

Title: The Chinese Way and the Western Way in Teaching English as a Foreign Language: Chinese Learners' Perspectives

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Abstract

English teaching in China has long been dominated by the grammar-centered, text-centered, and teacher-centered method. Since the early 1980s, the student-centered Communicative approach has been introduced into China and has aroused heated discussion regarding the priority of classroom teaching. Most of the studies that examine the effectiveness of the two approaches are quantitative, using multiple-choice questionnaires to seek learners' opinions or analyzing test scores to determine learners' proficiency. To discover the complexities of foreign language learning through learners' voices, I conducted interviews with 15 Chinese people who learned English during the Open Door period (1978-present) in China and had experiences of doing graduate studies in the U.S. In this paper, I first analyze the participants' reflections on the two central elements of the Chinese way of teaching English: memorization of texts and focus on grammar analysis. Then some participants' perceptions of the Western way of teaching will be presented. Lastly, I will show their comparisons of the two approaches. My findings indicate that both the traditional Chinese and the Western way have their merits and deficits in China's context. While keeping the good elements of the traditional way is necessary, Chinese teachers should reform their mentalities and attend to various learning styles by developing a more practical, student-centered way of teaching foreign languages.