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“The choice made from no choice”: English writing instruction in a Chinese University

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Abstract

Approaches to writing instruction developed in North America have gradually made their presence felt in other parts of the world during recent years. A curricular evaluation of the local needs, instruction, assessments, teacher preparation, and other pedagogical factors is crucial for the successful transmission and integration of those approaches into the new contexts. Set against the background of recent, exuberant scholarly discussions of the issue of transplanting Western writing pedagogies, this article presents an observational report of a typical college English curriculum for non-majors in China, with a focus on its writing component. The study has found that English writing is taught under the guidance of a nationally unified syllabus and examination system. Rather than assisting their students to develop thoughts in writing, teachers in this system are predominantly concerned about the teaching of correct form and test-taking skills. Because of their relatively low economic status in China, English teachers have to work

extra hours and have little time to spend on individual students or on furthering their professional training. However, signs of recent Western writing pedagogies, such as pre-writing and multiple-drafting activities, are identified in classrooms and textbook publishing, which indicate the possibility of successful adaptations of the recent Western writing pedagogies in the Chinese context.



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Keywords

EFL writing instruction; Western approaches; English curriculum; China

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