A Chinese beginning teacher’s professional identity transformation:  
An auto-ethnographic study

Hongwei CHEN

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education (Honours)

ROSETE: Research-oriented, school-engaged teacher education  
Centre for Educational Research  
College of Arts  
University of Western Sydney

Supervisory Panel  
Dr Joanne Orlando (Principal Supervisor)  
Professor Michael Singh (Associate Supervisor)

11 March, 2011
Declaration

I declare that except where due acknowledgement has been made, this research is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree at any university or other institute of tertiary education. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

Hongwei CHEN
25 March, 2011
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Dr Joanne Orlando, my principal supervisor. I show her my sincere thankfulness for her valuable suggestions on doing research and keeping my research on the right track. Especially, I learned much on how to analyse data and construct a theoretical framework, as well as how to improve the manuscript. It was her patience and encouragement that empowered me to keep on researching and finally to finish writing the thesis. Thank you for your advice and your tireless tutelage.

Secondly, thank you to Professor Michael Singh, the head of the ROSETE program and my secondary supervisor. I have learned much about research through his guidance and inspiration in framing this research. I thank him also for contributing his time and energy in reviewing this work.

I am really grateful to Dr Dacheng Zhao. He was not only keen to answer my questions on academic work, but also, always ready to help when I met problems. Because of his efforts, the ROSETE team is like a family where I felt very warm and safe. At the same time, I also benefited much from all the other academics in the ROSETE team, from the tutorial sessions every second Friday.

In addition, my sincere appreciation goes to the three organisational parties of the ROSETE program: the Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau; the Department of Education and Training New South Wales (Western Sydney Region); and the Centre for Educational Research, the University of Western Sydney. I would like to say thank you to Mrs Cheryl Ballantyne for her care of my school experience and daily life in Australia. Furthermore, I also appreciate the continuous support from the schools I was engaged in. Thank you for your support in promoting Mandarin teaching and learning and involving me as a teacher in your schools.
A special thank you to Kate, my mentoring teacher in one of the schools I engaged in during the research period. Her rich experience in teaching Mandarin to secondary students provided me with a deep insight of Australian “student-centred” educational culture. Meanwhile, her patience in mentoring and guidance was extremely helpful, enabling me to adapt to the workplace quickly, and greatly improving my professional teaching competency. I am also greatly indebted to her kindness and assistance in conducting the student survey and teacher interviews, which contributed to my thesis a lot. It was a very rewarding and unforgettable experience for me to work with Kate and learn from her, which I feel very lucky about.

I also especially appreciated language advisors of NSW DET, including Evelyn Mark, Evelyn Man and Shaofeng Yuan, from whom I received an overview of the Australian Education and Quality teaching framework. The language teaching methodology training course they held was very helpful for me to start confidently in learning professional teaching.

Finally, thank you to Linda and Bram, my landlords, to my friends and my family for their continued support throughout this process. Especially my deepest gratitude goes to my father and mother. Because of their wholehearted support and encouragement, both emotionally and financially, I was able to live overseas and learn to do research without worrying about other issues. They were the backbone of my life and study.
Author’s Conference Presentations


# Table of Contents

Declaration ................................................................................................................................. ii
Acknowledgements ...................................................................................................................... iii
Author’s Conference Presentations ........................................................................................... v
Table of Contents ....................................................................................................................... vi
List of Tables ................................................................................................................................ ix
List of Figures .......................................................................................................................... x
Abbreviations ........................................................................................................................... xi
Abstract ......................................................................................................................................... xii

Chapter 1: Introduction ........................................................................................................... 1
  1.1 Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 1
  1.2 Autobiographical background ...................................................................................... 1
  1.3 Background of this research ......................................................................................... 4
  1.4 The importance of the beginning teacher’s professional identity ................................. 6
  1.5 Research questions ....................................................................................................... 7
  1.6 Overview of the research methodology ....................................................................... 8
  1.7 Significance of this research ......................................................................................... 8
  1.8 Structure of this thesis .................................................................................................. 11

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework ......................................................................................... 14
  2.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................... 14
  2.2 Teachers’ professional identity ..................................................................................... 14
  2.3 Theories about beginning teacher’s development and professional identity ............ 24
  2.4 Teaching practice ......................................................................................................... 31

Chapter 3: Methodology, research design and methods ...................................................... 41
  3.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................... 41
  3.2 Teacher as Researcher ................................................................................................. 41
  3.3 Auto-ethnography ....................................................................................................... 43
  3.4 Research Design ............................................................................................................ 50
  3.5 Data collection .............................................................................................................. 52
  3.6 Data organisation and analysis .................................................................................... 55
  3.7 Validity and reliability .................................................................................................. 59
  3.8 Research ethics ............................................................................................................. 61
Chapter 4: Managing the classroom and motivating students ........................................ 65
4.1 Introduction ...................................................................................................... 65
4.2 Narrative 1: Shock at Australian teacher and students’ behaviour .................. 67
4.3 Narrative 2: Supervising teacher’s modelling in motivating student learning.... 71
4.4 Narrative 3: Navigating management strategies between Chinese and Australian ways ..................................................................................................................... 75
4.5 Narrative 4: Managing to discipline students’ behaviours............................. 79
4.6 Narrative 5: Successfully building a positive relationship with students through appreciative teaching methods .......................................................................................... 84
4.7 Overall Discussion ...................................................................................... 87
Chapter 5: Preparing lessons in the context of “no fixed textbook” ..................... 92
5.1 Introduction .................................................................................................. 92
5.2 Narrative 6: Teaching without a fixed textbook .......................................... 93
5.3 Narrative 7: Unit preparation and lesson preparation with supervising teacher .. 97
5.4 Narrative 8: Insufficient instructional preparation for computer activity ........ 100
5.5 Narrative 9: Preparing activities and post-lesson reflection ......................... 106
5.6 Overall Discussion ..................................................................................... 111
Chapter 6: Concerning pedagogy and impact on students’ learning .............. 115
6.1 Introduction .................................................................................................. 115
6.2 Narrative 10: Supervising teacher’s advice and modelling: embedded stories into teaching characters .................................................................................................................. 116
6.3 Narrative 11: Ignorance of students’ background knowledge ...................... 123
6.4 Narrative 12: Creating personal pedagogy—lead-in quiz ......................... 128
6.5 Narrative 13: Teaching characters by telling stories .................................. 131
6.6 Narrative 14: Learning the reasons behind students’ responses ............... 135
6.7 Overall Discussion ..................................................................................... 139
Chapter 7: Conclusion ..................................................................................... 143
7.1 Introduction .................................................................................................. 143
7.2 Overview of thesis ..................................................................................... 143
7.3 Findings ....................................................................................................... 145
7.4 Reflection on the research ........................................................................ 153
7.5 Implications ................................................................................................. 154
7.6 Conclusion ......................................................................................................... 156
References ................................................................................................................ 158
Appendices ............................................................................................................... 172
Appendix 1: University of Western Sydney Ethics Approval ................................. 173
Appendix 2: State Education Research Approval Process (SERAP) Approval ...... 175
Appendix 3: Measures of Achievement— ............................................................... 176
Work schedule (July 09-Dec 09).............................................................................. 176
Appendix 4: Measures of Achievement— ............................................................... 177
Work schedule (Jan 10-Dec 10)............................................................................... 177
Appendix 5: Principal’s information sheet ............................................................. 179
Appendix 6: Information sheet(s) (parents/caregivers).......................................... 180
Appendix 7: Information sheet (supervising teacher/DET officials)....................... 183
Appendix 8: Participant consent form (parents/caregiver) ...................................... 185
Appendix 9: Participant consent form (supervising teacher/DET officials)......... 186
Appendix 10: Interview Schedule.......................................................................... 187
(DET Mandarin language consultant) ................................................................. 187
Appendix 11: Interview Schedule (ROSETE organiser) ....................................... 189
Appendix 12: Interview questionnaire (Supervising teacher).............................. 190
Appendix 13: Survey questionnaire (student)....................................................... 191
Appendix 14: Reflective journal sample ............................................................... 192
List of Tables

Table 2.1 The dimensions and elements of the NSW model of pedagogy.
Table 3.1 Timetable of my experience in local schools. ........................................51
Table 4.1 Narratives included in chapter 4. .........................................................
Table 5.1 Narratives included in chapter 5. .........................................................
Table 6.1 Narratives included in chapter 6. .........................................................
Table 7.1 Stages of my concerns in teaching profession areas. ..........................
List of Figures

Figure 1.1 A conceptual model for Research-oriented, school-engaged teacher education .................................................................6
Abbreviations

ROSETE: Research-Oriented School-Engaged Teacher Education
NMEB: Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau
UWS: University of Western Sydney
NSW: New South Wales
DET: Department of Education and Training
WSR: Western Sydney Region
VMT: Volunteer Mandarin Teacher
LOTE: Languages Other Than English
PCK: Pedagogical Content Knowledge
Abstract

This study explores the construction of my professional identity during my first year of teaching as a Mandarin teacher in two Australian secondary schools in the Western Sydney Region of NSW. I began teaching in schools in Western Sydney as part of the ROSETE Program, which is an innovative teacher education program in cooperation between the Ningbo Educational Bureau in China, NSW DET in Australia and the University of Western Sydney. Distinct to my experiences in my first year of teaching is that I am Chinese and have only experienced formal education in China. I therefore had no experience of Western conceptualisations of schools, teaching and learning.

Auto-ethnography was the methodology used in this study to examine the cultural element of my experiences during the first year of teaching. Data collected and analysed included self-reflective journal entries, teacher interviews, and student surveys. Narratives were developed to identify: the critical incidents I experienced when teaching in the classroom; the factors that contributed to these critical incidents; how I engaged with these critical incidents and how they contributed to my professional identity as a teacher. Aspects of “professional identity”, “beginning teacher” and “teaching practice” theories were used to interpret and discuss these narratives. The aim of the discussion was to make sense of my experience of a Chinese beginning teacher’s professional identity transformation in an Australian context.

One critical incident I experienced was associated with my lack of familiarity with how Australian students behave in schools. In addition, I lacked experience in managing student behaviour. After a period of teaching practice, I shifted my
traditional ‘Chinese’ beliefs of classroom management to adapt to the Australian classroom context. A second critical incident was my lack of experience with planning and preparing lessons without a fixed and mandatory textbook. A third critical incident was the realisation that my teaching strategies were not helping my students’ learning Mandarin. I realised the need to develop my understandings of Western pedagogy to improve the students’ learning outcomes.

This study contributes knowledge about a non-native, beginning language teacher’s experience. This knowledge is important for teachers, for teacher preparation programs and for teacher professional learning in Australia and in China.
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

“I was soooo tortured in school today!” I complained to my homestay host. It was the 4th August, the first day that I started teaching life as a student teacher who was going to teach Mandarin in Australian High School. “What happened to you? How was the school?” my host asked me. “The students were not as well-behaved as they should be. They talked to me as they wish, without putting hands up. I felt I can not control them at all!!” answered me in a worried and frustrated voice felt even by myself. (Author’s reflective journal 4/08/2009)

This thesis explores the professional journey of a native Chinese, brought up in Chinese culture, as she commenced in the role of beginning Mandarin teacher in Australian schools. As the above quote indicates, this study began at a time when this teacher faced with tensions centring on her professional identity. The aim of this study is to examine the critical incidents that the beginning teacher experiences in her first year of teaching within the domain of NSW education system, and the changes brought with her in terms of her professional identity.

1.2 Autobiographical background

Being a teacher has been a dream since I was very young. It was inspired by my parents, who were both teachers. My father was a botanist, lecturing at university. My mother was a kindergarten teacher. Brought up by them, I was familiar with the teacher-student relationship in Chinese culture, where students hold immense respect
for teachers. Students often came to visit my parents, asking for suggestions and guidance from my parents. They always expressed respect and honour to my parents. As I observed, the relationship between my parents and their students was like that of parent-child, reflecting “the dignity of the teacher and teaching” in Chinese traditional education, which has been acknowledged by Chinese societies as a moral norm. There is an old saying that the culture is “一日为师，终身为父 (Being their teacher for one day, is like being their father their whole life)”. Though in modern China, teachers no longer hold that high status, they still enjoy high social respect.

During the period of my schooling, as a student, I respected my teachers, not only those who were kind to me, but also those whom I experienced as strict and serious. Moreover, I obeyed almost all the teachers’ instructions and made a great effort to behave as I was required to. Sometimes even, I studied hard in order to please teachers. I had always excelled academically. I never thought about the purpose of learning and my personal interests in learning, but just followed the teachers’ words. It was the teacher, and passing examinations, that dominated my school life.

English was one of the three top compulsory subjects in Chinese schools, the other two being Chinese literature and mathematics. We were informed that English was important, as it would help us get a job and get promotions. A big motivation for me to keep learning English for more than six years was because English was emphasised to be as important as Chinese literacy and mathematics in the “高考” (gaokao, i.e. National College Entrance Examination System).

In China, all school and university subjects are examination oriented. I got used to this and never critically thought about this type of school life, or that there might be an alternative. Hence, my impression was that learning is and should always be an exam-oriented process. My belief was typical of the majority of school students in China.
My memories of the experience of learning in high schools are dominated by textbooks. Students were trained to be familiar with every detail documented in the authorised textbook. This was regarded as a way of improving students’ learning outcomes and achieving high marks in exams. Take the subject English as instance: I was given a textbook called English for High School, which was published by the “People’s Education Publisher”. This set of textbooks was authorised by the Department of Education and was used nationally used in all public schools. Since the textbook determined the content and quality of our English learning in high school, students were required to memorise the dialogues, texts and words in the textbook. There were audio tapes with all the dialogues and texts from this book. Students were required to listen to this tape again and again in order to practise listening. It was the same situation for the other subjects: fixed textbooks were required to be used nationally in public schools.

There is another old saying in Chinese: 教者，上所施而下所效也。(jiaozhe, shangsuoshi er xiaxuoxiaoye). It means that the concept of teaching refers to a process where the authority gives the knowledge top-down and the learners imitate him. All this indicates that teachers dominate the teaching and learning process and have a higher status, and that learning consists of copying the authorities, by which is meant both teachers and textbooks. Such an understanding of teaching and learning determines that the teaching style is teacher-centred in almost every subject class.

Under teachers’ instruction, teaching and learning were organised around the examinations. Taking English as an example again, teachers focused on training students to pass the reading and writing tests. Since there was neither oral examination nor any culture-related assignments, the class was never organised with hands-on activities or games. My English teacher only took English writing into account, and especially grammar translation. Usually, she stood in front of the class all through the class time but never moved a bit, instructing us to read the dialogues
and texts of each lesson in the authorised textbook. She then would ask us students to find out new vocabulary and check the meaning in the vocabulary appendix. After that, she explained the target language grammar in the dialogue and text. Normally, many writing exercises and sections of practice exam papers would be given as homework. It was the typical way of English teaching in Chinese public secondary schools, so far as I know.

Likewise, in all the other subjects, my learning was always led by the examinations and by the teacher’s instruction. Besides her knowledge of the English language itself, my English teacher was also good at guessing exam questions. She was very experienced at predicting the types of questions that we might potentially be asked in the examination. She provided different tips for English examinations, and we were taught to guess the examiner’s thinking and interests. In other words, we were learning to pass the English examination. I was a diligent learner because I wanted not only to pass the exam but also to get a high mark, which would be an honour and glory for myself and my family. The examination motivated my learning in turn.

All through my experience of studying, teachers were at the centre of teaching and learning. I acknowledged the widely accepted traditional definition of teacher: 师者, 所以传道授业解惑者也。(shizhe, suoyi chuandao shouye jiehuozheyi) (i.e. teachers are those people who teach you knowledge, train your skills and answer your questions). Hence, like the majority of other students, I viewed teachers as authorities and sources of knowledge, who would help me to solve problems and understand life and the world. The teacher-centred, subject–centred and exam-oriented beliefs had been deeply embedded in my ideology through my schooling experience in China.

1.3 Background of this research
This research is part of an innovative model of language teacher education named ROSETE: the “Research-Oriented, School-Engaged, Teacher Education” program (Zhao & Singh, 2008), which was designed for Chinese students, who work as voluntary Mandarin teachers (VMTs) in Australian schools and, at the same time, study at an Australian university for the Master of Education Research (Zhao & Singh 2008 p. 269). This program involves an international partnership between the University of Western Sydney (UWS), the Western Sydney Region (WSR) of the New South Wales (NSW) Department of Education and Training (DET), public schools in the Greater Western Sydney Region and the Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau (NMEB) (Zhao and Singh 2008). The VMTs were selected by the NMEB from hundreds of competitive applications and were recruited by NSW DET as VMTs, helping to promote Chinese language and culture in the WSR. NSW DET provides teaching methodology training workshops for the VMTs and UWS further supports them by integrating their teaching practice into educational research (Zhao & Singh, 2008). The ROSETE program aims to foster international student teachers’ professional development through integrating teaching and research (Zhao & Singh, 2008, p. 275).

The VMT has a particular role in the ROSETE program. According to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between these partners, the VMTs are allocated to Western Sydney Region public schools as Volunteer Mandarin Teacher Assistants (VMTA), whose role is “to support the teaching and learning of Mandarin language and Chinese culture” (NMEB, NSW DET & UWS, 2009). As required, volunteers experience face to face classroom teaching up to 10 hours per week over no more than three days per week. The specific responsibilities of the VMT/VMTA include “Working with students to improve spoken Chinese” and “Providing activities or advice on activities to enhance students’ understanding of the culture of the People’s Republic of China (pp. 1-2)”. Each volunteer is provided with a supervising teacher. Meanwhile, teaching and learning programs based on NSW syllabus documents are given to volunteers for their teaching involvement.
Volunteers also undertake the degree of Master of Education (Honours) through the Centre for Educational Research. VMTs are encouraged to integrate their teaching practice with their university research. In other words, it is recommended that VMTs construct their teaching experience under the “teacher-researcher” research frame. The following Figure 1.1 shows the design of this innovative teacher education model:

![Figure 1.1 A conceptual model of research-oriented, school-engaged teacher education (Singh, 2008)](image)

**Figure 1.1 A conceptual model of research-oriented, school-engaged teacher education (Singh, 2008)**

### 1.4 The importance of the beginning teacher’s professional identity

Entering a real Australian classroom for the first time, I was shocked by local students’ classroom behaviour and the classroom teacher’s reaction. What I saw was that the dignity of the teacher and teaching was greatly challenged, which in turn challenged my moral and professional understanding of being a teacher. I was lost, dealing with students’ behaviour and understanding the local educational philosophy.
This experience drove me to question my position as a teacher and to consider the relationship between my educational beliefs and knowledge of Australian educational culture. It seemed that to continue participating in the program, learning to be a professional teacher in Australia, I would face challenges from a different educational culture. I needed to learn to cope with these challenges, to adapt to the work settings and become a qualified language teacher.

During the first half year of my engagement in local schools, I was continuously finding out ways to position myself legitimately and effectively in the classroom, to enact becoming a professional Mandarin teacher. This became the starting point of my research. As a beginning teacher from a non-Australian background, I was therefore interested in following and understanding how my professional identity changed as a beginning teacher through my volunteering experience, in the context of Western Sydney Region public schools.

1.5 Research questions

This study is an examination of the transformation and construction of my professional identity as a beginning teacher. My focus is on what professional issues concerned me the most, what helped to build up my understanding of the teacher’s role as well as changing my professional performance? The research questions addressed in this study were:

1. What critical incidents will I experience as a native Chinese, Volunteer Mandarin Teacher (VMT) in my first year of engaging in schools in Greater Western Sydney?
2. What factors contributed to these critical incidents?
3. How did these critical incidents contribute to my professional identity?
The research assumed that crucial incidents are the turning points in the process of professional identity transformation and construction. The first question seeks information about these moments as crucial points in professional identity construction. Then, underlying attributes, both external and internal, are inquired into, to gain a deeper understanding of the occurrence of these tensions and critical incidents. My personal experience should also be studied in consideration of the broader social context. The last question examines the implications of critical incidents for my professional identity.

1.6 Overview of the research methodology

Auto-ethnography was adopted as the methodological strategy for this research. For a study focusing on the researcher’s personal identity, the use of the auto-ethnographic process can help the teacher-researcher clarify her own emotions, thoughts and performance during a period; the auto-ethnographic method can also help to achieve self-understanding of the teacher-researcher’s professional identity. Data were mainly collected from my self-reflective journal entries, about my feelings, thoughts and performance in teaching practice, and field notes. Other external data sources included interviews with DET officials, the supervising teacher and a student survey. Also, a theoretical framework was constructed to help the data analysis. Data from interviews and survey was used to triangulate the self-reflective journal. Literature on other beginning teacher studies, on professional identity and teaching practice was drawn on to extend my personal experience into a view of broader social understanding. The data finally was constructed and presented in the form of narratives. The teacher researcher’s thinking, emotions and actions were displayed in narrative constructions. Each narrative is then followed by analytical discussion.

1.7 Significance of this research
Recent research has revealed that teachers’ professional identity plays an important role in the language classroom (Varghese et al., 2005, pp. 21-2). How language teachers identify themselves and position themselves will influence their teaching process. This study explores the professional identity construction of a novice VMT, a native Mandarin speaker, in WSR local schools. This study has significance for the following parties: a) the teacher-researcher herself, and other beginning and in-service teachers; b) teacher educators and institutions; and c) the field of educational research more broadly.

1.7.1 Significance for teachers

As a teacher-researcher, I achieved self-understanding and improvement through doing this auto-ethnographic research. As this research continued, my self-reflections on teaching helped construct my professional identity. Meanwhile, the research helped to improve my Mandarin teaching professional capability in local secondary schools.

To potential readers of this thesis, who might include secondary and primary teachers, the research provides knowledge of the culture of a beginning teacher’s professional identity (re)formation, including typical emotions, beliefs about teaching and learning, and the action styles of the beginning teacher. Especially, the findings of this study may be beneficial for teachers who have a similar experience and background as the author, through recalling their own feelings and understandings of their experience and achieving a better understanding of the professional growth of Chinese VMTs. A sympathetic response to my narratives would help them cope with difficulties and confusions in their own teaching practice.
Furthermore, this research may contribute knowledge for Chinese teachers, to some extent. Much Chinese literature demonstrates that, in China, the “New Curriculum reform” requires teachers to change their traditional perspective on the teacher’s role, featured in a teacher-centered learning environment, and form a new teacher identity. According to the “New Curriculum reform” syllabus, teachers are required to be more student-centred in teaching practice. My one-year experience of teaching in the NSW educational context will enrich Chinese educational institutions’ and teachers’ understanding of the meaning of professional identity within the domain of the NSW education system. Especially, the culture of “student-centred teaching”, which characterises NSW educational culture, could furnish a useful reference for Chinese “New Curriculum Reform”.

1.7.2 Significance for teacher educators and institutions

By outlining an understanding of the beginning teacher’s transformation and its influence on teaching, this research contributes knowledge to teacher educators and institutions. To NSW DET, this research provides a deeper understanding of the beginning teacher’s professional growth and identity (re)formation in secondary public schools in the Western Sydney Region. Moreover, as part of the ROSETE program, this research is significant in reporting the learning outcomes of Chinese VMTs within the model. It reveals the novice VMT teacher’s way of understanding the teacher’s role and responsibilities in a WSR public school context. It reports the effectiveness of educating student teachers who are from China through a research-based, school-engaged model. As a small scale study, this research thereby responds to the ROSETE program in the direction of teacher education.

Through these insights into the professional learning of a beginning teacher, this research provides a way to address the National Goals for Schooling, which aims to improve Australian schooling. It relates to and contributes to a) current DET goals and strategies and b) The National Goals for Schooling. For the former, this research
addresses the needs of the NSW DET’s goals and strategies to continuously improve school teacher quality, as well as supporting the career progression of staff. The teacher-researcher's stories offer a broader understanding of Chinese beginning teachers’ professional learning in a NSW context. They provide evidence and information for DET for the further design and development of the teaching methodology training program for VMTs.

Moreover, this research will benefit the National Goals for Schooling (known as the “Melbourne Declaration (2008)”, which has a goal of “Promoting world-class curriculum and assessment” and identifies Asian Languages as an important learning area (MCEETYA, 2008 p. 14). Through achieving better self-understanding, the growth to maturity of the beginning teacher will stimulate the teaching and learning of Mandarin in WSR public schools.

1.7.3 Significance for the field of educational research

Through reporting my personal experience of learning to be a teacher in a NSW context, this thesis contributes to the research literature a deep understanding of the nature of beginning teachers’ professional growth and (re)formation of their professional identity. As the researcher is a non-native beginning teacher, this research serves as an empirical study for further educational research on the emergence of the beginning teacher's professional identity, from a cross-cultural perspective.

1.8 Structure of this thesis

Chapter 1 has introduced the background of the researcher, including her educational autobiography in China and the ROSETE teacher education program in Australia, as the larger research background in which this study is embedded. It has also outlined the research questions, methodology and significance of this research.
Chapter 2 constructs a theoretical framework from the literature. This theoretical framework consists of three components: “Teacher’s professional identity”, “Theories about beginning teacher’s development and professional identity” and “Teaching practice”. Building the base for data selection and analysis, the theoretical framework is drawn on to extend my personal experience into a broader social understanding of the beginning teacher’s professional identity construction.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology of this study. It explains the rationale for using auto-ethnography to study personal professional identity construction, as well as matters of validity and reliability. It details the data collection from resources such as the reflective journal, interviews, literature reading, and data analysis methods. Ethical issues of this study are treated at the end of this chapter.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 are evidentiary chapters focusing on 3 themes: “classroom management and student motivation”, “lesson planning and preparation”, and “pedagogical rethinking”. Each chapter presents data in independent narratives, with discussion following. A literature review is contextualised within the discussion of each narrative. Hence there is no separate literature review chapter in this thesis. 15 narratives in total are provided, to display the tensions and critical incidents I experienced. Discussions contribute to answering the subsidiary research questions, including the external and internal factors of the critical incidents and their implications for my professional identity.

Chapter 4 focuses on the tensions I experienced, brought about by my lack of familiarity with how Australian students behave in schools. In addition, I lacked of experience of managing student behaviour. As the chapter shows, after a period of teaching practice, I shifted my traditional classroom management beliefs to adapt to the Australian classroom context.
Chapter 5 focuses on the tensions and critical incidents I experienced due to my lack of experience with planning and preparing lessons without a fixed textbook. It also includes narratives of critical moments where I learned the skills and principles of preparing lessons and improved my lesson planning capability.

Chapter 6 focuses on tensions where my prior teaching strategy did not help students to learn Mandarin. Followed by critical moments I experienced, I realised that pedagogy is at the core of the teacher’s profession, and started to become concerned about the impact of my teaching strategy on students’ learning outcomes.

Chapter 7, as the final chapter, concludes the thesis as a whole. It summarises each chapter then moves to discuss links in the three evidentiary narratives. It provides an overview of the teacher-researcher’s experience and of the constructional process of her professional identity as a beginning teacher. It also considers the limitations and constraints of this study, then presents the researcher’s personal reflections on this study. Finally, implications and recommendations for further research are considered.
Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the theoretical framework that guided the data collection and analysis. It comprises three aspects: “Teacher’s professional identity”; “Theories about beginning teacher’s development and professional identity” and “Teaching practice”. These three components were used in this study because they resonated with the research questions and also were relevant to the identification and analysis of critical moments evident in the data. What follows is discussion of the significance of each theory for the research questions, key definitions that were used for each theory and the features that I interpreted as relevant to the research questions.

2.2 Teachers’ professional identity

2.2.1 The significance of studying teacher’s professional identity for this study

Research on teacher’s professional identity is increasingly regarded as the most significant aspect in the area of teacher education program. Recent studies on teacher’s identity argue that the self of the teacher is central to teacher education (Timostsuk & Ugaste, 2010). Timostsuk & Ugaste (2010) believe that who a student teacher is will influence what she will or will not learn in order to become a teacher. Even more, it is the teacher herself that matters in respect of what and how to teach, as well as how to respond to various teaching contexts (Timostsuk & Ugaste, 2010, p. 1563). It is not an exaggeration to say that developing teachers’ professional identities is the ultimate aim and task for any teacher education program. Since the
ROSETE program, in which the volunteer Mandarin teacher participated, is a form of teacher education program (Zhao & Singh, 2008), it is worth evaluating the professional identity construction of participant student members.

2.2.2 Definition of teacher’s professional identity
Various definitions have been given for teachers’ professional identity. Some stress the “self” dimension in studying “teacher’s professional identity”, referring to teacher identity as a teacher’s personal perspective on her professional role and responsibilities, as well professional performance (Zembylas, 2003; Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004). Specifically speaking, a teacher’s professional identity could be understood “as an overarching construct including beliefs, goals, and standards. . . . [A]s the ways teachers perceive themselves as teachers and the way they portray themselves to their students.” (Schutz, Cross, Hong, & Osbon, 2007, p. 226). Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, and Johnson (2005) conclude, after theorising different perspectives of teacher identity:

Teacher identity is a profoundly individual and psychological matter because it concerns the self-image and other-image of particular teachers (p. 39).

Some view the teacher’s professional identity as a “relational identity”, highlighting the vital role of social and cultural context in understanding identity (Flores & Day 2006; Sexton, 2008). Sexton (2008) regards the nature of teacher identity as “the relationship between one’s inherited traits and those that emerge through macro- and micro-social structures (p. 75).” As he describes it:

Identity highlights how an individual mediates teaching —drawing upon different arrays of social positioning, experiences, and resources to enact their professional selves in particular ways (Sexton, 2008, p. 75).
In other words, for Sexton, the teacher’s professional self-identification is not mere individual psychology but a negotiated meaning between individual understanding and socio-cultural norms.

By reconsidering research on teachers’ professional identity, Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) conclude that the current research remains unclear as to what counts as “professional” in teacher identity. They suggest:

Ways in which teachers relate to other people (students, colleagues, parents); . . . and the responsibilities, attitudes, and behaviours they adopt as well as the knowledge they use which are, more or less, outside themselves . . . . to become common themes of research on teachers’ professional identity (p. 125).

Building upon the existing literature for the purposes of this study, this research adopts the concept of teacher’s professional identity with the following components: a) teacher’s emotions, b) teacher’s understanding of, beliefs about and attitudes to teaching and learning, and c) teachers’ knowledge and skills in teaching practice. A detailed explanation of each component follows.

**Emotions**

Some scholars investigate teachers’ professional identity from the perspective of emotion (Timotsuk & Ugaste, 2010; Zembylas, 2005). Emotion is increasingly viewed as a significant parameter in understanding teachers, especially how beginning teachers view their profession, the characteristics of their response, and even their professional mobility, all of which are closely linked with teacher education. Flores and Day (2006) say: “emotion (is) a significant and ongoing part of being a teacher (p. 221).” They recognise that emotion is featured in and accompanies the process of teachers’ professional identity construction (p. 221).
There is a range of related emotions, including: “frustration; anger exacerbated by tiredness, stress and students’ misbehaviour; anxiety because of the complexity of the job; guilt, sadness . . . ” (Flores and Day, 2006, p. 221). When seeking the cause of teachers’ affects, they state that these emotions occur when teachers’ long-held perspectives and practice are challenged by real-world contexts, such as students’ behaviour (Flores & Day, 2006, p. 221).

Noticeably, research indicates, teachers’ emotions are identified as a judgemental criterion of teacher-student relationships. Jennings & Greenberg (2009) emphasise the significance of teachers’ social and emotional competence (SEC) in managing teacher-student relationships (p. 491). They argue that teachers who have higher SEC are likely to develop a more supportive teacher-student relationship:

Socially and emotionally competent teachers set the tone of the classroom by developing supportive and encouraging relationships with their students, designing lessons that build on student strengths and abilities, establishing and implementing behavioural guidelines in ways that promote intrinsic motivation, . . . (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, p. 492).

While negative emotions threaten teacher-student relationships, classroom management and classroom atmosphere (Jennings, & Greenberg, 2009, p. 496), it could be argued that a qualified teacher has the capability to express their emotions appropriately, to develop and maintain a healthy and supportive teacher-student relationship (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, p. 500).

It should be noticed that emotion is a distinguishing feature all through the process of beginning teachers’ professional growth, compared with experienced teachers. For beginning teachers, it is difficult “to escape the sense of pressure and vulnerability to emotional responses that emerges, when thought to be under
surveillance or being judged for career tasks” (Cattley, 2006 p. 343). Cattley (2006) reminds us that “recognition of and responsibility for one’s emotions is certainly part of professional identity formation” (p. 342). Hence, investigating emotion as an indicator is essential in the study of beginning teachers’ professional identity.

Beliefs
Teacher beliefs, especially educational beliefs, are closely linked with teachers’ perception of self—i.e., professional identity (Ertmer, 2005, p. 28). Though the notion of teacher educational beliefs is poorly conceptualised and is not clearly defined in the research literature, it is recommended that understanding teacher educational beliefs should embracing the following elements: “the nature of knowledge, perceptions of self and feelings of self-worth, confidence to perform certain tasks, and so on” (Pajares, 1992, cited in Ertmer 2005, p. 28). This thesis focuses on teachers’ educational beliefs about teachers’ teaching practice.

It is argued by educators and researchers that teachers’ beliefs and value systems will shape their conceptions and practical theories in classroom teaching, eventually influencing their instructional strategies and performance in the classroom (Cheng et al., 2009, p. 319).” Cheng et al. (2009) examined the relationship between pre-service teachers’ epistemological beliefs and their conceptions of teaching. It is widely believed that what teachers believe about the nature of knowledge and knowing will influence their understanding of teaching, and their pedagogy. Student teachers who believe that most knowledge is certain, or just waiting to be discovered (what is called the “naïve epistemological belief”), often use teacher-centred teaching strategies, which support the one-way transmission of knowledge from teacher to students (Cheng et al., 2009, p. 320). Those however who believe that most knowledge is evolving (called the “sophisticated epistemological belief”), adopt a more student-centred teaching strategy, helping students to construct knowledge through interaction (Cheng et al., 2009, p. 320).
Day et al. (2005) discuss about the relationship between teachers’ professional commitment and their beliefs, as well as values. They view teachers’ beliefs and values as an ideological core component of commitment, which represents teachers’ role and identity:

Commitment may be better understood as a nested phenomenon at the centre of which is a set of core, relatively permanent values based upon personal beliefs, images of self, role and identity which are subject to challenge by change which is socio-politically constructed (Day, Elliot & Kington 2005 p. 563).

Their findings show that it is teachers’ values and beliefs that give the meaning of their practice (Day, Elliot & Kington, 2005, p. 569). In other words, beliefs are the underlying force of teachers’ practice and performance, encouraging teachers to commit to a certain performance.

Teaching knowledge
Professional knowledge is listed in first position in the Professional Teaching Standards, NSW (NSW Institute of Teachers, 2004). It consists of two elements: 1) Teachers know their subject/content and how to teach that content to their students; 2) Teachers know their students and how students learn (NSW Institute of Teachers, 2004, p. 3).

It is pointed out that knowledge of subject matter was viewed as a part of the teachers’ professional knowledge base in the traditional educational research. The possession of subject knowledge empowers teachers to be able to “change programmes, develop effective tasks, explain things at a high quality level, and diagnose students’ understandings and misconceptions adequately (Beijjard, 2000, p. 751).” Professional identity is, therefore, categorised into “the teacher as a subject
matter expert”, who has a deep and full understanding of the subject area (Ibid, p. 751).

Apart from knowledge of subject matter, the first element of the teaching professional domain also emphasises knowledge of how to teach. The current literature acknowledges that knowledge of subject matter is not sufficient to take account of the complexity of teaching (Beijaard et al., 2000, p. 751). Beijaard et al. (2000) state that besides knowledge of subject matter, experienced teachers also see their didactic and pedagogic capability as the source of their perceptions of professional identity (p. 751). This body of teacher’s knowledge is generalized as pedagogic knowledge. Taking one significant element of pedagogic knowledge as instance, the concept of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) is widely viewed as a significant competency for teachers in the process of professional development. The notion of PCK refers to “the intersection of subject-specific knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and knowledge of the teaching context” (Watzke, 2007, p. 64). Generally speaking, teachers are distinguished from those who have mastery of the subject knowledge in the ways that teachers have knowledge of students’ learning and know how to instruct and how to present content effectively to a particular group of students.

Beijaard et al. (2000) recognise that recent features of the pedagogical and didactic side of the teaching profession are more student-centred, gradually replacing the traditional teacher-centred concept (p. 752). The second element in the domain of teacher’s professional knowledge refers to “in-depth knowledge of the characteristics of students and their implications for teaching and learning (NSW Institute of Teachers, 2004, p. 3)”. Knowledge that is relevant to the student-centred teaching profession has been conceptualised and advocated since the early 1980s (Shulman 1986, cited in Park and Oliver 2008 p. 261). Closely related to the third element of PCK—knowledge of the teaching context—it mainly refers to teachers’ knowledge of “the nature of the learners’ needs and preferences” (Harris, Mishra &
Koehler, 2009, p. 397). It is argued that knowledge of students and their learning is the key element that should be emphasised in improving teachers’ professional knowledge (Harris, Mishra & Koehler, 2009, p. 397).

Teachers’ knowledge of students and their learning determines the pedagogy they adopt and the quality of teaching they deliver. It is critical for teachers to have knowledge of students in order to select effective teaching strategies. As one of three dimensions of the Quality Teaching Framework in NSW public schools, “Significance” requires that teachers use pedagogy to connect students’ learning with themselves as individual and social beings, suggesting as follows:

To make these connections clear, teachers can link lessons to: the prior knowledge from which students work; the social, demographic and cultural backgrounds of students, families and the local community; the future contexts in which school learning would be applied; and the differing fields of knowledge with which teachers and students interact. To build effective connections teachers will need to work from a combination of their knowledge of the specific subject matter they are teaching and their knowledge of the cognitive, social and cultural backgrounds of their students (NSW DET, 2003b, p. 14).

Therefore, qualified teachers are those who have knowledge of students and take this knowledge into lesson planning and into adopting teaching strategies.

Whitton et al. (2010) explain two approaches to knowing the students: 1) catering for varying student ages and abilities and; b) governing learning styles (pp. 199-208). The former suggests that teachers are accountable for students’ different abilities. The implication for teaching practice is that the learning activities teachers design, should match students’ stage of developmental needs (Whitton et al., 2010, p. 199).
The latter aspect is that teachers are required to take students’ learning styles into account. It is believed that students have different “preferences for perceiving, thinking about and organising information over time for different subjects”, and this is known as learning styles (Whitton et al., 2010, p. 206). It is suggested that teachers shape their instruction and assessment practices according to different learning styles (Whitton et al., 2010, p. 207). In general, according to them, a professional teacher needs to be able to identify students’ stage of development as well as different learning styles, as part of their accountability in engaging and motivating students into learning.

**Teaching practice**

All professional knowledge is represented by teacher’s teaching practice, reflecting his or her professional identity. In the “identity” literature, some scholars identify identity as performative: “one that is constructed through a sustained set of acts posited through the social, psychic, corporeal, and temporal stylization of the body” (Zembylas, 2003, p. 227; Sexton, 2008, p. 83). That is to say, one’s various behaviours or actions construct one’s identity in reality. There is no reason to argue that a teacher’s professional identity is an exception to this rule. For the teacher’s part, the teacher’s repetitive acts and speech constitute and reflect his or her identity as a teacher, i.e. how he or she thinks a qualified teacher should be. Therefore, the teacher’s performance, and especially their teaching practice and strategies, is a significant component of professional identity.

For instance, it is widely accepted that the profession of teacher should not be reduced to mere transmitter of knowledge, but should be regarded more as a facilitator of learning (Beijaard et al., 2000, p. 751). Teachers are required to be aware of “what is going on in students’ minds, ways of communicating with and speaking about other people, and personal or private problems students have (Beijaard et al., 2000, p. 751).” The corresponding pedagogy of a professional teacher encompasses teaching practice issues like: “initiating, guiding, and
influencing students’ thinking activities, and gradually transferring control over the learning process from the instructor to the learner (Beijaard et al., 2000, p. 752)”. Beijaard et al. (2000) point out that such shifts in the teacher’s role impact on teachers’ understanding and beliefs in the teaching profession (p. 752).

2.2.3 Features of teachers’ professional identity

In recent years, research on identity has tended to agree on understanding identity as having the following features: (1) identity is not fixed, but is unstable and shifting; (2) identity is always contextualised; and (3) identity is constructed through language and discourse (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston & Johnson, 2005).

Post-structural approaches to the study of identity formation embrace the process of becoming. For them, identity is not a fixed, stable, unitary, and internally coherent phenomenon but is multiple, shifting, and in conflict; this is transformational and transformative (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston & Johnson, 2005). The studies on professional identity formation show that “identity formation is a process of practice knowledge-building characterized by an ongoing integration of what is individually and collectively seen as relevant to teaching” (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004, p. 123).

Secondly, it is agreed that teacher identity “is not context-free but is crucially related to social, cultural, and political context” (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005). Many papers have investigated the role of education reform in changes to teachers’ identity. For example, using a socio-cultural approach, Lasky (2005) argues that teacher agency was clearly constrained in a context of school reform (introducing a new set of norms and tools for teaching), and that teachers’ identity suffered vulnerability as a consequence.
Others pay attention to investigating the influence of teacher educators on the forming and transforming of student teachers (Walkington, 2005). Mentors or supervising teachers are believed to be vital role models in teacher education, and greatly influence the construction of the student teacher’s professional identity.

The third feature of identity stated above is further explained as follows: “identity involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through stories over time” (Rodgers and Scott, 2008, cited in Timostsuk & Ugaste, 2010 p. 1564). This means that through interrogating self, the teacher-researcher will make sense of self through documenting her practical experience into narrative languages. Research on professional identity in recent years is largely presented in the form of narrative. Teachers’ biography, self report or life story telling, are forms that researchers prefer to organise and present an integrated analysis of professional identity (Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop, 2004). In brief, applying the third feature of professional identity, the research process is a constructional process in itself.

2.3 Theories about beginning teacher’s development and professional identity

2.3.1 Definition & Significance

“Beginning teacher”, “pre-service teacher”, “student teacher” and “novice teacher” are terms used synonymously to refer to those who are placed within practicums and who are new in learning the teaching profession. The first year of engagement in the school and the classroom is a critical phase of their career life. Many researchers have noticed that the emergence of the new teacher’s professional identity is an important research locus worthy of investigation (Timostsuk, & Ugaste, 2010, p.1564). Information gained from new teachers can contribute to the study of teacher education and teaching professional training programs.
2.3.2 Features of the beginning teacher’s professional development

Research on beginning teachers’ professional growth contends that the forming or transforming process features stages. It is generally identified that the three stages that new teachers normally experience in their first year of teaching are 1) survival; 2) concern about the teaching situation; and 3) concern about students (Fuller, 1975, cited in Ginns, Heirdsfield, Atweh, and Watters, 2001). Stage theory describes a process of teachers growing from novice to expert (Arends, 2009, p. 31). Stage theory initially derived from Fuller’s “concerns theory” (Fuller, 1969, cited in Watzke, 2007, p. 107). According to Watzke (2007), “concerns theory” divided beginning teachers’ developmental process into three stages: self, task, and impact stages, distinguished according to their concerns in each period.

The self-stage represents student teachers’ concern for themselves, for their self interests, such as feelings of inadequacy, self-image in other people’s eyes, and whether or not they are accepted by students and colleagues (Watzke, 2007, p. 107). It is identified that the initial concerns for beginning teachers are always survival. Echoing the self-concern stage, Katz (1972) some years later, proposed four stages for the beginning teacher’s professional development. The first stage was described as “survival”, referring to the first problematic and challenging year for the beginning teacher. According to him, during the survival stage, beginning teachers care about whether they can take professional responsibility and survive in the new work setting. Similarly, Ginns, Heirdsfield, Atweh, & Watters (2001) recognise that problem-solution features in the initial survival stage of the beginning teacher. Numbers of profession-related problems are identified, including “classroom management and discipline, how to motivate students, dealing with individual differences, dealing with problems of individual students, assessing students’ work, relations with parents, organisation of class work, insufficient materials and supplies, and a heavy teaching load resulting in insufficient preparation time” (Ginns, Heirdsfield, Atweh, and Watters, 2001, p. 109). Other literature emphasised that
beginning teachers at this stage focus their attention on arranging a satisfactory relationship with students, so that “accomplishment in other areas naturally follows without a great deal of further effort (Allen & Toplis, 2009, p. 32)".

The second task-stage is concern with teaching tasks, “such as the instructional methods, delivery of the curriculum, and in particular, perceived deterrents to effective teaching (e.g. too many non-instructional duties, poor instructional materials, high numbers of students)” (Watzke, 2007, p. 107) The novice teacher at this stage shifts her attention from herself to whole-class learning. The novice teacher makes great effort in preparing creative planning, developing strategies to manage the whole class and engage students in learning, developing skills in assessing students’ work. As a consequence of the novice’s hard work, she may feel pressure in addressing these issues (Allen & Toplis, 2009, p. 33).

The third stage follows a couple of weeks after the second stage (Allen & Toplis, 2009, p. 32). The teacher at this stage starts to be concerned with her own self-development and the impact of her teaching on students’ learning and well-being (Watzke, 2007, p. 107). According to Allen & Toplis (2009), discipline is not the issue that worries beginning teachers; instead, it is common for student teachers to pay attention to caring about how students feel about the lessons and their learning (p. 33). This is consistent with the impact stage of concerns theory, which emphasises beginning teachers’ concern about the impact of her teaching on students’ learning outcomes.

Rather than being absolutely chronological, scholars like Watzke (2007) have reconsidered the concept of the chronology of the “survival stages”, suggesting extending our understanding of the survival stage from self-concern to task- and impact-concern (p. 118). He identifies evidence showing that the emergence of beginning teachers’ awareness of students’ learning could be as early as their concern for themselves as effective teachers and for the teaching task (Watzke, 2007,
In other words, beginning teachers’ concerns about these three aspects are recurrent to some extent (Watzke, 2007, p. 106). Without denying that self- and task- concerns occupy central position in the initial stages, he points out that these two stages are synchronized with emergent concern for students (Watzke, 2007, p. 118).

2.3.3 Factors that influence beginning teachers’ professional identity

Studies have attempted to identify the elements that influence the formation of beginning teachers’ professional identity. The beginning teacher’s personal beliefs and understanding of how to become a teacher, as well as the broader school context (including mentors, students, parents and school culture) are the main two catalysts in the process of identity construction.

Prior Knowledge

Beginning teachers bring their personal life experience to learning when they enter the professional field, and this shapes their initial understanding and belief about how to be a teacher. MacGregor (2009) found in his research that “many mature age pre-service teachers draw on their life experiences . . . to inform their professional identity” and “pre-service teachers also cite the influence of past teachers as a reason for their decision to become a teacher” (p. 3). Through an “apprenticeship of observation” and “atypical teaching episodes” (Mayer, 1999, cited in Walkington, 2005, p. 57), pre-service teachers develop teaching dispositions and learn teaching pedagogy from observing their teachers’ teaching (Walkington, 2005, p. 57). It is their core beliefs, and experiences of how they were taught, gained from their school life, that brings them to the starting point of the learning journey, which is “the basis for challenging and changing ideas” (Walkington, 2005, p. 56).

Mentoring support

27
Apart from novice teachers’ personal past experience, school culture and relational experience in the new work settings will shape their professional identities in the future. This is viewed as a contextualisation and socialisation process for beginning teachers (Walkington, 2005, Flores & Day, 2006). Especially, the vital role of the teacher educator (also called mentor, or supervising teacher) in forming pre-service teachers’ professional identity is acknowledged in much research. Cattley (2007) gives an example, saying that “If the chosen pedagogy is substantially different to that of the mentor teacher and this in turn leads to criticism of the pre-service teacher, the latter’s growing sense of professional identity could well be shaken (p. 338).” Based on the understanding that “the pre-service teachers were moulded by experienced supervisors to fit the particular school environment”, Walkington (2005) suggests that the responsibility of supervising teachers is to evaluate pre-service teachers’ beliefs and practices, to question their teaching philosophy and theorise about practice, in order to encourage their growth through proactive reflection (pp. 55-6).

**Reflective practice**

Novice teachers’ professional growth is featured as a reflective progression (Ginns, Heirdsfield, Atweh and Watters, 2001, p. 110). Beginning teachers inevitably find contradictions between their individual and cultural backgrounds (normally gained from university education) and the real classroom context of public schools (Stoughton, 2007, p. 1025). Consequently, teachers have to judge, negotiate and choose to perform in the way that they would like to present themselves.

[The] individual and cultural backgrounds that pre-service teachers bring with them, and the context of public schools can frequently result in disarticulations and contradictions as these novice teachers struggle to make sense of who they want to be professionally. They frequently conceptualise their own schooling experiences as “prototypical and generalizable toward the teaching profession” . . .
This leads to the question of how they negotiate interactions between the very different understandings represented in these disparate contexts. Do they find themselves straddling two worlds? (Stoughton, 2007, p. 1025)

Stoughton (2007) examines how novice teachers think about the above dilemma and how they gain knowledge in managing students’ behaviour, concluding that narrative reflection helps the novice teacher to form/construct their professional identity:

Reflection can be significant in promoting self-awareness with the benefit of coming to a sense of understanding of oneself and one’s reactions and perceptions. Reflective journals can also be important in providing protected spaces for developing, critiquing, and sharing reactions to experiences and perceptions (Stoughton, 2007, p. 1027).

For him, through writing a reflective journal, beginning teachers build their knowledge about teaching. First, by examining one’s own perceptions and actions, reflection stimulates self-awareness. It also provides the teacher a safe and comfortable space and time for revising critical events, one’s reactions, and the underlying beliefs (Stoughton, 2007, p. 1027). It could be argued that beginning teachers are empowered to mature in the professional field through an active and more reflective view of teaching and the teacher’s role.

**Discourses and community**

Flores & Day’s (2006) study opens a wider view in understanding the formation of the new teachers’s professional identity, highlighting the powerful interaction between personal histories and the contextual influences of the workplace. As to the nature of identity construction, they view the development of teachers’ professional identity as a staged process. Two main stages are recognised: “the threshold and the
growing into the profession”. It is noticed that novice teachers experience “transition shock” when they are confronted with professional responsibility and work in the threshold phase. As their skills, methods and competencies in teaching grow over time, they are gradually accepted in the whole context, including pupils, colleagues, and parents, which could be viewed as the second stage of proficiency (Flores & Day, 2006, p. 220). There is a reciprocal communication between the teacher’s own belief and the outer world:

The first few years of teaching may be seen as a ‘two-way struggle in which teachers try to create their own social reality by attempting to make their work match their personal vision of how it should be, whilst at the same time being subjected to the powerful socialising forces of the school culture’ (Flores & Day 2006 p. 220).

Not only examining identity from within as a personal characteristic that reflects teachers’ views of teaching and of themselves as teachers, Flores and Day (2006) at the same time recognise the power of the social and cultural discourse in which they are located. Socialising factors also influence the ways and the possibilities of identity construction. Socialising factors may vary according to the “apprenticeship of observation”, from student teachers’ “observation of their own teacher’s teaching, the impact of initial teacher training program, the influence of significant others (namely relatives and former teachers) and the ecology of the classroom, etc.” (Flores and Day, 2006, p.221). Therefore, it could be argued that the school context is inextricably linked with the beginning teacher’s professional identity, which should be one significant parameter when analysing and interpreting a new teacher’s professional growth.

To sum up, the beginning teacher’s formation and reformation of professional identity is influenced by four factors: prior experience, mentoring, self-reflection and socialising power, as elaborated above. This theoretical framework of the
beginning teacher will be employed when analysing the second research question: what factors affect the Chinese beginning teacher’s formation and reformation of being a teacher in an Australian context.

2.4 Teaching practice

As stated above, the teacher’s professional identity has a performative dimension that is reflected in their teaching practice. Hence, it is equally important to establish a theoretical foundation for examining teachers’ teaching practice, as a lens through which to discuss their professional identity. The following section focuses on professional teachers’ teaching practice.

A teacher’s professional identity, defined as an overarching construct, is represented by their knowledge and skills in teaching practice. Teachers’ performance is described in detail in the following aspects: classroom management; preparing for practice; teaching strategies (McDonald, 2010; Orlich et al., 2010; Wiseman & Hunt, 2001; Crookes, 2003; Whitton et al., 2010; NSW DET, 2003b).

2.4.1 Classroom management

The aim of classroom management: Creating a positive classroom environment

In expert-novice studies, it is found that new teachers are too nervous to give clear class orientation and to be concerned with, students and just focus on teaching the subject content quickly, while the “best” teachers devote time to setting up a relaxing atmosphere in the class (Moskoqitz & Hayman, cited in McDonald, 2010, p. 104). Researchers believe that a more comfortable and caring environment for students will give them a chance to be active instead of passive observers (Freiberg & Lamb, 2009, p. 104). Now it is widely accepted that the ultimate aim of
classroom managerial practice is to create a safe and supportive learning environment for students to achieve better outcomes (Kang et al., 2008, pp. 4-5).

**Reactive strategies**

Traditionally, classroom management is narrowed into the term “discipline”, which is defined as “the preservation of order and the maintenance of control” (Orlich et al., 2010, p. 172). Enormous research has been devoted to studying specific strategies for disciplining students’ off-task performance and misbehaviour. Teachers’ strategies for disciplining problematic behaviours are presented as reactive (Orlich et al., 2010, p. 173). Many specific reactive skills for teachers have been identified and documented in the literature by scholars. Teachers can use these reactive strategies to restore order and get the students back on task when misbehaviour and off-task behaviour occur in the classroom.

**Proactive strategies**

Rather than equating classroom management with discipline, current research has shifted to viewing classroom management in terms of more proactive strategies. More and more educators and researchers believe that student engagement is the determining factor of classroom order and effect (Emmer & Stough, 2001; Burke, 2007). Burke (2007) perceives classroom management as a strategy to both regulate comportment and engage students in subject study.

> There is a potential balance to be struck between the targets of discipline which aims to control ‘behaviour’, and discipline which aims to promote study. . . . I want to consider classroom management as a strategy to encourage pupils to study. (p.176)

Likewise but more specifically, Emmer et al. (2001) conclude that “classroom management encompasses both establishing and maintaining order, designing effective instruction, dealing with students as a group, responding to the needs of
individual students, and effectively handling the discipline and adjustment of individual students (Emmer et al., 2001, p. 104). Teachers who believe in proactive management and engagement are distinguished from traditional teachers, who have “a commitment to long-term behavioural change” and who “organise their classrooms to promote positive behaviour” (Henley, 2010, p. 6-7), instead of reacting to behavioural problems that occur. For these researchers and educators, the ultimate aim of classroom management is to engage students’ learning in the classroom.

There are two styles of engagement—autocratic and democratic—that are developed out of binary understandings of students’ behavioural mistakes (McDonald, 2010, p. 113). The former conductors believe that control is external (McDonald, 2010, p. 113), and therefore use reward-punishment to maintain students’ engagement. As McDonald (2010) puts it:

Reward-punishment approaches reward behaviours that adults deem important and reinforce through teacher praise, time for a special activity, stickers or treats. We can also hope to stop behaviours that are not deemed appropriate by punishing the student in the hope that others will see the punishment: removal from activity, verbal reprimand or isolation from the group, and act more appropriately (p. 114).

Such autocratic models of classroom management are also understood as teacher-focused discipline models which are “based on the teacher’s recognised authority to set standards within the classroom and to dictate appropriate classroom behaviours and consequences of misbehaviour” (Orlich et al., 2010, p. 188).

In contrast, democratic style teachers believe that behaviour is controlled internally (McDonald, 2010, p. 113). In other words, it is the students’ own needs that
determine their choice of a particular behaviour. These teachers will give students power to “self-manage and grow in autonomy” (McDonald, 2010, p. 113; Orlich et al., 2010, p. 183-8). The corresponding management strategy is called reality therapy, and refers to “individuals [who] take responsibility for solving their own problems (pp. 183-7).”

**Motivating students**

Responding to recent research, it is suggested that teachers use multiple teaching strategies in order to engage students in subject learning, as a preventative strategy in classroom management. Student motivation is an important component of the proactive approach. According to Wiseman & Hunt, student motivation is defined as:

[A]n internal state that arouses students to action, directs them to certain behaviours, and assists them in maintaining that arousal and action with regard to certain behaviours important and appropriate to the learning environment (Wiseman & Hunt, 2001, p. 7).

Wiseman & Hunt (2001) note that to create a motivational learning environment where students have incentive to engage in learning is the responsibility and capability requirement of teachers (p. 10). A professional and effective teacher plays a motivating role in teaching practice.

To achieve the aim of motivating students, high expectations are an effective way to get students involved in class work (McDonald, 2010, p. 126). McDonald (2010) lists four key elements in implementing expectations in classroom teaching: Offering hope; Ensuring achievement for all students; Acknowledging effort; and Using student choice to motivate (pp. 126-9).

**Building positive teacher-student relationships**
Teacher-student relationships are an important dimension of teachers’ classroom managerial practice (Freiberg & Lamb 2009, Kang, Levin, Null & Lawrence, 2008, Jennings, & Greenberg, 2009). Freiberg and Lamb (2009) believe that “teaching is about building relationships” (p. 102). Jennings & Greenberg (2009) understand the importance of a positive teacher-student relationship in students’ classroom behaviour and engagement. As they see it:

> Students’ perceptions of teacher support have a direct effect on their interest and motivation, and teachers’ expectations of student achievement (which has an affective component) influence the way they behave toward their students and thus can affect students’ motivation, self-perceptions, and academic performance (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, p. 500).

The results of research into second language teaching also show that teacher-student relationships are a great socio-cultural force to create a supportive learning environment and stimulate students’ motivation to learn a second language (Crookes, 2003, pp. 162-3). Research indicates that students feel more secure and are more productive when they feel their teacher is trustworthy (Henley, 2010, p. 56). Establishing rapport is of outstanding importance in a multi-cultural classroom, where teacher and students do not share the same culture (Crookes, 2003, p. 166).

Generally, Jennings & Greenberg (2009) advocate person-centred classroom management, which is negotiation and cooperation between the needs of the teacher and the learner in a balanced way (p.100). Different from traditional teacher-student relationships where the teacher is an absolute controller, in this model the teacher plays a role as facilitator and encourager of learning by putting her feet in the students’ shoes rather than being an overarching controller (Freiberg & Lamb, 2009, p. 102). Such a student-centred model is a prevailing view of teacher-student relationships in the contemporary field of Western education.
McDonald (2010) recognises the cultural elements existing in teacher-student relationships: “when teachers and students hold different values, customs and norms of behaviour, potentials for misunderstanding and conflict are greatly increased (p. 37)”. These misunderstanding and conflicts will probably lead students to feeling unvalued and not belonging to the class. Crookes (2003) also has noticed the cultural dimension of establishing rapport in a second language classroom (p. 166). Under such circumstances, it is important for teachers to be aware of this challenge and to use various ways to connect students, building up positive teacher-student relationships and creating a supportive learning environment (McDonald, 2010, pp. 37-8).

2.4.2 Preparing for practice--Lesson planning

Lesson planning is regarded as the first step of teachers’ readiness for teaching (Wiseman & Hunt, 2001, p. 9). Whitton et al. (2010) define a lesson plan as “a professional document explaining what will happen in a particular time frame” and “the planning and preparation for a lesson” (p. 113). Other scholars view lesson planning as a mental process that prepares for a complex task to be executed in real settings through cognitive rehearsal in advance (Crookes, 2003, p. 104). The two definitions of lesson planning are not contradictory of each other, but both together imply that lesson planning is a systematic and complex task.

Lesson planning involves much preparatory work, ranging from allocating space and time, organising groups, deciding teaching and learning strategies, etc. (Whitton et al., 2010, pp. 105-129). Teaching guidance books inform pre-service teachers that a wide range of initial areas need to be considered when planning instruction, such as: student considerations, content and process considerations, time considerations, resource considerations and technical considerations (Orlich et al., 2010, pp.
All these characteristics demonstrate that lesson planning is an essential component of professional teaching practice.

Among these preparatory works, selection of resources and materials is a basic task for teachers entering the teaching field. Resources and materials are used during a lesson with the aim of enriching the teaching and learning (Whitton et al., 2010, p. 122). In their teaching guidance book, Whitton et al. note that resources can be found from a wide variety of sources:

Resources may be made by the teacher or sourced from other avenues. Resources are produced by professional teaching associations, institutions such as universities and technical colleges, various government and non-government organisations, other teachers and special local interest groups (p. 123).

Also, in this teacher educational book, various types of resources are listed and recommended as options, including slides/overheads, games/digital games, simulations, videos and DVDs, audio cassettes, podcasts and CDs, newspapers and magazines, music, learning objects, social networking software and computer programs, etc. (Whitton et al., 2010, p. 123).

In addition, the primary preparation for second language teachers in Australia (author notes: that is not the role of teachers in China, with its emphasis on set textbooks) in lesson and unit planning is design activities and tasks (Crookes, 2003, p. 102). For example, many recent educational policies and much research advocate that teachers integrate ICT use as a planned activity into teaching and learning (Gray, Pilkington, Hagger-Vaughan & Tomkins, 2007, p. 408; Orlich et al., 2010, p. 103). Therefore, language teachers are faced with the task of designing new forms of teaching activities.
As to the nature of lesson planning, it is pointed out that planning is a recursive rather than linear process (Orlich et al., 2010, p. 105, 107). Teachers reflect on their plan, consult the plan during teaching, improve their understanding of and capability in planning, and get better at planning next time. In brief, lesson planning should be understood not only as work before the lesson, but also involves post-lesson reflection and revision of planning effects, preparing for another cycle of teaching.

2.4.3 Teaching strategies/pedagogy

Quality Teaching Framework
The Quality Teaching Framework is a model of pedagogy that has been developed to support the work of teachers in addressing teaching and learning in NSW public schools (NSW DET, 2003b, p. 3). It is used to improve teaching practice and hence student learning outcomes (Ibid, p. 3). Teachers are encouraged to use this model as a self-reflection tool, with the purpose being to “understand, analyse and focus their own teaching practices for improved student learning” (Ibid, p. 3).

According to the discussion paper pedagogy, regarded as “the art and science of teaching” (Ibid, p. 4), can be found:

[B]oth in the activity that takes place in classrooms or other educational settings and in the nature or quality of the tasks set by teachers to guide and develop student learning (p. 4).

Pedagogy can be equally viewed as a teacher’s teaching strategies, simply understood as “how to teach” (Iglesias et al. 2009 p. 91), that are designed and conducted to promote student learning. Pedagogy is the core component of the teaching profession (NSW DET, 2003b, p. 4). The process of how knowledge is constructed, produced and critiqued underlies the nature of pedagogy (Ibid, p. 4). It
is believed that pedagogy is the most direct and powerful factor that affects the quality of students’ learning (Ibid, p. 4).

Three dimensions—intellectual quality, quality learning environment and significance—have been coded out by researchers to represent the features of the classroom (Ibid, p. 5). These three dimensions combined form the basis of the pedagogical model for NSW public schools (Ibid, p. 5).

The three dimensions are closely interrelated. The dimension of intellectual quality is the core component in this pedagogical framework. In the terms of this dimension, pedagogy that aims to achieve a high level of student learning outcomes—including “deep understanding of important, substantive concepts, skills and ideas—is emphasised” (Ibid, p. 9). Pedagogy in the dimension of a quality learning environment refers to what is effective in creating a productive classroom environment for students’ learning (Ibid, p. 9). The pedagogies that assist in quality learning are reflected in at least six elements, such as setting high expectations and instructing in explicit quality criteria. Significance, the third dimension, refers to pedagogy which “helps make learning meaningful and important to students” (Ibid, p. 9). Each dimension has six subcategory elements, as follows:
Table 2.1 The dimensions and elements of the NSW model of pedagogy (NSW DET, 2003b, p. 9)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Intellectual Quality</th>
<th>Quality learning environment</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deep knowledge</td>
<td>Explicit quality criteria</td>
<td>Background knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deep understanding</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Problematic knowledge</td>
<td>High expectation</td>
<td>Cultural knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher-order thinking</td>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td>Knowledge integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Metalanguage</td>
<td>Students’ self-regulation</td>
<td>Inclusivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Substantive communication</td>
<td>Student direction</td>
<td>Connectedness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this research, the Quality Teaching Framework was used to analyse and discuss the features of the novice teacher’s teaching practice: specifically speaking, the pedagogy she employed to construct subject knowledge and guide students in learning Mandarin. Furthermore, it is also be used as a reference to discuss the transformation of the beginning teacher’s teaching beliefs and understanding of teaching and learning in the three dimensions.

Whitton et al. (2010) give a list of types of teaching and learning strategies, such as narration, discussion and demonstration (pp. 144-180). They believe that through working in this professional field, such strategies will become second nature to the teacher (p. 180).
Chapter 3: Methodology, research design and methods

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the methodology used to examine the research questions. It begins with the broad methodology in which this research was located, then followed by the research design, specific data collection approaches, data interpretation and ethics issues.

3.2 Teacher as Researcher

As stated in Chapter 1, the distinction of my role in the ROSETE program is that I am a teacher-researcher. Through participating in this program, I gained the opportunity to teach Mandarin in local secondary schools and simultaneously to do educational research at university. Hence, this study was undertaken under the broad paradigm of teacher-as-researcher.

John Dewey, a leading philosopher in the 19th and 20th century in the US, greatly contributed to educational thinking by raising the concept of “pragmatic epistemology”: “the development of human knowledge was an adaptive response to the environment.” (Dimitriadis, & Kamberelis, 2006, p. 5).

[Dewey] believed that individual thought and action issue from social experience in the first place. . . . Education must thus be experienced-based and not externally imposed (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006, pp. 8-10).
Based on Dewey’s concept of pragmatic epistemology, Lawrence Stenhouse started the tradition of teacher research, advocating that the teacher and researcher should be the one person: a teacher-researcher, in order to promote curriculum research and development (Stenhouse, 1978; Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p. 12). Two views of the purposes and goals of teacher research are shared by his followers: 1) to enhance teachers’ professional identity; and 2) to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p. 4). The rationale behind the notion of teacher research is that teachers develop their professional capability through pragmatic inquiry and practical experience, and this reflects Dewey’s pragmatic epistemology.

Realising the importance of the “Teacher-researcher”, Griffiths and Tann (1992) assume that personal theory is as important as public theory. They suggest that “personal theories need to be revealed (at different levels) so that they can be scrutinized, challenged, compared to public theories, and then confirmed or reconstructed” (Griffiths and Tann, 1992, pp. 70-1). To achieve this, they raise “the reflective teacher”/“the reflective practitioner” model as the bridge between teachers’ personal practice and personal theories. Reflection is a central element of Dewey’s pragmatism, underpinning Dewey’s perspective on inquiry:

[Dewey] defined reflection as an ‘active, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions toward which it tends’ (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006, p. 11).

Some educational researchers put faith in teachers’ reflective thinking, regarding it as a research means to find out personal theories (Griffiths & Tann, 1992).
The research used the special technique of the self-reflective journal as the primary data to link my fieldwork thinking, feeling and action with my research. As a teacher-researcher, my reflection entailed examination of my personal experience of teaching. And my research aimed at better understanding my own understanding of the teaching profession as a beginning teacher.

3.3 Auto-ethnography

Auto-ethnography was employed as the research methodology for this project. Auto-ethnography originated from ethnographic research, which is regarded as “an observational technique deriving from anthropological and sociological inquiry” (Cunningham & Jones, 2005, p. 1). Chang (2008) views the term “auto-ethnography” as the combination of “cultural analysis and interpretation with narrative details”, with varying degrees of reliance on the “auto (self)”, the “ethno (culture)” and “graphy (study)”. (p. 46). By reviewing and synthesising the literature on auto-ethnography, three dimensions were derived inductively: the self participatory dimension, culture dimension and reflective dimension, which help us to understand this methodology better. The following sections explain how auto-ethnography as a research strategy is appropriate to explore my research questions in these three dimensions.

3.3.1 The self-participatory dimension

Auto-ethnography, as a research paradigm, provides teacher-researchers with opportunities to make meaning of their life stories and allows a voice to be heard. Cunningham and Jones (2005) view auto-ethnography as “personal ethnography” (p.2). Rather than observing practitioners as an “outsider”, as in traditional ethnography, the investigator in auto-ethnography is at the same time the informant as well (Muncey, 2005, p. 2). Smith (2005) has presented the process of her choosing this research methodology for her Masters thesis, saying, “Using
auto-ethnography permitted my experiences to play a valid role in the study, because the genre includes the researchers as a participant” (Smith, 2005, p. 71). The self-participatory dimension of auto-ethnographic study could be viewed as a description and conceptualisation of the researcher’s own personal experience.

As stated in Chapter 2, identity is personal construction, involving personal constructs of emotions, beliefs and repertoire of knowledge. As the research topic of this study is my professional identity, I have focused on studying my personal constructs in my teaching experience in local secondary schools. Hence, through using auto-ethnography as a methodological strategy, I played a dual role as both researcher and participant. This provided a pathway for the teacher-researcher to conduct self-study, with an easier way of collecting data: from personal experience. Specifically speaking, it is a good tool to document my experience in local schools and classrooms, including critical incidents and tensions. Therefore, I gave preference to exploring my research questions by following an auto-ethnographic strategy.

3.3.2 The cultural dimension

Distinct from self-study, which is a look at the story of self, according to Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009), auto-ethnography “is a look at self within a larger context . . . ” (p.69). The “ethno” part of auto-ethnography stresses culture as an inescapable element in the presentation and interpretation of research results. Study of the broader cultural context refers to “the interpretation of experience within a culture and a context of place and time (Bryan, 2010, p. 142) ”. In other words, not merely tell life stories, auto-ethnographers also relate personal experience to larger social movements, issues or context. In doing so, auto-ethnographic study leads personal experience and theory to be understood in consideration of discourses and socio-cultural background.
Applied to this study, the cultural dimension of auto-ethnography could help assist the researcher to understand her personal professional identity through a social-cultural perspective. As a beginning teacher who came from a Chinese educational background, I aimed to make sense of my teaching self within the domain of the NSW education system. According to identity theory, discourses and identity are integrally related (Clarke, 2008, p. 37). Hence, my professional identity transformation and construction could not be understood without considering the educational discourse in WSR local schools and classrooms. Auto-ethnography could help to reveal the formation of my professional identity as a teacher, while considering cross-cultural influence.

Secondly, the broader cultural dimension of auto-ethnography methodology also refers to the experience of a particular group of people beyond the self, with similar culture in terms of “shared patterns of thought, symbol, and actions” (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, pp. 71-2). Though acknowledging that auto-ethnography is by nature a “self-reflexive way of examining [the] personal”, Pinnegar & Hamilton (2009) highlight that this research strategy also considers “how the self is othered in that experience” (p. 72). Through drawing on studies on people with similar background or experience, auto-ethnographic research makes the author’s personal experience become public, meaningful and valuable. In this study, auto-ethnography could bring deeper academic meaning and value to my personal experience and professional identity construction.

3.3.3 The reflective dimension

Some scholars have highlighted the reflexive dimension of auto-ethnography (Preez, 2008). It is defined as “a form of research methodology where “personal narrative and reflective practice are used as the basis for an ethnographic account (Preez, 2008, p. 509).” In other words, auto-ethnography shares its epistemology with the method of narrative inquiry, examining the participant’s lived stories and discussing their
meaning. Since personal narrative inquiry is at times equally viewed as “reflexive practice”, which means “a process of looking back” (Preez, 2008, p. 510), auto-ethnographic study is at bottom, a process of looking back at the researcher’s experience. By writing about themself, the researcher self-consciously constructs and analyses his/her experiences and discusses his/her thought formations (Bandura, cited in Preez, 2008, p. 511). In doing so, auto-ethnographic writing texts present a sense of self-understanding of one’s own acts, thoughts and attitudes.

As stated in earlier chapters, recent studies of identity believe that it is a shifting constructive process. The professional development of the beginning teacher and her professional identity could be viewed as a reflexive and constructive process. At the same time, a teacher’s professional identity is described in terms of “stories to live by” (Connelly & Clandinin 1999, cited in Tsui, 2007, p. 658). It means that narratives can be drawn on by teachers as a thread or landscape, where they make sense of their experience and achieve self-understanding (Tsui, 2007, p. 658).

A later chapter explains that auto-ethnography is a narrative writing method. By utilizing auto-ethnography as a research strategy, I could go back and forth, reflecting upon the data to dig out theorised knowledge from fragmented and elusive lived experience. Through the description and interpretation of reflective personal experience, I would be able to reach a richer, in-depth description of the beginning teacher’s professional life experience, and better discussion of the nature and possibilities of my professional identity. Therefore, auto-ethnographic study should help me to reflect on my lived professional experience and make meaning of my self-understanding as a Mandarin teacher.

3.3.4 Auto-ethnography is a narrative writing style

Auto-ethnography is a self-centric form of narrative inquiry. This type of research is usually presented in the first person (Cunningham & Jones, 2005, p. 2; Pinnegar &
Furthermore, the writing style breaches traditional classic ethnography, is more fiction-like, and can range from poetry to prose (Cunningham & Jones, 2005, p. 2). “[A]uto-ethnographers often . . . using a multi-genre approach . . . can incorporate short stories, poetry, novels, photographs, journals, and fragmented and layered writing” (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. 72). Auto-ethnography frees the researcher from traditional conventions of writing, while privileging/honouring personal voicing, such as colloquialisms, emotional expressiveness and so on (Smith, 2005, p. 71). The aim of presenting data “as ‘illuminated description’ is to immerse the readers ‘in the situation, vividly pictures the people, hears the voices, and is moved by the experiences’” (Richards, cited in Preez, 2008, p. 512).

In this study, my professional identity was constructed through presenting narratives, showing as a process of forming or transforming my professional identity. All the narratives are presented in the first person “I”. These narratives describe critical incidents involving my personal emotions, actions and thoughts as well as others, with the aim of presenting my lived teaching experience in an Australian educational context. The narratives will be formatted as indented paragraphs.

However, unlike autobiography, theoretical analysis is drawn on to discuss the experience represented by narratives in auto-ethnography research. Bryan (2010) stresses that auto-ethnography “. . . look[s] reflexively at self, . . . but also [is] committed to the theoretical analysis and interpretation that is embodied in this method of investigation” (p. 43). Anderson (2006) frames the analytic auto-ethnography paradigm as a subgenre of analytic ethnography (p. 374), calling for attention to developing auto-ethnography with the realist and analytic tradition in the field of ethnography (p. 376). He advocates that auto-ethnographers develop a commitment to theoretical analysis (p. 387). Anderson (2006) understands auto-ethnography as “to use empirical data to gain insight into some broader set of social phenomena (p. 387)”. 
Following this understanding of the auto-ethnographic genre of writing, I step outside the field text to be an outsider when extending narratives into interpretation. Since the research objective is my personal experience, there is no pre-existing theory or study. Rather, theoretical framework and conceptual frameworks are adopted instead of a literature review. To understand my personal experience, the literature is drawn on in the analysis of each narrative. Literature from theoretical frameworks and similar studies helps me in “zooming to see the problem” (Stake, 2010, pp. 104-116) in order to recount my personal experience. Moreover, documents on the teaching profession are adopted as field text sources (Candinin & Connelly, 2000, pp. 113-4). Since the “Quality teaching in NSW public school discussion paper” and the “Professional teaching standards” publications are significant teaching documents that convey the discourse of my professional identity formation, these two documents are selected and drawn on as field texts, and serve in interpreting my learning to become a professional teacher.

Due to the analytic nature of auto-ethnographic writing, the third person position will be used in discussion section followed each narrative, for the purpose of distinguishing from the 1st person position in narratives. Namely, I will treat my own actions, emotions and thoughts as research text and will analyse and interpret these texts from “an outsider's” perspective. This research, in doing so, would avoid being self-indulgent. It is also expected that the third position would further help to extend the meaning of my personal experience to a larger group, to the experience of other beginning teachers.

3.3.5 The value of auto-ethnography

As to the value of auto-ethnography: “auto-ethnography shares voices that might not otherwise have been heard, and presents insights that might otherwise have been too subtle to elicit” (Cunningham & Jones, 2005, p. 3). It is recognised that by telling
auto-ethnography as personal narratives, selves are constructed, disclosed, and implicated (Jones, 2005, p. 767). This auto-ethnographic study maximises the rationale of teacher-as-researcher.

In doing so, it fulfils study of the beginning teacher’s professional identity research (Cunningham & Jones, 2005, p. 2). By examining my own activities and attitudes, this research may contribute knowledge and understanding of the beginning teacher’s professional identity as a social issue, through the researcher’s personal perspective. Personal stories can be used to create an open space for interpretation and action (Jones, 2005). By offering subjective and alternative voices to the public, such “self-reporting diary study” should be valued in making up blind-spots in conventional ethnographic research (Cunningham & Jones, 2005, p. 2).

Besides its contribution to academic research, auto-ethnography is a user-friendly research methodology to me, the researcher. In writing auto-ethnographic entries, the researcher is able to express her reflections without the pressure of being observed (Cunningham & Jones, 2005, p. 2). Applying auto-ethnography in this research has helped to enhance the research credibility, and achieve a deeper understanding of personal experience. Since auto-ethnography assists in raising the researcher’s self-consciousness and reflexivity, consequently it empowers me as a subject (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

For the narrative audience, auto-ethnography helps the reader to self-investigate their role while they read the text. Personal stories have the capacity to “bring people in contact with ideas, situations, or others that appear to be totally different”, and to “move the readers intellectually, emotionally and toward concerted social, cultural, and political action” (Jones, 2005, p. 784). Thus, personal narratives could function to bring readers to reflect on the similarities and differences between the issues that the researcher presents, and their own (Johns, 2005; Preez, 2008).
In this auto-ethnographic study, the narratives about my personal experience in local schools and classrooms record my emotions, thoughts and actions. They also offer pictures of classroom culture and the teaching community in a WSR context. My narratives provide the audiences with an opportunity to understand the life of the Chinese beginning teacher who experiences her initial professional learning in an Australian educational context. Through reading my stories, it is hoped that readers can reflect on their own personal experience, especially if they are teachers themselves, and enrich their understanding of self and of the teaching profession.

3.4 Research Design

3.4.1 Time plan

This research was designed to investigate the construction of a beginning teacher’s professional identity development within her first year of teaching. According to a document outlining the “role of Ningbo volunteers” in the ROSETE program, the volunteer teacher was supposed to spend 10 hours of classroom experience within two days per working week in local schools (NMEB, NSW DET & UWS, 2009, p. 1). For this teacher-researcher, the research study started simultaneously with her engagement in local schools. The teacher-researcher mainly experienced observation and teaching assistance for half a year in the engaged schools. She was then given autonomy to conduct practical teaching in the second half of the year. Additionally, she undertook research activity at the University of Western Sydney. The research continued for another half year after the beginning teacher finished her first year teaching. Table 3.1 is a timeline showing the activity of my learning during the first year. July to December 2009 spanned Terms 3 and 4 in 2009. I mainly observed experienced teachers’ classes during this period. February to June 2010 covered Terms 1 and 2 of the 2010 schooling year; I conducted formal teaching during this period of practical teaching.
Table 3.1 Timetable of my experience in local schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>My experience of learning to be a teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July, 2009 – December, 2009</td>
<td>Teaching observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February, 2010 – June, 2010</td>
<td>Practical teaching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4.2 Sites

The participating schools were the two schools where I was a volunteer Mandarin Teacher. I refer to them in the narratives as School A and School B. Both of them are secondary public schools located in the Greater WSR, teaching Years 7-12. The schools have both boy and girl students. I taught Mandarin to Year 8 students, and three classes with around 25 students in each class. The students learn Mandarin as a compulsory subject in Year 8. They are beginning learners in Mandarin. The teacher’s main aim is to stimulate their interest in learning Mandarin as a second language, because Mandarin is a selective subject for students in Years 9 and 10.

3.4.3 Participants

As the teacher-researcher, I was the main participant in this study, as determined by the research objectives. Apart from myself, others also participated in the study project. The supervising teacher and other LOTE teachers were Australian-based qualified teachers. They merit discussion because of their potential influence on my professional identity construction. They observed my professional learning in their classes. The supervising teacher especially was the most direct mentor, who guided the beginning teacher into the teaching profession. Also, four DET officers were closely related to the ROSETE program. They were methodology trainers in the program, Chinese language advisors and the leading person of the ROSETE program. They informed me about the broader educational culture and about the Quality Teaching Framework, as part of my professional teacher training.
3.5 Data collection

Various types of information were documented as data for this research. There were three main data sources: 1) Self-level: reflections/memories; 2) Mentor-level: interviews; and 3) School and DET-level: survey and interviews. In addition, literature and artefacts are employed as triangulated data to add “accuracy” to the auto-ethnographic research. Data is constructed in narratives, to reflect the researcher’s identity transformation.

3.5.1 Reflective journal

In this research, a reflective journal was the primary source, which combined field notes and journal writing as a method of creating field text. Candinin & Connelly (2000) note that journal writing is an approach to creating field texts for teacher-researchers doing narrative inquiry study (pp. 102-3). Journal entries generally record experience. Candinin & Connelly (2000) also point out that to construct research texts, journals are sometimes composed as field texts when they are interwoven with other sorts of field texts (p. 104). Candinin & Connelly (2000) also introduced field notes as field text, describing that “[t]hese ongoing, daily notes, full of the details and moments of our inquiry lives in the field, are the text out of which we can tell stories of our story of experience (p. 104)”. They recommend that “field notes combined with journals written of our field experience provide a reflective balance (p. 104)”.

I kept diaries to reflect my experience as a VMT during the first year. Those events of importance, the critical incidents of my first year teaching, were recorded in daily journals as field notes on my professional identity status. The self-reflective journal included my reflections on methodology, training and research; reflections
on teaching observations; reflections on my practical teaching, and other related reflections during this research period. I recorded my observations, performance, conversations with others, emotions and thoughts (See Appendix 14: reflective journal sample).

In this research, personal memories were also taken into account as data. Personal memory has been used as a resource and catalyst by many ethnographers, for further data (Bryan, 2010). Ellis (2004) includes first-hand memory in field notes. Chang (2008) also states that “personal memory is a building block of auto-ethnography because the past gives a context to the present self” (p. 71). My prior experience in Chinese schooling is recalled as an alternative form of reflective field note. These memories include my prior educational beliefs, my previous teacher’s teaching strategies, and my personal English learning experience in China. The memoir of my early schooling in China is recorded in autobiographical writing. As Clandinin & Connelly (2000) suggest, rather than using it as a research text, the autobiographical writing is used to give a rendition of my previous understanding of the teaching profession, and sets the context for telling my later transformation in the Australian educational system (p. 101). This is regarded as data that can be further built into a database for analysis and interpretation, making the self-reflective journal more comprehensive and contextualised.

3.5.2 Interview

Interviews were conducted to triangulate the reflective journal data. According to Chang (2008), interviews of others are useful for auto-ethnography for many reasons, such as “to stimulate our memory, to fill in gaps in information, to gather new information about you and other relevant topics. . . .” (p. 106). I conducted interviews with the supervising teacher and with officers of NSW DET. Each interview was audio recorded (in mp3 files) and transcribed. The tape recordings and the
interviewers’ notes were used as a source of data for further coding, analysis and interpretation. Each interview lasted about 30 to 40 minutes.

The supervising teacher is anonymised under the pseudonym Karen in this research. Since the supervising teacher observed my Mandarin lessons and witnessed my changes in terms of professional performance, more from an “outsider’s” perspective, the formal interview with the supervising teacher was conducted to gain information about my professional development from her perspective.

Three officials of NSW DET were closely related to the ROSETE program. Two of them were Chinese language advisors, here given the pseudonyms “Ada” and “Belinda”. The third is one of the organisers of ROSETE program, is also a school development officer in the NSW DET (WSR) office, and is anonymised as “Caroline”. The interviews with them were conducted with reference to the “Quality Teaching Framework”, a professional teaching framework required for teachers to be qualified in the NSW educational system. Also, the interviewees were encouraged to share accounts of their peak teaching experiences as illustrations, to present the school culture and context in Western Sydney Region public schools. The information contributed to making more meaning for my personal experience as a beginning teacher. (See Appendixes 10, 11, 12: interview schedules.)

3.5.3 Survey

Data sources also included a student survey to see how students experienced my teaching. The students’ comments were expected to reflect my teaching performance from their perspective. The student survey involved collecting students’ written feedback on the Mandarin lessons. It was expected that the written feedback could reflect my professional identity change. Ideally, there would have been around 60 students from 3 classes participating in the student survey. However this was to be determined by parent/guardians’ written consent. Children not participating in the
study were still participating in the Mandarin lessons during the time the research was carried out. (See Appendix 13: student survey sample.)

3.6 Data organisation and analysis

3.6.1 Data organisation

Data organisation and selection were conducted synchronously, as the data was being collected. Chang’s 4-W (when, who, what, where) principle was used in organising data by labelling it, revealing: the time of data collection; who collected the data; data collection type, such as interview, reflective journal, feedback; where the data was collected and (where) the original physical context of the data (Chang, 2008, pp. 116-117).

Different sources of data were clarified into different file folders, and organised according to the above method. The reflective journal and interview tapes, as well as the transcriptions were computerised as digital files. The self-reflection was written in diary form at the end of each day. The entries were labelled with the class period, data, and the site where it took place. The reflective journals within the first teaching year were separated into four files, each of being about one term’s teaching experience. Each interview record was marked with the interviewee’s name and the place where it was collected. Student surveys were done in paper form and put into one portfolio.

3.6.2 Content analysis

Heish & Shannon (2005) define qualitative content analysis as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns”. Conventional
Content analysis is a tool to code text data and then to capture categories directly from the data. The advantage of this approach is that findings are grounded in the original data with participants’ unique thinking, rather than influenced by preconceived theoretical perspectives (Heish & Shannon, 2005, pp. 1279-1280). Content analysis generally “focuses on the characteristics of language as communication with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text” (Heish & Shannon, 2005, pp. 1277-8).

According to Merriam (2009), a classification scheme derives from original data without a preexisting category framework in educational ethnographies (p. 201). In this research, this analysis method was used to analyse the content of selected reflective journal entries, interview transcriptions and survey texts. First, all the data was read through by the researcher to obtain a general idea. Then, the researcher drew codes, which reflected the key ideas of each paragraph from the original data. Those codes with similar or related thoughts were further grouped under a broader category. Finally, the research findings were represented by exemplars of each category.

3.6.3 Coding

Facing with varieties and piles of data (mainly reflective journal entries), I coded the original data into themes, subcategories and categories inductively. Emerson et al. (1995) have introduced this way of developing a theme/topic:

[To] review the earlier codings and memos, identifying a number of the more interesting or relevant themes in one’s fieldnotes. . . . write out phrases stating possible themes clearly and explicitly. . . . the ethnographer looks for ways of relating some of these themes to one topic and then decides to drop those themes which cannot be tied to this topic. (p.172)
The next phase was narrowing the focus by selecting more relevant and significant data. Ellis suggests that “[t]he following first draft can choose a plot line from the field notes, and concentrate on developing it, foregoing anything that doesn’t fit the theme” (Ellis, 2004). I categorised the research text into topics. It was evidence about my changes and performances at each stage of my teaching.

3.6.4 Critical incident analysis

Critical incidents are defined as “a surprise or a problematic situation, which stimulates a period of reflection . . . or a solution of the problem (Angelides, 2001, p. 433)”. Problematic situations will stimulate teachers to reflect on them and regard them as critical incidents. Apart from dramatic critical incidents, Angelides (2001) argues that they may be small, commonplace events that happen in every routine professional practice and that may reflect hidden cultural assumptions (p. 431). Analysis of critical incidents is a speedy technique for collecting and analysing qualitative data (Ibid). In educational cases, teachers experience critical incidents in their teaching practice, which need not be dramatic but can be obvious and repetitive.

Since educational cultural assumptions are embedded in critical incidents, an analysis of critical incidents can reveal teachers’ implicit professional identity. For those field notes that recorded critical moments of my professional development, I rewrote them as auto-ethnographic text. For similar data with reoccurring issues or concerns, I put them together as a way to transpose fields note into research text. The process of selecting and categorising related data into topics was one of narrating stories. Through analysing critical incidents, I consciously identified self change and self-development through reflecting on these special events that were of significance for myself. According to Angelides (2001), in doing so, teachers may finally reach recognition of identity (p. 432).
3.6.5 Constructing narratives and discussion

Constructing narratives was the final stage of writing the research text, as is the nature of auto-ethnographic study. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the presentation of auto-ethnographic research shares the methods of narrative inquiry, focusing on the study of human beings’ lived experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I constructed field data into narratives in the first person. Narratives included not only my personal feelings, thoughts and actions, but also my interaction with students and teacher colleagues, as well as the educational culture in WSR secondary schools. Most narratives were written in the form of fictional description. The purpose of using such a writing style is to demonstrate my real feelings, thoughts and actions vividly, providing richer insights into the area that the study investigated.

It should be noted that narratives are not illustration or examples, but stories themselves in the first place. Narrative is a form of self identification, in learning to be a teacher and coming to understand the teaching profession. As Beijaard (2004) states: “Through storytelling, teachers engage in narrative ‘theorising’ and, based on that, teachers may further discover and shape their professional identity resulting in new or different stories” (Beijaard, 2004, p. 121, cited in Tsui, 2007, p. 659). During the process of constructing narratives, I identified similarities and differences between each narrative. Therefore, I grounded the narratives in three main themes, which further clarified self-understanding of my formation and transformation in three aspects of professional teaching.

Meanwhile, since auto-ethnography always involves culture concerns, I constructed narratives as “culturally meaningful and sensible text” (Chang, 2008, p. 125). Discussion follows each narrative as a reflection on and extension of each narrative. This is designed to transfer the narrative from field text to research text, while linking it with other thoughts, research studies and ideologies (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 136). Discussion draws empirical narratives into theoretical
thinking, investigating the cultural meaning behind my teaching experience. I deepened the narratives with a range of conceptual discussions, in order to understand how beginning teachers learn managing techniques and teaching strategies, and internalise NSW public school teaching culture into personal enactment. The discussions were expected to achieve the research objective: to understand the culture and make sense of a student teacher’s professional identity construction in the context of a NSW public school.

3.7 Validity and reliability

Debate around the great potential risk is basically concerned with the validity and reliability of auto-ethnography as a research methodology. Critiques of auto-ethnography focus on its post-modernist characteristics (Cunningham & Jones, 2005, pp. 2-3). The concern is often expressed that personalised narratives will lead to an extreme of being “self-indulgent, un-generalisable, impenetrably individualized (Cunningham & Jones, 2005, pp. 2-3)” Therefore, auto-ethnographic research needs to consider validity and reliability issues.

Internal validity and reliability share a similar reference in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009, p. 221). Merriam (2009) states that internal validity in qualitative research is to address the research findings to match reality. Likewise, she understands the notion of reliability in qualitative research as “whether the results are consistent with the data collected (p. 221)”. Similarly, reliability is regarded as “a degree of accuracy and comprehensiveness of coverage” in qualitative research (Cohen, et al., 2007, p. 149).

In qualitative research, subjective personal documents, including diaries and autobiographies are believed to be possibly reliable data sources (Merriam, 2009, p. 143). These personal data sources do reflect the teacher-researcher’s attitudes,
beliefs, which is just what this qualitative research looks for. For example, responding to a critique of the validity of personal memory as a data source, Bryan (2010) believes that “memory functions by interpreting the past in order to give it meaning. Moreover, that interpretation and meaning, conscious and unconscious, emerge from the culture of the person retelling the past” (Rosen, 1996, p. 22, cited in Bryan, 2010, p. 142). Cohen et al. (2007) state that the extent of qualitative research validity “attaches to accounts, not to data or methods; . . . it is the meaning that subjects give to data and inferences drawn from the data that are important” (p. 134). Hence, it is the reconstruction and interpretation of lived experience that accounts for the validity of data in auto-ethnographic research. As auto-ethnographic narratives risk being too self-indulgent, to overcome this problem, I adopted peer debriefing when analysing the original data, and especially when coding self-reflective journal entries. I discussed the significance of critical incidents with supervisors, to enhance the research’s credibility and trustworthiness.

Triangulation is a common way to legitimate the validity of personal data and enhance the internal validity of qualitative studies (Merriam, 2009, p. 215). Triangulation takes four types: “multiple methods, multiple sources of data, multiple investigators, or multiple theories to confirm emerging findings (Merriam, 2009, p. 215).” In doing an auto-ethnography of teenage pregnancy, Muncey (2005) triangulated the data by presenting her personal memory in four approaches: snapshots, artefacts, metaphor and the theme “journey”. Its powerful presentation implies the value of triangulation: showing a period of life experience in different dimensions can confirm the data validity of personal memory, and strengthens the power and conviction of individual stories, as well as the argument (Muncey, 2005). This research multiplied the data sources—contributing field text from various perspectives, including the supervising teacher, students, DET officials, etc.—to enhance the validity of the teacher-researcher’s perceptions of her personal experience.
To evaluate validity and reliability, scholars point out criteria for readers to judge auto-ethnographic research. Preez (2008) applies Ellis’ (2000) criteria, saying: “that it engages the reader, that it provides some understanding of the lived experience of another person and possibly has some instructive value for the reader.” (p. 516). The reader is also encouraged to evaluate auto-ethnographic research by thinking: “does the work make a substantive contribution to our understanding of social life; does it possess aesthetic merit; does it exemplify reflexivity, impact on the reader, and articulate an expression of a reality?” (Richardson 2000, cited in Preez, 2008, p. 517).

3.8 Research ethics

This research identifies the significance of ethics in educational research. Ethics is required to be concerned with “ensuring that the interests and well-being of people are not harmed as a result of the research being done (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p. 101).” Though this research studies the teacher-researcher herself, the well-being and interests of other participants involved were taken into account. In order to ensure that this research is ethically right and harmless to any participants, the researcher applied both the National Ethics Application Form (NEAF) for submitting research proposals to Human Research Ethics Committees and the State Education Research Approval Process (SERAP) to get permission for collecting data from students and Departmental staff. Information sheets and consent forms for parents/caregivers and participants were also designed, to assist the process. All documents are attached in the Appendixes.

3.8.1 Participant consent

Though the purpose of this research was to investigate my own development as a beginning teacher, evidence was expected to triangulate through collecting and
analysing data from students, my supervising teacher and relevant officers of NSW DET. Therefore, ethics issues related to these participants were of concern. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. They were not obliged to participate and could withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason and without any consequences. All written and audio records of participants will be destroyed.

3.8.2 Potential risk or harm to participants

No measuring devices and procedures were used in this research project that are not in everyday use in schools. Students with parental authorisation to participate in the study were asked to answer questions about their participation in my Mandarin classes in the survey. Students who had parental permission were asked to answer questions in the form of written feedback. This written feedback was collected at the end of the selected class and used as data to be analysed as part of this research. During the whole research process the researcher, along with the classroom teacher, provided support. Teachers and DET officers were interviewed about my teaching. Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. They will not cause any emotional distress to participants. Officers of NSW DET received an invitation email to participate in this research. Only those who gave consent were interviewed.

3.8.3 Confidentiality

To protect participants’ privacy, confidentiality of information was provided in the process of a) data collection and storage and; b) publication or dissemination of research results. All hard copies of data, including emails and audio tape, will be stored in a locked cabinet in my office for two years. These recordings could only be accessed by the researcher and her supervisors. After two years, these data will be destroyed.
The results will be disseminated via a Master of Education (Honours) thesis and jointly-authored publications with supervisors. Pseudonyms will be used for the publications and in the reporting of results where teacher and student data are included or referred to. The schools will only be identified as “Western Sydney School 1” and “Western Sydney School 2”. Students, teachers and DET officers will be only referred to by anonymised names.

3.8.4 Ethics approval

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is H7702 (see Appendix).

3.9 Research limitations

The researcher recognises the limitations of this research. This study is limited in both data collection and interpretation aspects. As stated above, the primary data source is the author’s self-reflective journal, which was mainly recorded on the days when she engaged in the local classroom. This constrains the richness of the field text in terms of both time and allocation. The researcher only collected the first year reflective diaries as data; till the end of June, 2010. Secondly, as designed by the ROSETE program, the teacher-researcher engaged in local schools two days per week, normally Tuesday and Wednesday. It should be noted that there are four terms per year and each term has ten weeks. Practically, according to the school timetable and to the arrangements, the teacher-researcher mainly observed Mandarin classes, with occasional co-teaching with the mentoring teacher during the first two terms (Terms 3 and 4 in 2009). She started teaching formally for the rest half year (Terms 1 and 2 in 2010). During this half year, she had one Mandarin class in Week A and two Mandarin classes in Week B. The limited time in the workplace will have constrained the possibilities for the beginning teacher’s construction of professional identity.
By exploring the deep knowledge and dispositions of the individual teacher, this research is expected to reflect the culture of a beginning teacher’s professional identity to some extent. However, it may not be effective in providing findings that can be generalized across teachers and contexts (Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008, p. 146). John (2006) indicates that a teacher’s cognitive style, personality factors and preference are likely to lead to different teacher development (pp. 489-90). Moreover, he identifies that “student teachers enter their programmes with a variety of experiences, pre-conceptions, and models about what constitutes teaching, learning, and learning to teach (pp. 489-90).” Due to the nature of auto-ethnography as methodology, this thesis only accounts for the teacher-researchers’ personal experience and understanding of self-professional identity construction. The teacher-researcher in this study had a particular background as she started teaching with a Chinese-based understanding of teaching and learning. Those critical incidents that were core concerns for her might not be significant for other beginning teachers. Moreover, as a beginning teacher herself, the teacher-researcher’s limited understanding of professional identity constrains the full analysis and discussion of data at a theoretical level. Hence, the results of this research might be limited in reflecting the culture of beginning teachers with similar backgrounds.
Chapter 4: Managing the classroom and motivating students

4.1 Introduction

The key theme in this chapter is “classroom management and engagement”. Classroom management refers to a teacher’s practice that has the aim of establishing classroom order and engaging students learning. As stated in chapter 2, the practice of classroom management involves both student discipline and learning engagement, with the aim of providing a safe and supportive learning environment and positive teacher-student relationships.

The findings suggest that the Chinese beginning teacher had issues in common with other beginning teachers in respect of classroom management, but also had distinct issues associated with her Chinese cultural background. This difficulty was due to her Chinese belief in teacher’s authority and respect for teachers. As the narratives show, she gradually became familiar with the Australian educational culture and improved in disciplining students and engaging them in Mandarin learning.

This chapter includes five narratives to describe the development of the beginning teacher in terms of classroom management. The five narratives are constructed chronologically, to present a process of how the Chinese beginning teacher’s professional identity shifted according to critical incidents centring on classroom management. Each narrative illustrates a critical incident related to this theme. The following table shows the approximate time these critical incidents occurred, the main tension and the data sources that were used to develop the narratives.
Discussion follows each individual narrative and the chapter concludes with an overall discussion of the themes.

The following table shows the time, the main tension and the critical incidents, as well as the related data sources.

**Table 4.1 Narratives included in chapter 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Data sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Classroom observation period (Term 3, 2009)</td>
<td>4/8/2009</td>
<td>Shock at behaviour of Australian teacher and students</td>
<td>Reflective journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Practical teaching period (Term 1, 2010)</td>
<td>17/2/2010</td>
<td>Supervising teacher’s modelling in motivating student learning</td>
<td>Reflective journals; interviews; survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Practical teaching period (Term 2, 2010)</td>
<td>7/5/2010</td>
<td>Navigating management strategies between Chinese and Australian ways</td>
<td>Reflective journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Practical teaching period (Term 2, 2010)</td>
<td>26/5/2010</td>
<td>Managing to discipline students’ behaviours</td>
<td>Reflective journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Practical teaching period (Term 2, 2010)</td>
<td>16/6/2010</td>
<td>Successfully building positive relationship with students through appreciative teaching methods</td>
<td>Reflective journals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Narrative 1: Shock at Australian teacher and students’ behaviour

This narrative focuses on the pre-service teacher’s shock at her students’ non-compliant behaviour in an Australian classroom and her supervising teacher’s dismissive reaction to their behaviours. This situation was a critical incident for the beginning teacher because she had never seen such disobedient behaviour in classrooms in China and it made her worry about her ability to teach in Australia.

It was my first day as a student teacher teaching Mandarin in an Australian high school. I had observed a Year 7 English class and now I was helping the teacher teach a Year 7 Chinese class. The students were not well-behaved and this shocked me. They talked to me without putting hands up. Some of them came to the front and blew their nose right next to me, and tossed their tissue in the garbage bin which was next to me. It really shocked me. I thought they should at least raise their hands to get my permission for coming to the bin or blow their nose quietly at their seat or outside the classroom or at least away from me. I found the students’ behaviours were very strange and rude. I have never experienced such behaviour in my schooling because no student would ever do this in a school in China. Students with such behaviour would be regarded as hopeless students if they were in Chinese classroom.

I felt I would not be respected when it was my time to teach and that I would not be able to gain students’ attention. I am a non-native English speaker new to Australian secondary school. I knew it would be difficult for me to express my instructions clearly because of my limited English language ability. I also felt I would be unable to respond to the students quickly in English. More than that, I was afraid that the students would
laugh at my accent and grammar mistakes. I felt confronted, standing in front of the class, facing a group of students who were not listening, which was a really unpleasant and humiliating experience.

What surprised me more was the classroom teacher’s dismissive reaction. She looked calm and kept smiling with the students. She disciplined the students’ behaviour but seemed to be much more tolerant than me. She seemed to have got used to such behaviour. To me, schools and classroom are places that set high standards and rules for students. The students are expected to meet these standards and obey rules. The classroom discipline in local schools here is not as strict as in China. Moreover, the relationship between teacher and students is less hierarchical than in China. I deeply felt a sense of insecurity.

I told my concerns to my other nine colleagues. Many of them had similar difficulties in their schools, especially secondary schools. All of us found that Australian students do not respect their teacher in the same way as we Chinese students do in China. For us, the students’ behaviour was not right at all. I could not help worrying about how to control my class when it would be my time to start teaching Mandarin on my own.

Discussion

What made it a critical incident for the beginning teacher?

In this narrative, the beginning teacher was shocked by students’ non-compliant behaviour in an Australian classroom. She felt frustrated because she was unskilled in managing the class. Numerous literature shows that classroom management is a key issue/challenge for novice teachers (Kang, Levin, Null, & Lawrence, 2008; Emmer & Stough, 2001), especially in controlling students’ behaviour (Stoughton, 2007). As Emmer (2001) states: “Novices, in contrast, do not seem to have sufficient
ability to use expert-like routines and frequently conduct disorganised lessons (p. 106)."

The situation was made worse for the beginning teacher as she worried about her English language ability. Studying TESOL teacher education, Pavlenko (2003) has identified that teachers from non-native language backgrounds generally encounter identity difficulties, due to their self-perception as a non-native speaker. Pavlenko (2003) found that the non-native speaker student teachers easily found it hard to position themselves as teachers and this generated negative effects on their self-perception (p. 258). This insecurity obstructed her confidence in being able to communicate with students effectively in English (or in the language of the classroom). Consequently it further weakened her ability in organising classes and building up her authority through language. The Chinese beginning teacher experienced similar failure in entering a native speakers’ community—an Australian classroom—as well as the teaching profession, and lost confidence in her language ability.

Moreover, the situation was unique to the Chinese beginning teacher because the Australian classroom challenged her Chinese beliefs about teachers and teaching in terms of classroom management and teacher-student relationships. It is known that traditional Chinese educational culture asserts that the teacher’s authority status is assumed in the relationship between teacher and students. The idea of “师道尊严” (The dignity of teacher and teaching profession)” embedded in traditional Chinese educational philosophy, has influenced the Chinese educational system for a very long time:

In traditional Chinese cultural discourses, teachers enjoy high social status and are regarded as being in the same league as other key cultural figures, including heaven, earth, the emperor and parents (Gao, 2008, pp. 154-165).
Nurtured by Chinese educational culture, the beginner held a belief that students should follow a teacher’s instructions without any question, and respect her as an absolute authority. The Chinese teacher entered the classroom with such standards of student and teacher behaviour. She drew on her student experiences and Chinese social norms about teachers to define the image she would like to present. Nevertheless, the reality she encountered within local schools largely challenged her belief.

What it meant for her professional identity?

Like other beginning teachers, the novice teacher was at a loss about what to do, without knowing any useful skills, language or strategies. Classroom management is inextricably linked with affect (Emmer, 2001, p.107). It can be argued that the strong negative emotion was produced by the tension between her prior Chinese perspective on teachers and teaching, her lack of expertise in teaching, and her insufficient English language. Additionally, responses she received from friends and other people affirmed that managing these students was a difficult task. These factors contributed to her nerves and frustration as a teacher.

The real teaching context had shaken her previous perspective of the teacher’s role and responsibilities up to that moment. Sexton (2008) points out that “misalignment (between role and identity), however, created dissonance between personal goals and program expectations (p. 78)”. Having a sense of this misalignment in teacher’s authority and Australian students’ behaviour, the Chinese beginning teacher began to reconsider her perception of being a teacher, as well as the classroom management issue. Her emotional reaction showed that she was struggling with positioning herself in a new context. Discussion with other people was her way to negotiate the meaning of her experience and trying to find a way out in order to establish a new identity.
4.3 Narrative 2: Supervising teacher’s modelling in motivating student learning

This narrative focuses on the beginning teacher’s anger at a student’s attitude to learning, as well as her anger at how her supervising teacher reacted to the girl’s learning attitude and behaviour. This critical incident inspired the novice to reflect upon her prior belief in teaching and added to her knowledge about Australian educational culture.

I had been observing classes for two terms. It was Period 2, in Karen’s Mandarin classroom. Karen was teaching how to introduce one’s name in Chinese. She asked in Chinese at first: “你叫什么名字？ (What is your name?)” Then, Karen turned to a girl, expecting her to answer. The student looked at Karen but her mouth remained closed tightly. Other students were all looking at the girl. The girl put her head down and remained silent. Karen asked her again but received no response. I felt the atmosphere was a bit nervous. Then Karen told her the answer: 我叫丁小丽 (My name is Ding Xiaoli). Karen repeated these five words again. I guessed that the girl would follow Karen and repeat the words now. To my surprise, the girl’s mouth remained closed. As an observer, I was already quite unhappy and impatient with her since I thought that such a student who ignores a teacher’s instruction was rude and not doing the right thing. I also thought Karen must feel the same way as me. To my bigger surprise, Karen looked neither unsatisfied nor impatient. She kept on guiding the girl: “Repeat after me: 我; 叫; 丁; 小; 丽.” She paused between each word, making them easier to be followed. Finally, the girl opened her mouth and repeated words one by one: “我; 叫; 丁; 小; 丽.” “See, you did it” Karen smiled. I was indeed impressed by Karen’s patience and kindness to that particular girl.
I felt that if I were the teacher, I would definitely have given up on the student and chosen another student to answer the question. This is what would happen in a Chinese classroom. For me, it would be a waste of time to wait and teach one particular student. Am I too strict and non-caring for students? I remained unhappy after this class and told Karen my concern. Karen said: “Well, in secondary schools, some students disregard China and refuse learning it. Teachers need to be quite patient and encouraging.” Caroline, the school development officer of DET, Western Sydney Region, NSW, also told me later that in the region where my volunteering school was located in, the students are culturally mixed and many of them have socio-economic disadvantage. As a result, learning Mandarin was not interested by most of the students (Interview with Caroline, 2010).

I learned that as a Mandarin teacher, I was facing more challenges in motivating students. In the following months, I noticed that almost every LOTE teacher gives chocolate and lollies to students when they successfully complete a task or give a correct answer. They were always encouraging students. The students show a higher level of engagement after getting rewards. This is different to how students are treated in China but an interesting way to motivate them. I felt I should do something positive to engage those students and change their attitudes to learning Mandarin. Since then, I started to give chocolates to my students in order to make them feel I am a nice and trustworthy teacher too.

Discussion

What made it a critical incident for the beginning teacher?
The beginning teacher was upset when facing a reluctant student. In China, teaching is exam-oriented. From the beginning teacher’s self experience, competitive learning was encouraged in Chinese schooling. As Li (2004a) has noticed, most Chinese students are docile and obedient, motivating themselves only for exams (p. 127). The responsibility left for Chinese teachers generally was to set high standards in examinations and push students to achieve these standards in various ways, such as lots of homework, negative language to prod students into making further effort, comparing students with others. Chinese teachers are more likely to critique, point out the shortcomings or insufficiencies of kids, and to make direct suggestions. This is because:

In the Chinese cultural system, social norms and the goals, needs, and views of the ingroup are more important than interests and pleasures of the individual, and behaviours are regulated by external restraints rather than internal desires of the individual (Lu, 1997, p. 14).

If the Australian student were in a Chinese school, she would be criticised as not being positive and diligent in learning. The teacher would then pick a “good student” to demonstrate. Hence, the Australian supervising teacher’s patient response and encouraging attitude towards the individual student shocked and impressed the novice a lot. The novice so far believed that learning is a student’s own responsibility. At that time, she had no idea that the teaching and learning of Mandarin as a second language in WSR public schools, especially for Years 7 and 8, were not exam-oriented. Consequently, she had not been aware of motivating students positively as a teacher’s responsibility.

**Why she resolved it in this way?**

Sensing her personal emotions, the prospective teacher attempted to find the answer for the emotion. This was therefore a critical incident in constructing her
professional identity. From discussion with the supervising teacher and the organiser of the ROSETE program, the novice learned that Mandarin was not so welcomed in the schools due to their economic disadvantages. That was a cause for students’ misbehaviours and off-task behaviours. This was a critical incident because it made her reflect on her beliefs about schools, teaching and students. Emmer et al. (2001) recognise the influence of context on classroom management, and the beginning teacher began to understand that schools do not have to be like they are in China.

Teaching contexts may vary according to instructional goals, subject matter taught, grade or age and other student characteristics, use of technology, and so forth. For example, school and classroom settings having students from predominantly lower or working class backgrounds are more challenging because students have been found to be less inclined to be cooperative with teachers. (p. 108)

These students may be categorised as not knowing the relevance of learning a second language, not to mention an unfamiliar Asian language. Consequently, students are not motivated to make efforts in Mandarin class, and are less willing to engage in learning. Importantly, at that time, the novice teacher had been aware that the issue of student motivation is closely linked with classroom management.

What it meant for her professional identity
The Chinese novice teacher noticed the educational culture in Australia is characterized by appreciative teaching, as she observed that her supervising teacher and other LOTE teachers often reward students, both verbally and materially, as a motivating way to encourage students’ learning. Through critical reflection, she had sensed the difference between Chinese and Australian motivating styles when she gained knowledge of student motivating style in an Australian context. There was disconnection between what the student teacher once had believed and what the
program expected her to be. Having identified the gap, a misalignment occurred in the beginning teacher’s professional identity (Sexton, 2008, p. 84).

Her realisation of the importance of student motivation and engagement for classroom order (Emmer & Stough, 2001; Burke, 2007), led to further reflection and adjustment on her performance. The beginning teacher realised that more work was needed to change their behaviours and manage the Mandarin class well. She gradually showed an open mind towards the new teaching culture and acknowledged that motivating students in a positive way is part of the teacher’s role in Australian LOTE classrooms. Cross & Hong (2009) have argued that “changing teaching practice . . . often involves modifying teachers’ existing beliefs about the domain, teaching and learning, and also reshaping their professional identity as a teacher (p. 273)”. Her later use of material rewards to establish rapport with students and motivate them, reflected her reshaped professional identity; inclining to guide students’ behaviour through alternative pathways.

4.4 Narrative 3: Navigating management strategies between Chinese and Australian ways

This narrative focuses on the beginning teacher’s attempts to control the class and engage students in learning. On the one hand, she depended on her previous Chinese knowledge to start the class and set the discipline for the Mandarin class, which worked well. On the other hand, she tried to mimic Australian style language teaching in order to engage students and to create a positive learning environment.

I had recently changed schools and today was the first day I formally taught in School 2. The bell rang, and the Year 8 students came into the classroom chatting. I clapped my hands to attract their attention, starting the class in Chinese way as I did many times in another high
school. I said: “同学们，请安静！(Please be quiet, my fellow students!)” All the students stopped talking, looking forward at me. I continued saying: “请起立! (Please stand up)” I repeated the word for “standing up” with the two hands up sign. The students all stood up though hesitantly. Then, I raised up my two hands and slowly put my hands neatly on my body sides, saying: “两手放在两侧，两手放在两侧。(Put your two hands at the side of your body.)” Looking around the whole class until every student stood clearly. Then I came back to the front of the class, pointing to the white board:

Tong xue men hao! (Hello, fellow students!)
Lao shi hao! (Hello, Miss!)

These words were written on the board before the class began. I read it: “‘Tong xue men hao’ means ‘Hello, fellow students’. I will greet you in this way. You guys need to greet us back politely, saying ‘Lao shi hao’, which means ‘Hello, Miss’. As you greet, you need to bow like this.” I bow to students as a demonstration, and asked “understand?” “Yes!” the students replied excitedly. “Okay, now let’s experience how a Chinese class begins!” I bowed, saying “tong xue men hao!” The students greeted back in a clear voice “lao shi hao.” Though their voices were low and they did not bow completely, I was quite satisfied: “很好，请坐！(Well done! Sit down please.)” I smiled and implied them to sit down by using a hands-down sign. The students concentrated on learning as soon as they sat down quietly.

Everything went smoothly until I started to teach them Origami (paper folding). I conducted this hands-on activity in the hope of motivating students and engaging them in learning in the Mandarin class. Having instructed the students to follow me, I showed them each fold step by
step. I assumed that it could be conducted as individual work. However, the students were unable to follow my instructions and complete the learning task because most of them were boys. The students looked so confused and asked for the instructions again and again. Some called out impatiently: “Miss, I am stuck. How to make that?” At first, I patiently taught two boys individually. To my surprise, a third, and fourth came to the front, standing beside me and asking me for help. The whole classroom began to be disorganized and noisy. I was driven crazy and deeply felt helpless about this class.

Suddenly, I saw a gleam of sunlight in this (my) desperate moment: the first boy I taught had already folded up a paper bird. So I said: “Okay, Please help each other if you or your partner does not know how to fold. I am sorry that I have no time to teach you one by one. So please ask your classmates. See, Adrian has got the right track!” As soon as my words finished, some boys turned to Adrian for help. Adrian was very happy and patient to teach his classmates. The class became more organised until the end. Goodness me! Next time, I need to know the students’ ability well before designing any activities, thought I.

Discussion

**What made it a critical incident for the beginning teacher?**

This was a critical class in which the beginning teacher tried both Chinese routine and Australian pedagogy, with the aim of managing the class and engaging students. The beginning of the class was successful for two reasons. First, the beginning teacher was pedagogically familiar with the Chinese way of starting a class by a formal routine, as a means of classroom management. Educational research shows that starting the lesson is critical for classroom management, as a chance for the teacher to announce authority (Burke, 2007, p. 181). Teachers who refer to
classroom or school rules, giving instructions to students to prepare for the class, state the norms and expected practice in their classroom, and this expresses their authority status over students (Burke, 2007, p. 181). Through instructing students to greet and bow in a formal manner, the Chinese new teacher effectively asserted the norms of the Mandarin class, set up an ordered tone and established her authority in class. Secondly, students probably felt interested in this Chinese class ceremony as an exotic ritual. From students’ responses and performance, she knew that she had managed the beginning of the class well. The novice had successfully established her authority through demonstrating a routine to students. Her previous Chinese knowledge of starting a class empowered her to control the class confidently.

Besides her Chinese management knowledge from previous experience, the novice teacher also navigated new strategies to adapt to an Australian classroom. Through reflection upon her previous negative experience, in Narratives 1 etc, the beginning teacher started to learn other LOTE teachers’ ways of disciplining and motivating. She found that teachers need to make the class colourful, as a means of capturing students’ attention in Australian. Engaging approaches include group work and competitive activities, which are widely used by local teachers. The beginning teacher had noticed that students’ engagement is the determining factor for classroom order and effect (Emmer & Stough, 2001; Burke, 2007).

**Why she resolved it in this way?**

Learning through observation of experienced LOTE teachers, the beginning teacher made attempts to experiment with the Australian pedagogy of engaging students by conducting hands-on activities. Her initial purpose was to motivate students’ interests so that they would remain well-behaved in classroom learning. However, she had zero experience of either learning or teaching language through hands-on activities in China. She was just mimicking Australian teachers without taking the students’ situation and abilities (most students were boys in this class) into account. The novice failed to achieve the purpose of engaging students through this activity.
This activity even produced more management problems. In order to survive in the class, the novice shared her responsibility with a boy student. Under the assistance of the student, she eased her management difficulties and maintained smooth running to some extent. The novice teacher here held her responsibility to create a motivational learning environment for students. It demonstrated her ideology and capability in managing the classroom through engaging students (Wiseman & Hunt, 2001, p. 10).

**What it meant for her professional identity**

All efforts she made showed her professional development in terms of being able to “demonstrate strategies to create a positive environment supporting student effort and learning” (NSW Institute of Teachers, 2004, p. 10). On the other hand, it should be noted that she was not able to “provide clear directions for classroom activities and engage students in purposeful learning activity” (Ibid, p. 10). It demonstrated her inability and lack of preparation for the new management style.

This failure exposed her to recognising her professional incapacity, which stimulated her rethinking about her teaching and organising methods. Ryan (2007) has portrayed the process of the beginning teacher in improving her professional competency in managing the classroom: using previous self-observation, teachers think further about coping strategies and finally reshape their perspective and actions, aimed at creating and refining better teaching circumstances (p. 5). The beginning teacher reflected afterwards that she should have considered students’ situation, ability and potential problematic situations, in advance. It showed that the beginning teacher had identified her role as a classroom manager according to teaching profession standards.

**4.5 Narrative 4: Managing to discipline students’ behaviours**
This narrative focuses on the beginning teacher’s growth in disciplining students’ off-task behaviours and misbehaviours. As the narrative shows, she had mastered some disciplinary strategies for correcting students’ behaviour and had started building her power in the classroom. This made her feel more confident as a professional teacher.

I

It was the middle of last term of my volunteering practice. Period 6 was Mandarin class for Year 8 G. The task of this lesson was to lead students to review their family members in Chinese. Showing flash cards of family members, I pronounced words one by one and let the students say after me. During oral drilling, students who sat in the two middle rows were paying attention to my teaching, while students at two side-groups, especially those sitting in the corners looked dreaming. Some of them did not open their mouths to practise. To imply that I was not happy and wanted them to open their mouths, talk louder, I raised my voice to attract their attention. This strategy seemed working to some extent. However, I found there were still two girl students sitting at the right back corner kept on murmuring. I was so unhappy that I called the two students: “Hello~~”, “Excuse me, please look here.” The two girls stopped talking and put their heads lower. Though they still didn’t follow my oral drilling, as they didn’t disturb others, I left them at the corner and continued my teaching.

II

The left corner was also unsettling. Two boys there suddenly fought with each other for some unknown reasons. I was so upset that I stopped oral drilling immediately. I pointed to an empty desk at the front row, speaking to one of the boys: “Harry, come and sit here.” The boy did not listen to me, arguing: “Miss, he hit me first!”
“I saw you hit him. Obviously you do not work when together. Come and sit here!” I insisted. “No, I do not want to sit there!” The boy refused right away.

“Come, and sit here!” I tried again.

The boy was more insistent than me.

I waited for a moment, staring at him firmly, struggling in my mind: I could not lose, no way! But what can I do? I repeated again with pause between each word: “you, come, sit here right now.”

The boy did not move at all. All the other students were watching us.

I could sense a smell of gun powder in the classroom.

What can I do? Should I give up? I started to doubt: no, it will “lose my face” if I give up. I am the teacher. Okay, last try! I repeated without more words: “Come, and sit here!”

To my surprise, the boy finally gave in: “Miss~, I will listen, I will behave well.”

“Great!” I felt relieved right away and thought happily, saying: “Okay, I trust you this time.”

I did not move the boy’s seat. In the rest of the time, the boy indeed behaved well.

Discussion

**Why this was a critical incident and why she resolved it in this way?**

Two vignettes are described in this narrative, both of which are successful situations of the beginning teacher’s meaningful use of reactive and proactive strategies in behaviour management. The notion of discipline refers to “the preservation of order and the maintenance of control” (Orlich et al., 2010, p. 172). The beginning teacher demonstrated her growing capability in this professional area, performing as a classroom manager.
In the first vignette, she used her voice as a strategy to draw students’ attention back. She learned this strategy of using her voice from a very experienced LOTE teacher. Horwitz (2005) found that Japanese teachers are used to conducting instruction behind desks (p. 61). From the similar East Asian background, Chinese teachers also used to give instructions with many desks between the students and themselves, to show their authority. In contrast, Australian teachers often speak in a loud clear voice to show their authoritative presence in the classroom (Horwitz, 2005, pp. 60-1). The novice was required by experienced Australian teachers to use her voice as a way of building authority and disciplining students’ behaviour. Her practice in the first vignette showed that the novice teacher had identified the means to present herself as an authority without being ignored by students. Her voice was powerful enough to control the classroom and to engage students in Australian classrooms after reflecting on the supervising teacher’s feedback and on her own performance. The students’ responses in this class showed that the novice had been effective in using a voice strategy to win students’ attention back and control the class.

The second vignette focuses on a strategy of seat arrangement. Burke (2007) views organising students’ space in the classroom as a strategy for engaging them, which at the same time helps to establish the teacher’s authority (p. 177). Different from Chinese schools, in the Western Sydney Region, public secondary school teachers have their designated classroom, while students need to rush into different classrooms to have different subjects from period to period. Therefore, the teacher has the power to arrange students’ seating. The beginning teacher learned from her supervising teacher to use the seat arranging strategy, which is common among Australian teachers to establish authority and classroom order. Her managerial strategy effectively corrected the boy’s performance in the remaining class time. This result displayed her growing capability in behaviour management.
Furthermore, the novice teacher balanced her disciplinary goal and the boy student’s dignity, through negotiation. It should be noted that the “educational tradition in East Asia has promoted a high degree of teacher authority and control” (Sakai et al., 2010, p. 20). Students in East Asia are not given the choice to develop proactive, autonomous behaviour. Therefore, the Chinese beginning teacher’s decision to allow the boy to remain in his seat transferred power to students, letting them be self-responsible. This showed that her classroom management style contained some person-centred elements, featuring a balance between the needs of the teacher and the learner through negotiation and cooperation (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, p. 100).

**What it meant for her professional identity**

This narrative demonstrates the beginning teacher’s growth and achievement in disciplining students’ off-task behaviours and disciplinary problems in class time. Unlike in Narrative 1, where she didn’t know how to deal with the students on the first day, the Chinese beginning teacher this time had been able to use a disciplinary strategy to control the classroom and manage students’ behaviour. She had achieved matching who she was and who she wanted to be, in respect of behavioural discipline. Professional strategies, such as voice and seating arrangements were used to correct students’ behaviour and engage students in learning. She had gained more confidence in using these strategies in practical teaching. Sexton (2008) has paid attention to “the alignment and misalignment between the student teachers’ identities and the way that teaching was shaped” (p. 83). In line with this implication, the Chinese beginning teacher’s professional identity was affirmed when an alignment occurred with her previous beliefs, in teacher-focused discipline management.

Moreover, the novice teacher developed her professional skills in classroom management towards a more democratic style. When facing the boy student’s disobedience, the novice teacher flexibly gave the boy a chance to achieve
self-discipline. Respecting his promise and choice, she allowed him to remain in his seat, instead of insisting on her absolute authority. She successfully achieved effective management through this balancing of power between the students and herself. This was a change from her teacher-centred ideology. It was a landmark of her professionalised understanding of classroom management and her management of competent learning.

4.6 Narrative 5: Successfully building a positive relationship with students through appreciative teaching methods

This narrative was the climax of the beginning teacher’s teaching experience, and which brought her confidence and a sense of achievement through building positive teacher-student relationships. She rewarded students for their calligraphic works, with the aim of motivating students’ enthusiasm to continue Mandarin learning. This narrative symbolises that her teaching practice had been moving towards a more positive and appreciative style, and this was significant to her professional construction.

It was the last week of my first year teaching. In the last ten minutes of the Mandarin class for Year 8 B, I rewarded students for their calligraphy works they made last week. First, I claimed the top seven students whose calligraphic work had been selected. I put their calligraphic work on the right wall of the classroom, titling “Chinese calligraphy for animal’s name”. I also let these seven students to pick a bookmark with Chinese pictographic characters with the colour they like. Each bookmark has a Chinese character on it, which is very appropriate prize. I noticed they were so happy. Moreover, as a teacher, I should take every student into account rather than just focusing on top students. Therefore, for the rest of the class, I stamped a Chinese stamp on each
student’s work with characters of “加油 (Come on, try harder)” and “很好 (Very Good)”. While I was giving the work back to them, I praised all the students: “You can take your calligraphic work back home and show your parents. Guys, as beginners, you are already doing amazingly well.” The students all had happy expression on their faces. They cheerfully discussed about their calligraphy work with friends. They looked so lovely. Watching them, a delightful and gratified feeling came to my mind. I felt so much closer to them.

Discussion

Why the beginning teacher resolved it in this way?

In this class, the beginning teacher shifted from the style of strict teaching to appreciative teaching, being conscious of motivating students’ enthusiasm in different ways. Previous literature on Chinese teacher’s strategies in classroom management shows that Chinese teachers are “more likely to use punishment-oriented, antisocial BATs (Behaviour Alteration techniques)” than reward-based, prosocial BATs (Lu, 1997). In contrast, instead of emphasising teacher’s authority and disciplinary rules, the beginning teacher moved towards a proactive approach in establishing a warm and supportive relationship with students. The novice attempted to appreciate students’ learning enthusiasm by using reward strategies, ranging from material rewards to verbal rewards. The novice teacher successfully created a positive learning environment. She showed a more prosocial and cooperative position in managing her relationship with students and the classroom atmosphere, achieving student engagement.

What it meant for her professional identity?

Compared with the very early shock the beginning teacher experienced in a real classroom, the novice became more mature in respect of her social-emotional competence. Using Jennings & Greenberg (2009)’s words, the Chinese novice
teacher at this stage had developed capability to express her emotion appropriately, to develop and maintain a healthy and supportive teacher-student relationship (p. 491, p. 500). The novice showed her kindness and appreciative attitudes towards students, making them feel secure and that the foreign teacher was trustworthy, and this helped create rapport with students and their engagement with learning (Henley, 2010, p. 56).

This critical incident showed a new development in the beginning teacher’s professional identity. In studies of teachers’ psychological functioning, teachers’ emotions represents their perceptions of job characteristics (Klusmann, et al., 2008, pp. 130-2). The novice teacher’s positive emotions towards students showed that she had perceived that to establish positive teacher-student relationships and use rewards to engage students were responsibilities of the teacher. Since “teachers’ emotions are integral to their motivation” (Meyer & Turner, 2006, p. 388), the novice teacher’s positive emotions also reflected her motivation and commitment to the teaching profession in the Australian classroom.

The novice teacher’s commitment in motivating students through rewarding methods, indicates her transformed belief and understanding of classroom management and student engagement. Seeking the roots of teachers’ commitment, Day et al. (2005) view teachers’ beliefs and values as an ideological core component of commitment, representing the teacher’s role and identity (p. 563). The novice had identified herself as a motivator more than a discipliner. She had shifted from believing in teacher-centred education towards proactive strategies for engaging students, building rapport with students and creating a positive learning environment. Since “beliefs are often precursors to actions (Cross & Hong, 2009, p. 277)”, the beginning teacher tried to present a more positive image to students instead of being a nit-picking teacher. Croos & Hong (2009) also have recognised the reverse impact that emotions have on belief, viewing emotion as the driving force towards actualising belief (p. 276). When she sensed positive responses from students, the
Chinese beginning teacher began to see herself as a “real” teacher. She confirmed her belief in appreciative teaching and this encouraged her to do more in her future teaching life.

4.7 Overall Discussion

The tensions and critical incidents reported in this chapter focus on the field of classroom management and student engagement.

**Research question 1: What were the critical incidents?**

Firstly, it was found that the issue of classroom management, especially disciplinary management was the starting point of the beginning teacher’s identification with the teaching profession. The beginning teacher was not only faced with general difficulties, such as underconfidence and being under-prepared, as other beginning teachers experience, but also encountered unique challenges, due to her Chinese educational beliefs and understandings.

This dimension of the novice teacher’s professional identity construction was strongly featured in her personal emotions. Recognising emotion features in and accompanies the process of teachers’ professional identity construction, Flores et al. (2006) believe that emotion is “a significant and ongoing part of being a teacher”, (p. 221). They state that these emotions occur when teachers’ long-held perspectives and practices are challenged by real-world context, such as students’ behaviours (Flores & Day, 2006, p. 221).

The beginning teacher felt negative emotions because the Australian classroom conflicted with her Chinese educational beliefs. When entering the Australian classroom, the beginning teacher’s belief in teacher-centred classroom management, as well as the traditional Chinese style of student motivation, was challenged by the
student-centred Australian classroom. Since “many mature age pre-service teachers draw on their life experiences . . . to inform their professional identity (MacGregor, 2009, p. 3)”, when there was no prior experience and the existing prior beliefs conflicted with the reality, the beginning teacher’s professional identity was shaken.

The novice initially felt shocked, angry, anxiety, sad, over half a year or so of struggling. Inspired by negative emotion, the beginning teacher started to reflect on herself as a teacher, especially on her authority and position in the classroom. She had to adjust her Chinese understanding of the teaching profession and the teacher’s role and responsibility in classroom management to fit in to the Australian context. Once equipped with new managing strategies and transformed beliefs, she gradually became positive and confident. As to the meaning that these critical incidents had for the beginning teacher’s professional identity construction, it could be argued that classroom management made the prospective teacher’s professional identity shift quickly.

**Research question.2: What factors these critical incidents are attributed to?**

As to the factors that facilitate identity transformation, socialising power was of extreme importance in constructing the novice’s professional identity. It was her immersion in an authentic teaching context—an Australian secondary classroom—that contextualised the novice’s professional identity as a Mandarin teacher. Practical teaching in a school provides an opportunity for the Chinese beginning teacher to experience the real issues of students’ behaviour and to update at first hand her knowledge about Australian students’ characteristics, teaching culture, subject status. For example, in narrative 3, the beginning teacher learned that students may not be motivated to learn Mandarin. Also, the beginning teacher had plenty of chances to experiment with new-learned management and engagement strategies and finally to construct her personal style. As in narrative 4, the novice mimicked Australian teachers as she learned that activities were used to manage
classes; and in narratives 5 and 6, different disciplinary strategies and motivation strategies were tried out by the beginning teacher.

Flores et al. (2006) stressed the influence of socialising factors on how new teachers view their teaching and themselves. They identify:

Then ‘apprenticeship of observation’ during which students have observed their own teachers teaching, the impact of initial teacher training program, the influence of significant others (namely relatives and former teachers) and the ecology of the classroom are some of the major socialising agents (p. 221)

The broader educational environment pushed the beginning teacher to adapt to the educational system by adjusting her own beliefs and attitudes, learning survival skills.

In teacher education, mentors play a vital role in the constructional process of the preservice teacher’s professional identity. In real working settings, supervising teachers and other classroom teachers’ demonstrations, and their feedback, greatly helped the Chinese beginning teacher’s professional growth and identity construction. The supervising teacher’s performance and teaching philosophy, of motivating students as a means of managing the classroom, greatly influenced the prospective teacher’s emotion and changes in performance. The modelling role of the supervising teacher as mentor, illuminated in Narrative 2, was an example. Besides, the beginning teacher’s decision to organise activities and reward students as a way of engaging and motivating students, was also the result of her socialisation by other, professional teachers. This is consistent with the findings of other studies, that “pre-service teachers were moulded by experienced supervisors to fit the particular school environment” (Walkington, 2005).
Meanwhile, self-critical reflection was the primary way that the beginning teacher made learnt transformation in classroom management and student motivation. As Flores et al. (2006) put it:

The first few years of teaching may be seen as a ‘two-way struggle in which teachers try to create their own social reality by attempting to make their work match their personal vision of how it should be, whilst at the same time being subjected to the powerful socialising forces of the school culture’ (p. 220).

According to Flores et al (2006), the novice teacher will inevitably experience “transition shock” during the early time of her professional development, but will also adjust herself, adapting to the surrounding environment through critically reflecting on her own performance and beliefs (p. 220). Though the issue of students’ behaviour and motivation once caused great emotional reactions in the Chinese beginning teacher, she overcame this through self-reflection and adjustment. The beginning teacher compared her reaction and performance with that of her supervising teacher and colleagues. She evaluated herself, and actively changed her teacher-centred beliefs. She also absorbed local teachers’ knowledge and skills in managing classes and motivating students. In common with other beginning teachers, the novice teacher chose a personal way to present herself through judging and negotiating (Stoughton, 2007, p. 1025). The six narratives show that it is possible for a Chinese beginning teacher to reflect, and adapt herself into managing an Australian classroom within the space of one year.

**Research question 3: What it meant for the beginning teacher’s professional identity?**

There was a shift in process from her initial presence in the classroom to her engagement in teaching. The five narratives show that the beginning teacher shifted her understanding of classroom management. In the early period, when she initially
engaged in the classrooms, she assumed that teachers enjoy dignity naturally, based on her previous Chinese educational culture. After interacting with students and observing experienced teachers, she then realised that teachers have the responsibility to manage the classroom. To establish her authority and classroom order, she learned and practised both reactive and proactive strategies, such as voice use and seating arrangements, to discipline students’ misbehaviours and off-task behaviours. The novice teacher at the same time realised that the teacher is a manager, not just to discipline students’ behaviour but also to be a motivator, to engage students in subject learning. She attempted to organise activities to create a positive classroom environment and used various reward methods to build up rapport with students.

The shift in performance is the result of the novice’s belief change in respect of classroom management and student motivation. The novice saw the importance of developing classroom as a supportive and caring environment (McDonald, 2010, p. 30). Once to be a strict disciplinarian ideologically, the beginning teacher learned practical strategies of disciplining Australian students and be more caring and encouraging in order to build positive teacher-student relationship and motivating students to learn Mandarin. Her style of managing classroom tended to be more student-centred. As teacher beliefs, especially educational beliefs are closely linked with teachers’ perception of self, i.e. professional identity (Ertmer, 2005, p. 28), her change in respect of classroom management and student motivation was a forward step in the constructing her professional identity under Australian context.
Chapter 5: Preparing lessons in the context of “no fixed textbook”

5.1 Introduction

Lesson planning and preparation was one of the significant themes in the process of the teacher-researcher’s professional identity construction. Lesson planning and preparation is one of the key professional standards for a qualified teacher (John, 2006, p. 484). Researchers identify the significance of lesson planning and preparation as professional work that makes teaching an organised activity, providing a foundation for teaching the lesson (Orlich et al., 2010, pp. 63, 107). This chapter elaborates on this theme through focusing on the beginning teacher’s professional identity construction around her beliefs, knowledge of and capability in planning lessons, especially materials and activities.

Though it is also about the beginning teacher’s growth in teaching practice, the focus of this chapter is different from Chapter 4. Chapter 4 focused on students’ attitudes and classroom behaviours, and the beginning teacher’s interaction with them. This chapter centres in particular, on the novice teacher’s concern with and development in lesson preparation and planning, as professional tasks themselves. Four narratives presented in this chapter illustrate the beginning teacher’s professional change and growth in lesson planning, especially in designing activities and preparing materials in the Australian teaching culture. She shifted from confusion and worry about teaching without an allocated textbook, to gradually understanding how to design and plan lessons that did not rely on textbook use.
Table 5.1 below, outlines the narratives in this chapter; when tensions or crucial moments occurred, is indicated by the narrative title, and by the data used to develop the narrative.

**Table 5.1 Narratives included in chapter 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narratives</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Data resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Classroom observation period (Terms 3 and 4, 2009)</td>
<td>21/9/2009, 17/12/2010</td>
<td>Teaching without a fixed textbook?!</td>
<td>Reflective journals; interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Practical teaching period (Term 1, 2010)</td>
<td>20/1/2010</td>
<td>Unit and lesson preparation with supervising teacher</td>
<td>Reflective journals; interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>17/3/2010</td>
<td>Insufficient instructional preparation for computer activity</td>
<td>Reflective journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Practical teaching period (Term 2, 2010)</td>
<td>16/6/2010, 23/6/2010</td>
<td>Preparing activities and post-lesson reflection</td>
<td>Reflective journals, interviews; survey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**5.2 Narrative 6: Teaching without a fixed textbook**

The tension this narrative focuses on was the beginning teacher’s confusion and worry when she found there was no allocated textbook for Mandarin teaching and learning in WSR public schools. As stated in Chapter 1, growing up in a Chinese
educational system, the novice had no experience of teaching and learning without an authorised textbook. The new environment challenged her conceptualisation of teaching, and her confidence in teaching Mandarin as a foreign language.

We ten ROSETE volunteers visited Ashfield Public Primary School, for a field visit. We observed two Mandarin classes taught by an experienced teacher. After class, the teacher we observed introduced many books to us, such as, "幼儿汉语" (Kid’s Chinese; Ji Nan University Publisher); “中文” (Hanyu; Ji Nan University Publisher); “中文百宝箱” (Chinese treasure chest, CENGAGE Learning); “Chinese picture cards: a copy-ready resource” (by Juren Guan, BESS Press); “Go Chinese” (by Qiushao Luo & Yimei Xue, CENGAGE Learning). However, she did not pick any of them as the prescribed textbook for her class. At the end of the school visit, Eva, who was the teaching methodology trainer, let me copy a book list of those resource books, saying that she will buy these books and build a resource library for us volunteers. I really appreciated her kindness, but also at the same time was confused why there was no unitary set textbook for Mandarin teaching and learning in this public school. My other nine colleagues had the same confusion.

We raised the issue of textbooks to the school development officer, Caroline on one Friday meeting. Caroline acknowledged this issue and added that not only Mandarin, many other subjects have no fixed textbooks for teachers and students. It is the educational culture in NSW public schools. LOTE teachers are required to develop their own teaching materials, design various activities and using modern technologies. For example, they select worksheets from different teachers’ resource books for students to learn and work with in Mandarin class, or organise games, such as matching game. These
teachers’ works are advocated as teacher’s responsibility. It is believed to be effective teaching in terms of engaging students into learning through various activities instead of relying on textbooks.

This was challenging for me because I never had any experience of teaching without a textbook in China. I asked myself what teaching material could I use? How to access to these teaching materials? In what ways should I develop my own teaching resources and organise them in a useful way? Is there any principle underlying these skills? All in all, ignorance about preparing lessons fills my mind. I badly need someone to tell me what to do and how to do it.

Discussion

What made it a critical incident for the beginning teacher?

Like any other student teacher, the Chinese pre-service teacher noticed that preparing lessons was a significant professional ability that needs to be learned before entering into work settings (Crookes, 2003). However, the expectation of preparing for teaching without a set text was surprising and worrying for the Chinese beginning teacher, who came from China, where textbooks for teaching and learning were always available. In Mainland China, teacher manuals and the student texts are authoritative texts (Li, 2004, p. 263). For example, when learning English in a Chinese secondary school, the novice teacher and her classmates used one set of textbooks that were published by the People’s Education Publisher: Junior English for China (JEFC) and Senior English for China (SEFC) (Wang, 2007, p. 92). These two textbooks were most widely used, almost covering the whole nation. All students and teachers viewed the textbook as an authority, because the national examination would be designed according to this set of textbooks. The curriculum was exam-oriented and lessons were taught according to the sequence in the authorised textbook. All the other subjects in Chinese schools have fixed textbooks...
as well. The reason behind her negative emotions was rooted in her educational culture background: she had never conceived of teaching without a certain textbook. Cheng et al. (2009) have examined the relationship between pre-service teachers’ epistemological beliefs and their conceptions of teaching, pointing out that what teachers believe about the nature of knowledge and knowing will influence their understanding of teaching and their pedagogy (p. 320). In the Chinese pre-service teacher’s thinking, most knowledge is certain, and is documented in authorised textbooks. Teaching is to transmit knowledge from generation to generation in a formal and serious way. The Chinese pre-service teacher’s belief in the nature of knowledge and her educational beliefs about teaching and learning soundly featured as subject-centred and teacher-centred.

**Why she resolved it in this way?**

In this incident, beginning teachers lacked resources to form a new professional identity in lesson planning and preparation, when no prior experience could be relied on. This echoes a previous study, where “many mature age pre-service teachers draw on their life experiences . . . to inform their professional identity” (MacGregor, 2009, p. 3). As she had only recently arrived in Australia, she had not learned anything about how Australian teachers prepare lessons without being guided by a fixed textbook. She was at a loss what to do, and imagined the class would certainly be disorganised and in a mess. She felt a strong sense of confusion and worried emotionally at this stage.

**What it meant for her professional Identity**

As Crookes (2003) has found, in the practicum period, novice teachers often find it necessary to have detailed plans, both mental and physical (p. 101). This critical incident inspired the novice teacher to be concerned with the teaching task itself, of which lesson planning is the first step. The survival needs pushed her to identify her need of professional learning in planning knowledge and skills.
5.3 Narrative 7: Unit preparation and lesson preparation with supervising teacher

The critical moment this narrative shows is the beginning teacher’s learning of planning units and lessons via participating in the work of experienced teachers. In the light of their professional techniques, she learned the procedure and essential principles of preparing lessons systematically. Especially, she learned that the collection, selection and organisation of teaching materials from various resources and textbooks is an important part of the teacher’s preparation work. This incident alleviated the novice’s confusion and anxiety about how to teach without a textbook.

Though I had been engaged in the school for half a year, the coming term was my first term that I would formally deliver a class as a practicum teacher. Before the term began, Karen invited me to her house to prepare a teaching program and lessons for the following term. There was another experienced Mandarin teacher, Mona at Karen’s house too. Knowing that I lacked experience in preparing units and lessons, Karen wanted me to observe how Mona and herself prepared Mandarin units and lessons for next term. She also allowed me to use her program and lesson plan to deliver some teachings next term. I was very appreciative of her consideration.

Karen and Mona prepared a teaching program for Year 8 in an organised and rational sequence. They first set the students’ level as Stage 1. According to the requirements of Stage 1 in Mandarin curriculum and syllabus, they decided on a learning unit. Then they divided the unit into several lessons. As they were discussing, Karen at times turned to me and explained what they were doing and why they did this and that, such as considering students’ interests, background knowledge, and at the
same time, thinking of ways to engage Chinese culture in language teaching.

Sometimes, they asked me for my opinions, such as “What do you think?” “What do you recommend?” Due to my ignorance and lack of confidence, I always agreed with their ideas but contributed nothing new. I really cherished this opportunity to learn the unit program and lesson preparation, feeling like a blank white paper that wants to have every colour be put on me. I followed them step by step. The whole scope and sequence were finally designed by Karen and Mona. I was so amazed by their professional expertise.

Since there was no fixed textbook, Karen and Mona started collecting teaching material from different resources, and copied them out. These resources would be used as teaching tools, such as flash cards, or as students’ worksheets. By giving me some suggestions, Karen also encouraged me to look for some resources I personally preferred, from her books. I felt lesson preparation is a complex process and creation, rather than a simple, mechanical job, though the information was a bit overwhelming to me. As I went back home, I was already exhausted.

Learning how experienced teachers prepared lessons and programs without a fixed textbook, was both a positive and negative experience for me. The positive side is that teachers have more freedom and autonomy to be active, creative and flexible in designing teaching and instruction. However, this preparation meant more pressure on teachers. It required teachers to have rich experience and skills and to give more time and energy to their teaching. I realised that it would take quite a long time before I could be able to program and plan lessons independently. I needed time to know how to select and integrate
teaching materials, get familiar with the curriculum syllabus and my students, and collect useful resource books. As a beginning teacher, I felt the pressure greatly.

Discussion

What made it a critical incident for the beginning teacher?
The beginner’s professional growth and identity construction was facilitated by the mentor’s guidance and demonstrations. In respect of lesson planning, it is very important and helpful that school-based mentors coach novice teachers through joint planning (John, 2006, p. 492). Such training methods scaffold a novice teacher to learn lesson preparation by having a close look at how experienced teachers make choices and decisions, getting familiar with class circumstances, at the same time developing novices’ craft-knowledge (John, 2006, p. 493). By participating in experts’ lessons and unit planning work, the Chinese beginning teacher developed more knowledge of the curriculum, knowledge of students and knowledge of the Mandarin subject. Moreover, as the expert teacher encouraged the novice teacher to choose and design teaching materials, the Chinese beginning teacher was provided with an opportunity to practise planning independently. She realised the necessity of a wide range of areas that need to be considered when planning instruction, such as student considerations, content and process considerations, time considerations, resource considerations and technical considerations (Orlich et al., 2010, pp. 102-121). Research on teacher’s professional development in lesson planning shows that it is effective for a novice teacher to learn the planning process directly from a mentor teacher’s demonstration (Crookes 2003 p. 109).

What it meant for her professional identity?
The three hours of participation changed the Chinese novice teacher’s beliefs about teaching practice and updated her knowledge quickly and effectively. Engagement in the learning community is a process that challenges the novice teacher’s previous
teaching beliefs, so new teachers can develop a new identity that is different from their traditional beliefs and behaviours (Lieberman, 2009, p. 86). The novice’s finding a way to prepare for teaching without the guidance of fixed textbooks, constituted part of the constructional process towards her new professional identity. The Chinese beginning teacher identified that her job as a teacher is to alter the curriculum like a recipe and to make it serve for the students. She noticed that teachers here play a role in producing materials for the Australian educational system. Her beliefs changed, since she now felt that lesson preparation without a certain textbook was feasible; this made her feel less worried and confused, and more confident about her future teaching. Though she felt great pressure from the challenging task, the novice acknowledged that lesson planning was an important part of her professional work, and required taking both teaching and learning into account and integrating them into a complex whole (Lang, McBeath & Hebert, 1995, p. 53). Lieberman (2009) states that “teacher identity is largely determined by their apprenticeship of observation. . . . Participating in a learning community allows teachers to develop or confirm a teacher identity that includes meeting the needs of students and learning from other teachers in order to do so” (p. 85). It was a critical moment for the Chinese beginning teacher to learn lesson and unit planning through an “apprenticeship of observation”, further constructing her professional identity.

5.4 Narrative 8: Insufficient instructional preparation for computer activity

The critical moment in the following narrative presents a crisis experienced by the beginning teacher when she was over-confident in her ability to use computers with her class. During the lesson, the novice teacher was greatly challenged by instructing students to use computers to accomplish assessment. The critical moment initiated her awareness of the importance of preparing instructions for teaching, even she was very familiar with computers.
As we programmed, Karen and I decided to try the technical thing called “voki” as the form of oral assessment for this term. Karen introduced to me that “voki” is an Internet website where users can choose and design a cartoon character as his/her image. Then the user could record her voice through microphone in any language and save the voice as a file in computer. User could finally upload and publish the image with his/her voice to Internet. The whole process is just like producing animation. I did not prepare any instruction at all because I was so self-confident in using modern Internet. I just simply followed supervising teacher’s instruction.

During class, I volunteered to supervise students’ using the website and help them to revise language through doing the computer activity. The students looked quite excited and enjoying revising Mandarin through this computer activity. However, many difficulties for them occurred as well. As they were recording a self-introduction in Chinese, a boy student raised his hand, asking me: “Miss, I can’t find my voice. I have already recorded my voice and saved it as a file.” I said: “Okay, let me check for you.” After quite a few minutes, I had not sorted out the problem yet. Finally, I had to say: “Could you please wait for a while? I will ask Mrs Wang to check for you.” Right away, another girl asked me: “Miss Chen, how do I save the character I designed?” Later, there were still a couple of students asking me questions about the website use. I felt that I was not able to instruct them to operate the website in the ways they were expected. I ran to Karen and asked for help. Karen came by and got to know that many students had similar questions on computer use. She then went back to the front of the class and instructed the simplest way to solve the common problems to all the students. She also reinforced the teaching content again rather than the activity itself.
I felt embarrassed because as an assistant teacher, I was unable to answer students’ questions. I once felt that as a young teacher, I had an advantage in using modern technology. However, to integrate ICT in teaching is another story, which I need to learn and retell. Though it might take some time, with the hope of being recognised as a qualified teacher, I was determined to learn how to incorporate ICT use in Mandarin teaching.

Discussion

What made it a critical incident for the beginning teacher?

Researchers in foreign language teaching suggest that teacher should primarily be concerned with the activities or tasks when planning lessons (Crookes, 2003, p. 102). Elements such as “the setting up and managing of the activities and the materials associated with the task” should be regarded as “the major and focal unit of reference for classroom planning”, for experienced ESL teachers in Australia (Crookes, 2003, p. 102). Technology use is viewed as an activity that needs teachers to plan well in advance (Orlich et al., 2010, p. 103).

It implies a new requirement for entrants to the teaching profession. Teachers need to be competent with “strong personal ICT skills and an in-depth knowledge of the pedagogical uses of ICT” (Gray, Pilkington, Hagger-Vaughan & Tomkins, 2007, p. 408). Under such a wave of educational reform, Modern Foreign Language (MFL) teachers are facing a chance to adopt new forms of teaching (Ibid., p. 409). This is also true for beginning teachers who have not used technology in the classroom.

In the study of in-service teachers, it has been identified that when facing the introduction of innovations such as ICT into teaching, “teachers are concerned about maintaining control and the esteem of others and are unlikely to take risks . . .
Teachers will only try out what they are confident they can cope with” (Ibid., p. 410). However, in research on language teacher development in terms of ICT use, it is also recognised that “the nature and degree of change varied according to the different starting points and concerns of individuals” (Roberts, cited in Gray, Pilkington, Hagger-Vaughan & Tomkins, 2007, p. 423). Maintaining personal control and esteem were not issues for the Chinese beginning teacher at this stage. But overcoming embarrassment was urgent for her. For the beginning teacher, it meant to lose “professional face” and control if she were not competent with knowledge and skills in using attractive ICT in Mandarin classes. Therefore, rather than slowly and carefully, the beginning teacher quickly became aware of the need to learn integrating computer activity in teaching.

**Why she resolved it in this way?**

Though she was keen to integrate computers into teaching, the novice teacher had insufficiently prepared herself in the aspect of instruction before the class began. One reason was because growing up in the 21st century, the young beginning teacher was over confident in using modern technology, so that she did almost no preparation work for this computer use activity. Another reason was her immature understanding of lesson planning. She never thought about any questions like: what type of ICT should be used, how to use computer activities to facilitate students’ learning effectively, and what questions the students might have, etc. As John (2006) states:

Novices, particularly early on in their training, have difficulty making predictions about student responses and have problems adjusting their practice according to the exigencies they encounter (p. 489).
Since the novice teacher depended on the supervising teacher for all designing work and instruction preparation, she was therefore unprepared to instruct students to work through a computer activity, was challenged by their questions and unable to help students out. The novice didn’t realise the importance of instructional preparation for computer use in teaching until she had difficulties in responding to students with clear and effective instructions.

**What it meant for her professional identity?**

Partnered with an experienced teacher, the Chinese beginning teacher entered the landscape of conducting computer activity through observing the supervising teacher’s practice and recognising her own personal vulnerability. Since she felt embarrassed and pressured, due to her insufficient ability and preparation for the computer activity, the prospective teacher urged herself to change in order to adapt to the teaching field. It shows her realisation that design and implementation of instruction are primary professional responsibilities. As Orlich et al. (2010) have said: “Teachers have a primary responsibility to design and implement instruction. They prepare plans that aid in the organisation and delivery of their daily lessons (p. 101).” This case was a process of professional transformation accompanied by new understanding and commitment to the teaching profession. From real in-service experience, the novice started to be aware of the importance of instructing ICT use to students. Not only had she found that ICT could enable teachers to maximize students’ learning enthusiasm and achieve effective teaching, but also she realised the significant role of teachers in preparing instructions before class, for students to use ICT/computers more effectively, in order to facilitate learning and assessing. It was this new understanding of the teacher’s role in conducting computer activity that stimulated her identification with independency in preparing instructions for classroom activities.

**Why she resolved it in this way?**
It is worth noting that the transformation of the beginner’s knowledge of, attitude to and skills in preparing ICT use for teaching was catalysed by wider social-historical discourse. Since ICT is promoted educational policies to be integrated into teaching activities by, the novice teacher was encouraged by the social context to learn to design computer use as a class activity in second language teaching. Having identified the potential benefits of conducting computer activities, she was keen to become skilled in designing and integrating ICT use, as new forms of activity, for her professional needs in teaching practice.

Meanwhile, the Chinese beginning teacher’s professional identity in respect of preparing computer use in class was also greatly influenced by her practical experience at class level. Through participating in an experienced teacher’s class, the Chinese teacher understood students’ needs and potential problems through “observing how the lesson played out with students” (Lieberman, 2009, p. 94). As an apprentice, the student teacher followed the supervising teacher’s in-service practice, helping to integrate computer activity in teaching. She was unable to deal with the problems caused by insufficient preparation, but had to ask the supervising teacher for help. Responding to her identification with her responsibility to meet students’ needs, the novice teacher developed her awareness of the significance of lesson preparation for instruction. Her participation in a real classroom contributed significantly to the beginning teacher’s shift towards student-oriented lesson planning and preparation.

As current research shows, in-service training is “a means of responding to teachers’ personal and professional needs and encouraging the development of autonomy”, functions effectively in promoting teachers’ mastery of ICT advances and integrating ICT into daily school practice (Kalogiannakis, 2010, p. 5). It could be argued that the broader and the immediate teaching context were the external forces that socialised the beginning teacher to adjust her professional identity, and to be subjected to the Australian educational culture.
5.5 Narrative 9: Preparing activities and post-lesson reflection

In this narrative, the beginning teacher prepared a big classroom activity autonomously. The work of designing and preparing an activity was time-consuming and demanding, so that she consistently felt challenged by great pressure. But the novice ultimately remained committed, because of her transformed belief in the teacher as activity designer and organiser for students’ learning. Moreover, the after-class reflection with the supervising teacher helped her to revise her lesson preparation and led her preparation for organising the activity next time.

Karen discussed with me about Chinese class for Year 8B next week.
“You have been in this program for almost one year. Would you like to try something by yourself?” “Can I? . . . Yes.” I answered. “Good. Would you like to try an interesting activity called ‘Jigsaw puzzle’ for next week?” “Yeah?... But what is that?” “It is a new activity I learned from the Western Region Chinese language teachers’ conference last month,” Karen said, “It is a group activity. I saw a teacher demonstrate this activity quite successfully. The students may probably like it. But I haven’t tried it. Do you want a go?” “Yes.” I accepted without thinking. As I had observed that many local LOTE teachers’ class largely featured various activities, I was really keen to have a try by myself. Karen then explained the activity to me in detail.

It sounded like a simple game. However, when I started preparing at home, I found there was lots of work to do. In the Saturday afternoon, I took a train to Blacktown to buy jigsaw puzzles. After looking around several supermarkets, thinking about the prize, size, pieces etc., I finally picked one puzzle. After coming back from Blacktown, I went straight
to my office. I surfed the Internet for the rest of afternoon and night, just trying to find an appropriate picture. Printing the picture out, I then stuck it on the back of the jigsaw puzzle and carved into pieces.

It was already 10pm when I finished preparation and came back home. I fell onto the sofa, hoping to have a rest. But my brain automatically worked on. Several weeks ago, I conducted a student survey. Many of my students commented on my teaching as: “sometimes we don’t understand your instruction . . . ” (Student survey) So I was thinking I should make more effort on preparing instructions. I organised instructions for this activity in several ways, and finally reduced them to five points. To make sure I would not forget them, I wrote the five points on plan paper as well as on memo. As I was lying on bed, I rehearsed the class in my mind again. Before falling asleep, I sighed: how tired a teacher would be without a certain textbook. I almost have no personal life!

The following Wednesday, I conducted the jigsaw-puzzle in class. Though the class did not go badly, it seemed to be not very effective. The students did not respond as actively as I expected, and looked bored sometimes. I was a bit disappointed with the activity. After class, Karen discussed the lesson with me and reflected upon the jigsaw puzzle activity. She pointed out two reasons for my inefficiency. One was because the students are from the top class, for whom the activity was too simple to stimulate their excitement. Another reason was because my instruction misled about the original objective of the jigsaw puzzle game. Karen guided me to rethink the instructions and objectives of this activity to improve my plan for next class. I felt much clearer about my performance and was refreshed a lot after discussing with Karen. I like discussing with her, because Karen always recognises the underlying
Discussion:

Why it was a critical incident for the beginning teacher?
At this stage, the beginning teacher gained more autonomy in preparing lessons, especially preparing an activity. She was making an effort to attain the Professional Teaching Standards, which note that graduate teachers are required to demonstrate they can “create a positive environment supporting student effort and learning”, “provide clear directions for classroom activities and engage students in purposeful learning activities” (p. 10). Since it was the first time preparing an activity for a Mandarin lesson, the novice put great energy and time into preparing it. Consequently, she felt not only physically tired but also mentally challenged. According to John (2006), this is a common difficulty that pre-service teachers encounter in their practicum period:

Novice describe their planning as time-consuming as they struggle to make sense out of the cornucopia of decisions they have to make regarding content, management, time, pacing, and resources. . . . (p. 489).

Research shows that it is common for teachers to feel a time-consuming and heavy load when planning lessons (Lang, McBeath & Hebert, 1995, p. 53).

The condition was even worse for the Chinese beginning teacher, due to her non-Australian background. Before this, she had no experience of or idea about designing activities for language teaching. She studied English as a second language in Chinese schooling through using textbooks and rote learning. She was encouraged to memorise the words and sentences in textbooks by repeating and repeating.
Learning greatly depended on students’ efforts at home, while class time was used to explain grammar and vocabulary or check exam papers. In the novice teacher’s knowledge base, there was no experience of participating in activities, no mention of any ideas for organising activities. Though I had observed how local teachers conducted classroom activities for a period, preparing activities for the first time on my own was very new to me. The real practice was indeed a challenge.

**Why she resolved it in this way?**

However, the Chinese beginning teacher showed great commitment in preparing activities because her educational belief had been transformed. As the Chinese beginning teacher observed that activities took a large amount of time the classes of other LOTE teachers, and having achieved good effectiveness in motivating students’ learning, her understanding of the “no certain textbook” culture in NSW public schools deepened. She identified that activity and task design is the primary planning preparation for second language teachers (Crookes, 2003, p. 102). She also gradually acknowledged this teaching philosophy, and built a more positive attitude towards activities. Since beliefs are the underlying force of teachers’ practice and performance, encouraging teachers to commit to a certain performance (Day, Elliot & Kington, 2005, p. 569), though feeling a sense of pressure, she was happy to take more practice and enhance her ability in designing activities and preparing better instructions.

The researcher believes that experience is not enough for a novice to improve her planning capability (Crookes, 2003, p. 102, 109). Crookes (2003) points out that it is having a deep understanding of lesson planning and related conceptions, as well as its manifestations, that empowers beginning teacher to become expert in planning (pp. 102, 109). It implies the need for reflection on lesson planning and noting changes to make before teaching the lesson again (Orlich et al., 2010, p. 107). In the reflection on her original plan, the beginning teacher only sensed that the students’ reactions and behaviour were not the same as she had expected. Hence, she thought
the activity itself had failed to engage students. Research shows that beginning teachers easily focus on the activities themselves when evaluating their lesson or the student’s learning, while neglecting the importance of instructional objectives (defined as statements that professional educators use to signify the knowledge and/or skills they wish students to acquire as a result of participating in a lesson) (Lang et al., 1995, pp. 53-4). Lang et al. (1995) say that reflection on activity practice itself is not helpful to improve lesson planning for the next time (p. 54).

Lang et al. (1995) suggest that teachers judge whether the learning objectives have been achieved or not during the activity process; this is believed to be an effective way to improve teachers’ professional planning skills (p. 54). Guided by the supervising teacher, the novice started to pay more attention to the objective of the activity, instead of its form. She realised that the effectiveness of the activity was less than expected because she had forgotten to focus on the learning objective, and gave misleading instructions. Lang et al. (1995) stress the relation between instructional objectives and particular lesson plans, pointing out that learning objectives should be viewed as the first issue to be concerned about in lesson planning for professional teachers (pp. 52-3). Learning about and coming to understand the concept of instructional objectives, as well as knowledge of students’ ability, deepened the VMT’s understanding of lesson planning, an especially activity preparation.

**What it meant for her professional identity?**

The beginner’s professional growth and construction of her identification with being a teacher had been fostered through this “lesson-study” cooperative approach with the supervising teacher (a model in which a group of teachers work together to plan, teach and observe cooperatively with the aim of developing lessons) (Podhorsky &Fisher, 2007, p. 446). Through a collegial conversation with the supervising teacher, the beginning teacher critically examined her instructional practices. Clarified by supervising teacher, the beginning teacher learned the concept of
instructional objectives and deepened her reflection on the complexity of activity preparation. New teachers acquire the professional purpose of experienced colleagues: what to do, and how to support all students. As Lieberman (2009) implies (p. 91), goal-setting for students serves the beginning teacher as a guiding principle for future lesson planning and activity preparation. The VMT modified her understanding of activity design and instruction, and prepared better to support student learning. Post-lesson discussion with the supervising teacher prepared the Chinese beginning teacher to decrease her uncertainties in conducting activities the next time, by convincing her of the purpose of lesson planning and preparation. In doing so, new teachers affirm their identity in the teaching profession (Lieberman, 2009, p. 85).

5.6 Overall Discussion

Research question 1: What were the critical incidents for the beginning teacher?

“No fixed official textbook” has been identified as a big issue for the Chinese beginning teacher in the process of her professional identity construction. The Chinese beginning teacher came from a Chinese educational background where teaching is organised and conducted according to a certain textbook. When volunteering in WSR public schools, she faced an absolutely unfamiliar professional context and therefore was unprepared ideologically, and in terms of skills. Firstly, the Chinese beginning teacher lacked knowledge of the curriculum and the Mandarin syllabus, and did not know these students. Furthermore, from the perspective of professional skills, she was inexperienced in preparing teaching materials and resources, and was not capable of clarifying learning objectives, of designing activities and preparing clear instructions for activity implementation. These were difficulties that the novice faced and needed to cope with before her
professional identity as a Mandarin teacher teaching in Australian secondary schools could be established.

**Research question 2: What factors affect these critical incidents and tensions?**

Looking at the factors that affect the novice’s professional identity construction, it should be noticed that the supervising teacher and her lesson study model of mentoring played a vital role in guiding her step by step. Different from the traditional method of training a teacher in lesson planning in teacher education, where a rational sample lesson plan format is often provided for the novice teacher to learn, including elements like goals, objectives, materials, equipment, procedure etc. (Crookes, 2003, p. 101), through participating in the supervising teacher’s practice and hearing her guidance, the Chinese beginning teacher gained “a realistic, empirically-based understanding of what teachers actually do, or can do” (Crookes, 2003, p. 100).

The mentoring teacher taught the novice how to do lesson and unit preparation in various ways, including allowing the novice to participate, sharing collected teaching resources and materials, sharing ideas for activities (see Narrative 7). Moreover, she was gradually given autonomy to practise and understand abstract planning conceptions, such as instructing activities and evaluating the learning objectives (see Narrative 9). The supervising teacher’s mentoring allowed the beginning teacher to have insight into the complexity of teaching. “[T]he pre-service teachers were moulded by experienced supervisors to fit the particular school environment” (Walkington, 2005, p. 55).

Lieberman (2009) advocates lesson study with colleague teachers as a means of developing professional identity. He says:

> When teachers interact with one another about teaching, they develop and re-develop their skills, knowledge, beliefs and philosophies of
teaching and learning that directly influence how they teach mathematics to students. These interactions thus influence their professional identity . . . (p. 96)

The Chinese beginning teacher’s experience showed that this also applies to second language teachers (re)developing their identity in respect of the teaching profession, by collaborating with experienced teachers and opening themselves to learning. As the Chinese beginning teacher learned to be concern about well-being of her students, she obtained the professional norm of serving and being student-oriented, in the context of the Australian educational system.

Research question 3: What changes happened in terms of the beginning teacher’s professional identity?

Without being assisted by fixed textbooks or manuals, the beginning teacher reshaped her professional identity to adapt to the NSW educational context in respect of lesson planning and preparation. She gradually transformed from a series of negative feelings, such as confusion, anxiety and embarrassment, to more positive and serious attitudes towards lesson preparation. As the literature indicates, emotions are closely linked with teachers’ perspectives and practice (Flores & Day, 2006, p. 221). The change in her emotions reflected the novice teacher’s belief transformation: an acknowledgement that teaching is to help students construct knowledge through activities, rather than rote learning certain static words in fixed textbooks.

During the process, she realised her insufficiency in knowledge about instructing computer activity, in general pedagogical knowledge, creativity, and adaptive capability. She felt a strong sense of pressure and additional responsibility to achieve professional learning of high quality. However, the novice teacher remained committed to preparing tasks, actively reflecting on her practical performance, evaluating her lesson planning, preparing for further development (see Narratives 7,
Her experience echoed research on teacher’s professional identity, which indicates that beliefs are the underlying force of teachers’ practice and performance, which encourage teachers to commit to a certain performance (Day, Elliot & Kington, 2005, p. 569).

The Chinese beginning teacher learned that under the circumstance of no fixed textbook for students and no manual for teachers, “teachers are not technicians following a script that someone else imposed upon them, . . . (but) are craftsmen (Lieberman, 2009, p. 97)”. She constructed her intentions to serve students when planning and preparing activities. She learned that there needs to be lots of mental work, such as consideration of curriculum, students, resources, objectives and activities (see Narrative 8). She learned the importance of preparing instructions for activities (a computer activity for example, in Narrative 9) before teaching. She accepted and adapted to the role of teacher within the NSW educational system by carefully and creatively planning the jigsaw puzzle activity (see Narrative 10). Moreover, she learned to evaluate her planned activity, focusing on the instructional objectives rather than on the activity itself. She had identified that planning is complex in nature, and is more a recursive than a linear process (Orlich et al., 2010, p. 105, 107). These are all evidence that the beginning teacher had built her understanding of lesson planning as a complex, creative and reflective work. The Chinese novice teacher’s previous norms, about the teacher’s role and responsibilities in respect of lesson planning and preparation, had been changed substantially through learning lesson planning and reflecting upon her profession in this regard.
Chapter 6: Concerning pedagogy and impact on students’ learning

6.1 Introduction

The key theme this chapter focuses on is the beginning teacher’s learning of pedagogy that was particularly relevant to teaching Mandarin as a second language to Australian secondary students. The beginning teacher gradually learned to acknowledge and understand the importance of the students’ needs in the teaching and learning process. The beginning teacher transformed her teaching to be more student-oriented through constructing an adaptive pedagogy and pedagogical content knowledge. The following five narratives present and provide an insight into the process of how and what she did to construct her personal professional identity in this regard.

This chapter consists of five narratives, to show how the Chinese beginning teacher transformed her concern from teaching strategy itself to the impact of pedagogy on students’ learning. Like the narratives in chapters 4 and 5, the narratives in this chapter are presented along with a timeline, in order to display a chronological development of the beginning teacher’s professional learning. Each narrative focuses on one critical incident or tension, as the following table shows:
6.2 Narrative 10: Supervising teacher’s advice and modelling: embedded stories into teaching characters

This narrative focuses on two tensions experienced by the novice teacher. The first was when her supervising teacher interrupted the novice teacher, and the second, which happened that same day, was a discussion she had with her teacher about the lesson and how to improve her teaching. At first the novice teacher was not happy about the incident but later she was appreciative of the new pedagogic knowledge she learnt from her supervising teacher.

I was teaching the sentence pattern “你叫什么名字？ (What is your name?)” for Year 8 B at period 2. Karen was standing at the back of the classroom, supervising my teaching. After oral drilling, I wrote words in Chinese characters on the whiteboard and asked students to copy the
characters down on their language notebooks. Then, I walked around the classroom to check if every student was copying and in case they had any problems.

“Miss, I think us students maybe want to know the stroke order of every Chinese characters”, Karen called out from the back of the classroom unexpectedly. “I did not want to rub them and write again.” I thought because I had already written every Chinese character on the board. I hesitated for a few seconds. Considering that Karen was my supervising teacher, I finally went back to the front. “Everyone, pens down please. Look here,” I drew the students’ attention and continued, “Do you find this character ‘我 (me)’ is difficult to write? Yes.” I asked and answered by myself, pointing to the character that I thought was the most difficult one. “Now I will rewrite it stroke by stroke. Please watch carefully and write it as I do.” Not until every student was ready, I started teaching stroke order straight away. To be honest, I didn’t understand why Karen let me rewrite the characters. The students already copied them down. So why should I rewrite the characters stroke by stroke? Moreover, I had a lot of things to teach in the rest of class time. It was indeed not a happy experience that supervising teacher disturbed my teaching.

Probably reading my confused mind, Karen came up to the front of the classroom, said to me smiling: “Miss, I guess we can also teach the students “reading characters” “Reading characters? What was that?” I thought confusedly. This time, Karen started teaching by herself. She faced to the students and explained: “the character “我 (me)” looked like a big person with a belt around his waist, holding knife and fork in his two hands, and standing with open legs. This is a defending position. People always prefer to defend or protect himself, saying, ‘Do not offend me!’ So, this character means ‘I or me’. Karen used her body
language to help her explanation vividly. The students all laughed. Some practised the word in a low voice following Karen.

Not until now did I understood what a “reading character” is and how effective it is. Before this, the things I cared about were only the “quantity” (how many characters I had taught to students), but neglecting the “quality” (the effectiveness of students’ learning). For me, I never viewed the shape and stroke of Chinese characters as an issue. Therefore, I did not know there was an alternative way to read and explain the relationship between the shape of the character and its meaning.

After class, I discussed my thinking with Karen. Karen said: “Yes, always considering students’ background knowledge is important to being an effective teacher, especially when you teach Chinese characters. You know, Chinese characters are the most difficult learning area for Australian students. The Chinese characters’ shapes are closely linked with their meaning. My experience is to teach them Chinese characters by telling vivid stories. It provides a way to facilitate students memorising Chinese characters and their meaning.” Karen started drawing pictures on the whiteboard, explaining to me: “For example, the character of ‘六’ (six) looks like a person who plays cricket and got six points. In Australia, cricket is the most popular sport. In this sport, six points is the best result for players. Hence, this image represents ‘六’ (six).”
I: “Ah . . . This is interesting!”
K: “Haha . . . I call such a teaching strategy ‘connection’ or ‘association’. The stories connect what the students are going to learn and what they have already known.
I: I see. You tell stories to visualize Chinese characters as something in students’ daily life, so that students can be able to memorise the characters quickly and firmly. It is just like building a bridge between knowledge, isn’t it? “
K: “Exactly!”

This incident made me identify the central role of students in Australian teaching. I felt that teachers’ knowledge about students’ culture or background knowledge is extremely emphasised in Australian classroom teaching. It seemed that the teacher’s knowledge of students is valued as an important tool to help teachers to decide what teaching strategy to use. The purpose of linking the teaching content with students’ prior knowledge is to scaffold and facilitate students’ learning. It was a new understanding of teaching and learning for me, and was beyond my previous knowledge of teaching strategies. I found it was an alternative
teaching strategy that could be adopted by teachers and students, besides traditional Chinese lecturing, teaching and rote learning approaches.

Discussion

What made it a critical incident for the beginning teacher?

As some research has identified, beginning teachers are likely to rely on traditional strategies and prior experience (D’Ambrosio & Campos, 1992, p. 213). The beginning teacher in this narrative was brought up in the Chinese educational system. It has been observed that traditional teaching and learning strategies dominate the Chinese educational system, which featured a teacher-centred pedagogy, “authoritarian with a centralized curriculum (implying inflexibility and lack of attention to individual children’s learning needs) (Li, 2004, p. 127)” (Li, 2004, p. 127). Lu (1997) uses the phrase “teacher-centred lecturing style” to describe Chinese teachers’ teaching strategy (p. 20).

Tse et al. (2007) describe the traditional approach that teachers use to teach Chinese characters, noting: “As teachers write the characters on the board, they ask pupils to attend to it and learn the strokes. Pupils use their fingers to write the strokes in the air and memorise the sequence of strokes. . . . In order to ensure that pupils memorise the characters taught, teachers require them to practise writing every character many times until its recall is automatic (p. 379).” She studied Chinese in a highly traditional and structured teaching model “in which the students were passive listeners trying to assimilate as much of what was being transmitted as possible” (D’Ambrosio & Campos, 1992, p. 213). Such a teaching strategy depends on students’ rote learning. Her experience of being a student in China made her believe that teaching was a process of “transmitting knowledge” from teacher to students, while learning effectiveness depends on students’ own hard work. The novice’s experience shaped her beliefs and understanding of teaching and learning language as teacher-centred and knowledge-centred.
Yee (1990, cited in Lieberman, 2009) asserts that teachers already carry their teaching purpose as supporting students when they enter the profession. However, this was not the case for the Chinese beginning teacher, who was nurtured in a teacher-centred educational environment for long years. Tirosh (2000) states that prospective teachers’ beliefs and knowledge of children’s conceptions will affect their attitudes and teaching practice (p. 21). The VTR cared about whether they had copied down the characters, rather than supporting students pedagogically. Except for rote learning, she had no idea of how to teach Chinese characters more effectively, or even differently, for Australian students. Just as much literature has recognised, pre-service teachers have poor knowledge of students’ learning in the initial stage of practical teaching (Joffe, 2001; Tirosh, 2000).

Reflecting on the supervising teacher’s suggestion, the novice’s tentative stance showed she lacked knowledge of content and students (KCS) (Hill, Ball & Schilling, 2008, p. 375). The notion of KCS, as a primary element of PCK, involves both the specific teaching content and particular characteristics of learners (Hill, Ball & Schilling, 2008, p. 375). It is recognised that “a teacher might have strong knowledge of the content itself but weak knowledge of how students learn the content (Hill, Ball & Schilling, 2008, p. 378).” As a native Chinese speaker, the novice is master of Chinese character writing. However, she had minimal knowledge of how Australian students learn Chinese writing, what potential errors they might make and what common difficulties they would have.

The supervising teacher had a rich understanding of how an English speaker feels and thinks in learning to write pictographic characters. Also, her personal experience informs her that the common difficulty for Australian students is to understand and remember Chinese characters by closely linking the shape with the meaning. Compared with the novice, the experienced teacher not only had knowledge of Mandarin itself, but also understood “what makes the learning of specific topics
easy or difficult, as well as the conceptions and preconceptions that students of
different ages and backgrounds bring with them (Hill, Ball & Schilling, 2008, p.
375)“.

Due to this difference, the supervising teacher had distinctive opinions from the
novice about how to teach Chinese. She believed that students need special
pedagogy to memorise the characters effectively. The beginner’s simplistic
pedagogical knowledge of teaching and learning Mandarin was not accepted by the
supervising teacher. It was the contradiction between their pedagogical content
knowledge and teaching beliefs that produced the initial tension. The beginning
teacher inevitably felt negative emotion. As other studies of beginning teachers
indicates, it is difficult “to escape the sense of pressure and vulnerability to
emotional responses that emerges, when thought to be under surveillance or being
judged for career tasks” (Cattley, 2006, p. 343). The emergence of negative emotion
reflected that her prior beliefs in the nature of knowledge and its implications for
teaching strategies had been shaken.

Why she resolved it in this way?
Afterwards, the mentoring teacher explained her pedagogy, shared personal
pedagogical content knowledge and the beliefs behind her practice with the new
teacher. The rationale of the “reading characters” teaching strategy was to construct
knowledge on the base of students’ prior knowledge and their personal lives through
narrating, in order to enrich student understanding (NSW DET, 2003b, p. 15) Taking
an insightful view of the theorised pedagogy from a pragmatic perspective, the
novice gained deeper understanding of the Quality Teaching Framework in NSW
public schools. She was therefore relieved of negative emotion.

What it meant for her professional identity?
The expert’s suggestion enlightened this beginning teacher’s awareness of the
significant impact of pedagogy on students’ Mandarin learning. Rather than only
paying attention to “transmitting knowledge”, the novice started to be concerned about students’ cognitive learning process. Especially, since she knew that the difficulty for Australian students is to write Chinese characters, her knowledge of Mandarin as a subject increased, as well as her knowledge of students’ needs. The novice started to understand the concept of “student-centred teaching” in Australian educational discourse. Such development symbolised her construction of professional identity in terms of pedagogical and content knowledge, as well as the transformation of her teaching beliefs.

6.3 Narrative 11: Ignorance of students’ background knowledge

The crucial moment in this narrative is that the beginning teacher realised her inappropriate pedagogy when she received comments from the supervising teacher. The beginning teacher identified her ignorance and misunderstanding of Australian students’ background knowledge. With the help of the supervising teacher, the beginning teacher gained specific knowledge of local students’ preferences, preconceptions and the prior knowledge they brought to class.

Period 6 was Mandarin class for Year 8 G. During the oral drilling, I led students to practise four tones and the similar but different pronunciations between Chinese number four (sì) and ten (shí). For the former objective, I used the set of sounds “ē, é, è, ě” (/ə/) as examples for students to practise four tones repeatedly. As to the second objective, I required students to practise the sounds “s” and “sh” again and again. To show how easily the “s” and “sh” could confuse learners, I deliberately showed a traditional Chinese tongue twister called “Sì shì sì, shí shì shí (Four is four, ten is ten)” to demonstrate the differences. The students learned the tongue twister quickly and perfectly made the sounds of “sì” and “shí”. I was really happy and quite proud of myself as
well as the students. I confidently thought that my teaching strategy helped the students’ learning effectively.

After class, Karen helped me to reflect upon my class as we did usually. When she asked me how I felt about my teaching. I happily said it was a very successful class. However, she said that many students felt bad to say this vowel “ē, ē, ě, è”, because it sounds like something bad or awful in English. I felt really surprised. But as I recalled the teaching context, I found that the students’ voices were indeed quite low when practising the “ē, ē, ě, è” sounds. No wonder some had a strange look in their eyes and smiled weirdly to each other. I became very down right away. “It doesn’t matter because you are just new here, so it is understandable that you don’t know the Australian culture” Karen comforted me, and further suggested that I could let the students say “ā, á, ā, â”, or “ō, ó, ō, ô” instead, when leading the oral drilling to practise the four tones.

Then we talked about the tongue twister, I thought Karen would praise me for this anyway. I believed I did good teaching because I not only predicted the learning difficulties for students but also employed an effective teaching strategy to solve the potential problem. Again, to my surprise, Karen said: “I know this knowledge is stressed when Mandarin is taught as a second language in China. However, it is emphasised actually because Southern Chinese people are not able to tell the differences between the sounds ‘s’ and ‘sh’. Therefore, the two numbers are very difficult for them to pronounce. However, English-speakers can tell the differences between “s” and “sh”. For Australian students, the two pronunciations are not a problem at all. I suddenly realised the reason that why there were not any special responses but just smiling on students’ faces when I emphasised the pronunciation differences during the class. That was why they learned the tongue twister so quickly.
Under the guidance of the supervising teacher, I reflected upon my teaching experience. I started to be aware of the difference that culture makes in teaching a second language. Teaching students in ways they can relate to will be more helpful for engaging them in learning. In the following days, I paid more attention to learning Australian students’ culture and background knowledge. For example, I watched TV programs more often, especially those with advertisements. They helped me to know what students were caring about and interested in.

Discussion

What made it a critical incident for the beginning teacher?
In this narrative, the beginning teacher remained at a stage of relying on her prior learning experience to design and implement teaching strategies, without being aware of students’ needs. She decided to emphasise the difference between the sounds “s” and “sh”, because the two sounds had confused her classmates and herself when she was learning Mandarin in a primary school. Her Mandarin teacher used the tongue twister to help students remember the difference. The tongue twister indeed strengthened her learning effectively. Therefore, she implemented a Chinese strategy to teach students pinyin. At the same time, she did not know that the “/ə/” sound would inspire students’ resistance to learning, but instructed them in repetitive oral drilling.

As research has found, student teachers who believe that most knowledge is certain, or is waiting to be discovered (the “naïve epistemological belief”), often use teacher-centred teaching strategies, which support one-way transmission of knowledge from teacher to students (Cheng et al., 2009, p. 320). The Chinese beginning teacher had believed that most knowledge is certain in nature. Hence, simply assuming that Australian students would have the same pronunciation
problem as herself and other Chinese students, she imitated her previous Chinese teacher’s teaching strategy to teach Australian students.

The element of Inclusivity in the Quality Teaching Framework stipulates that professional teachers recognise and value students from diverse social groups (NSW DET, 2003a, p. 47). A qualified teacher is concerned with the knowledge of the group of students. However, the Chinese beginning teacher prioritised her personal concern and interests over students’ needs when teaching. She delivered Chinese teaching strategies without recognising the knowledge of Australian students. She did not notice the ineffective impact of her pedagogy on students’ learning. The beginning teacher’s self-indulgent teaching, excluding students’ cultural backgrounds and knowledge, showed the gap between her educational beliefs and “quality teaching”.

Why she resolved it in this way?
The supervising teacher re-evaluated the novice’s teaching practice, reaching a totally contradictory conclusion to the novice’s own evaluation. The novice didn’t realise her teaching strategy was inappropriate until the supervising teacher pointed this out. The beginning teacher was really surprised when her personal evaluation was denied by the supervising teacher’s comments. It was a critical moment when she felt her long-held understanding and knowledge of Mandarin teaching and learning was challenged.

Tirosh (2000) suggests teacher education to make prospective teachers familiar with different students’ cognitive thinking processes, and to help teachers use the effects of this thinking in their teaching (p. 5). This narrative echoes his suggestion, showing that the mentor teacher’s comments and evaluation evidently increased the beginner’s PCK, including knowledge of students’ characteristics and their implications for teaching pinyin to Australian students. Tirosh (2000) believes that teachers’ knowledge of what students know is as important as their knowledge of
what students do not know (p. 22). Developing further from the last story, the beginning teacher learned specific knowledge of students’ cultural preferences and prior knowledge. Specifically, informed by the supervising teacher, the novice teacher learned that students “here and now” had no problem in making the “s” and “sh” sounds. She also learned that the students don’t like the “/ə/” sound. The beginning teacher came to understand children’s learning through being mentored by an experienced teacher.

**What it meant for her professional identity?**

The beginning teacher realised that inappropriate teaching strategies will be ineffective and will even have an adverse impact on students’ learning. Her tongue twister was evidently not useful to make learning “s” and “sh” sounds “significant” for students in an Australian classroom context, where students had different perceptions of the same teaching content and therefore different needs. Also the practice of “/ə/” sounds may potentially have demotivated students’ practice of Mandarin. In terms of pedagogical understanding, the novice deepened her understanding of the “Significant dimension” of the Quality Teaching Framework —to let students see and understand that their learning matters (NSW DET, 2003b, p. 14).

Hence, the novice felt it was necessary for teachers to explore pedagogy that suited Australian students’ Mandarin teaching. Therefore, she actively absorbed Australian students’ culture in various ways, such as watching TV. The novice developed her professional knowledge and practice related to the dimension of significance, implying her acceptance of student-centred teaching culture. As stated in chapter 2, identity is performative in the behavioural dimension (Zembylas, 2003, p. 227; Sexton, 2008, p. 83); the beginning teacher’s action in developing her pedagogy meant that her understanding of teaching and learning moved toward the criteria required by the “Quality Teaching Framework in NSW public schools”. It was a significant landmark in constructing her professional identity.
6.4 Narrative 12: Creating personal pedagogy—lead-in quiz

This narrative describes an exploratory teaching experience of conducting a lead-in quiz. The beginning teacher designed this quiz and tested it in practical teaching. Students’ positive responses enhanced the teaching effectiveness, which further strengthened her acknowledgement of herself as teacher and facilitator, and enhanced her confidence. Meanwhile, it was a significant step in building her personal pedagogical knowledge and practice.

It was the 3rd period, I was teaching Mandarin for the Year 8 Class. I had designed a few lead-in questions about the topic “family members” the night before. These quizzes were to be asked in English but aimed to connecting with the topic of Mandarin learning and Chinese knowledge. I tried to help students move between two cultures, drawing on their prior knowledge of family to build up new knowledge of Chinese family. It was expected to also motivate students’ interests in learning Mandarin. It was the time to test whether the lead-in questions were helpful or not.

I said: “Okay, guys, before we learn anything, let’s do a small quiz. Ready?” I noticed students calmed down immediately, looking at me with expecting eyes.

Then I asked: “Now, tell me, how many siblings you have. Who has brothers? Raise hand up!” I asked. Seven students raised hands up.

“Who has any sisters?” I continued. Around 6 students put up hands.
“Good. Tell me who is the only child in family?” I asked. This time the answer is “zero”. I was quite surprised because it made me very special.

Then, I asked “Ok, now who can guess how many brothers or sisters I have?” “Three!” “Two sisters.” “Two sisters and two brothers!” Students happily called out their guessing. “No”, I shaked my head. “You are the only child.” I heard someone calling out. “Yes”, I happily nodded my head. “You are right. In my family, I am the only child. Very good, you got it! Do you know why I am the only child?” “No~~” “Because we have ‘one child policy’ in China. One family is not allowed to have a second kid.” “Wow~” Students looked so surprised.

I was happy because all of them were listening. Then I kept on asking, “Who can guess why do we have such a policy?”, I looked around the students, waiting for answers, “Have a guess, you have learned that.” I encouraged. “China has large population?” A brown hair boy who was usually a very quiet student, answered with uncertainty. “Very good! Very good!” I was indeed very happy that he got the answer. “China has 1.5 billion people, Miss!” some students shouted out. “Yes,” I asked: “What is the population in Australia?” “Er . . . about 22 million.” “Really?” I never knew before. It was my turn to be surprised.

As I found ten minutes had passed, I asked a final question, “okay, guys, guess what topic we are going to learn today?” A boy who once was very destructive guessed: “My family?” “That is right! I was so happy that the lead-in quiz worked well, achieving my aim of stimulating students’ interests and enhancing their engagement. I also felt good about myself in teaching.

Discussion
Why did the beginning teacher act in this way?

This narrative talks about a critical moment, a “Lead-in quiz” activity the novice teacher initiated with the aim of connecting students’ daily lives with Mandarin learning. As with her own personal pedagogy, this lesson introduction activity reflected elements of background knowledge, connectedness and narrative in the dimension of significance in the Quality Teaching Framework (NSW DET, 2003b, p. 15).

Students’ learning interests were greatly stimulated and engaged in the class unconsciously. The students’ responses showed that the activity successfully engaged students in learning Mandarin. The pedagogy was effective in creating a quality learning environment, where “students display sustained interest and attention” (NSW DET, 2003b, p. 13).

The result of this success is that “student teachers negotiated the program in their personalised ways (Sexton, 2008, p. 78)”’. Compared with the previous stage, in which she focused on subject matter knowledge itself, the beginning teacher showed a tendency to be concerned with the role of students’ interests in their learning, after self-critical reflection over her previous pedagogy. She started to be self-aware of building up a pedagogical knowledge base and capability. She actively developed a quiz related to students’ daily lives, bridging their prior knowledge to the teaching target. The beginning teacher had made learning meaningful and relevant to students’ interests and needs, as teaching profession standards required (NSW DET, 2003b). According to Beijaard et al. (2000), besides the knowledge of subject matter, experienced teachers also see their didactical and pedagogical capability as the source of their self-perception of professional identity (p. 751). This narrative reflects that the novice teacher had identified the importance of pedagogy in positioning her professional role as a facilitator at that time.
What it meant for her professional identity?

Learned the reasons behind experienced teachers’ practice, as stated in the above narratives, the novice teacher revised her belief about students’ learning, including their knowledge and potential, which further led her transformation in pedagogical decision making (Lieberman, 2009, p. 94). This was the reason behind her design of a lead-in quiz to bring students into Mandarin learning through connecting their prior knowledge to the learning topic. This was a process of construction of the Chinese beginning teacher, as Sexton (2008) reveals that teacher identity “illuminates levers for active agency in individual teachers (pp. 75-6)” and it is a process where the individual teacher “become more conscious, and in more control, of the contours of their own professional development (pp. 75-6).”

Meanwhile, through the lead-in quiz, the beginning teacher gained more information about students, such as the population of Australia, and how many students had brothers and sisters in their family. Feeling closer to Australian students and more able to facilitate their learning, the novice teacher reached a deeper understanding of student-centred teaching and of the significance dimension in quality teaching. As her professional practice was directly supported and affirmed by students’ positive responses, the Chinese beginning teacher’s professionalism was reinforced and validated by the success of the lead-in quiz, reaffirming her newly developed student-oriented teaching pedagogy.

6.5 Narrative 13: Teaching characters by telling stories

The critical moment that this narrative focuses on is the beginning teacher’s pedagogical practice in visualizing characters and telling stories to help students memorise Chinese characters. Her deliberate pedagogy for facilitating students’ learning and her decentralised stance, demonstrated her transformation in terms of the teacher’s professional role.
I was teaching Year 8 3 Mandarin at period 3 in Mitchell HS. Mimicking Karen’s “reading characters”, I designed stories for each character in lesson plan. As I was teaching writing, I introduced the first word “妹 (younger sister)”, saying “The right part of the character “未” looks like a girl showing her skirt with her two hands.” I picked two edges of my skirt to demonstrate. The purpose of doing so was to help them understand the character comprehensively and create deep impression.

Then, I wrote down another character “哥 (elder brother)”. A boy student called out, “It looks like a unit, Miss!” I didn’t want to refuse his idea, though I meant to describe it as a double-layer cake. Moreover, his suggestion indeed seemed to be more suitable. So I said: “Excellent. It indeed looks like a unit. Very good, what is your name?” “Daniel.” “I like your idea, Daniel.” I praised him and continued: “Since elder brother got a job. So he has money to buy a unit. So this character means elder brother.” I made up this explanation just by brainstorm two seconds before. The boy smiled happily.

As I taught the character of “弟 (younger brother)”, I came across difficulty in making up character story. I was a bit self-blaming because I thought it should be my responsibility to present the knowledge. Unfortunately, I indeed had no idea at all. I had to write it down without any description. A boy student called out when I was writing the character: “Miss, it looks like an old type TV.” “What a good idea!” I thought. “Very good, it indeed looks like a TV, doesn’t it?” I praised him. “Yes.” students replied excitedly. I felt so relieved right away and happy that the students looked quite engaged in learning Mandarin. I guessed maybe I could inspire them to create character stories by themselves next time, which would be more effective.
Discussion

What it meant for the beginning teacher’s professional identity?

This narrative demonstrates the stage that the beginning teacher had achieved, in which she actively explored and developed pedagogical knowledge and practice. According to some researchers, it is the lesson objectives and personal values and beliefs that decide a beginning teacher’s instructional goals, with little influence from students (Westerman, cited in Joffe, 2001, p. 219). Sakai et al. (2010) imply in their study that teachers in East Asia do not take students’ individual differences into pedagogical account (p. 20). If this had been a feature of the VMT’s performance in Narratives 10 and 11, one can notice in the current narrative, the novice taking students’ needs into consideration when deciding and implementing her instructional goals. She mimicked the practice of the supervising teacher’s pedagogy, of “reading characters”. In order to help students to memorise Chinese characters, she made up stories to link the images of characters with their meanings. She successfully internalised the PCK (Australian students learn Chinese characters better via stories that combine the character shape with meaning) that her supervising teacher taught her, into her own teaching practice. It showed that the beginning teacher started to be concerned about pedagogic knowledge, building up an alternative understanding of teaching.

It was identified that the novice teacher had transformed her professional identity in through teaching. The evidence was her choice of “reading characters” as a teaching strategy. The Chinese beginning teacher understood that to be a qualified teacher meant to do so. In her personal history that was not an element of her understanding of teacher professionalism. Behind this was her transformed epistemological belief that views the nature of knowledge as evolving and dynamic rather than static and fixed (Cheng et al., 2009, p. 320). It implied that she had transformed from a belief in “teacher as knowledge authority”, and “teaching is a process of knowledge
transmission”, towards identifying herself as a facilitator who helps students to construct knowledge through interaction. Therefore, she developed her habit of using student-oriented pedagogy.

Hills et al. (2008) state that the knowledge base of teaching prepares the teachers and guides their pedagogical development (p. 395). With her newly developed understanding of teaching, the novice became sensitised to students’ responses and knowledge when students made up different stories from hers. She adopted students’ ideas instead of her own and further acknowledged their ideas by giving further explanation of the students’ character stories. Here, students were being involved as a factor that affected her decision making. As Joffe (2001) believes, the role of decision making is viewed as a contributory factor in the transformative process of a beginning teacher’s learning knowledge about students, as well as applying this knowledge into teaching (p. 219). By deciding to accept students’ ideas, the novice showed that her belief in teaching was shifting from having students rote learn Mandarin to having students construct Mandarin into their language.

The novice’s showed more student-centredness in teaching when she experienced tension that she could not make up stories for every character. She felt a bit guilty because of her persistent belief that the teacher should be the authority of knowledge; however, the negative feeling did not last long. As some of her students thought up their own visualizing way to read and memorise Chinese characters, she happily accepted their ideas, rather than refusing them. She took students’ learning styles into account, respecting their “preferences for perceiving, thinking about and organising information over time for different subjects” (Whitton et al., 2010, p. 206). The professional teacher shapes their instruction and assessment practices according to different learning styles (Whitton et al., 2010, p. 207).

Joffe (2001) studied how observation moves the beginning teacher to acquire pedagogy. He found that observation does function as an intermediate process that
leads the beginning teacher to develop her pedagogical knowledge (p. 225). What the novice here attempted though, was not observing students’ performing in learning, but rather listening to students’ voices: their creative stories for target Chinese characters. Tirosh (2000) stresses “the importance and value of a teacher’s careful and sensitive attention in listening to the child to understand his or her thinking processes (p. 23)”. The beginning teacher’s “listening” showed the beginning teacher consciously concerned more about students’ needs and preferences, constructing knowledge about students’ learning as well as student-centred pedagogy.

By adopting students’ ideas and valuing their learning strategy, the novice not only stimulated individual students’ learning of Chinese characters, but also constructed new knowledge: a specific story for the particular character “弟”. She felt that she became more like an “Australian language teacher” and more engaged in the classroom community. Since teacher identity develops as “an ongoing process of ‘becoming’” (Clarke, 2008, p. 8), the Chinese beginning teacher’s student-centred tendency in her teaching attitude and performance consolidated her identity of becoming a professional teacher.

**6.6 Narrative 14: Learning the reasons behind students’ responses**

The critical incident that this narrative focuses on is that students responded negatively to the beginning teacher’s teaching when she spoke much Chinese, to make a real Mandarin learning environment. She was aware of students’ responses but did not know that the particular response resulted from her inappropriate teaching strategy. Through reflection, she gained more knowledge of students’ psychology and a deepened understanding of “student-centred teaching”.
I was teaching Mandarin for Year 8 G in Period 6. In order to help students review the words of family member, I conducted a “Choosing game”. I put vocabulary flash cards randomly on white board. Then I divided the students into team A and B. Each team was required to send a person. Two people compete to point out one flash card with the character I called out. At the beginning, the game went well. I gave instruction in English, saying: “the word I want is ‘father’”. The student from team A quickly found the character “爸 (father)”. Three rounds later, in order to make the game more exciting and interesting, I attempted to give instruction in Chinese. The students’ response was still fine.

As the fourth round started, a boy and a girl were standing in front of the board, ready to compete. I said: “我要的词是 ‘姐’ (the word I want is “sister).” I expected that the students would feel the competition more interesting and engage more. However, a surprising sight appeared: the boy pointed flash cards randomly, looking like getting crazy. I was unhappy about his behaviour but didn’t know how to lead the game back to right track. Consequently, I had to say: “Well, it seems too hard. Let’s stop here and do it next time.” The students looked quite disappointed. The whole class became bored and down the rest of time.

I was not sure what the exact problem was. After class, I asked Karen about this. She said that it was because I used emerging language inappropriately. My instruction contained too much Chinese. Therefore, the students were neither confident nor capable enough to catch my point. They easily got nervous and less interested. Some of them may even have chosen to shut down their brain from any information input. That was how the boy behaved —pointing characters randomly without any thinking.
As a Chinese native speaker, I tried to use as much emerging language as possible in order to create an authentic learning environment for students. However, this class showed that it might not be suitable for the Year 8 students in reality. Since not many students in my class were interested in learning Mandarin initially, it would be better if pedagogy focused on encouraging students’ learning enthusiasm and their confidence as teacher’s first priority. I realised that a good teacher must take students’ learning ability into account, and create a comfortable environment. Next time, I would give more explanation in English and help them believe they are able to understand and learn Chinese.

Discussion

What made it a critical incident for the beginning teacher?
The beginning teacher conducted a game activity with the aim of encouraging students to learn Mandarin. She had transformed from a belief in teaching second language as transmitting grammatical knowledge, to making efforts to create an authentic language learning environment for students. It demonstrated her identification with the second language teacher’s professional teaching method of replicating an authentic Mandarin language environment (Wu, 2009, p. 159). However, she neglected students’ feelings and learning ability. Her Chinese instruction made the game too difficult for students to understand. The students lost their engagement due to her inappropriate use of emerging language. Not only had the boy student blocked his mind from learning, but the rest of the class was discouraged.

Compared with the previous period, at this stage, the Chinese novice teacher improved in becoming aware of students’ responses to instructions. However, as researchers identify, most beginning teachers have insufficient awareness and
understanding of why their students think and respond to subject-specific topics in a
certain way, not to mention their poor ability to analyse the reasons behind students’
responses (Tirosh, 2000, p. 5). Though she had noticed students did not engage in
the learning, the novice teacher did not understand the underlying reasons for their
disengagement until the supervising teacher revealed the answer.

The beginning teacher’s discussion with the supervising teacher and her
self-reflection on the tension, inspired her to realise the students’ psychology and
further deepened her knowledge of students. As the supervising teacher pointed out,
the novice’s failure was rooted in her neglect of students’ ability by speaking too
much Chinese in instruction. The failure of her strategy to make an authentic
learning environment, reflected the beginning teacher’s insufficient knowledge of
the students, and of the implications for teaching and learning (NSW Institute of
Teachers, 2004, p. 3), as well as her immature capability in “Establish(ing)
supportive learning environments where students feel safe to risk full participation
(Professional teaching standards, p. 10). It could be argued that there was still gap
between her identification and knowledge of students’ needs and what would be
expected under the Quality Teaching Framework, as well as by an experienced
Australian teacher.

**What it meant for her professional identity?**

Having learnt the cause of students’ negative responses, the novice teacher’s
knowledge of students and this knowledge’s relation with pedagogy, were deepened.
After self-reflection, the novice teacher realised the importance of being accountable
for students’ different abilities (Whitton et al., 2010, pp. 199-208). As Tirosh (2000)
states, understanding the reason behind student’s thinking, guides teachers to gain
genuine knowledge of students and to improve their teaching strategies effectively
(p. 22). The novice recognised that the students’ stage of developmental need is the
benchmark for teachers to design and implement learning activities (Whitton et al.,
2010, p.199). Her professional identity was therefore further transformed, recursively.

6.7 Overall Discussion

Research question 1: What were the critical incidents?
The beginning teacher’s changes in pedagogical performance are a significant theme in the data. It is found that it was the novice’s pedagogical knowledge that produced many of the tensions and critical moments that she encountered in her Australian classroom. The Chinese beginning teacher once believed that teaching is “knowledge transmitting”. She identified with the “teacher as a subject matter expert”, who has deep and full understanding of the subject area (Beijjard, 2000, p. 751), as “teachers’ beliefs and value system will shape their conceptions and practical theories in classroom teaching, eventually influencing their instructional strategies and performance in the classroom” (Cheng et al., 2009, p. 319). The new teacher adopted a traditional Chinese teaching strategy in her teaching. However, her distinctive Chinese knowledge was not acknowledged by the supervising teacher since the teaching strategies did not fit in to an Australian Mandarin classroom and did not meet students’ needs and preferences. Moreover, the Chinese beginning teacher lacked knowledge of teaching Mandarin in an Australian context in the early period of her practical teaching. Consequently, the beginning teacher felt challenged and felt it necessary to develop her knowledge and strategies of teaching Mandarin to Australian students.

Research question 2: What factors these critical moments can be attributed to?
The supervising teacher played an external role in helping the beginning teacher to construct new understandings of teaching and learning, which further influenced her professional identity transformation. She functioned to introduce knowledge about students’ interests, habit, feelings and learning ability. She shared her personal PCK
with the novice, which built the novice’s PCK foundation and facilitated the novice’s concern for pedagogy and students’ learning (see Narratives 11, 12). By setting why-type reflection guidance, the supervising teacher also stimulated the prospective teacher to pay attention to students’ ways of thinking about a specific topic (Tirosh, 2000, p. 23). In doing so, she urged the beginning teacher to reflect on her current pedagogy (see Narrative 15). One study states that such context-specific mentoring provided by supervising teacher can be of great benefit in the constructional process of the beginning teacher’s professional identity (Watzke, 2007, p. 75).

Additionally, the novice’s interaction with students also largely influenced her PCK. Research indicates that new teachers acquire PCK from practical teaching experience (Tirosh, 2000, p. 5). The novice learned knowledge about students directly from dialoguing and interacting with students. It served as a building block for her self-reflection on the impact of pedagogy. Her knowledge and beliefs were shaken and framed when she received negative or positive responses from students.

In-service teaching and self-reflection are the primary intermediate processes that the beginning teacher used to construct and develop her pedagogical knowledge and knowledge of students. Being exposed to a real classroom, the beginning teacher’s knowledge increased “as they implemented innovative practices in their classrooms and studied the results of those practices” (D’Ambrosio et al., 1992, p. 216). Meanwhile, the prospective teacher’s subjective attitude also fostered her learning of PCK and pedagogy development. D’Ambrosio & Campos (1992) found, during the process of reflecting and researching, that beginning teachers show an increasing inquisitive disposition to learn knowledge about children’s understanding of the subject (p. 213). Through teaching independently and reflecting on the supervising teacher’s modelling, on advice, students’ responses and her own teaching practice, the beginner absorbed the experienced teacher’s pedagogic knowledge and
developed her personal teaching strategies. The novice tended to shift from self-concern and teacher-centred teaching to being more student-concerned.

**Research question 3: What it meant for the beginning teacher’s professional identity?**

The Chinese beginning teacher started to be concerned with students’ learning not long after she took up formal teaching. She gained new knowledge of students, such as that Chinese writing is difficult for Australian students, that stories make particular characters easy to memorise, and that English-speaking students have no problem in telling the differences between the sounds “s” and “sh”. Hill et al. (2008) have noticed the significant role of knowledge of content and students in teachers’ professional constructions (p. 395). Having identified the causal relationship between appropriate pedagogy and students’ learning, the beginning teacher paid more attention to developing and reflecting on her PCK. Through the process, she was evidently more knowledgeable of and more skilled in teaching Mandarin in a more student-centred way.

The beginning teacher was transformed from prior knowledge of teaching in China, to context-specific teaching practice and knowledge that fitted in an Australian classroom. Beijaard et al. (2000) view teachers who see their didactical and pedagogical capability as the source of their perception of professional identity as more experienced and mature (p. 751). D’Ambrosio et al. (1992) believes that the teaching profession is improved through experiments, involving problem-solving and decision making. It was through various tensions and critical incidents that the Chinese teacher changed her way of teaching and constructed new experience, knowledge and beliefs. Since the beginning teachers’ acquisition of pedagogy to a group of particular students leads her to be professional (Joffe, 2001, p. 219), this dimension is a vital part of the beginning teacher’s professional growth and identity construction. It should be noticed that the development of a beginning teacher’s pedagogy and PCK is not a linear process but spiral learning (Tirosh, 2000, p. 23).
The accumulation of the beginning teacher’s pedagogy and PCK is not a static but dynamic and ever-growing process (Fennema et al., cited in Tirosh, 2000, p. 6).
Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

The research has examined the teacher-researcher’s teaching experience with inquiry into her professional identity construction as a Chinese beginning teacher who learned to become a teacher in a NSW public schools context.

7.2 Overview of thesis

The first chapter introduced the twin role of the author as both researcher and participant in the study. It then introduced the focus of this study: the construction of the researcher’s own professional identity.

Chapter 2 then presented a theoretical framework that defined the key themes I used in this study, and current understandings of those themes. These themes included: “Professional identity”, “Theories about beginning teacher’s development and professional identity” and “Teaching practice”. The discussion in this chapter established a conceptual base for the later data analysis and interpretation.

Chapter 3 explained the methodology of this study. It explained that auto-ethnography was suited as a methodology for this study because of its self-participatory and reflexive dimensions, both as a method and a writing style. This chapter also showed that the data used in this study was the teacher-researcher’s self-reflective journals and interviews, and a student survey. The multiplication of
data sources aimed to validate the research through triangulation. Data was analysed using the approaches of content analysis and critical incident analysis. The final section discussed ethical issues in this research and their resolution.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 were evidentiary chapters. The chapters were organised around the three significant themes grounded in data analysis, including: “classroom management and student motivation”, “lesson planning and preparation” and “pedagogy and impact on students’ learning”. Each chapter presented a series of narratives. These narratives displayed the critical incidents in my practical experience and how my professional identity was influenced and reformed.

Chapter 4 displayed a story line around the theme of classroom management and student motivation. My initial impression of an Australian secondary classroom, and specifically, the students’ behaviour and the teacher’s management, shocked and frustrated me emotionally. Through observing the mentoring teacher’s demonstration and guidance, and after reflection, I changed my belief based on “the dignity of teacher and teaching”. Having acquired a set of reactive and proactive managerial skills, as well as strategies for creating a positive classroom environment, I gradually engaged myself in managing the classroom and motivating students. My engagement in motivating students’ learning and in creating a positive classroom environment constructed my learning to be a teacher. It made meaning for my identity as a teacher in terms of my positioning and my power in the classroom.

Chapter 5 showed four narratives about my professional identity construction in respect of lesson planning and preparation. The crux of this confusion was that the class I taught did not use a fixed textbook. From an initial stage of feeling anxious and confused, I gradually changed beliefs from depending on the authorised textbook to preparing teaching without a fixed textbook. In respect of skill, I learned lesson planning techniques, such as considering learning goals according to curriculum, designing activities, preparing materials and instruction. These newly
established teaching skills and techniques made me coordinate my activity within the teaching communities in the local schools, which further aligned me with the teaching community. Such a mode of belonging fostered my identification with being a teacher in NSW public schools.

Chapter 6 reported five narratives, showing my concerns about pedagogy and students’ learning. Different situational cases were presented by narratives, demonstrating both successful pedagogy for students’ learning and activities that failed. As to my professional identity, five narratives in a row demonstrated the process of my developing knowledge of pedagogies and knowledge of students in the classroom. Besides the traditional “teacher-centred” pedagogy of my prior knowledge, I shared the supervising teacher’s “student-centred belief”, and internalised such a belief through using a new teaching strategy (i.e. the lead-quiz) and adapting a local teaching strategy (i.e. reading characters).

7.3 Findings

Having used an auto-ethnographic approach to constructing narratives and then having located these in the literature, now it is necessary to identify the core idea that unifies these 14 separate narratives. Based on the findings derived from the three evidentiary chapters, the following section attempts to answer the three research questions across evidentiary units.

7.3.1 Staged professional growth development

The first research question was: what critical incidents or tensions will happen during my first year teaching experience? Based on the data, three themes were categorised and organised into three evidentiary chapters. On a general level the three themes were consistent with the stage theory of beginning teacher’s
development (as stated in chapter 2). The three chapters on “classroom management and student motivation”, “lesson planning and preparation” and “pedagogy and impact on students’ learning”, respectively echo the three stages of the beginning teacher’s professional identification: self-concern, task-concern, and impact-concern.

Classroom management issues were one consistent issue that I was concerned about since the very first day I was engaged in the classroom. As the narratives show, how to survive in an unfamiliar classroom with a group of different students worried me. As Katz (1972) states:

The first full impact of responsibility for a group of immature but vigorous young children inevitably provokes teachers’ anxieties. The discrepancy between anticipated successes and classroom realities intensifies feelings of inadequacy and unpreparedness (pp. 50-1).

My concern about coping with students’ discipline and classroom routine management started earliest, and continued across time within the first year. I was filled with negative emotions in the early part of this stage. It has been identified that as my experience grew, my negative emotions in this regard decreased. This was followed by my shifting concern towards how to keep order in the class, as well as how to build rapport with the students. I showed active agency in learning management strategies and engagement methods. These professional knowledges and skills were consistent issues that affected my professional competency and my understanding of teaching all through the rest of my first teaching year.

A second concern of mine focused on learning lesson planning and preparation. These narratives echoed the task-stage, showing my concern for the “mechanics of teaching” (lesson planning and instructional organisation) (Watzke, 2007, p. 107).
Though I encountered the issue of preparing lessons without an authorised textbook on the first day I visited local schools, it had not come to my attention and concern until I started to teach formally after a half year of observation. Narrative 7 reports my learning the techniques of lesson planning without a fixed textbook. I paid attention to teaching resources and material preparation, in particularly. Narratives 8 and 9 respectively focus on instructional preparation for computer activity and reflection on instructional goals, preparing for the next round lesson plan. It can be identified that my concerns were shifting from the activity and instruction themself to the effectiveness of the activity for students’ learning. This was consistent with task-concern as the second stage of the beginning teacher’s professional development.

Thirdly, I did not notice or start to be concerned about student’s learning until 24 February 2010—half a month after I started teaching independently. Since then, my central concern and interests increasingly became, what pedagogy would be effective to facilitate students’ learning. This was an outward development from my previous inward concern for myself and tasks, towards concern for students (Conway and Clark, 2003, cited in Watzke, 2007, p. 118). It indicated an alternative dynamic of beginning teacher’s professional growth. Narratives 10 and 11 showed my awareness of the issue of not taking students’ learning into account. The 12th and 13th narratives reported my efforts in navigating and using effective pedagogy to motivate students’ learning of Mandarin. The inadequacy of my concern for students’ emotional well-being and learning ability recurred in Narrative 14. It implies that the impact-stage is not an issue that can be resolved immediately, but is an ongoing concern, along with the beginning teacher’s growth.

Except for the first two themes, around classroom management and lesson planning, my concern for the impact of pedagogy on students’ learning was also found to be a consideration for survival during the first teaching year. As Watzke (2007) concludes:
The prominence of impact-related concerns during the first years of teaching presents a more complicated understanding of what has been described as “survival”, one in which student learning and well-being weigh heavily on the beginning teacher’s experience (p. 118).

Watzke (2007) also states that, though concerns for the beginning teacher’s personal control and acceptance, as well as task-related concerns generally decrease as teaching experience increases, these concerns may occur at some particular points during the beginning year (p. 118).

A difference between the stages I shifted through and those of the literature, is that the focus of my concerns in the teaching period examined in this thesis could not be clearly divided into three stages chronologically. Table 7.1 below indicates what were my concerns at different times during this teaching period. Classroom management was my main concern during 2009; this was a time when I was observing and co-teaching. Classroom management, lesson planning and pedagogy to motivate students’ learning and enhance their efficiency were simultaneous concerns when I was teaching. Rather than engaging in discrete stages, this was an ongoing professional growth process that was “holistic encompassing recurring areas of concerns, which are experienced and addressed by the beginning teacher in different ways across time (Watzke, 2007, p. 118).

Table 7.1 Stages of my concerns in areas of the teaching profession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension of teaching profession</th>
<th>Term 3 2009</th>
<th>Term 4 2009</th>
<th>Term 1 2010</th>
<th>Term 2 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>4/8/09—2/10/09</td>
<td>20/10/09-13/12/09</td>
<td>1/02/10-4/04/10</td>
<td>20/04/10-30/6/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.3.2 Factors that affected professional identity construction

The second research question is: what external and internal factors contributed to these critical incidents and tensions occurring? Two factors: self-reflection, and discourse, were both identified when the teacher-researcher wrote narratives about her experience.

**Self-reflection**

Self-reflection was the catalyst for the transformation and formation of my professional identity as a Mandarin teacher. It was self-reflection that helped myself to align with the local teaching community and learn common teaching practice in order to be a qualified teacher. For example, I navigated management and engagement strategies with the purpose of controlling the classroom and creating an effective learning environment, enhancing teacher-student relationships (see Narratives 4, 6). Also, in respect of lesson planning and preparation, I introspected over my insufficient instructional preparation for ICT use, my offtrack organisation of activity and reflected on a better plan for the future (see Narratives 8, 9). Furthermore, I also gave much attention to and reflection on my pedagogy and pedagogical experiment (see Narratives 13, 14). Self-reflection was a way of negotiating myself with the broader context and of repositioning myself as a Mandarin teacher; this constructed my professional identity.
The community and discourse

The community and discourse are strong powers to foster professional identity construction. I learned local students’ behaviour styles, their attitudes towards learning Mandarin as they emerged in the Australian schooling community. The exposure to the discourse took me out of my comfort zone and forced me to reposition myself and fashion my professional identity. Through mimicking the management strategies, lesson preparation and pedagogy of local experienced teachers, I engaged in the teaching community’s practice. My belief and understanding of teaching was refined and expanded under the context of “student-centred” educational culture. The vital role and function of discourse in constructing my professional identity is consistent with research on the language teacher’s professional identity, which highlights the dynamic interaction between the teacher’s agency and the discourse and community in which she is immersed (Clarke, 2008).

Especially, the literature shows that in teaching communities, mentoring teachers play a vital role in forming the professional identity of beginning teachers (Wang et al., 2008, pp. 144-5; Lunenberg, et al., 2007; Hobson, et al., 2009). It could also be found in this study that the supervising teacher affected and changed my teaching beliefs and performance through modelling, informing/sharing, guiding me to reflect. The supervising teacher’s modelling was important to the way I developed as a classroom manager and disciplinarian, planning lessons through systematic steps as well as using narration to teach Chinese characters. Equally important was that the supervising teacher guided me to know the discourse, such as students’ attitudes towards teaching, that Australian teachers prefer to use activities, and so on (see Narratives 2, 4, 10, 11). That helped me to align myself in the community. It contributed to the fashioning of my professional identity as a Mandarin teacher in the teaching community. Moreover, the supervising teacher guided me to reflect on my own teaching practice (see Narratives 4, 9, 11, 14). Overall, the supervising
teacher led me to have a more comprehensive understanding of the teaching profession’s knowledge and skills.

7.3.3 (Re) formation of Professional identity

The third research question, which was also the focus of this study was: what did the critical incidents and tensions mean for my professional identity in the process of learning to be a teacher in NSW public schools? The findings showed that I identified with the student-centred educational culture featured in the NSW context. Furthermore, I showed a tendency towards absorbing local educational culture through enacting local teachers’ responsibilities and roles. This constructed the formation and transformation of my professional identity.

This study showed that there were remarkable cultural factors influencing my professional identity reformation. It was caused by my prior Chinese knowledge about teaching and teachers, my initial understanding of being a teacher and delivering teaching. Chapter 4 showed that the tension about students’ behaviour was caused by my authoritarian belief in management, which did not correspond to the more democratic Australian classroom context and management culture. In chapter 5, it is recorded how I had difficulties in lesson planning and preparation without a fixed textbook because I was used to using authorised textbooks from my schooling experience in China. Narratives 10 and 11 showed that I used Chinese traditional teaching strategies without being concerned about students’ learning. All these prior experiences and identities formed the springboard for my critical reflection and my establishing a new professional identity.

The influence brought by the cultural factors was that, except for the typical emotions that student teachers generally experience at the beginning, I experienced a stronger emotional reaction when attempting to engage in the local classroom context and to align with the local teaching community. The most prominent
emotions were shock, anxiety, frustration and anger in when I came across issues of discipline, classroom routine management and students’ engagement. These were described in the Chapter 4 narratives. Additionally, I also felt confusion and worry when I learned there was no fixed textbook for the teacher to plan and prepare lessons. Such a related emotion was unique, due to its cause: cultural difference.

As a result, my conceptualising of teaching was shifting from believing in teacher-centred and subject-centred teaching strategies to student-centred teaching approaches, in the process of my learning to be a teacher. Accompanying this acquisition of new management strategies (see chapter 4), techniques for lesson planning and preparation (see chapter 5), and my increasing knowledge about the intellectual quality of teaching in NSW and knowledge of students’ abilities, motivations and interests (see chapter 6), I learned an alternative ways of teaching in each of these three teaching aspects.

Chapter 4 shows that I learned to acknowledge more democratic values and beliefs in classroom management. Through employing more proactive strategies, like engaging activities and rewards, with the purpose of creating a safe and warm classroom environment and improving teacher-student relationships, I had been socialised to conduct the common practice of the teaching community, as other teachers do.

Chapter 5 showed that I transformed my understanding of the teaching profession by acknowledging that editing teaching materials, organising teaching resources from various resources and textbooks, preparing and organising activities, were a significant part of the teacher’s responsibility in the NSW public schools system. I realised that lesson planning and preparation could not necessarily be centred around a fixed textbook, but rather that I could use teacher’s agency to construct teaching content and activity. I also started to be aware of students’ needs as an important consideration in planning lessons and activities.
In respect of pedagogy, I learned that besides the traditional way of teaching Chinese characters, there are teaching strategies that are better suited to Australian students. Moreover, I started to be concerned about the impact of my teaching strategies on students’ emotional well-being and learning achievement. Having noticed the importance of students’ interests, prior knowledge, learning intelligence and so on, I identified with student-centred teaching and engaged in adopting the new teaching strategies that I learned from local experienced teachers.

7.4 Reflection on the research

Throughout this auto-ethnographic study, I went through a rich developmental experience as a beginning teacher. My dual state as teacher/researcher provided me with a particular lens through which to examine a teacher’s formation or transformation in the ROSETE program. As a teacher, my research had a particular angle, to offer insights into a VMT’s identity formation through self-exploration. Meanwhile, by studying my own experience, I gradually became an active reflector who consciously absorbed teaching profession knowledge and developed my professional capacities in order to adapt to the Australian classroom context. My research helped me critically understand the transformation of my professional identity, In other words, the process of doing research helped me to construct a coherent self-understanding and positioning within the profession.

I learned to put myself in my students’ and my mentor’s shoes. I also reviewed Chinese educational culture from another perspective and developed a more coherent and comprehensive understanding of Australian educational culture and teaching philosophy. This was a process of forming a lifestyle: as a teacher, I had gradually formed the habit of writing a self-reflective journal; as a researcher, I had
learned to critically examine myself and self-consciously look for understanding of myself as a teacher.

### 7.5 Implications

The findings of this study are relevant to the professional development of other beginning teachers of a non-native background; to teacher education programs; to educational institutions and policy making bodies, such as DET NSW; and also to further research in this area.

#### 7.5.1 Implications for beginning teachers’ professional growth

Teachers’ professional identities are the starting point for teacher education (Sexton, 2008, p. 86). This thesis could be used as a preview for pre-service teachers in a teacher preparation program. There will be another 30 students joining the ROSETE program. They will all be fresh pre-service beginning teachers with Chinese educational backgrounds. As they engage in local schools and start learning to be effective teachers, this study could provide them an insight into their teaching experience to come: a beginning teacher’s professional identity formation and transformation.

The critical moments and tensions that this study has revealed might also be potential critical incidents for the future beginning teacher. Hence, the study could be used to inform models of professional growth that could be provided to those prospective teachers for reference. It could be expected that this study would help them to identify potential problems in future in-service teaching, as well as solutions. More importantly, as they refer to the narratives of this study, they may be recalled to mirror their own teaching experience and self-understanding through reflection.
7.5.2 Implications for teacher educators

The literature shows the vital role played by the supervising teacher in the constructional process of a beginning teacher’s learning to be a teacher. This study reinforces that the supervising teacher greatly helped the beginning teacher form and transform professional identity through demonstrating modelling, guiding her to reflect on experience and introducing knowledge of teaching strategies, management strategies and knowledge of students. This study proves that mentoring instruction facilitates student teachers identifying with the teaching profession under a new teaching context, at the same time transforming and deepening her self-understanding as a teacher. Hence, this study could be used as a case study in the service of helping a teacher educational program and teacher educators, especially mentoring teachers, to clarify their role and responsibility. In addition, it may be of benefit in making it possible to identify supervisees’ possible difficulties and confusions in teacher education.

7.5.3 Implication for education institutions

This study indicates cultural factors in the process of the Chinese beginning teacher’s professional identity transformation in the context of Australian secondary schools. It is identified that the beginning teacher’s prior Chinese educational experience soundly influenced her initial professional identity. Many tensions or critical moments that she experienced were caused by cultural differences between Chinese educational philosophy and Australian teaching philosophy. At the DET NSW level, this study implies the value of a culture-orientation for training and importing cross-cultural beginning teachers and immigrant teachers, especially those who have a Chinese educational background. Preparation programs for these pre-service teachers could highlight the cultural differences in respect of classroom management, lesson planning and pedagogy. At the local school level, special
consideration related to the local schooling context needs to be given to beginning teachers from overseas when they are imported.

7.5.4 Implications for future research

This study also reinforces that the auto-ethnographic methodology is an effective tool to assist the teacher-researcher in reflecting on and understanding her personal experience as a beginning teacher. Through introspecting on my experience of learning to be a Mandarin teacher, I have displayed my professional identity change through constructing narratives. The discussion of these narratives has raised my awareness of self-understanding and of understanding the teaching profession. It has shown that as a teacher-researcher, I have undergone remarkable change in the process of learning to be an effective teacher that fits in an Australian classroom context. Therefore, this study suggests the wider use of auto-ethnographic studies in teacher education research. Besides the focus on professional identity, auto-ethnography as a research methodology could be extended into research on teacher’s professional development from other perspectives, or with other research objectives.

7.6 Conclusion

The professional identity of beginning teachers has been a popular topic in educational research. Beginning teachers’ emotions, beliefs and attitudes in teaching, the knowledge and skills of teaching, are common themes for researchers investigating the conception of professional identity. According to the existing literature in this area, the emergence and construction of the beginning teacher’s professional identity features stages, in terms of the beginning teacher’s different focuses of concern at different times, based on her practical teaching experience. Auto-ethnographic research provides a methodological tool for the
teacher-researcher to explore the process through presenting narratives and narrative discussions.

The findings lead to the argument of this thesis: as a beginning Mandarin teacher with Chinese educational background, the teacher-researcher’s professional identity was (re)formed dynamically and contextualised under the discourse of the Australian classroom. The results of this study have shown that it is possible for a Chinese beginning teacher to shift her professional identity within one year, in the ROSETE program. The findings highlight cultural factors in the process of the Chinese beginning teacher’s professional identity transformation. It is identified that the supervising teacher’s instruction and modelling are significant catalysts for the beginning teacher’s transforming of beliefs about teaching and gaining knowledge about the teaching profession. Meanwhile, doing auto-ethnography provides an opportunity for the teacher-researcher to introspect on her personal experience and achieve deeper self-understanding in the field of professional identity.
References


Chang H. (2008), Autoethnography as Method, (Walnut Creek, Left Coast Press).


Cross, D. I., & Hong, J. Y. (2009), Beliefs and Professional Identity: Critical constructs in examining the impact of reform on the emotional experiences of


Heish, H. & Shannon, S.E. (2005), Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis, Qualitative Health Research, November, 15, pp. 1277-1288.


McDonald, T. (2010), Classroom management: engaging students in learning (Sydney, Oxford University Press).

MCEETYA (2008), Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians. Melbourne: Australian Education Ministers. Retrieved 10 October 2009 from:


NMEB, NSW DET & UWS (2009), A partnership of the NSW Department of Education and Training Western Sydney Region.

NSW DET (2003a), A classroom practice guide, Quality teaching in NSW public schools.
NSW DET (2003b), Quality teaching in NSW public schools Discussion paper.

NSW Institute of Teachers (2004), Professional Teaching Standards, Retrieved 4 January 2011 from:


Preez, J. (2008), Locating the researcher in the research: personal narrative and reflective practice, Reflective Practice, Vol. 9, No. 4, November, pp. 509-519.


Zhao, D. & Singh, M. (2008), International Cooperation in Teacher Education: Case study on an innovative model of language teacher training, published in the proceedings of the International Conference on Teacher Education
Transformative Society & Teacher Education Reform (Changchun, Northeast Normal University) pp. 269-276.
Appendices
Appendix 1: University of Western Sydney Ethics Approval

Notification of Approval

23 February 2010

Email on behalf of the UWS Human Research Ethics Committee

Dear Michael and Hongwei Chen

I'm writing to advise you that the Human Research Ethics Committee has agreed to approve the project.

TITLE: Title: Identity transformation of a beginning teacher

H7702Student: Hongwei Chen (Supervisor: Michael Singh)

The Protocol Number for this project is H7702. Please ensure that this number is quoted in all relevant correspondence and on all information sheets, consent forms and other project documentation.

Please note the following:
1) The approval will expire on 31 December 2010. If you require an extension of approval beyond this period, please ensure that you notify the Human Ethics Officer humanethics@uws.edu.au prior to this date.

2) Please ensure that you notify the Human Ethics Officer of any future change to the research methodology, recruitment procedure, set of participants or research team.

3) If anything unexpected should occur while carrying out the research, please submit an Adverse Event Form to the Human Ethics Officer. This can be found at <http://www.uws.edu.au/research/researchers/ethics/human_ethics/human_ethics_adverse_event_end_of_project_report>

4) Once the project has been completed, a report on its ethical aspects must be submitted to the Human Ethics Officer. This can also be found at <http://www.uws.edu.au/research/researchers/ethics/human_ethics/human_ethics_adverse_event_end_of_project_report>

Finally, please contact the Human Ethics Officer, Kay Buckley on (02) 4736 0883 or at k.buckley@uws.edu.au if you require any further information.

The Committee wishes you well with your research.

Yours sincerely

Associate Professor Janette Perz,
Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee
Kay Buckley
Human Ethics Officer
University of Western Sydney
Locked Bag 1797, Penrith Sth DC NSW 1797
Tel: 02 47 360 883
Appendix 2: State Education Research Approval Process (SERAP)

Approval

Miss Hongwei Chen  
49 Second Avenue  
KINGSWOOD NSW 2747

Dear Miss Chen,

I refer to your application to conduct in NSW government schools (Western Sydney Region) a research project entitled Identity Transformation of a Beginning Teacher.

I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved and that you may now contact the Principals of the nominated schools to seek their participation.

Your approval will remain valid until 31 December 2010.

You should include a copy of this letter with the documents you send to the schools.

I draw your attention to the following requirements for all researchers in NSW government schools:

- School Principals have the right to withdraw the school from the study at any time.
- The approval of the Principal for the specific method of gathering data must also be sought.
- The privacy of the school and the students is to be protected.
- The participation of teachers and students must be voluntary and must be at the school’s convenience.
- Any proposal to publish the outcomes of the study should be discussed with the research Approvals Officer before publication proceeds.

Yours sincerely,

KIL

Kerrie Ilkin  
School Education Director, The Hills  
Western Sydney Region Education Research Manager  
11 May 2010
## Appendix 3: Measures of Achievement—

### Work schedule (July 09-Dec 09)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jan 09</th>
<th>Feb 09</th>
<th>Mar 09</th>
<th>Apr 09</th>
<th>May 09</th>
<th>Jun 09</th>
<th>July 09</th>
<th>Aug 09</th>
<th>Sept 09</th>
<th>Oct 09</th>
<th>Nov 09</th>
<th>Dec 09</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflective diary</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research method</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drafting proposal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focusing on the project</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication of preliminary research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-read &amp; review proposal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 4: Measures of Achievement—

#### Work schedule (Jan 10-Dec 10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Jan 10</th>
<th>Feb 10</th>
<th>Mar 10</th>
<th>Apr 10</th>
<th>May 10</th>
<th>Jun 10</th>
<th>July 10</th>
<th>Aug 10</th>
<th>Sept 10</th>
<th>Oct 10</th>
<th>Nov 10</th>
<th>Dec 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Re-read &amp; review proposal</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second review literature review</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective diary</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-read &amp; review proposal</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare and submit ethics applications</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain secure file of records</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further review of research literature</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research method</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertake interviews</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of interviews</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of diaries</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of interviews</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication of preliminary results</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5: Principal’s information sheet

Letter to the Principal

Dear Principal,

I am writing to request permission to conduct a project entitled ‘Identity transformation of a beginning teacher’. This project aims to trace the identity transformation of the researcher as a beginning teacher in Western Sydney Region secondary public schools. During the year of 2010 researcher Hongwei Chen—a volunteer-Mandarin-teacher—would like to gather feedback from students and teachers. Also she wants to conduct interviews with classroom/supervising teachers. The findings from this study will be beneficial for teachers in a similar context, and their students will also indirectly benefit in terms of their learning from improved teaching. This study is not funded by any agency. So there are no financial benefits.

Participating students will be asked to complete a written feedback form which comments on my performance as a teacher. Also, they will be invited to participate focus group for same research object. The questionnaires for feedback will be conducted in one Mandarin class I teach in Term 2 2010 and the focus group will be conducted at a lunch time in Term 3 2010. It will only take 5-10 minutes for participants to complete these forms and 20 minutes for each focus group. Participation in this project will be totally voluntary and participants can withdraw from this project at any stage. The written permission of the children’s care-givers will be sought. Interviews with Hongwei’s supervising teachers will be conducted in Term 2 2010. Each interview will take 30-40 minutes out of class time. Teachers are totally voluntary. An invitation email attached with information sheet and consent form will be delivered to teacher before data collection taken place. This study will not cause any discomfort to participants. Also, there will be no naming of participants in the dissemination of research results.

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is H7702. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel: (02) 4736 0883 or email humanethics@uws.edu.au. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Yours sincerely,

Hongwei Chen
Appendix 6: Information sheet(s) (parents/caregivers)

Participant Information Sheet (Parent/Caregiver)

Who is carrying out the study?

I would like to invite you to give your written consent for your child to participate in a study to be conducted by Ms Hongwei Chen, Master Honours research candidate in Centre for Educational Research, University of Western Sydney. Your child’s participation will contribute to my research degree, which is being conducted under the supervision of Michael Singh, Professor of Education, at CER UWS.

What is the study about?

The purpose of this research is to investigate the "my transformation as a beginning teacher".

What does the study involve?

This study will involve collecting your child’s written as well as verbal feedback on my Mandarin lessons through completing a survey form and focus group.

How much time will the study take?

The written feedback will be collected at the end of one Mandarin class in Term 2 and tape-recorded focus group will be conduct at lunch time on one school day in Term 3.

For confidentiality concern, these recordings will be stored in my office cabinet for 5 years, after which they will be destroyed. These recordings could only be accessed by the researcher and her supervisors.

They will be used in the process of analysing data as evidence to reflect the researcher's identity transformation.

If you have concerns about what has been recorded, you may access recordings of your child within the period of storage. These recordings can be accesses by either calling 0405809996 or sending e-mail to: 16836020@student.uws.edu.au.

Children not participating in the study will be participating in the Mandarin lessons during the time the research is being carried out.
Will the study benefit me?

The findings from this research may not be of immediate benefit for you or your child. However, the findings from this study are expected to provide a better understanding of teacher identity, which will be beneficial to other beginning teachers and their students in terms of their teaching and learning.

Will the study have any discomforts?

This study will not cause any discomfort to your child.

How is this study being paid for?

The study is not funded by any agency.

Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?

The results of this study will be publicly available in my thesis and associated publications. However, only the researcher and her supervisors will have access to the primary evidence provided by participants, such as your child. In the dissemination of research results, there will be no naming of participants. Students will be only referred to as "Student 1", "Student 2" or a similar form of anonymisation. Likewise, your child’s school will be given a pseudonym.

Can I withdraw my child from the study?

Your child's participation in the study is entirely voluntary. You are not obliged to give your child consent to participate. Your child may withdraw from the study at any time or you may withdraw your child from the study at which point all written and audio records of your child's participation will be destroyed.

Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes, you can tell other people about the study by providing them with the chief investigator's contact details. They can contact the chief investigator to discuss their participation in the research project and obtain an information sheet.

What if I require further information?

When you have read this information, Ms Hongwei Chen will be happy to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Ms Hongwei Chen, Centre for Educational Research, UWS, 0405809996 (international phone number: 181
061405809996). You could also contact her at the following e-mail address: 16836020@student.uws.edu.au.

**What if I have a complaint?**

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is H7702.

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel 02-4736 0883 Fax 02-4736 0013 or email humanethics@uws.edu.au. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.
Appendix 7: Information sheet (supervising teacher/DET officials)

Participant Information Sheet (General)

Who is carrying out the study?

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Ms Hongwei Chen, Master (Honours) research candidate in the Centre for Educational Research, University of Western Sydney.

What is the study about?

The purpose of this research is to investigate the Identity transformation of a beginning teacher.

What does the study involve?

This study involves interviews. I wish to interview my supervising teachers. My classroom teachers will be asked to observe my Mandarin lessons and give feedback on my lessons and my changes in professional performance.

How much time will the study take?

Each interview will last about 30 to 40 minutes.

Will the study benefit me?

This study will not be of immediate benefit to the interviewee. However, the findings from this research are expected to provide a better understanding of beginning teacher's identity. Other teachers may benefit indirectly in terms of the improved teaching and learning.

Will the study involve any discomfort for me?

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can withdraw from this research at any time. This study will not involve any discomfort for the participants.

How is this study being paid for?

The study is not funded by any agency.

Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?
The results of this study will be publicly available in my thesis and associated publications. However, only the researcher and her supervisors will have access to the primary evidence provided by participants such as yourself. In the dissemination of research results, there will be no naming of participants or their workplace. Pseudonyms will be used for both. Furthermore, the language Methodology lecturer and Chinese language advisor will be only referred to as "an officer of the DET who had a role in our training" or something similar.

**Can I withdraw from the study?**

Participation is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to be involved and if you do participate, you can withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without any consequences.

**Can I tell other people about the study?**

Yes, you can tell other people about the study by providing them with the chief investigator's contact details. They can contact the chief investigator to discuss their participation in the research project and obtain an information sheet.

**What if I require further information?**

When you have read this information sheet, Ms Hongwei Chen will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Ms Hongwei Chen, Master Honours research candidate of University of Western Sydney, 0405809996 (international phone number: 061405809996). You could also contact me at the following e-mail address: 16836020@student.uws.edu.au.

**What if I have a complaint?**

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is H7702.

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel 02-4736 0883 Fax 02-4736 0013 or email humanethics@uws.edu.au.

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.
Appendix 8: Participant consent form (parents/caregiver)

Participant Consent Form for Parents/Caregivers

Project Title: Identity transformation of a beginning teacher

I, [print name], give consent for my child [print name] to participate in the research project titled [Identity transformation of a beginning teacher].

I acknowledge that:

I have read the participant information sheet and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my child’s involvement in the project with the researcher/s.

The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

I have discussed participation in the project with my child and my child agrees to their participation in the project.

I understand that my child’s involvement is confidential and that the information gained during the study may be published but no information about my child will be used in any way that reveals my child’s identity.

I understand that my child’s participation in this project is voluntary. I can withdraw my child from the study at any time, without affecting their academic standing or relationship with the school and they are free to withdraw their participation at any time.

I consent to the work samples being stored as paper files. Please cross out any activity that you do not wish your child to participate in.

Signed (Parent/caregiver):          Signed (child):
Name:
Name:
Date:
Date:

Where projects involve young people capable of consenting, a separate consent form should be developed. A parental consent form is still required.

Return Address: Ms Hongwei Chen’s Mandarin class
Appendix 9: Participant consent form

(supervising teacher/DET officials)

Participant Consent Form

**Project Title:** Identity transformation of a beginning teacher

I, . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . , consent to participate in the research project titled [Identity transformation of a beginning teacher].

I acknowledge that:

I have read the participant information sheet [or where appropriate, ‘have had read to me’] and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.

The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

I consent to the interviews being audio recorded.

I understand that my involvement is confidential and that the information gained during the study may be published but no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher/s now or in the future.

**Signed:**

**Name:**

**Date:**

**Return Address:** Ms Hongwei Chen’s Mandarin class
Appendix 10: Interview Schedule

(DET Mandarin language consultant)

1. The role of training teachers’ professional development in DET administration
   i) What role do the DET play in training student teacher in Mandarin teaching for NSW schools?
   ii) What is your specific role?

2. What elements in “Quality Teaching” Framework do you think are important and how do you fit them with in the training for Mandarin Teacher?

3. Experience-based questions on professional development

   a. Classroom management: What is the most significant issue in Australian classroom management for a Mandarin teacher?

   b. Bilingual teaching: Do you have any tips or suggestions for a Mandarin teacher who is not English native speaker to manage classroom?

   c. Lesson preparation: Do you have any suggestions for a new Mandarin teacher on preparing teaching materials? (How to select teaching materials? Any resources that teachers are able to access to?)

   d. Intercultural capability (student-centred teaching): How do you develop your intercultural capability, are you willing to share your experience? (How to understand students’ interests, funds of knowledge, learning habit?)

   e. Appreciative teaching: What are the most effective approaches to encourage students to learn Mandarin? Any suggestions?
      i) Appreciative teaching
      ii) Material rewards

4. Could you range these five issues by labelling them from the most important and urgent as “1” to the least important and urgent as “5”?
   ___Classroom management
   ___Lesson preparation
   ___Appreciative teaching
   ___Intercultural capability (student-centred teaching)
   ___Bilingual ability
5. Except for these five issues, are there any other significant issues that a beginning Mandarin teacher might come across in practical teaching? Could you talk about your experience or experience with other Mandarin teacher?

6. What do you think is the best approach to Mandarin teaching in Australia? Have you seen much teaching like this? Could you describe it?

7. Are there any related documents for Mandarin teaching in NSW? Particularly reports on practices of Mandarin teaching and students’ condition. Could I have copies?
Appendix 11: Interview Schedule (ROSETE organiser)

1. How has Mandarin teaching developed in Western Sydney Region public secondary schools? Can you briefly introduce the project of ROSETE with the consideration of Western Sydney Region situation, including the motivation of this project, its design and its goals? What is your role in ROSETE program?

2. How do schools in Western Sydney organise Mandarin curriculum in terms of Mandarin teaching, evaluation (assessment) and teachers’ professional development training?

3. What is the distinct about the social background of Western Sydney Region? Is there any impact that such social background has on Mandarin teaching, for example, in terms of students’ willingness to do Mandarin as well as their learning capability of achieving Mandarin?

4. What do you think are some issues teachers from overseas such as myself who have been educated in an Asian education system face when teaching in Australian classroom? (for example, classroom management).

5. Could you tell me about the experience of ROSETE 1st groups, including their experience as well as problems, if there is any? What aspects of their experience do you think I could learn from?

6. Do you have any suggestions for me in terms of developing my teaching?

7. Are there any related documents on Mandarin teaching or Mandarin promotion in Western Sydney Region? Could I have copies?
Appendix 12: Interview questionnaire (Supervising teacher)

1. Could you briefly explain what is distinct about this school (Hills Sports HS) and the community? For example, the socioeconomical and cultural backgrounds of students, students’ interests etc. To what extent do these factors impact on promoting Mandarin program as well as Mandarin teaching?

2. Since you have known me, what changes have you seen in my professional development? What I have done well and what aspects that I am not doing well?

3. If you had to describe all the aspects or work of being a Mandarin teacher both in the classroom and outside classroom, what would you include? Could you draw a picture?

4. As a Mandarin teacher in Western Sydney Region, what do you think is challenging in Mandarin teaching? Could you talk about your experience?

5. What approach to teach Mandarin do you think is the most effective? (Communicative Language teaching? or traditional way?) Any difficulties will these approaches have? Why?

6. What effort do you think that the DET Western Sydney Region, schools, parents and other social institutions have made in promoting Mandarin teaching and learning in Western Sydney Region? Are there any insufficiencies or limitations in current efforts? What impact do you think these efforts and limitations have on Mandarin teacher’s teaching?
Appendix 13: Survey questionnaire (student)

1. Do you think it is useful to learn Chinese nowadays? (please circle the answer)
   A. Very useful
   B. Maybe useful
   C. Do not know
   D. Not useful

2. What is difficult about learning Mandarin? (multiple choice)
   A. Pronunciation, especially four tones
   B. Writing Chinese characters
   C. Reading Chinese characters
   D. Listening
   E. Grammar
   F. Others _________________________________________

3. What do you think of my Mandarin teaching? (please circle the answer)
   A. Very interesting
   B. Interesting
   C. So-so
   D. Not interesting

4. In the past two terms, which part of Mandarin lesson, including the content and activities I gave you that you find is most effective for your Mandarin learning? (multiple choice)
   A. Oral drilling (oral practice with flash cards)
   B. Learn characters with stories (character reading)
   C. Writing practice
   D. pair dialogue
   E. group work
   F. competition game
   G. role play
   H. sheet activities
   G. Others________________________________________________

5. What content would you like to be included in the Mandarin lessons? And what activities? Why?

6. Is there anything else you would like to comment on about learning Mandarin?
Appendix 14: Reflective journal sample

5/05/10 Wednesday Hills Sports HS

Period 2 Chinese class for Year 8B

I did not change my teaching strategy very much from what I did in Mitchell HS for Year 8 3. The topic is the same, “My family”. In order to make students feel that the topic is very related to their real life, I still used several questions in introducing topic. I asked, “How many of you have brothers, please raise up?” “How many of you have sisters, please hands up.” “How many of you are the only child in your family? Please raise up.” for the last question, the answer is “zero” among the students. I was quite happy because it will make Miss Weng and me very special culturally. So I asked them, “Now who is brave enough to have a guess, how many brothers or sisters do Miss Weng have?” “Eight!” some called out. “One brother and two sisters” . . . “Have another guess” I continued encouraged and implied that I have not heard the correct answer. At this time, I heard a boy sitting in the middle of the front row calling out: “only child!” “One child.” Another girl said almost at the same time. I was very happy to hear that, so I caught the answer saying, “I heard some one calling out Miss Weng is the only child in her family. That is a very brave guess. All right, who can guess about me, how many brothers or sisters do I have.” “You are also the only child, no brothers and sisters, Miss.” “Oh, I know, I know, the one child policy! Yes!” some students have answered further even before telling them the answer and ask them “why do most Chinese people at my age are the only child in family”. So I have to say something more. But, a boy at the back of the classroom, raising up his hand and saying before I open my mouth, “Chinese have a large population!” Now, it’s my turn to catch their pace. So I quickly said, “Good, how large is that large?” (I did not prepare this question before. I thought it about at the time being.) “en . . . about 1.2, or 3 billion something.” “yes, close, I usually think we have reached 1.4 billion . . . En, . . . how much is 1.4 billion? . . .
think about what is the population in Australia.” “en, . . . about 22 million?” “Yes, 22 million, so you can figure out how many times is Chinese population larger than Australian population.” Luckily, I know the Australian population so that I was able to extend the question conversation. Finally, I throw out the ultimate question: “From the things we discussed just now, who can tell me what is the topic we are going to learn?” “Brother and sister?” “Do not know.” “Population?” “Family?” “Yes, that is right!” I caught the closest answer I heard and introduced the topic, “The topic for this term is, . . . ‘My family’” I wrote “我的家(My family)” on the board while I was talking.