, 2012, p. 6). In an analytical literature review of applied linguistics research, Flowerdew and Li (2007) drew similar conclusions when they wrote of:

> Cultural and ideological implications of the traditional Western (especially Anglo-Saxon) definition of plagiarism (a definition that fails to acknowledge alternative cultural conceptions of acceptable practice and that may lead to problems in dealing with students' [especially ESL students'] plagiaristic behaviors). (p. 163)

The misconceptions Western educated instructors may hold of Chinese learners' understanding and intent regarding plagiarism could easily lead to confusion and resentment on both sides of the classroom when learners perceive instructors' evaluations as punitive rather than instructive. In research, as in teaching, perspectives are divided between those that regard Chinese intertextual use as plagiarism and seek to *address the problem* and those that regard learners' practices as indicating alternative ways of learning and knowing to be integrated into course design and evaluation.

Discord also surrounds influence of traditional culture on Chinese learners' written organization and other aspects of textual expression. In Kaplan's seminal 1966 contrastive rhetoric study, the author concluded traditional forms of composition dating to China's 15th

34

century exerted continued substantial influence on Chinese learners' composition. Kaplan described the resultant writing of Chinese ESL learners as displaying a winding, indirect presentation that circles the subject "in a variety of tangential views, but the subject is never looked at directly" (p. 10). Ensuing scholarship has frequently criticized contrastive rhetoric studies for presenting essentialist binaries of Asian-Western and direct-indirect, employing poorly designed research (X.Liu & Furneaux, 2015), and perpetuating ethnocentric values that assume the superiority of Western rhetorical style (Connor, 2002).

Scholars have striven to work beyond essentialist binaries by emphasizing complexity in ESL composition (X. Liu & Furneaux, 2014). Some have argued contemporary Chinese learners' English writing is essentially as direct as that of first-language English writers (Kirkpatrick, 1997; L. Liu, 2005; You, 2005), while others have contended Chinese learners display a mix of both elements (L. Yang & Cahill, 2008; J. Zhang, 2011). In Chien's 2015 study the author analyzed the writing of 100 students in 25 academic writing courses in Taiwan, and conducted interviews with learners and instructors. Chien concluded learners were not culturally uniform in English composition, but displayed significant differences in the rhetorical patterns between those possessing high or low language proficiency. Authors have asserted contemporary factors such as language testing, prevalence of business English, and current textbooks exert more influence than traditional culture (Chien, 2015; Kangli, 2011; D. Wu, 2013).

Canagarajah's (2002; 2015) work has frequently delved into even more nuanced reflections on subjective aspects of identity and expression in second language composition, asserting that not only argumentative structure, but also "notions like personal expression, originality, and authenticity . . . assume a particular cultural orientation to the self" (2002, p. 90). In his 2015 case study of Japanese graduate student, Canagarajah highlighted the manner in

which sense of self comes into play "when students reflect on ways their voices were shaped by conflicting language and cultural influences . . ." (p. 126). Few academic analyses communicate conflict of self and second language composition more clearly than his subject's lament, "I feel like being in the middle of nowhere when I write in English" (p. 128-129). Such nuanced examinations of identity and second language composition are rare in a field dominated by studies of rhetorical aspects.

Recently scholars have also sought more nuanced understanding of Chinese learners' reticent classroom behaviors, once primarily attributed to Confucian tradition (Ha & Li, 2014; X. Wang & Chen, 2013). X. Wang and Chen (2013) described reticence among Chinese learners as "the performance of their habitual class behaviors" (p. 132) attributable to Chinese educational practices of the past century rather than a distant Confucian history. Authors propose a variety of factors influencing classroom reserve such as individual language ability, fear of speaking in public, second language anxiety, lack of knowledge or interest in discussion topics, unfamiliarity with educational context, and instructors who interact primarily with those learners possessing highest English proficiency (H. Li & Liu, 2011; M. Liu, 2005, 2006; Riasati, 2013; Tange & Kastberg, 2013; X. Wang & Chen, 2013). Cheng (2000) suggested variance in behavior also indicated some causes could be specific situational responses rather than cultural defaults.

Scholars examining classroom reticence among Chinese learners have given particular attention to the role of second language anxiety, defined by MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) as "the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning" (p. 284). Anxiety frequently arose through learners' combined fear of making mistakes in front of others coupled with perceptions of their own linguistic competence (Wang & Chen, 2013; Wei & Yodkamlue; 2013). Authors have contended

anxiety is exacerbated by the highly evaluative nature of their test-oriented experiences with English (M. Liu, 2006; M. Liu & Jackson, 2008; Riasati, 2013; Wei & Yodkamlue; 2013), lack of time to mentally prepare or translate a response (Foster & Stapleton, 2012; M. Liu, 2006), and the "sink or swim" linguistic conditions of an immersive expatriate-instructed class (Dewaele & Ip, 2013).

Levels of second language anxiety can arise from both personally individual traits and environmental factors. Regarding individual influences, authors have discussed the role of emotional intelligence in facilitating ability to evaluate one's own abilities and assess the demands of their situations (Dewaele, Petrides, & Furnham, 2008; Shao, Yu, & Ji, 2013). In their study correlating learners' foreign language anxiety with their tolerance of ambiguity, Dewaele and Ip (2013) argued anxiety is inversely proportional to the learner's decision to lay claim to second language knowledge. The authors contended elements of self-image may impact claiming a second language as one's own, thereby reducing anxiety, can be more influential than genuine proficiency.

External factors, including the presence of peers, can also influence levels of second language anxiety. In an extensive study of undergraduates in various non-English majors at a Beijing university, M. Liu (2006) noted the effect of learners' perceptions of their own English abilities in comparison with those of their classmates. Drawing on questionnaires, classroom observation, participant journaling, and interviews, M. Liu found learners became more anxious when interacting with classmate who they felt possessed superior language skills. Often learners whose second language facility renders discussion difficult or taxing, or those who simply lack confidence, will mentally withdraw from the class, resigned to rely on a few confidently active classmates to carry discussion (Anderson, 2014; H. Li & Liu, 2011; Riasati, 2013). To

ameliorate anxiety authors frequently recommend paired or small group work (M.Liu, 2005, 2006; Riasati, 2013) or engendering a relaxed, nonthreatening atmosphere (Riasati, 2013).

Recent literature has begun to re-examine anxiety producing effects of forbidding first-language use in the ESL classroom. In the last 20 years, scholars have questioned implementation of Krashen's (1985) *comprehensive input* hypothesis through immersive English-only environments. Some authors have come to recommend judicious, instructor-managed second-language use as beneficial to ESL learning (Jan, Li, & Lin, 2014; Moore, 2013). In research, second-language use has shown to aid in intersubjective sense-making, facilitate task management in activities, and to provide cognitive support for grasping grammar, vocabulary, and complex concepts (Jan et al., 2014; Moore, 2013; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003). Moore (2013) also asserted learners' perceptions that their first language is forbidden stigmatizes their mother language, and is often a cause for withdrawal from participation. In Jan and colleagues' 2014 questionnaire-based study of 510 Chinese tertiary English learners, the authors concluded "the majority of students agreed that a reasonable use of Chinese in the EFL classroom . . . would create a more comfortable learning environment, reduce the learners' affective filter, as well as enhance comprehension" (p. 176). Subjects of the study were non-English majors, and similar research conducted among English majors would serve to better understand benefits of first language use in ESL classrooms.

Regardless of common anxieties, in multiple studies Chinese learners have cited active engagement that includes group work, participatory classes, problem based learning, and critical thinking skills as appealing aspects of their intercultural learning experiences (Clason, 2014; Moufahim & Lim, 2015; Ozturgut & Word, 2007; Eringa & Huei-Ling, 2009). One participant in Tam, Heng, and Jiang's (2009) narrative inquiry study expressed preference for engagement

over classes where "we just sit in our seats and listen" with "no opportunities to participate" (p. 154).

In Ha and Li's 2014 interview-based case study, Chinese learners' at an Australian university described their motivations for classroom silence. Participants' comparative discussions of their experiences in both Australian and Chinese settings highlighted contextual factors that call into questions many broad conclusions drawn from studies focusing exclusively on Chinese international student experiences. The authors identified Chinese learners born after 1980 as a confident and independently minded "Me generation" who enacted classroom silence in response to contemporary factors rather than Confucian-based timidity toward self-expression or deference to instructor authority. The participants gave reasons such as not wanting to share knowledge in a highly competitive test-driven system, feeling that their voices were not genuinely heard or appreciated, and wishing to protest dissatisfaction with the learning environment. Learners may choose to forgo participation, preferring to focus on listening to their native speaking instructors in order to learn and reproduce a perceived superior native pronunciation (Canagarajah, 2013; Gao; 2014), enacting a language learner role that Gao (2014) labelled "the faithful imitator" (p. 60). Stanley (2013) also recounted intentional displays of disengagement through listening to MP3 players, reading, texting, or speaking Chinese amongst themselves. In these ways learners' levels of participation or disengagement are intentional, self-directed choices rather than cultural reflexes (Clason, 2014; Ha & Li, 2014). Ha and Li (2014) further contended,

> While these students expressed different reasons for their tendency to keep silent in
> Chinese and Australian classrooms, what they reported implies that they are aware of

their choice and not ashamed of it. None of them saw the in-class silence as a 'problem'

that needs to be 'corrected' or 'remedied'. (p. 12)

The authors' conclusion highlights a possible point of conflict in the dynamic between Chinese learners and Western instructors who feel a pedagogical obligation to remedy classroom silence rather than understand its possible sources. Instructor expectations of unfamiliar classroom behavior could influence learners' perceptions of their expatriate instructor's pedagogical, social, and cultural presence.

When instructors with little experience among Chinese learners attempt to implement their culturally based pedagogy, efforts can result in resentment or further disengagement from equally cross-culturally inexperienced learners. Western pedagogy "may lack face validity in China if . . . learners do not perceive it as legitimate pedagogy" (Greenholtz, 2003, p. 123). Learners frequently find their Western instructors' loosely structured teaching style unsystematic, or complain of material that is overly simplistic and undershoots their abilities (Ming-sheng Li, 1999). As further complication, some learners' come to the experience with cultural preconceptions of Westerners, expecting their expatriate instructors' classes to be academically lax, lively, and fun (Ming-sheng Li, 1999; Stanley, 2013). Through the combined influence of their past learning experiences and preconceptions regarding Western instructors, some Chinese learners may enter the intercultural classroom subjectively positioned for an experience that challenges multiple levels of expectation.

While pedagogically based studies such as those examined here, can usefully inform research into the experiences of Chinese learners, further research should also address their identities, preconceptions, and agency as social, psychological, and emotional individuals. Research based in Chinese learners' reflections could add much understanding regarding cultural

and individual identity and their roles in making sense of intercultural learning experiences. Studies such as Y. Zhang, Gan and Cham's (2007) article describing burnout in context of the contemporary pressures on Chinese college learners are all too rare. It is telling to note that foundational writing on learner engagement from authors like Tinto (1987) and Astin and Antonio (2012) stressed the individual learner's experiences and identity formation prior to entering higher education, while the Chinese learner in research exists almost exclusively in the present classroom. In another telling point of comparison with Western learner engagement literature, one is hard pressed to imagine studies that use the American *Socratic heritage culture learner* as foundation for inquiry and analysis.

Surveying literature that examines the Chinese tertiary learner displays the need for research shaped by subjective learner perceptions, rather than framed in static cultural-historical models. In a rapidly changing nation it is reasonable to question whether traditional "Confucian values and belief embedded in education still have currency in contemporary China given China's internationalization of education and its increasing contacts with Western cultures" (Ha & Li, 2014, p. 5). Authors rarely acknowledge the significance of contemporary national, cultural, or even institutional context to Chinese learners' experiences, often treating even Chinese and foreign contexts as mere background.

In context of composition, although scholars such as Booker (2012) Canagarajah (2002; 2015) and J. Zhang (2011) have used composition to inquire into issues of cultural epistemologies and identity, much research on the subject remains focused on structural aspects of writing. Even among more nuanced studies of composition, many authors focus on learners majoring in fields other than English, who could have substantially different relationships to language than English majors.

41

Research on intercultural teaching and learning that starts from Chinese learners'

contextualized personal experiences in Chinese environments would shed light on rarely

explored aspects of engagement with their expatriate instructors. In the next section I review

research that examines the expatriate Western instructors whose presences provide the

intercultural aspect of the leaner's experience.

The Expatriate Instructor

Literature on Western faculty teaching outside their home culture environments is

dominated by analyses of these sojourners' pedagogical and cultural adjustments. Similar to

research on Chinese learners, studies of expatriate instructors rarely examine subjects on the

individual, personal level (Kriebernegg, Maierhoffer, & Penze, 2014; Lam 2013). Further,

studies most often view these educators in context of branch campuses, joint degree programs

and other overseas extensions of the instructor's cultural home environment (Altbach, 2010;

Berkshire & Bemski, 2008; Gopal, 2011). In this section I will examine the relatively small body

of literature focusing on experiences of globally mobile instructors privately employed by

Chinese institutions. I will first survey literature on the educational backgrounds and teaching

experiences informing these instructors' pedagogical perspectives and practices. Next, I will

examine studies of globally mobile instructors' place in expatriate communities, and the

ambiguous relationships many have with both their origins and their host cultures. Finally, I will

review scholarship that examines their roles and experiences in the classroom.

In a 2013 study, Lam applied grounded theory analysis in interviews with 13 expatriate

instructors in Hong Kong to inquire into their experiences as part of a growing global population

of independently employed instructors at domestic institutions overseas. Lam highlighted the

manner in which the participants' experiences differed from those of "home-based shuttles

attending conferences and teaching in different societies on a short-term basis" (p. 87) in branch campuses and joint institutional programs. While "home based shuttles" most often teach for one or two semesters as content experts in fields outside of language study, expatriate ESL instructors bring diverse educational backgrounds to the classroom, and many remain abroad for years or decades. Among the participants in Shi's 2009 interview-based study of 12 ESL composition instructors in China, some participants were in their third year of teaching, while others had up to 20 years of experience in countries ranging from their home nations to Japan or France. Eleven held graduate degrees, but only four of these specialized in teaching English to speakers of other languages. Such range has not been uncommon amongst expatriate college ESL instructors in China, a group that represents degree holders in fields as diverse as English literature, creative writing, sociology and fine arts (Shi, 2009; Stanley, 2013). Among those lacking degrees in language instruction, many complete certification programs in the field before or during their time teaching abroad (Lam, 2013; Stanley, 2013). The possible variance in teaching styles and cultural awareness indicated by such diversity is rarely addressed in intercultural pedagogy literature, as authors often depict expatriate instructors as relatively heterogeneous subjects in studies of acculturation.

In their relationships to home and host cultures, globally mobile instructors often enact roles similar to Simmel's (1971) concept of the *Stranger* (Coffey, 2013; Rogers, 1999) as one who is both wandering and fixed, and who exists in a social-cultural environment without deep attachment to it. Lam's 2013 study presented rare personal portraits of internationally mobile instructors, a group the author referred to as "glomics" meaning "global academics" (p. 86). According to the author many "glomics" may acclimate to, or even enjoy aspects of their surrounding culture, but they rarely integrate into the mainstream, assimilating instead into a

transient expatriate community built on common international experiences. Most participants

also expressed similar disengagement from home and home-based friends. Lam concluded,

"Home as perceived by glomics seems to be under constant restructuring and construction and is

a dynamic process interacting with immediate and objective conditions" (2013, p. 95). Indicative

of this nomadic lifestyle, while most expatriate English instructors are originally from the United

States, United Kingdom, Canada, or Australia, it is not uncommon for them to have taught across

Europe and other Asian countries prior to arrival in China (Lam, 2013; Shi, 2009; Stanley,

2013).

Globally mobile ESL instructors often occupy similarly ambiguous positions in their

places of employment, where they are valued as native speakers with language expertise, but are

also considered outsiders with little knowledge of the local context (Shi & Yang, 2014). While

many expatriate instructors find it beneficial to work closely with Chinese faculty, such

opportunities are not common, and many feel left in the dark regarding policies, curricula, and

graduation criteria (Shi, 2009; Shi & Yang, 2014). Lacking access to such material and symbolic

resources in the environment can engender both internalized and externally perceived positioning

as an outsider (Coffey 2013). Without direct engagement with their host-nation colleagues and

administrators, "In cross-cultural transactions, expatriate personnel may find it extremely

difficult to precisely define or understand their new roles" (Ming-sheng Li, 1999, p. 3), and often

"rely on prior experiences and beliefs about teaching and learning that they have acquired from

their home culture to interpret their teaching tasks" (p. 4).

The classroom where an instructor carries out these tasks constitutes a space where roles

are mediated by the pedagogical choices (Ming-sheng Li, 1999). Relying on their prior

educational experience and the perceived desires of administrators (Shi, 2001) expatriate

instructors make pedagogical choices enacting perceived role as bearers of liberating or superior

liberal education values. In this role of cultural standard-bearer instructors frequently view their

purpose not in terms of teaching content or skills but as agents "to socialize their students into

English academic discourse" (Shi, 2001, p. 318). He (2014) suggested instructors' guidance of

learners through cognitive mapping of "English thinking" (p. 127) as one means of socialization

into this discourse. Among the expatriate instructors in Stanley's extensive 2013 ethnographic

account of university teaching in Shanghai, several participants expressed less quantifiable goals

such as to "coax our students' knowledge" or simply "motivate" them. Confronted with

pedagogy based on process rather than the quantifiable outcomes typical of Chinese education,

learners may resist instruction they perceive as disorganized or pointless (Greenholtz, 2003;

Ming-sheng Li, 1999). In turn, instructors may react to learner resistance with frustration, anger,

confusion, or acquired apathy toward their jobs (Stanley, 2013).

Western expatriate instructors also have shown diverse reactions to learner expectations

that they be "fun" (Ming-sheng Li, 1999; Stanley, 2013). Some faculty reported feeling

demoralized, entering the classroom with similar indifference or anger to that acquired in

response to pedagogical resistance. Others embraced the role as a means of creating a relaxed

learning environment. An astute participant in Stanley's (2013) study acknowledged possible

linguistic factors in learners' stated desire for "fun" in their intercultural classrooms. The

instructor observed, "[F]un may be the only word (the students) have to describe the emotions

and experience of self-directed learning . . . Are we overlaying a pejorative sense of fun (light,

inconsequential, and humour-based) over a more complex variety of shades of meaning?" (p.

144). The instructor's observation highlights the cultural, pedagogical, and linguistic terrain

Chinese learners and their Western instructors must navigate to create a mutually satisfying learning environment.

Learners also define expatriate instructor roles when "The classroom, as both a physical and social setting, provides a space for the enactment of roles" (Ming-sheng Li, 1999, p. 2). Learners and instructors themselves frequently perceive expatriate status as a role of cultural intermediary (Coffey, 2013) who represents foreign language, culture, and teaching (Holliday, 2006, 2008; Lowe & Pinner. 2013). Dissatisfaction instructors express at expectations to be entertaining and fun are only one aspect in which the roles of cultural emissary can overshadow the role of teacher (Holliday, 2008).

Drawing on Said (1978) and Carrier (1995), in P. Yang's 2016 ethnographic study of Chinese learners studying abroad the author described learners' essentialized perceptions of a cultural other as "Occidentalism". While Said's (1978) Orientalism designated the essentialized and stereotyped images of Asia and the Middle East in the European mind, P. Yang described Occidentalism as the "essentialising discourse" Chinese learners projected onto perceived cultural others, drawing on physical, linguistic, or cultural characteristics. Physically, expatriate instructors possess bodies often perceived as racially and culturally inscribed – an embodied difference (Ford, 2011; Han, 2014; Martin & Griffiths, 2014; Nguyen & Larson, 2014). Linguistically, the expatriate instructor constitutes the perceived embodiment of a perfectly native mastery of language and pronunciation the (Canagarajah, 2013) – the model sought by Gao's "faithful imitator" in language learning. In addition, backgrounds, assumptions, and desires that drive their global mobility, the expatriate instructor's role in the intercultural classroom is also constructed through the backgrounds and assumptions of the learners.

Literature on globally mobile instructors portray them as experiencing similar cultural dissonance to that experienced by learners, and driven by a similar desire to make sense of intercultural experience. In a 2001 phenomenological study of expatriate instructor experiences MacNamee and Faulkner observed, "In an attempt to restore meaning to their disrupted life worlds" expatriate educators "may be especially inclined to establish a new set of meanings or to reorder existing meaning priorities" (p. 65). MacNamee and Faulkner's phenomenological lens focuses the expatriate instructor's intercultural sense-making processes, but falls short of including learners' role in these processes. Better understanding of expatriate instructors and their learners in context of one another can enrich discussions on the intersubjective nature of intercultural teaching and learning experience.

Conclusion

The bodies of literature on intercultural dynamics, Chinese learners, and globally mobile instructors provide perspectives to support research into these learners' intercultural engagement, but fall short of substantively addressing the phenomenon on an experiential level in fundamentally Chinese environments. Despite moves away from strict cultural essentialist perspectives much research continues to use rubrics of essentialist traits as points of departure for inquiry. Culture is inarguably an influence on perceptions of teaching and learning in these environments, but research based on individual learners' interpretations of cultural meanings in intercultural experience could begin to pave valuable avenues of inquiry.

Fresh nuance and complexity can emerge in a phenomenological study built on individuality of both the learners and their expatriate instructors. In studies of learners' experiences, authors frequently depict instructors as homogenous cultural representatives, but learners actually engage with individuals whose unique backgrounds, cultural understandings,

47

behaviors, and teaching styles contribute to intersubjective experience. Building upon literature that positions Chinese learners in cultural contexts, this study delved into their individual anticipated meanings regarding culture and teaching and learning, thereby expanding our understanding of learners' agentive internal processes in making sense of intercultural engagement. Finally, acknowledging the significance of the home nation environment in ways uncommon in literature can refine our awareness of roles context plays in interpreting intercultural experience.

By filling in gaps among various perspectives, concepts, and methods in the literature presented here, my goal is to construct a learner-centered study of participants' sense-making in intercultural teaching and learning. In the next chapter I will present the epistemological framework that will inform ensuing research methods and analysis.

CHAPTER 4: EPISTEMOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

As I asserted in the review of literature, engagement in intercultural teaching and learning is a process grounded in subjective perception and sense-making. In this chapter, I lay out the epistemological foundations of my inquiry into the intercultural experiences of Chinese college learners. In the first section, I describe phenomenological constructs framing individual and collective perceptions of experience. Next, I share my personal hermeneutic process toward devising a model of intercultural engagement. Finally, I present the conceptual framework that applies theoretical foundations to the experience of Chinese learners' engagement with Western instructors in a Chinese institutional environment.

Phenomenological Epistemology

As an intersection of theoretical and philosophical constructs, phenomenology provides a fitting framework for understanding culturally diverse experiences and perceptions. The phenomenological researcher seeks to address assumptions embedded in cultural and disciplinary frameworks by "situating participants in their particular contexts, exploring the personal perspectives of participants, and starting with a detailed examination of each case" to examine experience "expressed in its own terms rather than according to predefined category systems" (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 32).

Although conventionally understood in research as strictly methodological, phenomenology's underlying ontological and epistemological constructs lay foundations to method (Kafle, 2011; Moustakas, 1994; Pascal, 2010; van Manen, 1990). I chose to ground my study of Chinese college learners in hermeneutic phenomenology's epistemological constructs of *lifeworld* and *essence* formulated by Heidegger (1927/1962, 1943/2002), then elaborated and refined by Ricoeur (1981), Gadamer (1976, 1960/2003), and van Manen (1990).

Lifeworld

Lifeworld refers to an individual's collective *lived experiences* of phenomena in their pre-reflective and reflective forms – experiential sensory, emotional, and ontological impressions informing interpreted experience (Gadamer, 1960/2003; Moustakas, 1994; Rich, Graham, Takett, & Shelly, 2013; van Manen, 1990). These interpreted constructs form subjective *anticipated meanings* – preconceived sets of expectations either confirmed or refuted in intercultural engagement (Gadamer, 1960/2003; Marotta, 2009). Through intersubjective engagement with an individual's descriptions of lived experience, the researcher enters the hermeneutic process of interpreting another person's world – that person's lifeworld (Pascal, 2010).

Four subjective *lifeworld existentials* of *lived body, lived time, lived space*, *and lived human relations* (van Manen, 1990) offer a theoretical framework for analytical inquiry into experience. *Lived body* constitutes our physical presence in everyday life, including all we feel and share through our body. *Lived time* denotes subjective temporal experience, as opposed to objective "clock time". *Lived space* can be understood as felt or perceived space, our subjective experience of the spaces providing both context and objects of experience. *Lived human relations* are the connections we make and maintain with others in our lifeworlds. Each of the four lifeworld existentials presents one analytical lens on a single complex, multilayered lived experience (Rich et al., 2013), and these guided my corresponding research questions inquiring into social and physical presence, as well as the perceived influence of the environment. Through hermeneutic analysis of engagement with participants' as they describe their interpretive lifeworlds, the researcher ultimately arrives at the essence of experiencing the phenomenon being studied (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002; van Manen, 1990).

Essence

Essence refers to representations of meaning shared across individual subjective lifeworlds to imbue lived experience of a particular phenomenon with its distinct ontological characteristics (Kafle, 2011; van Manen, 1990). In delineating essence, the researcher pares away extraneous elements, leaving the fundamental structure of lived experience. It is this contextual interpretation that renders essence a fitting analytical representation of the elements constituting the intercultural experiences in my study. Essence does not refer to immutably universal Platonic ideals, but to experiential interpretations grounded in fluid personal, historical, cultural, social, and situational contexts (Block, 2013; Coffey, 2013; Dahlberg, 2006; Gadamer, 1960/2003; Patton, 2002). Therefore, essence may contain varied textures of experience. For example, the essence of tasting a jalapeño pepper may be *hot*, but within this essence, experiences of *like* or *dislike*, *pleasure* or *distress*, may be present. Similarly, the Chinese English major's intercultural experience of engagement with an expatriate instructor in a teaching and learning environment is both an experience singular to that learner's lifeworld and an essential experience shared by all learners encountering the same social, historical, and environmental phenomenon.

The phenomenological researcher arrives at essence through the mediating function of language (Dahlberg, 2006; Gadamer, 1976; van Manen, 1990), distilling participants' responses to *interview questions* into answers to *research questions*. Each experiential description contributes "an example, an icon that points at the 'thing' which we attempt to describe" as the researcher constructs an essential "example composed of examples" (van Manen, 1990, p. 126) through hermeneutic engagement.

The hermeneutic cycle in phenomenological epistemology. The researcher engaged in hermeneutic phenomenology gradually arrives at a description of essence through reflective

writing – an ongoing, iterative relationship with the text (Kafle, 2011; van Manen, 1990). At each new stage of composition in this *hermeneutic cycle* (also referred to as *hermeneutic circle* or *loop*) the author repeatedly returns to earlier text in a circular dialectical revision process (Thatchenkery, 2001; Robinson & Kerr, 2015), reshaping existing passages to reflect revelations emergent in newly composed analysis. Through this process of "re-thinking, re-flecting, recognizing" (van Manen, 1990, p.131), assumptions embedded within preconceived theoretical and methodological passages are gradually replaced with reflections of the phenomena under inquiry. In the following section, I describe how my own hermeneutic process yielded a fundamental interpretive perspective for this study.

The Other in Intercultural Engagement: An Account of the Hermeneutic Process

The fundamental experience I examine in this research is that of the Chinese learner's engagement with an expatriate instructor who presents a foreign presence in a Chinese environment. As I began composing my findings chapters, it became increasingly clear that emerging themes required a framework that depicted learners' evolving interpretations of that foreign presence. However, nothing I had written prior to data analysis forged pathways for composing text that expressed the compelling dynamic of *coherence within complexity* I intuitively heard in participants' descriptions of intercultural experience. In my findings, I read pages of vague hints and allusions compiled into three disjointed chapters. I considered my original interpretive frameworks with increasing dismay, leading ultimately to frustration.

Almost reflexively, I turned first to the security of existing frameworks and models of the cultural Other. Scholars have commonly described the Other as one whose differences from a dominant culture are perceived as "strange, bizarre, or exotic" (Given, 2008, p. 587). Frequently cited works of Hall (1997a, 1997b) and Said (1978) contributed two assertions to help frame the

learners' perceptions of their instructor as a cultural Other – (1) the Other is defined by those who hold situational cultural dominance, and (2) defining cultural Other and Self are simultaneous acts of delineating each in contrast to its opposition. While these constructs helped me to frame analysis of learners' anticipated meanings and their roles in initial encounter, they failed to address interaction because they focused on representation and the "non-relation of the outsider rather than the stranger who is here among us" (Coffey, 2015, p. 272). When I discovered this Stranger archetype, first described by Simmel (1971), I found the means to extend my analytical frame to include the types of encounter and engagement experienced by learners and instructors in this study.

While Otherness exists remotely, "Strangeness exists when those who are physically close are socially and culturally" distant (Marotta, 2009, p. 275). Within a cultural environment, the Stranger is: (a) both wandering and fixed; (b) an occupant of the environment, but one not attached to it; (c) a long-term visitor rather than temporary sojourner; and (d) an agent who imports qualities into a group that do not, and cannot, arise from within the group itself (Coser, 1971; Rogers 1999). Returning to my findings with these concepts in mind, I came to realize the dynamics I sought to communicate did not rest in any pre-existing model, but in a depiction arising from my current findings. By combining and reorganizing traits of the conceptual Other and Stranger, I constructed a model illustrating the progressive modes of engagement, from representation to interaction, that I found in my participants' perceptions of engagement with the perceived foreign Other-ness of the expatriate instructor.

A Progression Model of Intercultural Engagement

Building on the concepts I found in Hall (1997a, 1997b), Said (1978), and Simmel (1971), my phenomenological analysis in this study considered three modes of learners'

intercultural engagement with the expatriate instructor as the cultural *Other – representation of the Remote Other, encounter with the Present Other* and *interaction with the Situated Other*. As shown in the Progression Model of Intercultural Engagement (*Figure 1*), the *Remote Other*
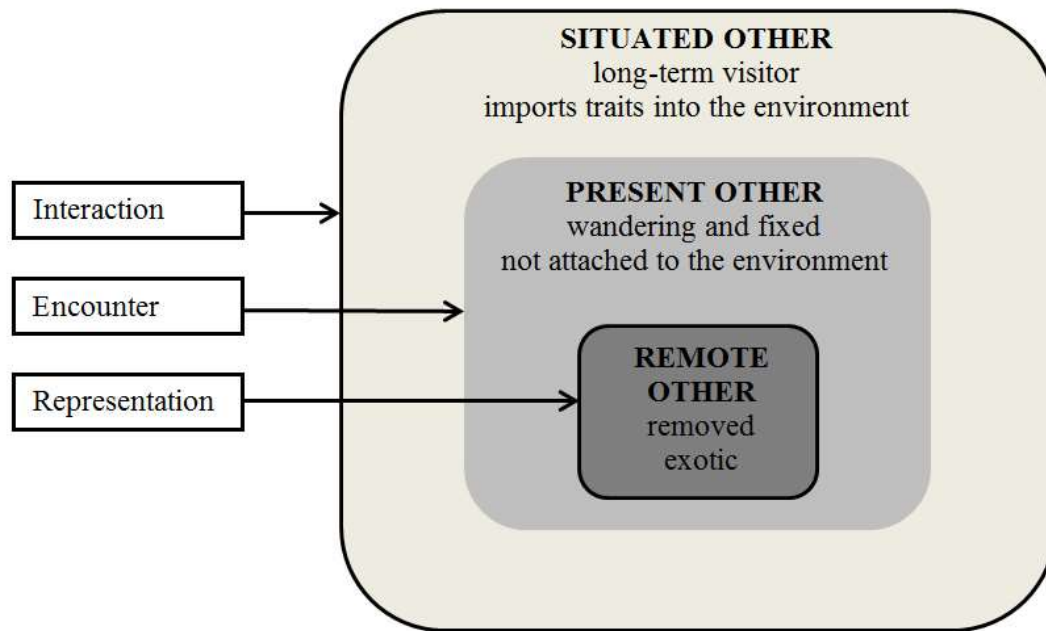
Figure 1. **Progression Model of Intercultural Engagement**

occupies the mode of remote, exotic representation. The *Present Other* is perceived as transient and unattached within the environment. These characteristics recognize the individual as an encountered presence, but imbue that presence with no contextual purpose or stability. Members of dominant culture, like the learners in this study, perceive the *Situated Other* as semi-permanent and possessing value in traits otherwise unavailable, traits granting qualified membership and purpose in the environment. As illustrated, progression to interaction with the *Situated Other* is not a process of shedding perceptions formed in representation and encounter. Traits of the *Remote Other*, such as exotic representation, may still be present in interactions with the *Situated Other*. However, they rest at the core of a more immediate, interactive, and complex relationship.

The Progression Model of Intercultural Engagement applies phenomenological constructs of subjective perception, interpretive meaning, and essential experience to Chinese learners' intercultural engagement with an expatriate instructor. Next, I present a conceptual model illustrating these theoretical constructs at work in context of course design, communication and other aspects of interaction with a physical, social and cultural presence.

Conceptual Model of Intercultural Teaching and Learning

The Conceptual Model of Intercultural Teaching and Learning shown in *Figure 2* outlines one learners' experience and sense-making of intercultural teaching and learning. The
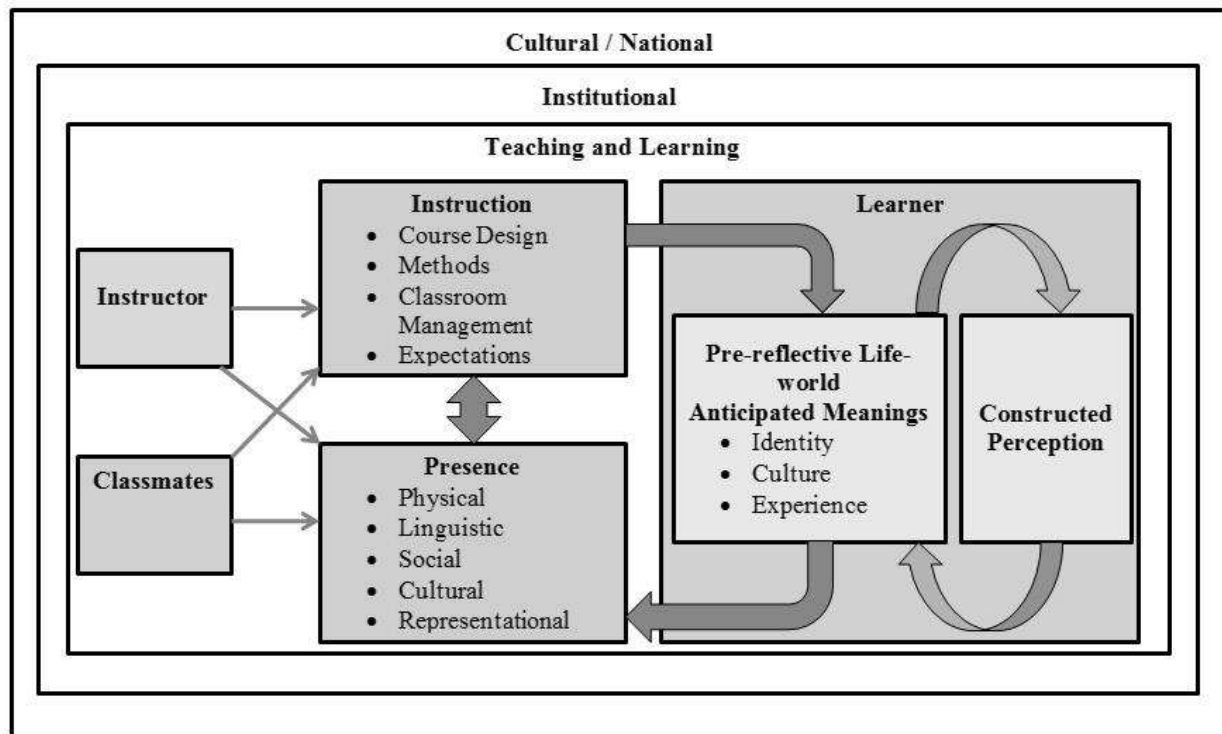
Figure 2. **Conceptual Model of Intercultural Teaching and Learning**

elements within the model reflect relationships among the lifeworld existentials and my own research questions.

As depicted in the model, the teaching and learning environment where experience occurs is nested within an institutional environment, which is itself nested within a national-

cultural environment. The teaching and learning environment most immediate to the learner's perception of the cross-cultural teaching and learning phenomenon designates both the physically encountered spatial aspects of the classroom and the experience of engagement in the course. Accordingly, the learning environment can be the classroom or any location in which the learner engages in coursework or sense-making related to the experience, such as a library or residence hall. The physical aspects that reflect lived space are dimensionality, sense impressions, and the physical presences of other learners and the instructor. The learner also experiences lived time and her or his own lived body in relation to the physical aspects of the learning space. Lived human relations is experienced through the physical presence of others and linguistic engagement with them.

Cyclical arrows moving through *presence*, *instruction* and the learner's *pre-reflective lifeworld* denote the interactive, intersubjective, and perpetually ongoing nature of experience. The dynamic also depicts the intersubjective role other learners play in the experience of instruction as they also engage with course design, methods, classroom management, and instructor expectations. Among the elements depicted, the linguistic may be especially complex in a second-language writing course because language is not only a means of communication but also the subject of teaching and learning. In addition to written material, the learner also engages with the expatriate instructors through elements of instruction, including course design, teaching methods, content, and expectations.

Sense-making of impressions within the pre-reflective lifeworld ultimately translates elements of the intercultural teaching and learning phenomenon into experience. The learner first experiences the phenomenal elements as part of the pre-reflective lifeworld with its sets of anticipating meanings. Through a continuous sense-making process influenced by identity,

culture, and past experience the learner translates current experience into the reflective lifeworld of constructed meaning. The cyclical dynamic shown between pre-reflective and reflective lifeworlds depicts the continuous nature of constructing and refining meaning. In the following chapter I will outline the methodological elements that will facilitate inquiry into the lifeworlds of participants as they interactively encounter the instructional design, communication, and presences of expatriate instructors. In the following chapter I will outline the methodological elements that will facilitate inquiry into the lifeworlds of participants as they interactively encounter the instructional design, communication, and presences of expatriate instructors.

CHAPTER 5: METHODS

In this chapter, I describe methodological tools for my inquiry into Chinese learners' perceptions of their intercultural classroom engagement. First, I trace the supporting alignment of various research design elements in addressing the primary question: *"What are Chinese learners' perceptions of their engagement with a Western expatriate instructor in the teaching and learning environment of an English composition class at a Chinese higher education institution?*

Secondary questions further defining my study's place within academic discourse are:

- By what processes do learners make sense of culturally alternative methods, behaviors, and perspectives introduced by an expatriate instructor?

- What are learners' perceptions of the instructor as a physical, social, and cultural presence?

- What are learners' perceptions of course design elements, such as classroom management, presentation of content, and assignments?

To outline methods for these inquiries, I begin by addressing my positionality as researcher through my personal experiences and impressions of the intercultural classroom in China. Next, I describe the processes of data collection, to include participant selection, contextual data, participant interviews and essays, and researcher notes. Finally, I outline the processes of hermeneutic phenomenological analysis that ultimately yielded my study's findings and conclusions.

Researcher Positionality

Researchers enter into a study with knowledge and experiences that influence the conduct of research. Not merely in final analysis, but in initial formulation of research questions,

methodology, and the act of research we are inescapably shaped by our positionality (Peshkin, 2000). As an inescapable aspect of researcher identity, positional subjectivity is neither inherently positive nor negative. The hazard of preconceived analytical bias arises from *unacknowledged* subjectivity. Positional subjectivity judiciously acknowledged merges the researcher's unique qualities to the data in ways that render a distinctive original contribution (Peshkin, 1988).

Through *epoché* the phenomenological researcher acknowledges subjectivity, identifying both intrusive preconceptions and biases, and valuable personal perspectives, objectives, and identity (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; van Manen, 1990). In my personal process of epoché I first examine aspects of my identity and past experience shaping my sociocultural and professional positionality in relationship to the topic of Chinese college learners in intercultural classrooms.

Personal Relationship to the Subject

My relationship to the subject of my study is best expressed in terms of my sociocultural and professional identities. In the simplest sociocultural terms, I identify as a white American male of middle class upbringing. Ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic class place me among the most privileged in my own society, and nationality further positions me among the most privileged globally. As beneficiary of systems of power and privilege I can often remain unaware of such systems and their dynamics unless I make an effort to be cognizant. Consequently, I strove to maintain awareness of the socialized, enculturated nature of my perspectives and values as I conducted this research, aware of being at risk of grounding my study in assumptions mistaken for fact.

Identity is present in how we perceive ourselves and in how others perceive us, and participants' perceptions could not help but influence their interactions with me. In both physical

appearance and manner, I present an almost stereotypical American male – a very *un-Chinese* presence that Chinese participants could associate with a variety of cultural and geopolitical characteristics. During interviews there were moments where participant's hesitation in voicing critical perceptions of their American instructors was a palpable reminder that my presence carried meaning for them. The intersubjective nature of interviews required that I consider participants' perception of my positionality as I established our relationships and conducted ensuing analysis.

My professional identity as an international educator provided the impetus for undertaking this study, arising from my own experience as an expatriate instructor in a Chinese college from 2004 – 2008, and from other teaching engagements in Taiwan and Thailand at the K-12 and tertiary levels respectively. The knowledge, emotions, and attitudes born of my overseas teaching experience provided beneficial contextual grounding for conducting this research, but can also instill bias. I still carried mixed emotions toward my experiences while teaching abroad. As an instructor, I often felt frustrated when a thoughtfully constructed lesson plan was met with silence and faces staring down at desktops. Conversely, I also felt sympathetic toward the learners navigating intercultural learning experiences, realizing expatriate educators like me ask them step outside parameters of their experience, and that many ask this with little or no cultural understanding of the demands they make.

My first-hand experience and emotional responses have proven valuable as they instilled concrete immediacy into grounding and execution of my research. They also required awareness of the way my prior experience teaching abroad could unconsciously shape my inquiry, and dilute the voices of the participants as they express their experience of phenomena in the intercultural classroom.

<center>**Site and Environment Selection**</center>

Institution

I selected Southwest University (SWU) based on three criteria – my study required a site that was representative of Chinese higher education, suitable to the proposed study, and logistically feasible. SWU constitutes a representative institution, having reflected each milestone development in Chinese higher education from the early 20th century to the present. The present-day SWU is typical of the Project 211 institutions that are emblematic of Chinese higher education development, displaying student diversity in socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and regional origins as well as an international outlook and resources. SWU's curricular structure and policies, particularly at the research site in the College of International Studies, is suitable for the goals of this study. With a sizable English language program that includes composition, and six-instructor expatriate faculty, the college presented all elements to address the research questions and meet requirements of the study's design. Finally, an ongoing relationship between Michigan State University (MSU) and SWU rendered the latter a logistically feasible site for coordination, travel, and accommodation. Established lines of communication, the presence of SWU professors and students on the MSU campus, and established joint programs facilitated preliminary fact-finding and long-distance coordination in the months prior to my arrival for data collection.

Composition Course

Composition courses possess two characteristics essential to my research design choices. First, the inherently cultural-epistemological nature of writing affords uniquely reflective means for learners, instructors, and researchers to explore intercultural experience. Second, analysis of

<center>61</center>

the subtly complex learner-instructor interaction that takes place in content courses, to include ESL composition courses is largely absent from research.

Writing is a socially and culturally mediated process (Connor, 2011; Connor, Nagelhout, & Rozycki., 2008) wherein epistemological perspectives and academic values manifest in such elements as textual organization (Chien, 2015), argumentation (Anderson-Levitt, 2014; Aneas & Sandin, 2009; Chien, 2015; Lillis & Curry, 2006; J. Zhang, 2011), and methods of instruction (Chien, 2015; Canagarajah, 2015). In my research, I regarded writing as not only the catalyst for intercultural experience, but also a subjectively reflective process allowing learners to analyze conflicting linguistic and cultural influences through writing (Booker, 2012; Canagarajah, 2015). As learners navigated linguistic and rhetorical elements they experienced salient cultural orientations to *self* (Canagarajah, 2002) and to the instructor. In sum, an ESL composition course offers opportunities for participants to reflect on their engagement with expatriate instructors in ways that entail the cultural-epistemological and pedagogical in contexts that are both social and textual.

Participant Selection

Phenomenological research calls for a purposive sample of participants who have experienced the same phenomenon (Creswell, 2009; Englander, 2012; Groenwald, 2004; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). I collected data from a purposive sample of 17 Chinese English majors who had been enrolled in a composition course with an expatriate instructor at SWU. English proficiency required for the learners to take part in classes conducted entirely in English also facilitated conducting interviews in participants' second language.

An undergraduate assistant provide by the College of International Studies distributed a questionnaire (Appendix A) and participant consent form (Appendix B) among eligible learners

within the English Department. Both forms provided my e-mail address, and the consent form provided a detailed explanation of the study. Eighteen learners contacted me via e-mail to volunteer for the study, and I responded to schedule an initial interview. During initial interviews I eliminated one learner who had taken English composition with a Chinese instructor. Each of the remaining17 participants had English composition courses with one of the expatriate instructors to be profiled in Chapter 6.

Data Collection

Data collection entailed four processes: (a) collection of descriptive information on the institution, department, and participants; (b) participant reflections expressed in interviews and essays; (c) classroom observations, and; (d) a researcher journal and interview notes. While collection of some descriptive information was required at the beginning of my research, these processes did not occur in a strictly sequential manner. Instead, in the course of my ongoing inquiry during a two-month residence at SWU, data collection of all types continued simultaneous to interviews and classroom observations.

Contextual Data

To begin the phenomenological process of understanding "human experience in context-specific settings" (Patton, 2002, p. 37), I collected data on the institutional setting (Bevan, 2014). I gathered information on curricular structure and international orientation (history of international relations, international partnerships, and number of international faculty) from public relations material, records, and from interviews with administrators, faculty, and learners. For pertinent information on the classroom environment, participants and faculty provided documents such as syllabi and instructional material in support of my own class observations.

Classroom observations allowed me to include social, spatial, and sensory elements of the learners' experiences in findings and analysis. Witnessing social dynamics amongst instructors and learners enhanced my capacity to analyze participants' descriptions of interpersonal aspects of their experiences. Experiencing the physical aspects of the classroom – instructional aids, classroom arrangement, and overall environment – allowed me to more concretely contextualize participant reflections. Classroom observations proved valuable in confirming and supporting participants' reflections expressed in interviews and essays, but they yielded few additional findings. Collecting institutional and class data assisted with the ongoing bracketing process by contextualizing participant reflections and researcher analysis in the specific environment, and cultural and pedagogical conditions.

Questionnaires

I used questionnaires to gather initial background information on instructors and participants. The faculty questionnaire (Appendix E) inquired as to their international experiences prior to teaching at SWU, academic backgrounds, and levels of satisfaction with their work at Southwest University. Learner questionnaires (Appendix A) addressed their personal backgrounds, past and current experiences with foreign instruction, past experience with individuals from other nations or cultures, career goals, and level of difficulty they found in their expatriate-taught composition courses

Interviews

Loosely structured interviews constituted my primary data source. A flexibly dialogic interview process structured around open-ended questions facilitates evoking a comprehensive account of an individual's experience (Groenwald, 2004; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990), and allows the participants' reflections to guide aspects of the interview (Marshall & Rossman,

2006; Moustakas, 2004, Seidman, 2006). Interview questions derived from Moustakas (1994) and based on van Manen's (1990) lifeworld existentials of lived body, lived time, lived space, and lived human relations provided the framework to focus interviews through the lenses of my research questions (Appendix C).

I conducted two interviews approximately two weeks apart during April and May of 2016. The first interview focused on participants' personal and academic backgrounds, and goals, and descriptions of their composition classes. The second interview concerned their reflections on teaching and learning, culture, and language in context of their composition classes. I took supplementary notes during and immediately following interviews to record body language, expression, and other nuances, as well as to carry out preliminary analysis (Aneas & Sandin, 2009; Finlay, 2005; Groenwald, 2004). I gave participants the choice of three locations to conduct interviews according to their convenience or comfort level – an empty composition classroom or secluded veranda in the College of International Studies building, or a student lounge in the Literature Studies building with an adjacent veranda.

At the first interview I described the purpose and procedures of the study, and explained confidentiality and informed consent. Both verbally and on a written consent form (see Appendix B), participants were informed that (a) they were free to participate and withdraw from the study at any time, (b) interviews would be audio recorded and transcribed, although they may request the recorder to be turned off at any time, and (c) their confidentiality would be preserved by all possible means, including the use of pseudonyms,

The participant-researcher relationship is essential to phenomenological interviewing. Englander (2012) called the phenomenological interview dynamic a *subject-subject* relationship, signifying the co-created, intersubjective nature of the exchange. Beginning with the initial

meeting, I worked to create open, conversational relationships with participants (van Manen, 1990; Englander, 2012). Participant and researcher define the relationship according to who they are to one another in an intersecting set of physical, cultural, and situational traits and perceived roles. Particularly regarding culture, I strove to remain aware of how the participant's perception of me as a white American male researcher could influence communication.

I also considered implications of conducting interviews in participants' second language of English. The intercultural, bi-lingual nature of our conversations necessitated occasional clarification and specificity less common in loosely structured interviews between first-language speakers. Participants' perceptions and the first language they would naturally use to describe experience are both shaped by the same social and epistemological foundations (Aneas & Sandin, 2009; Kudela, Forsyth, Levin & Lawrence, 2006). At our first meetings I assured participants I was accustomed to speaking with first-language Chinese speakers, and encouraged them to pause and collect their thoughts when necessary. Regardless, at times I could tell a participant was struggling to express a complex or nuanced thought in English, and attempted to facilitate comfort as best I could. Occasionally a participant asked to express a thought in Chinese, to which I always readily consented. This posed no problems, as I either understood as the participant spoke or successfully translated by reviewing the audio recording.

Essays

Each participant also wrote a prompted essay of at least 700 words (about 750 Chinese characters) in their native Chinese. Chinese essay writing balanced interviews in three ways. First, it allowed participants to express themselves in a linguistically and culturally familiar medium. Second, essay writing facilitated focused reflection of an "intermediate (or mediated) description of the lifeworld as expressed in symbolic form" (van Manen, 1990, p. 25). Third,

essays provided another data source to affirm analysis from interviews and observations. Blinded copies of essays were translated with the assistance of a native speaking Chinese translator, who I recognize as a third co-creator of meaning in a participant-researcher-translator dynamic (Andrews, 2013; McNae & Strachen, 2010). As translations are inherently paraphrases, no direct quotations from these translations are attributed to participants.

For essays, I asked participants to describe a typical day in their English composition course. I provided the guidelines and prompts for this essay (Appendix D) at the completion of the first interview, and requested they bring the completed composition to our second interview seven to nine days later.

Researcher's Journal and Notes

Throughout the process of designing and carrying out the study I kept a journal of impressions, initial analysis, and ongoing reflections on methods, theory, or purposes (Maxwell, 1996). My journal also contained an interview log of notes made during exchanges with participants to record descriptions of body language, vocal inflection and other observations for holistic analysis and thick description (Aneas & Sandin, 2009; Seidman, 2006). These notes also led to general changes in protocol and personalized foci for second interviews. The interview log also contained analytical notes made shortly after the conclusion of each interview.

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

Throughout the course of data collection, I conducted hermeneutic phenomenological analysis to arrive at the essence of participants' experience with their instructors in an intercultural classroom. Hermeneutic analysis's inherently interpretive nature is especially helpful in highlighting cultural context as manifested in the mediating function of language (Gadamer, 1976; Kafle, 2011; Patton, 2002; Van Manen, 1990). I based analysis on processes

described by Moustakas (1994) consisting of bracketing, horizontalizing, narrowing themes into horizons, clustering into meaning units, and summarizing meaning units into experiential essence.

Bracketing

In order to contextualize and "focus purely on the event, experience, or situation being studied" (van Manen, 1990, p. 175) bracketing leads the researcher to identify assumptions and biases through reflection and writing (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; van Manen, 1990). The bracketing process began prior to my data collection with my *epoché* presented earlier in this chapter, and it continued throughout the research project. After I completed data collection, I reviewed and revised my written reflections to refresh my awareness of assumptions, opinions, and prior knowledge that could influence analysis. Reviewing and expanding at the outset of analysis also helped me to contextualize reflections more directly within the data generated during the collection phase.

Horizontalizing

I first reviewed audio files of the interviews, transcribing at least one third of each interview within 24 hours in order to engage with the data while still fresh. This practice carried the added benefit of helping to focus and personalize second interviews. Throughout transcription, I recorded initial impressions in my journal. After completing transcription, I examined transcripts and essay translations line by line, asking of each sentence, "*What does this say about experience being described?*" As common words, phrases, and thoughts emerged, I began color-coding text to isolate thematic aspects. In isolating themes I also considered participants' nonverbal cues noted in interview and transcription notes.

Narrowing Themes into Horizons

To begin narrowing I identified redundant or irrelevant statements from the prior stage of analysis. After undertaking the process for all transcripts and essays, I eliminated those statements that continue to seem extraneous to the essence of participants' experience. As the process neared completion, basic structures of meaning units began to emerge.

Clustering of Meaning Units

I analyzed all similarly color-coded groups of statements from interviews and essays searching for those intersections grouping thematic elements into clusters. At this stage, I began placing quotations on an Excel spreadsheet according to thematic clusters, beginning a process of organizing and reorganizing quotations as I created, changed, and eliminated themes. This clustering process continued until meaning units met two criteria: (a) each was distinct with little or no overlap and (b) each contained no themes that presented significant differences. Resulting meaning units could then be organized into a textual description of participants' experiences.

Summarizing

In the final stage of analysis, I began summarizing meaning units into textual description of intercultural teaching and learning phenomena as lived experience expressed by participants. At this stage of the phenomenological hermeneutic cycle, I entered into a dialogic act with the data wherein composition of text and analysis were a unified undertaking. Beginning with a rough draft of findings and analysis, the hermeneutic cycle of revision entailed a continuous process of "re-thinking, re-flecting, recognizing" (van Manen, 1990, p.131) until arriving at the summary of experience that formed the core narrative of my findings.

Validity

Internal validity is a concern in qualitative studies due to their interpretive nature. As the

researcher, my positionality and past experience could influence my interpretation and analysis in ways that compromise the integrity of my findings. I used multiple sources of data and peer review (Merriam, 2009) as means to greater assurance of internal validity. Two interviews and one essay from each participant allowed me to cross-check and compare data across sources. I also called on the expertise and perspectives of my peers by sharing data with two colleagues who could provide suggestions and critiques as a way to challenge and clarify my findings.

Limitations

All research carries limitations, and those affecting this study arise from language and self-selection. The primary sources of data were interviews conducted in participants' second language of English, which could have inhibited expressiveness and specificity, and possibly presented a source of stress during our exchanges. All participants were volunteers, so self-selection introduced the possibility that learners in this study may represent a group possessing greater comfort in intercultural engagement than may actually be common among learners. However, varying degrees of comfort apparent among participants during interviews indicated that the sample was not inaccurately monolithic. In the next chapter, I place this participant diversity in context by first describing the environment of the research site, then providing portraits of the three expatriate instructors, before finally presenting individual participant portraits.

CHAPTER 6: ENVIRONMENT AND AGENTS

In this chapter I describe the institutional environment where the study took place and the instructors and learners whose intercultural engagement within that environment is the focus of analysis. In the first section, I detail concentric levels of the environment, as shown in my Conceptual Model of Intercultural Teaching and Learning in Chapter 4. I begin here with the institution, as the surrounding national environment was described previously in Chapter 2. In the following examination of environment I focus on institutional and academic structure, international orientation, and the departmental and classroom environments most directly influential to the learners.

In describing the agents I first discuss the three expatriate instructors who conducted the courses in this study. I then provide participant portraits for the 17 learners who acted as the study's primary participants.

Environment of English Language Teaching and Learning at Southwest University

Southwest University (SWU) is located in the Beibei District of Chongqing Municipality, one of four Chinese municipalities directly controlled by the central government along with Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin. In the summer of 2016 the university celebrated its 110th anniversary, tracing its roots to the founding of East Sichuan Teachers College in 1906. For the next 100 years, institutions that would become today's SWU underwent a series of mergers and divisions, each reflecting a developmental period in Chinese higher education (R. Yang, 2015; Cai & Yang, 2015). In the period of drastic restructuring that removed the last vestiges of the Soviet model's highly specialized institutions following the turn of the century, a merger of Southwest Chinese Normal University and Southwest Agricultural University 2005 created today's SWU (R. Yang, 2015; Cai & Yang, 2015).

SWU consists of 32 colleges that offer 20 PhD programs, 44 Master's degree programs, and 105 programs for approximately 40,000 undergraduates (Southwest University, n.d.). Institutional leaders take pride in the institution's global engagement, touting its active promotion of internationalization on the university's website (Southwest University, n.d.), and through posters and events across campus. International focus also manifests in partnerships with institutions in over 30 countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Korea, Japan, Australia, Russia, Canada, and Thailand. An International College was founded in 2008, and according to Director of the Center for International Programs, Dai Huapeng, it is currently home to 1,419 students from nations including Argentina, Botswana, and Brunei, Canada, Columbia, Korea, the Russian Federation, Thailand, and Vietnam.

SWU is among the 116 Chinese higher education institutions within Project 211, giving it increased access to funding and other resources, greater autonomy, and increased capacity to grant postgraduate degrees. The university's status as a desirable college choice has created a diverse student body in socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and regional origins.

College of International Studies

The College of International Studies, which houses the participants' English language program, annually enrolls approximately 2,000 undergraduates, 350 master's degree students and 20 PhD candidates (Southwest University, College of International Studies, 2015). The college offers undergraduate degrees in English, Japanese, and Russian, and master's programs in English language and literature, foreign and applied linguistics, Japanese language and literature, and Russian language (Southwest University, College of International Studies, 2015). According to Xiao Kairong, Director of the International Office for the College of International Studies, in 2006 the college was granted the right to confer PhDs in English language and literature studies

by the China Academic Degree Granting Committee of The State Council. Later, in 2011, the school achieved greater autonomy in their doctorate programs by attaining "First Level" status. The college also houses seven research institutes, including the Institute of Foreign Language Education, the Institute of Foreign Languages and Culture, the Institute of Translation and Lexicographical Studies, and the Institute of Japanese Studies (Southwest University, College of International Studies, 2015). The school adopted the English name College of International studies in 2015, but curiously retained the Chinese name *Wàiyǔ Xuéyuàn* [Foreign Language College].

As part of Southwest Teachers College, the school employed its first expatriate language faculty in 1953 with the inclusion of seven Russian instructors, and the first expatriate English teachers arrived from Canada and the United States in 1979 (Wen, Xiang, & Yang, 2016). In 2016 the college had a foreign faculty of 11 instructors, including two from the Russian Federation, two from Germany, and one from Japan. At the time of this study, there were six English instructors, all from the United States. According to Xiao, the English Language program recruits instructors through institutional partnerships, contacts established through its international graduates, and through Fulbright and Peace Corps Fellowships. In accordance with recent regulations by the Ministry of Education, newly recruited expatriate faculty must possess at least a master's degree, and the College of International Studies requires two years' teaching experience, and gives preference to TESOL degree holders.

The English Language Program

When considering learners within the English Language Program, one must bear in mind that majors are not completely elective in Chinese higher education, but allocated according to *GaoKao* scores. Therefore, the program includes learners with keen interest in English and

language learning, as well as learners with little pre-existing interest in language study. As throughout institutions in China, SWU's English program displays striking gender disparity, with females constituting 87% of enrollment.

Learners in the English Language program spend two years moving through a common core of courses in cohorts of approximately 35 classmates. Over this period learners take two years of Oral English courses that provide many with their first engagement with expatriate instructors. Instructors conduct Oral English classes in unstructured classroom environments furnished with three-person tables on wheels facilitating various configurations for the game-and-activity-based instruction typical of these classes.

At the end of sophomore year, learners choose a specific path in Business English, English Literature and Linguistics, or Translation, with the last being further divided into written and oral translation. In their third and fourth years, learners are grouped into new cohorts based on these specializations. It is also during this second half of their undergraduate education that learners first engage with expatriate instructors in content courses in such subjects as literature, English journalism, and composition, although these courses are also taught by Chinese faculty. Whether a learner's cohort has an expatriate or Chinese instructor for English composition depends on faculty assignments that vary from one semester to another.

English Composition Classrooms

English composition classes are most often conducted in the College of International Studies building, as were the three courses examined in this study. Unlike the oral English classrooms, environments for composition courses have immobile desks bolted to the floor. Desks are elongated tables shared by three learners whose seats fold down from the front of desks behind them, much like seats in a movie theater. In narrower classrooms there is a center

aisle between two sections of 13 desks each. In other rooms there are two aisles between sections of 8 rows. From the learners' perspective, the front of each classroom has a stationary lectern to the left and chalkboard to the right.

Each room is audio-visual equipped, with controls mounted in the lectern, and screen that lowers in front of the chalkboard. On the walls of each room are two framed posters of *míngrén míng yǔ* [famous people's famous words] with quotations from figures such as Alexander Dumas and Mark Twain, first in the figure's native language, then in Chinese translation. Each room has one wall of windows, although these may be positioned at the back or side of the room, depending on the room's orientation within the building.

The instructors in this study each used classroom space differently. Some spent much time sitting on the front row of desks or walking partially into the aisles while talking, venturing to the lectern only to operate audio-visual equipment. Others remained near the lectern and chalkboard unless monitoring small-group discussions. The configuration of the room, with both desks and seats fixed in place, made group work problematic, and instructors most often told learners to simply "discuss with your partner" in an adjacent seat. When instructors organized activities on group work, learners had to awkwardly arrange themselves in immobile seats and desks.

Instructors

In the following descriptions I focus on three aspects of the expatriate instructors who conducted the composition courses in this study. I note their academic and international backgrounds, perspectives on intercultural teaching and learning, and experiences with institutional administration and curricula.

Deanna

At the time of this study, white female Wisconsin native Deanna had been teaching at SWU as a Peace Corps English Language Fellow for two years. She completed a Master's degree in TESOL in 2013, preceded by a Bachelor's degree in Special Education. Prior to working in China, Deanna had taught English in France, South Korea, Uganda, and Ethiopia. She has also traveled extensively in Europe, Asia, and Africa. While working in Africa, Deanna met her husband, a Ugandan national who resides with her Chongqing. At SWU she has taught Academic Writing, Practical Writing, and Journalism and Newspaper Reading.

Deanna described her overarching goal in composition classes as encouraging learners "to like writing more – not fear writing, at least," by debunking myths that writing is difficult for anyone who is not "born a good writer." Her learner-centered approach encompasses peer composition review and in-class discussion and collaborative group work toward a participation grade comprising 10% of their course grade.

Deanna's specific goals included helping learners grasp the concept of plagiarism, and to develop critical thinking, basic research skills, and well-supported argumentative composition. Recognizing her goals differed from learners' prior educational experiences she said:

> I tell them. "I'm American. I come from an American context. That's what I'm familiar
> with and that's what I can teach you." They're already familiar with the Chinese context.
> . . . I always couch things [as], "If you're e-mailing a foreigner - if you're interacting with
> a foreigner – this is the way you want to do it. (Deanna)

Deanna also spoke of feeling constrained by the testing and memorization focus of the curriculum. She also confided she wished for more collaboration and communication with expatriate staff, and spoke of often feeling left "out of the loop" regarding curricular decisions.

76

"If I ask I feel like I get quite a bit of information," she told me, "but . . . you don't know what to ask about." Nevertheless, Deanna felt the personal connections she has been able to make with learners made teaching at SWU a satisfying experience.

Katelyn

Katelyn, a white female, was in her third year with SWU at the time of this study, with a one-semester hiatus to complete a master's degree in the United States. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in French in 2010, she taught at a high school in France, and the Seattle native has also travelled extensively in Western Europe, the Caribbean, and Asia. A Peace Corps Fellow during her first two years at SWU, after completing her master's degree Katelyn chose to return to SWU, where she has conducted courses in Oral English, Composition, and English literature.

Katelyn felt her purpose as an instructor was to help learners master characteristic features of various genres, such as argumentative or narrative essays. In class she preferred using examples from existing literature to elicit class discussion on specific features and the writing process, an approach she found more valuable than "just me standing in front lecturing them, 'This is how you write a good essay.'" Katelyn often discussed composition teaching in terms of remediating learners' detrimental writing habits, and expressed particular dismay regarding plagiarism, poorly developed ideas, and what she described as "flowery" writing that sacrificed concise clarity for ornamental aesthetics.

Although Katlyn maintained she was satisfied with her work at SWU, she expressed frustration with complexities of integrating her teaching goals into a testing-oriented curriculum, and with unclear guidelines and communication from the English Language Department. Her unhappiness with these was most evident in relating the story of being required to rearrange her syllabus six weeks into a semester in order to integrate preparation for an upcoming Ministry of

Education Test of English Majors. Regardless of her occasional frustrations, Katelyn spoke of returning to SWU after completing her master's degree with a renewed enthusiasm for teaching.

Keith

At the time of this study Keith had been at SWU for four years. A white male, Keith attended college in his home state of Minnesota, and in 2010 he was awarded a Bachelor's of Arts in Social Sciences and teaching certification. Keith's travels outside the United States prior to arriving in China were tourist excursions to Mexico, France, and areas of the Caribbean. During his tenure at SWU Keith taught Oral English, Comprehensive English, and English Composition, although it was only in his fourth year that he conducted composition courses

Lacking formal training in second language instruction, and inexperienced in teaching writing, Keith confessed to self-consciousness of his "deficits" early in the composition course. "I focused on the things I felt I could do," he told me, "and stayed away from the things that weren't as fresh in my mind from my own writing classes in college." Keith described teaching with "parallel goals" of developing learners' creative faculties while refining their command of English grammar.

Regarding administration and curricula, Keith said he, "Felt comfortable playing the game the way they wanted it played," despite qualms about grading expectations and unclear direction. He confessed the stipulation expatriate instructors give no grades lower than a C made him feel, "Our class wasn't that important. It was kind of like a token stamp." Otherwise he felt the administration was very "hands off," even when he would have appreciated more communication regarding course goals or assessments.

Keith seemed to derive the greatest satisfaction from making connections with the learners, both in and out of class. He valued the opportunity to read essays where he felt learners

revealed a personal side unseen during class, and prized time spent away from the classroom

playing ping pong or hiking the surrounding countryside. According to Keith, "That made a real

difference and made a real connection."

Learner-Participants

In this section I present brief biographical summaries of the learners who were

participants in this study. These summaries include their hometowns and parental vocations,

prior intercultural experience, and academic choices and goals. A summary of participant

demographic information in *Table 1* includes pseudonym, age, gender, major and regional origin.

Participant*	Age	Gender	Major	Regional Origin
Alma	21	Female	Business English	Henan / Semi-Rural
Blake	21	Male	Business English	Hebei / Rural
Cookie	21	Female	Business English	Hebei / Urban
Craig	22	Male	Translation	Shaanxi / Semi-Rural
Joy	20	Female	Translation	Hunan / Rural; Semi-Urban
Karen	20	Female	Business English	Liaoning / Urban
Kate	21	Female	English Lit & Linguistics	Chongqing / Semi-Urban
Lily	21	Female	English Lit & Linguistics	Sichuan / Urban
Lisa	21	Female	English Lit & Linguistics	Henan / Semi-Urban
Lulu	21	Female	Business English	Luzhou / Semi-Urban
Lydia	21	Female	Business English	Chongqing / Rural
Maggie	21	Female	Business English	Chongqing / Semi-Rural
Oliver	20	Male	Business English	Chongqing / Rural
Opal	22	Female	English Lit & Linguistics	Fujian / Semi-Urban
Sherry	21	Female	Business English	Yunnan / Semi-Urban
Sophia	21	Female	Business English	Shandong / Rural
Tim	22	Male	Business English	Hunan / Rural

*pseudonyms used to protect participant confidentiality

Table 1. **Participant Demographics**

Alma

Alma is a twenty-one-year-old female carrying a double-major in Business English and

Accounting. She grew up in the countryside near Henan Province's capital of Zhengzhou, where

she describes having no engagement with people from other countries, drawing most of her early

understandings of Western culture from books and movies. Her parents own a restaurant in

Beijing, where Alma's father spent much of her childhood. She confessed ambivalence toward her college choices, stating that she knew little about college and chose her major based on her high score on the English section of the *GaoKao* , and on her parents' wishes. Alma was drawn to SWU due to its status as a Project 211 institution, and after graduation hopes to use her combined accounting and English education working for an international corporation in China.

Blake

Blake is a twenty-one-year-old male who came to SWU from rural Hebei Province, where his parents are agricultural workers. Blake never encountered anyone from a foreign country during his rural upbringing, and learned of Western culture primarily though books, television, movies, and school. He did not choose English study, but said he was "distributed" to his major due to his *GaoKao* scores. Blake admitted to having no great fondness for language study, owing largely to the stringent language examination system. He hopes to attend postgraduate school to study one of his genuine passions, geography or history. He chose SWU because he wanted to experience Southern China, and also because of the school's high reputation, citing the institution's status as a Project 211 university.

Cookie

Cookie is a twenty-one-year-old woman from Hebei Province's capital city of Shijiazhuang. She described her parents' as "just workers," with a father who does factory repairs and mother who works in a hospital canteen. Her senior high school employed four expatriate English instructors, and although she did not take any of their classes, she related having occasional casual conversations with them. Cookie expressed comfort and interest in interacting with people from other cultures, and she attributes some of her understanding of Western culture to books, television, movies, as well as to personal interaction. Cookie expressed

a lifelong love of language learning, adding that she chose English because of its utility. Like Blake, she chose to attend SWU primarily for the opportunity to experience life in Southern China. As a Business English major, she hopes to work for a multinational corporation writing English promotional material.

Craig

Craig is a twenty-two-year-old male English translation major. His parents operate a grocery in his hometown of Ruan Zhen, which he described as small town in Shaanxi Province. Craig had no interaction with anyone from outside China prior to college, telling me Ruan Zhen had "nothing for foreigners. It is very ordinary." He disliked English study prior to college due to the emphasis on testing, and would have studied architecture if he had attained the necessary *GaoKao* scores. Craig now feels English is a "suitable" major, finding the manner of instruction more interesting than he experienced prior to college. Craig chose SWU based on its respected English program and the opportunity to "see a new place." Describing himself as a "social person," he hopes a career in oral translation will provide opportunities to meet different people.

Joy

Joy, a female Business English major, is twenty years old and spent her childhood in the small town of Hui Tong in Hunan Province, a town she describes as "underdeveloped" and "not that rural, but not that urban." Although she moved to the more urban Hui Hau in senior high school, she never encountered anyone from a foreign country, and said drew her understanding of Western culture primarily from the Internet before attending SWU. Originally aspiring to teach Chinese as a second language, Joy was extremely unhappy to have been assigned a history major and confided, "I cried a lot, actually." She took the unusual, and bureaucratically daunting, initiative to change her major to Business English, where she now feels "very lucky and

pleased". Joy recently passed the national examination to become a tourism guide, and has begun

accompanying seasoned guides conducting tours for Chinese and international tourists.

Karen

Karen is a twenty-year-old female Business English student from Ben Xi, a small city in

the Northeastern province of Liaoning where her parents own a small restaurant. She did not

encounter people from foreign countries as she was growing up, saying that would not visit Ben

Xi "because my hometown is not famous." Prior to college, Karen said she drew her perceptions

of Western culture from books, television, and movies. She told me she chose English as her

major because she enjoyed it as a subject in senior high school, and would like to attend

postgraduate school at NanKai University to study education. Karen chose Southwest University

because it presented an opportunity to "see another world" far from her home in the Northeast.

Kate

Kate is a 21-year old female majoring in English Literature and Linguistics. She grew up

in a part of Chongqing Municipality she described as "a little urban" with parents who were both

middle school teachers. In senior high school Kate attended a prestigious boarding school in the

urban area of Chongqing, where at sixteen she had her first foreign instructor, who she described

as a very shy young American man who mostly showed movies in class. A combination of

proximity to home and institutional reputation influenced Kate's choice to study at SWU,

although she hopes to continue her study of English literature at a postgraduate school in the East

of China.

Lily

Lily, a twenty-year-old female, grew up in the city of LeShan in Sichuan Province.

Although historical sites attracted international tourists to her hometown Lilly revealed she had

"little chance . . . or no courage to talk with them". She describes her mother as an "ordinary worker" in a factory, and her father as a truck driver. Lily is interested in English because she feels the language can "open a window before us" into the Western culture she had encountered through her high school classes, television, and movies. She chose SWU based on its status as a comprehensive university among the Project 211 elite, and is unsure of her post-graduation career path. Lily is considering English teaching, working for a multinational corporation, or serving as a tour guide to introduce Chinese culture to international tourists.

Lisa

Lisa is a twenty-one-year-old woman who comes to SWU from the small city of ZhouKou in Henan Province, where her father is a truck driver and her mother is a homemaker. Lisa told me she had never met a person from outside of China until she attended college, and had learned of Western culture primarily through books, television and movies. The last two also influenced her choice of SWU, as Chongqing was the site of several televisions and film dramas, and she wished to experience the city portrayed as so different from her own upbringing. She was attracted to her English Literature and Linguistics major because she felt it would be a good introduction to Western culture and will prepare her for possible postgraduate study in the teaching field of American and British Culture.

Lulu

LuLu is a twenty-one –year-old female native of Luzhou, a medium-sized city in Sichuan Province, and majors in Business English. Both of Lulu's parents are middle school teachers, her father teaching math and her mother English, but she maintains her mother's profession had little impact on her choice of major. Lulu's first experience with expatriate instructors occurred prior to attending SWU, when she studied with a Welsh English teacher for two years of high school.

Lulu had visited SWU while in high school, and its familiarity and proximity to her home were the primary influences on her choice. Following graduation, Lulu would like to work in foreign trade, and entertains the possibility of translating business documents for a foreign company in China.

Lydia

Lydia, is a 21-year-old female Business English Major, and grew up in a rural area of Chongqing Municipality with her parents, whose vocations she described as "just work in the factories". She said that although she occasionally saw people from foreign countries on the streets of her hometown, she had never interacted with them. She attributes her understandings of Western culture entirely to her schooling, where she had little interest in English until junior high school. Her accomplishments in English classes, along with her mother's advice, led her to choose a major in Business English. However, after a year of Business English study Lydia discovered she disliked business and wished to teach instead. Her decision was firm, as she related, "So from this semester, I said to my whole classmates and my teachers, 'I want to be a teacher'"

Maggie

Maggie is a twenty-one-year-old female Business English major who was raised in Chongqing Municipality, although her hometown is six hours by bus from the main metropolitan area near SWU. Maggie's family moved from Chongqing's rural fringes to a more urban area when she was in high school. Maggie had never encountered people from outside China during her rural childhood, and after moving to the city she said she was nervous in even brief interaction with them. Now, however, she said she values her English study because, "I think it is very charming for us to speak a foreign language, to speak to foreigners." Following graduation,

Maggie hopes to pursue further study toward a career in translation, specifically in translating business communication and documents.

Oliver

Oliver is a twenty-year-old male Business English major who was raised in an urban area of Chongqing Municipality where his self-employed father works at home and his mother works in a restaurant. Although Oliver grew up aware of the expatriate presence in Chongqing, he said he never had reason or opportunity to interact with any of them. Business English appealed to Oliver because he felt it afforded opportunities for more active communication than the alternatives of translation or literature and linguistics. Oliver chose to study at SWU because of its proximity to his home, although he admits he would have gone elsewhere had his *GaoKao* scores permitted acceptance to a more prestigious university.

Opal

Opal, a twenty-two year old woman raised in the small city of Wu Li Shan in northern Fujian Province, is an English Literature and Linguistics major. Her father is a carpenter and her mother owns a cosmetics shop, although she was a hairdresser during Opal's childhood. Prior to college, her engagement with Western culture drew primarily from television and movies. Although she enjoyed English classes as a high school student, Opal confessed her liking for language study was "not very deep," and her status as an English major is primarily due to her *GaoKao* scores. She feels that SWU's reputation and status as a Project 211 institution will be beneficial toward her goals to become a grade school teacher in her home province.

Sherry

Sherry came to SWU from MengZi in Yunnan Province, a place the twenty-one-year-old woman describes as "between" urban and rural. Her mother is a primary school math teacher,

and her father, who Sherry described as a "just a blue collar worker" passed away in 2015. As MengZi is close to several tourist destinations, Sherry often saw international visitors, but never interacted with them. She had little interest in foreign films or television and said that her understandings of Western culture prior to college came almost exclusively from school. English was Sherry's second choice of major, with her first choice of psychology being beyond the reach of her *GaoKao* scores. She now hopes to attend postgraduate school in English translation, focusing on a career in business translation.

Sophia

Sophia, a twenty-one-year-old woman, describes her hometown in Shandong Province as "a small village," where her father owns a furniture store and her mother works in a factory. The third-year Business English major reported that most of her understanding of Western culture came from books and movies. Sophia's interest in English developed during high school, and she hoped that her choice to study English in college will allow her to "find a job that's related to being a teacher." Sophia believes SWU's reputation in China will be an asset to finding a satisfying position, but had originally hoped to study closer to her hometown.

Tim

Tim, a twenty-two-year-old male Business English major comes from the rural village of Ji Shou in Hunan Province, where his parents are "traditional Chinese farmers." Tim's family is of Miao ethnicity, one of 55 "Minority Groups" recognized by the Chinese government, and Ji Shou is a designated community for the Miao people. In this setting, Tim never personally met anyone from another country, but was an avid fan of American television, mentioning *Gossip Girl* and *Two Broke Girls* as two of his favorites. Tim was unusually proactive in his college choices, searching the Internet to select a major and university. SWU appealed to him because it

is near his home and has a respected English program. SWU's respected psychology program also appealed to him, as he wishes to attend postgraduate school to study in that field.

Summary of Environment and Agents

In this chapter, I composed portraits of the environmental contexts of the research site and the agents interacting across cultures within these contexts. In doing so, I situated the learners' intercultural engagement in their English composition courses within constructs of my Model of Intercultural Teaching and Learning, providing the frame for findings and analysis.

I also illustrated SWU's standing within Chinese higher education, and the institution's international character. I further provided curricular and administrative details on College of International Studies, and finally gave physical descriptions of composition classrooms. I then described the academic and international perspectives expatriate instructors brought into the composition classrooms. Finally, and most central to the study, I provided portraits of the learner-participants, highlighting their personal and academic backgrounds, goals, and personalities. In the next chapter I present analysis and findings based on learner-participants' reflections on their intercultural engagement during an English composition course in a Chinese teaching and learning environment.

CHAPTER 7: LEARNERS AND EXPATRIATE INSTRUCTORS IN A CHINESE ENVIRONMENT

Participants described the foundational processes for making sense of their intercultural engagement to be positioning expatriate instructors and themselves within the teaching and learning environment. Over the course of my conversations with the learners, three essential perspectives emerged from their reflections. First, they constructed perceptions of the environment as an essentially Chinese space. Second, participants asserted positions of agentive ownership over this space. Conversely, they positioned the expatriate instructor according to particular ways of being *not Chinese* – a *Present Other* characterized by *foreign-ness*.

Classroom environments provide learners with processes, other individuals, artifacts, and structures that inform sense-making of their intercultural experiences (Canagarajah, 2015b; Guerrattaz & Johnston, 2013; Ting-Toomey, 2012). Phenomena in the classroom do not originate exclusively within its four walls, so in the following discussion *environment* refers to both immediate classroom space and to the broader institutional, national, historical, and cultural contexts informing the subjective perceptions learners brought with them into the learning experience.

By interpreting and reconciling these various contexts, participants enacted ownership and agency seldom recognized in literature. As I will illustrate in this chapter, learners do not enter the environment as blank slates, but as agents with anticipated meanings – "preconceived sets of expectations . . . either confirmed or refuted in intercultural encounters" (Marotta, 2009, p. 280). Although scholarship recognizes learners bring such meanings into the classroom, as well as their own social, cultural, and linguistic capital (Djerasimovic, 2013), there is little

examination of how learners use preconceived meanings and capital to shape new meanings of this environment.

In the following pages I outline participants' perceptions of their classrooms' Chinese cultural orientation through the three sub-themes of physical environment, linguistic environment and academic environment. Although these sub-themes provide useful analytical guidelines, their separation is merely a technique for examining the single complex, multi-layered environment of the intercultural classroom.

Physical Environment and Physical Foreign-ness

In discussions and writing, most learners first described their expatriate instructors as foreign in physical terms, contrasting this foreign-ness to the perceived environment's physical Chinese-ness (e.g. the expatriate instructor's t-shirt in a hallway filled with Chinese instructors in formal business attire). As illustrated in my Model of Intercultural Teaching and Learning in Chapter 4, physical environment in this study includes all concrete, spatial elements from the individual learner's desk to the national geography. Participants' reflections demonstrated they drew significant meanings from objects and people in this environment. In discussions related here, learners described beginning their sense-making process on physically concrete foundations.

When I asked participants to describe the cultural orientation of their classrooms many responded with a simple, direct assertion of its geographical-national location. For example, when I asked Sherry if the presence of her expatriate instructor affected the cultural atmosphere of her classroom, she replied, "I don't think there is any difference. It [the classroom] is the place, even in China," Her statement initially seemed simplistic, but unfolded with meaning when I considered Chinese speakers commonly use the word "even" to express the same

meaning of the Chinese word *jiùshì,* which means "very precisely or exactly". In other words, to Sherry, her classroom's situation in China was not merely incidental. Instead, her classroom was *precisely* in China – situated in a defining national-cultural context. For others, geographic location provided a contextual starting point for reflecting on processes within the classroom. With characteristically understated thoughtfulness, Sophia explained, "I think it is situated in Southwest University, so I think it is a place in China. And what's more, I think the foreign teacher is trying his best to get into our life . . . our place." By designating the classroom as "our [the Chinese learners'] place" to which the expatriate instructor is trying to gain entry, Sophia not only represented geographical position as defining the classroom's cultural orientation, but also as inspiring a sense of learner possession or ownership over the environment. Further elaborating on geographical placement and learner ownership, Craig observed:

> I think the classroom is a Chinese place. Yes – very is a Chinese place. I do not think the subject you are learn . . . and not people in the room, like the foreign teacher, can change where is the classroom. It is one teacher and teach many Chinese students.

Two key observations instantly struck me in Craig's comment. First, he described geographical-cultural character as an inviolable physical fact, compromised by neither individuals nor processes. Second, in describing "one teacher" and "many Chinese students" Craig claimed cultural ownership of the environment for himself and his classmates as members of a situationally dominant cultural majority.

Participants also described the classroom's physical details – even the view from the window – as signifying a distinctly Chinese environment. Their descriptions of such objects as posters and audio-visual equipment will be discussed in an ensuing examination of the linguistic environment. Lydia's comment, "Our foreign teacher can go sightseeing just by looking out the

90

window," is an especially articulate expression of the expatriate instructor's perceived relationship to the classroom's Chinese cultural orientation. Lydia's comment lent physicality to Lisa's admission to considering her instructor "more like a foreign tourist" than someone is part of the Chinese environment. Depicting the expatriate instructor as sightseer emphasized foreign status, much like that of a tourist, perceived in opposition to the Chinese view through the window. This perceived dichotomy of instructor and environment was further enhanced by the cultural significance learners assigned to their expatriate teachers' physicality.

Expatriate Instructor as Physically Foreign

As the learners and I spoke, they consistently referenced expatriate instructors' physical traits, clothing, and use of their bodies as signifying a particular orientation within the definitively Chinese environment. Their bodies – the sites from which the instructors enacted cultural meaning and identity – were also perceived by participants as racially and culturally inscribed (Ford, 2011; Han, 2014; Martin & Griffiths, 2014; Nguyen & Larson, 2014), embodying a dichotomous relationship to the environment.

Many participants' based their physical perceptions of expatriate instructors on pre-existing images of "foreigners" – anticipated meanings formed into a subjectively created representation Kate referred to as "my foreigner . . . my impression before I met the first one." Popular culture, as manifested in the visual medium of movies provided one of the most frequent sources for participants' impressions of foreigners, cited as influential by 14 of the 17 participants, second only to schooling. When asked to describe this impression, Lily explained, "I think first the figures – some tall, and beautiful eyes, and white or black, and the second is characters – energetic and open-minded. But somewhat influenced by the pop culture, maybe they are fashionable." In Lily's description, her archetypal foreigner began with physical

91

characteristics, which then denoted accompanying cultural character traits. She also described a "white or black" appearance, implying she perceived Western expatriates as possessing cultural identities encompassing diverse racial identities. In constructing images of cultural or racial foreign-ness, learners also constructed or validated their own cultural self-images (Cordella & Huang, 2014; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Through the act of projecting ethnic and racial diversity as foreign, Lily inversely validated a cultural self-image of Chinese as ethnically and racially homogenous, despite national diversity encompassing 56 ethnic minorities.

In our discussions, height, hair color and texture, and eye color were physical traits most often mentioned by the learners. Participants' descriptive observations implied perception of an individual whose physical characteristics set her or him apart from others in the environment, and from the environment itself. Their physical descriptions of composition instructors frequently stressed perceived differences between the expatriate and themselves, articulated in verbiage such as "taller than us" or "taller than Chinese girls" that highlighted comparative perspectives. Not all statements were so overt, leaving perceptions of physical difference to be expressed in subtext. In her participant essay, Lily went so far as to note her perceptions of instructor Keith's profuse bodily hair, an observation she even punctuated with an exclamation mark. In telling word choice, she referred to the "*wàijiào shēn*" [foreign teacher's body] in her observation, although calling her instructor by name elsewhere in the essay. Similarly, Karen declared of her instructor Deanna, "I love her eyes because her eyes are not black," an implied comparison between her instructor's eyes and those of herself and most of her classmates. As characteristics of her own appearance constituted a perceived norm, Karen did not feel the need to describe her image of a typical Chinese appearance in order to make an observation based on difference. Like Lily's ascription of foreign-ness to racial diversity, Karen's comment implied a

"typical" Chinese appearance was a homogeneous representation of the dominant ethnic majority of Han Chinese.

Participants' often reflected on constructed meaning of physical difference in statements such as, "You know the appearance is totally different so there is maybe some gap [between us]" (Sherry) or "Maybe, I am looking at them – yeah, we can feel [expatriate instructors are] a little different from us" (Sophia). In such statements the learners recounted a comparative process by which perceived physical appearance embodied cultural differences. In addition to such analytical statements, participants' observations also frequently portrayed expatriate instructors' as possessing an exotic attractiveness. Just as Karen expressed admiration for her instructor's blue eyes, participants often specified characteristics signifying difference as rendering the instructor an exoticized representation of "handsome" or "beautiful".

Participants also considered manner of dress a marker of difference for expatriate faculty, frequently noting instructors' "fashionable" or "casual" wardrobe. For Alma, who told me on several occasions of her enjoyment in the relaxed atmosphere in her expatriate instructor's class, clothing seemed to confirm a carefree attitude toward life she attributed to Westerners, particularly Americans. In two separate conversations she described her instructor's clothing and lifestyle both with the phrase "very free". Like their bodily descriptions, many learners framed discussions of wardrobe in comparative terms, but with a significant shift in focus. Participants often rendered bodily comparisons between the expatriate instructor and themselves; they made wardrobe comparisons between the expatriate instructor and Chinese instructors. In these terms, Sherry observed, "They [expatriate instructors] wear much t-shirts – very different from Chinese teachers. Maybe the Chinese teachers will wearing the suit. I never see the American wear this." Echoing Alma's statements, Sherry felt expatriate instructors' casual style indicated they were,

"Maybe easier to get along with," but added, "the first time you're seeing their dress it is very odd". Specifically positioning her comments as comparison between instructors implied an unspoken professional dress code that rendered the expatriate instructor visually and culturally incongruous according to their expected roles within the Chinese environment, particularly in comparison to an instructor wearing the expected suit. Clothing as a cultural marker has been largely overlooked in research that largely focuses on bodily characteristics denoting race to the observer (Ford, 2011; Han, 2014). In this incongruity, learners constructed an image of attractive exoticism, both "easier to get along with" yet "very odd".

Building upon geographic and spatial characteristics of their classrooms, learners first constructed perceptions of their learning spaces as fundamentally Chinese environments. Within these physical spaces, expatriate instructors' physical characteristics signified perceptible foreign-ness based partially on participants pre-existing images, and denoting deeper cultural differences in character and professional demeanor. Starting from preconceived images to situate the instructor in the environment was the process of moving from representation of a *Remote Other* to encounter with the physically *Present Other*. By drawing cultural aspects together with their observations of physical difference, learners began sense-making on a concrete foundational level. For participants, expatriate instructors' comparatively casual dress signified both their more informal characters and perspectives on professionalism comparatively different than those of Chinese instructors. In essence, participants' voiced perceptions of physicality, and described expatriate instructors as contrasting with their environment.

Linguistic Environment and Linguistic Foreign-ness

Learners perceived a linguistic environment shaped by language use – by the interplay of multiple languages, their respective purposes, and subjective culturally significant meanings. As

language majors, participants brought a particularly informed and thoughtful awareness regarding language into our discussions of their intercultural experiences. For the learners, presence of fellow first-language Chinese speakers and prevalence of written Chinese in the learning space itself imbued Chinese language with normative communicative status. Conversely, they described English as primarily an object of study, used for communication in the classroom only as necessitated by the presence of the monolingual English-speaking expatriate instructor.

Opal explained linguistic normativity as arising from qualitative differences she perceived in first and second languages. "Chinese is our native language" she told me, "We have learned – acquired it. Yeah, so it's not a system in our minds, but English for us is a system of language." For Opal and others, English represented a "system" of technical knowledge – a subject of study learned through mastery of vocabulary, grammar, or pronunciation. They spoke of Chinese as internalized, again using language of ownership and possession - "acquired" or the possessive "our" – while consistently referring to English as a more perceptually remote "*second* language." Whenever possible their lingua franca for constructing meaning and solving problems remained Chinese. In a pair of studies, Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) and Moore (2013) found learners maintained a first-language internal cognitive dialogue, and used first language among themselves for intersubjective knowledge construction. Although their findings are supported by participants in this study, Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) and Moore (2013) conducted highly controlled paired-learner observations. Conditions lacked the additional social dynamics that further shaped first language use in small-group work, or class discussion among the learners at SWU. Alma noted this social aspect, describing her classmates as a Chinese-language support

system for navigating English as she claimed, "If I can't think of some exact words maybe I can still speak Chinese and they [classmates] will understand it, they will remind me."

Many learners confided that they often spoke Chinese amongst themselves during small group discussions. For Sherry, this use of Chinese in dialogic problem solving and sense-making was the central factor defining the environment as fundamentally Chinese. Again and again, participants indicated they based their subjective orientation toward language on how that language was used in the environment. They may have frequently *navigated* the classroom environment and course material in English, but they *understood* those elements in Chinese.

In light of this orientation to each language – English and Chinese – it is not surprising learners skirted the *English only* rule common in expatriate classrooms, surreptitiously conducting discussions in Chinese while remaining aware of the expatriate instructor's location in the room. Lulu laughed as she confessed to monitoring her instructor Deanna's proximity so "if we are ensure that she isn't come, we will speak Chinese," her laugh seeming to arise from a degree of absurdity she found in the situation. Kate imparted a less light-hearted description, ascribing a mildly coercive character to her expatriate instructor, who "would walk among us; try to listen to our discussion . . . . and he would act like the inspector to remind us not to speak Chinese in the class." My classroom observations of partnered discussions confirmed Kate's account, as I watched learners code-switching back and forth from Chinese to English in response to the instructor's proximity, in effect creating a "bubble of English" that moved with the instructor through an otherwise Chinese environment.

Expatriate Instructor as Linguistically Foreign

To participants, the expatriate instructor was positioned within the linguistically Chinese environment as a foreign presence marked by little or no communicative capacity in the

dominant language. For learners like Lily, communication with the expatriate instructor took place across a "language obstacle – language barrier" that often thwarted sharing of complex ideas. For Opal this barrier presented a defining cultural divide:

> Because most of the foreign teachers they cannot speak Chinese, so I think that is a little difference in the culture. Because when he would explain something and we didn't understand much, he would explain it in English – all English.

Maggie used similar phrasing to connect the instructor's foreign status to linguistic limitations:

> She is a foreigner, and maybe we feel very worried about whether can the student and teachers work perfectly together. Maybe because she is a foreigner, and she does not know some Chinese, and we worry a little about our communication.

Maggie voiced two points common across my talks with participants. First, she expressed a direct link between language and foreign-ness through the phrases "because she is a foreigner" and "she does not know some Chinese" indicating she bundled the two traits as tandem aspects of her instructor's identity and positionality. She also expressed anxiety regarding the ability to effectively communicate in nuanced, shared knowledge construction. Words such as "worry", "fear" and other expressions of anxiety accompanied other learners' descriptions of instructors' placement outside the linguistic norm for deep understanding. Sophia admitted, "Actually I was a little worried because I think maybe she cannot explain well because she cannot teach us in Chinese". In their concern for the expatriate instructor's ability to communicate effectively, participants also described difficulty arising from their own confinement to English – a confinement attributable to the expatriate instructor's presence. Blake framed the situation in expatriate-Chinese comparative terms as he noted, "When I was in Chinese teachers' class if I have something – some problem – I can ask them in Chinese, but in foreigner teachers' class I

must speak English because they don't speak Chinese." Blake's comparative explanation highlights the subjectively normative status of Chinese, describing the perception of English as *imposed* by the expatriate instructor's presence – Blake "can" ask his Chinese instructors for clarification in Chinese, but he "must" voice inquiries to his composition instructor in English.

Participants' perceptions of the expatriate as linguistically disadvantaged by the environment were even more indicative of the instructor's foreign presence. When Lulu told me expatriate instructors "don't understand the way of speaking, which can just be understood by ourselves," she positioned instructors' as disadvantaged in interaction with the environment's Chinese language normativity. By labelling Chinese "the way of speaking", Lulu referred to a standard form of communication, as opposed to a foreign and conceptually remote "system of language". She also expressed a degree of linguistic ownership of the environment inaccessible to the expatriate instructor because the dominant language "can just be understood by ourselves". The portrait drawn in Lulu's simple statement is of an instructor disadvantaged by the linguistic conditions of the environment.

In this environment participants often expressed a sense of stewardship toward the expatriate instructor, hoping to ameliorate their disadvantage. For example, Lydia described the common practice of language learners adopting Western names – which they referred to as "English names" – as a concession to their expatriate instructors:

> I think in the foreign teacher's class it is okay to use the . . . English name because it is easy for the foreign teachers to remember our names. Because they have to learn the pronunciation of our names – it is hard for them to remember.

In this way, the practice of adopting Western names – often viewed by Western educators as an educative aspect of learners' language immersion – was perceived by learners as a response to

their instructors' linguistic limitations, and they extended this same consideration to me as the foreign researcher, foregoing my offer to let them select Chinese pseudonyms. Learners further explained they never used these names in English classes with Chinese instructors. A common exchange between participants and I illustrated the foreign-ness with which they viewed their Western names. When I asked them to select pseudonyms masking their identities, many gave me their classroom Western names, and had difficulty understanding why these were not sufficiently anonymous. Learners viewed their Western names as foreign on the most personal level – a name divorced from their genuine identities. These incidents illustrated the interesting positions of learners and expatriate instructors, with the learners acting as curators of the environment by adopting situationally bounded identities to accommodate the perceived linguistic difficulties that environment presented to their instructors. Uryu, Steffensen, & Kramsch, (2014) referred to this phenomenon as "proxy identities" born out of a situational relationship of self to Other (p. 16), but the authors did not address the environmental implications voiced by participants here. By identifying the adopted linguistic identity as an accommodation of the Other, the learners signified their ownership of the environment and the expatriate instructor's disadvantage within that context.

Participants perceived expatriate instructors as encountering linguistic difficulty navigating the environment's affordances. Cookie described feeling awkward as she watched expatriate instructors struggle or fumble with equipment labelled in Chinese. Referring to the audiovisual controls in each classroom, she asserted, "Well, I think they should be trained. They should be familiar with some useful Chinese words and some useful devices, or maybe [it is] difficult to use the computer because it is in Chinese." The awkwardness she felt at these times was evident as she winced and shook her head in relating such incidents.

Not all Chinese language classroom elements were of such technological nature. In each classroom of the Foreign Language building posters displayed rules of conduct in Chinese, which Craig pointed out as we conducted an interview in one of the composition classrooms. Looking at the poster, he jokingly observed, "You see – the rules are Chinese. Maybe the teacher has no rules," and then, laughing, he added, "Maybe he doesn't know we break the rules." Even in jest, Craig shared the belief in learners' linguistic advantage in the classroom environment also expressed by other participants. The classroom's physical affordances, perhaps better than any other element, encapsulate the intersection of concrete and linguistic in rendering the expatriate instructor a foreign presence positioned in an otherwise overwhelmingly Chinese environment

Not surprisingly, learners expressed approval of efforts on the part of the instructor to adjust to the communicative dominance of Chinese. Like many participants, Sophia was pleased and impressed with instructor Keith's progress in studying her language. She said,

> I think first for him, he can try his best to learn a foreign language. He do his best to get into us. And for me, I think he is trying to use Chinese and we can communicate well. It is easy for us to understand him.

Sophia's use of the phrase "do his best to get into us" once again describes learners' ownership of the environment – a place where the expatriate instructor learns to meet them on their ground. As the advantaged parties in this environment, participants often spoke of a role-reversal, wherein they acted as their expatriate instructors' language tutors. For example, Blake was pleased that when, "Some foreign teachers took Chinese lessons in the International School. . . . we teach some Chinese characters to them and some pronunciation." Similarly, Lydia recalled, "At that time she [instructor Deanna] is learning Chinese, and we taught her some Chinese, and

we may make some sentences by Chinese, and my class laughed very heartily at that time. It's very funny." Other learners also described expatriate instructors' attempts at speaking Chinse as humorous, expressing both good-natured approval and confident bi-lingual superiority.

While they praised expatriate instructors studying Chinese, not all participants agreed regarding instructors' attempted use of the language while teaching. Learners such as Kate felt Keith's use of Chinese helped learners understand some concepts, but for others like Craig, an expatriate instructor's attempts to speak Chinese in the classroom disrupted their learning environment. He complained,

> To say honestly, I thought it was . . . a little pointless. He is the beginner at Chinese, so the things he says are very simple. We are English majors – we can understand the simple things if he speaks them in English. . . . Sometimes I think it is like the show, to show us "I can speak Chinese." It does not help us students.

In comments like Craig's and Lydia's, participants expressed ownership of the environment's dominant language of Chinese. Just as they did not feel in full possession of English, they also felt the instructor was far from fully in possession of Chinese.

Three converging subjective understandings formed the essence of participants' perceptions of their expatriate instructors as foreign presences in a linguistically Chinese environment. First, learners designated Chinese as the environment's dominant language based on spoken interactions and physical representations of language. Perceived inadequacy of English interaction – presenting difficulties for both understanding and expression – stood in opposition to the familiar communicative ease of Chinese they shared with their fellow learners who dominated the environment. Prevalence of written Chinese on equipment, posters and other

affordances rendered linguistic dominance concrete and reinforced instructors' foreign-ness when affordances proved problematic.

Second, participants positioned the expatriate instructor as an agent importing English into the otherwise Chinese environment, through both enforcement and necessity. This represented an initial step in positioning their instructor as *Situated Other* – a foreign presence with purpose and a degree of belonging in bringing new traits into the environment. Learners perceived the expatriate instructor as the one who enforced the English-only policy common in language immersive environments, yet they spoke of ownership and agency in subverting enforcement by speaking Chinese while carefully monitoring the instructor's movements. Their instructor's presence also necessitated English communication due the expatriate's limited – or non-existent – capacity for Chinese communication.

Limited capacity leads to the third aspect – the expatriate instructor as linguistically disadvantaged within the classroom. When participants spoke of their composition instructors' engagement with learners and with physical aspects of the environment itself, they described someone who is linguistically out of place. Conversely, they perceived themselves as empowered through possession of the environment's dominant language. Such reversal provides just one example of how academic, social, and cultural elements converged in shaping the environment and the expatriate instructor's perceived position within it.

Academic Environment and Academic Foreign-ness

In discussions and writing, participants' depicted a Chinese academic environment defined by their lived educational experiences. In the following discussion, I use the term "academic" to designate policies and practices that give structured form to teaching and learning – rules, curricula, standards, and the expectations that form during a lifetime of following these

conventions. Learners described a highly structured academic environment, a stratified, rule-bound system of relatively centralized control. Through a lifetime of experience, participants described developing agentive capacities to navigate policies and practices in this structured academic environment.

National testing policies played major roles in participants' stories. Six of the seventeen told me the National Higher Education Entrance Examination, popularly called the *GaoKao*, had determined their institutional choices. For Blake, Joy, and Opal it even determined their majors. Participants also described the Test of English Majors (TEM) series, commonly referred to as TM4 and TM8, as inherent to the rhythm of academic life in a Chinese English department. According to Joy, for several weeks each spring "everything just go away" while the examination preoccupies instructors, administrators, and learners. In our talks, learners like Alma described an empowering element in these experiences:

> Our Chinese students, they can hold and control all kinds of class, especially examination. In China, students will not [be] afraid [of the] examination, because they grow up in this kind of process from very little to very old, they have to take part in many kind of examination. We are not afraid of any challenge.

For participants like Alma, knowledge and grit to navigate the maze-like policies of Chinese education allowed them to take ownership of their academic experience. Literature on learners in China's competitive, hierarchical, higher education system has most frequently highlighted learners' anxieties (Ni, Ma & Li, 2013; Zhang, Gan & Cham, 2007). Comments from Alma and others indicate more varied texture among experiences, including elements of empowerment and agency.

Presence of Chinese instructors at SWU helped participants orient their past experiences to their present college environment. Just as learners contrasted Chinese and expatriate instructors' attire, they also compared their academic acumen. Chinese college instructors represented normative, familiar pedagogical styles, shared learners' fundamental educational experiences, and knew the general knowledge and skills of a Chinese learner. Lily expressed this perspective in terms of shared social-cultural systems of meaning:

> We Chinese students can understand the Chinese teacher better because we may have the same thinking pattern. We may have the same understanding to something. Also Chinese teachers teach writing different from foreign teachers. We may have the same opinion with the Chinese teachers

Maggie framed her similar observation in overtly comparative terms regarding perceived quantifiable content knowledge,

> I think that most of the foreign teachers, they didn't know what exactly our knowledge is. The Chinese teachers, maybe they will know more about what language – what knowledge we have learned before and they will teach us some more profound knowledge.

Maggie and Lily's comments intersect to frame learners' perceptions of the expatriate instructor as an academically foreign presence in a Chinese environment. By situating expatriate instructors in comparative opposition to their Chinese counterparts, learners carried out three interrelated processes. They delineated the parameters, defining activities, and knowledge of the academic environment; they positioned themselves in agentive positions of ownership by being among those who hold this knowledge and carry out these activities; and they positioned expatriate instructors according to their unfamiliarity with knowledge and activities.

Expatriate Instructor as Academically Foreign

Perceived as often surprised by common policies and practices, and as unfamiliar with learners' knowledge and ways of knowing, expatriate instructors presented an academically foreign presence in the Chinese academic environment. Life experience was fundamental to participants' perceptions of their own positionality and that of their expatriate instructors in the academic environment. On some levels, learners perceived expatriate instructors' experiences in a foreign education system as sources of frequent disadvantage when carrying out their classroom roles

Participants noted instructors' scant familiarity with policy as it visibly affected teaching responsibilities. Learners rarely showed expectations for expatriate instructors to be aware of policy-related practices, in fact they seemed to assume otherwise. This assumption was often evident in interactions with me, when they would preface explanations with phrases like, "You may not know the Project two-one-one" (Lily), or, "Do you know about the *GaoKao* in China?" (Alma). Participants' assumptions were understandable, given that instructors Deanna, Katelyn, and Keith complained of feeling left "out of the loop" regarding curricular and institutional policy. They also confessed they often had to go to their own students for information, but did not mention any impression they felt this might have left.

TEM testing presented the most visible examples of expatriate instructors' difficulties navigating the Chinese academic environment. Instructor Katelyn told me of her frustration with rearranging her course weeks into a semester at administrators' urging to begin test preparation. Katelyn was not alone in her predicament. Learners in all three instructors' classes perceived testing-related expectations as emblematic of an academic environment where expatriates had little control or bearing. Lulu spoke of her instructor Deanna as confined by academic priorities

shared among Chinese instructors and learners. "Not only the (Chinese) teacher, but also the students' themselves . . . care about the [test] score," she told me, "and our foreign teacher . . . she is limited by this." Keith's student Joy spoke in similar terms, as she explained, "I think all the foreign teachers at that time are informed by the deans or something, 'You should give the students this kind of information'" to prepare for the TEM. In these discussions, a perception emerged of expatriate instructors directed by confounding academic circumstances outside their experience. Not surprisingly, studies by Jan and colleagues (2014) and Shi (2009) found learners preferred Chinese instructors for test-related subjects. Although 12 expatriates in Shi's 2009 study of composition instructors in China found resistance among learners who felt disadvantaged by expatriate instructors' lack of testing knowledge, neither learners nor instructors at SWU related resistance or resentment. It is possible Shi's reliance on interviews with instructors rather than learners could reflect instructor perceptions more than those of resistant learners.

Throughout our talks, learners seemed to take their instructors' unfamiliarity with policies largely in stride. A discussion with Craig presented an exceptional moment of exasperation, as he shared an incident in his instructor Keith's class:

> We one time discuss . . . why we come to this Southwest University, and many of say is because it is project two-one-one. And Erik ask us, "What? What is two-one-one?" He didn't know - did not know two-one-one! I know it is a Chinese thing, so maybe Americans don't know, but he is a teacher in China - a teacher at *Southwest University*! Is many Chinese teachers who want to teach here – is *competition* to teach here. [It] is . . . an honor, but he doesn't know. Is just a university.

Craig grew more passionate in tone and gestures as he told his story, indicating Keith's unawareness troubled him, perhaps even offended him. As he spoke of the honor in being an instructor at a Project 211 institution, I considered how Craig's own pride in admittance to SWU may have felt devalued in the incident. For Craig, like other participants, an expatriate instructor's positionality in the academic environment was not a simple measure of working policy knowledge. As learners described them, policies often articulated shared beliefs regarding one's identity as part of a rapidly developing China, what is valued as knowledge, and the legitimacy with which its educational system measures and rewards achievement.

Participants entered the academic environment bearing beliefs, values, and sets of meanings constructed in their past classroom experiences. While participants were interested in alternative teaching and learning concepts introduced by expatriate instructors, they also found some instructors' practices contextually erroneous. Alma summarized her fellow learners' observations when she told me, "The foreigner teacher in our school, they just teach Chinese students, so maybe there are some gaps between the teacher and the student. So the teacher should also learn something about the students, about their learning environment." Although Alma voiced a fitting summary, other participants detailed aspects of expatriate instructors' academic foreign-ness in more specific contexts of Chinese learners' ways of knowing, academic abilities, or past educational experiences.

Regarding teaching practices, Maggie suggested "Maybe the foreign teacher, they have to learn more, because maybe . . . their teaching style might not be so suitable for the Chinese students. Maybe we are not (ac)customed to their teaching style." In one of our discussions, Lily related an exchange with one of her Chinese instructors regarding common Western teaching practices. Relating this exchange to experiences in her composition class, Lily surmised

expatriate instructors' replicated teaching from their own learner experiences. "I think maybe their [expatriate instructors'] student experience tells them how . . . to teach the students," she said, "Maybe the experience makes them like new teachers." Emphasizing the expatriate instructor's status as a product of American academic culture crystalized foreign positionality within the Chinese academic environment. Just as learners felt lack of Chinese language ability created disadvantage in the linguistic environment, Lily believed foreign educational background rendered expatriate instructors inexperienced, new instructors within the Chinese academic environment.

Participants not only found expatriate instructors' ways of learning incongruous within the academic environment, but also their estimations of Chinese learners' knowledge and abilities. Kate elaborated on Maggie's observation that expatriate instructors "didn't know what exactly our knowledge is" by also alluding to the expatriate instructor's perceived role in introducing culturally alternative teaching:

> Maybe in the earlier stage of his teaching, it is a little bit easier for us, because we have already grasped so many techniques of writing when we were senior high school students or junior high school students or middle school students. So, many knowledge about writing is not that essential for us, so maybe he think that "I am the English teacher. What you have learned . . . in your previous school, were taught by your Chinese teacher, so I try to show you a new way." So he was always afraid to puzzle us, so he try to explain everything in an easy way, and taught us easy things.

Kate she felt her composition instructor's material grew more appropriate as he gained experience in the academic environment, adding, "It is better in the latter stage because he get our level". In this progression, Kate indicated a transitional process from *Present Other* to

108

Situated Other as the expatriate became more purposefully positioned within the environment. For many leaners, miscalculated target level of material heightened perceptions of foreignness through repeated contrast with perceptions of more demanding work required by Chinese instructors, or allusions to their own academic experiences.

Not all participants discussed this topic in such a matter-of-fact manner. Some expressed clear frustration with expatriate teaching perceived as below their abilities. Tim became especially animated when sharing the following criticism:

I think most of the problem is because of the questions. Some teachers will ask some questions – [I] will use the word 'stupid' to describe. Because we also have discuss some questions we have already discussed in our middle school. So, sometimes when the teacher asks us that question we think, "It don't have meaning," because sometimes the teacher will ask a question . . . too easy for us. So sometimes I think the teacher will try to make some questions that are a little meaningful. . . . you must believe that we have the level.

Other participants who shared Tim's frustration in feeling underestimated attributed their instructors' choices to their foreign-ness in both academic and linguistic respects. They believed their composition instructors underestimated their abilities and sophistication when they could not adequately communicate complex ideas in their second language of English – the language required to communicate with their expatriate instructor. This dynamic illustrates the intersecting influences between varied aspects of expatriate instructors' perceived foreign-ness.

Learners constructed a perceived Chinese academic environment from their lived experiences of policies and practices. Their experiences extended from childhood to the very days of our interviews, as they shuttled between expatriate and Chinese instructors, checked off

109

figurative boxes of a structured academic life, and planned pathways through graduation and beyond. Through their agency in managing these intricacies, learners constructed a sense of ownership over the academic environment they occupied with expatriate instructors. As they watched expatriate instructors struggle to satisfy demands of policy, and meet expectations and needs of Chinese learners, participants situated them as academically foreign presences. Their anticipated meanings further influenced learners' perceptions, as they frequently attributed their pre-existing conceptions of American academic conditions to past experiences of their instructors.

Current literature addresses expatriate's struggles with policy and practice in China almost exclusively from the instructors' perspective (L. Shi, 2009; Shi & Yang, 2014; Stanley, 2014). Only Shi's 2009 study most directly acknowledged learners' perspectives on "having an expatriate instructor who did not know how they learned English and how they should be prepared for structure-oriented local tests" (p. 47), but the author's assertions filter through the lens of instructor interviews. As the learners at SWU demonstrated, policy and practice can play significant roles as they make sense of their engagement with the *Present Other* in the Chinese academic environment.

Conclusion

Calling on their understandings of teaching and learning, their culture, and of themselves, the learners at SWU constructed a multi-layered perceived environment in which they positioned themselves and their expatriate instructors – a foundational step in the role construction essential to make sense of their intercultural engagement (Cordella & Huang, 2014; Ming-sheng Li, 1999; Marotta, 2009). As illustrated in *Figure 3*, by viewing the learning environment as fundamentally Chinese, participants claimed their own agentive ownership. Through the same sense-making

processes, they expanded perceptions of expatriate instructors' foreign-ness from representations of a *Remote Other* to encounters with a *Present Other*. As denoted by the uni-directional arrows in the figure, as a *Present Other*, the expatriate instructor was largely *acted upon* in the environment. In short, learners' ownership and agency balanced against the expatriate instructor's disadvantage and foreign-ness to comprise the essence of their intercultural experience of the instructor as *Present Other*. In these perceptions, participants presented complications to pervasive assertions in the study of intercultural teaching and learning.
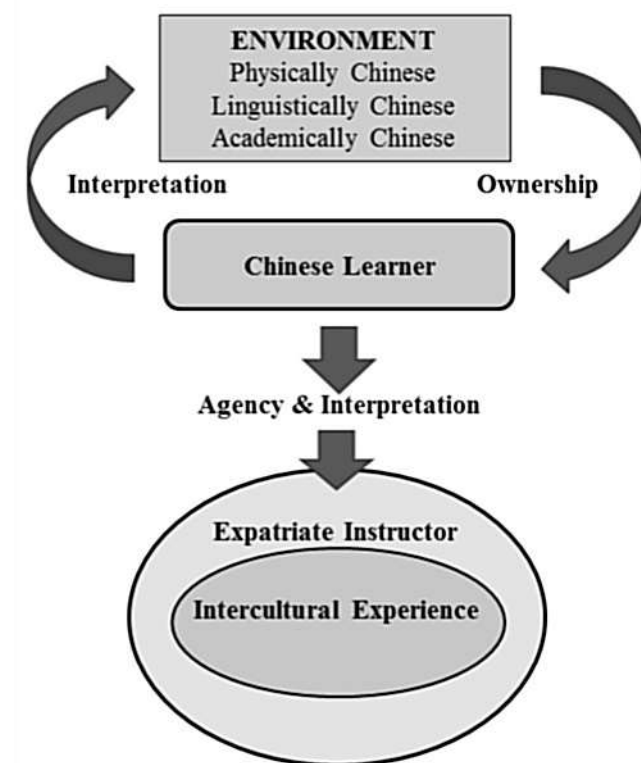
Figure 3. **Interpretive Agency and the Present Other**

The sense-making dynamic expressed by the learners in this study complicates depictions of intercultural "Third Spaces" as culturally hybrid environments or constructed zones between cultures (East, 2012; Liddicoat, 2005; Lo Bianco, Liddicoat & Crozet, 1999). Instead, participants in the study described an environment characterized by constant negotiation to accommodate cultural alternatives while keeping distinct cultural meanings intact. In affirming

111

cultural meanings, participants' consistent comparisons between expatriate and Chinese faculty points to unexplored contextualizing roles the latter play for intercultural sense-making in learners' home-nation environments. Existing research has reported Chinese learners' comparisons between expatriate and Chinese instructors (K.H. Wu & Ke, 2009; Ming-sheng Li, 2009; Moufahim & Lim, 2015; Shi, 2009; Stanley, 2013). However, authors have typically focused on learners' navigating a Chinese-behaviorist/Western-constructivist dichotomy, ignoring elements of contextual sense-making that could reveal more depth to their comparisons.

Findings regarding the role of environment also call into question assumptions regarding learner-instructor balances of power in the intercultural classroom. The degree of ownership and agency expressed by the Chinese learners at a Chinese institution complicates Canagarajah's (2013) assertion that the role of teacher in a second language composition course grants institutional power. Significantly, Canagarajah made this assertion while examining learners of English as a second language in the United Kingdom, United States, and Australia. Participants in this study showed that institutional power can be fluidly situational. In subjectively imbuing the environment with a fundamentally Chinese character, participants expressed a type of empowerment inaccessible to the expatriate instructor as a *Present Other* who is *in* the environment, but perceived as *not of* the environment (Rogers, 1999).

In this chapter, learners began with *definition by negation* – positioning the expatriate instructor as a foreign presence characterized by particular ways of being *not Chinese*. However, by situating their instructors within the environment, participants went beyond representations of a *Remote Other*, to construction and engagement with the *Present Other*. In the following chapter, I will examine learners' continued agency and sense-making as they construct congruent for the expatriate instructor as *Situated Other.*

CHAPTER 8: LEARNER-CONSTRUCTED ROLES OF THE EXPATRIATE

INSTRUCTOR

In the last chapter, learners described positioning their expatriate composition instructors as foreign presences within the Chinese teaching and learning environment, simultaneously positioning themselves as the environments' agentive actors. In this chapter, I follow the learners' trajectory in narrowing from the generalized to detailed in constructing contexts and roles. In continuing discussions, they revealed that positioning expatriate instructor identity did not end with creating a one-dimensional representation of the *Present Other.* The process progressed to creating a complex, multi-dimensional set of expatriate instructor roles drawing on learners' anticipated meanings, cultural self-images, and goals. Participants more fully created a perception of the *Situated Other* as they created meaning around specific perceived traits instructors imported into the environment – a move from *definition by negation* to *definition by ascription*. In doing so, participants also created their own more firmly defined cultural and academic self-images.

I situate these discussions in gaps left between two widely stated assertions in intercultural teaching and learning research. First is the assertion that intercultural classrooms constitute physical and social settings for learners and instructors to negotiate and enact roles (Ming-sheng Li, 1999; Ting-Toomey, 2012). The second is the assertion learners and instructors enter the classroom with different expectations of teaching and learning, and of the roles each play within that process (Bambacas & Sanderson, 2011; Ming-sheng Li, 1999; Stanley, 2013). What is missing in the spaces between these assertions are descriptions of processes occurring in these physical and social settings where learners work to reconcile the behaviors acted out by their expatriate instructors with their own expectations of teaching and learning, and of

intercultural experience. As they spoke of these processes, participants described three essential roles for the expatriate instructor – the roles of *modifier of social relations, model of alternative pedagogy,* and *embodiment of culture and language*.

Expatriate Instructor as Modifier of Social Relations

Learners constructed the instructor's role as modifier of social relations in response to interactions and classroom management that called on them to cross familiar hierarchical social lines between learner and instructor. Learners' indicated a perceived difference between interpersonal as opposed to strictly pedagogical interactions, describing the former as taking place in a primarily social sphere of anticipated meanings arranged in vertical hierarchical relationships. Participants felt expatriate instructors' social use of classroom space, their genial demeanor, and focus on the personal in interactions confounded familiar learner-instructor social hierarchies and impelled them to construct alternate roles for the expatriate instructor and themselves.

Instructors' Social Use of Classroom Space

Modifying social hierarchy between learner and instructor physically manifested in the expatriate instructors' occupation of classroom space. Participants' frequently described their instructors as crossing lines between two perceived spatial zones – one designated for learners, the other for instructors. They used a variety of terms to denote these "teacher places" at the front of the classroom, often referring to "the stage", a raised platform common in classrooms throughout China. Such structures were notably absent in the classrooms in this study, making it apparent participants' continued use of the word "stage" when discussing their composition classes carried a socially constructed meaning. They also spoke of "the computer" as a place, referring to the audiovisual controls embedded in the lectern that rendered it a type of command

post. Lily shared a particularly telling description with me when she spoke of Chinese instructors who "all the time stay in the teacher places. They never, never, never get down. . . . Always the regular." By referring to occupying a designated "teacher place" as "regular" behavior Lily expressed anticipated meanings of status-associated classroom space.

Learners found it striking when expatriate instructors crossed the "regular" boundaries within the classroom. When I asked Tim for three verbs describing his composition class, the first he chose was one to describe his instructor Katelyn: "Move - because she always [moved] around in the classes. She didn't just stand there, stand in front of the computer. [S]he will [move] round . . . and round." For Lydia, a Chinese instructor initially drew her attention to expatriate instructor's use of space. According to Lydia, her Chinese instructor asked

> whether [we] noticed the foreign teacher walk around in the class and they sit on the
> desk. And they didn't notice, and they didn't mind their – how to say it – how they sit.
> They did not mind they had to sit on the stand and to teaching. And after . . . when I took
> part in Deanna's course I found that Deanna may walk around.

Lydia's choice of wording – "they don't notice" and "they did not mind they had to" – indicated her perception that the expatriate instructor's use of space enacted disregard for convention. Like Lydia, other participants also referenced the influence of discussions with Chinese instructors, classmates, roommates, and friends who shared a set of culturally based meanings for making sense of their intercultural encounters.

For participants, expatriate instructors' disregard of socially based spatial convention constituted physical disruption of conventional social hierarchies between learners and instructors. Karen felt her expatriate instructor's habit of walking the aisles amongst learners while conducting class "makes the relationship between the teacher and the students more

115

closely", crossing not only physical lines, but those stratifying instructor-learner relations. Alma described this same dynamic when she noted,

> Especially when they introduce some things they will walk into the middle of the class, and when we write they will walk around the classroom and they will look to see our writing and give some suggestions to us. Actually, if he or she moves around in the classroom I feel she is a part of us. She is a member of us. We feel more free, more relaxed.

In describing crossing of perceived classroom boundaries participants like Alma began to define the instructor's role as taking place *among* rather than *before* learners. In this instance, an instructors' use of space presented physical enactment of a socially alternative kind of instructor-learner relationship. This presents an interesting contrast to participants' perceptions related in the previous chapter, when they viewed the instructor in the more authoritative role of an "inspector" moving about the room during small group discussions ensuring learners were not speaking Chinese. This dichotomy suggests some perceptions are so highly contextual they can vary with the comfort level learners felt with the current activity, or even individuals' subjective feelings toward social boundary crossing.

"More Like a Friend"

I was both surprised and pleased when "friend" was one of the most common words participants used to describe social relationships with expatriate instructors. In Karen's participant essay she referred to her instructor Deanna as *pengyou,* meaning "friend", and wrote that the warm relationship she experienced with Deanna made her wish the class would never end. Although many echoed Karen's sentiments, learners also strived to reconcile a new type of leaner-instructor relationship with cultural habits of social propriety. Lily expressed a perceived

dichotomy by quantifying the degree to which the role of friend shaped the relationship as she stipulated, "Eighty percent of the time I will feel like I'm a student, because he . . . has the duty to teach us something, but the rest of the time I feel like he is just a friend." Lydia expanded on this view, acknowledging influence of her past experience when she described negotiating ambiguity in the perceived instructor-friend conflict:

> Actually speaking, because we have received the Chinese traditional teaching for almost twenty years, the teacher and students - this role - their difference have been rooted in our mind, so we still feel teacher is teacher and student is student. We still feel respect for teacher, and maybe in class like that [the expatriate's composition course] we do feel creative and we are participate in that class . . . and we are just like friends. But, for teacher and for our students, I still feel that teacher . . . is for the student – for respect. They are still on the upper class for us.

Lily and Lydia both articulated a need to reconcile a learner's sense of hierarchal mutual obligation toward an instructor who exhibits the social demeanor associated with the role of friend. They asserted the role of instructor rested "on the upper class" – a term epitomizing social stratification – based on their duty to learners, who are expected to respond with deferential respect. To make sense of their positions participants worked to resolve the conflict between long-held understandings and this unconventional learner-instructor relationship.

For Oliver, conflict resolution began by believing that his expatriate instructor's behavior did not confound positive elements of duty and respect, but instead eliminated the negative element of fear:

> He will not form an atmosphere of a class like a teacher and a student. It's more like a friend – friend to friend. A student should be afraid of the teacher in the past time, I think.

But to a foreign teacher, I'm not afraid of them.

Blake expressed similar sentiments when he stated his expatriate instructor "shows more respect to us", and "more patience . . . than my Chinese teacher." These observations by Oliver and Blake share two key points in formulating essential understandings of the expatriate instructor's role in enacting social parity in the classroom. First, by describing their expatriate instructors' behavior in comparative terms – Oliver to a traditional past, and Blake to Chinese instructors – they depicted relationships in their composition class as constructed alternatives to traditional learner-instructor boundaries rather than a violation of inviolable borders. Second, each indicated reciprocity between instructor and learner. Oliver spoke of a mutual "friend to friend" relationship, while Blake perceived mutual respect as present in the reciprocal relationship between leaner and instructor.

Tim described to me how he formed understandings of instructor roles partially through perceptions of how they regarded and presented themselves. He explained, "The apparent difference is they [expatriate instructors] didn't treat themselves as a teacher." Significantly, he added that such conduct by expatriate instructors was one of the aspects that "makes them foreign." Tim went on to describe the effect of expatriate instructors' behavior on himself and the environment:

> You know, our Chinese, if they are our teacher . . . we must treat he as a teacher. But if it is a foreign teacher, in our mind . . . the relationship between the student and the foreign teacher is much closer. . . . the atmosphere and relationship is much easier between me and them.

Tim's comment typified participants' opinions that classroom atmosphere engendered by reciprocal learner-instructor relationships is conducive to learning, particularly as it eases anxiety

arising from second-language interaction. Alma similarly explained,

> Atmosphere is very important, I think, especially when you are learning any kind of
> foreign language. If the atmosphere is very strict – is very serious – you're afraid to speak
> out. You're even afraid to open your mouth. Yes, I think atmosphere is very important.

Karen also believed if an expatriate instructor "is kind of strict to us, maybe we are too, too, nervous and shy and we may be afraid to talk." Like Oliver, Alma, and other participants, Karen frequently used to the word "afraid" to describe anxiety in interacting with expatriates in China, and with all instructors, regardless of nationality or ethnicity. She went on to provide an example that conveniently summarized participants' perceptions of social parity in learner-instructor friendship:

> Each time Deanna come into the classroom she will firstly say "hello" to us, but our
> Chinese teacher for most of the time, the students will say hello to the teacher first. But
> we also respect the foreigner teacher, because the foreign teacher is very friendly, and she
> will say hello to us first. I think that is very friendly and close. Close to us, and it makes
> me more open mind.

Karen acknowledged her instructor's behavior broke social conventions that traditionally stress respect, yet declared breaking those conventions an alternative source of respect. Additionally, her avowal of an accompanying "more open mind" indicated belief in pedagogical advantages in addition to simple social ease and pleasure.

Instructors' Focus on the Personal

Their expatriate instructors' personal focus further reinforced participants' perceptions of equal social footing and learner-instructor reciprocity. They described being impressed by

expatriate instructors' willingness to present themselves on a personal level, while they also recognized personal individuality in learners and encouraged its expression.

For many participants, the expatriate instructor's self-introduction on the first day of class helped establish the learner-instructor relationship's personal tone. In our conversations learners fondly recalled instructors' stories of family and pets, romantic anecdotes of meeting a partner, and their sharing of childhood photographs. For Craig, sharing personal information helped humanize his instructor:

> Keith tell us about background life – where is his hometown, his family – have one brother, I think. He told us about his life first, and then tell us about the rules of the class. I like this type of introduction. It makes us feel like he is a person . . . with us. Not only a teacher doing a job.

Craig's phrasing is striking, as he noted Keith's personal sharing positioned him as a person "with us", emphasizing a shared experience lacking hierarchical elements. As he continued, Craig also contrasted the personal introduction with his experiences in more traditional classes where "the Chinese teacher will never do this". Maggie couched her reflections in comparative terms as well, stating her Chinese instructors "just told us their name, their phone number, their e-mail address, but they will not tell us something about their personal feeling about something or their family." She continued, sharing her feelings about her expatriate instructor's personalized introduction:

> It will make us feel more comfortable to take this class. And make us students more capable to understand her life and we will be easier to get involved into this class. I think maybe . . . if she told something about herself the students are willing to tell their feeling to them [then] maybe they will feel that this teacher is very easygoing, is very kind to

work together, to study together so maybe they will feel more comfortable. Maggie's comment articulates two points shared among the participants who emphasized the personal nature of instructors' introductions. First, she felt the instructor's attitude engendered a comfortable environment conducive to engagement. Second, she described the introductions as encouraging a sense of reciprocity by making learners more "willing to tell their feeling."

Participants spoke of expatriate instructors' attention to learners' personal individuality as further encouraging the personal nature of their relationship. Simply making an effort to know each learner's name was significant to many. Several recounted memories of instructors taking photographs of each learner on the first day of class, accompanied by Western and Chinese names. For Blake, the instructor knowing the names of all of his classmates exemplified the respect for learners he appreciated in his expatriate instructor. Lulu spoke with open enthusiasm when describing her feelings when her expatriate instructor Deanna greeted her by name outside of class, saying "I feel so pleasure. It's like my honor, 'You know my name!' Like 'Lulu' - she just say 'Lulu' to me!" For Lulu, who emphasized the "casual" nature of these encounters, their occurrences outside the classroom emphasized the personal significance of being recognized by name.

Spending informal time with their expatriate instructors outside the foreign language building reinforced instructor-learner relationships' personal nature. Tim was impressed that his expatriate instructor Keith not only encouraged, but required socializing outside the learning environment:

He made a rule in the first class; he said that every student in his class would meet him twice. So no matter what you do with him, but you must meet with him twice – maybe do some sports or play or cook or just climb the Jing Mountain.

One could argue instructor-mandated socialization does not signify reciprocal comfort on the part of the learner, as it could also constitute an exercise of instructor authority. However, participants also frequently initiated social engagement between themselves and instructors outside the classroom. Maggie felt it was important to "communicate after the class and we always invited the foreign teachers to go out and have a dinner". In addition to inviting instructors to a restaurant, Kate proudly told me of making the outing her treat, deviating from traditionally stratified relationships common in Chinese society, wherein those of superior status are obligated to play the role of provider and those of lower status to act as grateful recipient:

> I treat him, we have lunch together; we have dinner together; we talk about some things.
> Yeah, so class time is limited, so the teacher have to be active to chat with the student
> more after classes. And I think our foreign teachers do well in this part. We often go out
> together, to eat together, to play together – went to some restaurant together.

Participants' willingness to move outside comfortable social norms is particularly telling, as it shows that for some, evolving roles were not merely following the expatriate instructor's lead in the teaching and learning environment.

While learners generally viewed levelling social relationships as positive, accommodating themselves to unfamiliar learner-instructor social relations presented complications for the participants. Learners perceived limitations to the depth or comfort level in personal, friendly relationships with expatriate instructors. As Lily noted, "I found a problem. When you talk with or communicate with them, you also have some surface things to talk. Not so deep. Just about travel or food, or something like that." Lily attributed limited depth to the "language barrier" that bounded communication within available vocabulary or ability to express complex ideas. Tim also referenced second language barriers when he described his conflicted

122

feelings, saying, "I did feel comfortable. But you know something like, I talk with you just now, I don't know how to express myself with some words, so maybe a little awkward". Alma's view was less linguistic and more interpersonal, as she told me she often found conversation between learners and expatriate instructors "shallow" due to personal unfamiliarity and a lack of shared experience. In short, complications or discomfort most often arose from aspects of the instructor's perceived foreignness. In these ways, the essence of participants' experience was one of simultaneous appreciation and struggle. Participants appreciated social role realignment, but often struggled to reconcile new learner-instructors roles with long-held convictions regarding respect and propriety, and with social awkwardness accompanying new roles and interaction with a cultural Other.

Expatriate Instructor as Model of Alternative Pedagogy

For participants, malleable social boundaries provided underpinnings for engagement with expatriate instructors who modeled pedagogical alternatives to traditional and contemporary Chinese teaching and learning conventions. Authors have consistently asserted learners perceive native speaking expatriates as unique in being culturally equipped to introduce learner-centered perspectives and methods (Holliday, 2006, 2015; Stanley, 2012). For participants, expatriate instructors were not merely practitioners of new pedagogical practices, but living models of practice. In making sense of alternative pedagogies participants sought context in familiar rhetoric on Chinese development, struggled to acclimate to their own roles as co-constructors of knowledge, wrestled with new epistemologies, and sought respite in expectations that expatriate instructors ensconce learning in an atmosphere of casual fun. Unlike the vertical, hierarchical boundaries learners described in social interactions, they expressed the essence of their reflections on pedagogy in terms of horizontal boundaries demarking separate areas of

123

responsibility in the teaching and learning process – an expected division of labor. When expatriate instructors introduced pedagogical dynamics blurring the anticipated roles of instructor-as-knowledge-deliverer and learner-as-content-recipient, participants worked to construct roles accommodating this alternative dynamic.

Culturally Alternative Pedagogy in Chinese Context

The learners began their pedagogical sense-making process much as they had approached the environment – by situating experience within familiar contexts. Participants noted the ways in which their learning experiences differed from others in even China's recent past, citing technology, greater access to information, and more varied educational and professional opportunities. Learners' awareness of governmental and institutional policy provided experience with a broad contextual foundation, evidenced in Lydia's assertions regarding "teaching in the modern world". Referencing the Ministry of Education's movement toward "modern teaching" she observed, "In China our education authority advise the teachers to . . . just make the students with friends and make that atmosphere more warm and try to guide the students. And just like it is teaching revolution".

Joy used similar verbiage when she argued integration of learner-centered pedagogy meant Chinese educators "are now on the revolution - trying to change". However, she also acknowledged both her own struggles and those of Chinese educators when she shook her head and added with a sigh, "It's hard." Kate characteristically expressed the sentiment more stridently when she contended, "We have traditional teaching model. Of course, China now try to get it away. Get rid of it." In such comments, participants expressed views of alternative pedagogies as means of revolutionizing Chinese education – a view carrying two significant points. First, phrasing like "revolution" and "get rid of" indicated perceptions of drastic, fast-

paced change. Second, by consistently contextualizing changes in terms of Chinese educational

practices and policies learners expressed the essence of their experience as distinctly Chinese,

implying *reformation of Chinese practice* rather than *adoption of Western practice*, and thereby

framing it as less foreign.

For learners like Oliver, one of the most salient reasons for the presence of expatriate

instructors was to "introduce new ways of learning" into Chinese practice. Joy responded to my

question about the purpose or value of having expatriate instructors by placing engagement with

new pedagogies in context of her college's policy:

> Maybe they [administrators] want us to be exposed to different teachers. That is
>
> [something] one of my teachers told us, because my college, College of International
>
> Studies, their teaching purpose is getting students to be exposed to different teachers,
>
> different teaching patterns.

In designating delivery of alternative teaching and learning models as impetus for expatriate

instructors' very presence, participants took this endeavor beyond the designation of *function* to

the status of *role* or *identity*.

To begin making sense, navigating, and taking a degree of ownership of alternative

pedagogies presented by expatriate instructors learners had to first contextualize them in terms of

their environment and experiences. By referencing national and institutional trends and policies,

they were equipped to understand their engagement as an endeavor taking place on their own

cultural ground.

Learners as Peer Educators

Participants often met their expatriate instructors' learner-centered expectations to act as

co-creators of knowledge with contradictory feelings. The learners most often expressed this

complexity in assessments of their own personal capacities to fulfill these expectations, and capacities of their classmates to do the same.

When participants spoke appreciatively of discussion-based learning, they described it as an opportunity to compliment one another's capabilities and understandings. Lily described class discussion in this fashion, saying, "I have some advantage and disadvantage [in learning], and we communicate – learn from each other." Alluding to the blurring of roles, Lydia felt through participative learning, she and her classmates "are just like the teacher." She also felt the inverse to be true regarding her instructor – a foreign learner striving to navigate the Chinese environment. Lydia explained, "While teaching, they are also learning. They grow up with the students. This is a very important one for me." Similar to participants' descriptions of classroom social roles, Lydia described an essentially reciprocal teaching and learning relationship in which new roles of instructor and learner melded while helping to define one another.

One of most commonly discussed means for learners to act as partners in knowledge construction were the weekly presentations that were fixtures in instructors Deanna and Katelyn's classes. Each week a group of two or three learners would open class by teaching part of that day's lesson. Karen's thoughts on presentations paralleled Lily's perspectives on mutually beneficial class discussion. Karen felt learner presentations provided "a good way, because we students' can learn from each other. We have different understandings of this lesson." She later added that "in foreign teachers' class we can learn from our students – learn from each other. And we will create some knowledge." For learners like Lily and Karen, crossing boundaries from *recipient of knowledge* to *co-creator of knowledge* was an interactive process initiated by their expatriate instructors and carried out through mutual support among fellow learners. Karen's use of the phrase "we will create some knowledge" stands out in its evocation of social

constructivist learning. Participants like Karen donned the new roles encouraged by expatriate instructors by viewing themselves as agents in a process of knowledge construction rather than subjects of a behaviorist act of acquisition. These learners' perspectives supported assertions in studies by Chan (2010) and Hằng and colleagues (2015) that Chinese learners are more comfortable with collective knowledge construction than commonly believed. Not all learners shared Karen's comfort, though.

Others felt expatriate instructors' expectations that learners present new material placed them in an incongruous and unsatisfying positions. They believed learners lacked depth of content knowledge and teaching skill to impart knowledge. In Oliver's opinion,

We . . . do not know how to teach. But we do have to know the part we teach as clear as possible. . . . And it is hard for us to explain some rules because we are students. . . . the time is limit and there are many things we have to learn. So I didn't get much in the class.

While Oliver focused mainly on lack of experience in presenting material, Alma felt her ability and that of her fellow learners to understand the material in depth hindered their capacities to teach:

Actually, because we are very similar with our classmates, . . the things they do [in] the presentation I can grasp *before* they do the presentation. But as for Deanna, she will add much thing, or group much things together, so I can learn much from her class. I can learn much more knowledge from her, compared with my classmates, because as classmates we are very familiar – similar with each other.

Alma felt one learner was unlikely to understand the material any better than another. Instead, she believed her instructor, as designated content authority, was much better prepared. Similar convictions were also evident in participant essays written for this study, where many shared

detailed descriptions of instructors' words and actions, yet Oliver was the only one to even briefly mentioned other learners' contributions. Lulu experienced similar feelings of her own inadequacy to teach when it was her group's turn to present. She revealed, "I am not so confident about my contents, because I think that it is not something true. I just research it myself, so I am not so confident to give it to my classmates." Lulu felt acting in a role she perceived as the instructor's required her to be inauthentic – to enact "not something true". She went on to describe similar dissatisfaction with her classmates' presentations, saying, "The way out classmates do the presentation is also very formal or just read the PPT [PowerPoint], and I think 'ah, it is just so boring. I don't want anything, I don't want to face [it].'" While alternative teacher-learner roles defined the essence of the learners' experience, their diverse comfort levels wove a varied texture within that essence.

Participants seemed to feel more comfortable crossing learner-instructor boundaries when carried out in less formal activities, such as class discussions. This is in direct contrast with Foster and Stapleton's (2012) findings that Chinese college learners preferred presentations over class discussion. It is important to note, however, Foster and Stapleton's study examined Chinese international students in a Western institution, and that the learners based their preference on the opportunity for oral English practice, and not on content delivery. The learners at SWU preferred more shared responsibility and took comfort in the ambiguous role of co-creator in an instructor-led discussion. Participants felt that by requiring learner presentations expatriate instructors forced an overt adoption of the instructor's role, and even occupation of the "teacher place" at the front of the room that many found inappropriate, unsatisfying, or inauthentic.

Engagement in Self-Directed Learning

Learners perceived limitations to their capacities as co-constructors of knowledge in the

individualized self-direction and critical thinking promoted by their expatriate instructors. Oliver described his perception of critical engagement as a culturally foreign epistemology when he said, "I think it maybe came from another culture, because . . . Chinese students . . . they more like to think about the math questions," indicating greater comfort with the perceived definite right and wrong answers in arithmetic. It is notable that Oliver referred to an abstracted category of "Chinese students", while learners more comfortable with individualized critical thinking, like Lily, Lydia, and Karen, happily referred to an inclusive, familiar "we" comprised of classmates. Oliver's preference for behaviorist-based content learning is similar to that expressed by Chinese learners in Chen and Bennett's 2012 study of online education. Oliver shared a level of abstraction with Chen and Bennett's participants, who lacked physically present classmates for immediate social constructivist interaction, although the authors never alluded to this aspect of an online learning environment.

Oliver did not shrink from challenges, despite his espoused difficulties. In our talks, he reflected on his appreciation for the opportunity to learn how to "think outside the box" and "reach out of the space." The young man, whose clear discomfort with his English conversation abilities belied an astute, self-awareness, recognized that "Outside the box is not build in a day. So I'm still learning how to use it. And sometimes maybe overreact because . . . I'm a starter. So I'm still learning how to use that." Joy asserted her expatriate instructors should recognize Chinese learners as beginners who may need a "transitional period" to integrate critical thinking into their learning:

> I think in China the teaching – the cramming teaching . . . students get used to it, but it
>
> has to be changed for critical thinking in China. Students don't have that kind of critical

thinking, and for me I don't think I have a critical mind (laughs). So . . . when we enter

the college we are asked to do critical thinking, [but] we don't have the ability to do it.

Perhaps Lisa most succinctly expressed the ambivalence many felt toward self-directed critical

thinking when she stated, "I have no opinion. I don't know how to express my opinion." Lisa

seemed to correct herself, or make an admission, midway her deceptively simple statement. Her

difficulty was not in having no opinion; it was the complexities of giving it form and expression

– expression undoubtedly complicated by demands of a second-language environment.

For many participants, topics presented for discussion and writing presented a barrier to

critical engagement. Joy felt topics introduced by her expatriate instructors were too unfamiliar

and unrelated to the lives of young Chinese people. She argued,

> When I was asked to do that kind of thinking I find it hard because I didn't have enough
>
> kind of information on that topic actually, so I don't have enough backups . . . . So I don't
>
> – in that kind of way – I don't deeply thinking.

Tim showed similar frustration when he described expatriate instructors presenting the

challenges of critical thinking incongruously packaged with simplistic discussion and writing

topics:

> I think if you want your students have critical thinking, you must have asked him a
>
> question like this [difficult or sophisticated]. Don't just ask him . . . to describe something
>
> . . . because if you want to have critical thinking you must have the question go deeper.

For learners like Tim - eager to engage with the pedagogical challenges of critical thinking -

expatriate instructor's underestimation of learners' sophistication presented a disappointing

starting point.

While participants' valued critical thought and self-directed learning, they often perceived them as foreign concepts abruptly thrust upon them, or couched in topics they perceived as ill-fitting to their lives or intellectual capacities. Variance in degrees of comfort or unease, satisfaction or frustration, seemed commensurate to each learners' perceived success in situating himself or herself within the intercultural experience.

"Learning and Playing – Playing and Learning"

Expectations for expatriate instructors to engender a relaxed, fun classroom environment were among the most pervasive topics participants discussed. In fact, only two of the 17 did not discuss classroom games, with many giving lengthier descriptions of games than of any other activity. In our conversations, learners shared enthusiastic narratives of the lively atmosphere during games, but this was curiously lacking in their participant essays. In their writing, some devoted lengthy passages to describing rules, expressing little of the engagement related in our face-to-face conversations. Also common among their written accounts were references to games as a characteristically foreign classroom activity.

Assumptions that classes with expatriate instructors would include games could be so embedded that when I asked Lisa if she found it unusual, she felt it sufficient to simply inform me, "This was not the first time we took the foreigner teacher's class." Participants described long-held images of Westerners, particularly Americans, as "free", "casual" and "easygoing", and these images seemed to inform expectations of classroom play. Opal voiced the assumed element of play in the expatriate instructor's class as she recalled, "In my expectations . . . I was a little excited because . . . I would have a foreign teacher. And I thought he would be very funny. And the class would be very free, and that was true." Sophia shared Opal's expectations, stating, "In our opinion, maybe we just think the foreign teacher can give us some very fun in our

131

class, and if she or he is very formal maybe we will feel a little disappointed." Indeed, Craig was disappointed that his composition instructor played fewer classroom games than described by learners of other expatriate instructors. In expressing his disappointment, Craig also attempted an explanation:

> But for Keith, he was not games. . . . honestly, Keith was a little boring. Not like I hope the foreigner teacher will be . . . not play in the class. But maybe it is good. We maybe have to learn more things in the writing

In using verbiage like "disappointed" and "not like I hope" Sophia and Craig expressed the degree to which they retained subjective expectations in the face of theoretical or real-life contradictions. For Craig, the confirmation that other expatriate instructors included games among class activities was sufficient to view Keith as a disappointing exception, and to rationalize that exception in context of the course's subject.

For many participants, games provided yet another means by which expatriate instructors alleviated classroom stress. Alma appreciated that through play the "atmosphere is very free and relaxed. We don't have much stress." Maggie expressed similar feelings, specifically noting she confined these expectations to expatriate instructors. Referring to classroom games she said, "Many foreign teachers feel very active and we feel very comfortable to have the class. We will not feel so stress in the class. But if a Chinese teacher do this, we will feel very strange." It is significant that, for Maggie, behavior anticipated from an expatriate instructor would be considered "strange" in a Chinese instructor. Her comment highlights the contradictions many encountered in reconciling engagement with expatriate instructors with subjective academic values and anticipated meanings based on their life of educational experiences.

Other participants saw the value of games as enlivening an otherwise boring class. According to Lydia, "I want the writing class to be more interesting . . . while learning and playing – playing and learning. I think the image that writing is very boring is rooted in our Chinese students' mind . . ." She went on to add,

> Maybe because of the properties of this class, we think of this class as boring, but . . . they [expatriate instructors] try to make the class interesting. And . . . during their teaching, they may host some games for us, and these games are related to that topic. So while we play, while we're playing games we may learn something. We may learn - try to remember that point.

Maggie also spoke of games presenting an improved learning environment for an unengaging subject. She said, "It makes the students very active too – because the academic writing is somewhat boring to students, and she just organize the questions to the – to the games – and we feel very active to answer these questions and we will be maybe more unforgettable to answer these questions."

While learners spoke of games as notable aspects of their learning with expatriate instructors, not all agreed as to the benefits. Tim felt, "We may enjoy the process of doing games, but we may forget what we learn from the game. We are happy with the game, but why did I do the game? What was the meaning? We forgot. We just know we did a game." For Tim and others in this study, play was enjoyable, but it also contradicted culturally based expectations of efficient delivery and reception of content.

"The Chinese Teacher is More Efficient"

Although the learners expressed appreciation for the opportunities presented by expatriate instructors, they also spoke of limitations. Participants valued expatriate instructors for their roles

in modeling pedagogical alternatives, but they also found those roles antithetical to their own expected primary responsibility as students - content acquisition. Learners in this study clearly expressed their preferences by comparison. For example, Karen noted,

> A Chinese teacher will talk more lessons in a period. But foreigner teacher will focus on do some discussion and do some games among our students, and Chinese teacher will not focus on some discussion or games. So I think to some extent the Chinese teacher is more efficient.

For Karen, volume of content learning denoted learning "efficiency" expatriate instructors traded for increased enjoyment and engagement. Opal, who was studying to be an ESL instructor, phrased her similar observations more starkly when viewing participatory, learner-centered methods through the lens of her own coursework and what she saw as the realities of China:

> I think that's not very helpful in reality. Because you know in China there are many students, and teachers usually need to teach . . . teacher-centered, not student-centered . . . that's not very practical.

Lily also reflected on her alternative pedagogical experiences in terms of comparative efficiency in volume of content delivered when she stated,

> In my view, my Chinese teacher . . . more focus on the knowledge. They care about more how much you have take in. But some my foreign teacher is more careful you really enjoying this class, this major, this subject. The interest – maybe the foreign teacher pay more attention [to] the whole phenomenon.

Lily articulated the often ambivalent perceptions participants held of the expatriate instructor's role as model of alternative pedagogy. For her, enjoyment was not divorced from academic concerns in the course subject and her major. Yet she continued to primarily consider knowledge

content delivered by the instructor and taken in by the learner. For Lily and others, the efficient

volume of this content taken in is cast in balance against degree of enjoyment.

Participants engaged with their expatriate instructors as Models of Alternative Pedagogy

by first placing these alternatives in Chinese contexts of change and development. Sharing in the

work of knowledge construction, the essence of their experience encompassed both enjoyment

and struggle regarding overlapping roles of learner and instructor. Expatriate instructors were

also seen as providing a relaxed environment that offered respite from the demanding lives of

Chinese college students and the stresses of English language communication demanded by the

presence of the expatriate instructor. Even "inefficient" content delivery situated the expatriate

instructor by reinforcing perceived normativity of lecture-based delivery in the Chinese learning

environment. At the foundation of essence in participants' understandings of their experiences

rested perceptions of their expatriate composition instructor as embodying a foreign culture and

language.

Expatriate Instructor as Embodiment of Culture and Language

As shown in the previous chapter, learners were acutely aware of their expatriate

instructors as foreign the foreign Other to be purposefully situated in the environment. As our

conversations continued in this vein, they described embodiment of cultural foreign-ness as one

of the most essential – and valuable – roles the expatriate instructors played in their classrooms.

When asked why she thought her department employed expatriate instructors, Karen invoked

their capacities to provide authentic cultural experiences unavailable through Chinese instructors,

responding, "Because foreign instructors is different from Chinese instructors, their thinking is

different. For example, the way they speak, their thoughts are different from Chinese". Although

this substantiates Holliday's (2015) assertion the expatriate instructor's role of cultural

embodiment can obscure wider roles in teaching and learning, research has neither addressed the anticipated meanings learners' use to construct this alternate role, nor the meanings or purposes they continue to create from it.

In describing expatriate instructors as embodiments of a foreign culture and language, learners often depicted them as bearers of essentialized traits. Craig succinctly expressed the occasional totality of this characterization when he observed, "We meet the foreign teacher, so we meet the foreigner culture". Alma offered a list summarizing the various aspects of the cultural-linguistic embodiment role when she recalled, "Our teacher told us this kind of class will be taught by a foreigner, so we were . . . very excited, because we like being teached by the foreigners, because apart from the knowledges we can get, we can also learn their pronunciations, their lifestyle". As Alma implied, the expatriate instructors' role as cultural provided direct experience of a lived culture and "true" form of spoken English.

Cultural Embodiment

Participants' described the cultural role of the expatriate instructor as being enacted through two means. At times, they spoke of their instructors deliberately sharing first-hand cultural knowledge in lectures and discussions. At other times, they described the instructor's presence as an opportunity for direct experience of foreign culture through exposure and interaction with its human embodiment. The essential elements shared across both descriptions were desire and anticipation of authenticity in intercultural experience. In Blake's words, the opportunity to "connect with the foreigner" provided means to validate and expand pre-existing images – anticipated meanings made real through as embodiment.

For many participants, expatriate instructors' deliberate presentations of cultural knowledge held greater value than writing instruction. When our discussions turned to

136

pedagogical matters, I often asked participants what they felt would improve their experiences in composition class. I was admittedly surprised when the most frequently expressed sentiment did not regard writing, but a desire for more description of foreign culture. Lisa felt her expatriate instructor should "not only teach us how to write an essay. They can tell us some . . . culture about their own countries, because they are a foreign person." Similarly, Kate believed "our [expatriate] teachers should teach us not only the techniques of how to write, but also . . . any kind of related information, like celebrity stories . . . like recent news about the politics." Three implications in Lisa and Kate's comments stand out. First, learners' desires to connect with cultural embodiment were not entirely born of unconscious assumptions, but involved intentionally and specifically articulated expectations. Second, while they did not disregard writing instruction altogether in discussing instructors' roles, they designated it as one facet of no greater importance than any other. Third, in their emphasis on contemporary everyday life and issues Lisa and Kate expressed desire for a type of cultural authenticity sought through direct connection to its embodiment – an Occidentalist construct of essentialized characteristics (Carrier, 1995; Yang, 2016).

Alma spoke of perceiving language and cultural learning as one tandem endeavor, one in which the expatriate instructor played a role inaccessible to her other instructors:

Actually I think when you learn the language; you are learning the culture of their country. Maybe . . . our Chinese teacher, maybe their oral English is very good . . . but their living style is still Chinese style. So we can learn much more from foreign teacher, from their characters, from their living style.

Alma's comment typifies the perceptual relationship between *learning culture from presentation* and *absorbing culture through contact*. While "living style" seemed to designate

shared stories and interests, "their characters" implied embodiment.

Lulu more distinctly described absorbing culture through embodied contact in her allusion to perceived cultural aura, as she asserted, "I think most . . . meaningful thing [is] just . . . study the culture around the teacher, her way of thinking – things like that". Sherry expressed a similar perspective when responding to my question about the expatriate instructor's purpose: "Why we expect a foreign teacher? Because I want to know more the culture that he's experienced in his country. I think it is about the culture." By designating cultural embodiment as "the most meaningful thing" and contending their composition course "is about the culture" both Lulu and Sherry noted the primacy of the expatriate instructor's cultural embodiment role.

As previously noted participants frequently designated composition instruction as secondary to the expatriate instructor's role of cultural embodiment. In Opal's view, "Foreign teachers for me just like a direct way to know the other culture - just the experience. He grows up in the other experience. They can give us not only the knowledge to write in English but also the culture - brings us to the culture." Just as Opal referenced the expatriate instructor's lifelong immersion the foreign culture, Kate related how she perceived culture as instructors' defining trait:

> Most importantly, most English speakers in China, they learn the language itself, not the culture itself. So we need foreign teachers. They have already got themselves involved in it. They have been immersed in that language culture, so they don't have this kind of awareness, but in fact, this kind of cultural awareness have already implanted in their blood.

Many participants similarly attributed their instructors' capacities for cultural embodiment to lifelong immersive experience not shared by even their most knowledgeable and respected

Chinese instructors. Kate also articulated the way in which engagement with the instructor as embodiment of culture affirmed leaners' identities as English majors when she stressed this contact separated them from the countless other Chinese who had mastered English. Maggie expressed this in more explicit detail when she asserted,

> We are English majors. A lot of students, they do not major in English, but they speak English very well. So, because we are English majors, we have accept the knowledge of the English. We have to learn more about the American culture and the American history, because some of the teachers, although maybe they are very knowledgeable, they are still Chinese, they do not know exactly what they foreigners thinking. So the foreign teachers will let us know more native (thinking).

As Maggie and Kate described, intercultural engagement with their expatriate instructors helped participants shape their own identity as English majors by defining that identity as one who has engaged with the embodiment of cultural and linguistic authenticity. In this way, learners did not construct identity through opposition or compromise (Martin & Griffiths, 2014; Yang, 2016) with a cultural stranger. Instead, the essence of participants' experience formed as they constructed mutually supporting, complimentary contextual identities for self and expatriate instructors *in tandem with* one another.

Linguistic Embodiment

Participants also perceived their expatriate instructors as linguistic embodiments, enacting such aspects of spoken English as pronunciation, accent, and vocabulary. Participants' stressed listening over discussion, supporting assertions in literature regarding *native speakerism* – perceptions of second language instruction as a foreign import delivered in a fixed form best enacted by native speakers (Canagarajah, 2013; Holliday, 2015; Lowe & Pinner, 2016).

139

However, when authors even note learner positionality at all, it is most often in post-colonial contexts depicting the learner strictly in terms of disadvantage within systems of power enacted in the classroom. However, the learners I spoke with felt empowered within the environment, ascribing a linguistic identity to the expatriate instructor based on self-directed learning goals. This supports Canagarjah's (2013) assertion that strictly colonial understandings of native-speakerism belong "to an earlier order" (p. 214) or perhaps other contexts. Disadvantage is not at all evident in the agency of learners who subordinate instructor's responsibilities as composition instructors to their functions as spoken language exemplars. This sentiment is evidenced in Joy's assertion all classes with expatriate instructors, regardless of stated subject, are regarded as oral English classes.

Participants felt their composition classes exposed them to a definitively correct form of English spoken by an expatriate instructor, affording an opportunity, in Lily's words, to be "influenced by his standard accent". Although some participants' expressed interest in cultural aspects of language, such as Lydia's goal to acquire "slang, or some very casual" vocabulary from her expatriate instructor, the majority focused on sounds of speech. In fact, accent and pronunciation – terms participants seemed to use interchangeably – were the most frequently discussed aspects of oral English. For Karen, studying spoken English entailed such opportunities to "imitate the . . . accents and pronunciations" of expatriate instructors who functioned for her as "examples".

For participants, encountering the expatriate instructor as linguistic embodiment was not an interactive undertaking, but one based on learners' listening. Participants in the study frequently named opportunities to absorb instructors' "standard" pronunciation as the primary benefit for their English learning. As Maggie said, "Their pronunciation are very great, and I

think it is good to listen to their words". Lulu even compared her class to the common practice of learning English from Western film and television. She observed that when she is exposed to their "intonation, and something like that, I can have a feeling when I listen to foreigners, just like I watch American drama." In sum, participants spoke of expatriate instructors' linguistic embodiment in almost de-personalized, non-interactive terms. As participants sought to observe fixed, "correct" forms of speech for reproduction they also constructed an ambiguous melding of *object* and *instructor* for the expatriate.

Lily succinctly summarized the essence of experience illustrated in this section in one sentence when she said, "I think that foreign teachers' class is not the subject, but just like I can study the culture, the intonation." More than an undertaking in composition learning, classroom engagement with the instructor as embodiment of culture and language constituted the most salient form of English study through intercultural engagement. Even more important than expatriate instructors' intentional sharing of culture through class activities, their very characterization of culture rendered the essential experience an *encounter* rather than merely a class. Learners' cultural and linguistic engagement further validated their identities as English majors, and influenced their understandings of Western culture as well as the nature of culture itself.

Conclusion

In Chapter 7, I illustrated how learners built ownership and agency in interpreting their intercultural engagement by situating experience in familiar contexts. This chapter presented them using that interpretive, sense-making agency by constructing contextually meaningful roles for expatriate instructors – a process of perceptually *making foreign-ness belong*. As depicted in

Figure 4 below, participants positioned expatriate instructors as *Situated Others* who imported traits into the environment that satisfied learners' anticipated meanings and desired forms of
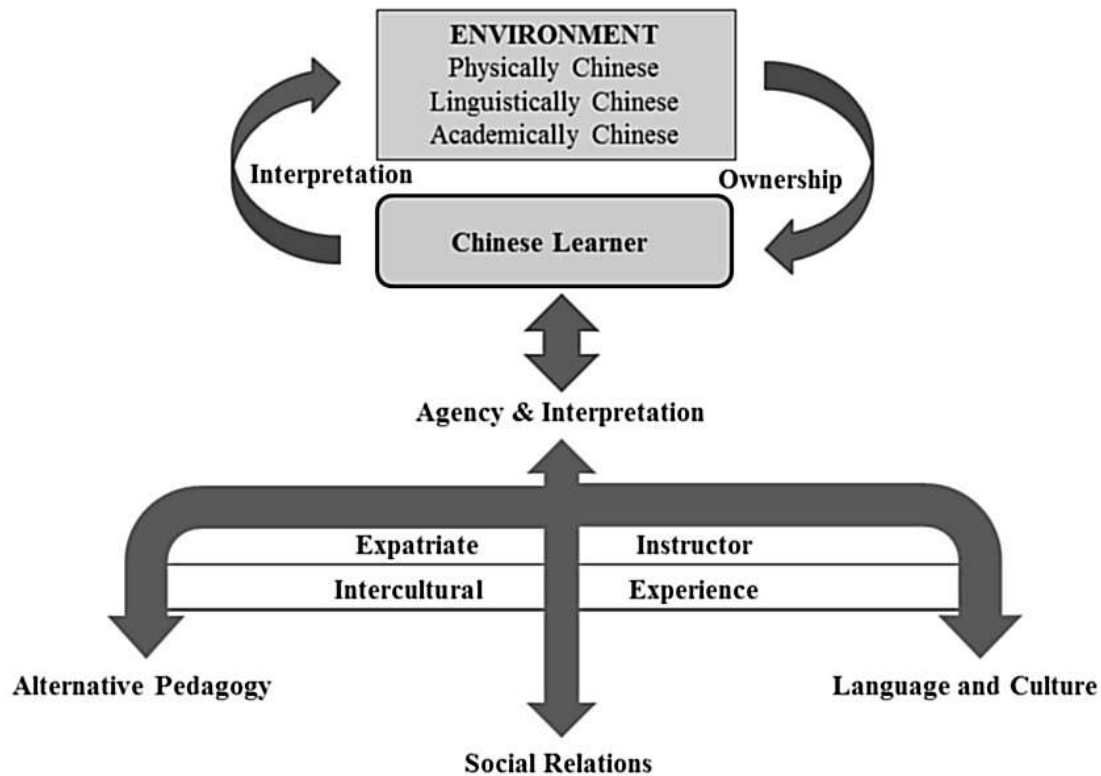
Figure 4. **Interpretive Agency and the Situated Other**

engagement. Learners constructed the role of modifier of social relations to reconcile social dynamics enacted by instructors with traditional, hierarchical learner-instructor roles. Casting instructors in the role of model of alternative pedagogy allowed participants to make sense of their own roles as co-constructors of knowledge in a loosely structured environment - an environment in which they perceived instructors' practices as enjoyable and culturally informative, yet counter to "efficient" content delivery. In the embodiment of culture and language role, the instructor presented essentialized traits through which learners could interact with and observe culturally alternative behaviors and speech. Situating the expatriate instructor through these roles, learners simultaneously made sense of intercultural experience, interpreting

142

its essence as one of pedagogical, social, linguistic, and cultural engagement. In these processes, participants most clearly displayed the ownership and agency to shape their experiences.

In describing sense-making and role construction, participants referenced Chinese national and institutional policies, social trends, comparable or contrasting experiences with Chinese instructors, and discussions with classmates, roommates, and Chinese instructors. In maintaining perceived Chinese-ness of environment and experience, learners exhibited culturally aware agency that complicates assertions of Chinese learner passivity, and paradigms of neo-colonial dominance in native speaking instruction (Canagarajah, 2013; Holliday, 2015; Lowe & Pinner, 2016), and supports Djerasimovic's (2013) assertion that learners come to intercultural experience with cultural discourses of their own – anticipated meanings – imbuing them "with the power to transform foreign discourses and ideologies as much as they may be transformed by them" (p. 207). In this chapter, participants did not malleably conform to alternatives presented by their instructors, nor did they actively resist or shrink from them. These findings show learners engaging in intercultural experience through capacities to create meaning by defining both context and the contextualized identities of those in the environment. In the next chapter, I will explore how participants called on these identities in taking concrete agency to manage language learning with an expatriate instructor.

CHAPTER 9: ENGAGEMENT WITH ENGLISH THROUGH A NATIVE SPEAKING

INSTRUCTOR

When topics turned to language teaching and learning, participants' observations and reflections were among the most individually personal and immediate. Less steeped in cultural abstractions, their reflections on teaching and learning experiences shared more individual perspectives and feelings regarding language and the meanings they attached to learning. Viewing intercultural experience in their composition classes as engagement with both written and spoken English, they spoke of agency in setting their own learning priorities regarding content, negotiating classroom dynamics based on self-perceptions, and interpreting the cultural thought systems they perceived in a foreign language.

In this chapter, I will illustrate how learners used the sense of ownership described in Chapter 7, and the interpretive agency demonstrated in Chapter 8 to take further agency in their intercultural language learning experiences. Having cast their expatriate instructors as modifiers of social relations, models of alternative pedagogy, and embodiments of culture and language, learners were able to understand and manage language learning as a social, pedagogical, linguistic, and cultural endeavor. In this way, learners expanded their agency to include interpretation of experience and *management of learning*.

A strain of recent scholarship approaches the perspectives voiced by participants in this study, acknowledging Chinese learners' choices in response to perceived purposes and utility in various modes of instruction (Clason, 2014; Chen & Bennett, 2012; Ha & Li, 2014). Although it has been over 20 years since Leki & Carson (1994) argued learners in a second-language writing class determine *what they will learn* based on *what they feel they need to learn*, there has been little inquiry into how they determine these needs or act on them. The following findings expand

144

the dialogue on language learners' choices by exploring the perceptions and choices informing them.

Learners Shape Purpose in their Composition Course

Ambivalence characterized participants' reflections on English composition learning. For many, skills and concepts of academic writing constituted only one of many concerns in their composition course, and occasionally seemed almost peripheral. Instead, learners described the class primarily as an avenue to engage with various expatriate instructor roles (Holliday, 2008). I asked Sophia what she believed to be the reason for assigning expatriate instructors to composition courses, and she articulated that focus:

> Reason to have a foreign teacher? The foreign teacher, as a native, they have a better understanding of the culture, so they can teach us their culture, which our Chinese teacher cannot give us. What's more they have a good spoken English. It's good for us to correct our accent – that's the reason.

Although I had specifically phrased the question in context of *composition* courses, like most participants, Sophia made little or no reference to composition when reflecting on her expatriate instructor's roles. When the learners mentioned writing unprompted, it was most often as a passing comment within a discussion of culture or oral English. Lulu described how this focus factored into her decisions in managing coursework, revealing that in composition her goal was to "just finish my task . . . the class is just killing time" while actually studying culture as embodied by the instructor.

For many learners, aspects of spoken English took precedence over composition learning. According to Joy, "I think in most foreign teachers' class no matter what kind of thing, although it's writing we really think it's gonna be oral English. And people sometimes don't take it

seriously." In Tim's estimation, the sheer volume of learning possibilities in an expatriate-taught class required him to prioritize those aspects that warranted his attention during limited engagement available with his expatriate instructor. He explained,

> I think every teacher . . . has prepared a lot of time, and they want to teach all the things in the class, but I know . . . you cannot learn all the things in this class. And you know – our Chinese students – the most problem is the spoken, and the accent. . . . So I think most of us just want more time talk with the teachers.

Tim, who hoped to study psychology in postgraduate school, once told me he enjoyed our discussions as an opportunity to "study the processes in my thinking", and here he reflected on his conscious decision processes. He felt a need to make choices based on his capacities for learning, opportunities presented, and those aspects of English learning perceived as most demanding of his attention. Other participants spoke of similar processes, explaining how they adjusted their engagement with English composition to also accommodate opportunities for spoken language and cultural learning with a native speaker. As learners' narrated their decision processes, these findings speak to unexplored gaps in literature. Recent research has acknowledged choices Chinese learners make (Clason, 2014; Chen & Bennett, 2012; Ha & Li, 2014; Leki & Carson, 1994), but does not delve into the "educational and cultural experience, skills, aptitudes, beliefs, desires, expectations and motivation" underlying these choices. (Djerasimovic, 2014). Individual choices and actions varied according to self-assessed abilities, desired outcomes, views of teaching and learning, and personal interpretations of expatriate instructor roles, but two threads wove all choices into the essence of their experience of intercultural teaching and learning. First, learners took agentive ownership in managing their

language learning, and second, they viewed engagement with language, and its embodiment in the expatriate instructor, as encounter with an alternative culture.

English Composition as a Structured Cultural Thought System

As learners characterized their experiences with English composition, the dual aspects of instructors' roles as embodiment of culture and language merged in the experience of writing instruction. For participants, this role encompassed expatriate instructors' capacities to personify, articulate, and structurally frame English composition as engagement with a culturally alternative thought system. Participants' reflections supported Holliday's (2005) assertion of a common belief "that 'native speaker' teacher represents a 'Western culture' from which spring the ideals . . . of the English language" (p. 6). Oliver expressed this perception when he described his instructor as not only a guide to the writing process, but as an agent whose very presence provided contact with "the right thinking and thoughts" for English composition.

Cookie elaborated on this perception when she said of her instructor Katelyn, "I expect her to teach me . . . the thinking of the foreigners, how they think about how to write the articles, because there is a different theory between the foreigners and us. I kind of expected her to show me how to form the logic of the article." To provide an example of "the logic of the article", she then went on to contrast the organizational placement of main ideas in Chinese and Western composition. Such frequent and significant use of the words "logic" or "logical" were striking in our conversations about writing. For participants the word seemed to denote a perceived intersection between the linear argumentation they associated with Western epistemologies and the highly structured writing expected by their expatriate instructors.

Kate articulated the manner in which many learners equated cultural thought and written organization. She summarized her goals in writing as "to make my essay seem more structured

147

or logically clear, and . . . native," with the inclusion of "native" implying her perception that structured written form characterized a cultural mode of thought. Kate praised her instructor Keith for modelling logical "native" thought by presenting his own writing to the class, which she admired as "so convincing" in its linear argumentation.

While Kate found a framework for linear "native" expression in her instructor's examples, Karen felt her instructor Deanna provided similar guidance by framing instruction within Modern Language Association (MLA) rules. Karen told me she believed "It will [make] my writing more logical, and it also develop a logical thought for me in the future". Karen's comments reflect the goals Deanna had shared with me in her interview, telling me she focused her composition teaching on assisting learners prepare for the stylistic demands of their upcoming senior theses. Similarly, Tim asserted the best way to write an English passage is to "use English thinking, so they teach it, . . they require the process". Tim and Karen shared a conviction that structure as represented in the stylebook guidelines or processes articulated by expatriate instructors provided them with molds to shape thought into written expression of a linear Western epistemology.

Oliver offered a fascinating description of how he structurally managed replicating his perception of Western thought in his writing. He told me he had originally struggled to present a single argumentative perspective in his writing, because "in Chinese we usually seek a balanced point" between opposing perspectives. According to Oliver, his instructor Katelyn "just told us not to do that. [If] you like it, you write you like it; you don't like it, you write you don't like." While Oliver's narrative supports Huang and Wang's (2011) assertion Chinese learners seek "a unity of opposites" antithetical to conventional Western argumentation, the authors' entirely

148

theoretical work offers no learner perspectives on reconciling the two. Oliver's unique resolution illustrates the creative ingenuity to be found in learners' perspectives:

> It's not hard for me because in Chinese you have to write two different kind of views. In English you have to choose one view . . . so it's less. So maybe it's not hard for us to just write one view, one direction.

For Oliver, the solution was eventually simple – take what he was accustomed to doing, and cut it in half. He addressed his conundrum in the most structurally concrete manner he could devise.

For some participants, equating structure with a culturally defined thought system was even evident in grammatical structure. Opal described her perceptions of Western thought in these terms, telling me, "I think maybe they [Westerners] are very logic in doing things. Yeah, because in English will usually be like, 'but', 'however', or 'or' - some conjunctions and like that. Maybe it's the way of thinking – is different I think." Opal's observation was astute, as she recognized cultural thought systems inhabit the deepest, most detailed levels of language, but it may have also reflected the influence of her instructor. In my interviews with Opal's instructor Keith, he detailed his emphasis on grammar in composition teaching, and repeatedly cited conjunction use as an area he felt required remediation. As his student, Opal seemed to have internalized her instructor's emphasis on linguistic mechanics to make sense of a thought system that she continued to find elusive. In fact, she made an interesting revelation when I asked her if following such structure made her feel more familiar with Western thinking. She confessed, "I think not so much. I think for me is just learning how to write in another language that may be natural to the natives." Opal's additional observation indicated that while learners in this study commonly felt structure allowed them to replicate culturally alternative thought, within this

overarching perception, they varied in degrees to which they felt replication constituted

epistemological engagement and understanding.

Structure as an Intercultural Tool

Learners frequently told me patterns and structure presented an orienting sense of control

as they navigated the uncertainties of second language expression. Lydia expressed this belief as

she said:

> I think . . . for me the first most important thing for me is structure, because before
>
> writing a paper well, you have to know well of that structure to write in the native
>
> thinking way. Then I put my idea into it. So that class I put more attention on the
>
> structure.

For Lydia, organizational structure provided a vessel into which she could place her ideas with a

degree of confidence in the cultural-epistemological form of their outcome. She displayed

enthusiastic pleasure when she went on to describe this process. "After the first stage of writing

my paper I may feel [it is] difficult," she said, then added with laughter, "But after the process I

may feel my idea exploded".

Opal professed a similar reliance on structure, but one that constituted a bastion of

security against shaky confidence, describing organizational structure as a means to stay afloat

when feeling adrift in a second language. She confessed,

> I am not sure if my writing is good or not. . . I cannot evaluate my writing to know
>
> whether I am writing good or bad. I cannot judge myself. . . . I don't know if this
>
> expression is natural.

By telling herself, "That's a pattern' and I will write like that," Opal felt she could exercise a

degree of control over written English. He (2014) suggested instructors guide learners through

cognitive mapping of "English thinking" (p. 127) to aid in their cultural-epistemological

understanding. Learners' reflections here indicated they were attempting to construct such

cognitive maps on their own from the rhetorical structures presented by expatriate instructors.

Structure and Language Restrict Expression

While Cookie found structures taught by her expatriate instructors useful in replicating

culturally alternative thought systems, she also voiced a level of frustration with aspects she

perceived as restrictive. Starting from a contrast with Chinese composition, she explained:

> I think it [Chinese composition] is more casual, because when you write an article in
>
> English you kind of obey some rules. I think the rules is strict. For example the first
>
> paragraph, if you wrote an argumentation, the first paragraph and the last paragraph, they
>
> ask you some requests. And you have few choices to write. But in Chinese articles, if you
>
> write in argumentation, you use lots of ways – parallelism, and some metaphors – those
>
> kind of things. But in English maybe its's hard for me to use this, so it becomes stubborn.
>
> . . . They all look the same.

Cookie's sense of monotonous confinement was common among participants who felt structure

provided concrete means of English writing mastery at the expense of variety and literary

aesthetics. For Lily, her instructor's attention to structure made her feel composition class

presented "not much about writing, but about punctuating, about how to choose your topic, . . the

references, and other things." Oliver complained of this monotony as he told me, "When you

write many more the same, same structure – this is the first paragraph, the main body, and the

conclusion . . . again and again and again, that gets me frustrated." When chatting with Tim, I

used the word "map" as a metaphor for writing guidelines instructors taught, but he was quick to

correct me, telling me he preferred the word "formula" because,

Formula is a disappointed word. Why I say disappointed is I say the word "map" is very

clearly what you will write – logical. But if I say a formula, sometimes you will feel all

[writing] is the formula because I write a lot of passage like these from the high school. . .

. But if you write too much of this papers then you will feel very boring.

Tim's feelings of disappointment expressed his sense of monotony in reproducing "formulas" of

structure while also expanding on disappointment participants expressed in Chapters 7 and 8

when expatriate instructors continued teaching skills they had already grasped in high school.

Disappointment extended to participants' senses of aesthetics as well. Joy's frustration

arose because "Sometimes we thought that kind of rules is not important. Why don't you tell us

something – some *real* things? Not that kind of pattern, more like the Chinese teacher do – the

beautiful words – the use of words." She went on to outline her English writing process in a

resigned tone, relating dryly enumerated steps:

After that class I tell myself I have to do three patterns, and in the first paragraph I have

to tell people what-what – I have to tell people my opinion. In the second paragraph I

have to build up, and then the final I have to do some conclusion. I still remember . . . he

told us that every paragraph must include about three to five sentences.

Joy's statement echoes those of other participants who depicted the English composition process

through a series of numbers and lists while lamenting expatriate instructors' perceived disregard

for the "beautiful" writing they found satisfying in Chinese composition.

Personal frustration with English expression. Accompanying their disappointment in

the aesthetics of their English writing, participants often described a demoralizing inability to

fully express themselves in their second-language compositions. In these discussions, learners'

reflections often turned from the purely academic. They made fewer direct references to their

instructors, instead expressing their experiences of composition learning in more personal terms of frustration and disappointment.   Joy continued to describe her English writing process saying, "I felt a little bit bummed. You know – how to say – I can't really enjoy the writing itself. What I'm doing is basically following the rules. I can express my opinion but not that freely." Such feelings accompanied a degree of perceived powerlessness in contrast to her ownership of Chinese language – a dichotomy she pointed out by asserting, "When I write in Chinese, I can have control." In fact, several learners described English composition as something one learns to "control". Disregard for beauty was also a frequently perceived feature of English writing when participants spoke of their frustrations with expression. Like Joy, Lily attributed her frustration to her expatriate instructor Keith's focus on argumentative format and structure:

> I expect there is more styles, and more beautiful [writing]. I want to know how the foreigner writers write novels, write their essays and how they understand. Maybe they are different from us, but I can just guess. I expect for my foreigner teacher to know more about the beauty. I think the literature is much more beauty than the argument, than the formal style.

Leaners like Joy and Lily felt disappointed in instructors who confined writing instruction to formal academic genres. They expressed not only feeling uninspired by their English writing, but also believing they were missing out on other forms that allowed expressive beauty in their second language.

For others the sense of frustrated expression was itself inherently structural and linguistic. In her participant essay, Cookie admitted she feared her second-language expression distorted her meaning, and elaborated in our discussion. "We don't have so much vocabulary, and sentence structure," she lamented. "Maybe we can only write some not so difficult and complex

153

sentence structure". Opal spoke of similar frustration with limitations imposed by her English vocabulary when she explained,

> When I was writing in English sometimes I am limited by the use of the words of vocabulary. I mean the usage. Maybe I know the words if I want write it . . . [but] in my mind I do not know how to structure them. Because I know the feeling, maybe in Chinese I can write, but in English, I do not know how to express it.

Participants contrasted their eloquence in Chinese and English more often when we discussed writing than in our talks about spoken English. Their awareness of this gap worked to exacerbate feelings of frustration to an extent that Tim described as "gloomy".

Participants' perceived English composition teaching and learning through a lens that defined rhetorical and grammatical structure as concrete forms of a cultural thought system. Essence of learners' experience with written English was constructed from anticipated meanings regarding compositional structure and epistemology, their own self-assessed abilities and goals, and instructors' framing and presentation of composition. Those with high self-assessed confidence in their abilities found structure an obstacle to expression and aesthetics. Those with less confidence regarded it as a guide through unfamiliar epistemological territory, although one exhaustively demanding in its detail. These findings point to unexamined degrees of nuance between Canagarajah's (2015) critique of unengaging "form-focused and product-oriented" (p. 13) instruction, and Al Bulushi's (2015) contention explicit instruction on writing conventions can enhance second-language learners' confidence and enjoyment. When participants enacted these linguistic attitudes in classroom dynamics, they often found themselves grappling with divergent expectations of spoken English held by themselves and expatriate instructors.

Spoken English as Classroom Communication and Object of Learning

Participants' reflections on English as a medium of classroom interaction expressed complex, often conflicted feelings. Learners often found expatriate instructors' attempts to initiate class discussion inappropriate in a course they perceived as driven by content delivery. They also decried obstacles such as mental processing of a second language in both their understanding of their instructors, and in their own spoken expression. The latter led to feelings of exclusion for some, and a sense of increased responsibility to manage the classroom dynamic among others. Class participation constitutes one of the most frequently addressed topics in research on Chinese learners, but rarely through the voices of the learners themselves. Researchers often examine participation in broad non-empirical analyses (H. Li & Liu, 2011; Riasati, 2013; Wang & Chen, 2013), or survey-based studies confining participants to selecting pre-written responses (Dewaele, Petrides, & Furnham, 2008; Dewaele & Ip, 2013). When learners in this study narrated classroom experiences and internal processes in their own words, they offered personal, fresh, and often surprising observations.

Discussion is Inappropriate for Composition Class

Although participants spoke of courses with expatriate instructors as means to improve oral English, the consistently stressed listening comprehension and exposure to "native" accents and pronunciation over interactive discussion. For many, participatory discussion was an activity befitting oral English classes – which they referred to as "conversation class" – but one outside the focus of content skill courses like composition. The following simple exchange with Cookie not only succinctly expressed this view, but also displayed the manner in which many felt it an obvious matter of common sense:

Jay: Would she have you be in groups talking to each other? Or not very much?

Cookie: We're a writing class.

The incredulous, almost impatient tone in which Cookie delivered her part of this exchange

echoed the sentiments of many participants who felt confused or skeptical about the place of

discussion in a composition course. She went on to explain, "In the foreign teachers' class we

may use lots of time to understand each other. And that kind of wastes lots of time, I think."

Estimation of wasted time in discussion primarily arose from views that it detracted from

pressing tasks in a course anticipated to be driven by instructors' content delivery. According to

Lily, "We can ask any questions [if] we feel puzzled or we can't understand from him. [But]

because this is formal article writing, there is nothing to communicate." She continued to explain

in Chinese that she felt academic composition was far too precise to be grasped through class

discussion. In light of this view, participants often considered instructors' attempts at

participatory dynamics as misguided good intentions further signifying unfamiliarity with

Chinese learning practices.

As discussed in Chapter 8, participants perceived English as subject content, but not a

medium of intersubjective sense-making and learning. Lisa described this dichotomy in

contrasting different classes, noting, "Because the academic writing is about the writing, so we

talked less than the former classes. But when we took the class conversational – about

conversation, they talked more." In context of our interactions, Lisa's comment also highlights

one of the more interesting observations from interviews. Lisa, who often struggled to express

herself in our discussions, and displayed clear nervousness when conversing in a second

language, perceived very little discussion as taking place in her composition class, while others

in in the same class with more confidence in their spoken English described discussion as

relatively frequent. Such diminished perception of discussion was common among participants

who showed similar struggles and anxiety during our discussions. This unexpected disclosure indicates subjective perceptions of learning experiences unaddressed in the literature on Chinese learners' classroom reticence. Learners in this study indicated interpretation of classroom interaction consisted of an individual's anticipated meanings regarding language learning balanced against personal comfort with spoken engagement.

Difficulty and Anxiety in English Participation

In our talks about spoken class participation the learners revealed more of their internal experiences of intercultural engagement than in discussing any other topic. They often lamented time and mental energy necessary to process their thoughts into a second language, a process exacerbated for many by second language anxiety and class management. These difficulties led some leaners to feel excluded from discussion, mentally withdrawing from the class.

Participants frequently reported a very conscious awareness of their mental translation processes back and forth between Chinese and English, a phenomenon Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) referred to as their "internal" or "subvocal" speech (p. 766). Cookie related a sense of mental exhaustion accompanying prolonged periods of English discussion, particularly in comprehending the instructor or fellow students, saying, "Maybe a few words that maybe we can't understand . . . we must . . . so concentrate [so] we can understand." When I asked how mental exertion affected her by the end of a class, she replied emphatically, "Tired!" Some learners felt themselves pushed to a point of mental exhaustion, where they eventually shut down. Oliver admitted,

> I maybe find it not easy . . . because they [expatriate instructors] didn't give enough time
> to let us think, sometimes. Sometimes they will let you have some discussion with your
> partner, but sometimes they introduce some question and maybe after ten seconds they

just ask you, "Oliver, do you know the answer?" And I say, "No," because my brain is not working at all. And I have some blank space in my brain. When I hear the English I just – my brain just broke out, left nothing in my brain.

Like others, Oliver found the pace at which instructors managed, or failed to manage, English discussion constituted a crucial influence upon his capacity to participate in English discussion. Although commonly related by learners in this study, there is little in literature addressing mental fatigue's role in reticence to participate. In rare occasions that authors have noted linguistic-cognitive aspects of class discussion, they most often refer to "difficulty" (M, Liu, 2005), "incomprehensible input" (Wang & Chen, 2013, p. 129), or other similarly vague terms.

Participants expressed appreciation for instructors who posed a question, then paused for sufficient processing time before expecting responses. In class observations, I watched instructor Deanna project material or brief videos onscreen, then pose a related question, encouraging the learners to "think for about a minute" before she expected responses. The confidence with which learners responded in absence of awkward silences displayed their appreciation and use of such time. A faster pace deprived them of this time, and heightened feelings of mental exhaustion and anxiety.

Anxiety was the most frequent feeling learners expressed in our discussions of class participation in English. Sophia gave a particularly vivid description of her internal state when preparing to speak in her composition class. "It makes me nervous," she said, "and my heart beats very strong and I try to calm down myself and use what I think – what I thought, and try to calm down and express myself very good." Sophia's portrayal of herself is especially striking given that she was among the most outgoing participants – an engaging and animated English conversationalist, and a class leader who happily assisted me in contacting other participants. It

is not surprising that less advanced leaners, like Lisa, would tell me speaking out in English during class made her feel "Not a little nervous, but *very* nervous. Sometimes I can't speak out all the things I think about. I just could speak a little things". By noting expressive limitations imposed in English conversation, Lisa showed how many sentiments shared by participants regarding written English applied across all facets of relationships to their second language.

Lisa also expressed feelings shared by many participants when she admitted to greater confidence speaking English in smaller groups. "If there was a group discussion maybe I can talk more with my classmates," she explained, "but if [the instructor] asks me to raise my hand and stand in the whole class, I am a little nervous, so I can't speak so much." Lisa's statement indicates that two facets of Chinese education and culture may play influential roles regarding learners' disposition toward participation. While expatriate instructors in this study did not require learners to stand when speaking, many participants continued this common Chinese practice as a deeply engrained sign of respect to the instructor, or simply as a habit. As I watched this behavior during class observations, it seemed to indicate that some expatriate instructors' attempts to engender informally relaxed atmospheres ran counter to lifetimes of ingrained habit and attitudes. In this way, discussion presented a source of internal anxiety and stress not readily noticeable to the expatriate instructor who perhaps envisioned a relaxed, informal exchange.

Self-consciousness like that related by Lisa indicated continued influence by the traditional Chinese concept of *face* – commonly understood as avoiding embarrassment in maintaining one's dignity and standing and within a harmonious social group. Participants often expressed fear of losing face in a variety of overt and implied ways: "we don't want to lose face because we say the wrong words or the wrong grammar" (Sherry) – "fear to make mistakes in front of foreigner" (Kate) – "It is embarrassing – awkward - when you make a mistake. Your

teacher, your students may laugh at you" (Tim). Karen related the manner in which need to

maintain face can exacerbate second-language anxiety, admitting,

> I can't concentrate [on] what I should say . . . and also worried about if others may listen
>
> to me. I would be less nervous if there are some strangers, because they didn't know me,
>
> so I don't mind . . . what my behavior is.

Participants like Karen indicated that sets of cultural meanings, beliefs, and behaviors they

brought into the classroom, such as standing to speak or maintaining face, added to inherent self-

consciousness and capacity to make mistakes accompanying second-language communication.

In addition to their personal concerns, learners may also experience anxiety on behalf of

the group. Sometimes individual and group concerns come into conflict, as Sherry described

when discussing uncomfortable moments of silence: "If I can say [something] I will," she said.

"I *must* say something – I will help release the embarrassment. But if I don't know the answer to

the question I will look down my head . . . and pray in my heart, 'Don't call my name. Don't

call my name.'" For such learners, choices to speak or not often entailed internal negotiation

between levels of individual and group anxiety. Sherry and others, who spoke up in class to

release collective tension, directly contradicted M. Liu's (2005) assertion in a study of Hong

Kong "non-English" majors. The author claimed "other students' participation in the classroom .

. . functioned as a deciding stimulus" for participation, while learners were less inclined to speak

if "the class is in such silence" (p. 13). It is possible that English majors' greater mastery of the

language accounts for the willingness of some to break awkward silences.

Exclusion, silence, and management. Participants' responded in a variety of ways to

anxiety, self-consciousness, or simple disinterest regarding discussion. Learners described both

voluntary self-exclusion and perceived imposed exclusion by others who they felt more

conversationally adept. Some spoke of relying on others to carry discussion, while others told me they felt responsible for the class through their own frequent contribution. In most responses, learners exercised agency as they sought to manage the classroom environment, its dynamics, and the expectations of their expatriate instructors.

Several participants felt excluded from participation by perceived limitations of their own capacities for spoken English and the superior abilities of others. In discussing time she needed to formulate an English response, Lisa conceded she felt excluded from an elite group of learners who seemed quicker and more articulate. According to her, "There is a group but we can't join their conversation. I want to join them, but I don't know how to express myself." Oliver responded to feelings of exclusion by withdrawing into states where he would mentally "just get out of the class." He went on to explain, "Just because maybe I'm a little not smart as other students, because some students actually figure out the question. They just raise their hands, and then speak the answers but I just got nothing in my brain." He confessed that after a period of trying, "Then I just stop to thinking about the question because just like . . . I don't know why . . . because . . . I don't want to think about the question again." Oliver described his exclusion as occurring in two stages – first imposed by those quicker than him, then self-selected due to mental exhaustion from trying to keep up. Listening to him relate his feelings in the midst of class discussion, I could not help but feel sad at his belief that discussion provided proof he was "not as smart as other students." As an educator, I could envision a self-perpetuating cycle of diminished confidence and withdrawal described by H. Li & Liu (2011) among learners who, feeling "unworthy or unable to communicate, . . . remain silent out of shame" (p. 962).

Some participants found the expatriate instructor to be at least partially responsible for their exclusion, either by primarily engaging with just the most active learners, or through lack of

161

attentive classroom management. Some learners felt strongly enough to share this in both their interviews and participant essays. After writing of the small group of classmates she perceived as the focus of her instructor's attention, Opal told me in our following interview that discussion in her composition class was often confined to "some students in the front row – they [learners] will interact . . , so sometimes he just talk with those." Likewise, Joy granted that although she appreciated the informal participatory atmosphere encouraged by her expatriate instructor, she wished he would "have a better control of the freedom, about the time given to students to do discussion." Judging discussion as frequently pointless and unproductive in both our conversation and in her essay, she selected to self-exclude and withdraw from the class, describing her engagement in these moments as "Silent – and play with my phone."

Participants in the previous paragraphs shared instructors who conducted loosely structured discussions – Lisa and Oliver in Katelyn's class, and Joy and Opal in Keith's. As opposed to Deanna's structured discussions built around brief videos and activities, Katelyn and Keith introduced broad topics and spurred discussion with probing questions. The latter dynamic, described in participants' interviews and essays, and supported by my class observations, called on learners to mentally and linguistically navigate more ambiguous exchanges. Dewaele & Ip (2013) asserted correlation between learners' ambiguity tolerance and their capacity for comfortable participation, but learners in this study indicated the degree of ambiguity introduced by instructors to be equally influential.

Participants also centered the instructor in one of the most striking and surprising findings in this study. Learners revealed that some embarrassment they felt during prolonged silences was on behalf of the instructor, rather than themselves. This perspective is one I never encountered in the volumes of literature on Chinese learners and classroom silence. Participants

described sympathetic responses to expatriate instructors they portrayed as looking earnestly and desperately into a silent classroom. This response speaks to learners' perceptions of ownership – even stewardship – of a learning environment in which they hold partial responsibility for instructors. The abundant literature examining Chinese learners' reticence and participation encompasses studies of personal embarrassment (Wang & Chen, 2013), emotional intelligence (Shao, Yu, & Ji, 2013), and ambiguity tolerance (Dewaele & Ip, 2013), but stewardship over environment and instructor is largely absent. Opal gave one of the clearest statements of learners' responsibility for their expatriate instructor as a foreign presence in the environment. She noted her instructor "is the one who stands alone . . . in the classroom, but we are together. It seems that that thing is just divided into everyone." Opal's statement encapsulates the essential dynamic across all findings in this study. Her perception of the expatriate instructor as a singular, isolated foreign presence within the Chinese environment required her and her fellow learners to take ownership of the experience for all involved.

For Tim, responsibility was mixed with a traditional sense of obligation to the instructor. "In fact, you would feel a little nervous," he admitted. "It's like . . . because your teachers say you should talk . . . but you didn't. You should discuss with your classmates but you didn't, so you feel nervous, or embarrassed. You feel that you did something wrong, and you feel guilty, because you know that teacher is good, is good for you." He further described his sense of relief when another learner would break the silence, dramatizing his statement with a theatrical sigh of relief.

Relying on assurances other learners would relieve prolonged silences constituted one of the ways participants managed class participation – both for themselves and sometimes for the class at large. Reliance on others was most frequently invoked by those who also expressed the

most discomfort or lack of confidence in their own abilities. For example, Oliver confessed, "I don't really raise hands in class. There will always have a student who will, so I don't feel it is my need." Reliance on others often accompanied acceptance of exclusion for some learners, such as Opal, who said, "Sometimes maybe I want to try, but there is someone [who speaks] - so I will thought, 'oh – okay – fine. It doesn't matter.'" The resignation in the last few words of Opal's statement is almost palpable, but less overt is her understanding of class dynamics allowing her a degree of comfort with her chosen actions.

Other learners took more directly active roles in managing class participation, as Sherry indicated when she recounted speaking in order to "release the embarrassment" of silence for the class and her instructor. Kate depicted her role as an even more active source of support to her instructor when she declared,

> In my foreign teacher class, I am a kind of activator – try to activate the atmosphere, because some students are shy. They dare not to speak out. They fear to make mistakes in front of foreigners, because they think that when they speak the foreigner will not understand them. And so I have to be the motivator, to encourage them to speak more. And to our teacher I would be a kind of helper.

While Kate enjoyed playing this role, Craig occasionally considered his similar sense of responsibility a burden:

> I am an active one in class. I feel embarrassed to speak wrong, but also embarrassed to be silence. My classmates know that I will speak. Is mostly okay – I don't mind. But sometimes I feel . . . annoyed and think, "I speak all the days of class. Is not for you to relax – you maybe speak and *I* be silence sometimes. *I* relax." It's okay. If I do not, always someone will speak at last.

In his exasperation, Craig seemed to indicate a sense of obligation in opposition to Kate's contented, even eager acceptance of her role. The difference may partially stem from her perceived role as "activator" encouraging others to speak rather than shouldering the responsibility individually. However, Kate and Craig shared the perception their class needed someone to ease tension, and perhaps move the class on to more productive matters.

Participants assessed English discussion as an anomaly in their composition classes, one they perceived as incongruously introduced by expatriate instructors into a content-driven course. Conducted in learners' second language of English, participatory discussion brought anxiety and silence as learners described awkward moments of avoiding their instructor's earnest gaze. Although some mentally shut down out of fatigue, fear, or resignation, many found ways to manage their own participation, or even that of the class. Most often, participants' based their chosen responses on perceptions of their own abilities. In all cases, their keen understandings of the dynamics amongst learners and between themselves and the expatriate instructor demonstrated a subtle agency rarely attributed to Chinese learners in intercultural situations.

Conclusion

As participants and I explored their feelings toward language, writing, and class discussion, we had many of our most richly textured and personal conversations. They candidly revealed their sense-making processes, learning choices, anxieties, and senses of accomplishment. These discussions also provided some of the most individually detailed descriptions of expatriate instructors. As their English composition teachers, expatriate instructors presented learners with the most specialized traits of a *Situated Other*. As illustrated in *Figure 5*, participants perceived constructed roles of the expatriate instructor as converging in

their embodiment of written and spoken English, although pedagogical, cultural, and linguistic

roles took precedence over the social in strict terms of language learning.
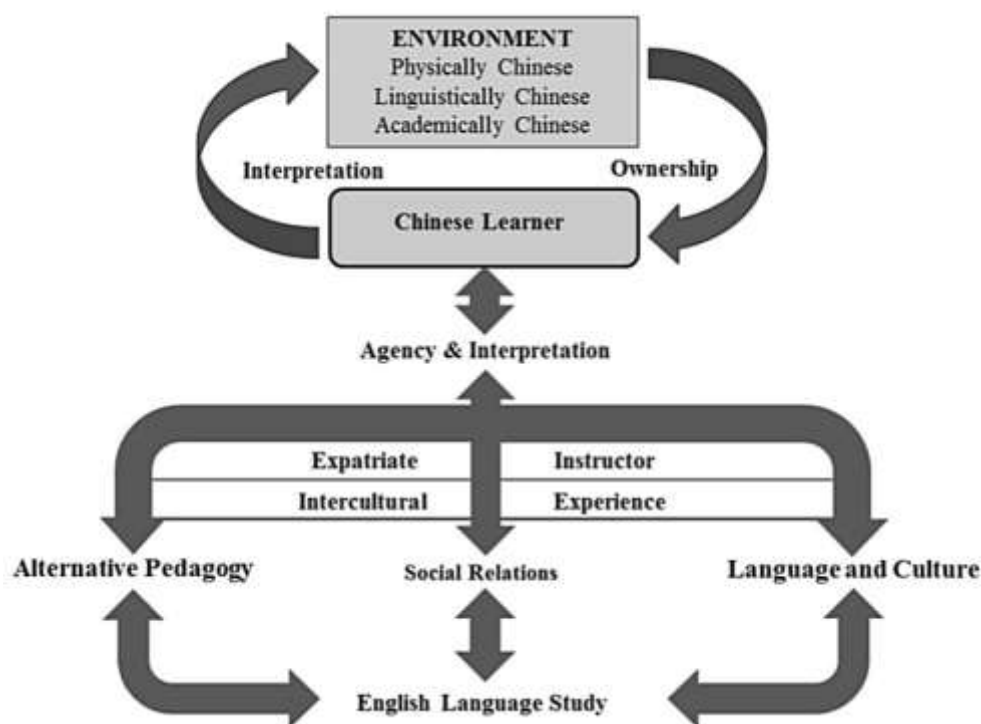
Figure 5. **Situated Other as English Instructor**

Participants interpreted their relationships with English in a second-language composition

course as constant navigation through a series of dualities – written versus spoken, listening

versus speaking, and discussion versus lecture. In their expatriate instructors' course design and

classroom management learners perceived English as both subject content and their instructors'

desired means of dialectical teaching and learning, although they were often skeptical regarding

the latter. Engaging with the language through the expatriate instructor's pedagogical methods

called on them to make countless choices throughout a class period – agentive choices not often

recognized by educators or researchers. Participants wove the essence of their intercultural

language learning experience with strands of self-awareness, decision-making, and management.

As course content, participants viewed English composition with ambivalence. Even those who enjoyed writing considered composition instruction a peripheral role for their expatriate instructors. The learners at SWU maintained that, regardless of content, valuable classroom time with a native English speaker was best spent focused on oral skills, particularly those based in listening. Although it is recognized that native speaker status can obscure certain expatriate instructor roles (Holliday, 2008), researchers have rarely recognized Chinese learners as agents in defining these roles and shaping their classroom experiences based on their own subjective anticipated meanings and goals.

In the learners' engagement with material and composition assignments from their expatriate instructors, a focus on structure – both participants' own focus and the perceived focus of specific instructors – constituted the essential element of their English writing experiences. This essential perception could branch into varied personal reactions. Some learners voiced the opinion commonly found in literature that concentrating on structure rendered writing dry and unengaging. Others, however, found structure provided them with a sense of certainty when navigating second-language expression. This dichotomy opens spaces of inquiry between Canagarajah's (2015) critique of uninspiring structure-based instruction, and Al Bulushi's (2015) advocacy of structural convention as a source of learner confidence. Further, by focusing on written organization many learners saw themselves as touching on a form of Western epistemology – either as genuine enactment or as structural replication of its written form. This perspective runs counter to assertions of Chinese learners' reliance on structure as strictly superficial and mechanistic (Chien, 2015; Hirvela & Du, 2013).

Regardless, participants felt encumbered in efforts at written self-expression and literary aesthetics when composing in English. Some attributed their frustrations to instructors' focus on

167

structure, while others perceived them as arising from limitations imposed by second-language facility. At times, learners felt secrets to greater expressiveness and beauty lay in genres overlooked or withheld by their expatriate instructors such as fiction and poetry.

Participants' attitudes toward spoken English as class participation mirrored perspectives on writing. They largely found discussion inappropriate for a course perceived as necessitating efficient content delivery. In their responses, effort, choice, and management constituted the essence of learners' experiences with English classroom discussion. Describing efforts at spoken participation, learners related mental fatigue and anxiety. Mental energy required to internally translate back and forth between English and Chinese heightened second language anxiety. In tandem, anxiety and fatigue led learners to mentally withdraw from class or feel excluded from the participation they perceived as the realm of more capable leaners. Those who felt excluded frequently believed expatriate instructors' classroom management placed them at a further disadvantage (Anderson, 2014). Unlike passive, almost inert, depictions of Chinese learners and silence common in literature, even less confident learners in this study described making agentive situational assessments and choices regarding management of their participation or withdrawal from discussions. Active management enacted by more confident participants entailed choices of when to break uncomfortable silences and when to encourage less self-assured classmates.

For learners in this study, their expatriate instructors represented cultural emissaries – *Situated Others* bringing linguistically expressed cultural thought systems into the environment. Through their perceived ownership of their Chinese learning environment, learners navigated their learning experiences with rarely acknowledged agency. In this chapter, I described participants' agentive management of intercultural language learning. This culminates the

168

study's findings regarding learners' essential senses of ownership described in Chapter 7, and their interpretive agency illustrated in Chapter 8. In the final chapter I will present a thematic synthesis of findings, and suggest applications for those findings for practice, research, and theory.

CHAPTER 10: SYNTHESIS, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND

CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters I presented analysis of Chinese learners' reflections on sense-making of intercultural engagement with expatriate instructors in English composition courses at China's Southwest University. Participants discussed systems of meaning they brought into engagement, and new meanings they constructed through agency in navigating lived experience. Through environmentally contextualized analysis of my discussions with Chinese learners in China, this study contributes to intersecting bodies of literature examining intercultural teaching and learning. I suggest that the contextual perspective of this research can further inform and refine our understandings of learners in their home nation environments, international learners on Western campuses, multinational classes in education hubs, and Western learners studying abroad.

In this chapter, I first return to my original research questions as lenses to focus and synthesize findings to reflect experiential essence as it spans chapters. Following essential synthesis, I will present recommendations for practice and implications for research and theory. Finally, I will offer my concluding thoughts on this study, both as research and as a personal journey.

Essential Synthesis of Findings

The catalyst for this research was my desire to address the overarching query: *What are Chinese learners' perceptions of intercultural engagement with a Western expatriate instructor in the teaching and learning environment of an English composition class at a Chinese higher education institution?* Three component questions further guided my inquiry:

- By what processes do learners make sense of culturally alternative methods, behaviors, and perspectives introduced by an expatriate instructor?

- What are learners' perceptions of the instructor as a physical, social, and cultural presence?

- What are learners' perceptions of course design elements such as assignments, classroom management, and materials?

These queries shaped my methods, epistemological and theoretical perspectives, discussions with participants, and hermeneutic analysis. Through engagement with participants' descriptions and reflections, hermeneutic methods yielded a textual description of experiential essence from meanings shared across individual learners' lifeworlds. In this section, my research questions frame a synthesis of findings spanning chapter divisions. The essence presented here of participants' intercultural language learning experiences occurred through their sense-making processes, perceptions of expatriate instructors, and perceptions of course design elements.

Processes of Sense-Making in Intercultural Classroom Experience

Essence of learners' intercultural sense-making emerged as a three-part process, beginning with situating experience in fundamentally Chinese context congruent with their existing systems of meaning regarding culture, foreign-ness, and teaching and learning. Second, within this context, learners positioned themselves as the culturally dominant agents in relationships with expatriate instructors they positioned as foreign presences. Third, as the dominant agents, learners achieved a sense of agentive ownership over lived intercultural experience.

Learners constructed context first through selective observation and consultation. Selective observation focused on Chinese physical, linguistic, and academic aspects of the

environment, ranging from geography and classroom affordances to pedagogy and educational policies. Perceived in this way, their composition class occurred in a culturally Chinese environment congruent with their pre-existing systems of meaning. Learners affirmed observations through consultation, describing to me how they discussed perceived experience with fellow Chinese learners and Chinese instructors, thereby orienting their sense-making to an intersubjectively constructed Chinese normativity. Through the resulting congruence between anticipated meanings and perceived context, participants positioned expatriate instructor within a Chinese environment in which they held ownership through cultural dominance.

Learners positioned their composition instructors as foreign presences within this environment through consistent comparison between the expatriates' traits and perceived Chinese contextual normativity. Participants described the expatriate instructor's demeanor, appearance, and teaching methods in opposition to "the regular", and highlighted ways in which the instructor was "different from us", and "very different from Chinese teachers". Conversely, the instructor's foreign-ness supported learners' dominance in opposition to the expatriate instructor who is "the one who stands alone in the classroom, but we (the Chinese learners) are together".

Acting as contextually dominant agents, participants expressed a sense of ownership and interpretive agency. The learners referred to the environment using possessive pronouns, as they related managing classroom interactions, selectively guiding their own learning, and defining their roles and those of their instructors. From the learners' perspectives, the "foreign teacher is trying his best to get into our life . . . our place" – a Stranger waiting to be situated. In the classroom space claimed by the learners as "*our place"*, learners described unspoken negotiation among themselves in class participation, and prioritizing certain types of language learning over

172

others according to their desired outcomes. In these processes, participants adopted interpretive learner roles based on ownership and agency. Through this ownership and agency, participants also constructed instructors' roles based on the expatriates' physical, cultural, and social presences. Ultimately casting their instructors as modifiers of social relations, models of alternative pedagogy, and embodiments of culture and language, learners situated instructors' foreign-ness by assigning it purpose.

Expatriate Instructor as Perceived Physical, Social, and Cultural Presence

Although instructors' perceived foreign-ness could prove problematically incongruous, learners also described it as situationally beneficial, desirable, and often personally endearing. Essence of participants' perceptions of instructors' physical, social, and cultural presences, emerged in learner-constructed roles rendering the expatriate instructor comprehensible and congruent within the perceived environment and their systems of anticipated meanings.

Learners' perceptions of physical presence drew upon instructors' appearances and social use of space. Throughout our discussions, participants frequently used racialized perspectives to describe instructors by height, hair, and eye color, often focusing on traits of pre-existing images of a *Remote Other* drawn from films and television. Wardrobe also drew learners' attention as they often compared expatriate instructors' casual attire with the more formal style of Chinese instructors. Participants also viewed expatriate instructor's use of physical classroom space in opposition to that of their Chinese instructors, as the former crossed perceived spatial boundaries demarking learner-instructor social relationships.

Expatriate instructors' social presences confronted learners with alternatives to their accustomed hierarchical learner-instructor relationships, and participants reacted ambivalently when expatriate instructors' interacted with them as social peers. They enjoyed the relaxed

classroom atmosphere, personally individualized attention, and instructors' self-humanizing conduct. Learners' simultaneous discomfort with conduct that contradicted traditional classroom hierarchies led to an intriguing irony – exercising ownership and interpretive agency to resolve cognitive dissonance arising from unexpected empowerment. In essence, learners resolved the conflict by asserting an inescapably inherent hierarchy that simply takes a more informal form, allowing instructors to be "just like friends" but "still on the upper class" in their perceptions.

Perceived cultural differences proved less problematic for learners. Perceived embodiment of a foreign culture, its language, and its pedagogical practices lent purpose to instructors' foreign-ness, constituting traits they contributed to the environment as *Situated Others*. Learners constructed culturally essentialized roles imbuing social, pedagogical, linguistic, and cultural traits with congruent meaning in their intercultural teaching and learning experiences. Cultural embodiment was so central to learners' perceptions that its importance superseded expatriate instructors' capacities as composition instructors. Situated within learners' desired experience and learning outcomes, essence of their perceptions of instructors emerged in in the expatriates' perceived identities as exemplars and vehicles for experience of culturally alternative thought systems, social interaction, and pedagogical practices.

Perceptions of Course Design

Expatriate instructors' course design required learners' to actively manage their engagement with culturally alternative pedagogy. Participants formed perceptions through consistent Chinese-foreign comparison, and each participant managed engagement according to individual expectations of teaching and learning, assessment of their own abilities, and desired learning outcomes. Participants' observations expressed the essence of these perceptions through three themes – navigating dynamics of unfamiliar classroom management, interpreting structural

174

thought-systems of English composition, and negotiating a personal relationship with English as second language.

For learners, expatriate instructors' classroom management required them to navigate alternative learner-instructor roles in knowledge construction. Accustomed to instructor delivery in lecture-oriented classes, they struggled with ambiguous roles as co-constructors of knowledge in class activities, discussions, and presentations. Participants perceived instructor emphasis on enjoyment and learner-direction that they found refreshing, but they also considered classes loosely structured for the effective content delivery they desired. Learners simultaneously praised the relaxed overall classroom atmosphere, but then would describe second-language discussion as stressful and mentally exhausting. They managed class discussion through acute awareness of dynamics, gauging their own participation according to contributions they anticipated from classmates. Learners' observations on managing participation led to one of the clearest expressions of perceived fundamental ownership over environment and experience, when several confessed to speaking in class to relieve the embarrassment of a frustrated instructor facing a silent classroom – a stewardship over environment and instructor.

Participants consistently felt expatriate instructors framed English composition almost exclusively in structural terms like rhetorical sequence and grammar. From this shared viewpoint, individuals' receptivity varied. Some felt mastering organizational and grammatical aspects of writing constituted engagement with frameworks of a culturally alternative thought system. For others, demands of structure rendered composition arid, mechanistic, and devoid of expressive aesthetics. Whether participants perceived structural emphasis as inherent to English composition or as characteristic of a specific instructor seemed to vary according to presentation. Learners most often considered such focus a particular instructor's emphasis when presentation

175

was formulaic – enumerating paragraphs, and emphasizing grammar. The encompassing experiential essence of these diverse reactions converged in a common belief that the academic task at hand was reproduce patterns, structure and grammar to the best of their ability in written assignments.

Participants brought up composition assignments with surprising rarity, and usually discussed them in terms of assigned topics and workload. Some expressed dissatisfaction with topics perceived as socially or culturally irrelevant for Chinese learners, or as inadequate challenges from an instructor who underestimated their abilities. They often noted they had fewer written assignments compared with friends who studies with Chinese composition instructors. These impressions supported essential perceptions of composition as only an incidental part of their intercultural experience, and many regarded composition as a task to be completed with diligence, but little engagement.

Conclusion

Chinese learners at Southwest University expressed the essence of their intercultural engagement with expatriate instructors in English composition courses as emerging from an experience based on ownership of a culturally Chinese environment, and interpretive agency in experiences within that environment. They perceived expatriate instructors in an array of constructed roles importing valuable, if sometimes problematic, traits and knowledge into the environment. I argue that learner ownership and agency were not merely internal interpretive processes, but also actions carried out as they prioritized their own learning goals, managed classroom interactions, and enacted their own cultural and pedagogical roles. In the following section, I make recommendations for practice to provide expatriate instructors with guidelines for engaging with such agentive learners in diverse environments.

Recommendations for Practice

My recommendations for practice, formulated in response to this study's findings, cover three areas – recommendations for Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) programs, recommendations for host institutional leaders, and recommendations for expatriate instructors. All recommendations share a two-pronged goal - to implement practices acknowledging learner agency in their home environments by enhancing expatriate instructors' practical and learner-perceived connections to those environments. Recognizing that institutions, programs, and individuals vary, I present suggestions in broad, goal-oriented terms in order to facilitate application under diverse conditions. These practices can also enhance teaching and learning in multicultural environments of branch campuses (e.g. Lane, 2011), education hubs (e.g. Wilkins, 2011), and even among international students on Western campuses (e.g. Tange & Kastberg, 2013).

Recommendations for TESOL Programs

TESOL programs should equip future instructors to engage learners' agency through intercultural teaching and learning congruent within their shared environments, and facilitate capacities of educators to navigate those environments as perceptibly capable members. The following guidelines can shape programs that prepare instructors who capably engage pedagogical and institutional environments in ways meaningful to their learners. Such programs can also aid those intending to teach English as a Second Language in their own home nations, or among multinational student bodies at education hubs, to better understand the backgrounds and experiences of many learners they encounter.

Include intercultural teaching and learning components. Culturally focused coursework for beginning TESOL professionals varies, from broad electives on intercultural

competence to required sociolinguistics courses. While well-intentioned, such classes do not fully prepare instructors to address learners' perceptions of ill-defined goals, instructor-learner role confusion, and other issues voiced by participants in this study. Coursework for new language teaching professionals should include a course dedicated to teaching and learning in intercultural contexts. This course can address culturally diverse ways of knowing, learners' social dispositions towards education, and expectations of instructor-learner roles. Intercultural communication components should consider linguistic influence on cognition, and examine instructors' reflexivity regarding their own positionality in intercultural contexts. Central to the findings of this study, classes should also examine fundamental differences amongst environments that are English-dominant, native to the learners, or multi-national and multi-lingual.

These recommendations not only provide practical applications for new language teaching professionals, but should also prove practical to incorporate into TESOL programs. As noted, many programs already include culturally oriented coursework, so the classes suggested here need not entail drastic additions, but simply purposeful design of existing components. Through coursework described here, instructors can better design classroom experiences that introduce concepts and instructional methods with responsive awareness of expected outcomes, roles, and interactions as described by learners in this study.

Address basic elements of institutional context. Policies and procedures taken for granted in an instructor's home nation can take drastically different forms in an institution abroad. Learners in this study frequently portrayed expatriate instructors who seemed lost among policies and procedures – disadvantaged and disconnected to the environment. Literature is rife with expatriate instructors who echo instructor Deanna's lament "you don't know what to ask"

when it comes to administration and policy. Policies and procedures instructors could encounter not only vary from nation to nation, but among institutional types. For example, New York University Dubai could present a radically different institutional environment than the native Al Falah University less than 200 kilometers away. Programs preparing new instructors to ask the right questions will enable them to meet learners' needs and expectations in specific institutional, social, and educational contexts.

No program can detail all procedures and requirements instructors could encounter worldwide, but instruction can provide new professionals with basic guidelines for seeking information at an institution abroad. TESOL programs that enhance understanding of varied curricular forms, administrative structures, and procedures can equip new professionals to map and navigate their new academic environments. Enhanced understanding will better equip expatriate instructors to design and implement contextually congruent and meaningful learning experiences. Congruence will not only improve learning, but also replace learners' images of expatriate instructors as disadvantaged, disconnected foreigners with images of professional, knowledgeable members of their learning community.

These recommendations for TESOL programs speak to the dialogue in ESL research regarding cultural foundations of language teaching and learning (e.g. Canagarajah, 2015; East, 2012) in varied contexts, including international branch campuses (e.g. Botha, 2013), and even online environments (e.g. Chen & Bennett, 2012). My suggestions also address broader academic dialogues in internationalization of higher education and the need to prepare educators to teach globally in diverse cultural environments (e.g. Gopal, 2011; Hamdan, 2014; Thanh, 2014).

Recommendations for Host Nation Institutional Leaders

Administrators and staff at institutions play significant roles in shaping engagement between expatriate instructors and learners. Leaders could ensure that new faculty from abroad understand curricula and policies, and implement ongoing practices to integrate these instructors into institutional and departmental culture. Through the following recommendations, institutions can connect expatriate faculty with resources and knowledge to facilitate classes perceived by learners as integral, meaningful strands woven into a cohesive college experience.

Orientation for expatriate faculty. Incomplete understanding of their environments leaves expatriate instructors reliant on habitual organizational and pedagogical assumptions that can prove misplaced or ineffective in their new surroundings. As the learners at SWU explained, such assumptions can result in uninspiring, baffling, or frustrating learning experiences. Chinese administrators should trade well-intentioned hands-off approaches to expatriate faculty for proactive roles in ensuring that instructors understand policies, expectations, curricula, and educational and institutional culture upon arrival.

Orientation should include outlines of institutional policies that shape educational guidelines, learning outcomes, and benchmarks of academic progress. As instructor Katelyn and the learners in her class related, redesigning courses already underway to support unexpected policy requirements can frustrate all parties, and engender learner perceptions of expatriate instructors as disadvantaged by their foreign-ness. Conversely, orientations outlining curricular structure and departmental procedures will facilitate instructors' abilities to design courses as parts of learners' cohesive college experiences, rather than the experiences participants in this study often perceived as exotic digressions.

Integrate expatriate faculty into departmental culture. Participants frequently perceived conflicting standards and methods between their Chinese and expatriate instructors. Rather than leaving learners solely to their own devices in resolving those conflicts, leaders should create practices to integrate expatriate and local faculty in departmental functions. Bringing expatriate and local instructors together in departmental committees and shared workspaces will professionally and socially connect expatriate instructors to the environment in ways visible and meaningful to learners both inside and outside the classroom.

Opportunities to serve on committees together will allow expatriate and native faculty to fashion a more cohesive academic environment for learners – a departmental culture in which learners perceive expatriate instructors as members rather than peripheral visitors. Faculty from abroad are often consigned to separate meetings, described by instructors Deanna, Katelyn, and Keith as presenting few opportunities to participate in core departmental functions, or to be adequately informed of policy or curricular developments. Chinese-expatriate committees for curriculum development, textbook selection, and other departmental matters can alleviate stark, fundamental learner-perceived differences between courses taught by Chinese and expatriate instructors. When committee decisions allow for instructor autonomy, expatriate instructors can still present the culturally based alternatives in course design and pedagogical methods prized by learners, but without perceived differences in standards and learning outcomes. Committee participation will also facilitate access to information on departmental and institutional policies, practices, and developments. When instructors no longer appear uninformed or reliant on learners as sources of information – a dynamic described by both Deanna and Katelyn – it is likely to diminish learners' perceptions of instructors' foreign-ness in terms of disconnection and disadvantage.

Shared native-expatriate workspaces could also more fully integrate expatriate faculty into the social, academic, and physical environment. Segregating faculty into separate cultural spaces is antithetical to intercultural engagement, and reifies expatriate instructors' physical foreign-ness within the environment. By arranging shared spaces among native and expatriate faculty, leaders fashion environments of opportunity to communicate, socialize, and collaborate. Social workplace integration and exposure to day-to-day developments will allow expatriate instructors to more completely situate themselves within the environment. In the classroom, instructors more deeply attached to the environment will be equipped to present more congruent, environmentally informed teaching and learning experiences. Participants in this study also expressed acute awareness of cultural and social messages communicated by space. In light of this, consider the different perceptions of learners encountering their expatiate instructors among local faculty versus visiting them in cloistered "foreigner-spaces".

Goals for these recommendations are twofold. First, practices can construct more direct instructor connections to the environment that better equip them in all facets of creating and implementing meaningful, relevant experiences with learners. Second, suggestions here will provide perceivable means for learners to situate experiences with expatriate instructors, and the instructors themselves, more firmly within the perceived environment. In such context, learners can better construct a sense of purpose regarding knowledge and skills created in their classes, as well as intercultural and linguistic encounter.

Practices suggested here can aid in more fully contextualizing the intercultural communication studies within business literature that are so often applied to organizational theory for education institutions (e.g. Baryshnikov, 2014; Stahl & Tung, 2015). Recommendations also directly address ESL literature on intercultural adjustment for teachers

abroad (e.g. S. Liu & Wang, 2012; Shi & Yang, 2014; Stanley, 2013), and emerging global mobility studies examining enculturation and cultural identity among international educators (e.g. Ali, 2014; Kim, 2015; Lam, 2013).

Recommendations for Expatriate Instructors

Understanding learners' perceptions of intercultural engagement with expatriate instructors guided this study from its impetus to final analyses. Accordingly, recommendations in this section directly address learners' agency in interpreting learner-instructor positionality, and in constructing meaning from intercultural experience. The following recommendations address four primary areas; (1) bridging the learners' and instructors' culturally-based expectations of teaching and learning to address participants' perceived dissonance, (2) guiding classroom activity to ameliorate learners' dissatisfactions in participation; (3) recognizing roles of first language in learning, and (4) meeting diverse learner dispositions toward second-language composition.

Contextualize the culturally alternative. Throughout our discussions, learners' consistently described painstaking processes to reconcile existing systems of meaning with intercultural experience. Most often sense-making entailed first contextualizing new information and perspectives within familiar contexts. Expatriate instructors could accompany and guide learners through this process by providing means for them to place new concepts and methods in meaningful context. Toward these ends, educators can present mutually supportive goals and methods, guide learners to compare and connect cultural concepts, and center relevance in designing activities and assignments.

When expatriate instructors draw clear connections between pedagogical methods and defined goals, they present learners with means to contextualize learning experiences as cohesive

means toward their desired outcomes. Assignments and classroom activities presented as means to specific, prioritized goals can guide learners to perceive activities and assignments as purposeful, rather than simply novel experiences of "what foreigners do." In syllabi and introductions to each class session, instructors can frame outcomes and methods in pairings of "What we will do" and "What we will learn". Connections should also consider learner-perceived instructors' roles. Rather than attempt to mitigate learners' agency in role construction and desired outcomes, expatriate instructors can use those roles to set learning priorities and focus while fulfilling expected roles and meeting learner's self-determined needs. For example, many participants considered expatriate-taught composition courses primarily opportunities for oral practice, so instructors can state improved speaking as a secondary course goal, accomplished through discussion of writing methods and concepts. Such practices are not dependent on a specific cultural context, and can therefore serve multi-national class environments, such as education hubs or institutions with an international student presence.

Expatriate instructors can also guide leaners through compare-and-connect processes, bridging past learning experiences with their new intercultural experiences. Learners at SWU perceived their intercultural experiences as occurring in a dominantly Chinese environment. By starting from a Chinese perspective and moving into the culturally alternative, instructors provide means for learners to more fully contextualize alternatives within existing systems of meaning. As discussion moves from comparison to connection, learners may also position the instructor who introduces these concepts more firmly within the environment.

Finally, instructors can aid in learning and contextualized sense-making through mindfulness of the academic, social, and cultural relevance learners in this study often found lacking. Participants told me they frequently considered writing and discussion topics irrelevant

to their lives and goals. For writing assignments, instructors could allow learners to select their own topics within a set of purposeful guidelines and expectations that present academically relevant challenges to grow and strengthen existing abilities. For discussion topics, steps previously recommended for connecting prioritized learning goals and methods should highlight academic relevance. Recommendations for culturally contextualized instruction can contribute to ESL practice and research in language teaching and learning (e.g. Canagarajah, 2015; East, 2012; Hull, 2004) by offering perspectives that help expatriate instructors congruently position themselves in the academic and cultural environment they share with learners. As noted in the introduction, these practices can also contribute to more satisfying teaching and learning experiences in multicultural environments of branch campuses (e.g. Lane, 2011), education hubs (e.g. Wilkins, 2011), and among international students on Western campuses (e.g. Tange & Kastberg, 2013) by facilitating learners' capacities to assert and share cultural identities in the classroom.

Structure and guide classroom activity. Free-form discussions familiar to expatriate instructors felt out of place to the learners at SWU, particularly in a class perceived as driven by content learning and skill acquisition. Participants voiced aversion to discussion due to second-language anxiety, sense of exclusion, lack of confidence in their capacities for valuable contribution, and perceptions of fellow learners as illegitimate sources of academic knowledge. To address aversion to discussion, expatriate instructors could carry out two intertwined practices – guided framing of topics, and enacting learner legitimacy as peer educators. Although these recommendations arose in response to Chinese learners' reticence, they apply to any environment where learners must navigate second-language participation, and unfamiliarity with discussion as a learning activity.

185

Guided framing refers to presenting topics in conceptually concise themes, then building discussion toward a set of conclusions derived from learner contributions. Thoughtfully guided discussion can address a number of problems participants described. The practice can ameliorate perceptions of discussion as an aimless distraction from content and skills by lending recognizable structure, familiar elements of instructor guidance, and focus on learning outcomes. When instructors frame themes in concise statements and questions, learners may find translating concepts and responses back and forth between languages more manageable, and less intimidating and mentally exhausting. As instructors introduce each framed theme, they should allow learners a minute or more to process and discuss among themselves before responding, a practice Deanna successfully implemented in discussions at SWU.

Participants also felt discussion lacked learning value because they did not perceive fellow learners as sources or partners for constructing legitimate knowledge. Instructors can use the meanings learners attach to classroom space for bolstering legitimacy of learner-constructed knowledge in discussion. As a framed discussion progresses, the instructor can organize learner contributions on the board or screen, thereby physically giving them the perceived position and form of "legitimate knowledge." Seeing their words and those of their classmates organized into a cohesive learning presents several possible benefits for learners. They can visually perceive participation as contribution to a group endeavor, rather than a culturally discouraged ostentatious, disruptive display of self-importance. Learners can also gain confidence in their own capacities and those of other learners in knowledge construction, benefit from contributions by their cultural and linguistic peers, and strengthen dimensions of ownership and agency learners expressed in their intercultural learning experiences.

These practices are not to "remedy" learners' dispositions toward class discussion, or to somehow trick them into interaction. One should assume learners' desires for activities that are linguistically and cognitively comprehensible and educationally purposeful match those of their instructors. My recommendations build upon and expand existing ESL literature on second language anxiety and classroom reticence (e.g. Dewaele & Ip, 2013; Li & Liu, 2011; Liu & Jackson, 2008; Riasati, 2013), and assertions of agency in teaching and learning research in discourse theory (e.g. Ha & Li, 2014). Like many of these authors, my goals here are to give expatriate instructors guidelines to design activities and engender dynamics that render discussion perceptibly congruent to the learners and their environment.

Incorporate roles of first language into learning. In our discussions, even learners with the most advanced, confident grasps of English indicated Chinese as their primary language of cognition and social engagement. Therefore, instructors should reconsider the "English only" rule common in expatriate-taught classes. Expatriate instructors must primarily conduct class in English, both for learning purposes and their own linguistic limitations. However, group work and brief exchanges among classmates present opportunities for learners to use Chinese to cognitively engage with new concepts.

Incorporating first language can enhance cognition and shared knowledge construction, increase opportunities to contribute, and facilitate perceptions of composition as the course's purpose. Nearly all participants described varying degrees to which Chinese remained their internal language for processing new information and concepts, and for formulating their own contributions to English discussion. When learners can mutually exchange ideas, ask questions, and think through concepts aloud in their first language, this internal world is freed from the isolation imposed in a monolingual English classroom. Some learners at SWU felt further

187

isolated by either real or perceived inabilities to follow and contribute to English discussion. Learners like these can gain feelings of inclusion, value, and confidence through Chinese engagement with classmates. Their classmates can also benefit from perspectives that would have otherwise gone unvoiced, creating opportunities that not only enhance learning, but also engender perceptions of fellow learners as legitimate partners in learning.

In a classroom of second-language English speakers, the concept of the English-only environment is a fallacy. Internal worlds of learners are filled with their first language in any environment. By integrating Chinese into classroom activities, instructors can help learners build connections between dichotomies of *internal versus external* and *Chinese versus foreign*. They can also facilitate similar connections between language and thought that are mindful of individualistic agency among diverse learners in English composition learning. These recommendations can further an emerging strain in ESL literature advocating the cognitive benefits of first-language use (e.g. Jan et al., 2014; Moore, 2013). They also provide real life practices reflecting linguistics scholarship applying Vygotskian sociocultural theory (e.g. Meier, 2017; Palmer, Martinez, Mateus & Henderson, 2014; Payant, 2015) to social construction of knowledge.

Address diverse dispositions toward composition through culture. Participants in this study demonstrated that Chinese learners are not homogenous in their dispositions toward English composition. Expatriate composition instructors must recognize these divergent dispositions, and then locate shared interests to provide a core around which to construct teaching and learning. Such diversity may be even more pronounced among nationally and culturally diverse international leaners in a variety of institutional environments worldwide. All learners I spoke with were intrigued by engaging with the representative of another culture. I

188

suggest expatriate instructors accommodate this interest to foreground English writing as engagement with a culturally alternative thought system. By allowing learners to explore their cultural curiosity, instructors can render composition meaningful to learners with varied backgrounds, interests, abilities, and confidence levels.

This recommendation is best explained through a possible example in which instructors introduce organization of an argumentative essay using an exercise in learners' conceptual modeling of its cultural thought system. The instructor can present a standard argumentative outline, and then divide the class into groups to represent the outline as a model of their perceptions of its inherent thought system – essentially "draw an argumentative essay". When finished, groups can post their models throughout the room, and take time to examine one another's work. In ensuing class discussion, learners can present their models and comment on other groups' in a guided discussion of writing and culture.

In such activities, those with little interest or confidence in English composition can engage with concepts and connections in a momentary break from writing, while those with more confident interest can delve into the ideas underlying an activity they already enjoy. Learners who rely on structure for a sense of security can construct a more nuanced and assured grasp of its internal logic, while those who find emphasis on structure dry and uninspiring have the opportunity to consider it in a more meaningful, expressive light. More importantly, all learners can engage with an aspect of English composition through their shared curiosity regarding culturally alternative thought systems. The learner-centered focus of these recommendations speaks to the strains of applied linguistics in ESL literature on composition, rhetoric, and culture (Connor, 2011; He, 2014; Huang & Wang, 2011), particularly research

examining learners' intercultural sense-making through academic writing (Canagarajah, 2015; Chien, 2015; Hirvela & Du, 2013)

Conclusion

These recommendations for practice among TESOL programs, institutional leaders, and expatriate instructors intersect at the goal of facilitating meaningful intercultural engagement and learning between expatriate instructors and learners in a variety of cultural and multicultural settings. Acknowledging learners' interpretive agency, these practices can facilitate instructors positioning of themselves and their teaching within the perceived environment, experiences, expectations, and goals of learners worldwide. Suggestions here are not confined to environments of relative cultural homogeneity among learners, like those at SWU. Educators can also apply these recommendations at international branch campuses, multi-cultural student bodies at global education hubs, and among international students. In the following implications for scholarship, I apply these same perspectives and criteria to suggesting implications for research and theory.

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Implications for Scholarship

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Based on the findings of this study, I present five recommendations for further scholarship. The first three recommendations call for specifically focused studies of environment, comparative instructor-learner experiences, and sense-making as a form of engagement. The third and fourth recommendations suggest theoretical perspectives for understanding engagement with individuals perceived as culturally foreign, and for re-framing post-colonial perspectives on language. Where relevant, I also highlight the limitations of my study that leave open these avenues for continued inquiry.

Foreground Context in a Variety of Environments

The impetus for this study became its most essential finding – the assertion that cultural environment is fundamental to learners' perceptions of intercultural teaching and learning experiences, and to the roles played by themselves and instructors in those experiences. This study's findings provide implications for both empirical investigations into teaching and learning, and theoretical perspectives regarding the phenomenon of context itself.

By foregrounding cultural, linguistic, and social contexts in varied environments, researchers can expand on limitations presented by conditions in the single institution in this study. For example, a learner-centered study at a Western institution's branch campus in China could provide intriguing counterpoints to the findings here. How might learners express different perspectives on ownership in a "transplanted" version of the expatriate instructor's institutional environment? Further contextual research can add analytical layers unfolding into richly textured depictions of diverse intercultural teaching and learning experiences.

Contextual focus can also tease out complex differences often hidden under cultural generalizations by comparing findings among learners who share a culture, but study in different environments. In this way, participants' perspectives that emerged in this study speak to current debates in comparative education research regarding cultural essentialism in our assumptions about learners (e.g. Chen & Bennet, 2012; Clason, 2014; Foster & Stapleton, 2012). Findings here can also enter into critical studies on methodological nationalism (e.g. Chernilo, 2011; Shahjahan & Kezar, 2013), replacing the nation-state as unit of analysis for international education with paradigms that acknowledge complex interplay between individuals, culture, and the environment.

Examine Instructor and Learner Perceptions in the Same Classes

The brief interviews I conducted with expatriate instructors presented intriguing points of intersection and divergence with the perceptions learners expressed in more extensive discussions. Studies comparing perceptions by expatriate instructors and home nation learners could expand on perspectives limited here to learners' perspectives on intercultural teaching and learning experiences. A handful of studies have demonstrated the potential for invigorating multiple areas of comparative education scholarship by adding instructor-learner balance to the methods and perspectives in this study (e.g. Pan & Block, 2011; Shi, 2009). Additional inquires can both expand and refine the currently sparse body of qualitative research concerning personal and pedagogical adjustments of globally mobile educators (e.g. Kim, 2015; Lam 2013; Shi & Yang, 2014; Stanley, 2013). In such research, case studies of instructors and learners in the same class can facilitate nuanced comparative analysis of the dynamic interplay between cultural agents in the classroom. Ethnographic elements could further expand case studies by acknowledging the researcher as a yet a third source of analysis.

By pinpointing areas of connection and disconnection between instructors and learners, such studies can also contribute to comparative education scholarship on intercultural teaching and learning (e.g. Chan 2010; Rao & Chan, 2010; Kriebernegg, Maierhoffer, & Penze, 2014) in varied cultural environments. Studies conducted in education hubs, where many learners may also be expatriates (e.g. Wilkins, 2011), could uncover very different dynamics taking place when both instructor and learners are out of their home-nation cultural environments. Conversely, research among instructors and international students on Western campuses (e.g. Kingston and Foreland, 2008; Tange & Kastberg, 2013) can speak to dialogues concerning intercultural communication, teaching, and learning.

Conceptualize Sense-Making and Cognition as Engagement

Participants' consistent mental engagement related in this study undermines the image of the "passive" Chinese learner. While much current literature refutes the passive-learner stereotype, authors typically support their arguments with examples of Chinese learners espousing enjoyment of class participation or engaging actively *in a Western sense* – speaking out in class discussions to express opinions or ask questions. However, findings in this study indicate we may not need to *address problems of reticence*, but instead *understand forms of engagement*, as the participants indicated significant mental engagement not readily evident in outward behaviors reported in literature. In recent comparative education studies on intercultural teaching and learning, authors have worked to disengage from cultural assumptions regarding engagement, such as reconceptualizing memorization as an active form of learning in some cultures (e.g. Chan, 2010; Kingston & Forland, 2008; Law et al., 2010; P. Tan, 2011; Watkins, 2008; Yu, 2014). Theoretical scholarship on culture and cognition within the field of comparative education (Canagarajah, 2002; Tian & Low, 2011) can find new applications by turning this same lens to discussion-based learning

Further empirical inquiry into the type of sense-making and cognition described by participants at SWU, can expand this dialogue on re-framing engagement by taking it *into the classroom*. Using these perspectives, extensive discussions of classroom reticence in TESOL literature can dig deeper to find the cognitive activity underlying emerging scholarship that acknowledges learners' agentive choices in silence and participation (e.g. Cheng, 2010; Ha & Li, 2014; Tian & Low, 2011; Zhou, Knoke, & Sakamoto, 2005).

Envision New Paradigms of Engagement with Cultural Others

I created the Progression Model of Intercultural Engagement in Chapter 4 out of

necessity. Existing frameworks based on remote representations of a cultural Other proved

inadequate to frame participants' personal interactions with expatriate instructors, while

intercultural competence and communication models reflected Western-centric perspectives only

marginally applicable to my research. As a framework admittedly created in expedience, the

concepts comprising the Progression Model of Intercultural Engagement call for further

theoretical development. Through recognizing the intersubjective, evolving nature of these

perceptions, researchers can also examine how individuals construct and transform their own

perceptions of cultural self in response to perceived Other-ness.

Spaces exist within the body of intercultural communication literature where we can

further explore processes defining cultural self and other through engagement (e.g. Coffey, 2013;

Marotta, 2009; Uryu, Steffensen, & Kramsch, 2014). New perspectives discussed here can also

provide dynamic frames for comparative and transnational education research on cultural

elements in instructor-learner engagement (e.g. Eringa & Huei-Ling, 2009; P. Yang, 2016), and

transformative learning experiences (e.g. Martin & Griffiths, 2014). Turning engagement-based

perspectives to our own learners in the West, we can introduce new ways to frame interpersonal

engagement in current scholarship on intercultural competencies as study abroad outcomes (e.g.

Ellwood, 2011; France & Rogers, 2012; Savicki & Cooley, 2011).

Examine Evolution of the Post-Colonial Experience with Language

Assertions of agentive ownership by participants in this study complicate long-held

depictions of post-colonial experience with language. When researchers invoke post-colonial

theory regarding global English use, perspectives often reflect the world of early de-colonization

from the 1940s through the 1960s. While the languages of imperialism – primarily English and

French – were once strictly imperial impositions, their use in the post-colonial world is now

more complex. Although English is still *lingua franca* within an unbalanced world system of power, in nations like China, learners, educators, and policy makers have exerted assertive agency in taking possession of the language for their own goals. Canagarjah's (2013) assertion that strictly colonial understandings of language use may belong "to an earlier order" (p. 214), is a currently rare reflection of the perspectives expressed by learners at SWU.

Through implications of learner agency found in this study, education research in post-colonial studies and critical theory (e.g. de Oliveira Andreotti, 2014; Galeh & Dorcheh, 2015) can frame paradigms of power and language that recognize complexities of our contemporary world. Authors of ESL and transnational education literature can further build upon findings in this study for analyses of language, agency, and power in the intercultural classroom (e.g. Canagarajah, 2013; Ha & Li, 2014; Holliday, 2008; Djerasimovic, 2014).

Conclusion

As I conclude this study, my thoughts return to the evening in Katelyn's class recounted in the first chapter. After class, we had chatted while she packed up her folders and markers. When Katelyn zipped up her bag, I thanked her again for letting me sit in on her class, and told her I was going to stay behind to make some notes. I stood at the front of the empty room, and was struck once again by its similarity to my former classrooms in Henan Province. Now, though, I was beginning to understand the worlds of activity among the rows of bolted desks.

Findings from this study illuminate the lived experiences of 17 Chinese college learners as they created meaning in their intercultural engagement with three American instructors. Among the familiar surroundings and rhythms of Chinese college life at Southwest University, their English composition classrooms became sites where language, learning, and culture converged in newly constructed perspectives. In the process, these learners took agentive

ownership of interpreting intercultural experiences in ways only alluded to in current literature. I hope the reader can also feel a sense of the personal experiences underlying the analysis in these pages – the Southern China spring afternoons when young learners and I discussed their accomplishments and frustrations, their anxieties and pleasures, and their confusions and understandings. Despite all I learned from our talks, I contentedly admit I finish this study with fresh questions, but no fewer.

If fellow citizens in the global academic community can find both answers and questions in this study, then I have accomplished my primary goal. In a world where intercultural engagement is an increasingly common feature of our classrooms, the learners in this study demonstrated that the process of understanding themselves, their world, and the others who share that world is essentially a holistic act of agency.

APPENDICES

Learner Questionnaire: English

My name is Jay Larson, and I am currently a PhD candidate at Michigan State University. I am inviting you to participate in a research study on Chinese college students' experiences with foreign instructors at a Chinese university. This study will provide information about the interactions between students and instructors from different cultures, and give information that can improve teaching and learning experiences for Chinese students.

Your participation will help me to better understand how students and foreign instructors can create satisfying educational experiences, and how Chinese students view their interactions. This information is for my dissertation on the experiences of Chinese undergraduates with foreign instructors at a Chinese university.

Participation will include two interviews and one short essay. The interviews will take about 90 minutes, and will take place about two weeks apart. During the two weeks between the first and second interview you will be asked to write a 750-character essay in Chinese about your experiences in your composition class. Your participation will be anonymous – all information that can identify you personally will be removed from documents and analysis.

Please bring this questionnaire back to class on _____. I will be in contact with you soon to schedule your first interview.

I appreciate your willingness to consider participating in this research.

Thank you,

Jay Larson
Michigan State University
Doctoral Candidate and Research Assistant
Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education

1. Are you willing to participate in the research described here?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

If you answered "No" you do not need to complete the rest of this questionnaire. If you answered "Yes" please continue to end of the questionnaire.

2. I am:

☐ Male   ☐ Female

3. Where did you grow up (province and city/town)?

_____

4. How many foreign instructors did you have *before* you attended college?

☐ 0   ☐ 1   ☐ 2   ☐ 3   ☐ More than 3

If you answered 0, please go directly to Question 7

5. If you know, write the names of the home countries of your foreign instructors on the lines below.

_____

_____

6. Have you ever traveled outside of China?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

If you answered "Yes" write the names of the countries you have visited on the lines below.

_____

_____

7. Where do you feel you get most of your understanding of Western culture?

☐ Books   ☐ Television   ☐ Movies ☐ School   ☐ Contact with foreign people   ☐ Other

8. What do you plan to do after you graduate?

☐ Become a teacher   ☐ Work in business   ☐ Work for the government ☐ Work in tourism
☐ Go to post-graduate school   ☐ Other

9. How easy do you find it to understand your writing instructor's teaching and assignments?

☐ Very easy   ☐ Easy   ☐ A little difficult ☐ Difficult   ☐ Very difficult

Please write your e-mail address on the line below for the researcher to contact you:

_____

Learner Questionnaire: Chinese

调查问卷

我的名字是 Jay Larson，目前是密歇根州立大学的博士生。我邀请你参加一项有关中国大学生与外教的经验的研究。这项研究将提供关于不同文化背景下学生和教师之间的互动情况，并能提供改善中国大学生教学和学习经验的信息。

您的参与将帮助我更好地理解学生和外教如何创造满意的教育经验，以及学生如何看待师生之间的互动。这些信息将会用在我的博士论文中。

参与包括两个访谈和一篇短文。访谈约 90分钟。两次访谈之间间隔两周。第一和第二次访谈之间，你要用中文写一篇短文，该短文主要写你在英语作文课上的经验（约750字）。您的参与将是匿名的 – 与你身份有关的任何信息在录入和分析时都将被删除.

请将这份问卷做完后返回到你的作文课上＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿（时间）。我会与您联系，尽快安排你的第一次访谈。
我很感谢你愿意参与这项研究。
谢谢

Jay Larson
Michigan State University
Doctoral Candidate and Research Assistant
Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education

1. 你是否愿意参加这项研究?

□ 愿意　　□ 不愿意

如果你回答"不愿意"，则无需完成此问卷的其余部分。如果你回答"愿意"，请继续以结

束调查问卷。

2. 我的性别

□ 男　　　□ 女

3. 你的出生地（省，市/镇）？请填在下面的横线上，例如：四川，成都

＿＿

4. 在你上大学之前你有过多少外语教师？

□ 0   □ 一个   □ 两 个   □ 三 个   □ 多于三个

如果你的回答0，请直接进入第7题

5) 如果你知道，写出你的外语教师来自哪些国家。

_____

_____

6) 你有没有在中国以外旅行过？

□ 有过   □ 没有

如果你回答"有过"请写下你访问过的国家的名字。

_____

_____

7) 你对西方文化的大部分理解是通过哪些途径获得的?

□ 图书   □电视   □电影   □ 学校   □ 与国外接触的人   □其他

8) 你毕业后想从事什么职业？

□ 当老师   □ 在公司上班   □ 在政府部门工作   □ 在旅游中工作   □ 继续读书   □ 其他

9) 你觉得写作老师的教学和作业

□ 非常 容易   □ 容易   □ 有一点难   □ 难 □ 非常困难

请在下面的横线上写下你的e-mail地址，以便研究人员联系你：

_____

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Participant Consent Form: English

This research is to study the experiences of Chinese college students with foreign instructors' teaching methods, assignments, and interaction at a Chinese university. The goal is to better understand how Chinese students and their foreign instructors can create satisfying educational experiences. For this research you will be asked to: (1) take part in two English language interviews about your experiences in your English composition course. Each interview will take 60 – 90 minutes and will be scheduled at least two weeks apart; and (2) write one essay of about 750 characters in Chinese. For this essay, you will be asked to describe your most memorable experience in your English composition class. Research will follow standard procedures and will be conducted by Jay Larson under the supervision of Dr. Riyad Shahjahan. Participants will be assigned pseudonyms prior to analysis, and all identifying information will be removed from transcripts prior to analysis.

Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time with no penalty for doing so. However, if you are under the age of 18, you cannot participate in this study. You can choose not to participate at all, or not answer some or all of the questions. There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study. The interviews will be audio recorded, but you can request at any time that I turn off the recorder. Recordings will be kept in a secure location until three years after this study is completed, at which time they will be erased. Notes that indicate your name, contact information, and chosen pseudonym, will be maintained by the researcher in a secure location until three years after the end of the study, when it will be destroyed. This information will be kept in a separate secure location than that of the digital recording. Your identity will remain confidential in all transcribing, analyzing, and reporting of data. Because this study involves face-to-face interviews, I cannot provide anonymity to participants. However, you privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

Please indicate on the information form if you would like me to provide you with a copy of the findings of the study, a bibliography of resources for further reading on the topic, or both. If you have any concerns or questions regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact the researcher: Jay Larson (jayblarson@msu.edu) or Dr. Riyad Shahjahan (shahja95@msu.edu).

_____   _____

Signature of Participant (Chinese Characters)   Date

_____

Name of Participant (Please use Pinyin)

Participant Consent Form: Chinese

参加者知情同意书

这项研究是了解中国大学生参与外籍教师课堂的经验 – 从而了解学生对外籍教师的教学方法，功课，和互动的反馈。我的目标是更好地理解学生和外教如何共同创造令人满意的教育经验。对于这项研究，我请求您：（1）参加两次英文访谈以了解您参与英语作文课程的经验。每次访谈将持续60－90分钟，两次访谈之间相隔两个星期；（2）用中文写一篇短文（约750字）。这篇短文主要是描述英语作文课上您最难忘的经历。Jay Larson将在教授 Riyad Shahjahan的监督之下采用标准程序进行此项研究。在分析数据之前每一个参与者将被分配一个假名字， 所有识别信息在分析之前将从转录数据中移除。

您的参与是完全自愿的，您可以在任何时候退出，您的退出不会受到任何形式的处罚。但是，如果您是18岁以下，您不能参加这项研究。您可以选择完全不参与，或者不回答部分或全部的问题。对于参与本项研究，没有任何可预见的风险。访谈会被录音，但您可以在任何时候要求我关掉录音机。所有录音记录将被保存在安全的位置，而且数据会在这项研究完成三年之后被销毁，被销毁的信息包括您的姓名，联系方式和选择的假名等任何可以识别的信息。这些识别信息将单独保存，并不会与录音数据保存在一起。您的识别信息在任何转录，分析和最终的研究报告过程中都将保证绝对保密。由于本研究涉及当面的采访，我不能给参与者提供匿名。但是，您的隐私将在法律允许的最大范围内得到保护。

如果您要我为您提供这项研究结果报告的副本，或者进一步阅读此话题的文献资源，请在信息表上注明。如果您有关于您作为研究参与者权利的任何疑问或问题，或有任何关于本研究的任何方面的不满，您可以联系研究员：Jay Larson（larso107@msu.edu）或 Dr. Riyad Shahjahan（shahja95@msu.edu）

_____   _____

签名（汉字）   日期

_____

姓名（请写拼音）

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Questions below indicate topics to be addressed, and do not reflect exact wording or order in which topics will be addressed in interviews (bullet points denote possible lines of further questions or discussion)

Interview 1

1. Tell me about how you became an English major at Southwest University?

- Interest and experience with English
- Past experience with people from other countries/cultures
- Socio-economic background (possibly through discussion of parents' occupations)
- Why Southwest?
- Personal goals

2. What do you remember about the very first day of your composition class?

- First impressions of instructor – personality and / or physical
- What did you expect of the class

3. Describe a typical day in your composition class.

- Environment
- Interactions

4. Can you choose three words to portray how your composition instructor interacts with the class and individual students? Why did you choose these words?

- Learner's degree of comfort with interactions
- Instructor's presentation of content
- Interactions outside of class

5. Tell me about one assignment that stands out to you. Why does this one stand out? How did you approach it?

- Impressions of assignments as a whole
- Instructor's comments on assignments

Interview 2

1. In a few sentences, tell me what the word "student" means to you. Do you feel that this describes you in your composition class?

2. In a few sentences, tell me what the word "teacher" means to you? Do you feel this describes your composition instructor?

3. What role do your classmates play in your experience of composition class?

- In class
- Outside of class – studying, working together, discussing

4. How has this experience influenced the way you think about writing?

5. How has this experience influenced the way you think about teaching and learning?

6. Is there anything we have not discussed that you would like to tell me about your experiences in your composition class?

Aspects to Look for:

- What do you feel is the reason or value for having instructors?

- How the learner understands, or feels about, criteria and grading

APPENDIX D: INSTRUCTIONS AND PROMPTS FOR LEARNER ESSAYS

Instructions and Prompts for Learner Essays: English

Instructions

- Consider this informal writing and do not be with concerned academic aspects.

- Write at least 700 words, although you are free to write as much as you like.

- Provide examples when possible.

- When describing your feelings and thoughts, please write thoughtfully and honestly. Do not be afraid to describe both positive and negative experiences.

Prompt

- Recall a memorable day in your English composition class and describe this class from your point of view. Write in the first person (using *I, me, mine,* etc.), and describe the class in order from the beginning to end. Please include your own thoughts and feelings during class as well descriptions of the environment, and the actions and words of others as you have experienced them.

Instructions and Prompts for Participant Essays: Chinese

写作说明

·**把**这个当成非正式的写作。不需要用正式文体来写。

·**至少**750字，**但你也有自由想写多少写多少。**

·**必要**时请提供例子。

·**当描写你的感受和想法**时，请如实表达并**仔**细思考。**不要害怕描述你的正面和**负面经验。

作文**题目**

• **回**想上值得纪念的一天英语作文课，**并从你的角度来看描述**这个类。**写在（使用 我，我的，矿山等）的第一人，并从开始到**结束描述顺序的类。请包括上你自己的想法和感受，**以及**对环境的描述，**行**动和别人的话，**你都**经历过他们.

APPENDIX E: FACULTY QUESTIONNAIRE

Faculty Questionnaire: *A Phenomenological Study of Chinese College Learners' Perceptions of Intercultural Engagement with Expatriate Western Instructors*

This questionnaire is to collect background information on foreign instructors at Southwest University as contextual support for a study of Chinese higher education learners' intercultural classroom engagement. Your responses will remain completely confidential, in keeping with guidelines for ethical conduct of research by Michigan State University's Institutional Review Board.

You do not need to print this questionnaire. Simply download the form, and you may designate desired responses by clicking to place an X in the box, or type on the lines for text responses. Upon completion please return the questionnaire as an e-mail attachment to: larso107@msu.edu

1. Choose the answer that best completes this sentence: This is my _____ year as an instructor at Southwest University.

First☐   Second☐   Third☐   Fourth☐   Other☐

- *If you chose "Other" please write the correct response here _____*

2. Had you travelled outside of your home nation prior to teaching at Southwest University?

Yes☐   No☐

If you answered "No," please go directly to Question 4

3. In what capacity had you travelled outside of your home nation prior to teaching at Southwest University?

Tourism ☐   Work ☐   Study☐   Other ☐

- *If you chose "Other" please write your response here*

_____

- *Please write the countries you visited prior to teaching at Southwest University and the duration of your stay in each on the lines below.*

_____

_____

_____

4. What is your academic background (degrees and/or certifications)?

_____

5. How would you describe your level of satisfaction with your current position at Southwest University?

Very satisfied ☐   Satisfied ☐   Neutral ☐   Unsatisfied ☐   Very unsatisfied ☐

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WORKS CITED

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