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Title	Analyzing voice in the writing of Chinese teachers of English
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Source	<i>Research in the Teaching of English</i> , 44(1), 23-51
Published by	National Council of Teachers of English

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Citation: Spalding, E., Wang, J., Lin, E., & Hu, G. (2009). Analyzing voice in the writing of Chinese teachers of English. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 44(1), 23-51.

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## Analyzing Voice in the Writing of Chinese Teachers of English

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*This study explored how voice developed in the English writing of 57 Chinese teachers of English who participated in a three-week writing workshop during a summer institute in a large, urban school district in southeastern China. Teachers from grades three through twelve wrote daily in English in a workshop environment. Primary data sources were pre- and post-workshop writing samples. Supporting data included various teacher writings completed in the course of the workshop, daily written reflections, a final essay exam, anonymous course evaluations, and biographical and professional surveys. The pre- and post-workshop writing samples were assessed using the 6 + 1 Trait® analytical model of scoring writing (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2006). Scoring showed that the teachers' writing improved significantly in the course of the institute, but the greatest gain was made in the trait of "voice"—the distinctive, individual way in which a writer speaks to a reader. This finding will be considered in light of the current direction of educational reform in China and of current debates over the value of teaching voice in diverse writing contexts. The study had implications for the teaching of writing to English language learners and for the professional development of teachers of writing, including those who teach English as a Foreign Language.*

The emerging information society and global capitalism have created social and political pressure for educational reform in various countries with a focus on educating autonomous individuals who are able to collaborate with others, think creatively, invent new approaches, and anticipate and solve problems in real life contexts (Kennedy & Lee, 2008; Power, 2000). Central to such individuals is full literacy—"the disposition to engage appropriately with texts of different types in order to empower action, thinking, and feeling in the context of purposeful social activity" (Haneda & Wells, 2000, p. 430). Recognizing, developing, and expressing one's own voice is an integral part of the process by which students learn to use writing "as a means of achieving larger social and intellectual goals that are of genuine interest to the writers" (Haneda & Wells, 2000, p. 436).

China is one of the countries attempting to reform its educational system to align with 21st century needs, and English plays a key role in that reform. Historically, Chinese students and teachers have studied English as an academic subject with an emphasis on speaking, reading British and American literature, and writing as grammar/translation exercises. Recently, China redefined the goal of English instruction as communicative competence, which Hu (2002) has defined as “the ability to use the target language for authentic communication” (p. 93). This redefinition has far-reaching implications for both preservice and inservice English teachers in China, most of whom have learned English through a “teacher-fronted, knowledge-dominated, and expository approach” (Hu, 2005b, p. 673). Thus, efforts are underway on many levels to upgrade the English proficiency of Chinese teachers of English.

At the same time, in the U.S., writing instruction continues to be a focus of reform efforts. Recent influential reports advocate the use of strategies that are rooted in workshop environments where students learn skills in context and use the processes of writing to experience writing in a variety of genres, for a variety of audiences and purposes (Graham & Perin, 2007; National Commission on Writing in America’s School and Colleges, 2003). Nevertheless, schools, districts, and states continue to purchase and disseminate commercial writing programs that promise to improve writing test scores through such methods as the application of formulas to writing, computer-generated feedback on writing, and drill-and-practice activities that make it difficult for teachers to create workshop environments (e.g., Scherff & Piazza, 2005).

In China, where class sizes of fifty or more students at the secondary level are not unusual, where a “culture of learning” deeply rooted in the Confucian tradition of reverence for authority and hierarchical relationships prevails, and where the present teaching force is ill-prepared to teach English writing skills, reform of writing instruction is an even greater challenge (Hu, 2002). If a workshop environment, in which students integrate the use of the English language arts and use writing processes to produce authentic texts for authentic purposes and audiences, proves to be effective in developing their communicative competence, then major structural changes in the Chinese educational system may need to be implemented.

Questions about voice in writing are significant to the reform of writing instruction in both the U.S. and China. In many state and district assessments of writing in this country, some form of the 6 +1<sup>®</sup> Trait analytical model of scoring writing is used (Northwest Regional Education Laboratory, 2006). The dimension of “voice” is an important one on many writing scoring rubrics. Ironically, the same commercial programs that can indeed help students develop ideas, improve organization, and correct significant usage errors, do little or nothing to develop this rather elusive trait, which often makes the difference between “approaching” a standard and “meeting” it.<sup>1</sup> Thus, if a workshop environment does aid in develop-

ing voice, U.S. schools might need to rethink whether “one-size-fits-all” programs are the best approach to improving student writing.

In China, writing in English, when taught at all, has primarily been seen as a matter of filling in blanks, following pattern drills, and producing error-free text (Hu, 2005a, 2005b). These methods are consistent with the goal of linguistic competence, which is judged primarily by a user’s knowledge of language structures and conventions. Communicative competence, on the other hand, requires understanding the social, cultural, and pragmatic features of language along with the ability to use this knowledge to achieve communicative purposes (Hu, 2002; Hymes, 1985). The role that voice plays in the development of communicative competence is not entirely clear. Certainly, it may be possible to communicate competently in writing without voice (e.g., “Keep off the grass”). But it is difficult to imagine extended written communication that is both effective and lacking in voice. It could be the case that the opportunity to develop and express voice helps writers persevere through the often difficult process of learning to write and motivates them to consider the many factors that influence rhetorical choices.

This study reports on the impact of a three-week professional development institute for 57 Chinese teachers of English at the elementary and secondary levels. The first author was one member of a team of U.S. teacher educators (including the second and third authors) employed by a large, urban school district in southeastern China to introduce teachers to Western approaches to curriculum and instruction consistent with the nation’s reform efforts. The first author designed and taught a course entitled, “Teaching Writing Workshop.” This paper addresses three questions that surfaced from teaching this course: (1) How, if at all, does a workshop environment influence the development of Chinese teachers’ English writing? (2) What does voice look/sound like in the English writing of Chinese teachers? (3) What role, if any, does voice play in the development of communicative competence in writing? Given the current climate of educational reform in both the United States and China, it is important to know the answers to these questions.

## **Voice in Writing**

Recently, Elbow (2007) urged scholars to reopen the discussion of voice. He traced the rise and fall of voice in scholarly critical writing, outlined reasons for both attending to voice in texts and for not attending to voice in texts, and concluded by urging readers to “work out a both/and approach” toward voice “that embraces contraries” (p. 184). This study is one attempt to respond to Elbow’s call.

### ***Conceptions of Voice***

Snaza and Lensmire (2006) identified two major and influential conceptions of voice. *Voice as individual expression* is most closely associated with advocates of a

process approach to writing and writing workshop (Atwell, 1997; Calkins, 1994; Elbow, 1998; Graves, 1983). Elbow (2007) summed up this position as follows:

Voice is an important dimension of texts and we should pay lots of attention to it. Everyone has a real voice and can write with power. Writing with a strong voice is good writing. Sincere writing is good writing. My voice is my true self and my rhetorical power. The goal of teaching writing is to develop the self. (p. 168)

In fact, the importance of voice is so great that Graves (1983) called it “the dynamo for the writing . . . [that] contributes most to the development of the writer . . . [that] pushes the writer into confronting new problems through interesting topics, gives energy to persist in their solution, then carries the writer on to a new set of issues” (Graves, 1983, p. 229). He warned, “To ignore voice is to present the [writing] process as a lifeless, mechanical act. Divorcing voice from process is like omitting salt from stew, love from sex, or sun from gardening” (p. 227). Elbow (2007) described this stance as looking at written language through the lens of voice.

*Voice as participation* is a second major conception identified by Snaza and Lensmire (2006). This view arises from the advocates of critical pedagogy, such as Freire (1970), Giroux (2004), and hooks (1994), who emphasize the social nature of self and writing. Gilbert (1989), for example, referred to the workshop view of voice as romantic and child-centered. In her study of the reading and writing practices of students and teachers in one Australian secondary classroom, she argued that such a view masks the ideological and political nature of schoolwork. From a critical pedagogy perspective, “[i]ndividual student’s voices are assumed to arise from a social self, shaped and created in social contexts of great diversity. Student voices are formed within an oppressive society that privileges the meanings, values, and stories of some over others” (Lensmire, 1998, p. 270). Elbow (2007) pointed out that these two positions share the common desire to empower “students in the classroom and citizens at large” (p. 168).

Lensmire and Satanovksy (1998) proposed a synthesis of these views in yet a third position: *voice as a process of appropriation, struggle, and becoming*. From this stance, writers use their voices to invest words, phrases, styles, and structures with new meanings; to satisfy multiple and sometimes conflicting audiences; and to choose or reject certain perspectives on the world. Kamler (2001) distinguished her position from the three previously described by using the term “situated voice.” She is skeptical of views of writing as “therapy” (*voice as individual expression*) and as “empowerment” (*voice as participation*). She argues instead for relocating voice into a “theorized space to analyse texts of personal experience as discursively produced and therefore changeable” (p. 36).

Conceptions of voice differ and have given rise to spirited debates, but as Yancey (1994) has pointed out, all the disagreement about what voice is and how to develop it is a good indicator that voice does exist, that it matters both for the

individual and in discourse, and that it confers authority upon the writer. While the first author's pedagogy in the writing workshop was aligned with a *voice as individual expression* perspective, we do not claim that the sole goal of teaching writing should be to develop the self, or to transform society, or to produce texts for feminist or poststructuralist analysis. Each perspective on voice described here has both merits and limitations.

### ***Pedagogy of Voice***

Of the conceptions of voice described above, the first has arguably been the most influential in K-12 classrooms, as a process approach to writing has become widely accepted and practiced (in widely varying forms) in both the U.S. and Canada (Haneda & Wells, 2000). However, the process-centered writing workshop has been critiqued for its "invisible pedagogy," which marginalizes learners who have not been socialized from an early age into White, middle-class values and forms of participation (Heath, 1983; Delpit, 1988; Dressman, 1993). The last decade has seen a plethora of books and articles that describe strategies for making the "invisible" pedagogy of voice visible (e.g., Lane 1999; Kirby, Kirby & Liner, 2004; Fletcher & Portalupi, 1998). While some teachers do teach isolated lessons on "voice" as a component of test preparation, advocates of writing workshops would argue that voice *emerges* from the social practices of workshop pedagogy.

Workshop pedagogy and its social practices facilitate voice development in a number of ways. This pedagogy includes such strategies as helping writers find and choose their own topics, encouraging them to try on voices for a variety of audiences and purposes, and enabling them to recognize voice in their own and others' writing (Atwell, 1997; Elbow, 1998; Kirby, Kirby, & Liner, 2004; Rief, 1992). According to Romano (2004), writing that has voice contains interesting information; surprises the reader with its detail, perception, language, or thinking; is especially apparent in narrative writing; and often uses humor. He has offered suggestions for instruction in each of these areas. In a workshop setting, the teacher is also a writer, since if one is to teach others about voice, one must understand it from the inside out (Calkins, 1994; Gulla, 2007). All these activities occur in a classroom environment where writers feel safe to experiment and to express themselves (Romano, 2004; Yancey & Spooner, 1994).

### ***Views of Voice in EFL Contexts***

Many writing teachers in the United States do not see themselves as writers and are uncomfortable writing (Fleischer, 2004). If this is true of native speakers of English, how much more intimidating writing must feel to non-native speakers of English. Ramanathan and Atkinson (1999) have published an influential critique of the incorporation of the "U.S. mainstream ideology of individualism" (p. 45) into instruction of ESL and EFL writers and illustrated their argument with examples of how U.S. ideas of voice may be especially incompatible with the ideas of Chinese

ESL/EFL writers. For example, they claim that voice, as the expression of an inner self (a manifestation of the “voice as individual expression” conception described above), does not make sense to people whose norms of communication “foreground the *subtle, interpretive, interdependent, non-assertive*, and even *nonverbal* character of communicative interaction” (1999, p. 48, italics in original). They argue that in Chinese culture the purpose of writing is to transmit knowledge, not to create it, and that strongly voicing one’s own views may violate sociocultural norms based on consensus and the avoidance of discord. However, such an essentialist approach to Chinese culture is at least open to question. As Kennedy and Lee (2008) have pointed out, “it does require some imagination to believe that Chinese learners are influenced by the same set of cultural characteristics in exactly the same way” (p. 84).

Atkinson (2001) proposed that voice may be a social practice learned over time by native speakers of English. If so, he asked whether it is even a teachable or learnable concept for non-native speakers over the course of a semester or two on writing instruction. Finally, he asked whether writing teachers are asking non-native speakers of English to “basically become someone else” when they ask them to use voice in their English writing (p. 115). In a critical review of research on voice in second language pedagogy, Stapleton (2002) concluded that the role of voice has been “overstated” and that “ideas and argumentation” are more important for academic writing (p. 177). Similarly, Hyland (2003) argued that there is little evidence that process-based pedagogies “actually lead to significantly better writing in L2 contexts” (p. 18).

Leki (2005) has been a leading critic of imposing Western writing pedagogy in non-Western contexts. She has raised questions about whether EFL writing should even be taught at all in some settings where speaking and reading skills have historically sufficed. She used “voice” as just one example of traits and practices valued by proponents of Western writing workshop pedagogy that should be interrogated. She critiqued research that is founded on the assumption that if you adopt Western pedagogy you are progressive, and if you do not, you are old-fashioned or obsolete (see, for example Clachar, 2000). The fact remains, however, that much of the EFL critique of voice arises from autobiographical or semi-ethnographic accounts. Empirical studies have generally focused on linguistic features that can be isolated, particularly the use of first person (Stapleton, 2002), a perspective Elbow (2007) would call looking at voice through the lens of text. Rarely do these critiques include either a careful description of the pedagogy used to teach voice or examples of voice as it appears in texts produced by non-native speakers of English. In their review of second-language composition teaching and learning, Leki, Cumming, and Silva (2006) called for more studies that show the effects of particular teaching strategies on writer development, that illuminate factors that influence the development of L2 writing, and that employ mixed methods to analyze writing in naturally occurring contexts. The present study examines

the effects of a writing workshop on the development of the English writing of Chinese English teachers.

Another such study is Matsuda's (2001) analysis of voice in Japanese written discourse as embodied in one young woman's electronic diary. He argued that the difficulty non-native speakers have in developing voice in English is due not so much to a conflict between the individualist orientation of Western culture and the collectivist orientation of the cultures of Japan and other nations as to nonnative English writers' lack of familiarity with strategies for expressing voice in English. Matsuda recommends helping students develop a repertoire of discursive features and strategies that will enable them to express voice in English.

Like Japan, China is a collectivist culture and this orientation is only one of many aspects of "the Chinese culture of learning" (Hu, 2002, p. 96) that appear to be antithetical to the assumptions and practices of a Western version of writing workshop. Nevertheless, China is in the midst of major educational reform that includes a top-down push to teach English for communicative competence, including competence in writing (Hu, 2005a, 2005b; You, 2004). The aim of this reform is to create people who are "creative, innovative, and problem-solving" and who can contribute to China's emerging "knowledge economy" (Kennedy & Lee, 2008). Conflict between the curriculum and pedagogy (i.e. Western progressivism) that is generally assumed to produce such individuals and the traditional values of a Confucian-heritage culture like China seems inevitable, but it need not be destructive. There is a need for more knowledge about how to introduce alternative pedagogies in productive ways that both honor traditional values and offer teachers the opportunity to be creative and innovative problem-solvers themselves.

## **Context of the Study**

Three of the authors, who are U.S. teacher educators, were employed by a large, urban school district in southeastern China to design and implement a three-week professional development institute for 57 Chinese teachers of English at the elementary through secondary school levels. The district asked the U.S. team to offer courses that would help develop participants' general pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge in ways consistent with the current direction of educational reform in China. Based on the district's needs and the U.S. team's expertise, four courses were offered. One of them was Teaching Writing Workshop.<sup>2</sup> For instruction, the Chinese teachers were divided into two groups—an elementary group and a secondary group—and they rotated through each 90-minute block of instruction daily, Monday through Friday.

### ***The Writing Workshop***

The writing workshop in China was designed based upon the National Writing Project's (NWP) model of professional development for teachers of writing

(Lieberman & Wood, 2003). Over the course of the institute, the teachers experienced the writing processes—prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Each class session began with a mini-lesson focusing on a specific concept or skill. The instructor modeled and participated in all the writing activities offered to the teachers. Throughout the workshop, the Chinese teachers experimented with a variety of genres, including poetry. After completing several prewriting activities, they chose a topic for a personal narrative or memoir. They drafted, revised, and edited their pieces, receiving oral and written feedback from peers and from the instructor, but no grades were assigned to writing created in the workshop. Teachers had the opportunity to publish their writing orally in an “Author’s Chair” session and/or in print in a class anthology.

## **Methods**

### ***Researchers’ Roles***

The first three authors comprised a team that planned and taught together in China and debriefed daily, jointly reading teachers’ reflections written at the end of each instructional day. Upon return to the U.S., the team met weekly over the course of an academic year to organize, analyze, and interpret data collected in China. The fourth author is a Chinese teacher educator whose scholarship is in the area of teaching English writing in EFL contexts and in the professional development of Chinese teachers of English. This author was both an “outsider” who did not participate in the institute and could therefore impartially check the first three authors’ interpretations and an “insider” to Chinese culture who provided valuable insights about our interpretations.

### ***Participants***

Initial surveys, interviews, and informal interactions revealed that the experience, training, and English proficiency of the 57 teachers were similar to those of many Chinese teachers of English in urban areas of China (Cheng & Wang, 2004). Most had studied English at regional institutions of higher education and few had ever traveled to or studied in an English-speaking country. Many had never previously spoken to a native speaker of English. Most continued to develop their English skills by watching movies and television and by reading English language materials but rarely spoke English outside the classroom setting or to other English teachers in their schools. All were specialists who taught only English. Most participants had little formal experience in writing in English. English writing instruction was not a central focus of their instruction at school and, if present, it required filling in blanks, following pattern drills, and producing error-free text for passing centralized examinations (Hu, 2005a, 2005b). The teachers named in this study are referred to by their English names only. It is common practice in China to choose or be assigned an English name for English class.

### *Data Sources*

Over the course of the workshop, the teachers wrote daily and produced a variety of texts. Two pieces of writing from each teacher were scored by trained scorers in the United States after the workshop had ended. Piece #1 was either a reflection on learning or a paragraph of introduction, which writers had the opportunity to revise and edit, written during the first days of the institute.<sup>3</sup> This piece served as a baseline indicator of English writing competence prior to instruction. Piece #2 was a personal narrative or memoir developed by going through the stages of the writing process: prewriting, drafting, peer response, peer editing, final draft, and publication (voluntary) through Author's Chair and/or the class anthology.

### *Data Analysis*

Four U.S. graduate students were trained to score the writing samples using the 6-Trait® method<sup>4</sup> (Spandel, 2004). The traits are ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions (Kozlow & Bellamy, 2004).<sup>5</sup> The rubric defines a score of 5 (the highest) in voice as follows, a definition that is largely reflective of the expressivist perspective:

*The writer speaks directly to the reader in a way that is individual, compelling, and engaging. The writer crafts the writing with an awareness and respect for the audience and the purpose for writing.*

- A. The writer connects strongly with the **audience** through the intriguing focus of the topic, selection of relevant details, and the use of natural, engaging language.
- B. The **purpose** of the writing is accurately reflected in the writer's choice of individual and compelling content, and the arrangement of ideas.
- C. The writer takes a **risk** by the inclusion of personal details that reveal the person behind the words.
- D. **Expository or persuasive** writing reflects a strong commitment to the topic by the careful selection of ideas that show why the reader needs to know this.
- E. **Narrative** writing is personal and engaging, and makes you think about the author's ideas or point of view.

Each piece was scored using a scale of 1–5 on each of the six writing traits. Scoring was conducted by pairs who worked independently. Each pair of scorers received a packet of approximately 57 papers. Papers were identified by teachers' code numbers only.<sup>6</sup> Each set of papers was constructed so that each scoring pair worked with a variety of pieces from both elementary and secondary levels and a mix of Piece #1 and Piece #2. Scores that differed by two or more points were considered discrepant and an arbiter re-scored the paper. If the arbiter's score agreed with one of the original scores, that score was assigned. If the arbiter's score did not agree with either of the scores, the three scores were averaged. Scorers assigned a total of 1368 scores (114 papers x 6 traits x 2 scorers). The total number

of discrepant scores was 52. Thus, arbitration was required on 3.8% of scores and raters were in agreement on 96.2% of the scores. Additional statistical analyses were conducted using *SPSS version 14*.

Miles and Huberman (1994) outlined three reasons for linking quantitative and qualitative data: 1) to enable confirmation or corroboration; 2) to elaborate or develop analysis; and 3) to initiate new lines of thinking and provide new insights. Albertson's (2007) study of the traits of organization and idea development in student writing provided a similar rationale for combining quantitative and qualitative data in composition research. In this study, scores were used to identify pieces with particularly high or low scores in voice. Those texts were then studied and coded for the characteristics associated with voice. Because we have adopted an eclectic stance toward voice, our qualitative analysis attended to features of voice suggested by other perspectives (e.g., critical, feminist) as well. Some of these texts were chosen to illuminate the analysis. Studying complete texts allowed the authors to glean new insights about voice and how it sounded in texts produced by non-native speakers of English. Finally, supporting data, including participants' and instructors' reflections on learning and teaching were used to confirm or disconfirm the analysis of participants' voice development.

### ***Limitations***

This study had several limitations. In regards to data, the two writing samples analyzed were not identical. However, one assumption supporting analytic scoring is that many writing tasks, like cars, share comparable traits that can be evaluated (Wolcott & Legg, 1998). In addition, the authors judged the tasks to be of reasonably equivalent difficulty given the teachers' overall lack of experience with English writing (Breland, Lee & Muraki, 2005).

The first author is an experienced teacher of writing but not of teaching writing in English as a Foreign Language. Secondly, she does not speak Mandarin; cultural and linguistic barriers certainly existed between her and her students. Third, no conclusions regarding the teachers' use of voice in their native language can be drawn. Finally, trying to explain voice to a distant audience is somewhat like trying to explain a joke. Something is lost when voice must be explained to readers, and it is quite possible that readers will not hear the voices the authors hear in the teachers' writing.

### **Results**

Scoring revealed that the teachers' writing improved overall in the course of the institute, but the greatest gain was made in the trait of "voice," the focus of this study. As shown in Table 1, the overall mean score for the writing samples of the 29 elementary teachers increased from a score of  $M=3.23$  to  $M=3.76$  during the

professional development session. Similarly, the overall mean score in the writing samples of the 28 secondary teachers increased from  $M=3.57$  to  $M=4.06$  during the professional development institute. Paired-samples  $t$ -test analyses indicated that mean score on the exit writing sample, Piece # 2, was significantly different from the entry writing sample, Piece #1 [Elementary ( $t=4.474$ ,  $df=28$ ,  $p<0.0005$ ) and Secondary ( $t=4.154$ ,  $df=27$ ,  $p<0.0005$ )]. Thus, the overall quality of writing as defined by the 6-trait writing scale indicated a significant improvement across the two groups of teachers by the end of the workshop.

**TABLE 1. Overall Means and Standard Deviations of Writing Quality for Pre- and Post Assessments as Defined by the 6-Trait Method for the Two Groups of Teachers**

Writing Sample	Elementary Group n=29		Secondary Group n=28	
	$M^*$	$SD$	$M^*$	$SD$
Pre	3.23	0.41	3.57	0.57
Post	3.76	0.50	4.06	0.38

\* $M$  = mean (maximum number possible = 5)

$SD$  = standard deviation

### **Six-Trait Comparison of Means**

As revealed in Table 2, a closer analysis of the six individual traits for the two groups of teachers indicate that writing quality gains were observed in all the traits that included: organization, ideas, voice, word choice, and sentence fluency, with the exception of conventions for the secondary group. In general, paired-samples  $t$ -test analyses indicated that mean score differences on the entry and exit writing sample for all teachers were significantly greater at the  $p<0.0005$  level in all the traits (organization, ideas, voice, word choice, sentence fluency) except for conventions (see Table 3). This suggests that the quality of writing of the teachers as a group in all traits except for conventions in the 6-trait writing scale was significantly improved by the end of the professional development institute. Furthermore, the effect sizes reported in Table 3 for the statistically significant differences range from moderate (.645) to large (.833 and above) and show that the differences were practically meaningful and important (Cohen, 1988).

In sum, the workshop contributed importantly to improvement of various aspects of participants' writing except for writing conventions, the most noticeable of which was voice. This was the case whether participants were in the elementary or secondary group and regardless of years of teaching experience.

**TABLE 2. Means and Standard Deviations of Scores for Individual Traits in Pre- and Post Assessments as Defined by the Individual 6-Trait Method for the Two Groups of Teachers**

Trait	Writing Sample	Elementary <i>n</i> =29		Secondary <i>n</i> =28	
		<i>M</i> *	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i> *	<i>SD</i>
Organization	Pre	3.344	0.613	3.554	0.614
	Post	3.948	0.617	4.250	0.461
Ideas	Pre	3.293	0.575	3.500	0.638
	Post	3.862	0.565	4.125	0.400
Voice	Pre	3.310	0.618	3.518	0.713
	Post	4.207	0.590	4.411	0.624
Word Choice	Pre	3.035	0.499	3.429	0.663
	Post	3.638	0.611	3.804	0.515
Sentence Fluency	Pre	3.190	0.489	3.625	0.741
	Post	3.586	0.628	4.054	0.533
Conventions	Pre	3.224	0.576	3.804	0.567
	Post	3.345	0.696	3.750	0.461

\**M* = mean (maximum number possible = 5)

*SD* = standard deviation

**TABLE 3. Paired Samples Statistics and Effect Size for All Teachers.**

Trait	Mean Paired Differences	Std. Error Mean	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Effect Size ( <i>d</i> )
Organization	0.649	0.099	56	6.536	0.000	1.100
Ideas	0.596	0.105	56	5.679	0.000	1.070
Voice	0.895	0.109	56	8.215	0.000	1.398
Word Choice	0.491	0.097	56	5.046	0.000	0.833
Sentence Fluency	0.412	0.106	56	3.879	0.000	0.645
Conventions	0.035	0.110	56	0.320	0.750	0.056

### ***The Process of Voice Development in Writing***

In this section, writing samples from the summer institute along with the relevant strategies and activities used in the workshop are presented to show how participants developed and expressed their voices in writing. The following excerpts are

representative introductory paragraphs and written reflections on learning that were scored as Piece #1.

*Introduction (Elementary Teacher)*

Joyce is from XXXX Primary School. She is kind and hardworking. She teaches Grade Two and Grade Five. Her students all enjoy her lessons very much. She likes smiling. When she smiles, she is so beautiful, and just like a fairy. She is good at cooking. But she seldom invites us to share her food. That's really a pity. (E-5).

*Introduction (Secondary Teacher)*

Queenie is from No. XX Middle School. She got married last year, and she went to work by school bus everyday. I think she's an optimistic person. Although she fell off the bike badly during the trip to Guilin two weeks ago, she looks happy now. (S-2)

*Reflection (Excerpt, Secondary Teacher)*

... In [professors' name] class, I learned something interesting. It's very good to teach in bodily-kinesthetic way. I never know that it plays such a important role until today. I also know the process of teaching action verbs. The games make the class atmosphere friendly and lively. Students can have deep impression if the teach[er] teaches in new and interestingly ways. (S-29)

The introductory paragraphs were the result of an extended classroom activity adapted from Zemelman and Daniels (1988). Teachers worked in pairs to interview each other and then to write paragraphs of introduction. Teachers used the opportunity for revision primarily to correct errors in grammar and usage. The reflections were first drafts only and no pre-writing was done. The above samples scored in the middle range (3) on the trait of voice.<sup>7</sup> Most of the sentences are simple, employ stock vocabulary (e.g., kind, hardworking, optimistic, interesting, friendly), and formulaic structures (e.g., "That's really a pity," "I think she's an optimistic person," "I learned something interesting"). The mean score (N=57) on the trait of voice for Piece #1 was 3.31 for elementary teachers and 3.52 for secondary teachers.

Throughout the workshop, the teachers had opportunities to experiment—even play—with writing. Poetry is the perfect vehicle for playing with words (Grainger, Gooch, & Lambirth, 2005). Several days into the workshop, the teachers wrote "Name Poems," describing themselves by using the letters of their English names to begin each line. Selected examples appear below.

Rose is my favorite flower  
 Or I like red rose  
 Same with all the ladies  
 Enjoying all beautiful things  
 Such as rose.

Millionaire  
 Abacus  
 Rainbow  
 Ivory  
 Lily  
 Yeah.  
 Nonsense

Becoming a very beautiful lady is all female's wish. Firstly, the  
 Eye must be large. And she shouldn't be  
 Rude. Instead, she must be tender and kind. But  
 In this world, no one can choose her appearance. So everyone need to learn how to  
 Accept the gift that the God presented.

Rose's poem, while simple and straightforward, employs its limited number of words and sounds artistically. Marilyn's poem reflects the quirky sense of humor that she revealed over the course of the workshop. Beria (who sometimes went by the name of Hilda) hints at the serious, philosophical voice she developed as a writer.

The teachers also wrote poems inspired by classic models (Koch, 1970). They imitated William Carlos Williams's poetic apology "This is just to say," chosen for its simple language and universal message. Two poems inspired by Williams's work appear below:

This is just to say  
 After shouting  
 Silence coming  
 But the scary  
 In your eyes  
 Tells me  
  
 What is coming  
 Oh, my dear kids  
 What should I do for you?  
 (Fish, Elementary Teacher)

This is just to say  
 I left the dresses  
 Which were worn,  
 But not washed,  
 In the basket,  
  
 And dirty  
 In the living room,  
 So messy  
 In the bedroom.

Forgive me  
 Being lazy for your wife.  
 But to be a cat,  
 So cute you love.

(Carolyn, Elementary Teacher)

Fish's poem is an apology to her students. Even though the word "scary" is not normally used as a noun, it is very effective here. The reader gets the sense of Fish's regret and dedication to her students when she asks, "Oh, my dear kids/What should I do for you?" Carolyn's apology has an element of surprise: she might have ended simply by asking her husband for forgiveness, but she adds the poignant detail of the cat, who is presumably more loved than she.<sup>8</sup>

As Romano (2004) has suggested, writers need opportunities to look closely and describe their perceptions in order to develop voice. One day, the teachers rotated through six poetry stations, exploring the task at each center (Heard, 1998). At one center were flowers, leaves, stones, water, and other items picked up from the school grounds. The teachers selected natural objects on the table and wrote about them. A rock from the Mojave Desert proved to be quite inspirational. Two poems about that rock appear below:

*A Little Stone*

A little stone  
 From a far-away desert  
 Is common and not transparent.  
 Although beaten by the wind and rain,  
 It's so hard and not crushed easily,  
 And decorated the natural world in its own way.  
 Just like me  
 An ordinary lady  
 Without any outstanding achievement,  
 But with a strong will  
 To find love in the world.

(Hilda/Beria, Elementary Teacher)

*A Vagrant (A Stone)*

Where do you come from?  
 I wonder.  
 You look SO weary  
 and so ragged.  
 Do you have feeling?  
 I wonder.  
 You look so hard and so cold.

Maybe you have lost your way.  
 Don't know the way home.  
 Maybe your heart has been broken.  
 Won't believe love any more.  
 So you are doomed to be  
     a vagrant.

(Hope, Secondary Teacher)

Compare Beria/Hilda's poem about the stone to her name poem. The reader can sense this writer's presence in her writing: a budding feminist, perhaps, who understands but does not necessarily accept the cult of beauty. Hope's poem also gives the reader a sense of the writer's presence as she speaks directly to the stone, using upper case for emphasis ("SO weary"). In the second stanza, she lets the reader know why she is talking to the stone: perhaps she and the stone share a common experience of heartbreak and are both fated to be vagrants.

Another exercise in looking closely was inspired by Anne Lamott's advice to write about what you can see within a one-inch picture frame (Lamott, 1995). Each teacher received a tiny paper picture frame. The teachers practiced putting the frames before their eyes, looking closely at what appeared within the frame, and writing it down. Two poems that came out of this activity appear below:

*Plum Tree*

i see a plum tree  
 tall and slim  
 leaves flourishing  
 yellow and green  
  
 branches are waving  
 in the soft wind  
 like a dancer  
 dancing merrily

(Helena, Elementary Teacher)

*A Cat*

This is a cat  
 White and black.  
 Why looks it sad?  
  
 Nothing for ate,  
 Starve to death.  
  
 Crack, crack, crack.  
 A fish in the bag,  
 Deliciously it had,  
 Then for a nap.

(Carolyn, Elementary)

Here, Helena expresses her voice by playing with the conventions of capitalization and punctuation, two areas that are generally taken very seriously by Chinese English teachers and students. Carolyn observed a cat in the alley behind the school building. Even though she was too far away to hear the crackling of the bag herself, she makes effective use of auditory imagery here. The usage errors in this simple poem do not detract from its vivid impression.

Personal narrative has been called an ideal vehicle for voice. As the teachers began the narrative writing process, they completed a number of different pre-writing activities to help them generate quality information. In one prewriting activity adapted from Linda Rief (1992), the teachers created “Life Graphs” to visually represent the “best/worst” moments of their lives. Helena’s “Life Graph” appears in Figure 1.

Helena’s “Life Graph” depicts such universal human events as marriage, pregnancy, family illness, and death. But the graph also contains tantalizing symbols of Helena’s unique life experiences: her first haircut (unhappy) at age 5, her first television set (happy) at age 10, her teenage angst over her parents’ invasion of her privacy at age 18. Ultimately, Helena wrote her narrative about her performance at age 33 of the role of Snow White in her class play (an excerpt appears later).

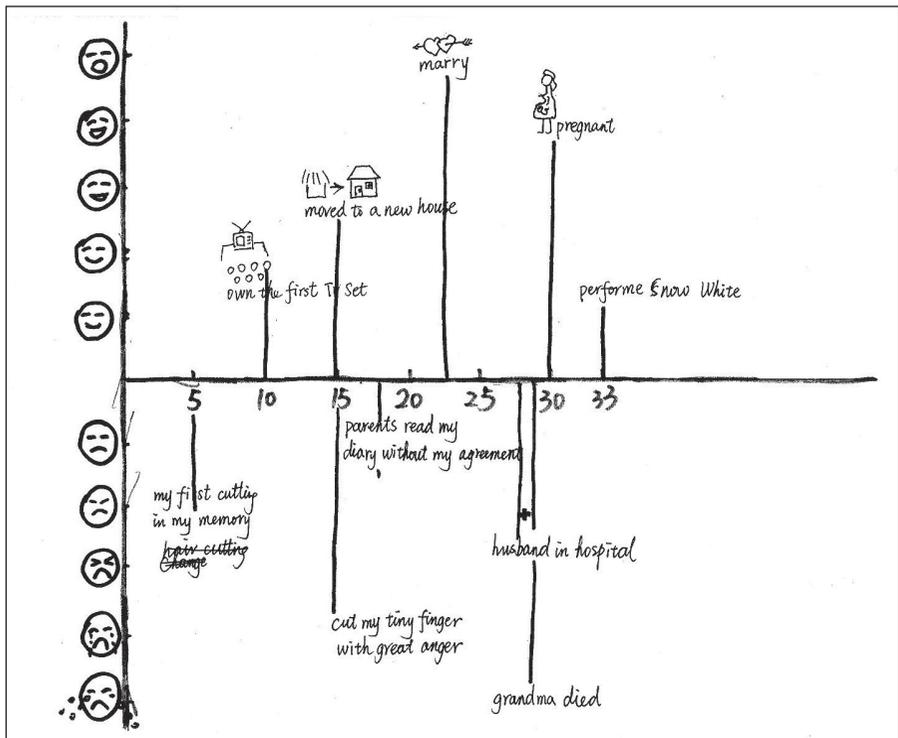


FIGURE 1: *Helena’s Life Graph*

She also expressed her uniqueness through the happy and sad faces she added to indicate the impact of each event.

A major part of developing voice is learning to hear it in others' writing (Elbow, 2007). Over the next few days, teachers drafted their narratives and responded to one another's writing in small groups. In order to help the teachers listen for meaning rather than focus on error, as was their custom, teachers were instructed to read their narratives aloud to their small group. Then each person in the group wrote down "3 pluses" (details they noticed and liked) and "1 wish" (a question about the piece or request for more information). Below is the feedback Lily, whose final narrative will be quoted at length, received from two peers:

*Three Pluses and a Wish Activity in Response to Lily's Narrative*

Viola's Response

- + many details describing (relieved, trembled)
- + rushed out
- + intentionally
- ? to make it more brief

Freda's Response

- + detail describing place
- + a big grey dog was staggering towards the wood
- + MAD DOG! MY GOD! My heart sank!
- ? make the story ending more interesting

As will be shown, Viola and Freda recognized voice when they heard it.

***A Closer Look at One Teacher's Narrative***

Lily was an experienced middle school English teacher who had learned English in college and who had never visited an English-speaking country. She worked exceptionally hard on her writing and learning throughout the institute. For example, she frequently volunteered to share her writing or participate in a demonstration when no one else would. She wrote four complete drafts of the narrative she finally turned in. One of those drafts consisted of five hand-written pages, both front and back (the length to which Viola referred in her wish).

Lily wrote about a terrifying incident that occurred when she was about eight years old and living in a small village. She entitled it, "A MAD DOG ATTACKED ME." That day she was on her way to the mountain to gather fuel when:

... suddenly I found something unusual walking unsteadily 10 meters far away from me. What was it? I slowed down and had a careful look. It was a terrible big, grey dog with listless eyes and a foaming mouth. Its wet and dirty tail was very tightly closed to its buttock[s]. It wasn't walking but staggering like a drunk man. What I had seen told me that in front of me was a crazy dog, which usually would attacked or killed people.

However, to her surprise the dog passed quietly by and Lily kept on walking:

I walked as carefully and quietly as I could through those houses. Suddenly out of the W. C. there rushed a nightmare. My God----THE MAD DOG! My heart sunk at once but it was too late to escape. . . . Intentionally it attacked me on the face more quickly. It was so angry that it tore my strong bamboo hat into small pieces. . . . At the very moment three or more men came across what happened to me. Immediately they shouted loudly: "Kill the dog! Hurry up! Kill the mad dog!" The dog was shocked but it didn't run away until the stones and stockages [sic] arrived. All the men nearby ran after it till it was exhausted and got killed.

Subsequently, her cousin carried her to the doctor's house where she began the painful series of rabies vaccine injections. She eventually recovered from but never forgot the attack.

Lily's narrative received a score of "5" on voice. Based on the description of voice in the scoring rubric, Lily's writing speaks "directly to the reader in a way that is individual, compelling, and engaging;" is "honest, personal, and engaging;" and gives the reader a "sense of the person behind the words." Lily gives readers plenty of information that makes one want to read on. For example, the dog did not just rush out of nowhere; it rushed out of the "W.C." She includes vivid, precise details (e.g., "a terrible big, grey dog with listless eyes and foaming mouth" and "tore my strong bamboo hat into small pieces"). She uses a strategy young writers often use when they convey strong emotion in writing by using all caps and/or multiple punctuation marks: "My God----THE MAD DOG!" (Graves, 1983). She recalls the shouts of the men who rescued her.

While Lily's story of the mad dog attack was the most dramatic in the group, the distinctive voices of the teacher-writers could be heard in many other narratives. A sampling of passages with especially strong voices appears below:

**Maria (Secondary)** wrote about her pets. Here is her first sentence: "Dog, Dog, Dog, I love you so much." She goes on to describe her relationship with her two pets: "Looking at the fuzzy fellows, I couldn't help myself holding them tightly in my arms. I put them in my bed. While I was sleeping, they were by my side. While I was watching TV, they were watching TV, too. Of course, they were naughty sometimes. They liked biting things. They bit everything they could to practice their biting skills. Oh! It really did annoy me."

**Mr. Wu (Elementary)** wrote about receiving his first love letter: "I received a letter with two together beautiful hearts on the envelop from the postman so my whole body was in electroniced . . . . I was eagerly to see my lover-Is she beautiful? Is she tall . . . But I tore the letter [open] carefully."

**Kitty (Elementary)** wrote a narrative entitled "Too Much Love Can Be Bad." Here is how she began:

“What’s the matter, mum?”

As soon as I enter the door, I realize that my mother is unhappy. It’s unusual—she usually opens the door and welcomes me with a smile!

“She’s dying,” Mum says sadly.

I know what she says. The tulip, mother’s favourite, is dying.

**Marilyn (Secondary)** whose name poem appears above wrote a narrative entitled “The Nightmare:” “One silent night, I slept alone in my bedroom. Then the magic thing was approaching to me. I could hardly breathe as if a ghost was pinching my neck. I couldn’t move my body, either. Not even my baby finger. As if someone was pressing my chest. I made every effort to move myself, but I still remained motionless. ‘How about shouting?’ I said to myself.”

**Helena (Elementary)** whose observation poem appears above and whose Life Graph appears in Figure 1 grew up dreaming of being Snow White. That’s why she called her narrative “Dream Come True.” As an elementary teacher she had her students put on the play “Snow White,” and she took the opportunity to play the role of her dreams. Here she gets dressed: “Now it’s my turn. I could touch my dream at once. Face red, breath heavily, hands trembling. I took out the white dress and put it on carefully. Then I set my hair down and put on a crown. I turned back to the big mirror slowly. Long white dress with shining diamonds, black curve hair with a crown, big eyes twinkled excitingly and red mouth like a fresh cherry.”

**Merry (Elementary)** wrote about the death of her grandmother. These were her thoughts as she looked at her Grandma lying in her coffin: “I was also so sad that I couldn’t buy the sweet dumplings at the Lantern Festival for her. She died on the 11th of the 1st month in lunar calendar and the Lantern Festival is 15th of 1st month.”

These excerpts illustrate some of the following aspects of voice. Maria uses humor (her dogs “practice their biting skills”) and a clever, engaging lead (“Dog, Dog, Dog, I love you so much.”). Kitty uses surprise, leading the reader to expect a tragic event—but it’s only a tulip that is dying. “Electroniced,” the word Mr. Wu uses to describe his physical reaction to receiving the mysterious letter, may not be in the dictionary but it certainly conveys what he was feeling. Marilyn uses precise detail (“Not even my baby finger.”) and inner speech, and perhaps a bit of humor as well (“How about shouting? I said to myself”), revealing the playful voice she suggested in her name poem. Helena invites the reader to look into the mirror with her as she experiences the magical transformation into Snow White. Merry conveys her sadness at her Grandmother’s death with the precise detail of the sweet dumplings and the festival her grandmother did not live to celebrate with her.

Of course, not all the writing the teachers produced in the institute was as compelling as the above examples. Ellen, an elementary teacher, for example, even in her final piece retained the simple sentence structure, formulaic phrases, and

factual reporting that many of the teachers exhibited in their initial pieces: “My son was born in 2001. Now he’s about four years old. He’s a cute baby. And he’s a strong little boy. He’s 4 kilos when he was born. He looks like his father. He has a big head, two little eyes, a small mouth.” Nevertheless, many of the teachers who participated in the workshop were rewarded by discovering that they had English *as well as* Chinese voices.

## Discussion

This study examined how a writing workshop approach based primarily on a process approach to writing instruction influenced the development of Chinese teachers’ English writing. Specifically, the authors looked at how voice developed in the writing of teachers who had little experience writing in English and who taught writing in very traditional and formalized ways. The Chinese English teachers’ writing showed statistically significant improvement on five of the six traits of writing as measured by the 6 Trait® analytical model of scoring writing (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2006). Of these traits, the teacher’s writing showed the greatest improvement in voice, even though voice was not explicitly taught. These findings and their implications are discussed below.

### *Influence of Workshop on Voice Development*

The improvement in voice development in the context of overall improvement in writing scores is especially noteworthy considering the teachers’ lack of experience with writing in English and the short duration of the workshop. This finding challenges the claims made by various EFL writing scholars that the idea of voice may be difficult to grasp or even incomprehensible to individuals from collectivist cultures and may violate their sociocultural norms (Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999), that it is not likely that voice can be taught or learned in a limited period of time (Atkinson, 2001), that it is unrealistic to expect individuals who lack English proficiency to express voice (Leki, 2005), and that voice plays a negligible role in comparison to that of ideas in writing (Stapleton, 2002). When the teachers’ writing was scored systematically and on the basis of traits, voice appeared to be intimately related to all the other traits (ideas, organization, word choice, and sentence fluency) except for conventions and contributed substantially to the overall improvement in scores. How can this be explained?

First, it is possible that contextual and environmental factors played a role. The majority of studies of EFL writing have been conducted with college students enrolled in EFL classes. College students may be anxious, overly concerned about their grades and their relationships with their instructors and thus less willing to take the risks that expressing one’s voice may require. The teachers in this study were enrolled in a summer professional development institute and understood

their writing would not be graded. They taught and resided in the school district in which the institute was offered. All these factors contributed to the creation of an environment in which they felt safe to express their voices. Like the teachers Lieberman and Wood (2003) interviewed in their study of National Writing Project institutes, the teachers in this study appear to have benefited from being members of a participatory community.

Second, although the teachers did not receive explicit instruction in voice, they did receive instruction in various processes and strategies associated with the development of voice. This affirms Matsuda's (2001) recommendation that EFL students learn features and strategies that will enable them to express their voices. Strategies and activities that have proven effective in helping U.S. teachers and students develop voice in writing were also useful in helping Chinese teachers develop their voices: prewriting, playing with language, and guidance and support in the process of narrative writing. This finding challenges the assumption that the Chinese culture of learning—reflected in reverence for teachers' authority, hierarchical relationships between teacher and students, and a view of writing as the transmission of knowledge—restricts the applicability of learner-centered strategies and activities developed in the West to Asian EFL settings, such as China (Hu, 2002). Rather than being impediments to writing, these Western techniques offered structures and formats through which the teachers' voices emerged. One suggestion Leki (2005) has made regarding the teaching of English writing is that teachers and teacher educators "begin by getting a little experience doing some kind of public writing themselves" (p. 83). The safe spaces and supportive environment of writing workshops can invite teachers to write freely and discover they can use their English voices publicly with confidence.

As noted previously, it was outside the scope of this study to determine whether the participants wrote with voice in their native language. However, it is possible, even likely, that the teachers already knew the concept of voice and used it in their writing, since *voice* is an important concept in Chinese writing. Such popular sayings about good writing as "one's writing mirrors oneself" and "rich in voice and feeling" attest to this. (In fact, more research is needed regarding the nature and role of voice in the native languages of English learners.) Therefore, the lack of voice in the teachers' initial writing samples could be attributed more to their self-perceived lack of L2 proficiency in crafting voice, their lack of experience with voice in L2 writing, or misunderstandings about the role of conventions in "good writing" in English. The workshop pedagogy provided a vehicle to enable the teachers to do something that they had not been able to do previously. This evidence seems to refute those who claim that voice is too culturally-laden to be useful in improving writing. It also suggests that the development and expression of voice may be an important step toward improving the writing of English language learners.

### *Hearing Writers' Voices*

The evidence presented here does not provide a definitive answer to Atkinson's (2001) question: is voice even teachable or learnable in the course of a semester? But the writing samples included here suggest that the teachers became not "someone else," as Atkinson speculated, but someone *more*. While no claims can be made about the teachers' ability to write with voice in their native language, it is clear that in English they could be playful, wistful, and witty. They told their stories in ways that drew the audience in, put them in the writer's shoes, and left them wanting to know more. The writing is marked by sincerity in its best sense as described by Elbow (2007). The narratives of Lily and Maria and the poems of Fish and Hope enable us to "[make] contact with the writer" (Elbow, 2007, p. 179). The writing has resonance, which Elbow (2007) described as "bits of irony, play, metaphor, or even silliness" that reveal glimpses of the author's self (p. 179). Despite its tangled syntax (or perhaps because of it), Mr. Wu's narrative resonates with readers: "I received a letter with two together beautiful hearts on the envelop from the postman so my whole body was in electroniced. . . . I was eagerly to see my lover—Is she beautiful? Is she tall . . . But I tore the letter [open] carefully." Perhaps Elbow (2007) is right that "[e]veryone has a real voice and can write with power" (p. 168), regardless of culture of origin.

What remains unknown is whether this brief experience in writing with voice will help the teachers further develop their voice in writing or become an important knowledge base for them to help their students learn to write in a similar manner. The answer to this question is crucial for verifying the theoretical assumption developed in the Western educational reform literature that teachers' own experience in writing functions as a bridge for them to connect relevant content knowledge to their pedagogy (Ball, 2000; Calkins, 1994). This study focused on the development of voice in teachers' writing, but the authors did collect data regarding teachers' intentions to implement what they had learned in the workshop (Spalding, Wang & Lin, in press). Like teachers surveyed in a recent longitudinal study (Stokes & St. John, 2008) of the impact of National Writing Project institutes on teachers' classroom practices, the Chinese teachers indicated that the workshop had expanded their repertoire of classroom practices, increased their professional knowledge, and built their confidence in their ability to help students learn to write.

The quality and directions of the teachers' development of voice differed and were reflective of the varying conceptions of voice in the field. For example, some teachers demonstrated the use of voice as self-expression, using unique humor, surprise, distinctive word choices, and vivid details. Others, like Fish and Carolyn, may have been using their voices to develop critical social perspectives on their roles as females and as teachers. One can also hear in Lily's voice in the MAD DOG narrative the process of appropriation, struggle, and becoming, as she produced

draft after draft in her attempt to recreate in a foreign language a traumatic experience and obviously still troubling memory (Romano, 1989).

### ***Voice and Communicative Competence***

Voice is not just a “touchy-feely” kind of thing, as some critics would charge. It can be both expressive and political, for

when teachers are able to name and then speak what they know in the social spaces of elite and popular culture, they bring about the kind of critical consciousness that allows them to see themselves as meaning makers and agents of change. (DeBlase, 2007, p. 119)

Some of the texts produced by the Chinese teachers may contain the seeds of such critical consciousness. It may also be the case that the workshop provided a safe outlet—or what Canagarajah (1999, p. 192) called a “safe house”—and support for the expression of the predominantly female teachers whose voices were more likely to be marginalized in the Confucian culture of reverence for male authority.

This study had implications for writing instruction in both the U.S. and in EFL settings. If China sincerely wants its students to achieve communicative competence in English, then writing instruction will have to go beyond the status quo. A person who can only read, speak, and listen is not fully competent in communication. Translation, sentence manipulation, and controlled language practice do not add up to writing competence—either in the U.S. or in China. In China, “Chinglish” is a common term for the brand of English that has resulted from this approach to writing instruction. Indeed, an entire web site ([www.english.com](http://www.english.com)) is devoted to poking fun at the English writing of East Asian people. Many factors undoubtedly contribute to this unintentionally humorous prose (e.g., “Staying in Queue Makes Me Civilization”), but one is almost certainly the lack of opportunities to write frequently in English for authentic audiences and purposes. As Elbow (2004) has described the process,

. . . the more we write and talk, the more we have to write and say . . . Talking and writing put words and thoughts *into* students’ heads . . . When we stop privileging reading over writing . . . we stop privileging passivity over activity . . . Reading asks, “What did *they* have to say?,” whereas writing asks, “What do *you* have to say?” (p. 10).

Increased opportunities to write assist all students, native and non-native language learners, to expand their rhetorical repertoire and to use language effectively to meet the demands of any writing task at hand.

When students view writing as drudgery, it is doubtful that they will become very proficient or engaged writers, as Gan, Humphreys, and Hamp-Lyons (2004) discovered in their study of successful and unsuccessful EFL students in Chinese universities. These researchers argued for a holistic, integrative perspective on

language teaching that includes tending to the needs of the whole student and providing more personally relevant curriculum and assessment. Such an approach may increase intrinsic motivation, a hallmark of successful language learners. This seems to bring us back full circle to writing workshop pedagogy and Graves's contention that voice is "the dynamo for the writing . . . [that] contributes most to the development of the writer . . . [that] pushes the writer into confronting new problems through interesting topics, gives energy to persist in their solution, then carries the writer on to a new set of issues" (Graves, 1983, p. 229). Or, more simply put by Elbow (2007), "Thinking in terms of voice can help people enjoy writing more" (p. 178). EFL writing instructors might consider harnessing the power of this "dynamo" by first enabling writers to discover their voices while exploring personally meaningful topics and genres before launching them into academic writing and argumentation in a classroom environment characterized by competition for grades. At the same time, one might view voice, as Kamler (2001) does, as a rhetorical construct made up of writerly choices and not necessarily an expression of an author's identity. In that case, more explicit teaching of the rhetorics of voice could expand writers' ability to demonstrate voice across a range of texts.<sup>9</sup>

Hu (2005b) has pointed out the disjuncture between China's espoused goals of helping students learn English through "a learner-centered, task-based, and communication-oriented approach" and the common actual practice of English teaching in a "teacher-fronted, knowledge-dominated, expository approach" (p. 673). But in China as in the United States, it is not very likely that teachers will change their practice just because they are told they should (Fleischer, 2004). If you have never struggled to find just the right word to express your thought, to make your audience want to know more, to show your reader a MAD DOG's crazed expression, can you really teach others to write well?

The question remains whether and to what extent, the Chinese English teachers will sustain and further develop their voices when the workshop environment and similar kinds of support are no longer present. No matter how energized teachers become by learning new methods and strategies in professional development settings, they return to the same teaching conditions, with the same colleagues and the same students, in the same schools, and their good intentions are gradually eroded. This is as true in China as it is in the United States, and more research is needed to examine the effect of context on the implementation of language teaching reform. Furthermore, while little is known about how U.S. teachers learn to teach writing (Grossman, Schoenfeld & Lee, 2005), even less is known about how EFL teachers learn to teach writing and this question becomes increasingly important with the push toward English as the *lingua franca*.

Hu (2005a) has called China's efforts to reform English language teaching largely ineffective because the educational bureaucracy has disregarded contextual diversity. Writing workshop is one pedagogical practice that is context-sensitive

because it enables participants to write about meaningful topics in purposeful ways and in their own voices.

## NOTES

1. For example, the description of “novice” performance on Kentucky’s writing scoring rubric includes: “Indicates some awareness of audience’s needs; makes some attempt to communicate with an audience; may demonstrate some voice and/or tone.” Proficient performance “indicates an awareness of audience’s needs; communicates adequately with audience; conveys voice and/or appropriate tone.”
2. The others were Models of Teaching, Teaching for Multiple Intelligences, and Theories and Methods of Second Language Acquisition.
3. A few teachers did not complete the introductory paragraph assignment. For those teachers, a reflection written in English at the end of the first day of the institute was scored.
4. The 6-Trait method is also referred to as the 6+1 Trait® method. The +1 trait is “presentation.” The papers were not scored for this trait.
5. The complete rubric is available at <http://www.nwrel.org/assessment/pdfRubrics/6plus1traits.PDF>
6. Teacher codes consisted of a letter—E for elementary, S for secondary—plus a number, e.g., E26.
7. The 6 + 1 Traits® rubric defines a score of 3 in voice as: “The writers seems sincere, but not fully engaged or involved. The writing has discernible purpose, but is not compelling.”
8. The fourth author suggests an alternate interpretation of this poem, “Could it be possible that Carolyn is saying that she is a lazy but cute cat that her husband loves dearly. In China, ‘cute cat’ can be synonymous with ‘darling’ in intimate conversations between young couples.” If this is the case, then Carolyn is being coyly humorous.
9. We are grateful to Reviewer #998 for suggesting this alternative interpretation.

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### Call for Nominations

The CCCC Executive Committee announces a call for nominations for its Exemplar Award. This award will be presented, as occasion demands, to a person whose years of service as an exemplar for our organization represents the highest ideals of scholarship, teaching, and service to the entire profession. The Exemplar Award seeks to recognize individuals whose record is national and international in scope, and who set the best examples for the CCCC membership. Nominations should include a letter of nomination; four letters of support; and a full curriculum vita. The nominating material should be sent to the CCCC Exemplar Award Committee, NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096; or [cccc@ncte.org](mailto:cccc@ncte.org). *Nominations must be received by November 1, 2009.*

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