

Teaching English in China: Changing self-perception

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This paper is a mixed-method, grounded theory study of two teams of American teachers who taught 1125 Chinese teachers of English over two years in intensive fourteen-day professional development workshops. Through the use of ethnographic, grounded theory, and mixed methods, the paper will illuminate the paradigm shift from didactic teaching to a student-centred, active learning environment seen through a socio-cultural linguistic, constructivist lens. In contrasting the unique collectivist, authoritarian cultural context of the Peoples' Republic of China with the United States' recognised sense of ethnocentricism, its societal norms and standards, recognition is given to the outsider-insider dialogical and ontological insights with regard to changes in indigenous identity. Pedagogical and methodological practices will be examined in this light. Of all participants in two summers of professional development, it was found that 97.75% reacted favourably to the shift from teacher-centred dispenser of information to an active, student-centred perspective. In the process, Chinese teachers became more confident in their skills and in a dispassionate fashion, compared and contrasted two pedagogical paradigms, and mutative senses of their identity. 2.25% t felt there was little benefit in moving paradigms given their country's emphasis on test scores.

KEYWORDS: socio-cultural linguistics, active learning, ontology, ethnocentricism, identity, student-centred, teacher-centred



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1. INTRODUCTION

It is a country of 1.37 billion people where thousands of cars, motorbikes and bicycles adeptly but frighteningly weave in and out along the congested city streets. It is a land where high-rise buildings are more frequently seen as two storeys while the smog obscures both cities and their peoples. It is as if the sky has written off the noise and throngs below it and the poet's eye can only imagine what really exists below. But it is also a land of appreciative, thoughtful, caring people who allow us as teachers from a foreign country to

be seen apart from the differences of our ideologies and embraced as a family within and across the profession. It is China, where country landscapes are reminiscent of another time, free of the constraints of division and scepticism, and distant mountains majestically stretch to the heavens in search of the peace, tranquillity and beauty of a 4300-year history.

From those who pedal carts of vegetables and others who hawk crawfish on a stick, to the teachers who come to the 'foreigners' workshops,

'It is as if the sky has written off the noise and throngs below it and the poet's eye can only imagine what really exists below'

professional development and programmes, this is China. These are people who, like all committed teachers, come seeking more effective teaching and learning practices for their students, perhaps up to 70 in one class, to learn, grow and fulfil their dreams. It is estimated that in 1986 nearly 50 million people were learning English, 40 million of whom were students (Wang & Storey, 2015). The number of English speakers in China was estimated in 2017 at about 10 million, still only one in ten of the population (Lyons, 2017).

2. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This then is a paper most generally framed against a mixed-methods research model, although it leans rather heavily on a qualitative, ethnographic action research model that examines pedagogical practices. Additionally, it is a socio-cultural linguistic study of the evolutionary process of attendant self-identity. It draws from concepts of the sociology of language, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, linguistic anthropology and social theory. It also attempts to understand other values and other experiences, ones that are not our own.

3. INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORK

The experiences, perceptions and observations as well as shifts in identity are the tools used to understand the comparative lived experiences of the Chinese and Michigan teachers. How the Chinese teachers made sense of the daily changes in their teaching perceptions is the main reason for this study. Additionally, the often-contested sociolinguistic and sociocultural linguistic approaches assisted in interpreting the data as they emerged. While language lies at the heart of every social interaction, sociolinguistics tends to focus on and begin with language used in social as well as in cultural contexts. These researchers study the effects of language use within and upon groups of peoples and the reciprocal effects of social organisations on language.

While sociolinguistics collect data, sociocultural linguists observe the learner's interactions in a natural language setting. They examine the sometimes overlapping fields of mediation, genetic analysis and the application of the social learning theory. For the purposes of this paper, we find interpretive value in both traditions with a stronger leaning towards socio-cultural linguistics.

4. FOREGROUNDING OUR WORK IN CHINA

Our curriculum used a socio-cultural linguistic lens that gave us the flexibility in our culturally responsive classrooms to better interpret responses, engagement, identity development and

identity intersectionality, as well as how to approach our individual as well as collective teaching. We were mindful of racial expectations given both lack of knowledge depth regarding Chinese culture and because of changes, based on a socio-cultural linguistic platform, built into the curriculum.

Two mentor teams of 10 to 15 American teachers taught multiple 10 to 14-day sessions entitled 'Teaching English to Chinese teachers of English'. A special text was written that used the student-centred, active-learning approach (Williams-Boyd, 2015). As with Fisher (1963), we contend that it is through art, language, shared action, and active dialogues that true growth flourishes. Varied venues of English language usage were employed: teaching English through music (the theme for the workshops was the song 'We Are Family' by Sister Sledge, which ran throughout our activities as well as our relationships), using multicultural myths and legends and theatre-based techniques in addition to a designated block of ESL teaching strategies were the largest part of the day. Homerooms, using active learning strategies, had one teacher who would work throughout the P.D. (Professional Development programme) with 25-50 Chinese teachers. Each member of the team also rotated once a day through each homeroom and taught their chosen specialisation, e.g. differentiated teaching and learning, formative assessment, before and during reading strategies

'They challenged students to own their own learning, to be thinkers and partners in the business of teaching and learning'

and incorporating them into learning stations, American holidays and culture, teaching to all of the multiple intelligences in forty minutes, and student learning profiles with an emphasis on types of intelligences. The afternoon ended with all homerooms responding to/on common-question exit cards and in personal journals. The evening sessions focused on lesson design, project and performance-based assignments. The two-week sessions each concluded with a celebration of what was learned by the Chinese teachers as measured through their performances of new-English language songs, fashion shows narrated in English, and skits or play adaptations. The preparation for the celebration used only English. This performance-based assessment was a creatively synergistic display of their English skills of listening and speaking, manipulating and teaching through their newly found confidence.

5. PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Student-centred, active learning classrooms' engagement and success of all students were the foci of the work. They challenged students to own their own learning, to be thinkers and partners in the business of teaching and learning.

In an authoritarian, teacher-centred pedagogy common to China, the note of individual differences is uncommon. However, 97% of all responses were similar to:

'I think now about the students' studying levels. Then I'll know how difficult I'll teach them. Then consider the importance of this lesson in order to realise the teaching goal I'll also try to make or design interesting activities to motivate students: teaching purpose, warm-up, oral practice in pairs/groups, important parts in the textbook, summary or quiz. It is a guide' (July 8, 2015).

96.2% of the participants noted similar critiques:

'I came to improve myself. I have been teaching for eight years. I felt I encounter (sic) the plateau period. I need new thoughts. The 'routinisation' makes me panic. So thank you to bring me new ideas' (July 22, 2016).

In the words of several Chinese colleagues, *'Individuals count more than rules'* and *'Respect every spirit because teachers help students to be better people'* (July, 2015). Although still the authority figure in the classroom, teachers become facilitators of constructed knowledge. In order for young people to become creative, communal, critical and independent learners in society, teachers step off the podium of lecturing and onto the floor of student learning.

In an active student-centred classroom, students are engaged in problem and project-based learning in reading, writing, discussion or problem solving. They promote critical, higher level thinking through analysis, synthesis and evaluation of teacher content. In the three parts to every lesson (content, process, and product), the process segment is the most crucial for it is here that students feel respected as part of a group.

'The teaching style in America is different from the style in China. In China we have a traditional education rule. The student need (sic) to listen to the teacher carefully and get more knowledge. But we have less actions in class. In America, the students are free in class, I think...' (July 23, 2016).

In a traditional teacher-centred classroom, teachers provide basic instruction through the use of lectures and demonstrations. The teacher holds all the power because of his or her outstanding knowledge, while classroom management is focused on rules and expectations. In a student-centred classroom, the teacher and students process information with the teacher's primary role as a facilitator for student learning. A variety of assessment methods – formal and informal, project-based, performance-based, and the use of portfolios – measure learning more deeply than a written test. In active learning, teachers lead by example, showing students how to engage, access and understand the lesson through engaged

demonstration. Is it perceived to mirror our country's ideology? The Chinese teachers noticed comparative differences and felt active learning strategies were an improvement for them.

'Chinese – 70 students in a class. Think we must be humble (sic). America – 20 students in a class. Full of confidence (sic) (July 18, 2016).

'We don't allow the students to do anything but listening to the teachers and doing homework' (July 7, 2016).

'American teaching is very very vivid and active and creative, but Chinese teaching is very more (sic.) serious and short of creative' (July 7, 2016).

'Michigan teachers have classes freely, but our Chinese teachers have classes dully. We should learn from you' (July, 2015).

A total of five or 2.25% of the Chinese teachers felt:

'There are more students in China. And there are more rules in classes. If the classes are a little bit more active than before, school managers may ask teachers to do class control... I think I can use some of strategies (sic) in my class. I can change them according to my students' styles' (July 5, 2015).

97.7% of the Chinese teachers expressed support for active learning strategies:

'The students in America are more active than those in China. The teachers in America are more active than those in China, too. I think the active way can make teaching more effective' (July 24, 2016).

'The spirit of American teachers' contribution inspires me a lot. Their teaching strategies are very important to us. So I think the American teachers are very serious about their jobs, and it shows' (July 23, 2016).

'Interest is the best teacher. Role-playing is great. Interactions is (sic) important, too. When we are in trouble, we should communication (sic) each other, understand each other' (July 23, 2016).

'I find working together is powerful. During discussion everybody is inspired and may come up with new ideas' (July 18, 2015).

The students learn through observation first and then through using the teacher's demonstration, copying the process. The emphasis is on critical, creative and higher-order thinking.

'It's useful to keep students active and learn to cooperate. And also to keep students' differences in mind is important' (July 4, 2015).

While China continues to score higher on the international PISA test than any other nation in math, science and reading, award-winning author Yong Zhao (2014, p. 10) contends that in order to cultivate new talents, his country must have an education that enhances *'individual strengths, follows children's passions, and fosters their social-emotional development'*.

6. THE TEACHING CONTEXT

Our Chinese colleagues noted the mentors and the workshop participants agree that we all, *'want our students to get more knowledge'* and to *'find the best way to reach students'*.

'We all hope they will succeed one day' (July, 2015).

Yet two Chinese colleagues said:

'I really didn't find any similarities between China and America. I think the teaching goals may be similar but the teaching methods are entirely different' (July 18, 2015).

76% of all participants described their teaching context as *'an emphasis on discipline and obedience,' 'a focus on efficiency,' 'teachers talk more and students listen more,' 'servicing the examination'*.

'In China, the final goal of school teaching is to

help all students to go to the university. In America, not all the students are intended to go to the university' (July 23, 2016).

'We must pay attention to scores and rules. The principal is willing to control everything' (July 23, 2016).

'In China, the education is the exam-oriented education. What we do is not only teaching students, but let them get high score. They judge just according to the score' (July 23, 2016).

'China: tradition and our thinking confinement. America: open-minded and active atmosphere' (July 23, 2016).

'Most schools, parents and students themselves focus on scores instead of learning experience. It's a pity' (July 23, 2016).

'Teaching in China is a big challenge. Some children are raised by their grandpa or grandma, and their parents are far away. In this way, the grandparents love these children very much. If they make some mistakes in school, their family would think it doesn't matter. You, teacher, shouldn't punish them' (July 23, 2016).

China is wealthy in its traditions, thinking and peoples. The United States is a fledgling country whose teachers, when left to their professional

knowledge, make decisions for its students based on best practice research. Simpson (2008) notes that China sees its teachers as dispensers of wisdom. As with ancient thinkers, a teacher must transmit knowledge, provide for study and dispel confusion. This is reminiscent of Friere's (2006) 'banking' model of education that holds students are passive, empty vessels into which teachers pour knowledge. This then poses challenges in bridging the perceptual and positional gap, respecting Eastern thought while at the same time teaching effective learning strategies. Simpson (2008) contends Chinese students (in this case, teachers) do not participate in class for fear of giving the 'wrong answer' and, therefore, losing face. To some this would appear to block western thought and action; however, the team diligently worked to construct a safe environment. Soon the hesitant were contributing active class members.

'Teaching strategies in America is (sic) different from ours. We only stress scores and ranks. They (Americans) pay attention to 'develop and inspire' – develop student's ability through various methods especially by demonstrating and inspiring students' confidence and braveness' (July 10, 2015).

'I find the way to make sure everyone is involved in the class very useful. Preparing for the lessons consists of different aspects including getting a better understanding of the different students, the

teaching strategies' (July 9, 2016).

'I came to the PD thinking I would make many friends and learn from them. I would improve my oral English. But now I think I should speak English more' (July 10, 2016).

'Learning English is not just speaking, writing, listening. It depends on people who are brave and has (sic) much motivation' (July 10, 2016).

79% of respondents commented on the teachers in much this way. 91% of respondents said:

'I have learned many teaching strategies. That opens my eyes' (sic) (July 20, 2016).

Given the perceived disjuncture between teacher-centred and student-centred learning, large numbers of foreign language teachers returned from China with dampened enthusiasm, feelings of disappointment and in some cases bitterness and rancour. Following intense month-long sessions in stifling heat, the unanimous reaction by our mentors was quite the opposite.

7. TEACHING AS A RELATIONSHIP

7.1 Identity through social discourse

We examined the emerging identities of Chinese teachers of English, who came from Inner Mongolia, Chengdu, Beijing and Shijiazhuang. The trust and familiarity between foreign American

teachers and all students/teachers from China grew and self-identity continued to evolve.

Because the paper examines the positionality of relational teaching and the attendant effects on changing constituents' position of self and Other, it is noted the participants' mutative development of identity became more viable and productive, as constituted through communal interactional contexts and continued linguistic interaction that enabled learning. The consequent positionality was responsive to the varied communities' traditions and values from which they had come.

Relational teaching is the interactional engagement of the self to and with the Other based on varied contextual layers of dispositionality. Unlike Brofenbrenner's (1986) layered 'bogs of alienation', these intentional and yet overlapping contexts were layers of regional, racial, social strata, and cultural experiences. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) noted, although identity held a secondary focus of our work what naturally emerged was identity as a result of the relational positioning of self with the Other. As such, the social cultural paradigm offered a rich framework upon which to build identity and interactive teaching for it examines the nexus of socio-emotional thought, tradition, artefact and linguacultural discourse, and their complex analytical interplay. We use a multidisciplinary as well as an interactive lens.

'The further we progressed through each session, the more we experienced a group dynamic that suggested the intercommunal construction of identity'

'The things inspired me most was the way you teach, the way you think and the way you do for me. I am the actor in my class. I did most of the job while the students just listening, taking notes and doing exercises by themselves. We are lacking in communication. There are less chances for the students to show themselves. Students learn best when they are involved in the process' (sic) (July 23, 2016).

'The work is intense but rewarding. The people are unlike anything you can imagine: friendly, hospitable, appreciative. Participants have the opportunity to make a real difference' (July 23, 2016).

The further we progressed through each session, the more we experienced a group dynamic that suggested the intercommunal construction of identity. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) suggest five principles of note in the emergence of the individual and more dynamically collective identity with regard to language immersion and production.

This paper has adapted those principles specifically to help interpret these intensive multiple, two-week sessions for Chinese teachers of English.

7.2 Dialogic trust building

Language is developed collectively in relationship with others rather than solely within the developing mind. The anthropological view of the dialogic rather than single-development theory adapted from Hymes (1975) was expanded by Bauman and Biggs (1990). As seen in our research, language developed particularly in interaction with native speakers and secondarily with colleagues. Those who did not feel confident enough to speak in a foreign tongue, were voluntarily sharing in English by the end of each two-week intensive session based on relationships.

'The Michigan teachers are so friendly that I'm not afraid to talk to you. Now I think I'm more outgoing because I have learned to communicate better' (July 22, 2016).

'We not only learn the teaching method. We were also affected by your enthusiasm of teaching' (July 6, 2015).

'Looking back over the last eight days, the most valuable to me is the friendship from American friends and teaching methods I have learned' (July 24, 2016).

'I value the friendship between teachers and students, between classmates and I enjoy the happy time' (July 24, 2016).

'The unity and exciting way of teaching is the most valuable for me. The whole class and the family are full of happiness and warmth' (July 22, 2016).

'I love the teaching style and the good relationship' (July 23, 2016).

'Your spirit of devotion encourages me. In the future, I will try my best to teach my students and I'll help my students to be a better person (sic)' (July 6, 2015).

The emphasis was on Total Immersion in English, which required workshop participants to speak in English at all times in the educational process. Although the teaching mentors did not correct them or demand proper sentence structure, the emphasis was on interactive experiences using the language.

Therefore, an important point not to be lost was the building of trust in themselves and in us and support for the Chinese teachers' usage of language. In sociocultural linguistics, particularly in the ethnomethodological perspective, the concept of 'acting out' or active social engagement is an interactionally dynamic construct that is born of intentionality and

engagement (Fenstermaker & West, 2002; Garfinkel, 1967).

7.3 Dispositional shifting

The levelled degree of socio-cultural linguistics appeared to be mutating as the participants engaged in a daily variety of experiences, as well. And 4% of all respondents similarly noted:

'Although my English is poor, I believe where there is a will there is a way' (July 24, 2016).

'If I am brave enough I will have more chance to take part in more activities to improve myself' (July 24, 2016).

'Now I think opening my mouth is very important. I can make my students learn more by this' (July 24, 2016).

'I came to the PD thinking, I hardly ever communicate with foreigners. I'm worried that I would not understand the teacher, I'm afraid to answer. Now I think I really like the American teachers' (July 21, 2016).

The emphasis on Total Immersion English required them to speak in English at all times. Those who initially sat in the back of the room, through active, student-centred engagement not only literally moved to the front, but began to express positionality of linguistic confidence through

voluntary role engagement with colleagues.

They commented on the newly-found confidence in community and in themselves:

'I made many new friends who are friendly and helpful to me They gave me confidence and help which I will use and never forget' (July 21, 2016).

'What has inspired me most is group work. The teammates work together and show the work proudly' (July 21, 2016).

'I came to this workshop thinking that I would be afraid of speaking in front of our foreign teachers. I was afraid to make myself understood, but now I think that I should change my idea' (July 23, 2016).

'Confidence is the first important. If you teach your students well. (sic) We ourselves must improve step by step' (July 25, 2016).

'I'm scared to speak with teachers although I know they are friendly. So I think I'll care about those who don't talk with. That doesn't mean they don't like me. Maybe they need more help' (July 23, 2016).

'...being an English teacher in China is different from the teacher in America. Maybe I should open my mind, learn more and practice more to

'Recognising that when varied languages and cultures engage in experiences, economic and political dispositional power may either arise as a barrier to trust and engagement or become a bridge to thoughtful activity'

improve myself' (July 23, 2016).

'I came to this thinking my English is poor, my students are naughty, there is something wrong with my teaching, but I can't figure it out. Now I think I get something from here, something good and important' (July 22, 2016).

And finally, 14 respondents indicated, *'Teachers are leaders and the future. This inspires me most. I never think that I'm that important and powerful'* (July 23, 2016).

'I know what I am to be in the future. I know I am the leader of my students I know I must get the students involved, so they can have interests or confidence in themselves and also in life' (July 23, 2016).

'The words, 'Teacher is the leader Teacher is the professionals' inspired me on my teaching. I will change myself constantly to give my students what

they want' (July 19, 2016).

Although the teaching mentors did not correct their grammar or demand proper sentence structure, the emphasis was on interactive experiences, on using the language. Important is the personal building of trust in, respect for and support between mentors and Chinese teachers' usage of language in many instances emergent, in others more proficient language usage. In some instances identities that emerge from spoken dialects or other characteristics that may represent lower SES populations, were clearly more vulnerable.

'I'm shy to speak and oral communication and reading is difficult. Because I left school about eleven years old, I often have some work to do. So I don't have some free time to learn English I forgot' (July 24, 2016).

'I'm from countryside school (sic). It's difficult for my students to learn English well' (July 9, 2015).

Although this is not a cross-cultural comparison, intercultural roles were noted and tracked through the session. After two to three days of varied sessions and interactions with different American mentors, as well as having a 'homeroom' foreign teacher, the levels of linguistic confidence transcended the perceived binding SES stratifications that were in the beginning

prohibitive.

Social linguistic development was noted by all mentor teachers as experiences inside and outside the formal classroom were shared.

Recognising that when varied languages and cultures engage in experiences, economic and political dispositional power may either arise as a barrier to trust and engagement or become a bridge to thoughtful activity.

7.4 Social positioning

Numbers one and two address the state of identity in ontological terms. The formation of identity through the indexical process of labels evaluates the epistemic orientation of continued talk, use of ideological systems of speech which are markers of social position markers of speech orientation. Micro-level linguistic structure speech patterns are tied to social positioning in that they may be recognised as markers from a particular part of the country, the region, the area. In this case teachers could easily distinguish who was from Inner Mongolia, from Beijing, from the poor mountain areas around Shijiazhuang, and from the lesser or more affluent areas of Chouyang.

'They will know I came from the poor families who live in the mountains. My culture is very different from Beijing. We have little but we share everything!' (Day 1, July 6, 2017).

'I'm sorry. I come from vocational school. I'm poor in oral English so this afternoon, I can't understand all the teacher said I try my best' (Day 4, July 10, 2015).

There is a variety of linguistic markers, such as code choice, labelling, implications, inflection and tonal inflection, (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 598) which contribute to the construction of self-identity and self-identification and suggest the most dynamic form of self-identity creation.

7.5 Interconnection and mutuality – the linguistic construction of identity

Identity is a relational construct not only with regard to self but also from teacher to student, a symbiotic relationship, from a teacher to his or her class and to communal relational identity. Just as a young person's developing sense of self is constructed against a collective and rather amorphous 'other', so too is the linguistic learner. Students are more likely to succeed as linguistic learners when they feel connected to the school, to the teacher, to classmates. Nearly half of all U.S. high school students think the adults in the school do not care about them or about their learning. Often this study's exit cards asked what could be done with the 'naughty' student. Young people misbehave when the work is too simple or boring, when it is too difficult and they don't know where to begin, when the home situation carries uncomfortable and troublesome exchanges into

the classroom, or when they feel unconnected to the teacher or to the institution of school itself. Although there may be far fewer Chinese students who feel this, nonetheless, interconnection and mutuality turn a vulnerable learning situation learning into a successful accomplishment. Positive personal interactions between a student and a teacher, between an administrator and a student, or even between students will provoke learners to step out into the frontier of linguistic thinking and acting (Blum, 2005). This is not devaluation of self, where identity becomes subjugated and seen as problematic (Bailey, 2000), but a challenge for skilled educators to know their students:

'As a teacher I must know my students, what do my students want to learn? What did the students learn from the lesson? I must communicate with my students' (July 9, 2015).

'We should encourage students to be themselves and be enthusiastic about life. We everybody have our own personality. It's so good to be different from others' (July 23, 2016).

'What has inspired me most about teaching is the students' thirst for knowledge and the teachers' sense of mission' (July 23, 2016).

'The students' warmth and their future inspired me most' (July 21, 2016).

'The responsibility for our students and enthusiasm of my students for knowledge have inspired me most. Everyone should do something for our country' (July 23, 2016).

'I learned that students are different. What inspired me most is that you think a lot for every different student. You always give students so much as encouragement, let them have confidence in themselves' (July 23, 2016).

'We must open and free minds to solve problems in different ways' (July 17, 2016).

TPD (Teacher Professional Development) makes me realise, *'that as a teacher, we can do so many things to motivate our students Sometimes, if we are brave to get changed, we'll find that our students are so talented'* (July 23, 2016); *'that teachers help students to be better people'* (July 24, 2016); *'that as a teacher I should be open-minded. We teachers not only teach our students to learn the knowledge in books, but also we should help them improve their all-around abilities'* (July 21, 2015); *'I must remember the ideology that we should teach students alternatively and patiently and the methods to achieve it'* (July 24, 2016); *'I am not only a teacher but also a partner. I should teach them through many active ways, so that my class will be fun'* (July 24, 2016); *'I have learned from the foreign teachers' confidence and love to their*

students, influence me in the future (sic). I'll try my best to love my students, to influence them' (July 16, 2016).

Teachers must scaffold their students' linguistic success, negotiate the murky waters of doubt, not regardless of a student's given personal situation but knowing the situation and embracing the student. This is also not a process of denaturalisation wherein identity becomes subjugated and seen as problematic.

7.6 Partialness principle

Identity is more than one's own sense of self as linguistically expressed. Both identity construction and deconstruction draw from multiple, interrelated contexts. *'Because identity is inherently relational, it will always be partially produced through contextually situated and ideologically informed configuration of self and the Other'* (Bucholtz, 2003).

Linguistic researchers hold that instead of identity being static to nationality or in this case particular to the native or regional language, it is mutable, a changing and emerging experience through the process of linguistic integration (Rajagopalan, 2001). Accordingly, the unwillingness to communicate or unavailability of the means to do so creates insurmountable linguistic barriers that poses problems for some. This was a transformative process for both mentors and

'Teachers must scaffold their students' linguistic success, negotiate the murky waters of doubt, not regardless of a student's given personal situation but knowing the situation and embracing the student'

Chinese nationals. The classroom as community was intentionally created to provide the safety in which students could venture into what they felt to be the tenuous areas of second language acquisition. This sense of community was created through a variety of communal and pedagogical strategies that were culturally responsive.

8. CONCLUSION

Identity is a relational construct that inevitably exists in a mutable state of perception as well as in linguistic, cultural, societal, biological and psychological realms. It is more than the single self or a classroom collective or the expression of a nation's distinctive ideology. Beyond labels, epistemic orientations, or linguistic structures, identity is inherently unlike any other aspect of our being, self- or other-shaped. Through spoken and unheard linguistics, teachers help shape that part of us that is not seen but is obsequiously demonstrative, at once complexly invisible and creatively apparent.

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