

A VISITING SCHOLAR'S PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHING READING IN CHINA: LESSONS LEARNED FROM OBSERVING HOW TO TEACH READING IN THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

In this descriptive qualitative study, the authors are two literacy professors at two different universities, one in the United States and the other in China. Author 2 came to the United States as a visiting scholar and observed and studied in author 1's courses about reading instruction in English in the United States. Positioned within the intercultural learning theory (Immetman & Schneider, 1998), transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991) as well as Schön (1983, 1987)'s notion of reflective practitioners, the study reported author 2, the visiting professor's developing thoughts and perspectives on literacy instruction in China based on her observation and collaboration with author 1.

INTRODUCTION

Being one of the fastest developing countries, China's growth and development are not only reflected in areas of economic and military power, but also the globalization and internationalization of its higher education. An important result of globalization in education is the exchange programs, which refers to the study-abroad opportunities as well as the transfer of programs and teachers to other countries. According to the Ministry of Education data, there were a total of 399,600 Chinese people who studied abroad in 2012 and China has become the country with the largest studying abroad population (MOE, 2013). In addition to the students who study in foreign countries for a degree, many are visiting scholars, which refer to,

Scientists and professors who attend universities in other countries to engage temporarily in research or teaching, while also maintaining their affiliation and position at their home universities and returning after their visiting period ends. They usually have doctoral degrees or are professionally trained (Shimmi, 2014, p. 9).

Different from international students, visiting scholars usually have more free time and are more willing and better prepared to be involved in conducting research collaboratively or independently.

A literature search on visiting scholars' experience in foreign countries conducted using two reputable educational databases ERIC via EBSCO in the United States (US) and CNKI in China revealed limited results. While there are some publications about visiting scholars' experience of learning in a university in another country, none of those are empirical studies. These authors all had the visiting scholar experiences and generally discussed their understanding of tertiary education in the US, the evaluation procedures and standards in the educational programs in the US, the workload and the hiring procedures of the professorship, and how they adapted themselves to the foreign living and studying atmosphere (Du & Sun, 2013; Li & Zhang, 1997; Song, 2012; Yang, 2014, Zhang, 2005; Zhang & Yang, 2013; Zhou, 2013). Among all the studies, Yang, Wang, and Zhang (2013) talked about the necessity and importance for English-teaching professors to be visiting scholars in English-speaking countries, and viewed this experience as a way to receive trainings on teaching pedagogy, self-reflection, and interaction and collaboration with foreign professors. All these reports and studies revealed these Chinese visiting scholars' general impression about higher education, teaching foci and teachers' pedagogical approach in the US. However, none of these scholars reported their academic growth during their visiting period and how this experience influenced their teaching and research practice in their home countries. For this very aim, this study endeavored to investigate how a visiting scholar (author 2) collaborated with a professor (author 1) in the local institution in the US to develop new professional knowledge on the teaching and learning of literacy.

Education in China and the US is different in many ways, as the two countries have different mainstream ideologies and cultural values. According to Hofstede's cultural dimensions (2001), collectivism and individualism are important cultural values to understand the education in eastern and western countries. The

Chinese society promotes collectivism and the collectivist classrooms emphasize on discipline and conformity. Teachers expect students to accept the knowledge they deliver, inherit good cultural traditions, and become citizens with good qualities such as righteous, hard-working, and following the authorities to maintain social harmony (Smith & Smith, 1989; Ames & Rosemont, 1998). Western individualism, on the other hand, values the growth of individuals, promotes social justice, and strengthens the democratic way of life (Danforth, 2008; Galbraith, 1998; Kellner, n.d.). As John Dewey said, "Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself." Hence, students are expected to interact with society and find ways to make it better (Dewey, 1916, 1938; Boyles, 2006).

The authors in this study are two university professors of literacy at two different countries; however, they share some similar cultural background. Author 1 is an associate professor in a literacy program at a southeastern university in the US. As a Chinese native, author 1 completed her K-12 as well as undergraduate education in Beijing China and became a high school English reading teacher after graduation. Interested in learning how English was taught as a native language, author 1 came to the US to complete her graduate degree majoring in Reading Education. After obtaining her terminal degree in literacy, she worked in this university preparing pre-service and in-service teachers how to teach reading in K-12 classrooms. Author 2, once a middle school Chinese teacher, is an associate professor of Chinese teacher education in a normal university in Beijing China. Author 2 has her terminal degree in Chinese educational history and has worked in this normal university for 9 years preparing pre-service and in-service teachers of Chinese in public schools. As one of the top scholars in the field of Chinese literacy education, she was selected by Beijing Municipal Commission of Education to come to author 1's university as a visiting scholar for one year.

Both authors are Chinese natives, and had similar schooling experience learning how to read and write in Chinese. Additionally, they both teach similar college level reading method courses to pre-service teachers. Because of the common background and experiences, the two authors have many conversations about their instructional practice, and found the conversations informative and beneficial to broaden their perspectives on literacy instruction. The authors believe that this study was unique in the way that they compared and contrasted literacy instruction in Chinese and English from the native language teaching perspective and were inspired by each other in terms of improving their own literacy instruction.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Intercultural learning theory (Immetman & Schneider, 1998), transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991) as well as Schön (1983, 1987)'s notion of reflective practitioners provide a conceptual framework for this study. Immetman and Schneider (1998) assessed students' learning in study-abroad programs and suggested that intercultural learning occurs in cognitive (knowledge acquisition), behavioral (skill acquisition), affective (attitudinal development), and social (interpersonal development) domains. Particularly, knowledge acquisition in the cognitive domain includes both subject matter knowledge learning and intercultural knowledge learning. The intercultural knowledge learning can be further supported by Mezirow (1991)'s transformative learning theories, which argue that learners become more aware of the constraints of their existing perspectives in an intercultural environment and tend to develop "a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective" (p. 167). As learning is a social process, Mezirow (1994) also argues that meaningful learning occurs through reflection, which is what Schön (1987) referred as knowing-in-action. Through reflection, learners develop understandings and create new knowledge to guide action.

Based upon these three interrelated theoretical perspectives, the authors conceptualized the experiences of Author 2's as an intercultural and transformative learning process. During the study period, both authors reflected upon their teaching and author 2, in particular, reflected not only what she learned through observation of author 1's courses but also the changes that she planned to carry out in her own teaching of Chinese reading. The authors believe that author 2's experience as a learner in author 1's literacy courses allowed her to rethink and reflect about literacy instruction in China. Furthermore, through the collaboration with each other, both authors have developed deeper understanding about literacy instruction in one's native language.

READING INSTRUCTION IN AUTHOR 1'S LITERACY COURSES IN THE US

Literacy instruction is said to be the cornerstone in the elementary education curriculum and reading, as is known to all, is one of the most essential and important life skills, which opens the door of understanding in all content areas. For years, educators and teachers have been researching and debating about the most efficient way to help children learn to read and write. And to date, the discussion has led to the call for a complete and balanced approach to literacy instruction (Bingham & Hall-Kenyon, 2013).

Author 1 designed her reading courses under the balanced approach to literacy instruction. The first course, titled *Reading Instruction in the Intermediate Grades*, is an undergraduate course offered two times a week on campus focusing on reading instruction and assessment at elementary school from third to fifth grade. And it has the following six objectives: 1) identify and articulate the developmental characteristics of intermediate readers; 2) demonstrate an understanding of a balanced literacy approach and describe the role of each component in supporting the development of proficient, motivated readers and writers in the intermediate grades; 3) apply knowledge of reading assessments and describe their role in informing instructional design in the intermediate grades; 4) recognize and evaluate appropriate methods and materials used in the teaching of reading in the intermediate grades; 5) design reading instruction to meet the individual needs of intermediate grade students, including advanced and struggling readers; 6) examine the roles of critical thinking, communication skills, digital literacy, global awareness, and technology in a reading program in the intermediate grades.

The second course, titled *Teaching Reading in the Junior/Senior High School*, is an undergraduate and graduate combined course offered online focusing on teaching content area literacy to junior high and secondary teachers. In this course, students will develop an understanding of the role of disciplinary literacy in fostering students' literacy development; explore literacy strategies for ensuring all learners read, write and think effectively; select, evaluate and apply appropriate disciplinary literacy strategies to aid with text comprehension, study skills, and vocabulary development; explore how communication within disciplines and communication across disciplines is influenced by specialized contexts; examine the role of standards, assessments and high stakes testing within the context of content area literacy.

The third course, titled *Remediation of Reading Difficulties*, is a graduate course offered online requiring each graduate student to work with one struggling reader across the entire semester to identify and assess the struggling reader's reading needs, and design and provide appropriate instruction.

One of the common instructional foci in all these three courses was reading strategies. Author 1 introduced and modeled different reading strategies for different purposes, with different groups of students, and under different settings. Students also had opportunities to practice using different reading strategies to work with individual or groups of school children either during their practicum experience, or in their own classrooms.

READING INSTRUCTION IN CHINA AND IN AUTHOR 2'S LITERACY COURSES

In the US, students learn literacy skills in Language Arts. In China, a similar class that helps students develop their literacy skills is called 语文 in Chinese. In this article, the authors translated this term into *Chinese literacy*. The authors used *Chinese literacy* rather than *Chinese* because one of the goals of Chinese literacy class (语文课) is to teach students read and write in Chinese. China adopts a unified curriculum across country and Chinese literacy is one of the core subjects at all school levels. According to the 2011 Chinese literacy curriculum standard, Chinese literacy education should cover three aspects: 1) literacy skills learning (proficiency in speaking Mandarin and using PinYin and dictionary to be able to read and write in Chinese), 2) literature learning (understand and appreciate selected Chinese as well as foreign literatures), and 3) traditional Chinese cultural appreciation (MOE, 2011). China also requires a unified textbook to be used in all public schools across the country. These textbooks are similar to the basal reading books in the US in which a collection of texts in different genres and from different periods and different countries were selected.

In terms of the instructional approach, ever since the adoption of the "Honglingjin" method from the Soviet Union about 50 years ago, it has been the dominant approach of literacy instruction in China (Author 2, 2007). Classroom instruction follows the 3-step teaching approach: 1) introduce key vocabulary words, author's background and writing period, 2) analyze text by summarizing each paragraph and explaining key sentences, and 3) synthesize the text to find the main idea and the central theme (Zheng, 2014).

In recent years, more and more Chinese literacy scholars realized the importance of reading in literacy education and the absence of strategy instruction in the teaching of reading in Chinese (Fan, 2003, Guo, 2014). The revised 2011 Chinese literacy syllabi (MOE, 2011) emphasized that different reading strategies should be taught when reading texts in different styles. For informational texts, selecting important information, summarizing and reasoning are important strategies of instruction. And for narrative texts and classic literatures, "审题辨体 (read the title to understand the writing style)、梳理文脉 (analyze contexts)、辨词析句 (scrutinize key sentences and vocabularies to read between the lines)、分析特色 (summarize characteristics of the main character or writing styles)、多元评赏 (allow multiple perspectives in understanding)" (MOE, 2011, p.13) are important reading strategies.

Author 2 offers two courses to pre-service teachers at her institution - *Chinese Literacy Education History* and *Chinese Literacy Education Pedagogy*. The history class introduces not only Chinese literacy history, learning and teaching theories, but also the nation's political standpoint toward Chinese literacy learning, such as cultivating students' patriotism and developing good citizenship through Chinese literacy learning.

The pedagogy class aims at giving students an overview about literacy education and instructional methods in public schools in China. The course content is closely aligned with the public school literacy curriculum. Author 2's classroom instruction usually involves the following steps: 1) introducing the text (selected examples from public school textbooks), including author background, writing period, genre, writing characteristics, etc., 2) showing instructional videos from exemplar teachers, 3) students' discussion and reflection. At the end of the semester, author 2's students are expected to be able to independently design and conduct literacy instruction.

METHOD

The authors have adopted the basic qualitative design as the method for this study, for the primary purpose of basic qualitative research is to generate knowledge for the sake of knowledge, and such knowledge may subsequently inform action (Patton, 2001). The study reported author 2, the visiting professor's developing thoughts and perspectives on literacy instruction based on her observation and collaboration with author 1 in a university in the US. The major research questions are - what are author 2's new perspectives on teaching literacy in China and the changes she plans to make in her teaching?

Data Collection and Analysis

The data sources in this study included observation notes, collaborative session transcriptions and reflection journals/reports. Author 2 observed and participated fully in Author 1's courses throughout the spring and fall semesters. Activities include whole class or small group discussions about the required reading materials, providing feedback about reading assessments and videos, and participating different course projects. Author 2 took detailed notes for each class, and then the authors held collaborative sessions for one hour after each class to discuss class content and exchange thoughts. All these meetings were digitally recorded and later transcribed by author 2 as one data source. In addition to the class observation and collaborative meeting notes and transcriptions, author 2 also wrote journals each week to reflect on her experience and share thoughts about the US. Finally, author 2 was required by her home institution to write study reports every three months to reflect on her learning in the US. These journals and reports were also used as parts of the data for this study.

Analysis of the data began while the authors were reviewing the observation notes and the collaborative meeting transcriptions. Data were analyzed inductively (Patton, 2001, p. 453). Instead of having predetermined categories, each author first open coded all the data individually and then met to discuss and compare each other's codes for agreement. Guided by the research questions, these codes were put into the following four categories: need for strategy-based literacy instruction in Chinese, importance of the practicum experience in literacy instruction, readers' freedom of interpretation, and different views on the ultimate goal of literacy education. During the data analysis period, the authors met constantly to make sure that their findings possessed a measure of authenticity by being reflexive, respecting each other's perspectives and including original quotations.

FINDINGS

The author's thoughts and reflections were categorized into four big themes, which were 1) the need for strategy-based literacy instruction in Chinese, 2) the importance of practicum in literacy instruction, 3) transaction with texts: reader's freedom of interpretation, and 4) and different views on the ultimate goal of literacy education.

The need for strategy-based literacy instruction in Chinese

In two of the courses author 2 observed, author 1 taught specific reading comprehension strategies, such as setting background knowledge, monitoring comprehension, visualization, making inference, etc. In teaching each strategy, author 1 provided explicit instruction on how to teach each strategy, why teaching a particular strategy, and then modeled how to teach each strategy during reading aloud.

Author 2 was most impressed with author 1's modeling of each reading strategy. As a professor who prepares pre-service teachers in teaching literacy in China, she indicated that the modeling and demonstration of how to teach is what students need the most; however, it has been absent from the current Chinese curriculum. While the curriculum stated the importance of reading strategies, it failed to give teachers directions in terms of how to teach reading strategies. Strategy knowledge became teachers' tacit knowledge and individual teachers had to make their own decision regarding whether or not to teach reading strategies, and how to teach them.

Author 2 stated that the teaching of reading in China still followed a three-step straightforward traditional model: 1) teachers providing background information about the author and his/her writing period, 2) teaching of the genre knowledge (argumentation, classical, essay, narratives, prose, poetry), 3) summarizing main idea from the texts. Due to the absence of strategy instruction, Chinese teachers were left to figure out how to teach students to comprehend Chinese texts. Author 2 said:

In my observations of many Chinese teachers, those experienced ones have learned from their experiences what strategies to teach, how to teach them, and how to get students focused and interested in the text. So they do a good job helping students make meaning from readings. The novice teachers, however, have nothing to consult but to follow the teacher's manual. (Transcription 1, March 6, 2015. Original transcription in Chinese and translation provided by author 1.)

Example One - background knowledge and visualization. Author 2 used a famous Chinese essay which was in the 7th grade Chinese textbook, *Spring*, written by Ziqing Zhu (Appendix A), as an example to reflect on how the strategies, activating students' background knowledge and visualization, could be used to facilitate comprehension. Author 2 described a lesson taught by an exemplar Chinese teacher. First, the teacher started by asking her students to think about what their school looked like in spring. Then, she asked her students to write down the beautiful words, sentences, and poems they have learned that described this season. And finally, she asked students to visualize a picture of spring in their mind. After these three steps, this teacher finally asked students to open their textbook and read the essay, *Spring*, by Ziqing Zhu. Author 2 said:

This is an exemplar lesson and has been video recorded to show my pre-service teachers. In my class, we talked about how good this teacher was and what she did in this lesson. However, the professors in my university and myself included, we never explicitly told our students that this teacher explicitly activated students' background knowledge and used visualization as reading strategies. In fact, we did not even know that these are reading comprehension strategies.

Example Two - think aloud. Author 2 was most interested in learning the importance of think-aloud during reading instruction. After discussing with author 1 and seeing how author 1 demonstrated think-aloud in class, author 2 was inspired. She reflected on how think-aloud could be used in teaching a fifth grade narrative text - 月光曲 (The Moonlight) (Appendix B). Author 2 suggested that teachers should use think-aloud to demonstrate how readers form questions in their minds during reading the section about why Beethoven was willing to perform this piece of music to the blind girl. Author 2 reflected, "Teachers using think-aloud to show students the reading-while-thinking process is so much clearer, more detailed and persuasive. And it also encourages conversations between teachers and students" (Reflection, 11/6/2015). Author 2 also explained that many teachers were not aware that think-aloud could be used as a way to help students form the habit of thinking while reading. Due to the pressure of high-stake testing in the Chinese curriculum, teachers spent more time teaching students reading for the correct answer rather than thinking freely to interpret the texts.

An important change Author 2 plans to propose is to add reading strategy instruction to her teaching and provide professional training workshops to in-service teachers on reading strategy instruction. She planned to explicitly introduce reading strategies, teach how to use different strategies when reading different texts under different contexts, and help both teachers and students develop the thinking-while-reading habit.

The importance of the practicum experience in literacy instruction

Both authors agreed on the importance of having practicum experiences for students to practice teaching literacy in classrooms. Comparing and contrasting their students' practicum experiences, they found merits from each other's instructional practice.

In author 1's undergraduate Reading course, each student was required to complete 5 hours of practicum in a 3 to 5 grade level classroom observing and teaching reading. They were required to do three projects: an Assessment project, an Interactive Read Aloud project, and a Guided Reading project. Before students went to the elementary classrooms to conduct these projects, author 1 gave detailed instruction on what and how to complete each project; provided practice opportunities (i.e. assessed a sample child's reading of wordlists and passages to decide his/her reading level; carried out reading interest inventories in pairs); modeled how to teach in small group and whole class by herself or through watching videos. After practicum, author 1 asked students to write reflections about their teaching experience.

Author 2 praised highly about this type of practicum-in-the-course experience. She said: "the combination of class instruction and practicum give students immediate opportunities to try what they have learned in class and in particular, give them room and time for reflection and improvement" (Transcription 4, 3/31/15). Furthermore,

author 2 also adored the assessment project in the practicum. She said: “It is great to start with the assessment project. It helps the pre-service teacher develop the concept that teachers need to know each student’s level in order to provide individualized instruction” (Transcription, 3/31/15).

Compared with the practicum-in-the-course experience, students in China only have a six-week practicum experience in their last year. Due to limited resources and partnership programs with local schools in China, Chinese students did not have many opportunities to have individual practicum experiences to practice what they have learned in a particular course. Author 2 mentioned that students get “practical” experience in her class by watching instructional videos from the exemplar teachers. And then author 2 explained the good teaching points to students and involved students into discussions about those exemplar instructional practice.

In order to help students obtain more opportunities of teaching, Author 2 tried to provide a platform in her classroom. Based on the topics of instruction, for example, poetry, author 2 put students into groups of four to five and asked them to select different poems and design a lesson plan with all the required teaching points (i.e. author’s background, cultural and historical background during the writing period, key vocabulary and its meaning during the special poetry context, aesthetic reading of the poem). Finally, each group was asked to teach the lesson they designed to the whole class. The other students as well as author 2 herself served as the audience, the observers, and the evaluators during the group presentation. Even though having limited practicum experience in the course was a deficit in the Chinese context, author 1 believed that author 2 provided her students a powerful platform to perform as teachers and learn by observing and evaluating each other as teachers. She said,

I really like this activity. Students practiced teaching, although not in the real classroom, but in the meantime, they were being observed and they can learn so much from observing others. I think you provided a mirror for your students to see themselves and to reflect on their teaching. This is really something that I would like to spend more time in my classroom too. I feel like reading their work on paper to evaluate their teaching is still very different from being there to see how the lesson went (Transcription, 3/31/15).

After knowing how the practicum structure worked in author 1’s classes, author 2 also planned to suggest some changes to her institution. First, she plans to get the administrative approval to obtain separate practicum by lessons. Similar to author 1’s course requirements that every student should get 5 hours of practicum, author 2 was going to recommend to her institution that students should get separate practicums in addition to the 6-week long whole day practicum in their last year. For separate practicums, students should not be required to be at the school an entire day. Instead, students and teachers can negotiate their schedules to find a time that works for both. Students should be asked to mainly observe, but teach if possible, different lessons on different topics. For examples, observing lessons on teaching poetry, classic essay (文言文), contemporary literature, and foreign literature.

What is more, author 2 also plans to suggest students seeking practice opportunities themselves. For examples, students can try to find practicum placements themselves or tutoring opportunities. Many students have home or friend connections that can help them get into a classroom to observe a few lessons. Even though students will not be able to teach in this type of practicum, they still can see classroom teaching at least. And finally, tutoring is another great way to obtain hand-on experience for students.

Transaction with text: reader's freedom of interpretation

In author 1’s courses, she introduced Rosenblatt’s (1978) reader transaction theory and emphasized the importance of reader’s active role in trying to interpret texts. Repeatedly, author 1 explained to her students how different readers with different cultural backgrounds, family situations, and life experiences could have different interpretations reading the same piece of text. Even though author 2 agreed on and valued the importance of respecting each reader’s interpretation of text, she indicated that the applicability of this type of instruction was limited in Chinese classrooms.

Contrary to the freedom of interpretation of texts, author 2 offered an example to show how the teaching of Chinese reading was limited to only one understanding. In the 8th grade Chinese textbooks, there is a famous prose, *Peach Colony*, also titled *Peach Blossom Spring* (Appendix C), written by a poet, Tao Yuanming, in the Dongji period (year 352 - 427). The story describes how a fisherman haphazardly sailed into a river in a forest and discovered a beautiful land entirely covered by peach petals. The villagers lived there were very friendly, but surprised to see him. They explained that their ancestors escaped to this place during the civil unrest of the Qin Dynasty and they themselves had lived in this place ever after. They lived in great harmony with nature and were unaware of the outside world for centuries. After the fisherman left the village, he told others about his

experience and wanted to find this place again. However, his repeated effort of searching was in vain. After Tao's story, the Chinese expression 世外桃源 (the Peach Spring beyond this world) was formed, meaning an unexpectedly fantastic place full of joy, peace, and happiness. And the Peach Blossom Spring also becomes the standard Chinese term for utopia.

Author 2 well understood that different people with different experience and background may have different interpretations in reading this prose; however, in the 8th grade classrooms, Chinese teachers were required to lead students to the only accurate interpretation that the current Socialism Chinese society under the leadership of the Communist Party was the only utopia for Chinese people. In one of the collaborative sessions, the two authors had the following conversation:

Author 1: This is a great example that you shared. I remember learning it myself in middle school and I remembered that yes, as a student no matter how we think, we do have to praise our Socialism country and the Communist Party at the end. I even remember that as long as we mention these points in exams, we will get points anyway when answering questions related to the Peach Blossom Spring.

Author 2: Yes, you are right. Because of this limitation, I really dare not to teach my students to have their own interpretation of many texts. They have to come back to the major point. This is the reality.

Author 1: I can understand it as I experienced it when I was young. I am just really surprised to see that teachers still have to teach in this way TODAY. (Transcription, 5/6/15)

Author 2 explained the two reasons for the limited understanding of texts. First of all, the national exam requires a standard answer. In order to get a good score in the exams, teachers have to train students to form their understanding close to the correct theme. Hence, the freedom of interpretation toward texts was not recognized or promoted in Chinese classrooms. Secondly, similar to the schooling experience of both authors, the current classroom teachers learned how to comprehend the text from their teachers in the same way. They have gotten used to comprehending texts in only one way and were not capable to enlighten their students to think creatively or differently.

Author 2 believed that even though she might not be able to change the status quo of the testing-centered literacy instruction in China, she should at least make her students, also future teachers, aware of the concepts that active readers construct meaning with texts and different readers may have different understandings reading the same piece of texts. Author 2 believed that these concepts would broaden the perspectives from both teachers and students.

Different views on the ultimate goal of literacy education

One of the topics author 1 covered in class was reading for social justice. Author 1 discussed the ultimate goal of literacy with her students and asked students to reflect on how teachers can empower students through literacy skills. Students were required to read Lynn Gatto (2013)'s article, *Lunch Is Gross*, and then author 1 also showed the *Lunch Is Gross* documentary in class. In this *Lunch Is Gross* critical literacy project, the elementary school students identified an issue (the gross lunch provided in their school), questioned the powers behind the issue (write emails to the principal, posted blogs online, get connected with the public through a newspaper blog and speaking in public meetings), and acted upon the existing power structure for social justice. After in-depth reading of the article and the viewing of the documentary, author 1's whole class discussed 1) what are powerful and critical literacies, 2) the literacy skills that were involved in the *Lunch is Gross* project, and 3) how the teacher empowered her students to be lifelong learners.

Author 2 expressed that this lesson shed light to her mind and was a wonderful approach to show students the power of literacy. She said,

It is promising to see that the students found out the problem from life and worked hard to change the status quo through their efforts. After all, there are all kinds of problems in reality, and we can either accept or change. Obviously, this teacher and her students chose not to accept the reality and worked hard to change it. I do think students learned a lot from this experience - they must have been more confident about themselves and their literacy skills are also improved (Reflection, 11/12/15).

Author 2 planed to introduce this case to her colleagues and students, as she believed that it offered a different perspective about teaching literacy. However, she also ruled out the possibility of Chinese teachers encouraging similar actions in their classrooms. Author 2 explained that being critical and acting to change were never the concepts of teaching in the Chinese setting. She stated:

In China, literacy teachers believe that their major responsibility is to help students develop their character, knowledge and morality. Due to the long history of our country, we have lots of valuable cultural and moral concepts that teachers want students to inherit, rather than to be critical or to change.

What is more, the reality does not allow teachers and students to report these types of problems or to find out who is responsible. That is not their job. They will be criticized if they address these types of problems in class (Reflection, 11/12/15).

The authors had discussions about the power of literacy and the ultimate goal of literacy education. Because both of them share a similar cultural background, they held similar perspectives and opinions. In the US, literacy education endows individuals with not only the ability to read and write, but also the capacity to put those skills to work in shaping the course of one's life. Hence, a literate person has the responsibility and capability to attend to the reality, be critical, and find ways to change for better. In China, hierarchy is more evidently shown in society and people are asked to be responsible for their own matter. In other words, literacy teachers are expected to teach students how to read and write in Chinese. Students are expected to master those skills to inherit Chinese culture as their tasks. Challenging the authority and changing the reality are not considered as the job of teachers and students.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

During the study period, author 2 audited three literacy courses taught by author 1 in two semesters. Through course observations, participation, and the collaborative sessions with author 1, author 2 developed new perspectives about literacy instruction. She realized the need for explicit strategy instruction in teaching reading, re-ensured the importance of practicum experience, developed an awareness about readers' freedom in interpreting different texts, and gained a deeper understanding about the goal of literacy education in China and the US. Author 2 also planned to propose changes in her teaching. She planned to bring reading strategy instruction into focus in the current literacy curriculum in China and suggest a three-step teaching model: direct teaching of reading strategies, teacher modeling of reading strategies, and student practice teaching strategies in reading.

Author 2 praised the value of having separate practicum opportunities for different courses in the US curriculum and planned to try it in her institution. However, there were also some limitations that should be considered. Firstly, due to the testing requirements, Chinese teachers have tight schedules and are struggling with finding enough time to cover the required testing content. Even though teachers understand the importance for students to practice teaching in real classrooms, they are hesitant to accept student teachers because of the testing pressure. Many classroom teachers reported that they would have to repeat the teaching after student teachers have taught it. Secondly, different from the elementary schools in the US that one teacher is in charge of one class teaching all the subjects, schools in China have different subject area teachers. Subject teachers, except literacy teachers, are only responsible for particular subjects. Chinese literacy teachers, however, are usually assigned as homeroom teachers with the most demanding responsibilities including not only teaching the subject, but also managing the whole class. Therefore, practicum for Chinese literacy pre-service teachers includes literacy teaching as well as learning the tasks and responsibilities involved in being homeroom teachers. Having a Chinese pre-service teacher in a classroom means adding another job to the homeroom teacher; therefore, most schools are hesitant to accept literacy interns. Hence, the practicum for Chinese literacy pre-service teachers is usually hard to obtain.

In terms of the limited understanding of text, author 2 raised a point that many teachers were not capable to help students get different understandings of the text because they were trained in the same way by their teachers to have the only one correct understanding of the text. Obviously, this status quo revealed the need for Chinese literacy teachers to improve their pedagogical knowledge. But more importantly, it also suggested the complexity and difficulty of the content of Chinese literacy. It is known to all that China has a long history and experienced many different dynasties and periods. The writing styles and literatures in each period differ. The current textbooks include selected writings from ancient literature and contemporary literature in both ancient Chinese language and contemporary language. Evidently, it requires professionals who have a great amount of knowledge on both Chinese literature and education pedagogy to be literacy teachers. However, the fact is that Chinese literature majors are not in the teacher preparation programs, and the education majors also have inadequate knowledge about Chinese literature. Therefore, it calls for interdisciplinary professionals who are equipped with pedagogical knowledge as well as literature knowledge to join the literacy teaching force.

The different views on the goals of literacy education in China and the US reflected the different education philosophies between these two countries. More precisely, these are the differences between eastern collectivism and western individualism, discipline/conformity emphasized education versus the naturalistic and practical approach to learning (Hu & Smith, 2011; Smith & Hu, 2013).

These differences between the education philosophies of the two countries explained the different foci of instruction in the literacy classrooms. It was not the intention of the authors to judge which view is superior to the other; however, author 2 felt the need for literacy professors in China to realize these differences in order to better understand the reading strategies introduced and used in classrooms in the US.

LIMITATION, SIGNIFICANCE, AND RECOMMENDATION

In this study, author 2, a Chinese literacy professor, came to author 1's university as a visiting scholar and collaborated with author 1, a Chinese professor in the English literacy education program, to study about literacy education in the US. Through course observations and the collaborative meetings with author 1, author 2 has not only gained knowledge about literacy education in the US, but more importantly, she broadened her perspectives on literacy instruction in China and planned to propose changes in her own practice. It is worthy of mentioning that the goal of this study is not to compare and contrast whether the Chinese or Western practice is more effective and enlightening. Instead, the authors aim to report author 2's professional growth through the visiting scholar experience, and contribute to the literature on this topic. The authors realized that the current study design might lead readers to think that Author 1's literacy teacher education was superior to Author 2's, and that learning was entirely a one-way transmission from Author 1 to Author 2. The authors acknowledge that this is a limitation of the study, as the study focused on author 2's learning experience from author 1's courses. Both authors believe that there are merits in the literacy education programs in both universities and there is mutual learning between the authors through this one-year long exchange experience. If author 1 could have the opportunity to visit author 2's university and audit courses, she would learn just as much as author 2. And in fact, this is the next step of their collaboration.

The study brought up some meaningful questions for literacy researchers, professors, and curriculum designers in China to ponder and suggested directions for future research. For instance, the curriculum standard in the US is created based on scientific research results, and is comprehensive, which gives teachers specific directions on what and how to teach. The curriculum in China, however, is general, with overarching goals but missing detailed directions to inform teachers what and how to teach in order to meet those goals. While the US curriculum can be scripted somehow (Commeyras, 2007), the Chinese curriculum lacks details to guide the instructional practice of novice teachers. Therefore, it is important for educators and teachers to realize the inadequacies in the curricula of these countries and develop a comprehensive and unbiased picture about the education in China and the US.

Author 2 has gained professional growth through the collaboration with author 1 during the visiting experience, which suggests that the visiting scholar program can be an important means of faculty development. Different from the view that the visiting experience is a type of training to improve one's teaching pedagogy (Yang, Wang, & Zhang, 2013), the authors believe that it is an opportunity for exchanging ideas and broadening one's educational belief. Through the opportunity to experience and learn about the education in a different country, scholars reflect and re-examine their pedagogy and instructional practice, realize the merits and inadequacies of their practice, and foster changes to become better teachers. The authors recommend to educators across all disciplines in different continents to seek this type of educational exchange opportunities. They believe that teachers at tertiary level need to first develop global perspectives on teaching and learning, so they can instill a sense of cultural awareness and broad-mindedness to their students to promote the internationalization of education in their country.

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APPENDIX A

春 (作者: 朱自清)

Retrieved from <http://www.zybang.com/question/668a6949c971af1f7d5cbe2d1af2f100.html>, January 26, 2016.

盼望着，盼望着，东风来了，春天的脚步近了。

一切都像刚睡醒的样子，欣欣然张开了眼。山朗润起来了，水长起来了，太阳的脸红起来了。

小草偷偷地从土里钻出来，嫩嫩的，绿绿的。园子里，田野里，瞧去，一大片一大片满是的。坐着，躺着，打两个滚，踢几脚球，赛几趟跑，捉几回迷藏。风轻悄悄的，草绵软软的。

桃树、杏树、梨树，你不让我，我不让你，都开满了花赶趟儿。红的像火，粉的像霞，白的像雪。花里带着甜味，闭了眼，树上仿佛已经满是桃儿、杏儿、梨儿！花下成千成百的蜜蜂嗡嗡地闹着，大小的蝴蝶飞来飞去。野花遍地是：杂样儿，有名字的，没名字的，散在草丛里，像眼睛，像星星，还眨呀眨的。

“吹面不寒杨柳风”，不错的，像母亲的手抚摸着你的脸。风里带来些新翻的泥土的气息，混着青草味，还有各种花的香，都在微微润湿的空气里酝酿。鸟儿将窠巢安在繁花嫩叶当中，高兴起来了，呼朋引伴地卖弄清脆的喉咙，唱出宛转的曲子，与轻风流水应和着。牛背上牧童的短笛，这时候也成天在嘹亮地响。

雨是最寻常的，一下就是三两天。可别恼，看，像牛毛，像花针，像细丝，密密地斜织着，人家屋顶上全笼着一层薄烟。树叶儿却绿得发亮，小草也青得逼你的眼。傍晚时候，上灯了，一点点黄晕的光，烘托出一片安静而和平的夜。乡下去，小路上，石桥边，撑起伞慢慢走着的人；还有地里工作的农夫，披着蓑，戴着笠的。他们的草屋，稀稀疏疏的在雨里静默着。

天上风筝渐渐多了，地上孩子也多了。城里乡下，家家户户，老老小小，他们也赶趟儿似的，一个个都出来了。舒活舒活筋骨，抖擞抖擞精神，各做各的一份事去。“一年之计在于春”；刚起头儿，有的是工夫，有的是希望。

春天像刚落地的娃娃，从头到脚都是新的，它生长着。

春天像小姑娘，花枝招展的，笑着，走着。

春天像健壮的青年，有铁一般的胳膊和腰脚，他领着我们上前去。

SPRING by Ziqing Zhu

Translation retrieved from <http://www.zybang.com/question/668a6949c971af1f7d5cbe2d1af2f100.html>, January 26, 2016, but modified by Author 1.

Waiting and waiting, east wind comes and Spring is coming.

It seems that everything just awoke after a long sleep, and their eyes still sleepy. Mountains and hills turn more luxuriant, rivers and lakes become fuller and clearer, and the sun face gets red.

The new grass, tender and greenish, sneaked out of the ground without anybody knowing when. The gardens, fields, everywhere you go, you see tracts after tracts of greenness. You may like to sit down, or lie down, or roll

yourself over on the grass; and you may feel like playing football or doing several rounds of running or even playing hide-and-seek on the grass. The breeze was simply so gentle and the grass so tender.

The peach trees, apricot trees, and pear trees seem to compete against each other in blossoming. The red resembles fire, the pink clouds, and the white snow, giving off a sweet fragrance. With your eyes closed, you could almost see peaches, apricots and pears on these trees. And swarms of bees are buzzing among the flowers, together with butterflies, large and small, busy flying to and from. Wild flowers are seen here and there: a miscellany with or without a name each, dotting the grass like eyes, or stars that blink from time to time.

“Blowing into your face without making you feel cold is the spring breeze.” True, it was just like a mother’s hand fondling you. The smell of the newly cultivated land carried by the wind to you, mixed with that of the grass as well as fragrance of various kinds of flowers, was brewing in the slightly moistened air. Now that the nestle had been completed among luxuriant flowers and tender leaves, the birds grew happy, singing proudly to call their friends as well as mates with their notes in perfect harmony with the gentle breeze and gurgling water. And the cowboys on the buffalo back can be heard blowing their flute so resonantly these days.

Rain is nothing unusual now, and often lasts two to three days. Never get annoyed! Look, could it be ox hair, or needles, or thin threads instead? Those thin threads simply weave sideways, so densely that a thin mist pervades over all the housetops. The tree leaves are, however, dazzlingly green, so is the grass with its luxuriance. When the dusk sets in and lights are on, the pool of dim light suggests a night of peace and quiet. In the countryside, on the trails and beside the stone bridges, there are people strolling leisurely, holding an umbrella, and there are also farmers working in the fields, wearing a straw-cloak and a bamboo-hat. Their houses, sparsely located, stand still in the weaving rain.

Gradually, there are more and more kites in the sky and the number of children on the ground grows, too. In cities as well as in the countryside, people from every household, young and old, are all pouring out of their homes one after another to stretch their limbs and, with their spirits aroused, go about their own business. “The whole year’s plan is made in Spring,” the saying goes. A year has just started, so there is still much time and one can have as many hopes.

Spring comes as a newly born baby, new from head to toe, who grows.

Spring comes as a charming girl, dressed in her best clothes, who laughs as she walks.

Spring comes as a robust youth with strong arms, waist and feet, who leads us forward.

APPENDIX B

月光曲

Retrieved from <http://baike.baidu.com/subview/102899/9559808.htm>, January 21, 2016

两百多年前，德国有个音乐家叫贝多芬，他谱写了很多著名的曲子。其中有一首著名的钢琴曲叫《月光曲》，传说是这样谱写成的。

有一年秋天，贝多芬去各地旅行演出，来到莱茵河边的一个小镇上。一天夜晚，他在幽静的小路上散步，听到断断续续的钢琴声从一所茅屋里传出来，弹的正是他的曲子。

贝多芬走近茅屋，琴声突然停了，屋子里有人在谈话。一个姑娘说：“这首曲子多难弹啊！我只听别人弹过几遍，总是记不住该怎样弹，要是能听一听贝多芬自己是怎样弹的，那有多好啊！”一个男的说：“是啊，可是音乐会的入场券太贵了，咱们又太穷。”姑娘说：“哥哥，你别难过，我不过随便说说罢了。”

贝多芬听到这里，推开门，轻轻地走了进去。茅屋里点着一支蜡烛。在微弱的烛光下，男的正在做皮鞋。窗前有架旧钢琴，前面坐着个十六七岁的姑娘，脸很清秀，可是眼睛失明了。

皮鞋匠看见进来个陌生人，站起来问：“先生，您找谁？走错门了吧？”贝多芬说：“不，我是来弹一首曲子给这位姑娘听的。”

姑娘连忙站起来让座。贝多芬坐在钢琴前面，弹起盲姑娘刚才弹的那首曲子。盲姑娘听得入了神，一曲弹完，她激动地说：“弹得多纯熟啊！感情多深哪！您，您就是贝多芬先生吧？”

贝多芬没有回答，他问盲姑娘：“您爱听吗？我再给您弹一首吧。”

一阵风把蜡烛吹灭了。月光照进窗子来，茅屋里的一切好像披上了银纱，显得格外清幽。贝多芬望了望站在他身旁的兄妹俩，借着清幽的月光，按起了琴键。

皮鞋匠静静地听着。他好像面对着大海，月亮正从水天相接的地方升起来。微波粼粼的海面上，霎时间洒满了银光。月亮越升越高，穿过一缕一缕轻纱似的微云。忽然，海面上刮起了大风，卷起了巨浪。被月光照得雪亮的浪花，一个连一个朝着岸边涌过来……皮鞋匠看看妹妹，月光正照在她那恬静的脸上，照着她睁得大大的眼睛，她仿佛也看到了，看到了她从来没有看到过的景象，月光照耀下的波涛汹涌的大海。

兄妹俩被美妙的琴声陶醉了。等他们苏醒过来，贝多芬早已离开了茅屋。他飞奔回客店，花了一夜工夫，把刚才弹的曲子——《月光曲》记录了下来。

Moonlight Sonata (Translated by Author 1)

More than two hundred years ago, there was a famous German musician named Beethoven. He composed many beautiful music pieces. Among them, there was a famous piano song, named Moonlight Sonata. Here is the legend about how Beethoven composed it.

One year in the fall, Beethoven went on a trip and came to a small town on the side of the Rhine River. One night, he was walking on a quiet road and heard the sound of piano, on and off, coming from a very shabby hut, playing his music.

Beethoven walked closer to the hut, the music suddenly stopped, and he heard someone talking in the room. A girl said: “This song is too hard! I only heard other people playing a few times, but I can never remember. It would be great if I could hear how Beethoven plays it!” Then a man said: “That is true. But the ticket for the concert is too expensive and we are too poor.” The girl then replied, “Oh, bother, don’t be sad. I am just joking.”

After hearing this, Beethoven pushed the door and walked inside their hut. In the dim light of a candle, the man was making leather shoes. There was an old piano in the corner and a girl, about 16 or 17 years old, sitting in the front. She was pretty, but blind.

The shoemaker saw a stranger coming to their hut, stood up and asked: "who are you looking for, Sir? You must have come to a wrong place." Beethoven replied, "No, I am here to play a song for this young lady."

The girl immediately stood up and offered Beethoven her seat. Beethoven played the music the girl just practiced. The blind girl listened to it so carefully and once Beethoven was done, she said: "how good you played, so skillful and with all that emotion! You, you are Mr. Beethoven, right?"

Beethoven did not answer, but asked, "Do you like it? How about I play another one for you?"

A gust of wind blew out the candle, and the moonlight shone into the window. The hut was covered with silver yarn, appeared to be quiet. Beethoven looked at the brother and sister by his side. Accompanied by the quiet moonlight, he started to play.

The shoemaker listened very carefully. He seemed to be facing the sea, the moon rose from the horizon where the sky touches the water. The silver moonlight suddenly spread across the sparkling sea. The moon rose higher, through a gauzy cloud. Suddenly, it became windy and the waves rolled up. The waves were lightened by the moonlight; travelling one by one toward the shore...The shoemaker looked at his sister, moonlight shines on her beautiful and quiet face. She opened her eyes so big and seemed to see the scene that she has never seen before - the moonlight shining on the rough sea.

The siblings lost themselves in the beautiful music. When they woke up, Beethoven had already left their hut. He rushed back to his hotel, spending the whole night, recorded the song he just played - Moonlight Sonata.

APPENDIX C

桃花源记 (作者: 陶渊明)

Retrieved from <http://www.hjenglish.com/new/p517109/>, September 19, 2015

晋太元中，武陵人捕鱼为业，缘溪行，忘路之远近。忽逢桃花林，夹岸数百步，中无杂树，芳草鲜美，落英缤纷；渔人甚异之。复前行，欲穷其林。

林尽水源，便得一山。山有小口，仿佛若有光，便舍船，从口入。初极狭，才通人；复行数十步，豁然开朗。土地平旷，屋舍俨然。有良田美池，桑竹之属，阡陌交通，鸡犬相闻。其中往来种作，男女衣着，悉如外人；黄发垂髫，并怡然自乐。

见渔人，乃大惊，问所从来；具答之。便要还家，设酒杀鸡作食。村中闻有此人，咸来问讯。白云：先世避秦时乱，率妻子邑人来此绝境，不复出焉；遂与外人间隔。问今是何世？乃不知有汉，无论魏晋！此人一一为具言所闻，皆叹惋。余人各复延至其家，皆出酒食，停数日，辞去。此中人语云：“不足为外人道也。”

既出，得其船，便扶向路，处处志之。及郡下，诣太守，说如此。太守即遣人随其往，寻向所志，遂迷不复得路。南阳刘子骥，高尚士也，闻之，欣然规往，未果，寻病终。后遂无问津者。

The Peach Colony by Yuanming Tao

Translation by Yutang Lin, retrieved from <http://www.hjenglish.com/new/p517109/>, September 19, 2015.

During the reign of Taiyuan of Chin, there was a fisherman of Wuling. One day he was walking along a bank. After having gone a certain distance, he suddenly came upon a peach grove which extended along the bank for about a hundred yards. He noticed with surprise that the grove had a magic effect, so singularly free from the usual mingling of brushwood, while the beautifully grassy ground was covered with its rose petals. He went further to explore, and when he came to the end of the grove, he saw a spring which came from a cave in the hill. Having noticed that there seemed to be a weak light in the cave, he tied up his boat and decided to go in and explore. At first the opening was very narrow, barely wide enough for one person to go in. After a dozen steps, it opened into a flood of light. He saw before his eyes a wide, level valley, with houses and fields and farms. There were bamboos and mulberries; farmers were working and dogs and chickens were running about. The dresses of the men and women were like those of the outside world, and the old men and children appeared very happy and contented. They were greatly astonished to see the fisherman and asked him where he had come from. The fisherman told them and was invited to their homes, where wine was served and chicken was killed for dinner to entertain him. The villagers hearing of his coming all came to see him and to talk. They said that their ancestors had come here as refugees to escape from the tyranny of Tsin Shih-huang (builder of Great Wall) some six hundred years ago, and they had never left it. They were thus completely cut off from the world, and asked what was the ruling dynasty now. They had not even heard of the Han Dynasty (two centuries before to two centuries after Christ), not to speak of the Wei (third century A.D.) and the Chin (third and fourth centuries). The fisherman told them, which they heard with great amazement. Many of the other villagers then began to invite him to their homes by turn and feed him dinner and wine. After a few days, he took leave of them and left. The villagers begged him not to tell the people outside about their colony.

The man found his boat and came back, marking with signs the route he had followed. He went to the magistrate's office and told the magistrate about it. The latter sent someone to go with him and find the place. They looked for the signs but got lost and could never find it again. Liu Tsechi of Nanyang was a great idealist. He heard of this story, and planned to go and find it, but was taken ill and died before he could fulfill his wish. Since then, no one has gone in search of this place.