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## Editorial

### Opportunities and Challenges

By George King, Guest Editor

Since China first began to open up to the outside world after 1978, Christians from many nations have seized the opportunity to teach there. While some have been highly-qualified, others have had minimal qualifications; even being a native English-speaker has sometimes been enough to gain employment. There has been a similar diversity of approach, varying from holistic professionalism to using teaching merely as a platform for verbal witness. Whichever approaches have been taken, Christian expatriate teachers have been a major feature of the Chinese educational scene for nearly forty years.



Times are changing. Increasingly, higher qualifications are expected of teachers, especially in major universities, though exceptions may still be found. China is more assertive on the global educational stage, and foreign teachers are generally expected to make broader contributions than in the past. At the same time, there is increasing political hostility to perceived Western ideas, with growing restrictions on what is permissible for foreign teachers to say. In this context, the purpose and potential of future contributions by expatriate Christian teachers requires further clarity.

Against the changing background, this edition of the *ChinaSource Quarterly* examines the role of expatriate teachers in China. Our approach is not primarily theoretical but practical, seeking to learn from experienced practitioners and to understand approaches that will stand the test of current trends. Rather than propose a “roadmap,” we seek to inspire and encourage with a vision of what is possible.

Lead writer, Bradley Baurain, directly tackles key issues of professionalism and witness. Insisting on high professional standards, he highlights the complex and holistic nature of witness, avoiding the need for striving.

New teachers coming to China are well-advised to understand the context in which they will be working. Rose Cheng and Henry DeYoung helpfully survey China’s educational history and related cultural background, providing valuable insights for expatriate teachers.

In “Views from the Classroom,” four teachers from different educational sectors, with over sixty years combined experience in China, briefly explain some of their priorities and the lessons they have learned. Their testimonies serve to highlight both what may be possible and the importance of respectful partnership in the work of teaching.

It is important for foreigners to understand how they are perceived in China. We interviewed Professor Wang Wanxin who has worked with many foreign teachers. Her answers help to clarify where contributions of Christian expatriate teachers can still be very valuable.

Mabel Anderson, who taught in China in the early 1980s, paints a fascinating picture of those early days of “opening up,” showing a China significantly different from today’s, yet with clear continuities. Some things may change quickly; others do not.

Finally, Nessie Jones reviews a book which helpfully focuses on a key issue: the challenging interaction between professionalism and Christian witness.

From these diverse sources, a picture of effective, expatriate, Christian teachers emerges: rooted in professional knowledge, skills and approaches; seeking to contribute to the good of their schools and colleagues as well as their students; prepared to be there long-term; caring for individuals; willing to be learners themselves. From this foundation, being “the salt of the earth” and “light of the world” can emerge naturally, with powerful effect and surprising opportunities, whatever developments may come in the political and social environment.

*George King (pseudonym) has taught in colleges and universities in both the UK and China for nearly 30 years.*

# Professionalism and Witness in TESOL

By Bradley Baurain

The global role and popularity of English has created opportunities for Christians to teach English around the world. These opportunities, though, have come with a variety of challenges and tensions which need careful consideration. Accordingly, this article aims to address two significant questions for expatriate teachers in China and elsewhere:

1. What is the role of professionalism for Christians in TESOL?
2. In what ways can Christian witness be a legitimate dimension of TESOL?

## Professionalism as Foundational

Is professionalism a priority for Christians in TESOL? Absolutely, yes. At a practical level, one would never dream of opening a hospital without medical professionals or of boarding a plane not operated by aviation professionals. Similarly, the idea of launching a language learning center without language education professionals makes no sense. Yet the myth that "if you can speak English, you can teach it" has long plagued the field.

From a faith perspective, there is even more reason to affirm professionalism. Christians need to pursue professionalism as a dimension of integrity. That is, we should be who we say we are. If we say we are English teachers, then that is what we should really be. To lead an English language classroom with excellence requires the appropriate training, credentials, and experience. To just fill a role or to use TESOL merely as a means to an end disrespects our learners, the learning process, and the gift of language.

In addition, the pursuit of professional excellence is a first line of Christian witness. God is not glorified by mediocrity or well-intentioned incompetence, not to mention that students tend to see right through it. They know when a "backpacker teacher" is using their classroom to earn money for further travel or has other ulterior motives. In the same way, they know when an unqualified Christian teacher is unable to truly assist them in learning English.

## Witness as Normal

What do I mean by *witness*? As I have defined it elsewhere: "*Living out one's beliefs in purposeful ways so as to persuade others also to accept them as true.*" Christian witness thus might be direct and verbal, but it should also flow through actions and character, such as by service or patience or showing care or working for justice."<sup>1</sup>

The fact is that witness in this sense is an integral aspect of education in general. Teachers do not leave their identities, beliefs, or values at the door of the classroom. While brainwashing or proselytizing is highly unethical, this does not mean that teachers are empty vessels or neutral actors. Our identities, beliefs, and values shape and influence what we do in the classroom, including how we plan lessons, choose curricular materials, and interact with our students. We live out our identities, beliefs, and values in appropriate ways within specific contexts and relationships. They are part of how we know what we know and why we do what we do professionally, that is, of our "teacher knowledge." Simon Borg has defined "teacher knowledge" as "the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching—what teachers know, believe, and think... [T]eachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs."<sup>2</sup> These can and should include spiritual and religious beliefs.

I am not the first to argue that due to the nature of the learning process, *witness* is to some degree inevitable, though the secular world tends to prefer terms such as "transformation." In his book *Values in English Language Teaching*, self-identified atheist Bill Johnston argues that "all teaching aims to change people; any attempt to change another person has to be done with the assumption, usually implicit, that the change will be for the better" (p. 5). He later explains: "[W]e are always in the business of changing our students... [W]e can never satisfactorily segregate our influence as teachers from our influence as people; and, even more crucially, we can never fully separate our relations as teacher and student from other aspects of relations between people."<sup>3</sup>

Though witness—whether by Christians or others—is therefore normal, purposefulness and reflection remain key to ethical effectiveness. Merely being a teacher is not enough for learning to take place. The teacher must work hard and do what teachers do. Similarly, merely being a Christian is not enough for meaningful witness to take place. We must work hard at integrating faith and practice in ways that benefit our students and honor our callings.

## Witness as Complex

As described above, Christian witness is holistic and complex. It is carried out through words and actions, inside and outside the classroom, in learning processes and through relationships. It is done by teaching with excellence and therein serving our students' needs and caring for them as intrinsically valuable individuals created in the image of God. This begins with basic professionalism but it certainly does not end there. Like teaching, learning, language, and the Christian life itself, witness is engaging and absorbing, requiring wholehearted commitment.

One tension that challenges the authenticity of witness is that of power dynamics. Teachers necessarily hold some authority over learners. Given this, if a learner takes an interest in a teacher's religious beliefs, it might not be based on sincere interest. Perhaps the learner took note of the teacher's faith and observed that she enjoyed talking about it. Desiring access to the teacher, additional opportunities for language practice, or simply to please the teacher, the learner might ask questions and interact in ways shaped by the



Image courtesy of a ChinaSource reader.

power dynamics rather than by genuine curiosity.

Another tension that challenges the authenticity of witness in TESOL particularly is the connection with various forms of imperialism or neocolonialism. English is a global language largely due to reasons of British and American political and military power during the last few centuries. In addition, English as a global language has been and remains linked to business and profit motives and thus to economic hegemony as well. While the world wants to learn English, it does not necessarily want to learn the English-speaking world's consumerist values, media-saturated culture, or (sometimes) monolingual parochialism. This extends even to questions of teaching methodology, as the prevailing general paradigm of "communicative language teaching" has often been judged to be an inappropriate or ineffective Western import in non-Western educational contexts.

The most effective way in which a Christian teacher can address these moral and spiritual issues is by learning the local language(s). Doing so shows respect for other languages and cultures and works against the sometimes unconscious message that English is a superior language or that learning English is all that matters. The dynamics are altered for the better if Christian English teachers take a learners' position, demonstrating humility and valuing others above themselves (Philippians 2:3) in a daily, concrete way.

### **Philip, the Language Teacher**

Philip, in the Book of Acts, presents Christian English language teachers with an admirable example for imitation. (8:26-40) In his encounter with the Ethiopian court official, the opportunity for witness arose initially from a cross-cultural language teaching situation. The Ethiopian, a eunuch, was the treasurer in the court of Queen Candace and therefore likely a person of power and influence. He was also apparently a Gentile convert or proselyte to Judaism, since he was studying a biblical scroll in Hebrew or Aramaic. In either case, he was reading in a foreign language. Philip therefore offered him a reading lesson: "Do you understand what you are reading?" (v. 30) The Ethiopian gladly accepted. After a passage from Isaiah 53 had been read aloud, he asked, "About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" (v. 34) Or to put this question in terms of grammar, "What is the antecedent of the pronoun?" From this rather unlikely and unglamorous starting point, Philip was able to share the good news with him. (v. 35)

The point is that Philip here did not ignore individual needs in order to force his own agenda, but was given the opportunity to bear witness to his faith by meeting the Ethiopian court official at his point of inquiry. This was true physically or geographically, as God led Philip to a specific desert road where the man could be found. It was also true intellectually, as Philip listened to hear what the eunuch was reading and asked him about his level of comprehension. And it was true spiritually, as Philip started from the language learning exercise in which the treasurer was engaged and proceeded from there to the gospel. Philip was able to "teach the lesson" and answer the man's questions about the prophecy because he knew Scripture well—the situational equivalent of professional preparation in TESOL. Perhaps most importantly, Philip did not try to create something out of nothing. He simply joined in with what God was already doing in the Ethiopian's life.

Professionalism is never neutral. Witness is never anxious. As we teach with excellence and live out our identities, beliefs, and values in appropriate ways within specific contexts and relationships, we do so in the knowledge that God already knows and loves all our students better than we ever could.

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<sup>1</sup>Baurain, Bradley. (2007). "Christian witness and respect for persons." *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 6, 201-219.

<sup>2</sup>Borg, Simon. (2003). "Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe, and do." *Language Teaching*, 36, 81-109.

<sup>3</sup>Johnston, Bill. (2003). *Values in English Language Teaching*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 101.

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## Introducing Modern Chinese Education

By Rose Cheng and Henry DeYoung

No nation in the world emphasizes education more than China. Most secondary school students in China get up around six in the morning and then attend morning classes until noon with breaks for lunch and a mandatory nap. After their nap, students have afternoon classes until supper time. After supper, they attend evening classes or do homework, not going to bed until eleven at night or sometimes midnight.

Teachers and parents carefully attend to their children's educational needs. On weekends, parents send their children to all kinds of tutoring programs. For the sake of education, parents, teachers, and students barely have time for anything else.

Why would a nation drive its young so fiercely to get an education? What is the nature of education in China? What are the pros and cons of the system? What can the West learn from the Eastern educational system?

### History

The earliest known schools in China were set up to train wealthy children for future service to their kings and empires. Notable developments came during the Han Dynasty, but it was not until the early Tang Dynasty that, to facilitate the selection of the best officials for the empire, a strict hierarchal examination system was introduced which ran until 1905 when the late Qing Dynasty abolished it.

In the early twentieth century, Western democracy, science and technology had a major impact on China and a Western educational system was introduced, particularly affecting the humanities, math and science. Western Christians helped to establish some excellent Christian schools. After thousands of years of a rigid, monopolistic, educational system, the Chinese finally had some choice of private schooling. During that period, China produced a number of fine pastors, philosophers, scientists, writers, and statesmen. Several leading universities and hospitals in China today have Christian roots from the West.

From 1949 to 1966, the new Communist government under Mao Zedong started to ban Western influence in its educational system. The central government gradually took control and started the so-called *gaokao* or college entrance exam system. In essence, it was the return of the old imperial system in the format of communist ideology.

During the so-called Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, most schools were closed. Teachers, like pastors, were mostly labeled as "evil" and were jailed or sent to do manual labor as part of the government's corrective measures. During this dark period, a number of well-known scholars and teachers lost their lives.

After Mao's death, Deng Xiaoping initiated a series of reforms including restoring the educational system of the 1950s which was Mao's educational system with a new ideology. In 1978, the country held its first nationwide college entrance exam after its having been interrupted during the Cultural Revolution.

From around 1978, Deng initiated the "Open Door to the West" policy. With some interruptions, over the past four decades China has experienced the biggest economic boom in human history. China's GDP is now second only to that of the U.S. With this growth, demands for high quality education in China have constantly been on the rise.

Today in China, public schools dominate the entire educational system. Public education is a monopoly and no one dares to challenge the system. The government dictates the curriculum, school calendar, ideology, and even college entrance exams. In the past decade or so, there have been some private schools across China, but private education is still less than one percent of the overall education in China. In almost all private schools, ideology and curriculum are still strictly controlled by the government. Children seldom talk about freedom, equality, privacy, and individual rights because they are brought up believing in the government, patriotism/nationalism, collectivism, and the public good.

### Worldview Differences

Current attitudes to education are still significantly affected by traditional ideas. Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism are all inter-related and are deeply rooted in Chinese culture. Confucianism says education is the top trade among all trades and teachers/scholars ought to be honored at all times. Indeed, Chinese religions, philosophies, and values are all about morality. Interestingly enough, the morality-based education throughout Chinese history is also largely compatible with Christian values and Christian education. Nevertheless, Chinese education has a substantially different worldview from that of the West.

So, what are the major differences in terms of Chinese worldview and Western worldview? To answer this question, we use the work of Dr. Philip Holtrop, professor emeritus at Calvin College.<sup>1</sup>

Dr Holtrop argues that postmodernity has brought about "an age of internationalism and global interdependence" and "a worldwide movement—the first 'age' or 'paradigm' shared, in some sense, by virtually all nations on earth." However, he also points to many commonalities in Western worldviews that are still distinct from the East: "Throughout, we see a strong rational, logical, legal, and 'definitional' tradition—an accent on dialogue, argument, apologetics and defense; the priority of what is regarded as 'truth' over



Focused by Kyle Taylor via Flickr

relationships; competition and political power struggles; and finally the breakdown of vertical ‘hierarchical’ thinking in favor of more horizontal democratic accents, with a focus on the dignity of each person; and eventually the secularization of what was once seen as ‘spiritual’..... Western postmodern Christianity also reflects the pragmatism and relativism of the cultures around it.” Thus, “subjectivity pulls rank over objectivity.”

By contrast, Dr Holtrop suggests Eastern worldviews have “a holistic and more mystical way of looking at the world,” which is relational rather than analytical. The East “does not ‘analyze’ issues so much as it wants to ‘live with them.’ It is less active than passive. It is passionate about ‘inner circles’ (especially families), but patient about the ‘bigger things’ that ‘we cannot change’—like the so-called ‘Mandate of Heaven.’ It stresses that people should ‘know their place.’ It has never assigned individuals the ‘rights’ that Westerners inherit from their main sources of culture—the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions, along with the Bible.”

In summary of these worldviews, Westerners tend to have an “either... or” approach about things. Good versus evil is usually a major theme in Western literature. Politicians quite often say either you are with me or against me. Westerners go to sports games and select a team to cheer for. Easterners, on the other hand, tend to have a “both... and” approach about things. Yin and Yang are two opposites and they tend to coexist. When Chinese go to a sports game, they tend to relax and cheer for both sides.

### **Practical Implications**

Finally, what are the differences between Chinese education and American education? How do we compare and contrast qualities of American and Chinese students? How might cultural differences impact the work of expatriate teachers?

Dr. Holtrop argues that Chinese and Western students have contrasting strengths. Chinese are eager disciplined learners, respectful of teachers, using memorization abilities to excel in tests. However, Western students are more creative, able to think independently and critically, and are better equipped to carry out individual research. At a relational level, “Being indirect, sensitive to others in the community, and loyal to family and country are all good virtues in China. Being direct, honest, and valuing equality and individualism are good virtues in America.”

Dr. Holtrop concludes that, given the contrasting strengths of Chinese and Western education, mutual respect and interchange is important. “Learning and fun, content and form, should not be opposed to each other. In the best education they should go together. But creativity (very important!) should be in the interest of community, and individualism (very important!) should be in the interest of society.” Thus he wants Western educators to learn from China’s educational emphases. At the same time, he wants Chinese educators to develop greater sensitivity to the needs and potential of each individual.

The two cultures and educational systems have almost opposite features and characteristics. Western students tend to spend much time on art, music, sports, and other social activities, while Chinese students tend to spend much time on academics or test preparations. No wonder Chinese students tend to score very high on tests but low on hands-on lab work or creativity. Today, Chinese students are in most major Western schools. Most of them only care about academics. Rarely can one find Chinese students on sports teams, but they are increasingly involved in music, art, and robotics events.

For Westerners working in China, it is important to understand that the people are more relational. Things work through personal relationships rather than rules, and it is relatively difficult to “get into” others’ lives. China is a “high context” culture: there are constantly hidden meanings in what is seen. By contrast, Westerners are more individualistic: it is easier to get to know each other, and law is more important. It is a “low-context” culture in which things are much more as they seem. These observations relate to the well-known contrast of shame and guilt in different cultures: in China, shame is a big deal; in the West, it is guilt.

Because the educational system is very rigid in China, Chinese students usually like teachers from English-speaking countries in the West. They love a Western style, student-centered learning approach in classroom instruction. They tend to appreciate ideas such as individualism, analytical thinking, freedoms, and so on. Western teachers usually like Chinese students because they are generally serious learners, and they appreciate and respect teachers. However, Western teachers sometimes get into trouble in China because they do not like to work with authorities or other teachers in the same school. In China’s hierarchical system, things work from top down rather than bottom up as in the West. Losing face is sometimes more important than losing life in China. No-one wants authorities to lose face. Hence, expatriate teachers in China can criticize authorities in the West but never authorities in China.

Sometimes Western teachers bring Chinese students to church. This might be a red flag for Chinese authorities; they do not want any religious influence on Chinese students. Any ideology different from the teaching of communism in China will be seriously monitored and controlled.

Some expatriates are surprised that Chinese students often like to “copy and paste” others’ research or statements without any citations. That’s because the system emphasizes collectivism instead of individualism. As a result, in China “copyright” means the right to copy; it is the way people are brought up. However, under the impact of globalized education, China is gradually changing in this respect.

Nowadays most leading public or private schools in China have beautiful campuses and state-of-the-art facilities. The educational philosophy, however, largely remains the same; that is, hierarchical and teacher-centered. This means that for Westerners teaching in China, there are both opportunities and challenges. Expatriate teachers certainly have great opportunities to learn about Chinese history and culture, to build relationships with students and other colleagues, and to bring the distinctive contributions from their Western heritage. They also have to endure culture shock, loneliness, limited freedom in education at times, and a deeply unfamiliar way of how many things are done in China.

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## Views from the Classroom

By Laura Woodman, Grace Haynes, E.D. Wang, and Mark Wickersham

*We invited four different teachers, in a variety of educational sectors in different parts of the country, to give brief perspectives on the opportunities and challenges of teaching in China. These should be seen not as scholarly articles or definitive statements but as individual reflections on long-term experience that may yield insights helpful to others. The four contributions were written independently, and the authors are unknown to each other. Together these four authors have over 60 years of experience in China.*

### Teaching English at a University

Called to China as a witness for the Lord and as a university teacher, like many others, my challenge was how much I could talk directly to people about him. In my twenty-year stay in China, there were seasons when it was difficult to speak out directly but other seasons when I could. In the seasons where it was possible to speak, discernment or hearing from God at key moments was the most important factor. But in those times when I could not speak directly, how did I fulfil my calling to be a witness for him? As teachers we can give input into students' academic, personal, and social lives and become valued, professional, staff members.

Teachers need to be professionals rather than preachers. Academically, universities and students value teachers with professional excellence—excellent subject knowledge and methodology, good preparation, marking homework, answering questions both in and out of class—rather than those who talk about God. In the Confucian value system we teachers are respected, and students generally want to learn and spend time with us. However, I found the biggest challenge was that most Western methodology uses discussion-based activities at some stage. However, students from a Confucian background are used to a more passive style of learning. Initially they may be shy and worried about communicating, but respect and desire to learn ensures that if we create a safe environment, give background information, use good teaching practices and encouragement, we can get them to overcome their barriers. For example, using groups of six with a group monitor helps students in discussion-based activities to overcome their anxiety of joining in. Academic excellence is important as we witness for God; talking about God but not showing excellence does not honor him.

We can make a significant impact on the lives of our students both academically and in broader life. Giving extra time to students not only develops their academic skills but also relationships. “Office Hours,” when students signed up to talk to me, were a good way of answering queries, addressing problems, and helping students develop into mature and responsible adults but also gave me defined boundaries. In many of these meetings, students opened up and shared personal problems, not just academic issues, giving opportunities for us to talk in a deeper way. Students valued my time and asked why I gave it to them.

I also enjoyed fun times with students in small group “English Corners,” and we had wild times of cake-making and cooking as well as movie and games nights in my apartment. These times were special and opened up all manner of conversations and led to friendships as well.

In addition, we can contribute to our colleagues and the universities. I was asked to attend many university events including judging competitions such as speech and dancing as well as movie dubbing with colleagues and students which provided the opportunity to speak in a more relaxed atmosphere. Other events that gave opportunities to mix with a wider range of people included baking cakes for International Fairs (and watching people eat them!), attending dancing shows, being present at meals, giving seminars and lectures to teachers, and introducing movies to students. In my experience, attendance at university events helped local colleagues and enabled me to build deeper relationships and friendships. Refusal to do these things is not a good witness. In my time there, the best conversations I had with people were at some of these events or as a result of meeting a person at one.

In summary, working as an excellent university English teacher enables one to contribute to students' overall development and make friends and relationships for life. St. Francis of Assisi indicated we should preach the gospel at all times, sometimes using words. As a university teacher that is an appropriate saying.

*Laura Woodman (pseudonym) has taught English for many years at a major Chinese university and has been involved in supporting other teachers in China.*

### Teaching Science at a University

How can foreign academics have an influence while teaching in China? The most obvious opportunities in professional contexts are in promoting professional ethics, introducing theistic worldviews, and simply demonstrating care for students.

Most teachers deal with plagiarism. Knowing what plagiarism is, why it is wrong, and how to avoid it are key skills for anyone in academia. Before students' first written assignment, I explain how plagiarism is equivalent to lying, cheating, and stealing. I also tell my students what the consequences will be if they are caught. I teach them how to reference their sources and give them opportunities to practice. The students learn not only the style of the bibliography or references section but what statements should be referenced and how to paraphrase and summarize the source without changing the meaning. However, there are always those who copy anyway. Their excuse is usually, “I can't write as well as they can.” Some students are afraid of getting a bad grade because of their poor English. However, for other students, getting caught is the first step in understanding the seriousness of plagiarism. For those



[Urumqi foreign language school's classroom by Aaron.huo via Flickr.](#)

students who really understand, it can be transformative.

In the sciences, different worldviews can be presented about the origin of life or the universe, evolution, or environmental protection. I strive to keep the content professional and to present a variety of opinions. Although I present theistic perspectives, I do not tell the students which position I personally agree with. Often students have never considered anything outside the Marxist worldview they have been taught since childhood. They attempt to translate the latest political rhetoric from the Chinese Communist Party, and it is a challenge to help them deepen or broaden their thinking. Since ethics is not widely taught in science departments in China, the language and concepts are quite new to them. Usually, I ask them to discuss the different perspectives and then write about their own worldview. I have learned not to have a debate or opinion survey where the theistic worldview will simply be discounted because so few of them believe God exists. Instead, I circulate to ask and answer questions as they discuss the different viewpoints in small groups. In the process, I can challenge simplistic answers, correct misunderstandings, and help them to articulate their ideas more clearly.

In general, being a kind and conscientious teacher who genuinely wants to be fair and unbiased can go far in a Chinese context. Most foreign teachers spend time with their students outside of class, whether by holding visiting hours at home, in an office, or in a classroom; going to the canteen with them for meals; or going shopping or to events together. In the classroom, I strive to treat all the students equally and give everyone a chance to participate, without embarrassing those who are afraid to speak in front of the class. I take pictures of the students on the first day and work hard to learn their names, whether they have English names or not. "He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out" (John 10:3b). Many students have been deeply affected by the simple fact that I consider them valuable enough to know them by name.

*Grace Haynes (pseudonym) has taught Science and Scientific English for many years at a major Chinese university.*

### **Character Instruction in a High School**

I had just moved to China to teach English at a large, new, government high school in a wealthy area. I could not read Chinese and could speak only a little. Reporting to work after Spring Festival, I heard the principal make a public announcement over the campus speakers. A colleague translated for me. Among the general announcements, one thing stood out: the principal commended the honesty of two senior high students who found someone's wallet and returned it to the authorities. I recognized that he valued and encouraged moral character, something that I had already wanted to include as a supplement to my conversation classes. I made a list of 49 character qualities, and when the principal visited our office, with the help of a translator, I introduced an idea.

I explained that I had heard his announcement and was impressed by the young men's honesty. Showing him the list of character qualities, in both Chinese and English, I asked permission to supplement my lessons with conversational topics based on these qualities. If he gave his approval, would he then circle the 20 most important qualities for me to introduce.

Within days the list was returned with twenty character qualities circled, so with the principal's authority I began to implement my idea. That first semester, I taught 40 different 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade classes bi-weekly, each class with about 50 students. In addition to standard conversational English, each lesson had a character quality theme such as attentiveness, obedience, truthfulness, determination, diligence, honor, contentment, cautiousness, initiative, virtue, wisdom, justice, and mercy.

Several months later, the principal asked me to return to teach in the fall even though he knew I was a believer. Later I asked him if I could teach the meaning of Christmas and Easter. After a little thought, he said, "Yes, this is Western culture." It is important to understand that the regular moral character themes are what make sense of these special holiday lessons.

Character instruction is simply teaching people how to love others in everyday, practical ways. I have found that students love hearing character illustrations in the lives of historical figures, the animal world, and stories. They particularly like to hear my own personal character stories, whether good or bad—but mainly my failures! This highlights, of course, that character training must start with me and my own example.

At the end of the year, as I test my students on what we have been studying, I explain that every day we face character tests without warning. Often we fail, and should then take responsibility for this and seek to change. It is at these times when students realize their character failure that they may ask themselves, and maybe even the teacher, "How can I have good character and break the bad habits that I know are wrong?" There may then be an opportunity to explain that we all need a change of heart and tell where this can come from.

I have found that this approach has sometimes been challenged by humanistic Westerners ("Whose definitions am I using?") or by Chinese ("Why do we need Western moral character taught in China?"). However, moral character is an international language, part of general revelation. No one can seriously question statements such as: "Every wife wants a loyal husband"; "Every engineer must be responsible when designing a bridge"; "Every doctor must be truthful in his or her diagnosis"; "Every judge must apply justice in an equitable way to every person." Moral character is encoded by our Designer into everyone's conscience.

Since those small beginnings, with the approval of the authorities, I have given this kind of character training to many students in different parts of China. Recent changes, however, mean that there is greater suspicion of such ideas from foreigners; as always, each situation must be handled thoughtfully to know how to best serve students while honoring the authorities.

*E. D. Wang (pseudonym) has taught English and character development in high schools in different parts of China.*

### **Teaching at an International School**

In 2003, I started teaching at an international school in a Chinese city of several million people. The school I served at had an American curriculum with an international focus. Most of the classroom teachers were American and a majority of the students were from South Korea. Parents of the students had come to China for various reasons. Little did I know how much I would learn here and be

impacted by my experience teaching in this country. I was a confident 20-something-year-old who thought I might be overseas for a couple of years making a difference in others' lives. Instead, teaching at an international school and living in China taught me much about myself and how much I needed to grow.

***Teaching at an international school in China made me a better teacher.***

I honestly thought teaching at an international school would not be too different from my public school position in small town USA. I thought I could simply teach in the way that I always had. I quickly realized that my Indiana jokes did not make sense to my students from Brazil, the Netherlands, or South Korea. I needed to change my wording and cultural references for my students. I also needed to rethink how to incorporate my cooperative learning activities with a student body that was used to a great deal of lectures and individual assignments. Although my colleagues thought I was doing well in the classroom, my heart was struggling to connect with my diverse group of students. Teaching at an international school in China helped me see that I needed to see each student as uniquely made with specific needs and skills.

***Teaching at an international school in China gave me a better ability to adapt to different environments.***

Through service projects, sports tournaments, and class trips, I was exposed to an assortment of delicious meals, amazing architecture, special customs, unfamiliar dialects, beautiful music, and more. All of this might sound romantic; however, time after time I was placed in situations that would stretch me. I ate meals that were the farthest thing from a BLT.<sup>1</sup> I took Chinese language classes at my school and had to fumble my way through countless conversations. I met people from all walks of life who did not look like me, think like me, act like me, or smell like me! All of this has helped me learn how to see the beauty in our differences instead of fearing them. I am now able to better be the person I need to be to fit in distinct settings. This has allowed me to serve more people and contribute in ways I never thought possible.

***Teaching at an international school in China made me see that I have plenty to learn from the Chinese.***

My Chinese colleagues often praised me when I did something well. Whether it was an important school-wide presentation or something simple like telling a joke—praise was not uncommon. This was not because I was accomplishing so much, but because I made great friends who knew how to encourage instead of critiquing like I often did. My Chinese colleagues were humble team players who put the needs of others before themselves. Additionally, their work ethic was exceptional. They helped motivate me to give 110% in all of my endeavours. We had a sense of community and accomplished tasks to achieve the school goals. I learned a tremendous amount from my Chinese colleagues that carries forward to today, and I will never be able to thank them enough.

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<sup>1</sup>In the United States, a BLT is a bacon, lettuce, and tomato sandwich.

*Mark Wickersham is the middle school principal at Evansville Christian School in southern Indiana, U.S. He taught in Indiana and South Korea before serving as a coach, teacher, or principal in China for 13 years. Find Mark's latest posts at <http://mkwick.blogspot.com> or contact him by [LinkedIn](#).*

## **Introducing Modern Chinese Education**

**Continued from page 6**

### **Concluding Comments**

The ancient Chinese made many notable inventions: gun powder, paper, printing, and the compass. However, their feudal society created an educational system for the rich which hindered further development in creativity, critical thinking, innovation, freedom, and equality. The essence of this system continues under the present regime. Thus, China's educational system cannot be sustained because it holds educators, parents, and students hostage.

Democracy and capitalism also have flaws, reflected in their Western educational systems. In short, the East and the West need each other. The effect of globalization so far has been largely one-way, but China's resurgence is likely to lead to some re-balancing. In different ways, both East and West need to reform their educational systems so that the young around the world can maximize their potential. Expat teachers in China have the potential to contribute not only to China, where education will always be important, but also to this global development.

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<sup>1</sup>Dr. Philip Holtrop, "Chinese and American Culture: Some Main Contrasts and What We Have in Common" (unpublished lecture notes, Graduate Doctoral English Program, Peking University, 2016). All quotations in the following paragraphs are taken from his lecture notes.

*Rose Cheng and Henry DeYoung (pseudonyms), both born in China, were educated in China and the USA and are now involved in educational projects in both countries.*

## A Chinese Perspective on Expatriate Teachers: Interview and Commentary

### *An interview with Professor Wang Wanxin by George King*

How do Chinese university leaders feel about the role of expatriate teachers, and particularly about the part played by Christians? Professor Wang Wanxin, leader of an English department at a major university in China, herself a Christian, gave written answers to a series of questions exploring these issues.

Below, the questions and answers are given verbatim followed by the editor's commentary on issues they highlight.



A university in China by Barbara Kindschi

*1. I know that over the years you have had many foreign teachers of English. What benefits do you feel they bring to your students, your colleagues and your university?*

The benefits are many. They bring different perspectives and different cultures. Working with them, both the faculty and the students learn to respect differences. This is very important in China today. This difference also makes us look at our own ways of thinking and doing things in a new way—we understand ourselves better. We believe some courses are best taught by foreign teachers, such as courses in the culture and society of the English speaking countries.

The benefits to the university are mostly in their different services, such as polishing papers in English for publication in international peer reviewed journals, and polishing various promotional materials of the university. Now, some teachers also publish in international journals. This increases the visibility of the university in the world

*2. I also know that some of the teachers you have hired have been Christians. Do you feel that they have brought any other benefits?*

Yes, of course. The most prominent is what I call “Christian work ethics.” They’re very dedicated to their work, and they’re the role models their Chinese colleagues aspire to. Christian couples teach by example what an ideal marriage is like. All my Christian colleagues have been widely respected by both the faculty and students.

*3. What mistakes do new foreign teachers tend to make when they first arrive?*

I’m not sure. Maybe you should ask the foreign teachers themselves. From the teaching perspective, I wouldn’t call it a mistake, but I think they may over estimate or under estimate students’ English proficiency, so the lessons can be either too simple or too difficult.

*4. Some Christian teachers see sharing their faith with students as a vital part of why they are there. How do you feel about this?*

I think it’s fine. But now the Chinese government is very strict about “preaching religion on campus.” I think it’s fine to share your faith with people who are interested, but preaching on campus is a different matter.

*5. Have you noticed any trends in what Chinese universities expect from English teachers?*

I think the mere teaching of language skills is not enough today. Most universities expect their foreign teachers of English to be able to teach other courses as well, such as culture and society of the English-speaking countries, literature, or courses in the disciplines they’re trained in.

*6. Have you noticed any trends in the kind of teachers who come to China or their approaches?*

I see more and more teachers come to live and work in China for longer periods of time, usually several years.

*7. What advice would you give Christian teachers coming to teach English in China?*

I know some Christian teachers think they should share their faith with students. But you may not be aware that some of your Chinese colleagues also need it to “survive.” Blend with your colleagues and you may find the need. However, you don’t want to act bluntly and come to be regarded as “preaching your religion on campus.”

### **Commentary**

Professor Wang’s concise answers highlight several significant issues.

First, expatriate colleagues can be welcomed not merely for the lessons they teach but for broader contributions they make to their colleagues and the life of the university. The open sharing of differences can be part of the ongoing process of educational development. Of course, this presupposes that expatriate teachers are as willing to learn as they are to teach, as willing to receive as to give. It also assumes an attitude of service adapted to local conditions rather than importing personal agendas.

Second, there is a growing expectation for teachers to offer more than basic, English courses. Indeed, in leading universities there is a trend towards requiring higher qualifications, expecting broader involvement as professional colleagues, and even being involved in research in some cases. This in turn may require teachers to stay longer at their universities in order for their contributions to become effective. It is a call for greater professionalism which in turn may lead to greater long-term impact.

Third, though being open to teachers sharing their faith, Professor Wang counsels against “preaching your religion on campus.” Clearly there is a difficult dividing line which will vary considerably from place to place, but a basic attitude of service, carried

through with competence and professionalism, will guard against inappropriate striving and may open doors for natural and profitable discussion.

Fourth, she highlights that although many Christian expatriates seek to be a witness to their students, their colleagues are also in need of the gospel to “survive.” To serve in this way, however, implies a willingness to invest long-term in relationships with colleagues, to “blend,” rather than having a single focus on students. Indeed, this may be a much more effective approach to verbal witness, free of potential accusations of abusing power relationships.

Finally, she highlights the lives of the teachers. In a context in which individualism and materialism increasingly distort relationships, one’s marriage does not have to be “perfect” to make an impact. Many ex-students who later became Christians will testify that it was the life of a teacher, even without explicit gospel words, which first opened their eyes to the beauty of Christ.

One important caveat must be made to both Professor Wang’s words and this commentary: situations vary widely in Chinese universities. Not every university will welcome foreigners as valued colleagues; some departments will be looking only to fill basic, English classes; in some places minimal qualifications may still be acceptable; not every head of department is as positive or welcoming as Professor Wang; in some places there may be severe controls on what expatriate teachers can say, even informally.

Despite this caveat, Professor Wang’s answers serve as good indicators of where Christian expatriate teachers may profitably continue to serve Chinese universities, even as the political winds change.

*Professor Wang Wanxin (pseudonym) is the leader of an English department in a major Chinese university. George King is the guest editor of this issue of the ChinaSource Quarterly.*



Image courtesy of a ChinaSource reader.

## Teaching in China—the Early Years

By Mabel Anderson

What was it like to teach English in China in the early 1980s? One person's observations, mainly in one city, can give some insight into the situation back then.

Contracts with Chinese universities were difficult to negotiate. During the initial negotiations between teacher and university, the contract stated a provisional (minimum) salary with the final salary to be decided in about two months. After that, a contract was to be signed in October or November. In truth, it turned out that by late February or early March, often still no contract had been signed. Some teachers had to teach all year without a contract!

Chinese universities often tried to omit the teaching load and course names in the contract. Often they would finally say they agreed to what the expatriate teacher wanted, but since the contract was not to be signed until fall, after the teacher came, the courses were often changed. Also, it was very common for the schools to withhold some facts that might change the teacher's mind about coming until after the teacher had agreed to come.

In the very beginning, China thought that the need for Foreign Experts and Foreign Teachers<sup>1</sup> was only temporary and afterwards Chinese English teachers could take over. Consequently, the packages for Foreign Experts were quite generous at first—a high salary (by Chinese standards), round-trip airfare for the Expert, spouse, and a child under 12, a free winter vacation trip for sightseeing or a vacation allowance, and bath soap and toilet paper supplied. As China realized that expatriate teachers were not temporary, the packages were scaled back—round-trip airfare for only the Foreign Expert, bath soap and toilet paper provided only for the first time and then not at all, and no vacation allowance. (Foreign Teachers could receive return airfare after two years of teaching at the same university.) Foreign Experts in China as singles could legally exchange fifty percent of their salary for foreign currency, but those with a spouse only thirty percent. They were paid the appropriate amount in “Foreign Exchange Certificates,” required for exchanging money which was often very complicated because banks did not want to give up their foreign currency. Foreign Teachers were paid totally in nonconvertible *renminbi* (RMB).

All expatriate teachers were required to live on campus, typically in a special building built for foreigners. (Schools lacking such a building might house them in the Friendship Hotel which was off limits to Chinese.) The buildings all had a doorkeeper. If the school had few of these teachers, they were housed with the foreign students. Sometimes the entire building had only one telephone. If there was a foreign teachers' building, it might have a telephone extension in the hall on each floor. However, one might have to try fifty times in a row to get an outside line! Also, phone service was so poor that it was hard to hear someone on the other side of town. Further, the phone kept ringing even after the other party had hung up!

Most schools were very restrictive about keeping expatriates separate from Chinese people. At one school, students were not allowed to visit their teachers' residence even to get help with their studies. (Teachers typically did not have offices.) At that school one teacher mentioned that she needed to get a haircut, and two students volunteered. They sneaked into the teacher's suite and cut her hair. The next day the administrator asked the teacher, “Who cut your hair?” Since the administrator's English was not very good, the teacher pretended not to understand and said, “Yes, I got my hair cut.” “No, no, *who* cut your hair?” “Oh, who cut my hair? A friend.” “Chinese or foreigner?” “A friend.” “Chinese or foreigner?” “A friend.” “Chinese or foreigner?” “A friend.” This school also watched the expatriate teachers so closely that they knew what time one teacher usually went out for a daily bike ride! One team of expatriate teachers elsewhere was advised by their authorities, “Don't get a bike; you might get hurt. Don't take the bus; you might get lost!”

At another university, whenever students came to see their teacher, the doorkeeper would page the teacher to come down and escort the students to her room. In one case, while two students were visiting a teacher, another one came. When the teacher went down to escort the newcomer up, the doorkeeper asked, “Where are the other two students?” “Up in my room.” “You're supposed to bring them down with you!” That school also tried to establish limited visiting hours for foreign teachers, a policy that was soon discontinued.

In the early years, expatriate teachers were hired only at colleges and universities. Typically, the authorities monitored what the teacher said in class by asking either a student or sometimes the whole class. I heard that one teacher, when leaving, had given each of the students some Bible passages, but the department collected them all because the Bible was still banned in the very early 1980s. Yet, in 1986 (probably the most open year) one teacher was permitted to teach an Introduction to the Bible course and had the students read Bible passages. (An older Chinese teacher sat in on the class each time.)

Early on, older people were given the first chance to study English from expatriate teachers. For example, one team of teachers taught a one-semester, intensive English course to a group, mainly in their 50s, who were to be sent abroad for six months of study. Many did not understand any spoken English.

These earlier students were very diligent and respectful. If the teacher got to the classroom before they did, they were very embarrassed because students are supposed to wait for the teacher. During break, if the teacher started to erase the board, a student quickly took the eraser and said, “This is the students' job.” While most students had been relieved of their work responsibilities, occasional-



[Foreign Exchange Certificate \(FEC\) of China. Back side. 中国 兑换 元](#)  
by [hiroo yamagata via Flickr](#).

ly some who were department heads would have to miss class because of work. In such cases, they would come very apologetically to the teacher ahead of time and ask for leave. In addition, it was very difficult to get these students to speak English in class because they were so afraid of making a mistake.

The younger generation, however, is in sharp contrast. One teacher was shocked to find *graduate* students who cut class, tried to talk the teacher out of final exams, and gave their department a written complaint (which the whole class was forced to sign) about a course they did not like.

In 1984 many undergraduates had studied English for three to six years before attending a university. One teacher had a freshman Listening and Speaking class of fifteen girls and fifteen boys. Many of them were nervous because this was the first time they had had a foreign teacher. When the year began, about one-third could not understand one word of spoken English, but another one-third could already converse with a native speaker. When being paired up for speaking practice the first semester, the students insisted that their partners be the same gender. Consequently, there had to be two groups of three. About the beginning of the second semester, the girls learned that boys are interesting!

At first, exercise music was played over loud speakers for the whole campus twice a day, from 6:30-7:00 a.m. and from 9:50-10:10 a.m. when students went out to do morning exercises. After a few years the ten a.m. music was discontinued, but the six-thirty a.m. music persisted for a number of years. At first, it was only Chinese music, but later there was Western music—sometimes rock or even “Pomp and Circumstance”!

Shopping could be a challenge. In the early 1980s almost everything important was rationed—eggs, meat, flour products, cotton goods, sugar, and so on. While booklets were issued to locals for eggs and meat, other items were to be bought with ration tickets—good for only that item and normally just in that city. Of course, expatriates were not given any ration tickets. Once, a teacher was very angry over not being allowed to buy a loaf of Chinese bread without a ration ticket. Protesting that she had not been given any ration tickets did no good.

On another occasion a foreign teacher had found out where to buy the big, standard, Chinese-English dictionary. At first, the clerk said they did not have any more copies of that dictionary. When the teacher asked to buy the one in the window, the clerk said it did not have any printing in it! The teacher said, “Please let me have a look at it.” The clerk kept saying it had no printing in it while the teacher kept repeating, “Please let me have a look at it.” Finally, the clerk talked to someone at the back, got the very dictionary from a back room, and sold it to the teacher! They were evidently keeping some back to be able to fulfill important people’s requests.

On arrival, all foreign teachers had to exchange only enough money for a month’s supply of food and bus fare (about ten *fen* per ride) plus a bicycle. (The school paid their rent and utilities, and they got paid for teaching after completing each month.) In major cities such as Beijing, imported items could be bought only at the Friendship Store (off limits to ordinary Chinese) and only with Foreign Exchange Certificates (FEC). Foreign *teachers* were often frustrated because they were paid totally in RMB—no FEC. After they had their RMB salary, why should they have to exchange more US dollars to buy goods in China? When expatriates exchanged their foreign currency for RMB, they were given a receipt. When they left China, to change FEC back to foreign currency, they had to have receipts showing they had exchanged that much foreign currency for FEC.

In the very early 1980s most things were very cheap. For example, to park one’s bicycle in a lot with an attendant to watch the bicycles cost only two *fen* (100 *fen* = 1 *yuan*). No ice cream was sold, but small ice lollipops were sold by street vendors for two *fen*. Stamps for international letters cost seventy *fen*. (At that time the exchange rate was kept artificially high, with two *yuan* equal to one US dollar. By the mid-1980s, the rate was perhaps five or six *yuan* to the dollar.)

Mail sent to expatriate teachers was often read before it was delivered. In 1981-’82 some expat teachers received anti-Chinese government propaganda in Chinese inside their letters. (This was probably an attempt to get the teachers into trouble.) In at least one case, the propaganda was even dated later than the US postmark! Also in the early years, some teachers received their mail with the envelopes still wet from having been steamed open, and some even received them ripped open! Since this was before computers and email, it usually took about a month to get a reply from home in the US (two weeks each way).

To sum up, teaching in China in the early 1980s was challenging. Starting to teach without a contract, the difficulty of getting foreign currency, poor phone service, very restrictive rules at residences, many students whose listening comprehension was very low, annoying music early in the morning, difficulties shopping, and having no private mail meant adjusting to these situations was not easy.

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<sup>1</sup> *Foreign Experts* had to have at least a Master’s degree and three years of teaching experience, but *Foreign Teachers* could have less. Foreign Experts were paid about twice as much as Foreign Teachers. However, sometimes there was no difference in qualifications; it depended on who the school had permission to hire and was willing to hire.

*Mabel Anderson (pseudonym) taught in China for some years starting in the early 1980s.*

## Book Review

### Teaching with Christian Values

Reviewed by *Nessie Jones*

*Professional Guidelines for Christian English Teachers: How to Be a Teacher with Convictions while Respecting Those of Your Students* by Kitty Barnhouse Purgason. William Carey Library, Pasadena, CA, 2016, 221 pages. Paperback, ISBN-13: 978-0878-08497-5; \$13.99 at Amazon.com.

What attracts readers to a new book? The title will be one drawing card, the author another, and for some, it could be the stamp of a trusted publisher. In this case, the lengthy title narrows down the readership from English teachers in general to those who have a Christian faith, and finally, to people interested in the juxtaposing of their own convictions with those of their students. The author's credentials are strong, from her childhood days in India where her parents worked, to her own professional experience in many countries as a teacher and then a teacher educator. Then there is the name of the publishers, well known over almost half a century for bringing us books in this and related fields. One further reason for getting hold of a book can be a personal recommendation which is what this review aims to be.

The topic of values, and specifically Christian values, as they apply to the teaching of English has received attention from a number of authors in the past couple of decades. Dormer (2011), Snow (2001), and Pierson and Bankston (2017), to name just three, all include in their titles words like Christian, mission, or theology as does Dormer's which also has the words "effectiveness and integrity." These and other books all reflect a concern about how people's underlying beliefs play out when they are teaching English, particularly (but not only) outside their own country. This review highlights two features that make Purgason's book worth reading and using with teachers pre- and in-training: sound theory and practical examples.

The book has three parts, each with a different format. The first of three chapters in Part 1 introduces the topic through four case studies which illustrate the range of international contexts in which Christian English teachers find themselves. This chapter also includes a summary of Purgason's life as mentioned above. The short second chapter states the book's biblical foundations: the Great Commission and the Golden Rule, among others. Then, in Chapter 3 the reader is invited to consider "what we teach and how we teach it" (p.19).

Part 2, with its nine chapters, forms the body of the book. Each chapter has a succinct heading followed by a more explicit subheading. Thus Chapter 5, "Going Deep," has the subtitle "Questions about what's important," while "Good Teaching" in Chapter 9 is subtitled "Critical thinking." A detailed look at one chapter will give a feeling for the section's focus and format. In Chapter 10, "Power Dynamics," about appropriate teacher-student relationships, the content goes beyond what might first come to mind under that heading. It deals, among other topics, with cultural expectations of how students should respond to teachers in class. Is disagreeing with the teacher's viewpoint seen as rude? Should students appear to agree even when they don't? A number of lively examples (and solutions) are added. One idea is for the teacher to introduce some imaginary exchanges as a starting point for showing how disagreeing need not be the same as rudeness.

Teacher (presumably feigning ignorance): *The capital of Thailand is Chiang Mai.*

Student (raising hand): *I'm sorry Ms. Thompson. Chiang Mai is a fine city, but the capital is actually Bangkok.*

Finally Part 3, titled "More Teaching Ideas," moves to a different format. There is nothing theoretical about the list of suggestions here. Its seven chapters include a mixture of lesson plans and teaching ideas based on songs, poetry, short stories, and proverbs. The final chapter is for teachers who must follow a prescribed text book but would like to supplement this in interesting ways. The suggestions come in four columns of lists which include references to well-known international textbooks such as *Interchange* as well as others from Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press and Heinle.

Two groups who come to mind as likely to use this book are individual teachers who are heading off to teach English in another country, and people running training courses for these people. It would be easy to imagine the material here being assigned as part of the course reading and then leading to helpful discussions. However, there are plenty of illustrations throughout the book which build on the teaching of English in the United States, and therefore it is worth recommending to any new teachers of English who are also Christian.

This book is warmly recommended to both these groups as well as to long established teachers who might like to look at their professional lives through a fresh lens. They will find plenty here to reflect on and to include in upcoming lessons.

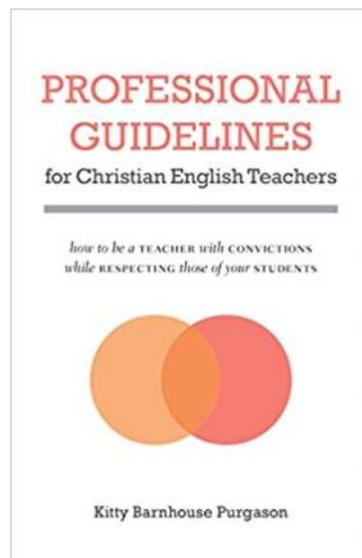
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*Nessie Jones is a retired, university lecturer living in New Zealand. She enjoys reading and writing books and articles. She finds that reviewing books keeps her professionally updated for leading workshops for teachers and learners in other parts of the world.*



## ChinaSource Perspective

### More Blessed to Receive

By Brent Fulton

When foreign English teachers first started going to China in the 1980s, most received their salaries in RMB. Unlike the Foreign Exchange Certificates (FEC) available to tourists and some foreign experts, RMB could not be directly converted to foreign currency and thus needed to be spent in country. As a result, teachers would often use extra RMB to purchase souvenirs or gifts for friends back home. Lacquer ware, porcelain tea sets, silks and scrolls were among the popular items often found in teachers' suitcases on the return journey to their home countries.

They came to give. But they ended up taking more of China with them than they had perhaps bargained for.

FEC are long gone, along with the assumption that English fluency and a pulse are sufficient qualifications to land a teaching job in China. The bar is much higher today. Yet, as many contributors to this issue of the *Quarterly* have pointed out, one thing hasn't changed. Those who come not only to give, but also to take what China has to offer, are the ones who will likely excel both in and outside the classroom.

How to be a good receiver? Here are some suggestions drawn from the articles in this issue.

**Learning the Language.** While one's main job is arguably to teach English, to thrive long-term in China requires fluency in Chinese. There is no substitute for being able to communicate in the heart language of those one has come to serve.

**Exploring Chinese Culture and History.** Communication in China is rooted in history. Idioms used in everyday conversation may refer to people or events thousands of years in the past. The more one knows about China's history, the better one will be able to engage meaningfully in relationships with students, colleagues and friends.

**Staying Longer in China.** China takes time. While those on short-term teaching stints may come back feeling like they have learned much about China, it is only after living in China for a longer period of time that one begins to understand how much one *doesn't* know. Then the deeper learning can take place. Furthermore, colleagues and students are likely to take one more seriously if they know he or she is not planning to leave at the end of the semester.

**Having Fun.** Some of the most meaningful times outside the classroom occur over meals or on outings with students who are usually more than happy to introduce a foreign teacher to local cuisine, customs, and pastimes. Being flexible enough to enjoy these times goes a long way toward deepening relationships.

**Experiencing the Realities of Life in China.** It is possible, at least for a time, to exist within an expat bubble that shields one from the harsh realities of China life. If one really wants to receive all that China has to offer however, it means accepting the inconveniences, the injustices, the invasions of privacy, and the rules that seem to make no sense. A foreigner can never really become "Chinese," but by entering into these realities one will be able to journey more meaningfully with Chinese friends.

Most who have served in China would agree that they received much more than they contributed. As one long-time China worker put it, "They may have left China, but China has not left them." They gained new friendships. They left with cherished memories and with new perspectives on themselves and what it means to be a follower of Christ in a land not their own. Through their lives they imparted a life-changing message, but in the process they were changed as well.



With students in the snow by Barbara Kindschi.

## Resource Corner

### Resources about Teaching in China

Compiled by George King

The following resources deal with the theology and practice of teaching in the context of Christian mission and are intended to provoke further discussion and reflection. Authors represent a variety of viewpoints (including one atheistic researcher). There is a preponderance of works from a language teaching context.

It is beyond the scope of this edition of *China Source Quarterly* to recommend detailed curricular information in specific areas.



### Books reviewed by China Source

Kitty Barnhouse Purgason, *Professional Guidelines for Christian English Teachers: How to Be a Teacher with Convictions while Respecting Those of Your Students* (William Carey Library, 2016) [Reviewed in this issue of *ChinaSource Quarterly*, <https://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/articles/teaching-with-christian-values>.]

Bradley Baurain, *Religious Faith and Teacher Knowledge in English Language Teaching* (UK, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015) [Reviewed in *ChinaSource Blog*, April 16, 2018, <https://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/blog-entries/teaching-with-faith-and-professionalism>.]

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Jan Dormer, *Teaching English in Missions: Effectiveness and Integrity* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2011)

Donald Snow, *English Teaching as Christian Mission: An Applied Theology* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2001)

Cheri Pierson and Will Bankston, eds., *Thinking Theologically about Language Teaching: Christian Perspectives on an Educational Calling* (Langham, 2017)

David Smith and Barbara Carvill, *The Gift of the Stranger: Faith, Hospitality, and Foreign Language Learning* (Eerdmans, 2000)

Bill Johnston, *English Teaching and Evangelical Mission: The Case of Lighthouse School* (Multilingual Matters, 2017) [ethnographic research, self-identified atheist researcher]

Amy Peterson, *Dangerous Territory: My Misguided Quest to Save the World* (Discovery House, 2017) [book-length narrative by a Christian TESOLer]

Michael Romanowski and Teri McCarthy, *Teaching in a Distant Classroom: Crossing Borders for Global Transformation* (IVP, 2009)

### Online Resources

Christian English Language Educators Association (CELEA), <http://www.celea.net/>

*International Journal of Christianity and English Language Teaching*, <https://digitalcommons.biola.edu/ijc-elt/> [This is peer-reviewed and open-access.]