

Culture in an English-language Training Program

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The received notion of culture as a monolithic national identity has in recent decades given way to a new conceptualization. Culture is increasingly viewed as dynamic and multidimensional. Culture can include national or ethnic, but also disciplinary or professional, institutional, consumer, technological, and individual dimensions. This new understanding of culture plays a role in analysis of relationships in the English language classroom between students and instructor, and in negotiation between students and administrators. The dynamics of a 6-month program in English, offered at an American university for Chinese participants, is better understood through the emerging model than through the more limited and traditional concept of ethnic interaction. In particular, the new model of culture explains the otherwise unexpectedly strong power negotiation by students in the program.