CROSS-CULTURAL CURRICULAR INNOVATION:

AN ECOLOGICAL, PRINCIPLED PERSPECTIVE ON TEACHING BUSINESS ENGLISH IN CHINA

By

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An Ecological, Principled Perspective on Teaching Business English in China

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to offer useful pedagogical information for ESP instructors, business professors, and curriculum developers. The author calls attention to specific sociocultural variables at the macro and micro level which impacted the approach and design of an intensive, short-term, Business English (BE) program for Chinese university students in mainland China. Drawing from this experience of cross-cultural curricular innovation, suggestions are made for on-going curriculum improvements reflecting ecological and principled concerns. Finally, this research supports wider implications for the rapidly growing field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in the post-methods era (Brown 2002; Richards and Rodgers 2001, Nunan 2000).

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ACRONYMS and DEFINITIONS

BE	Business English
BESIG	Business English Special Interest Group
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EBP	English for Business Purposes
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ELP	English for Legal Purposes
EMP	English for Medical Purposes
EOP	English for Occupational Purposes
EPP	English for Professional Purposes
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
EST	English for Science and Technology
ETS	Educational Testing Services
TBLT	Task Based Language Teaching
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language
TOEIC	Test of English for International Communication

1. Introduction

In September, 2003 I was asked by the Director of a Pittsburgh based employment support service to plan a program to teach a Conversational Business English course to Chinese undergraduates studying at a university in Sichuan, a South West province in China. The university, which I will call "SWU", is touted as having the finest business program in the province, and its main campus is home to 10,000 students in Sichuan's capital city. The e-commerce campus of SWU is situated in the second most populated city in the province with approximately 600,000 citizens. At the time of our project, the e-commerce campus was only two years old and yet 2,000 freshmen and sophomores were enrolled. The e-commerce campus' recent construction affords the latest technology for its students—the library is outfitted with a radio station and an electronic reading room with over 100 computers. In addition to computer access from the library, each classroom is equipped with a computer and projector for PowerPoint and DVD use. Our Conversational Business English program was offered to the SWU e-commerce campus, and the aims of the course were quite broad, as follows:

(a) to work in conjunction with the China-based program coordinator to determine the needs of the University stakeholders

(b) to recommend a curriculum for Conversational Business English that would meet stakeholders' needs

(c) to train the instructors in principles of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)

Because this was a pilot program, it was understood that all the elements, including curriculum, would inevitably be defined *a priori* and that the program's success would be initially measured by SWU's invitation to return in consecutive years. We also worked with the intention that all aspects of the program would be refined *a posteriori*, that is, if we were invited to return we would draw from the actual experience to further shape the program in order to more effectively and efficiently meet the needs of students and stakeholders. At first glance it might seem that these aims presented two stages in the work to be done— curriculum choice (a-b), then teacher training (c). However during the fact-finding stage, the needs of the stakeholders and the curriculum choice became parallel, rather than sequential, concerns. [1] The stakeholders' needs therefore militated against the curriculum choice, and vice versa. The reasons for this reflexive, yet tenuous, relationship between aims were due to certain sociocultural variables and the dearth of applicable Business English materials for this specific language setting. These sociocultural variables echoed those of Nuna Markee's in *Managing Curricular Innovation*, wherein he summarizes the struggle of an Anglo-Sudanese language project he worked on: "My project was affected by complex cultural, ideological, historical, political, economic, administrative, institutional, technological, sociolinguistic, and language planning factors" (12). In regard to the paucity of applicable Business English for our specific language setting, the class length, duration, size, and resources rendered the need for a customized curriculum suited for these practical limitations. In short, there was no silver bullet or panacea that would solve the problem of appropriate teaching texts

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[1] "Just as in the business world, market research had become an essential ingredient for success, so in curriculum design, the fact-finding stage is an imperative prerequisite for effective decision-making regarding participants" (Dubin and Olshtain 5).

for an intensive, Conversational Business English class in China, and therefore a tailored curriculum had to be developed.

While many English for Specific Purpose (ESP) studies have centered on what constitutes Business English (Dudley-Evans 1998, 2001; Dudley Evans and St. John 1996; Ellis and Johnson 1994), few applied linguists have investigated the challenges facing Business English teachers in the mainland China setting. My research aimed to fill this gap and to offer useful pedagogical information for ESP instructors, business professors, and curriculum developers. The purposes of this thesis therefore are (1) to raise awareness of diverse issues impacting the design of an intensive, short-term, Business English (BE) program for Chinese university students; (2) to suggest curriculum improvements based on relevant theory and classroom assessment; (3) to offer wider implications this research supports for the rapidly growing field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in the post-methods era (Brown 2002; Richards and Rodgers 2001, Nunan 2000).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Business English

2.1.1 What is Business English?

Any approximation of a definition of Business English must account for a theory of language and language learning. Defining the language of BE as everyday English peppered with vocabulary or sentence-level structures singular to the professional business environment is an oversimplification and at best insufficient for the communicative goals of our students. Mark Ellis and Christine Johnson give one the earliest, comprehensive definitions of BE in their book, *Teaching Business English*. Ellis and Johnson characterize the language of BE as being branded by a "sense of purpose", objectivity rather than subjectivity, and highly ritualized social interactions patterned from routine, formulaic exchanges (7,8). They ascribe the cause of these robotic social exchanges to the preferred practice of decontextualized interaction, which minimizes possible cross-cultural misunderstandings in today's global business environment. Additionally, they associate a "higher risk" element as characterizing BE language from general English. This risk factor motivates the "sense of purpose", in that mistakes in communication can equal large profit loss (7). Therefore, the winning language style that marks BE is clear, short, and direct communication that is motivated by a sense of purpose and that avoids misunderstanding (9). In addition to a desire to achieve business objectives, Ellis and Johnson also concede that recent technology such as fax and email may also be responsible for shaping the clear, concise, and purposeful communication of BE (9). While Ellis and Johnson venture to codify the language of BE based on their many years experience working with job-experienced learners, they are quick to qualify that despite "[s]ome kinds of analysis [which] have been carried out with respect to the language of meetings and discussions, …there is still little to support course developers beyond their own first-hand experience gained in the field " (7).

John Dudley-Evans and Maggie Jo St. John's *Report on Business English: A Review of Research and Published Teaching Materials* aims to further our understanding of the nature of BE language as it is presented in published scholarly work as well as teaching materials. Their effort is a seminal rigorous inquiry into the definition, current status, and future predictions of BE materials and research. Like Ellis and Johnson, their findings point to a deficiency in published, observational research on language used in business interactions. Dudley-Evans and St. John conclude that there is a "…mismatch between the results of needs analysis and the focus of published textbooks on the one hand, and the published research in the area of Business English on the other hand" (1,2). Specifically, while the goal of students who are learning BE and the focus of textbooks is verbal proficiency, published research concentrates on the written text. For example, studies center on the language used in letters, faxes, emails, and company reports, while linguistic data from negotiations, business meetings, discussion, and telephone conversations, etc. is scarce. Dudley-Evans and St. John supply two reasons for the lack of oral data. The first reason is the sheer difficulty of obtaining data because companies want to protect their own financial interests, from general ways of conducting business to trade secrets (more recently, see Edwards 295 and Forey 2004). Secondly, written text is easier to access and easier to tackle for the linguist (2). Dudley-Evans and St. John's report is valuable in that it comprehensively covers internationally published research on BE, and divides the text of BE into four main categories: linguistic analysis (sentence-level aspects of grammar and lexis), discourse analysis (patterns of organization above the sentence-level), communication skills, and cross-cultural communication skills. They stress the growing international nature of BE, as non-native speakers are using English as the *lingua franca* to conduct business with other non-native speakers. They therefore predict the rising interest in cross-cultural communication skills as defining aspect of BE in an international business setting.

More recently, Harris and Bargiella-Chiappini (2003) position communicative interactions among business people as a language contact zone, therefore depicting the language of BE in its widest sense. Deeming BE as a language contact zone takes into consideration the globalization of business, technology mediated communication, and international management teams due to multi-national corporations (Harris and Bargiella-Chiappini 162). Bargiella-Chiappini and Nickerson (2002, 1999) update the transactional sense of purpose described by Ellis and Johnson as " talk and writing between individuals whose main work activities and interests are in the domain of business and come together for the purpose of doing business." Therefore, the language of Business English, *sui generis*, emerges out of the globalization of market economies; it shapes and is shaped by the discourse of non-native speakers and cannot be relegated to banal, formulaic expressions and buzzwords.

A brief overview of the taxonomy of TESOL positions Business English as a category within English for Specific Purposes (ESP), thereby sharing certain assumptions about language learning with its parent discipline. Underneath the TESOL umbrella English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) sit side by side (see Appendix A). The term ESL is used to refer to the learner environment in which English is the predominant language of communication (Carter and Nunan 2). For example, a Finnish immigrant in the U.S. or Australia learning to speak English as her non-native language is in an ESL environment. Conversely, an EFL context is characterized by little or no English usage in communication or instruction (Carter and Nunan 2). For instance, a Chinese university student learning to speak English in Beijing is in an EFL environment. In an EFL environment, there is hardly any exposure to the target language outside the English classroom and students will therefore have little opportunity to use it.

In addition to the distinction in learning context, a singular communicative purpose for using English further categorizes the ESL/EFL classroom, that is, why learners actually need to acquire English. This consideration for the purpose or overall goal for acquiring English carves space for the category of ESP in TESOL. Since the 1960's, the status of ESP has wavered within the pale of English Language Teaching (ELT) in that its focus on the needs of learners invites the charge that ESP "lacks an underlying theory" (Dudley-Evans and St. John 2). However, in *Developments in English for Specific Purposes: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, authors Tony Dudley-Evans and Maggie Jo St. John argue that a "theory of ESP could be outlined based on either the specific nature of the texts that learners require knowledge of, or on the basis of the needs-related nature of teaching" (1). They proceed to further outline the theoretical underpinnings for accepting ESP as a multidisciplinary approach to ELT, stating, "ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner; ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines it serves; ESP is centred [sic] on the language (grammar, lexis, register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities" (Dudley-Evans and St. John 4-5). In addition to the absolute characteristics of ESP, the authors also outline variable characteristics of ESP:

> ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines; ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English;
>
> ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be used for learners at secondary school level; ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students. Most ESP courses assume basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners. (Dudley-Evans and St. John 5)

Within ESP, the need to learn English may be divided by the particular academic or occupational direction of the student. These categories are referred to as English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), respectively (See Appendix A). The difference in learning English for occupational purposes such as medicine or business rests on the premise the learner is a practicing doctor or business person, versus just learning English for the purpose of studying medicine or business. For example, a Business English course can be specialized to address academic or occupational learning needs, and as such will differ in respect to syllabus, methodology, and content. Dudley-Evans and St. John English also recommend a sharpened definition of BE by stipulating more narrowing limits on its use. While they introduce English for General Business Purposes (EGBP) and English for Specific Business Purposes (ESBP) into an already acronym-laden field, this author has not witnessed the currency of these terms as commonplace within the literature. I will therefore maintain usage of BE to refer to English used and taught for any business purpose, as well as our course at SWU.

2.1.2 Business English Materials

The worldwide demand for BE is outpacing the supply of teaching resources, even though BE is the fastest growing sector in ESP materials development. The creation and increased administration of the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) demonstrates the current global demand for an English proficient workforce. For the past twenty-five years, businesses involved with international trade have been administering TOEIC to existing and prospective employees. TOEIC is designed to measure English language proficiency of non-native English speakers needed for practical use in the professional arena. The workplace is becoming increasingly more global and the widespread acceptance of TOEIC by businesses as an international standard for English language proficiency in the professional world reflects this. For example, Dudley-Evans and St. John cite in their 1996 report that in 1995 there were 934,000 TOEIC test takers. Fast forward ten years and TOEIC's producer Educational Testing Service boasts in "The Measure of Success in the Global Workplace" that the number of TOEIC test takers has risen to over 3 million and that it is the "standard for workplace English language proficiency worldwide." In 1996, Dudley-Evans and St. John reported that the "huge demand of materials" is "in many ways analogous to the situation with EST[2] and EAP[3] in the 1970's and 1980's…" and is "at present on a scale never reached with EAP and EST" (*TOEIC Research Report #2* 39,40). In 2001, Steve Flinders' updated survey reported a continued proliferation in BE materials production

[2] English for Science and Technology.
[3] English for Academic Purposes.

since 1998, stating, "the range of materials and media available to BE teachers has widened progressively" (190). Flinders also predicted that:

> ...another two-year interval will see further significant developments in the range and scope of materials...big publishers may begin to have problems with shorter shelf life, as expectations of topicality rise. There will also be a massive increase in the quantity and quality of web-based materials which will be impossible for the next reviewer to ignore.
>
> Intercultural communication will be embraced by writers and will become a mainstream component of BE repertoire. (201)

In a self-fulfilling prophecy, Flinders produced the next review of BE Materials in 2005. True to his earlier survey, Flinders discovers the sprawling expansion of BE materials, and rightly attributes it to the advent of the World Wide Web (WWW). The WWW offers widespread access to downloadable materials from publishers websites such as Macmillan and Oxford University Press, as well as lessons plans that are "freely and generously shared on a worldwide basis among professionals brought together in professional discussion groups, chat rooms, and the like" (159). The WWW as a vehicle for free materials has significantly altered the print publishing landscape as well. However, the traditional textbook has not yet retreated to suffer the same fate as the eight-track. Various media are resurrecting the text, reinventing the traditional static format by transforming content delivery through additional components such as teachers' manuals, workbooks, audiocassettes and CD Roms. However, despite the huge growth in production, availability, and "technical stretch" of today's BE materials, Flinders wraps up his 2005 review with a "wish list" for "lively materials which are more targeted to smaller more specific groups of learners; using the possibilities which new multimedia technologies are opening up…"(175). Flinders also identifies a need recognized by Dudley-Evans and St. John nine years earlier: "Business English courses should be ESP courses and tailored to the needs of individuals or small groups. The proliferation of Business English materials makes it difficult for teachers to systematically select from the wealth of different materials" (Dudley-Evans and St. John, *TOEIC Research Report #2* 39). Summarily, the "dearth" or "paucity" in BE materials does not denote quantity, but rather applicability to a narrowly defined teaching context such as our context at SWU. The current drive in materials development to shore up the chasm which exists between the research on actual language used in business settings and language used in BE teaching materials breeds business as a site of language contact and as such is interdisciplinary and methodologically diverse (Harris and Bargiella-Chiappini 156).

2.2 Approaches and Methods in Teaching Business English

In the following section I will briefly review frequently implemented approaches and methods in the ESP, as well as BE classroom: Communicative Language Teaching, Task-Based Language Teaching and Cased-Based Teaching. I will also touch on some strengths and limitations of each one.

2.2.1 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Because Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has gained exponential currency within TESOL circles in the past twenty years, there has been considerable debate over what constitutes a truly "communicative" classroom. CLT as a movement in ELT has its roots in second language acquisition theory. In 1972, Dell Hymes coined the term "communicative competence," or what a speaker needs to know to participate the speech community of which he is a member. Hymes' view of language connects communication with culture and is a key aspect in the CLT classroom. The CLT classroom is student centered, in that the learner is expected to fulfill the role of negotiator of meaning, and this is facilitated through classroom tasks such as information and opinion gap activities, jigsaw puzzles, and other tasks that promote meaningful communication, information sharing, and negotiation of meaning (Richards and Rogers 166,67). In the CLT class the teacher's role is one of a needs analyst, counselor, and group process manager. As a needs analyst, the teacher "assumes the responsibility for determining and responding to learner language needs" (Richards and Rodgers 167). One or a combination of text-based, task-based, and realia or authentic materials are usually used in the CLT class. In her book *Principles of Course Design for Language Teaching*, Janice Yalden gives the following description of the communicative classroom:

> Communicative teaching exhibits certain distinctive features. It is based on the notion of the learner as communicator, naturally endowed with the ability to learn languages. It seeks to provide opportunities for communication in the classroom as well as to provide learners with the target language system. It is assumes that learners will have to prepare to use the target language (orally and in written form) in many predictable and unpredictable acts of communication which will arise both in classroom interaction and in real-world situations, whether concurrent with language training or subsequent to it. (Yalden 61)

Overall, CLT is praised for its emphasis on meaning focused communication grounded in interaction with authentic language resources, preparing students for real-world interaction, promoting fluency over accuracy to increase learners' verbal proficiency, increasing intrinsic motivation and a lively classroom environment.

2.2.2 Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Richards and Rodgers defines Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) as being informed by the principles of Communicative Language Teaching and as an "approach based on the use of tasks as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching" (223).

What is a task? Drawing from scholars such as Michael Long, Jack Richards and Theodore Rogers, and Michael Breen in *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom,* David Nunan defines "communicative task" as:

> a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is primarily focused on meaning rather than form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand out in its own right. (10)

Nunan submits a framework for the analyzing communicative tasks in which goals, input, activities, the teacher and learner role, and settings are all identified. Goals explain why learners are engaged in a particular task (48). Input refers to the linguistic cues that launch the tasks (e.g. business cards, shopping lists, radio broadcast). Nunan claims that activities "specify what learners will actually do with the input" once received (59). Drawing from Richards and Rodgers (1986), Nunan also advances the notion of teacher and learner roles and settings as "implicit" in learning tasks. "The part that a learner or teacher is expected to play while carrying out a task" refers to a role, and approaches and methods in language teaching usually prescribe certain roles. For example, in the Audiolingual Method, the learner may be expected to be a passive recipient of linguistic knowledge, and not to display autonomy toward the task. Likewise, a teacher utilizing the Audiolingual method exhibits control and power over the patterns of classroom discourse. In TBLT, learners carry out roles of group participant, monitor, and risk taker or innovator (Richards and Rodgers 235). Teacher roles include, but are not limited to, selector and sequencer of tasks, preparer of learners for tasks and a facilitator of consciousness-raising (236). Consciousness-raising refers to the variety of form focused techniques teachers use to foster acquisition through noticing salient features of the language (236). Instructional materials are constructed from authentic language sources or "realia" such as Internet, T.V., radio, newspapers, and magazines. Because a TBLT course is dependent entirely upon tasks, it demands a considerable amount of time, ingenuity, and access to authentic sources of language input, which can be therefore be a less attractive methodology for teachers (236).

In regard to TBLT, it is important to note that although there exists many examples of task-based activities, there are few published examples of language programs fully designed from TBLT (Richards and Rodgers 230, Willis and Willis 176).

2.2.3 Case Based Teaching (CBT)

Case-Based Teaching is generally aimed at students with upper-intermediate proficiency (Dudley-Evans and St. John, *TOEIC Research Report #2* 38, Esteban and Canado 138) and is used in business education programs worldwide and is a problem-based methodology, wherein learners are challenged to "develop their interpersonal, analytical, and decision-making skills as they link theory with practice" (Jackson 214).

The communicative strength of CBT is that discussion is the central activity in the classroom. The teacher presents a case, usually from a real-life business situation, for the students to think about and analyze. Class discussion ensues, allowing students to practice active listening, expressing views, supporting positions, develop leadership and interpersonal skills, and increase their confidence in speaking.

Jane Jackson enumerates several obstacles to CBT in an Asian setting in her article "Case-Based Teaching in a Bilingual Context: Perceptions of Business Faculty in Hong Kong". She cites students' reticence and low tolerance for ambiguity in discussions based on Confucian values of group harmony, face-saving, and respect for teachers (222, 23). Therefore, the challenging, interactive discussion style of Western settings is difficult to duplicate in an Asian setting. In her study she narrates teachers' feedback on the questioning strategies they employ to overcome these obstacles. These strategies include singling out students, drawing name cards, tracking participation for credit, using small groups and teams (226, 27). Linguistic limitations may also contribute to students' reticence however, as teachers reported that students do not necessarily have the language needed to verbally express themselves in class discussions (223). Teachers also warned that it is important to provide a sense of closure to the class by highlighting what was learned during the discussion so that students value the time invested in the activity.

2.3 English Language Teaching (ELT) in China

The practicality of rubber-stamping a singular language teaching methodology from one context to another is a recent subject of debate within TESOL and educational circles (e.g. Hu 2005, Bax 2003, Larsen-Freeman 2000, Brown 1997, 2001, Biggs, 1998, and Holliday 1994). For the past twenty years, CLT has been the chosen methodology for

ESL, EFL, and ESP classes. For example, H. Douglas Brown refers to the current status of English language teaching as the "Post-Method" Era and argues for a "principled approach" to successfully teach non-native speakers across various contexts (2001, 1997). The idea is further complicated within an EFL environment (Hu 2005, Bax 2003, Rao 2002, Philipson 1992, Pennycook 1994). For example, while Xiaoqing Liao (2004) prescribes in his article "The Need for Communicative Language Teaching in China" that CLT is the absolutely best methodology for China, Guangwei Hu (2005) argues that Liao's view is "untenable" at best as it ignores research that recognizes the regional disparities that exist in China (65). In order to support his position that CLT is best for China, Liao cites policies to promote a communicative classroom that were put forth by China's official authority for education, the State Education Development Commission (SEDC), since 1992 and most recently requiring secondary school teachers to use task-based language teaching in 2001 (270). In Liao's view, teachers in China do not have autonomy of choice as they do in other countries, so it is futile, and perhaps even aggressive, to expect Chinese English teachers to customize a methodology that is appropriate to their context (271). He equates appropriate methodology with compliance to government regulation, which is currently in favor of CLT. Additionally, Liao maintains that Chinese teachers do not have "enough knowledge and time" to carry out needs analysis, which is foundational for a context driven syllabus, wherein individual students, needs, wants, learning styles and strategies along with the classroom, local, and national culture are factors that forge teaching approach and methodology (Liao 272, Bax 2003). Hu's response to Liao's charge that CLT should be the only method advocated because of the government's policies is that it mistakenly assumes that "policy directives will feed directly through to classrooms in a neat, linear, predictable, and deterministic manner, and that teachers will do as they are told" (65). Also, it negates research which shows resistance to CLT in many Chinese EFL classrooms (66). For example, Hu reports on the affective differences of English Language Teaching (ELT) between Chinese classrooms in coastal regions and inland regions in his article "English Language Teaching in China: Regional Differences and Contributing Factors". In his study, 439 post-secondary Chinese students representing 46 different cities in 25 different provinces were surveyed to identify regionally based disparities in English proficiency, classroom behaviors, and language learning and use strategies. Hu divides the participants into two groups, students from the coastal provinces and capital cities of the inland provinces comprise the "More Developed" (MD) group, while the rest of the students the rural areas located in the inland provinces comprise the "Less Developed" (LD) group (297). The outcomes of the study showed that a majority of students in the LD group reported an "absence or infrequent occurrence" of communicative classroom instructional practices such as pair/group work, language games, and other activities that use English for meaning-focused communication. The LD group also reported little teaching of the "cultures of English-speaking peoples", textbooks were followed verbatim, and lessons were rarely taught in the target language (297). Moreover, students in the LD group manifested certain classroom behaviors and learning strategies as a result of the lack of exposure to a teaching style that treats English as a tool for communication, rather than an object of study. For example, when students from the less developed regions were exposed to a skills-centered, task-based, and process-oriented classroom, they displayed "lower adaptability" and "considerable resistance" (299). In addition, they lacked "learner autonomy" and were not "enthusiastic about collaborative learning activities and shunned speaking in public whenever possible" (299). The LD group was more concerned with accuracy rather than fluency, preferring not to take risks with the language and to focus instead on structural features and grammar rules of the language. Overall, Hu's findings indicate efforts need to be made to improve the communicative competence of students in China's underdeveloped regions to shore up the gap between coastal and urban areas with the inland, rural areas. These efforts, suggest Hu, need to be "informed by an ecological perspective on English teaching and learning, that is, an encompassing view of language teaching and learning within the totality of economic, political, social, cultural, and curricular influences (Tudor 2003, Van Lier 1997)" (313). While Liao, Hu, and Bax argue from a predominantly practical, pedagogical, point of view, other scholars criticize attempts to export English teaching methodologies from a sociopolitical stance.

Li Yang, celebrity English teacher, is the shining example of a Chinese individual who directly profits from Business English as a business in and of itself. Bolton describes Li as " a youthful thirty-something with a popstar [sic] image and entourage to match, who has turned his teaching method into a multi-million [dollar] business" (195). He packs stadiums and universities, speaking to crowds of 20,000 to 30,000, converting them to his brand of English Language Teaching: Crazy English. The charismatic instructor inspires his pupils to overcome adversity through sharing his personal story of language learning failure, as a shy student who failed 13 college exams and three semesters of English. A 1999 Mainland Chinese documentary of the English teaching superstar features Li's message as heard in a radio broadcast:

> I want to serve as an example. My Crazy English consists of many philosophies of life and success…Money is no longer a problem. In one day, I could make 20 to 30 grand, 30 to 40 grand. That time is past. I've moved onto another stage. Once I've accomplished something, it becomes dull. I think I have found a bigger goal. To tell thousands of people about my process of struggle. Everyone needs to do his work well. Because Chinese people lack confidence. Chinese people need to put their noses to the grindstone…. as the 21st century approaches, what do we need now? We need heroes. What else do we need? English. These two factors continue to make Li Yang's crazy English. (195-6)

Bolton summarizes the iconic impact of Li Yang:

> In the case of Li Yang's 'Crazy English', we seem to see another modernity at work, that of the rapidly-industrializing China in which the workings of capital and capitalism are reconstituted as 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'. Creolists explain Canton 'jargon' as an early form of 'business English' and, as China enters the WTO, Li Yang's approach appears to give voice to the material hopes of millions of Chinese in a variety of brash English that twangs American but rings global with its exhortation 'Make the voice of China be widely heard all over the world!' (196)

Since China's entry into the World Trade organization (hereafter, WTO) and in anticipation of hosting the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, the teaching and learning of English has gained unprecedented momentum from the Chinese government. In their article, "English for International Trade: China Enters the WTO", authors Jixian Pang, Xing Zhou and Zheng Fu cite several examples of the government's widespread concentrated, yet compulsory, support of ELT. The study by Pang et al. examines a survey of 400 people in 126 business and trading companies from Zheijang Province in the People's Republic of China (hereafter, PRC). The personnel officers and employees were surveyed on issues related to the learning and teaching of English with reference to China's entry into the WTO (201). The authors provide numerous examples of specific National English tests, exams and certificates that are not only of high social value but are also required by most universities in order for students to graduate (203). These exams can be viewed as a response to China's entry into the WTO because of the greater need to be able to represent itself as an economic power and to communicate effectively among other nations using what is now considered the *lingua franca* for business communication: English. Historically, extrinsic motivations such as tests and exams, English language school curriculum in the primary and secondary level and the desire to make money in import/export trade have had a significant presence in English teaching and learning. However, Pang's survey is particularly insightful because it reveals additional motivations of China's citizens as a result of the expectant societal and economic shifts that will naturally unfold from China's role in the WTO. The need to succeed, material gain, and an increase in competition further emphasize the extrinsic pressure of the English language learning process in China, which, in turn, challenge EFL teachers to construct curriculum that will foster intrinsic motivations.

Technological advancements such as Internet and E-commerce have changed the landscape of professional business communication. Firstly, the widespread proliferation of Internet access by personal users has drastically minimized geographical limitations and time obstacles. Internet access in China is cheap, so doing business with a non-local counterpart utilizing online capabilities proves much more affordable than ever before. For example, video conferencing allows for companies formerly separated by air travel and time zones to correspond face-to-face and to accomplish negotiations, reach agreements and to overall transact business more affordably. Networking is simpler and more efficient through email, newsgroups and various types of real-time communication. Websites are an excellent cost-effective source of reaching untapped markets as well as researching the competition. Indeed, Internet access and its resulting e-commerce have nullified most time/money related issues for companies, providing an unprecedented opportunity to globalize their business. Consider the following statements of two personnel officers quoted in Pang's survey:

> With China's entry into the WTO, the traditional concept of import and export businesses as we now have with two parties involved will change. We will set up multinational corporations and do international trade in the true sense of the words. Under the circumstances, we have to use English, or to be more exact, international English, more often. (qtd. in Pang 207)

and

> With the advent of Internet and E-commerce, it seems evident that secretarial support will decrease and business professionals will have to compose their own correspondence, for example. Just like driving a car, now the company has a driver to drive the car for us. But in the future I think we will have to carry out business negotiations for ourselves. And also we'll have to be able to use English to carry out business negotiations and to attend business meetings. English is now a true international

> language and to be able to use English effectively is a prerequisite for successful business mangers. (qtd. in Pang 207)

These statements regarding the perceived needs for English learning illustrate a paradigm shift occurring as a result of China's entry into the WTO. What is obvious to these business professionals is that the nature of their job functions will change in direct proportion allotted by their newfound international status. Participation in the global economy was an opportunity afforded by the advent of the Internet however, government and society's overall expectations are now completely and strategically behind China's international economic advancement. The concept of the English language as a necessary tool for autonomy in business correspondence and negotiations in order to become a "successful business manager" gives further weight to extrinsic motivations such as fear of failure, financial hardship, and competition in the global business environment.

Recognizing the primary place that economic reform holds in Chinese society today, Pang et.al. recommend that educational changes be made in order to accommodate classes at the university level that specialize in advancing English business communication. Firstly, they acknowledge the fact that BE courses will introduce additional demands on English teachers however, at the same time they exhort teachers to rise to the challenge and increase their level of professional development in order to "adapt themselves to the currents of change in the present Chinese EFL world" (213). Secondly, the authors make recommendations to reconsider the role of input and output in the classroom. They advocate an expansion of the classroom atmosphere through English corners, English festivals, and self-service English centers to compensate for the

EFL environment. They also recommend that texts used in class be designed in a manner that would allow for greater flexibility and customization in order to maintain relevancy and authenticity for the learners. The demands on learner output are also increased through Pang's recommendations. Specifically, previous oral outcomes of "short, interactional exchanges [sic]" (213) are no longer satisfactory for today's global economic forum. Students' oral proficiency should be challenged at the extemporary level through the training and practicing of lengthy oral presentations. Pang's curricular reform advice is in response to the expressed needs of the government and workers to compete economically in the global arena; however, second language acquisition is a consequence in large part to learners' intrinsic motivations, to which I now turn.

English language teachers must be careful to distinguish orientation from motivation when constructing curriculum for a particular class of learners. "Orientation means a context or purpose for learning, motivation refers to the intensity of one's impetus to learn" (Brown 75). As evidenced in Pang's article, the context of educational reform is China's recent esteem in the world's economic affairs. Fang Xu and Mark Warschauer support this belief, stating that China's entry into the WTO along with its plans to host the Olympics in 2008 demand a "more modern educational system that prepares people to interact with a global society" (303). However, the "intensity of one's impetus to learn" is what defines a learner's motivation and these pressures can be extrinsic or intrinsic in nature. H. Douglas Brown defines the difference between extrinsic and intrinsic pressures as " [p]rizes, money, grades and certain types of positive feedback are examples of extrinsic motivation, while feelings of competence and self–determination are examples of intrinsic motivation (75)." Extrinsic motivation therefore is usually a result of an experience outside the self, while intrinsic motivation implies that the influencing experience to learn is discovered inside the self. Furthermore, Brown asserts that intrinsic motivation is a more desirable type of learning influence to facilitate, as a "convincing stockpile of research on motivation strongly favors intrinsic drives, especially for long term retention" (76). Brown cites Abraham Maslow hierarchy of needs theory and Jerome Bruner's theory of "autonomy of self-reward" as significant interdisciplinary evidence to support the claim that intrinsic motivation is directly linked to longevity of learning (76). Therefore, studies in second language acquisition and psychology show that motivation must be considered in addition to orientation as a determiner of success for a language learner. What necessarily follows, then, is an attempt by the English teaching community to construct curriculum for Chinese EFL students that will balance the already existing extrinsic pressures of the current context, or orientation, of English teaching and learning with the learners' intrinsic motivations.

Developing an EFL environment that not only nurtures, but also champions, intrinsic motivations such as self-determination and autonomy, invites consideration of Chinese social values. An individual's drive is directly linked to one's values, and learning outcomes that are in line with one's personal values will often foster intrinsic motivation. Likewise, if an individual perceives that a learning outcome is contrary to her personal values, the desire to learn will most likely be fostered by extrinsic pressures (e.g, fear of authority, getting the good grade, etc). The concept of "face" in Chinese and American values is a clear example of a social value that can affect motivation type. In their book, *Encountering the Chinese: A Guide for Americans*, Whenzhong Hu and

Cornelius Grove explain how the concept of face exists, albeit differently, in both American and Chinese cultures.

> In individualist cultures such as that of the United States, maintaining consistency between one's private and public self images is of great importance; consequently one's public self-preservation of face corresponds as closely as possible to one's "core self." But in collectivist cultures such as that of the PRC, the self is situationally and relationally based, defined by means of one's ongoing interpersonal relationships and maintained through reciprocal "face work negotiation" in which one is as committed to lending role support to the face of others as to preserving one's own face. (130-31)

According to Hu and Grove, individual integrity is uniquely important in the United States. A "what-you-see-is-what-you-get" mentality is the prevailing attitude of most Americans in order to maintain a perceived unity with core of self and the public mask. Even though unity is often not achieved between the core self and public mask, American society in large prefers this type of face. Moreover, preservation of one's personal integrity (wholeness or lacking in internal contradictions) is primary to the preservation of group integrity. In China, however, individual and group integrity are both important (Hu 123). For example, in China "face can be lost as a result of undermining the long-established relationships that give a group its identity and its members a sense of security" (Hu 123).

Because of the American concept of face, Americans are direct in their interpersonal communication, especially in business dealings. Conversely, the Chinese will often be indirect in their responses to requests in order to save the face of those within their circle of influence, or the group. Hu gives an example where during a business negotiation, a Chinese person may respond to an American request in a manner that will communicate more time is needed by her superiors to consider the request. However, the Chinese businessperson responds this way knowing the request has already been denied. The American will fish out objections to the request, and attempt to successfully overcome them. When the American learns later that the request was never going to be accepted, frustration ensues because of time lost during the negotiation procedures. Because Americans in most part are direct, the temptation for Americans doing business with Chinese is to assume the same from their PRC counterparts. As a result, Americans may feel frustrated, or even that their Chinese business partner has lied to them. This view is based on a misunderstanding of the role of face in Chinese society. Within the EFL classroom, and in particular, in an English for Business Purposes class, difficulty arises when attempting to teach Chinese students such pragmatic functions as how to accept and reject requests/offers. It is therefore incumbent upon EFL teachers in China to learn about the cultural mores of their students, so that they can have an informed approach to their curriculum in order to balance new concepts so as not to adversely affect self-determination or autonomy.

If a teacher learning more about a student's culture can help build self-determination and autonomy, should the same hold true for the student who learns more about the L2 culture? Brown refers to Zoltan Dornyei and Kata Csizer's "ten commandments" for motivated learners. Of these ten commandments, the ability of the instructor to familiarize learners with the target language culture stimulates intrinsic motivation in the classroom (Brown 81). The idea that learning more about American culture will help students to identify with native English speakers and therefore the English language itself is widely supported in current EFL classes. As a result, a section of class time is often devoted to introducing various features of American popular culture, such as musicians, sports, T.V. shows, etc. However, Pang et al. suggests that with the increase in globalization and English as the business *lingua franca*, Chinese business people will continue to do even more business with other non-native English speaking countries; therefore it is "absurd for a Chinese businessman[sic] to adopt a British cultural attitude to do business with his counterpart from Japan or Germany" (212). In addition to the fact that non-native English speakers are doing business together using English, allowing them to maintain their respective cultural attitudes, the question also arises whether America's increasing controversial role due to the war in Iraq and other foreign policy adversely affects teaching American culture in the classroom. Often, students are unable or unwilling to make the distinction between a government's policy and the hearts and minds of the people in that country. In Sada Daoud's article, "How to Motivate EFL Learning and Teaching of Academic Writing by Cross-Cultural Exchanges", also provides examples of transferring the perceptions of government actions onto the attitudes of its citizens. In a letter exchange between Iranian and American students, the initial tone of letters from the Iranian students were hostile and argumentative, assuming American individuals had direct responsibility for social issues such as violence and sex in movies and foreign policy (391-412). Although Daoud and her American teacher counterpart capitalized on the opportunity to guide the student's understanding of the culture through class discussions that promoted a more tolerant view, it seems that autonomy and self-determination was achieved primarily from the freedom Iranian students had to select their topics and questions to write about. Familiarizing the learners with the target language culture, then, had a very minor role in facilitating intrinsic motivation as opposed to inviting students into the task development process. Because of the fact that English is no longer "owned" by any one culture, the increase in globalization with English as the *lingua franca* among non-native speakers and the evidence in Daoud's study of student interest being peaked due to being involved in the communicative task design, it therefore follows that EFL teachers in China need to consider spending less time teaching American popular culture and more time on classroom practices that will directly contribute to the students' intrinsic motivation.

Pang's recommendation that texts used in class should be designed in a manner that would allow for greater flexibility and customization in order to maintain relevancy and authenticity for the learners does allow for intrinsic innovation. An emerging option for innovation is to supplement standard EFL classes with computer-mediated, project-based instruction.[4] Using computers to supplement texts promotes relevancy and authenticity because of the plethora of subjects that can be found on the Internet to cater to students' interests. For example, in their article, "Technology and Curricular Reform in China: A Case Study", Xu and Warschauer report on a five-year study they did to enhance curriculum in a university in eastern China through technology. Xu and Warschauer reported on to what extent higher education China benefited from their class technology makeovers, in which students produced and exchanged emails, constructed web pages, surfed the Net, created PowerPoint presentations, and in which 30% of the

[4] Computer-assisted project based instruction may fit under the banner of what is commonly referred to Computer Assisted Language Learning, or CALL.

learning time was devoted to project-based learning. It should be noted that this type of curriculum does not treat the University as merely a vocational school; students engage in critical thinking and learn language strategies:

> Interaction within the project structure forced students to engage not only with the forms of the language but also with its content, a rare occurrence in traditional Chinese ELT courses. For example, in the Cities Project, students' messages indicated their active involvement in discussing and debating what their exchange partners said about life in their countries as compared to China. As they got further involved in these debates, they began to engage in language behaviors that are often taught but seldom practiced, such as skimming or scanning prior messages for information, relying on context to determine meaning for a particular word, or reading between the lines to evaluate the belief system behind a supposedly factual statement. (Hu and Warschauer 311)

Therefore, the purpose of the project is not just to hone students' technological skills, but also to become more fluent speakers of English through the combination of speech interaction with writing. Hu and Warschauer also advise that the cultural notion of autonomy is often equated with independence from the group, which is an inherently Western notion. However, student autonomy can be achieved through a program that emphasizes collectivity and peer leadership. This autonomy is achieved through transitioning the student from a teacher-student structure to one that "encourages student initiative through teamwork" (313). The direct link between computer mediated content and motivation for Chinese students can also be gathered from Pang's survey, which yielded results that indicate 25% of personnel officers and 20% of employees rate surfing the net as an important area for English use within the business environment. Hu and Warshcauer's study also examines classes that are purely teacher-centered in relation to how they help students develop cognitive skills that are essential to the metalanguage processes that promote fluency. For example, in an "English for Tourism" class the teacher would lecture for the whole of class time while the students took notes furiously. The exam basically demanded regurgitation of the lecture notes they had memorized, and therefore the "skills required to achieve high test scores were not necessarily those required to succeed in the tourism industry, which calls for creativity, interpretation and thinking ability (313). It can be concluded that EFL teachers can creatively harness technology in order to customize the curriculum to their students' needs, while imparting universal language skills that will outlive the technology used to advance these skills.

In conclusion, the need to succeed, material gain, and an increase in competition are all extrinsic pressures that have been heightened due to China's entry into the WTO and its emergence as an economic power. These recognized motivations may not serve to support second language acquisition studies which show that long-term language learning is best facilitated through intrinsically motivated behaviors such as self-determination and autonomy. The current challenge EFL teachers in China face is to construct curriculum that will foster intrinsic motivations. This can be begin to be accomplished trough foreign teachers learning more about the Chinese culture, focusing less on teaching American popular culture and experimenting with task-based and computer-mediated project based instruction that are relevant and authentic for EFL learners.

3. Conversational Business English Course at SWU

In this section I adopt Richards and Rodgers (2001) framework for language teaching approach and method analysis to describe the development of the intensive Conversational Business English program implemented at SWU. However this framework is adopted with one addition— I incorporate the learning context into the approach.

3.1 Approach

3.1.1 Theory of language

My theory of the language of BE was a conflation of my personal experience (ten years of management in retail, business-to business sales and consulting, manufacturing, and financial services sectors) and the paradigm of stakeholders in the program. There were several reasons for this paradigm. During the development phase of the curriculum, the BE materials I consulted with were mainly based on written texts, such as business letter writing, composing faxes and emails, and formulaic greetings. The BE materials that centered on oral proficiency were general in their approach to vocabulary and the tasks would need to be customized to be culturally sensitive to our students. It would have also been financially and practically impossible to purchase texts because the program consisted of 180 students. Tasks were readily available as web based materials however, there was no justification for the sequencing of tasks; compiling a large selection of unrelated tasks would have been disorganized and ineffective for the intense, systematic, three-week course. Additionally, I wanted to take into consideration the background of our teachers, so that their input would be authentic as much as possible. Our stakeholders in the university specifically requested a strong emphasis on oral skills and asked us not to teach grammar. They also wanted us to teach the students "how to negotiate", although this was only to be an element of the class, not the overall focus. Learners were pre-experience, in that they had not yet ventured into the business world, and their e-commerce program indicated that their long term career goals would be include Internet marketing for their business, online communication, and verbal communication with native or non-native speakers of English.

3.1.2 Theory of language learning

As previously established, BE is a category derived from ESP and thereby shares certain assumptions about language learning with its parent discipline. The primary assumption BE shares with ESP is that learners' needs are foundational to course design (Dudley-Evans 2001, 1998, Dudley-Evans and St. John 1996, St John 1996). Needs analysis is axiomatic to BE course design, and can be accomplished through one-on-one interviews with students, informal talks, or a formal needs assessment instrument, to name a few. Because the focus of the class was oral proficiency, the first assumption I made was that communicative tasks would promote fluency because they "provide both the input and output processing necessary for language acquisition" (Richards and Rodgers 228). Rather than just exposing students to comprehensible input as a complete activity in and of itself, language learning happens when students are engaged in meaningful activities through which comprehensible input and utterances, or output, work in tandem to produce conversation. Secondly, according to Richards and Rodgers, tasks also "foster processes of negotiation, modifications, rephrasing, and experimentation that are at the heart of second language learning" (228). Lastly, I believed that well planned tasks grounded in the real world of business situations motivate Business English students to achieve fluency.

3.1.3 Learning context

Developing the course design began with a descriptive inquiry into the students' physical learning context and orientation via email with "Devyn", our on-site coordinator. If the physical environment in China were not taken into account before planning classroom activities or communicative tasks, failure would be inevitable (Rao, 93). I constructed a series of questions for Devyn to answer about the city, SWU, the classrooms, facilities, and students. Questions included: How many computers are available to students on campus? What types of businesses are in the area? How many students can be expected per class? Do you have access to a copy machine, overhead projector, and T.V.? Is the class mandatory? The answers to these questions and others by in large informed the syllabus for the class. Devyn also emailed digital pictures of the campus, classrooms, facilities, and the surrounding city, detailing each image in such a way that actualized the surroundings for the American teaching team and myself. Our coordinator's familiarity with the host culture helped gauge the appropriateness of tasks. I was also able to interview another American living and teaching at the main campus of SWU for over a year. His insights based on personal experience into student and classroom culture also guided the curriculum development.

For three weeks, classes met daily Monday through Friday for three hours (9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.). Two ten-minute breaks were scheduled at the end of the first, and second, hours of the class. In addition to the forty hours inside the classroom, students were also offered additional opportunities to practice English off campus during weekends with the teachers. The teachers announced each week the time and place of the excursion. Participation was strongly encouraged, but not mandatory.

3.2 Design

The design of the course was therefore informed by a theory of language and language learning and consisted of objectives, types of learning and teaching activities, learner roles, teacher roles, and the role of instructional materials.

3.2.1 Objectives

The stated objectives of the course were developed by integrating specific business communication skills desired by SWU stakeholders into an informed ecological and principled approach to the overall course.

- Equip students to converse naturally and effectively in specific business situations through practice of language and customs used in everyday American business settings.
- Provide a basic understanding of the relationship between Western business culture and ethics and their impact on American English.
- Enable students to investigate, identify, and replicate the language used to communicate varied corporate philosophies.
- Improve comprehension of spoken English, particularly for specific information in business contexts.
- Ensure mutual understanding among business parties by learning phone, face-to-face and written communication strategies.
- Strengthen acquisition through contact assignments and real interaction through guided tours and weekend excursions.

3.2.2 The syllabus

Needs analysis is an axiomatic element of ESP, and therefore, BE course design (Richards and Rodgers 2001, Dudley-Evans and St. John 1998, Finney 1989, Nunan 1989, Yalden 1987, Dubin and Olshtain 1986). After the needs of stakeholders were ascertained, the first order of business was syllabus construction (Richards and Rodgers 25). The syllabus for the course was as follows:

Week One

English used during the American employment process

Names, titles and positions used only in a business environment
- Using correct forms of address
- Identifying job responsibilities

Application process: phone, Internet, face- to -face.

Essentials of successful cover letter and resume writing for Western businesses
- Identifying who and what businesses are looking for

What to do before, during and after an interview
- Preparing for the interview
- Language used to present oneself
- Answering questions correctly
- Asking questions
- Accepting or declining an offer for employment
- Follow up letter and phone call

Week Two

English used to communicate Western corporate philosophies

Websites and what they say about your product or service
Understanding mission statements and
Understanding core values
Understanding corporate vision statements
Writing mission statements that will appeal to the American customer
Determining core values
The importance of product/service testimonials to the American consumer
Requesting testimonials from your customer

Week Three

The language of small business

Understanding the values of interdependence and independence
Practicing appropriate ways to network
Asking for referrals
Expressing appreciation to your customer

Requesting advice from colleagues

Not all the lesson plans were written a priori at the start of the classes. I established a Yahoo group for the purpose of communicating with the teachers during their training time stateside and throughout their teaching time at SWU. A Yahoo group is a free service that provides a forum for communication among participants that can be experienced by the entire group via public postings, one-on-one via private emails, or instant chats. In addition to communicating messages, I was able to more efficiently execute several important functions for this particular project through the Yahoo group. First, our China-based program coordinator and American expatriate, Devyn, visited the campus and took digital pictures of the campus, classrooms, facilities, and surrounding area. These images were uploaded and viewable to everyone through the Yahoo group. These visual artifacts allowed the teachers to begin to imagine where and how they would work in the classroom. The photos were also essential for the needs analysis process, uncovering many characteristics of the physical environment that would impede or aid certain tasks. Through the links function of the Yahoo group, the teachers were able to gain background cultural knowledge of China, the university, as well as the Chinese language itself. Some of the links to websites include: the University's English and Chinese version of the website, the CIA fact book about China, the Chinese People's Daily newspaper, and an introduction to Chinese characters and Mandarin tones. There is a plethora of Internet sites about China and its language, so in order to insure credibility I relied on our expatriate advisor's recommendations for the sites, and selected only those sites of which the content would be factual, simple to navigate, and easy to understand for first time visitors to China. The Yahoo group also includes a calendaring option that I used to send automatic email reminders about training times and meetings. During the beginning of the planning, I entered all the dates for training and meetings and set up the reminders all at once, scheduling reminders to be automatically sent out at regular intervals. Also, all members can view the calendar and even create a personalized calendar to customize their planning. Most importantly, files could be uploaded to the group, and could be viewed or downloaded by anyone. The file space was considerably large and sufficient for storing the daily lesson plans, additional readings, or any other texts the teachers would need for the trip. Even though the teachers traveled with a hard copy of the lesson as well as a soft copy on CD- Rom, it was valuable to have an entire copy of the curriculum online, as I was advised by our stateside and expatriate coordinators that post 9-11 traveling conditions to China and throughout the country have proven to be unpredictable in their experience. While the teachers were in China, I was able to respond to teachers' request for additional activities, amendments to the lesson plans, etc. by creating and uploading files. The teachers also found this function helpful: "the files were simple to get to and easy to save onto my own computer, as well. (6/20/04)" Another function of a Yahoo group is instant chat. When members are logged in, they can view who else is online and communicate in real time.

3.2.3 Types of learning and teaching activities

Luis Pedro Luchini (2004) reports a case study where meaning focused and form focused tasks were combined to develop oral skills in Chinese L2 learners. The study covered nine EFL classes with thirty third-year university students each for a period of six months. The combination of fluency with accuracy-focused tasks "was sensibly effective in the sense that upon the completion of these activities, the learners were able to raise their self-awareness, develop their noticing-skills and promote their own learning autonomy, three basic fundamentals for second language acquisition to happen" (18). Likewise, Rao's study (2002) of thirty Chinese university students on the appropriateness and effectiveness of communicative and non-communicative activities in an EFL class yielded a recommendation for a conflation of traditional language teaching techniques with communicative tasks. The daily lesson plans gave opportunity for input skills such as listening and reading, and output skills such as speaking and writing. Pair work and group work enabled interaction to occur. Some of the tasks included: journal writing, role-plays, class discussions, dialogues, and email exchanges. The purpose of journal writing was to accommodate a reflective learning style, giving learners time to think about American and Chinese culture, and to express their thoughts and opinions. Examples of journal questions included:

> You are offered a high-paying job overseas. You would have to leave your family for three years. What decision would you make? Why?
>
> What motivates you? What makes you want to do week in school or at work? Is it people, things, or both? If people, who are they?
>
> Do you think technology has helped people to communicate better? Why or why not?

The journal questions were positioned before class discussions in order to warm up a general topic. So for example, the journal topic introducing the dilemma of accepting a position overseas proceeded a class discussion on how jobs in China differ from jobs in the United States.

The syllabus culminated in a final project presented to the class, which was also the final grade in the class. The students' final project was to work in small groups to create a business that would be marketed and advertised to their classmates. The assumption was that the project would

> …necessitate certain language use: the need to be able to use the language in a particular way gives validity to the study of the language points in questions. Therefore, a project can be considered both a motivator and a vehicle for certain specific kinds of language study. (Yogman and Kaylani 320)

The syllabus stated that individual participation and accomplishment was just as important as group achievement, therefore their final grade would reflect the work they had done on an individual basis as well as how the group performed overall. The individual grade was based on the niche they filled in their group (e.g. drawing the company logo, creating the PowerPoint, creating the good or service to be marketed, writing the company mission statement, etc.) and equaled half of their total grade. The other half of their grade was earned by how well the group did overall. Therefore there was incentive to take individual ownership and accountability of a singular element of the project, but also cooperation and harmony were fostered through an equal focus on the team performance as a whole.

3.2.4 Learner roles

Students would need to exhibit a level of autonomy appropriate to the tasks, a concept often misconstrued as entirely Western and non-existent in the Asian culture (Littlewood 1999). I anticipated that students would "support each other in collaborative modes of learning"(Richard and Rodgers 213). Students would also need to be willing to tolerate input from their fellow classmates during pair work and group work, and stay open minded about classroom management that may differ from Asian classroom in terms of power distance between student and teacher.

3.2.5 Teacher roles

Five Americans, Nadine, Amy, Andrew, Taylor, and Sarah, (assigned pseudonyms) volunteered their time to serve as teachers for the class. Nadine and Sarah were both experienced teachers, although only Nadine had specific ESL experience. Amy, Andrew, and Taylor all had cross-cultural experience, but lacked any formal teaching or business background. Devyn, an American with more than a decade of business experience and significant information technology skills and our advisor, also taught. The teachers were paired up according to skill sets and personality style in order to better balance the classroom size. Nadine and Amy were assigned to class one, Andrew and Devyn, class two, Taylor and Sarah class three. The program began and ended with three classes of approximately sixty students each.

In addition to the daily, online feedback from the teachers, student feedback was also collected. On the last day of class the teachers distributed a one-page questionnaire in their respective classes in order to survey the learning experiences of the students (see Appendix B). One hundred and forty-five students voluntarily completed the questionnaire. Finally, several of the small group presentations were video recorded.

3.2.6 The role of instructional materials

Because the curriculum was customized to meet the learning needs of students and stakeholders as well as to accommodate this specific learning context, no official textbooks were used in the class. Before the start of classes, the teachers purchased notebooks for each student and distributed them the first day of class. The notebooks served as a journal for the journal writing activities. Our program coordinator made photocopies of handouts, readings, or other materials for activities and these were passed out to students when appropriate.

During the data-gathering stage Devyn discovered each classroom was equipped with a computer with Internet access, so many tasks were built around the use of the WWW. For example, one type of task required students to surf through five American business websites and five Chinese business websites investigating the differences in language use, space, activity, quantity of content, and imagery in preparation for a class discussion. Commercials were another example of realia used with the Chinese students. The language used by companies advertising products and services through commercials were featured in discussion, and the commercials were viewed online. Email was also a tool for communicative tasks. For instance, an email exchange between native American businesspeople and the Chinese students equipped teachers with an ad hoc activity for students outside the classroom. A month prior to the start of classes, I advertised to American business people through a local organization the opportunity to participate in an email exchange with Chinese students of conversational BE. The expectations for the American business people would be to respond to students as they would in any other business email. I recognized that it would be important to establish parameters for the Americans, in that they can expect short exchanges, every other day (at most) for three weeks. Communication after the program ended would depend on the desire of student and the American. These parameters helped to safeguard the participants from receiving more emails that they could realistically respond to, as well as provide a way out of the exchange if it proved too demanding for their time or interest. Thirty-seven participants engaged in the exchange, representing diverse sectors of business industry. Among the participants were entrepreneurs, sales managers at the middle and executive level, marketing representatives, insurance agents, trainers and other various roles common in the American business environment.

4. Outcomes of Course Design at SWU

In this chapter I discuss the curriculum in light of classroom realities, using teacher feedback to explore what tasks were implemented, when, and how. I will refer to Nadine and Amy as C1, Andrew and Devyn as C2, Taylor and Sarah as C3.

4.1 *The First Day of Class*

Throughout the time that our expatriate advisor and coordinator, Devyn, visited the campus and met with SWU stakeholders, limiting the class size to thirty students per class was a non-negotiable. According to Devyn, students were paying the university for the class, and ironically the BE class became a business in and of itself. Devyn had forewarned us that this may be the case and to be prepared for large classes. On the first day of class, at least fifty students arrived in each of the three classes. "All our students are showing up every day, and more appear each day as well, so I think they are enjoying it (Devyn 7/14/04)." By the end of the course, there were at least sixty students in each class, and a total of 180 students completed the program.

The first day's lesson plan consisted of a warm up, syllabus review, needs assessment, class discussion, article reading, new vocabulary, name chain game, and business introductions. Teachers also had the option of introducing the email exchange and assigning email homework. The initial warm up was intended to set a friendly, open tone in the class, make introductions, and to exercise the students' listening skills. In the warm up, teachers gave their name, a little about where they live and work, their families, favorite color, and hobby. For fun, they also gave an example of how they would spend a million dollars. Of course, if in fact they were millionaires. In turn, the teachers passed out index cards for each student to write down on one side their name in Chinese, and on the reverse side their age, favorite color, hobby, and what they would do with a million dollars. A final question was added: What are your favorite American names? From each card, the teachers assigned an American name to each student. The reason teachers assigned names was to avoid duplication. Also, Devyn suggested that we have a list of names ready to choose from, so that students did not pick arbitrary nouns such as "brick" or "shoe". Devyn assured us that the students would enjoy having an American name for the class, and it would help them to immerse into an English-speaking role. His input adjusted the task to avoid cultural irrelevance:

> Before we got into the cards, we talked about various English names, and how English names are different than choosing a Chinese name (rock, red cloud, etc.) We also talked about the formality of needing to say Mr. John Smith, or Mr. Smith. We told them that Snoopy, and Tomato are not good names, and for this class everyone would need to have a proper English name, and without a proper name, they would not get respect.

Once the cards were completed and American names chosen, each student wrote their American name underneath their Chinese name on the index card. The cards could be used to take daily attendance, to generate participation by "pulling" names (if needed), and as a communication tool during the oral needs assessment. With a class size of sixty, systematizing names, seating, and grouping was a crucial management issue that needed to be executed on the first day of class.

The teachers began altering the task sequencing the first day. According to the first day's lesson plan, after the teacher introduction, the course syllabus would be passed out and explained. My rationale for positioning the teacher introduction before the course introduction was so that the teachers could immediately set the friendly, open yet respectful, and interactive tone for the class. The warm up would also buy them some time to assess the general proficiency of the class before explaining the syllabus. Teachers had an advanced and a simplified version of the syllabus to use at their discretion based on what they would pick up about their student's proficiencies during the initial warm up. In reality, the teachers ended up switching these activities—the simplified syllabus was reviewed first, followed by the teachers' introductions. Devyn explains the rationale behind the change:

> Monday, we moved the introduction of the class and the syllabus to the very beginning, at the recommendation of some local Chinese. We also told the students we were not there to teach them grammar, only to help them with their business English and business customs.

It was immediately clear that input from Chinese colleagues might be a factor in altering the order of tasks although it was not clear whether the advice was solicited or offered.

Following the course introduction, teachers were to move into needs assessment; however, the needs assessment began after the teacher introductions that were originally intended for the class warm up. The objective of the needs assessment was to measure oral proficiency as well as find out more about why students were taking the course and what they were looking forward to learning. Anticipating large classes, the needs analysis was structured so that one teacher could interview a small group of students at a time in the hallway outside a classroom, while the second teacher led the remaining students in a journal writing task. The journal writing task would not only keep students who were waiting to be interviewed busy, but it would allow them to express their ideas through writing and to off set a potential poor oral performance. For example, teachers would be able to couple the journal writing with their oral interaction with the student during their assessment. The idea behind the simultaneous tasks was to have a chance to speak with each student, yet not at the expense of causing embarrassment in front of the class. The oral interview and journal writing was not a test, so it was important for students to feel they were communicating with the teachers at some level, while it was even more important for the teachers at this stage to learn more about why their students were in the class. The small group interview was informal and conversational in nature in order to lower anxiety and to see if there would be any student-to-student interaction, which would indicate a higher level of oral proficiency and interpersonal communication skills. Once again, Chinese colleagues suggested a change in the task structure. Chinese colleagues advised Devyn to conduct the oral needs assessment in class, rather than taking small groups into the hallway. However, the suggestion was soon abandoned when it proved futile. Devyn explained, "…started [the oral interviews] in class, on the recommendation of our Chinese teachers, but everyone was bored so after a few, we took them outside in groups as we were supposed to."

A couple obstacles emerged during the needs assessment to which teachers responded differently. Firstly, the forty minutes devoted to the small group interviews seemed uncomfortably long for the teachers. Secondly, students employed memorization as a strategy to accomplish the oral interview. C3 reported, "we began the needs assessment but the students were getting bored so we spread it out over the next three days taking out groups of 3-4 while the rest of the students answered the journal question. This worked very well." The "boredom" sensed by the teachers may have resulted from the students lacking the discourse-level writing skills that would justify writing for more than twenty minutes on a journal task. In regards to the oral interview, it seems as though students tried to resort to memorizing and sharing responses in order to minimize their anxiety level. Although the average number of years that students studied English language was at least seven and a half, their exposure to native English speakers was rare. Additionally, their accustomed teaching style was grammar-focused rather than fluency-focused. Anxiety caused by the opportunity to converse with a native speaker was to be expected. Teachers dealt with the students memorization strategies during their interviews in different ways. C3 writes:

> Each day I would write new needs assessment questions so I would know that students I already assessed couldn't give the questions to students I hadn't assessed yet. Of course, the students were nervous but I was able to open them up by joking with them and telling them that we just wanted to see a glimpse of their oral proficiency.

C2 reported attempted asking close-ended questions in order to warm up the students for open discussion, however quickly discovered students did not comprehend the questions' meaning:

> We had them fill out the cards, then did the assessment of the students, while they wrote in their journals. Most write better than speak. Many students had problems talking to us in English, and I am not sure whether they are really that poor in speaking or not… a few problems with that, mainly because you have to find a way around what they memorized for their introduction on their hobbies, and what is real conversation….

> Also many too afraid to talk to us I tried to use questions related to what they said their hobbies are. I found the importance of not asking yes or no questions. Because some just started answering yes. Yes, I am learning to drive, [y]es I have a car, (no way this girl had a car) then I asked her another question that was nonsense, and she said yes as well...Hmmm. The evaluation took a long time.

What was clear from the needs assessment was that most students were much more comfortable writing than speaking, lacked verbal abilities at the discourse level and strategies to help them negotiate meaning, and were very nervous. Teaching business introductions during the first day was therefore well suited.

Business introductions served as a communicative task as well as a cultural component. During the course-planning phase I collected actual American business cards for the classes to use during the second part of the activity. The objective of the task was to teach specific forms of address, how to scan business cards for contact information, provide practice for non-verbal customs such as handshaking and making eye contact, as well as paralinguistic cues such as intonation, pitch, and tempo. Teachers presented the new language needed to perform the task by writing it on the board, giving time for students to write it down, choral drilling the class as a whole, and then performing a final comprehension check by singling out several students. For the first part of the task, teachers modeled the language in context of a dialogue by performing a mini-role play of two business people exchanging greetings. The business cards were reserved and not included in the exchange until the second task, however. After teachers modeled the interaction, students practiced in pairs. Circulating around the room, teachers listened and took mental notes of errors. A couple errors were selected to review with the class as a whole, and then students were asked to practice in pairs again. The teachers modeled the activity a second time, drawing attention instead on body movement, or kinesics and use of space, or proxemics, during an introduction (Scollon and Scollon 142). Specifically, they demonstrated incorrect body movement and use of space. Not smiling, nodding affirmatively too much or not enough, standing too close, and inappropriate touching are examples of non-linguistic cues that could be potentially misleading in a business interaction. Teachers passed out the business cards to the students, showing them where to locate the person's name. Students circulated around the room using the business cards to meet and greet one another, paying attention to non-verbal communication.

C2 reported:

> They connect with it when they see us do it twice, then they do it once. When we randomly ask people to repeat what we've done, we can see their comprehension. We did this with how to shake a foreigner's hand, since I saw some people really didn't get it when we did introductions. Then I shook lots of peoples' hands critiquing their technique. Many very limp handshakes, or just grabbing of fingers, not the hand…
>
> They practiced asking and giving business cards to others and how to read them well. We used this time to also talk about how to properly do a handshake... They took time to practice with each other.

C3 reported:

> This went very smoothly and students really got into it. [We] wrote all the language on the board and they copied it down. We role played several

times and then had the students practice with each other and then had them present. The business cards were used during this activity however the students had trouble pronouncing the foreign names but enjoyed looking at them. During this activity we also thoroughly discussed correct etiquette when introducing yourself. We told them the importance of a firm handshake and eye contact when introducing yourself in an American business situation.

It was evident from the business introduction exercise that authentic business cards were an excellent tool to jump start role play activities and that students were actively engaged during the task. This task also illustrates the importance of showing and modeling business introductions, rather than just telling or transmitting information about business introductions.

Although additional tasks were planned, the first day of class consisted of teacher introductions, syllabus review, needs assessment, and business introductions. During the first week I received very little feedback from C1, and what I did receive was general in nature. C1 shared that their students were of mixed verbal proficiencies, while in general their writing skills are more advanced. C2 shared that C1 was experiencing personality conflict as a team and as a result their class was "having a bit more troubles." C1 summarized the conflict issue by explaining, "we're working on teamwork, because some of the team members thought we were lacking this a little and it was disrupting class flow."

4.2 *Week One: Needs Assessment, Resumes, and Interviews*

Week one was dedicated to communication during the employment process. Tasks were designed around authentic resumes and interview questions, and combined writing and speaking skills. The resumes coupled with interviewing allowed students to exhibit their writing skills, learn new vocabulary, and to use the resume as a launch pad for meaningful communication: the interview.

The teachers had their personal resumes as well as my own prepared in advance to use as authentic materials. All the resumes were patterned similarly, so that the students could learn the overall structure of the resume. The sections included: contact information, objective, employment, education, other skills, references and organizations. The first resume task focused on listening and writing. Students were asked to copy down the section titles, leaving space in between. Teachers read chunks of their resume content, and students were asked to select the section that they thought matched the content. Students were asked to come up with a definition for the section titles, based on input from the content since the sections were not defined in advance. The teachers conducted initial comprehension checks through choral drilling, which proved successful.

The second resume task was tiered for mixed proficiencies. It also utilized the students' strengths in writing, but was not accuracy-focused. Students practiced business introductions with the business cards, and then were asked to write content in each resume section based on the person and type of business represented on the business card. Because our learners were pre experience, the task was tiered and it was essential for this task to be a type of role-play; students could imagine themselves as the businessperson representing the company on the card. Beginner students were encouraged to write their resume at the sentence level, while intermediate students were asked to write a paragraph in each section. Advanced students were challenged to write a more complete resume and to type a final copy in the computer lab. However, teachers complained that the memorization strategy of oral interviewing reared its ugly head in the form of plagiarism. C2 accidentally discovered a student had copied a majority of her information for her resume from an obscure website. The teacher decided to address the issue by explaining plagiarism and giving her an opportunity to redo the homework. The student complied; however, the subject of plagiarism was revisited throughout various tasks and continued to be problematic for our teachers.

Interviewing was treated as a process, rather than a product; the focus was on fluency, rather than simulating a robotic exchange of memorized questions and answers. The tasks were designed to help students learn how to prepare for an interview and how to share information about oneself during questioning. Having held several company recruiting positions in which I was responsible for surveying resumes, interviewing, and hiring, I drew on my actual experience in this arena. In a real world interview, memorized answers, however perfectly constructed, are rarely important and never impressive. The two most important elements in the interviewing process are: preparing for the interview by extensively researching the company, and self-monitoring during the interview. Interviewing, therefore, is truly representative of a real-world business communication skill, the success of which hardly ever depends on formal language accuracy.

The initial task involved the teacher reading an article that profiled a well-known American company. The teachers then led the class in a discussion about how interviews are conducted with the company and what kind of candidates the company is most likely to hire. For homework, each student was assigned an American company website to research answers to the following questions:

What is the company's product or service?

Describe the company's goals.

What type of person do you feel this company would want to hire?

The following day, the students practiced listening to an interview that was compiled entirely from direct, or wh- questions. The students learned that these questions require concise and specific answers because they are often used as "softball" or warm up questions during the interview (See Appendix D). The students also were given a chance to practice interviewing each other in pairs. Using the company they researched for homework on the Internet as the context, the interviewer was given a sheet with assorted interview questions to use, while the student playing the prospective job candidate answered the questions. Students were also asked to switch roles so that everyone would have a chance to interview and be interviewed. On day four, the teachers role-played an interview using indirect questions (See Appendix E), so that students could become familiar with both types of questions. It was explained that indirect questions usually call for a more elaborate answer. Throughout the week, students were also given homework to email their American business keypals and ask them about resumes and their company's interview process and practices, as an additional source of authentic interaction with a native speaker. The role-plays were very successful, C3 noted "Role plays and discussions keep them coming" and C2 remarked " [we] personally like the discussions, and it uses a lot of time, the other thing I really like is the role-playing. Real interesting stuff." The tasks were successful in that they served as introduction to the language of interviews and raised students' awareness of the importance of the pragmatic elements of the interview process.

During the first week teachers complained that the class was very noisy. C2 lamented, "I have found in our class it is difficult to get a student to define a term, because the room is so noisy, I have to ask a question and walk up and stand directly in front of them to hear their answer." It is unclear what the classroom chatter was about, since our teachers do not speak Chinese fluently. One explanation could be that students were clarifying task instructions with each other throughout the class, or helping to interpret and explain teacher input. Another explanation could be that students did not value listening to their peers answer questions. The lack of attention could have been a type of face saving technique, so that students would not lose face from not speaking well or answering a question correctly. Hu and Grove forewarn Americans who plan to do business with the Chinese the cultural differences in attitudes the speaker with the "floor" (165). They note that even when a native Chinese speaker is giving a formal presentation, if the subject matter is too dense, too simplistic, etc., audience members may just walk out. If they feel compelled to stay, they may talk with each other, walk around, or stretch. Because the Chinese speaker normally presents with their head down, reading, they are seldom distracted or aware of the noise. More significantly, it is just not considered rude. Hu and Grove point out that is the same treatment is given to a foreigner, they are not being treated disrespectfully, but they are being treated as a native. They also point out that in certain situations, audience "noise and movement" indicates *renao,* the Chinese word meaning "good fun" (166). Conversely, in an American classroom, talking with classmates is considered disrespectful to whoever has the floor, and usually signifies inattentiveness due to boredom. Hu and Grove also mention that teachers can usually expect "passive, reserved, formal, attentive, and respectful behavior" from Chinese students (166). In either case described by the authors—students' passivity or chattering— a Western teacher's logical first response to the problem will be to diagnose it as "boredom". The teacher feedback garnered revealed three different types of responses to classroom noise levels: C1 resorted to lecturing so students would have to busy themselves with note-taking, C2 threatened to reduce points for too much talking in their L1, C3 stopped talking or had whoever held the floor stop, stood to the side, and waited until students were silent before continuing the lesson. C3 was consistent with this approach, and the class became increasingly quieter while their peers or the teachers were talking.

4.3 *Week Two: Corporate Mission Statements, Core Values, Vision Statements, and Final Project Preparation*

Week two was dedicated to language used to communicate Western corporate philosophies through real-world mission statements, core values, and vision statements The daily lesson plans were constructed synergistically in order to incrementally prepare students with the background knowledge and language that would jumpstart their final project. Week two's lesson plans were as follows: Telephone and Web Business English, The Mission of Mission Statements, The Value of Core Values, Vision Statements and Logos. Tasks were designed that combined a focus on form with group and class discussions of specific companies. Company websites, commercials, and advertising were a central task theme as business language contact zones, displaying aspects of stylistics, pragmatics, text-image relationships, and the communication of ideologies (Piller 170).

One such task that capitalized on advertising as a site of business language contact was two-fold: for homework students studied five American and five Chinese company websites to find similarities and differences in content and style, and then came to class ready to discuss their findings. The idea behind the task was to raise awareness of how a message reaches its intended audience, a strategic communicative principle that is just not important for building websites, product and service design, and commercials, but also in giving presentations. This task proved fruitful for C2 and C3, however C1 ran into difficulty:

> Started the morning with review of websites. It fell flat because the groups findings about U.S. and Chinese website similarities and differences did not correspond to what we had been told to expect. Not being familiar with Chinese websites, we could not agree or dispute, so we moved on.

It appears from the above feedback C1 assumed a prescribed set of similarities and differences between American and Chinese websites. Assumptions were not written into the lesson plan, it was an exploratory exercise only, so it is uncertain where how their conclusions were formed. It is evident that they did not personally complete the task in preparation for the class discussion. In contrast, C2 and C3 both recalled having a lively discussion about the similarities and differences, which might be attributed to their personal preparation. C2 responded:

> Good website to look at for people comparing Chinese and American websites...www.sina.com Has a link to English at the bottom of the site. English is 1/5th the size, and has lots of white space. I don't know how students [in C1] could not see differences between American and Chinese websites.

Another helpful company website for task creation was www.jnj.com, the official Johnson and Johnson website. Johnson and Johnson's company credo is considered to be the first corporate mission statement. Johnson and Johnson's company credits their success to their credo on their homepage stating, "Our Credo has helped us fulfill our responsibilities to customers, employees, communities and shareowners for more than 60 years." The credo is lengthier than modern mission statements, presented in video format and in many translations. The class had a Mandarin and English copy of the credo to read, while also listening to the credo on video in Mandarin and English. After reading, watching, and listening to the credo, teachers followed up with a class discussion about their reactions to the credo and issues of corporate responsibility. At first C1 had difficulty facilitating the discussion because the class had not understood a large part of the vocabulary. It is unclear whether or not C1 also distributed the Mandarin copy of the credo, or allowed students to listen to the Mandarin version. It seems as though C1—teachers and students—exhibited a lower tolerance of ambiguity than C2 and C3 which proved problematic in a bottom-up approach to task sequencing. For example, C1 became more comfortable with class dynamics once a task focused on form, but would be frustrated during the window intentionally dedicated for students to negotiate meaning. However, C2 and C3 commented that the students enjoyed listening to the credo and the discussion that followed was spirited. Finally, several tasks which utilized authentic mission statements allowed students to focus on form and construct a mission statement for their own business in preparation for the final project. Creating a mission statement was a collaborative exercise in English among the small group and therefore promoted peer-to-peer communication.

Another company, AFLAC, was spotlighted in order to demonstrate the language of core values. I selected this company for several reasons. Firstly, AFLAC's worldwide brand recognition is second only to Coca-Cola, a fact aided in large part to their famous duck commercials. Secondly, John, Bill, and Paul Amos founded AFLAC fifty years ago, and despite its exponential growth as a publicly traded company, it continues to be owned and directed by the Amos family. Family values and networks are a widely recognized trait of Asian culture, and most businesses are family owned and operated. Thirdly, the commercials were an authentic and available language source via the web and a DVD copy obtained from the company. Lastly, the duck commercials were a unique way to introduce humor as an aspect of BE. The positive response to commercials as a BE genre inspired C3 to create an additional task that coincided with the final group projects:

> On Friday we assigned homework for the students to design a simple commercial [in English] for their company. They needed to act out the commercial on Monday. The commercials were hilarious - it was so much fun - both for the students and for us. Some students designed power-point commercials and some did chalkboard drawings. Regardless, we wanted something simple and creative and the students delivered!

Several other companies were profiled and students had the opportunity to collaboratively create a logo and vision statement company, another opportunity for them to showcase their creativity while discussing how to embody the message of a company through symbol.

4.4 *Week Three: Business Meetings, Business Letter Writing, Presentation Skills, and Final Project Presentations*

I mentioned earlier that not all the lesson plans were created before the start of classes. This was understandably a concern for our teachers who felt a bit unprepared as week three approached. This was a purposeful attempt on my part to allow margin for learning needs that I believed would inevitably surface during the first two weeks from students or Chinese stakeholders. My suspicion proved true in that SWU specifically requested toward the end of week two that we instruct students on how to conduct business meetings. A student in C1 also requested to learn about business letters. I opted to allow the teachers to prepare the lesson for business letter writing independently, partly because I felt that the task would detract from much needed time for group projects; each class would only have four instructional days for the week, the last class being reserved for final presentations and surveys. I originally had set aside ideas for lesson plans on networking and the language of small business, however the needs of stakeholders and students were an essential part of the course and so primary status was given to them. The teachers successfully incorporated business meetings with the final projects. Moreover, a combination of writing and speaking tasks proved effective. Students learned how to create an agenda and take minutes. C3 writes:

> To follow this discussion, we had each group create an agenda for the remaining 40 min class period. The topic of discussion was their group presentation. They then took minutes on the information they discussed in their group presentation meeting. I'm glad we gave them time in class to work on group presentation and we had an opportunity to see if they understood the concept of agendas and meetings. All in all it was a good activity.

In regard to business letter writing, C2 and C3 created tasks that made the letter writing a meaningful tool to develop their business for their final project, while C1 isolated the task and focused on accuracy. For example, C3 asked each group to write a letter requesting a formal business meeting with another company in order to present their product or service. On the other hand, C1 asked their students to focus on the microelements of the letter, "We began by reviewing business letter homework. Went through it all a couple more times and had them practice with each other. Then they developed a letter from scratch using the phrases we introduced to them. Stressed that format is important, content is critical. Be accurate."

4.41 *Final Project Presentations*

In preparation for the final group projects the teachers prepared the students in presentations skills. Similar to interviewing, the task centered on the delivery of content accuracy was only an issue insofar as inhibited understanding. Students were taught how to make use of logical connectors, the discourse patterns of a presentation, and simplicity. For practice the teachers asked students to give "popcorn" presentations which were short, impromptu presentations on subject they had learned in class such as handshaking, American business forms of address, contents of a good resume, interviewing etc. This was another example of how the teachers were able to regulate the task to better integrate it into the whole. C1 shared, "We gave each group ten-fifteen minutes to prepare and two minutes for the entire group to present. We had a good mix of topic choices and the presentations were succinct, on point, and really surprisingly good. We gave them hints and observations and a good time was had by all." Throughout the course, the final projects proved to be the thread of momentum for the classes. C1 reported: "The students are moving right along with the plans for their new businesses. They get enthusiastic and animated in their groups. I think we have some fun in store for us."

Indeed, the final group projects were a successful culmination of the students' receptivity and efforts, combined with the coaching from their teachers. C2 summarizes:

> Thursday and Friday the students made their final presentations for the Conversational Business English course. We were all so proud of these kids. Some of them, in the beginning when we first started teaching, were so nervous to talk in English in front of a group; however they did such a great job on their presentations - especially some of the most nervous ones. Their confidence in using English has improved dramatically!

During their presentations, the students showed creativity of expression through visual aids, group collaboration as well as individual achievement, and incorporation and extension of BE. A selection of students' business ideas are provided below:

- ***Water/Travel Bar.*** The bar is comfortable meeting place (water bar) where people can stop in for water and soft drinks (of the orange type, for instance) and mingle and exchange ideas and pictures about travel and destinations.

- ***Toy Business.*** Students felt that China makes so many of the world's toys as exports but keeps far too few for its own children. The business will work with toy manufacturers to distribute toys within the boundaries of China .
- ***Animal Care Service.*** This service is for persons who were away on vacation or at work. The animals will have custom-made clothing and include a photo service available so the owners could have custom pictures of their pets.
- ***Love Shop***. Young people (both men and women) can come to this "place" to see and be seen, to meet other people, and to have beautiful clothes available to them to dress up in. A photo service is available for pictures of themselves in their "lovely" groups, with soft music playing in the background, luxurious items available to make them feel special, and proper lighting to make them look their best for each other. Jewelry is also available for wearing and for purchase. The Love Shop is about being attractive and available in a safe environment.

Translation Business. A service to translate for their foreign clientele including most activities of daily living as well as eating out, finding proper domestic help, and travel information for the business traveler.

- ***Jasmine Florist Shop.*** Jasmine Florists provide personal flower shopping and delivery service for foreigners.
- ***3F Restaurant***. The 3F restaurant is an alternative SWU campus dining environment featuring a diverse menu and exemplary operations and customer service.

- ***Crazy T-Shirts.*** Custom designed, hand painted t-shirts. Chinese characters and art are used to reflect the customer or business personality, style or business.

4.42 *Student Surveys*

On the last day of class following the presentations students filled out anonymous surveys to help us better assess how well we met their learning needs (See Appendix B). Overall, 93% of students felt that they are able to speak better English as a direct result of the course. Additionally, 90% of students agreed the class had met or exceeded their expectations, and 93% of students agreed the course helped them to better understand American Business values. In regard to specific BE skills, 64% of students responded that they learned for the first time how to write a business letter, 69% learned interviewing skills for the first time. The overwhelming response was in the areas of business meeting and resume writing: 91% of students learned how to conduct a meeting for the first time and 86% of students were introduced to resume writing. It is noteworthy to mention that throughout the course, 86% of students responded that journal writing tasks helped them to express their ideas better than speaking. Finally, students were given space to write about what they enjoyed most and least about the class. The teachers and final projects were the top to choices for what students enjoyed most while playing vocabulary games and homework were least favored activities.

5. Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

In conclusion, I have detailed how sociocultural variables at the macro and micro level co-constructed our specific learning context at SWU. These sociocultural variables at the macro-level included: the political and economic climate of China's current position in world affairs, the centralized, educational administrative policies, and the ideological issues commonly attributed to Confucian Heritage Countries. At the micro-level, the needs, wants, learning styles, and strategies of our individual students, in combination with classroom, institutional, and local culture also informed the learning context for our BE course at SWU. The sensitivity to our learning context naturally precipitated a hesitancy to adopt a singular coursebook, approach and/or methodology, thereby necessitating curricular innovation for our BE class. In chapter three I outlined a course design inspired from an eclectic approach, that is, my approach was guided by context and second language learning principles. I drew from my personal business experience equally yoked with inquiry and observation into the learning context. The inquiry during needs analysis and on-going observation by teachers revealed second language acquisition principles which could be actualized in our context: intrinsic motivation, self-confidence, the language-culture connection, and communicative competence (Brown 54-68).

In retrospect, this approach has its limitations. I cannot stress enough how important it was to have a program coordinator who was able to physically visit the school and make recommendations based on the physical environment and first hand cultural knowledge. For example, knowing ahead of time that students did not have individual seats, but rather sat in rows of four at tables that were bolted to the floor was an invaluable piece of information in preparing for pair work and small group tasks. Sensitively engaged teacher observation was just as invaluable—discovering midstream that our students were late night video game aficionados lessened the charge of bored students. Ideally the process of obtaining information about students' proficiency levels and occupational goals would be accomplished well in advance of the curriculum development. However, this is practically impossible because of the turn around time involved as well as the uncertainty of reliability of information received. One possibility would be for the program coordinator to spend several days on campus screening potential students for the class and passing along proficiency information. However, this idea would be completely dependent on the agreement and support of SWU stakeholders.

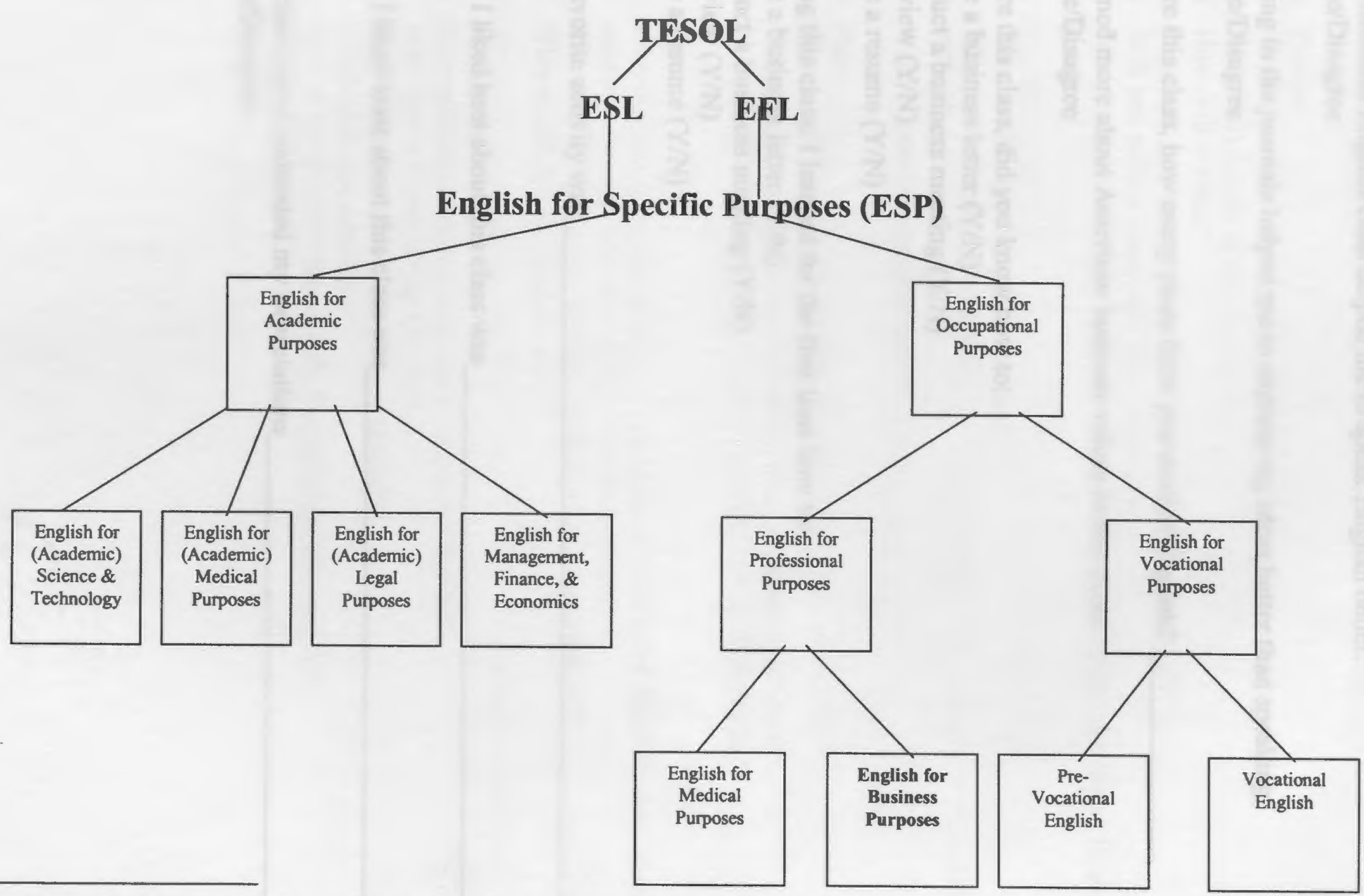
Looking ahead, an ongoing task assessment that would objectify the students' attitudes would be a beneficial and perhaps more immediate source of feedback. For example, teachers often used "boredom" as a rationale to change tasks. It was never clear how the teachers actually knew students were bored, since the students did not explicitly communicate this to the teachers. Facial expressions cannot be treated as fact across cultures. Scollon and Scollon emphasize in Asian cultures excessive smiling is a by-product of nervousness. "...it has been widely observed that Asians in general tend to smile or laugh more easily than Westerners when they feel difficulty or embarrassment in the discourse" (143). For example, if the students had been smiling teachers may have interpreted this as excitement over an activity, when in fact, students could have been very uncomfortable. As discussed earlier, talking in an L2 class is also not a valid indicator of boredom, as students may be attempting to clarify instruction or understand input in their native language. In short, a simple survey at the end of class everyday could have helped to more accurately select and asses the sequencing of tasks. The survey would indeed need to be short because class was continuously hard-pressed for time, perhaps just a question about what they learned new that day and their favorite activity/task would suffice. In addition to brief, student surveys, I would also like to see our team use video recording as a device for ongoing assessment. Although several of the final presentations were video recorded, I concur with Edwards's evaluation of his own ESP business course in which it "would have been useful to record student role plays discussions and presentations in the classroom for use in self-evaluation procedures" (Edwards 296). Notwithstanding our teachers' perceptions, many of the decisions they made were not merely reactive, but qualified by their increasing knowledge of their students learning needs. This became evident toward the end of week two, when teachers began to take an active role in adjusting tasks in order to better integrate them, rather than skipping a task in its entirety or succumbing to frustration. Despite issues of task sequencing, we learned that incremental tasks that built toward a final group project using BE in a meaningful way is ideal for the pre experience Chinese student.

On a wider scale, I hope my findings contribute to the rapidly growing research field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in the post-methods era (Brown 2002; Richards and Rodgers 2001, Nunan 2000). The primacy of context as it necessarily informs second language teaching enlightens our approach and perhaps best serves our EFL learners. Additionally, barriers to accomplishing a comprehensive needs analysis in an EFL environment can be mitigated by ongoing assessment and support of teacher adaptation strategies. This supports what Bax calls for: grounding teachers in methodology, yet with a "strong, explicit framework of 'contextual awareness'"(286). At its basic contribution, the ecological, principled approach tested at SWU rings true to Nunan's Nietzschean proclamation,"' the methods' movement - the search for the one best method, would seem to be well and truly dead (Nunan, "The Second Language Curriculum in the New Millennium" 3).

6. Epilogue

In the introduction I noted that the success of our program would initially be measured by an invitation to return to SWU by our coordinator and the school. We have since received an overwhelming, positive response from SWU as to the outcomes of our program and were invited to return this summer (2005). However, the Johnson and Johnson jingle "having a baby changes everything" is even more culturally appropriate for the Chinese context rather than its intended American audience. Our program coordinator and advisor discovered they were expecting, and would be due in July 2005. This, of course, would coincide with program's time frame and as such would be impossible to accomplish. Our plan is to further develop our curriculum in light of this research and return in 2006.

Appendix A[5]



[5] Adapted from Dudley-Evans, Tony. *Developments in English for Specific Purposes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Appendix B: Student Survey

This Business English class helped me to speak English better.
Agree/Disagree

Writing in the journals helped me to express my ideas better than speaking.
Agree/Disagree

Before this class, how many years have you studied English? ____________

I learned more about American business values in this class.
Agree/Disagree

Before this class, did you know how to:
Write a business letter (Y/N)
Conduct a business meeting (Y/N)
Interview (Y/N)
Write a resume (Y/N)

During this class, I learned for the first time how to:
Write a business letter (Y/N)
Conduct a business meeting (Y/N)
Interview (Y/N)
Write a resume (Y/N)

My favorite activity was ______________________________

What I liked best about this class was ______________________________

What I liked least about this class was ______________________________

This class met or exceeded my expectations ______________________________
Agree/Disagree

Appendix C: Group Project Worksheet for Final Presentations

Your team will make the following decisions about your business:

- ❑ Product
- ❑ What type of product or service will your company offer?
- ❑ What will it look like?
- ❑ How will it work?
- ❑ How will you brand it? Ex: Will it have a logo or mascot?
- ❑ Will you offer a warranty? If so, what kind?
- ❑ What kind of service or support will you offer your clients who invest in your product?

- ❑ What is the name of your business?
- ❑ What is the mission statement?
- ❑ What are your core values?
- ❑ What is your visions statement?

- ❑ Price
- ❑ How much will your product cost?
- ❑ Will you offer any discounts or sales, if so, to whom and when?
- ❑ Will you offer purchase options such as credit card, or financing?

- ❑ Place
- ❑ How will you get your product in the hands of your customers? Trucks, planes, automobiles, distributors, retailers, local shops, etc?
- ❑ How will you motivate your customers to buy your product?
- ❑ Where will you sell your product?

- ❑ Promotion
- ❑ How will you communicate that your product exists?
- ❑ What type of advertising will you use?
- ❑ How will you personally sell your product?
- ❑ Where will you advertise?
- ❑ How much of your budget will you spend on advertising?

Appendix D: Direct Interview Questions

Examples of direct interview questions include:

How did you hear about the job opening?

Why are you leaving your current position?

What were your specific responsibilities you had in your last position?

What motivates you?

What would your previous managers and co-workers say your strengths/weaknesses are?

What do you know about our company's products/services?

In what ways do you feel you could contribute to our company's goals?

What are your expectations of this job?

What do you think are your greatest strengths?

What are your work related goals for the next few years?

Do you like to work by yourself, or part of a group?

What makes you unique? Why should we hire you, rather than another candidate?

What salary range are you currently seeking?

Are you looking at any other employers?

Are you interviewing with any other companies at this time?

Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix E: Indirect Interview Questions

Examples of indirect interview questions include:

Tell me about yourself.

Let's talk about your previous employment (work history)

Tell me about the specific responsibilities you had in your last position.

Tell me about a specific problem you had at your lost job and how you handled it.

Give me an example of how you would solve a problem in the work place.

Describe your ideal job.

Describe your expectations of this job.

Explain to me your greatest strengths

Tell me some of your weaknesses and how you can improve them.

Tell me about your education.

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July 29, 2004

Dr. Steven Brown, Principal Investigator
Ms. Diana Kauffman, Co-investigator
Department of English
UNIVERSITY

RE: HSRC PROTOCOL NUMBER: 02-2005
TITLE: Curriculum Development for and Evaluation of a Chinese English for Specific Purposes Project

Dear Dr. Brown and Ms. Kauffman:

The Human Subjects Research Committee of Youngstown State University has reviewed the aforementioned protocol, and has determined it is exempt from full committee review based on a DHHS Category 1 exemption, *but with the following conditions:*

(1) *the Investigator should provide the Committee with a copy of the questions/measures that will be used to facilitate data collection;*
(2) *the Committee passed a new policy last fall requesting Investigators to include the name and telephone number of a Committee member as part of the contact information. Please include the name of Edward Orona, Director, Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs, telephone 330-941-2377 or email eorona@ysu.edu along with that of the Principal Investigator.*

Please submit the aforementioned materials to Cheryl Coy, Secretary, Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs, 357 Tod Hall, before initiating your project.

Any changes in your research activity should be promptly reported to the Human Subjects Review Committee and may not be initiated without HSRC approval except where necessary to eliminate hazard to human subjects. Any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects should also be promptly reported to the Human Subjects Research Committee.

Sincerely,

Peter J. Kasvinsky
Dean of Graduate Studies
Research Compliance Officer

PJK:cc

c: Dr. Gary Salvner, Chair
Department of English