

**Exploring a Summer English Language Camp Experience in China: A Descriptive
Case Study**

Authors

Mervyn J. Wighting, PhD

Assistant Professor of Education, Regent University

Deanna L. Nisbet, EdD

Assistant Professor of Education, Regent University

Evie R. Tindall, EdD

Associate Professor, Regent University

Biographies

Dr. Mervyn Wighting, originally from the south of England, has considerable experience in the education of people from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and has taught in a variety of institutions in the United Kingdom and in Europe. Dr. Wighting has also worked in public and independent schools in the USA as a teacher and as an administrator, and is currently an assistant professor at Regent University in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Dr. Deanna Nisbet is an assistant professor and director of the TESOL program in the School of Education at Regent University. She has more than 15 years' experience teaching at the community college, undergraduate and graduate levels. Prior to entering the teaching profession, she worked in the fields of human resource development and marketing. Dr Nisbet's areas of expertise include first and second language acquisition and literacy for second language learners.

Dr. Evie Tindall is an associate professor who teaches in the TESOL program in the School of Education at Regent University. Her areas of expertise include reading and language arts, special populations, and teacher collaboration. Dr. Tindall has extensive experience as a teacher, consultant, and conference speaker.

Abstract

This paper reports on a descriptive study of a summer English language camp held in China. Chinese youths ages 8-18 were taught conversational English through a variety of classes and activities. Instructors were visiting teachers from the USA assisted by local Chinese teachers. Qualitative methods were used to gather data. Results indicate that the camp was beneficial to the students and to both groups of teachers. Recommendations for further study are included.

Key words: China, communicative competence, EFL, language camp

Introduction

The People's Republic of China contains the largest concentration of English language learners worldwide (Hui, 1997; Zhang, 2004). Of the 1.2 billion people in China, an estimated 200 million are currently learning English (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). Additionally, the need for English proficiency among Chinese citizens is rapidly expanding, largely as a result of economic and political growth (Luchini, 2004). China's entrance into the World Trade Organization and the country's successful bid for the 2008 Summer Olympics have been instrumental in broadening exposure to the global marketplace, where English is the standard medium of communication (Luchini, 2004; Nunan, 2003; Zhang, 2004). In response to such major events, Chinese leaders have implemented policies at the grassroots level to expand the use of English. For example, in the city of Beijing, English has become the common second language for taxi drivers, tour guides, and government officials.

The expansion of English language instruction has also been seen within the country's school systems. In 2001, English was introduced as a required subject for students in primary grades in major cities throughout China, with the directive that other regions of the country were to follow suit as resources became available. This policy change lowered the age of compulsory English language instruction in China from 11 to 9 (Nunan, 2003). Implementation of the 2001 policy is not yet complete (Ashmore, 2003); however, even prior to the introduction of the official requirement, an estimated 3 million primary level students were already learning English as part of their school curriculum (Huang & Xu, 1999). At the present time, primary students in grades three and above (ages 9-11) typically receive two or three 40-minute English lessons per week, while for junior and senior middle school students (ages 12-18), the norm is five or six 45-minute English classes per week (Nunan, 2003; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996).

Although the educational changes evidenced in China in recent years are dramatic, they are not without precedent. Huang and Xu (1999) identify four prominent trends pertaining to English language teaching in China. Three of the reported trends highlight the momentum of innovations taking place within the language teaching landscape of this vast nation. They are: (a) a heightened emphasis on the study of English, as evidenced by changes in college entrance exams and the introduction of many

private sector language schools; (b) a shift from teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) to using English as a medium of education; and (c) a shift in the overarching goal of English teaching toward more communicative competence, as opposed to grammatical or linguistic competence (Huang & Xu, 1999). The fourth trend cited by Huang and Xu is the lingering presence of significant hindrances to educational reform in China. These hindrances are: (a) a lack of qualified language teachers; (b) extremely large classes, with poor teacher-to-student ratios; (c) teaching methods which focus on grammar, vocabulary, and linguistic phenomena; (d) test-oriented teaching; and (e) lack of suitable, authentic teaching materials.

Taken together, the trends presented by Huang and Xu (1999) reveal a growing emphasis on English language teaching and learning in China, as well as some recommendations for changes in regard to teaching methodology, conditions, and resources. Of particular note is Huang and Xu's mention of the shift in the overall goals of language teaching toward more communicative competence, and the accompanying challenges inherent in that process. The question of how communicative competence can best be fostered in a Chinese context is one that has both fascinated and perplexed researchers and practitioners for the last two decades (Chan, 1999, Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Hu, 2005; Luchini, 2004; Ouyang, 2000; Rhao, 2002; Shih, 1999; and Zhang, 2004). In fact, there is considerable debate among scholars and practitioners as to the viability of implementing communicative methodology within a Chinese cultural context. Specifically, recent publications have highlighted the potential for cultural conflict and incongruity when western teaching methods are brought into China without regard for local contexts. (See Ellis, 1996; Hu, 2005; Jarvis & Atsilarat, 2004; and Reed, 2002 for a detailed analysis of this phenomenon.)

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), with its emphasis on interactive use of language for meaningful communication, has been officially sanctioned in China since the mid-1980s. However, as previously indicated, the adoption of communicative methodology has been fraught with challenges within the traditional, grammar-based instructional context of Chinese classrooms.

A key premise underlying CLT is that learners should develop communicative competence, i.e. the ability to use language to communicate appropriately in a variety of contexts (Hymes, 1971; Brown, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1992). In regard to spoken language, communicative competence involves knowing what and how to say what to whom (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Communicative classrooms are learner-centered and characterized by an emphasis on language use, fluency, authentic language and contexts, and negotiation of meaning (Brown, 2001).

English classes in China have historically been conducted using the Grammar-Translation Method, a teacher-centered methodology that is known for producing excellent grammarians, with limited abilities in speaking and listening. As Shih (1999) reports, “The teaching of EFL in China...has emphasized gaining knowledge about the English language rather than using the language for genuinely communicative purposes” (p. 20). As evidenced throughout the literature on English language teaching and learning, there are significant philosophical differences between the Grammar-Translation Method and Communicative Language Teaching which are not easily reconciled.

While only a few studies have directly addressed teacher and student attitudes toward communicative language teaching (CLT), recent findings indicate that both teachers and students demonstrate a preference for grammar-based methodology and a resistance to communicative methodology (Hu, 2002; Rhao, 2002). Students’ and teachers’ preference for The Grammar-Translation Method has been linked by some researchers to the type of testing that is required of Chinese learners of English. Indeed, the Grammar-Translation Method has successfully produced learners who score well on the two main tests required of Chinese learners: (a) the national college entrance exam within China; and (b) the international Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). However, neither of these tests has measured the spoken language of learners; and as previously indicated, students of the Grammar-Translation Method have typically not performed well in terms of spoken language. Liu (2001) reports that after approximately 800 hours of instruction, most Chinese students “are still deaf and dumb in English” (Liu, 2001, as cited in Ashmore, 2003).

The issues surrounding the teaching and learning of English and, in particular, spoken English, in China are complex and multi-faceted; and there are no clear-cut solutions that can be readily implemented, particularly on a broad scale. And yet, with China's increasing exposure to the global marketplace, the present need for proficiency in spoken English is critical. It is within this complex milieu that opportunities for more informal means of English teaching and learning are flourishing. Native speakers of English are welcomed throughout China to serve as models of spoken English in a variety of contexts. One such venue is summer English language camps for children and youth, where native speakers are enlisted to serve as teachers of conversational English, often on a volunteer basis or in exchange for room and board. A review of the literature revealed an absence of studies specifically addressing English language camps.

Purpose

The need for spoken English proficiency in China has created rich opportunities for an influx of informal means of English teaching. Native speakers of English are welcomed throughout China in a variety of contexts to serve as models of spoken English. One such venue is summer language camps for children and youths. To date, little or no empirical research has been conducted on these camps. The purpose of this study is to explore the teaching and learning dynamics at one such camp. The investigation was guided by three overarching questions:

1. How do summer language camp experiences influence the conversational English of Chinese students (ranging from 8-18 years of age)?
2. How are the summer camp experiences different from the traditional school experience for Chinese students (ranging from 8-18 years of age)?
3. What are the most beneficial aspects of the camp for students and teachers and what are the least beneficial aspects of the camp for students and teachers?

Method

Participants

The participants in this study comprise students and their teachers who attended an English language camp in China during the summer of 2004. The 149 students are all Chinese, and the majority live in urban neighborhoods in Beijing. They range in age from

8 - 18; the gender breakdown is 69 males and 80 females. All students in this study are from one elementary through high school facility, and their parents paid for their camp attendance. Students who attend this type of camp are assessed as being of average or above average ability, and generally come from relatively high socio-economic family backgrounds. They were participating in a variety of classes and activities while at the camp. The average class size was 16. The Chinese teachers, who were selected by their principals to assist with camp, are all teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) and are all from the same school complex. The teachers make up two groups: 10 visiting teachers from the United States (none of whom are professional teachers of English) and 10 local Chinese teachers. Additionally there are 24 teaching assistants from the USA. The American teachers, teaching assistants, and the camp leader live in the same geographic region of the USA.

Setting

The camp is organized annually and is sited on the coast approximately 200 miles east of Beijing. It runs for three consecutive weeks and is located in austere hotel accommodation where all participants are housed and all activities conducted. The daily camp schedule runs from 8 am to 9 pm. Students are grouped by grade level in classes. The average student-teacher ratio for each class is approximately 18 students to 1 visiting American lead teacher, 1 Chinese teacher, and two visiting American assistants. Classes meet at least three times daily in a formal classroom setting and run for approximately 45 minutes. The goal of the classes is to improve spoken English so the teachers plan lessons incorporating facilitated dialogues and working with partners in order to encourage oral practice. In addition to formal classes the camp organizes daily activities designed to encourage interaction among the participants. These include arts and crafts, sports and games, and learning activities such as drama, music and singing. Speaking in English is encouraged during all of these activities. Additionally an English Corner is held daily, offering a forum for informal English conversation among students and teachers. Several cultural sightseeing trips are also organized during the camp and spoken English is promoted and encouraged by the teachers during these outings.

Instrumentation

Data were gathered in two stages. Surveys (available in the Appendix) were used for the first stage and semi-structured interviews for the second. All participating students were asked to respond to a language camp survey. The questionnaire contains 16 items measuring reaction to teaching and learning at the camp. Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agree with each item on a five point Likert-type scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. Study participants checked the place on the scale that best reflected their feelings about the item. Scores were computed by adding points assigned to each of the 20 five-point items. Items are reverse-scored where appropriate to ensure the least favorable choice was always assigned a value of 0 and the most favorable choice was assigned a value of 4. Eight additional questions gathered informational data from each student. Visiting teachers from the United States and local Chinese teachers were also surveyed using separate questionnaires. A pilot study was conducted on all of these surveys prior to the start of data collection. In the case of the instruments being designed for Chinese participants, the pilot study was conducted in China by a Chinese alumna of Regent University. Four Chinese students from different grade levels representing a cross-section of the proposed participants were asked to complete the students’ questionnaire. The administrator noted the time it took to complete the questions, and asked the participants to translate the questions orally into Chinese as a way of evaluating the accuracy of their understanding. Unclear or confusing words or phrases were circled at this stage and later refined. For example, on the student questionnaire, the phrase “teaching methods” was modified to read “ways of teaching.” Additionally, “the most beneficial” was changed to “the most helpful.” A similar process was used to conduct a pilot study on the questionnaire for local Chinese teachers, and where necessary, question formats were modified to make them clear and unambiguous. Questionnaires for participating teachers from the United States were pilot tested using a number of subjects similar to the participants who were asked to comment on the wording of each question. Based on the pilot study results, minor modifications were made to some survey questions.

A set of principal questions was prepared for the semi-structured interviews and follow-up questions were designed to probe for additional data. Reliability of the

interview questions was assessed initially by conducting a pilot study with a sample of students and teachers in China in advance of the actual interviews. The pilot study was conducted to determine whether the questions were clear and unambiguous, and also to show whether the questions were easily and fully understood by a sample of subjects similar to the participants. Following the interviews a sample of the analyzed responses was provided to an independent third party to assess them for reliability of scoring, and this peer review provided an external check of the research process.

Validity of the interviews was enhanced using the following procedures recommended by Creswell (1998). First, writing with rich, thick description enables the reader to transfer information to other settings and to determine whether the findings can be transferred to a similar population. Second, the analyses, interpretations and conclusions were reviewed by a professional colleague to help validate the accuracy and credibility of the account.

Procedure

The survey questionnaires were administered to all participants (students and teachers) during the second week of the language camp. A representative of the researchers who had been fully briefed on the required procedures conducted all data collection. Care was taken to ensure that all survey questions were fully understood, with a native Chinese speaker in attendance to assist if required.

Following the administering and subsequent scoring of the survey questionnaires, participants to be interviewed were selected. This selection was taken from within the pools of students and teachers by purposeful sampling, and specifically by maximum variation sampling. Ten participants were selected from among the students, six from among the visiting American teachers, and four from among the local Chinese teachers. This particular sampling technique was chosen as any common patterns that emerged from great variation would be of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared aspects (Patton, 1990).

Students, visiting American teachers, and Chinese teachers selected for the second phase of the study were interviewed separately and privately, and the confidentiality of the process was assured. The semi-structured interviews were recorded using detailed

notes with an audiotape recording as a back up. A full and detailed record of each participant's responses was produced on completion of each interview.

Analysis

The analysis in this case study is limited to questionnaire responses and interview data that were collected. Established qualitative analysis techniques were adopted. A content analysis was performed on the data, examining topics, categories of topics, and patterns across questions. First, using interview questions to develop initial coding categories, data from the transcribed semi-structured interviews were coded and charted for each group of participants. Next, in an attempt to answer the three overarching questions, an across-group content analysis was conducted and the results charted. Finally, all coded and charted data were analyzed again to discover major themes across the two sets of coded and charted data. The analysis was iterative in order to ensure that possible differences in the interpretation of responses were explored. To check the reliability of the analysis, a peer review was conducted to obtain a second opinion on the findings. An audit trail was maintained throughout the analysis. Finally the data, analyses, interpretations and conclusions were taken back to a representative of the participants to comment on the accuracy and credibility of the account.

Results

Results are reported under four categories: overarching questions, most valuable aspects, recommendations for improvement, and emerging themes.

Overarching questions

The first overarching question asked how summer language camp experiences influence the conversational English of Chinese students (ranging from ages 8 to 18 years). The data revealed that the language camp students are highly motivated to speak English. Salient motivators that were identified include interaction with native speakers; the novelty of a relaxed, casual, enjoyable setting; the opportunity to get to know Americans and American culture; attention and encouragement from the visiting American teachers; and participation in games, singing, dancing, drama, sports, and field trips. The data also indicated that students had numerous and continual opportunities to use conversational English in various meaningful contexts with native speakers. This included the following:

1. Interaction in a variety of settings (educational and social) and groupings (one-on-one, dyads, small groups, and large groups) and interaction through a variety of activities such as singing, sports, drama, games, and formal and informal conversations with native speakers.
2. Acquisition of English through direct teaching as well as the aforementioned activities with adult visiting teachers and visiting young people who are peers.
3. Relationship building through social interactions.

The second overarching question explored ways in which the summer camp experiences differ from the traditional school experiences for Chinese students (ranging from ages 8 to 18 years).

Major differences between summer English language camps and traditional schooling in China as reported by students include focus (spoken English), context, content, methodology, activities, materials, and interaction with native speakers.

Specifically, reported differences include practice of spoken English with native speakers; relationship-building with Americans and learning about American culture; use of casual English; and acquisition of more English idioms. Reported differences also include practice of spoken English in an enjoyable, relaxed setting; interactive teaching methods and activities; the absence of homework; innovative practices; relationship with teachers in an instructional setting; and teacher attitude and behaviors.

The final overarching question explored the most beneficial and least beneficial aspects of the camp for students and teachers. Analyses revealed the differences displayed in Tables 1-3. The data show that the students favored learning English with native speakers and benefited from the instructional methods employed; they would have preferred being grouped by proficiency; and they would have welcomed some free time scheduled in the program. Chinese teachers learned new teaching methods from the visiting Americans, and also built deeper relationships with the students; they also would have preferred proficiency grouping and scheduled down time. The American teachers benefited most from the relationship building opportunities afforded by the camp; they too reported that scheduled free time would permit all participants to re-energize.

Table 1

Chinese Students: Most Beneficial and Least Beneficial Aspects of Camp

Most Beneficial Aspects	Least Beneficial Aspects
<p>Learning English</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and practicing spoken English with native speakers <p>Instructional Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure of the day • Instruction and activities in a caring, relaxed, fun-filled environment with low teacher-student ratio and teaching assistants who were peers 	<p>Instructional Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of grouping according to levels of English proficiency • Reluctance of American teachers to correct student pronunciation <p>Schedule</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of time in the schedule for students and teachers to re-energize

Table 2

Chinese Teachers: Most Beneficial and Least Beneficial Aspects of Camp

Most Beneficial Aspects	Least Beneficial Aspects
<p>Professional Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning from American teachers to make classes more interesting and teach with more spirit • Improving spoken English <p>Relationship with Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building deeper relationships and gaining deeper understanding of their Chinese students. 	<p>Grouping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of grouping according to levels of English proficiency <p>Schedule</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of time in the schedule for students and teachers to re-energize

Table 3

American Teachers: Most Beneficial and Least Beneficial Aspects of Camp

Most Beneficial Aspects	Least Beneficial Aspects
<p>Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships with Chinese students • Friendliness of Chinese teachers and workers • Acquaintance with other fellow teachers prior to the camp experience • Unity of the team of visiting teachers • Sharing of gifts and expertise • Team teaching • Personal Change 	<p>Schedule</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of time in the schedule for students and to re-energize <p>Accommodations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spartan-like hotel accommodations and poor quality of food

Most valuable aspects

Analysis of the data also revealed the most valuable aspects of the camp according to each group of participants. For the students it was learning and practicing spoken English with native speakers. Chinese teachers indicated that for them the most valuable aspect was learning new methods for teaching English, while the teachers from the USA most valued the opportunity to build relationships with Chinese students and teachers.

Supporting testimonies regarding the students' learning of English were provided by Chinese and American teachers. Testimonials provided by the Chinese teachers include:

1. A student who did not like learning English under the grammar translation method was motivated to want to become a speaker of perfect English.
2. A student who was doing poorly in English in the Chinese school learned to love English and learned a lot of English vocabulary.

3. A student improved her spoken English and stated that she liked English more than ever before.

Visiting teacher testimonies include descriptions of two students: a boy who was identified as a natural leader who became demonstrably more verbal and a boy who was reported as previously unmotivated who demonstrated a strong desire to communicate; i.e., he made a special effort to speak English at the camp.

Participants' Recommendations for Improvement of the Camp

Although participants reported a variety of benefits of the camp, some areas for refinement were noted. The major recommendations included (a) adjustment of the daily schedule to build in some time for teachers and students to reflect and re-energize; (b) incorporation of time for Chinese teachers and American teachers to interact on matters of teaching learning; (c) provision of more instructional training for American teachers; and (d) grouping students by language proficiency levels. Both groups of teachers (Chinese and American) expressed a desire for further instructional training and all participants expressed a desire for some free time in the daily camp schedule. Chinese teachers and students recommended grouping students by language proficiency levels and not just by grade level.

Emerging themes

Throughout the analysis, three dominant, emerging themes were identified. These themes are:

1. learning and practicing spoken English;
2. building and valuing of personal relationships;
3. experiencing and valuing personal and professional change.

The primary goal of the camp was the learning and practicing of spoken English. Analysis of the data showed that each of the three categories of participants reported that the goal was met. Data analysis also revealed two residual effects that were interwoven throughout the camp experiences of participants, in the form of relationship building and experiencing change. Participants reported that relationships were built and strengthened on multiple levels: student-to-student, teacher-to-teacher, and teacher-to-student. Additionally, members of all three groups of participants reported instances of personal and/or professional change.

Discussion

From the analysis of data obtained both from questionnaires and from interviews, a number of preliminary determinations can be drawn. Foremost, participants in this study indicated that the camp was effective in its primary objective of teaching spoken English. Chinese students, Chinese teachers, and visiting American teachers who were interviewed reported improvement in spoken English proficiency on the part of the students. When students were asked to identify the most helpful aspect of the camp, they indicated practicing and improving spoken English. Additionally, Chinese and American teachers cited specific examples of students who exhibited dramatic changes in their level of motivation and enthusiasm for learning the language. One of the most influential factors relating to the improvement of students' spoken English was the manifold opportunities to practice spoken English with native speakers through classes, activities, and personal interactions. Because this study was primarily descriptive in nature, no inferential statistical processes were employed and the amount of improvement for individual students or students as a group was not determined.

Recurring themes throughout the data analysis suggest that the positive effects on language proficiency and motivation may spring from a synergistic interaction of three elements: (a) the camp context; (b) the interactive nature of the teaching and learning activities; and (c) the opportunity to use spoken English for authentic purposes. By its very nature, a camp setting is removed from the everyday experiences of students and teachers alike. Language camps, where two cultures meet in a novel setting to focus on spoken English, provide students with rich and authentic language experiences. At the camp described in this study, the teaching and learning experiences were characterized by engagement and interaction. Since students and teachers were housed at the same hotel, shared meals, and were involved in various activities and teaching and learning experiences from early in the morning to late in the evening, opportunity to practice spoken English was maximized.

As reported in the study data, the numerous formal and informal opportunities for teachers and students to converse using English in meaningful contexts were valued by participants. From the camp's many and varied interactive learning activities, the Chinese students indicated that drama, music, games, sports, and conversations with

native speakers were the most helpful in facilitating improvement in their spoken English. Interestingly, these informal means of instruction contrast markedly with the type of methodology typically seen in traditional language classrooms in China, where the main focus is on mastery of grammar-based curriculum. Thus, a beneficial aspect of the language camp is that it complements in a limited but distinctly different way the formalized school experience by affording teachers and students the opportunity to focus almost exclusively on interactive use of English.

Perhaps even more importantly, the camp provides a unique opportunity for participants to use English for authentic purposes. One of the primary manifestations of authentic use of language at this camp was in the building of relationships. Participants revealed that relationships were developed and strengthened on multiple levels: student-to-student, teacher-to-teacher, and teacher-to-student. The authentic use of language happened rather naturally as a by-product of the sustained interaction that took place at the camp. Interestingly, while the teachers at this camp were not trained in CLT, the type of authentic language interaction that is the core of CLT occurred. Thus, an important insight from this study is that students were not resistant to interactive language instruction as reported in past studies pertaining to student attitudes (Hu, 2002; Rhao, 2002). In fact, Chinese students indicated that they valued these experiences. Considering the unique context of summer language camps, and the personal and social nature of the language learning process, it is speculated that the camps have potential as vehicles for promoting spoken language proficiency among Chinese students.

As evidenced in this study, other hallmarks of the camp phenomenon are relationship building and personal and professional change. Notably, when reporting on the most valuable aspects of the camp, all interviewees alluded to some form of these elements. Consequently, all participants became learners, teachers and students alike.

Recommendations for Further Research

The following recommendations for additional study are offered:

1. Replicate this study in other English language camps in China to compare results. Since this study is an initial investigation into what is happening in English language camps in China, it should be replicated with the addition of quantitative

- measures to determine the amount of improvement in spoken English proficiency as well as to examine other aspects of the camp phenomenon not measured in this study.
2. Conduct a quantitative study to verify the self-reported data and examine the amount of spoken English learned at language camps and to determine whether the spoken language acquired at the camp is retained over time. Use standardized assessments (pre-, post-, and delayed tests) of spoken English such as the PhonePass Test.
 3. Include a measurement of community since summer camps in general have distinct characteristics such as offering a fresh context, release from the usual routine, a unified focus, choice to attend, a certain mystique of bonding among the participants and the forging of a totally new sense of community.

Concluding Thoughts

This study has provided the opportunity to learn more about the dynamics within one language camp in China. We have seen that rich benefits flowed from this particular camp and all participants in the study indicated that the primary goal of the camp was accomplished. At the same time, participants offered valuable recommendations for making the camp experience even more meaningful and effective.

Researcher responses to participants' recommended improvements are supportive. It is recommended that (a) the daily camp schedule includes time to re-energize for students and teachers as well as time for Chinese and American teachers to interact concerning teaching and learning; (b) the camp director enlist an English language teaching specialist who understands Chinese culture to serve as a trainer-consultant to visiting American teachers; and (c) the teachers group students by language proficiency especially in the more formal teaching and learning sessions.

With these types of enhancements together with others that may be revealed by further research, summer English language camps like the one examined in this study may be an untapped resource that could play a role in addressing the growing need in

China for spoken English proficiency. These camps also have great potential to provide rich opportunities for exchanging individual worldviews, promoting cultural understandings, experiencing professional and personal growth, and fostering meaningful and lasting friendships across cultures.

References

- Ashmore, R. (2003). How the Chinese teach English. *Phi Delta Kappa Fastbacks*, no. 512.
- Brown, H. (2001). *Teaching by principles* (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Chan, S. (1999). The Chinese learner – a question of style. *Education and Training*, 41 (6/7). Retrieved May 26, 2005 from <http://www.emerald.library.com/brev/00441fc1.htm>
- Cortazzi, M., & Jin, L. (1996). English teaching and learning in China. *Language Teaching*, 29, 61-80.
- Creswell, J.W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Ellis, G. (1996). How culturally appropriate is the communicative approach? *ELT Journal*, 50(3), 213-218.
- Huang, Y., & Xu, H. (1999). Trends in English language education in China. *ESL Magazine*, 39(6). Retrieved March 17, 2005 from <http://www.eslmag.com/modules.php?name =News&file=article&sid=32>
- Hu, G. (2002). Potential cultural resistance to pedagogical imports: The case of communicative language teaching in China. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 15(2), 93-105.
- Hu, G. (2005). ‘CLT is best for China’ – an untenable absolutist claim. *ELT Journal*, 59(1), 65-68.
- Hui, L. (1997). New bottles, old wine. *Forum*, 35(4), 38.
- Hymes, D. (1971). Competence and performance in linguistic theory. In R. Huxley and E. Ingram (Eds.) *Language acquisition: Models and methods* (pp. 3-23). London: Academic Press.

- Jarvis, H., & Atsilarat, S. (2004). Shifting paradigms: From a communicative to a context-based approach. *Asian EFL Journal*, 6(4). Retrieved June 18, 2005 from http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/december_04_HJ&SA.php
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and principles in language teaching* (2nd ed.). NY: Oxford University Press.
- Luchini, P. L. (2004). Developing oral skills by combining fluency- with accuracy-focused tasks: A case study in China. *Asian EFL Journal*, 6(4). Retrieved March 29, 2005 from http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/december_04_PL.html
- Nunan, D. (2003). The impact of English as a global language on educational policies and practices in the Asia-Pacific region. *TESOL Quarterly*, 37(4), 589-613.
- Ouyang, H. (2000). One-way ticket: A story of an innovative teacher in mainland China. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 31(4), 397-426.
- Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Reed, J. (2002). The pedagogical challenges for western English teachers in Asia. *Contact*, 28(4), 1-8.
- Rhao, Z. (2002). Chinese students' perceptions of communicative and non-communicative activities in EFL classroom. *System*, 30(1), 85-105.
- Richards, J. C., Platt, J., & Platt, H. (Eds.) (1992). *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics* (2nd ed.). Essex, England: Longman.
- Shih, M. (1999). More than practicing language: Communicative reading and writing for Asian settings, *TESOL Journal*, 8(4), 20-25.
- Zhang, L. (2004). CLT in China: Frustrations, misconceptions, and clarifications. *Hwa Kang Journal of TEFL*, 10(1). Retrieved March 18, 2005 from <http://www.hjktefl.org/2004-Zhang-CLT.html>

Appendix A**LANGUAGE CAMP QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS**

What grade are you in at your school?

How old are you?

Are you male or female?.....

What languages do you speak in addition to Chinese and English?

How many years have you studied English?

What grade were you in when you started to learn English at school?

On the attached sheet are some statements regarding the teaching and learning at the language camp. Please give us your own opinions by indicating whether you agree or disagree with the items as they are stated.

For questions 1-15 please write alongside each statement (to the LEFT of each number) one of the following:

SA (Strongly Agree)

A (Agree)

N (Neutral or uncertain)

D (Disagree)

SD (Strongly Disagree)

1. I enjoy learning English in a group of other students
2. I find the classes at this camp difficult
3. The teachers at the camp make learning English seem easy
4. I have previously learned all of my English at school
5. The teaching methods at the camp are different from those at my school
6. I am learning many new English words at this camp
7. Reading English in textbooks is the best way for me to learn
8. I prefer to learn English by listening to English speakers talk
9. This camp is helping me with my spoken English
10. The teachers at my school make learning English seem easy
11. Learning English is more fun at the camp than at school
12. I find the classes at this camp quite easy
13. I learn English best by memorizing lists of words
14. I am more confident in speaking English as a result of this camp
15. I prefer learning English in my classroom at school
16. I think the morning classes are more helpful for learning English than the afternoon and evening activities

Finally, please respond to the following questions:

A. On a scale of 1-9, with 1 being the lowest and 9 the highest, please indicate how much English you think you are learning at this camp compared to how much English you would learn in the same amount of time at school.

B. What are the most beneficial aspects of this camp for you?

.....

C. What are the least beneficial aspects of this camp for you?

.....

D. What do you do best in English?

-----speak -----read -----listen -----write

E. Which of these is the most difficult for you in English?

-----speaking -----reading -----listening -----writing

F. When you are not at camp, how many hours per week do you spend speaking English? ----- How many of these hours are outside of school?.....

G. When you are not at camp, which of the following do you do in English?

----talk to friends -----watch TV -----listen to radio

----talk to parents -----talk to family -----listen to music

----read books -----read newspaper -----use the internet

----read magazines -----play computer games -----watch movies

H. Why do you want to learn English?

-----to talk with friends for future career -----for travel

.....required to learn it at school interested in the language

.....interested in the culture other (please explain)

Appendix B**LANGUAGE CAMP QUESTIONNAIRE FOR VISITING TEACHERS**

Are you male or female?.....

Have you taught English to Chinese students previously?.....

Have you taught in a language camp previously?.....

What is your occupation at home?-----

On the attached sheet are some statements regarding the teaching and learning at the language camp. Please give us your own opinions by indicating whether you agree or disagree with the items as they are stated.

Please write alongside each statement (to the LEFT of each number) one of the following:

SA (Strongly Agree)

A (Agree)

N (Neutral or uncertain)

D (Disagree)

SD (Strongly Disagree)

1. I find it easy to teach English at this camp

2. Students seem to be more confident speaking English as a result of the camp

3. Teaching at this camp is frustrating for me

4. I think the camp activities are beneficial for students learning English

5. The students are improving their ability to speak English at this camp

6. Teaching at this camp is more difficult than I expected

7. I was well prepared for the non-teaching aspects of this camp, such as living conditions, cultural considerations, and team interactions

8. The students appear to be enjoying the English teaching at this camp

9. I think the morning activities are the most beneficial for learning English

10. I am learning a lot from teaching at this camp

A. What do you think is the best aspect of this camp for you?

.....

B. What do you think is the least beneficial aspect of this camp?

.....

Appendix C**LANGUAGE CAMP QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS FROM BEIJING**

Are you male or female?.....

What do you teach at your school in Beijing?.....

What grade do you teach?.....

How long have you been teaching?.....

Have you taught in a language camp previously?.....

On the attached sheet are some statements regarding the teaching and learning at the language camp. Please give us your own opinions by indicating whether you agree or disagree with the items as they are stated.

Please write alongside each statement (to the LEFT of each number) one of the following:

SA (Strongly Agree)

A (Agree)

N (Neutral or uncertain)

D (Disagree)

SD (Strongly Disagree)

1. Students seem to be more confident speaking English as a result of the camp
2. I think the afternoon and evening camp activities are beneficial for students learning English
3. The students are improving their ability to speak English at this camp
4. The students appear to be enjoying the English teaching at this camp
5. I think the morning activities are the most beneficial for learning English
6. The methods used to teach English at this camp are very different from the methods used in my school
7. I would like to assist with this camp again in the future
8. I enjoy working with the English speaking teachers at this camp
9. I intend to use some of the teaching methods I have seen at this camp when I return to my own school
10. I think all students would benefit by attending a summer language camp like this one

A. What do you think is the best aspect of this camp for the students?

.....

B. What do you think is the least beneficial aspect of this camp for the students?

.....

C. I think the teaching at this camp could be improved by.....

.....