A path to Professional knowledge and Identity Building: Self Study of a Native Chinese Language two Teacher in Western Sydney Schools

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March, 2012
Declaration

I declare that except where due acknowledgement has been made, this research proposal 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 Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

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March, 2013
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Author’s Conference Paper


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<tr>
<td>ROSETE</td>
<td>Research-Oriented School-Engaged Teacher Education</td>
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<td>L2</td>
<td>Second language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UWS</td>
<td>The University of Western Sydney</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEC</td>
<td>Department of Education and Communication</td>
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<td>WSR</td>
<td>Western Sydney Region</td>
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<tr>
<td>TCSL</td>
<td>Teaching Chinese As a Second Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>TPR</td>
<td>Total Physical Response</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMS</td>
<td>Short Message Symbol</td>
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<tr>
<td>NESTs</td>
<td>Native English-speaking teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELT</td>
<td>English Language Teaching</td>
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<td>TEFL</td>
<td>Teaching English As Foreign Language</td>
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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the development of my professional knowledge, practice and identity as a teacher in Western Sydney primary schools of unique status. It focuses on my important achievements and challenges, the changes I made to address these challenges and how they contributed to my professional identity development.

Self-study through action research was employed as the methodology to examine my first-year teaching experience. Data collected and analyzed included self-reflective journals, class teacher’s observations and interview, students’ questionnaire and formal discussion notes. Excerpts of these sources were analyzed to identify the achievements and challenges I experienced, and their similarity to the experience of other beginning teachers.

I theorized my development as a teacher using the concepts of practical knowledge, professional development, professional learning and professional identity. Similarities to the experience of other beginning teachers include the fact that classroom management issues and classroom teaching all developed in accordance with the stage theory of professional development. However, idiosyncratic factors, including my non-native English language status, my lack of conventional educational background, my casual status and Chinese educational values, all contributed to a unique and different experience as a beginning teacher. Both the similarities and differences in my achievements and challenges affected my sense of belonging; this pushed me to just focus on developing some successful practical knowledge, rather than addressing all the challenges. In order to pursue professional development effectively, the most useful types of professional learning identified were learning from ROSETE peers and supervisors, partly due to the easy access and frequent academic contact with them. The analysis and discussion focuses on the effect of my critical teaching experience in influencing my choice of developing particular kinds of knowledge and what professional learning strategies I used to develop my practical knowledge, as well as how the development of knowledge contributed to teacher professional identity development.
Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 A significant teacher

I have dreamt of being a teacher since I was in junior high school. My first English teacher in Junior High, Mrs Li, was an important reason for this dream. She was skilled in motivating us to enjoy learning English. Even though she was not as experienced as the key schoolteachers, she was comfortable with organizing us in terms of classroom management, task assessment and instructional strategies. I never saw her nervous or stressed when dealing with our never-ending and unpredictable questions. Sometimes she did not even know the answer, but she regarded this as a challenge and praised us for asking such questions. This empowered the students to think more, and succeeded in providing us with access to skills to learn knowledge more easily. Mrs Li was like a queen to me, who was in control of her field with tremendous passion, as a powerful person.

What really impressed me about Mrs Li was her confidence in us as learners. Actually, I often heard of other teachers’ complaints about my class, stating, “They are too restless to have a studying atmosphere, they are always loving answering questions nothing to do with their tasks”. While I acknowledge that my classmates had specific characteristics that made us not easy to manage, Miss Li had faith in us, often speaking highly of our class, saying we were clever.

I wanted to be a similar, supportive and confident teacher like Mrs Li. A Chinese poem illustrates what I want to achieve as a teacher: “

(zhídīnjíngshān, jǐyangwénzì; Pondering national affairs, setting people afire with my words). My aspiration was to be skilled in controlling the classroom, gaining respect from the students, teaching my discipline area and inspiring my students to learn and achieve.

A distinct practice of teachers in China is that in the classroom they only call on those students whose grades are top of the class. Even though my grades were
always above average at school and university, I was not top of the class and this meant that teachers would ignore me. This routine makes it very difficult to change one’s status in a class, because one does not have the encouragement of the teacher. While I studied hard to reach a higher level, I could not rise up to the top of the class. However, Mrs Li changed my life one day and helped me to break this obstacle on the way to my success. I vividly remember a revision class where Mrs Li had asked all students to revise all the learned English words and sentences. She gave us a few minutes to scan our work and then she would say the word in Chinese or English; we had to spell the words in English as soon as possible. That is to say, we had to spare no effort to compete with each other. At the time, I had mixed feelings. On one hand, I had revised all the words the previous night and thought this might help me to be more competent. On the other hand, I was afraid of failing. Any possibility of failing would frustrate me and make me lose face. To my surprise, Mrs Li asked me to spell the words! She did not call on the top students as usual, so I had no choice but to try to master the word. I spelt all the words she asked of me correctly. I was really excited at that moment when I gave the correct answer and became the teacher’s choice. I heard her comment, “I believe my choice is always right, you are the master of these words”. I really felt shocked by her confident facial expression and her words about me. I was her choice, not a product of randomly selecting any student.

My achievement in that review lesson strengthened my self-confidence as a student. It made me believe the Chinese saying: “密林花明有伊村; Dense willow trees and bright flowers blocked my view, but finally I found the village). This suggests that the poet got lost because of the dense vegetation and couldn’t find the way. He felt worried, but luckily the village was to be found just behind these dense plants. This is likened to shining success being just behind difficulties. It echoes the western saying: “There is always light at the end of the tunnel”). When I have to face a challenge, rather than just feeling sorry for myself, I always spare no effort to conquer it. I can overcome difficulties in subjects, I can be the teacher’s choice, and I can do as well as the top students.

1.2 My aspiration and path to become a teacher

Mrs Li set a good example of the effective teacher. However, I had always aspired to
be a teacher, from the time I was in primary school. I wanted to be a teacher because I felt that teachers can have lots of authority and can enjoy a good reputation and high status in our society. As the Chinese saying goes, (yi ri wei shi, zhong sheng wei fu; Being a teacher for one day, being their father forever).

In my primary study experience, I witnessed that teachers could get lots of respect from both students and parents, and that students were really willing to follow every instruction the teacher gave. At that time, in my eyes, teaching was the most powerful profession in the world. Witnessing and enjoying Mrs Li’s teaching helped me further understand what kind of a teacher I wanted to be. She showed me that a good teacher was the one who was skilled in managing the class and skilled in giving effective lessons by using various useful teaching strategies and assessing students’ various learning outcomes efficiently.

As I continued from high school to university I increasingly came to appreciate the great value of teachers to other people, and of the teaching practices that facilitate this. I saw that the aim of the role is to nurture people, to support knowledge passing from one generation to the next one. As the Chinese old saying goes: “(shi zhe, suo yi chuan dao shou ye jie huo ye; Teachers are those who instill knowledge, train your skills and dispel doubt for students). I often imagined that if I were a teacher, I would bring detailed knowledge and life insights to the students. I also envisioned that the role would bring me a great many intangible assets, like increased confidence and skills in public speaking and reflection. I considered that such attributes would deeply add to my self-satisfaction.

Recently, I came to Australia to take part in the UWS Research-Oriented School-Engaged Teacher Education (ROSETE) program, which was to allow me to fulfill my dream as a teacher. It is an innovative, flexible and intellectually challenging program that has Chinese graduated researching the teaching of Chinese to non-background speakers. A memorandum signed by the Ningbo Education Bureau, the NSW Education Department (Western Sydney Region) and the University of Western Sydney formalized the program. This project required me to volunteer to teach Chinese in schools for nine hours a week and also to complete a Masters of Education by research degree at the University.
My family and friends considered it unwise for me to study the Masters of Education because I did not have the “right” educational background. When I left school I fulfilled my parent’s dream for me and completed an engineering degree. Engineering background graduates have different content knowledge and skill sets from Arts/Humanities students. In Engineering there is a focus on science, calculation, quantitative data and correct answers. This focus did not contribute greatly to the creativity needed for developing meaningful and interesting lessons for students.

Furthermore, there was little focus/incentive in my Engineering course on excelling in the English language. It was difficult for me to become skilled in English, because I did not have a positive English learning environment in which I could have partners to practice with and be supported in learning English. However, being a ROSETE volunteer teacher required excellent ability in English. I should be very fluent in oral English and excellent at listening, as this could help me to communicate well with local students. Without sufficient English ability, it would even be hard for students to understand my language of instruction, let alone achieving my goal of giving effective Mandarin lessons.

In spite of challenges in both my English and Chinese teaching abilities, I aimed to be an effective second language (L2) Mandarin teacher in Sydney. With my parents’ blessing, I grasped the opportunity to become a member of the ROSETE Program and realize my dream of becoming a teacher. The teaching and research focus of the ROSETE program allowed me to form a virtuous cycle in which I could enrich both my practical knowledge and theoretical knowledge at the same time.

I began this thesis at the time of beginning my career as a teacher. Beginning this career brought with it a great many issues to deal with. Central to these issues is how a person who does not have formal education in teaching development—in particular, knowledge of pedagogy, understanding of classroom management, relationships with students that empower them—learns to become an effective teacher. For all the reasons outlined above, my research aims came to cluster upon one primary question: how I could enhance my professional identity as a teacher.
Further to my issues is how I learnt to become a teacher in the Australian schooling system. Being educated in China gave me a different understanding of teaching and learning. From my experience as a volunteer Mandarin teacher in Australian schools I have come to see that western people have a different understanding of schooling. Chinese and Australian teachers attach importance to different things. Chinese teachers value quantity, how much information you have memorized from textbooks. However Australian teachers prioritize depth of understanding rather than quantity in learning. Seminars or workshops are used as a way of communicating with each other, exchanging one’s deepest thoughts and the most profound understandings about the academic concepts, thus strengthening the learning of concepts. In addition, Australian teachers emphasize the application of concepts, trying to demonstrate their validity. So when I first came here to be a research student, I really felt confused about what they taught. I could not understand why they did not give me some books and tasks to review the theoretical concepts, and an examination to test whether you can remember it, as I would be expected to do in China.

1.2.1 The focus of this thesis

My particular status is that I am a native Chinese who has lived in China all my life and undertaken all of my formal education there, prior to the present studies. I had not travelled outside China before; I arrived in Australia only two weeks before I began teaching here. Western life and schooling were very unfamiliar to me. In addition, I had not undertaken a Teacher Education course; rather, my university degree was in Engineering. Not did I have an understanding of learning theories and pedagogy; this made my first year as a teacher even more challenging for me.

Consequently, my dilemma which is also the focus of my research, is how do I develop as a volunteer Mandarin teacher in a school in Western Sydney Australia, when I do not have either an education (or even Arts) background, and have not had experience with western education? My intention was, through this research to learn to be a confident, supportive and reflective teacher.

Given this background, my study focused on tracing my professional development as a L2 novice teacher in my first year of teaching in Western Sydney schools. The
research questions below guided this study.

1.2.2 Research questions

How can I enhance my professional identity as a beginning volunteer Mandarin teacher in Western Sydney schools?

The contributory questions were:

1. What professional achievements or challenges can I identify as important in my first year of teaching?
2. What changes can I make to my teaching to address the challenges?
3. How do these changes contribute to my identity as a teacher?

The main research question focuses on exploring the development of my professional identity in my first year of teaching. There was an emphasis on the initiatives I would take to enhance my learning to be a teacher. Contributory Question 1 seeks to identify the challenges and achievements I encounter in my first year of teaching. It assists in identifying the areas I require further knowledge in. Contributory Questions 2 builds on Contributory Question 1 and focuses on the process of building my knowledge base on being a teacher within a Western Sydney Region (WSR) context. It mainly focuses on the various professional learning strategies which can help me to address my challenges and improve my teaching practice. Not only does it include the influence of single strategies in influencing the development of my teaching knowledge, but it will also highlight how the interwoven relationship of these learning strategies contributes to my identity. Contributory Question 3 examines how the process of actively building my knowledge base and the development of my teaching practice contributes to my professional identity.

1.3 Significance of the study

This study contributed to developing my expertise as a teacher. It helped me to address my aspirations to be an effective teacher through self-understanding and improvement. It contributed to my ability to develop my understandings of pedagogy, class management and building relationships with students. In addition to this
improvement in professional capability, the study also helped me to understand the construction of my professional identity in local teaching practice. In a deeper sense, this study also helped me to develop my understanding of the teaching approaches I value, as they provided the opportunity to reflect deeply on traditional teacher-centred ways of teaching in China against the student-centred practice which is valued in Australia.

The focus of this study is also consistent with Australia’s urgent need to understand China and speak Chinese, as well as the great mutual economic and social benefits China brings to Australian (Orton, 2008). Within these overarching trends, increasing attention has been paid to Chinese learning in Australia. The National Goals for Schooling (known as the “Melbourne Declaration [2008]”) has declared for “promoting world-class curriculum and assessment”, and especially has highlighted the importance of Asian Languages (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 14). In order to improve the quality of Chinese teaching, native-Chinese teachers need to have a central role in promoting Chinese learning. It is said that 90% of teachers of Chinese in Australia are native Chinese speakers who come from the mainland (Orton, 2008, p. 21). However, most of them are rejected as unsuitable, due to “poor self-presentation socially and linguistically” and their poor understanding of Australian children and local classrooms (Orton, 2008, p. 21). So this research will contribute to a better understanding of the professional identity of teachers who are native Chinese and teach Chinese in Australia to a level that matches national guidelines. It provides information about how can these teachers thrive to be a qualified teacher in Australian context. So this self-study of Chinese teachers’ professional identity in Australia will support better understanding of the beginning teachers’ maturity journey and stimulate Chinese teaching in Western Sydney Region. This will be of benefit to those directly related to the teaching of Chinese language in schools and also those on the periphery of this group who have not have the opportunity to develop an understanding of this aspect of teaching in Australian schools.

1.4 Research aims and outcomes

The aims of this research are to:
Contribute to understanding of how a volunteer beginning teacher understands herself as a teacher in a Western Sydney context.

Recognize how to develop and capitalize on teachers’ shifting knowledge to gain positive student outcomes.

Understand how the volunteer beginning teacher develops her own professional identity.

The research outcomes will be:

- Exploring factors that enhance my professional identity as a volunteer Mandarin teacher in the Western Sydney region.
- Finding the most relevant influential factors that contribute to beginning teachers’ professional development and professional learning.
- Identifying the changes that help non-native English speaking beginning teachers to flourish in their early career and further contribute to their professional identity growth.

1.5 Presenting the research in the first person

This inquiry was a self-study of my practice within the field of Educational Action Research and this thesis is constructed in the first person “I”. Firstly, self-study as methodology allows researchers to study their roles within their own inquiry, focusing the taken-for-granted questions about practice onto themselves, foregrounding the research from a first person instead of external onlooker role (Saramars, 2011). Samaras (2011) claims that using the first person in the research with critical collaborative inquiry allows teachers to develop and direct their professional development in learning communities that support and extend that development (p. 20). In my case, I present this self-study in the first person because it allows me to treat myself as a learner who is being provided with opportunities to be engaged in meaningful discussions about how reform of my teaching related to students’ learning development. This kind of meaningful inquiry enabled me to think critically and to challenge my ideas about how various powerful factors are constructed in my teaching world and are mapped onto my teacher identity development.
Secondly, the use of “I” was also essential for relating action research as a form of practitioner research related to self-study. Whitehead et al. (2003) claim that action research “place[s] the “I” at the centre of enquiry process…. as a form of self-study or first person enquiry” (p. 9). The importance and significance the first person in such kinds of research are illuminated in the following quote:

The emphasis on the living person “I” show[s] how individuals can take responsibility for improving and sustaining themselves and the world they are in. “I” have the capacity to influence the process of social change in this way, because “I” can influence others in my immediate context, who in turn can influence others in their contexts. The circles of influence are potentially without limit. Collectively, individuals can generate world-wide change. (Whitehead et al., 2003, p. 20)

From the research perspective, using “I” to present my research also highlights the responsibility I took for my own actions and for my claims and judgments in forming findings and conclusions. From the action perspective, using “I” in my research indicates not only my intent to intervene in and improve on my own practice, but also my appreciating other voices: respecting other opinions, being open to argument and criticism from my peers and supervisors. Furthermore, also it indicates an assessment of my own influence, in terms of how others respond to my practice. I shared my knowledge and ideas with colleagues, engaging in collaborative practices to create an atmosphere of enquiry, to contribute to the development of social formation through education.

1.6 Outline of the thesis

Chapter 1 has introduced the background of the research, focusing on the biographical path that led me to this thesis. It includes how I identified the meaning of significant teachers from my study experience in China and my aspirations and path to becoming the kind of teacher I want to be, which developed throughout my studying life in China and my teaching experience in Sydney. It has also outlined the research questions, the significance of this research, the aims and outcomes of this project.
Chapter 2 presents the literature review, which tracks what is known about the trajectory of development—how beginning teachers develop their expertise and identity—and where the gaps in this literature exist. A review is made of the literature on: beginning teachers, professional identity, theories about beginning teachers’ development and its relationship with professional identity, as well as the professional learning of beginning teachers and its effects on helping to develop teachers’ identities. In terms of professional identity, a gap is identified in the lack of research into the classroom practice identities of native-Chinese L2 beginning Mandarin teachers. With regard to professional development, the gap focuses on the professional development of teachers without the conventional education background and on what accelerates their development. Finally, it notes that there have been limited studies on informal professional learning strategies and how the various kinds of strategy intertwine with each other to form a learning system, to contribute to the development of beginning teachers’ professional identity.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology of this study. It explains the rationale for using the methodology “self-study through action research” to study development in my professional identity as teacher and improves my limited professional knowledge base: the combination of these two methodologies allows me to utilize a cycle of selves, to conduct the research by contrasting past selves in practice and the current self in practice, thus helping me to capitalize fully on my teaching experience. It then outlines the participants: the teacher-researcher, a class teacher, the students and my ROSETE peers. The data collection is detailed: a reflective journal, interviews, observations and formal discussion notes. Further, it explains the action cycle plans as a process of reflection, planning, acting and developing, entailing validity, generalizability and ethical issues. Finally, it illustrates data analysis methods, the organization of data and the specific process of analysis in the two action cycles.

Chapter 4, 5 and 6 are evidentiary chapters focusing on 3 themes: achievements and challenges in cycle 1; professional learning strategies; the achievements and challenges of cycle 2. They trace my evolutionary process: how I developed my teaching practice and addressed my problems through different professional learning strategies. Each chapter presents the data in different sub-themes, which are
illustrated by excerpts in support. Each excerpt is discussed according to the key concepts in the research questions, supported by the literature review. In total, 22 excerpts are provided, to illustrate the tensions between achievements and challenges, as well as the changes I made to address the challenges. The discussion contributes to answering the contributory questions and demonstrates the reasons for regarding particular incidents as achievements and challenges, as changes that enhanced the teaching practice, and their influences on my professional identity.

Chapter 4 focuses on the achievements and challenges that I encountered in cycle 1. It displays my achievements in engaging and enhancing students’ learning of Chinese, by using various effective teaching strategies for various types of learners. In also shows how my challenges in cycle 1 had a common theme in classroom management, due to ineffective teaching strategies, a lack of ability to give clear and assertive instructions, as well as my failure to building an authoritative figure. The chapter shows that in action cycle 1 my achievements mainly focused on developing ability to use appropriate teaching strategies to teach Chinese, while my challenges regarded my inappropriate teaching practice, leading to classroom management problems.

Chapter 5 focuses on my professional teaching strategies, which helped to address my challenges and to develop my teaching knowledge. It demonstrates that the collaborative-oriented learning from students, class teachers, ROSETE peers and supervisors helped me to gain practical advice on teaching to different levels, and to gain theoretical knowledge to guide my future lesson plans. It also pushed me to develop my teaching practice by providing emotional support and giving me space to reflect on my lessons. Besides, it also illustrated individual-oriented learning strategies, such as searching and synthesizing various information and reflections about my teaching, through I could gain abundant information and examine my teaching practice.

Chapter 6 focuses on the achievements and challenges of cycle 2. Through the accumulation of teaching experience and knowledge through trying various professional learning strategies, I had some achievements, such as adapting teaching strategies to a wider range and with greater effectiveness, making sense of students’
learning, and motivating their exploration of knowledge. At this stage, I came to focused on the creativity both of students and myself. However, tensions were also experienced in relation to my limited knowledge of students’ daily lives and my giving ineffective instructions.

Chapter 7 concludes the key points of the thesis as a whole. It summarizes each chapter’s key points and moves to focus on the key points of each evidence chapter and the links between excerpts. By synthesizing the findings of each evidential chapter, an overview is provided of my teaching practice and the process of constructing my professional identity in local teaching practice as a native-Chinese beginning Mandarin teacher. The limitations and constraints of the study are referred to, and I make some reflections on this study. Finally, implications and recommendations for further research are discussed.
Chapter 2 Review of Literature

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews the theoretical work and empirical studies that are related to my research questions. Theoretical work provides crucial background information to understand and assess my own research, and empirical studies help to contextualize my research in relation to the recent literature and then to identify the gaps in these studies that are met by my own research.

The chapter begins with the concepts of teachers’ professional identity and the beginning teacher; these are the key ideas in my research. Then it covers empirical studies about what challenges beginning teachers encounter during their different career stages, when they develop their professional identity, and how they try to address the challenges. Finally, the last part reviews empirical studies about how different professional learning methods help with beginning teachers’ professional identity development.

Although a considerable number of studies have been done in these relevant fields, a review of the literature shows that these studies seldom focus on how L2 beginning language teachers without Australian teaching qualifications develop their professional identity, as related to Australian teaching practice. There is also little literature focusing on the professional development of Chinese beginning teachers who lack a formal education background in teaching and in particular on how these teachers accelerate their professional development with various kinds of professional learning strategies. Another gap in the current literature is that few long-term empirical studies systematically examine how beginning teachers learn from informal professional learning systems to enhance their professionalism. This study will contribute to addressing the limitations of the current literature in respect of how a Chinese-native novice Mandarin teacher in Australian can enhance her professional identity.
2.1 Professional identity

Professional identity is how an individual participates (acting and interacting) in their professional context, and interprets and reinterprets their profession throughout their professional life. It consists of an “understanding of agency, or the active pursuit of professional development and learning in accordance with a teacher’s goals” (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, p. 177). Recent literature highlights the importance of professional identity in teacher development (Day & Kington, 2008; Olsen, 2008). As the definition of professional identity is closely related to understanding of the concept of identity more broadly, it is important to comprehend the definition of identity first.

A key point drawn from the literature on “identity”, which is important to understanding professional identity, is that self is related to identity (Beijaard et al., 2004; Samuel & Stephens, 2000, Volkmann & Anderson, 1998). Self is interpreted as “an organized representation of our theories, attitudes and beliefs about ourselves” (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 108). It is argued that the concept of self strongly influences how an individual teaches, how they become a teacher, and how they react to educational changes, thus influencing their professional identity (Volkmann & Anderson, 1998).

Many scholars illustrate that the concept of self can be viewed as both internal and external (Olsen, 2008; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Sfard & Prusak, 2005; Gee, 2001). The internal self refers to something that has been digested by a person, that is inherent in their mind—such as their emotions, values, thinking, dispositions, personality; anything that is internally chosen, understood by the individual (Rodgers & Scott, 2008; Veen & Sleegers, 2006; Zembylas, 2003; McCluskey, Sim & Johnson, 2011). The outer self often refers to individuals’ actions and interactions within a particular context, such as job experience and relationships with others, that is recognized by society or external groups (Flores & Day, 2006; Rodgers & Scott, 2008; Sachs, 2005; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

2.1.1 The concept of teacher professional identity

A variety of definitions of teacher professional identity have been given, according
to the different theoretical frameworks the scholars rely on. Some stress that the central role of self, referring to teacher identity from a personal perspective, as their understanding of responsibility and personal performance, should be connected closer with identity in future research (Beijaard et al., 2004). Based on the above framework, teacher professional identity includes a teacher’s understanding of self within specific professional contexts (Beijaard et al., 2004; Sachs, 2001). That is, teacher professional identity refers to “what teachers themselves find important in their professional work and lives based on both their experiences and their personal backgrounds” (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 108). Similarly, Bullough & Gitlin (2001) highlight the importance of self in being a teacher:

who you are as a person will profoundly influence what you will learn or not during learning to be a teacher, but more importantly, it also shapes what you will be as a teacher, what and how you will change and how to reply to the changing teaching context (p. 45).

From this view of point, teacher identity can be seen as the “core of the teaching profession” (Sachs, 2005). Sachs (2005) also provides her view of identity as a framework for teachers to “reflect their own ideas of ‘how to be’, ‘how to act’ and ‘how to understand’ their work and their place in society” (p. 15). Both of these researchers, on one hand, have highlighted the central status of self in understanding teacher identity. On the other hand, however, they also state that self encompasses both personal and professional aspects in respect of teacher professional identity. Beijaard et al. (2004) report that teacher professional identity is not purely the teacher’s own thing: it is a process “of practical knowledge building characterized by an ongoing integration of what is individually and collectively seen as relevant to teaching” (p. 123).

In this way, the professional context a teacher practices in, and their interpretations of that context, are crucial to their professional identity. To be more specific, some scholars simultaneously build up their own understanding of teacher professional identity based on the concepts of learning, and identify being a teacher as “the person’s self-knowledge in teacher-related situations and relationships that manifest themselves in practical professional activities, feelings of belonging and learning
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2.1.2 Characteristics of teacher professional identity

Teachers’ professional identities, like their personal identity, are multifaceted. Historical, sociological, psychological and cultural factors can affect the teacher’s sense of their role (Cooper & Olson, 1996, cited in Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 113). A teacher’s professional identity consists of sub-identities with different contexts and relationships (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004). These sub-identities are either “linked to the core professional identity” or just “peripheral” (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 122). The more central the sub-identity, the more difficult it is to abandon it (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 122). For example, one’s own ethnicity is likely to be core to one’s professional identity and therefore to be important to all aspects of professional identity. However, the sub-identities must be balanced and aligned with each other, so as not to hinder general teacher professional identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004).

Teachers’ professional identity is also an ongoing, evolving and dynamic phenomenon, shifting over time throughout one’s career, under the influence of a range of factors, both internal and external to the individual (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Chong, Low & Goh, 2011). It is an ongoing process of “interpreting oneself as a certain kind of person and being recognized as such in a given context” (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 108); for example, how the teachers understand what kind of teacher they should be in Western Sydney schools. Different emphasis is placed on what should be the most important aspect of a teacher’s identity. For example, some scholars think that linguistic identity or the identity of race is the principal identity in the novice L2 teacher’s professional identity (Pavlenko, 2003; McClusky, Sim & Johnson, 2011). Other studies prioritize improvement of practice and teacher self-efficacy as the most important aspects of beginning teachers’ professional identity.

2.1.3 Reframing language teacher professional identities

Recently, the influence of context on identity has been explored in many aspects. The context influences the new teacher’s beginning practice and consequently their students’ experience (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). To be more specific, the school
environment, the population, the school staffs’ attitudes and school administration, can all be active in forming new teachers’ professional identity. Flores & Day (2006) conducted a long-term study of beginning teachers’ professional identity by exploring the interplay between contextual, cultural and biological factors in teaching practice. They found that teachers’ personal and professional histories and pre-service training, school culture and leadership are strong influential factors mediating the kinds and the stability of professional identities that new teachers develop in their early career. For new teachers, teacher professional identity over time constructs and reconstructs itself; key influencing contexts include pre-service induction programs and school culture.

More recently, the literature increasingly calls for the need to view identity in a broader context, not just limited to school or education settings (McCluskey, Sim & Johnson, 2011; Pavlenko, 2003; Kachru, 1994). These environments are different for each person and can be influenced by their culture, language, prior experience and so on. For example, a Chinese teacher in Australia may have different beliefs, understandings of the teacher’s roles and responsibilities, the different demands on them to be a good teacher. They may also identify with Chinese teachers in China. That is not only because of the language they use, but also, more importantly, the two contexts value different teaching styles and student outcomes, and challenge different aspects in constructing and reconstructing teachers’ professional identity. The researcher wanted to find out how the L2 beginning teacher challenges her own beliefs about teaching Chinese, and how this challenge contributes to her unique professional identity in a particular Australian context.

As stated above, teachers’ professional identity is formed in a process of interactions with various factors within a broader social context. In this case, the construction of teachers’ professional identities has been explored in the context of language teachers, with a particular focus on foreign teachers. Firstly, a growing body of literature on language teachers’ identity focuses largely on the cultural attributes of teachers. Varghese et al. (2005) theorize language teacher identity into three frameworks: social identity (Tajfel, 1978), situated learning identity (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and image-text (Simon, 1995), and argue that an openness to multiple theoretical approaches allows for a richer and more useful understanding of the
processes and contexts of teacher identity. Drawing upon Wenger’s (1998) social identity theory, Tsui (2007) examined an EFL teacher’s 6 year teaching experience and demonstrated how the teacher’s professional identity formed through complex relationships between membership, competence and legitimacy of access to practice.

More specifically, recent research has also called into question the role of intercultural competence in forming L2 teachers’ professional identity. One important research study demonstrating this was conducted by Sercu (2006), who claims that intercultural competence should be emphasized in the formation of modern teachers’ professional identity, due to the increasing demands of cultural knowledge in language teaching. She investigated a number of foreign teachers from seven different countries and found that foreign language teachers are required to know the foreign language culture they teach, culture-general knowledge and what stereotypical views students may have of the foreign culture. She further claims that the foreign language teacher’s intercultural identity highlights the linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse components of their professional identity.

A much different study that yielded similar results was conducted by Nakahara & Black (2007), who argue that the best means of survival way for a Japanese woman teaching in Australia is to be an “intercultural speaker, who is able to mediate between cultures, depends on traits such as curiosity and openness as well as on knowledge of one’s own and other social groups and their ability to acquire knowledge” (p. 13). As a result, novice teachers, particularly those who are overseas educated or whose backgrounds are vastly different from their students’ sociocultural backgrounds, should have the ability to deal with the cultures of foreign classrooms (Nakahara & Black, 2007; Osterling et al., 2009). In summary, foreign teachers’ identity is the result of negotiation and interaction between their own sociocultural and foreign culture components.

Another important, and classic focus in forming language teachers’ identity, is closely related to their language ability (Kato, 1998; Pavlenko, 2003; McClusky, Sim & Johnson, 2011). A seminal study in this area was conducted by Kato (1998), who argued that the Japanese teachers failed to teach Australian students because of their inability in English. A similar study conducted by Hartley (2003) claimed that
language generates crises in foreign teachers’ identity and sense of worth. The foreign teacher needs to address incalculable personal investment and insurmountable cultural barriers. What is more, Pavlenko (2003) further connects L2 beginning teachers’ linguistic identity to their imagined community of practice, claiming that student teachers who regarded themselves as multilingual were eager to reconstruct and reframe themselves in a more positive light, and to position themselves differently in terms of their language and competence (p. 262). This helps to enhance their self-esteem, their belief in their own language ability and their agency to learn to develop their professional identity effectively. However, when L2 teachers regard themselves as non-native speakers, they may feel “second class” and “less than a human being”, because they portray L2 learning as a “never-ending elusive quest for native-speaker competence” (p. 259).

2.1.4 Unqualified natives teaching their first language

In modern times, the notion that native-English-speaking speakers are born to be perfect English teachers for L2 learners is questioned by many researchers (Boyle, 1997; Medgyes, 1992; Medgyes, 1994; Barratt & Kontra, 2000; Holliday, 2006; Jin, 2005; Shin & Kellogg, 2007, Bright & Phan, 2011; Tajino & Tajino, 2000). A seminal study in this field is conducted by Medgyes (1994), who claims that thousands of unqualified native speakers teaching English all around the world lead to “considerable disservice to ELT by decreasing the level of professionalism” (p. 66). Even if natives are superior in authentic pronunciation, wide-ranging cultural knowledge, flexible use of vocabulary and idioms, and critical information of word usage (Barratt & Kontra, 2000; Jeon & Lee, 2006), their dominance of being an excellent teacher is still doubted because competent language teacher can’t be exclusively based on “the language grounds, without taking the criteria of cultural, social and pedagogic appropriacy” (Medgyes & Ârva, 2004, p. 369). So in this case, natives should not “exaggerate their significance or elevate them to be a supreme position as a unit of thought” (Kabel, 2009, p. 15). Similarly, Shin & Kellogg (2007) start to question the hierarchy of competence implied by the term ‘native’ by redefining language teachers’ competence as teaching competence, not just simply language competence.

Many native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) are most frequently criticized for
the lack of TEFL preparation (Barratt & Kontra, 2000). Those unqualified teachers, however, are regarded as “potential menace” due to their linguistic ignorance (Barratt & Kontra, 2000, p. 20) and their lack of particular profession makes them unable to explain things and answer students’ questions (Barratt & Kontra, 2000). Ryan (1998) pinpoint that untrained NESTs are incapable in using grammatical metaphors which “hangs their definitions of culture” (p. 137), to make the transition to literacy in its cognitive consequence (Halliday, 2004). In addition, the novice NESTs are less sharp in presenting grammar and less vigilant in correcting errors (Barratt & Kontra, 2000; Medgyes, 1992; Medgyes & Ârva, 2004). They know what is correct, but unable to explain the grammatical rules (Boyle, 1997, p. 169). Worse still, most of novice NESTs just learn the grammar knowledge as they begin to teach (Medgyes & Ârva, 2004). Also, a different study carried by Medgyes (1992) yields the similar the results, pointing out that the NESTs should strive to improve their knowledge of grammar if they want to be a qualified teacher in the context of hosting countries. Otherwise, even they can speak good English, they can’t explain the grammar clearly (Barratt & Kontra, 2000). The teaching of foreign language can no more “be left to an untrained expatriate” (Shin & Kellogg, 2007, p. 165).

Another important factor holding back their knowledge in declarative knowledge is their deficiency in local language (Medgyes & Ârva, 2004, Medgyes, 1992). Medgyes (1992) contends that NESTs should learn the vernacular of the hosting country because “the more proficient in the learners’ mother tongue, the more efficient in the classroom” (p. 348). This kind of deficiency, however, leads to those NESTs’ failure in giving fully understandable explanation (Medgyes & Ârva, 2004, p. 362). In that sense, without the ability to speak students’ mother tongue, teachers can’t really “interpret the mistakes students make” (Medgyes & Ârva, 2004, p. 362).

Secondly, unqualified NESTs are criticized for their lack of understanding of students’ difficulties in learning target language and relevant strategies to deal with students’ learning difficulties (Medgyes & Ârva, 2004; Jin, 2005, Boyle, 1997; Barratt & Kontra, 2000; Shin & Kellogg, 2007). In most cases, those untrained novice expatriate teachers simply dismissed the stereotyping of L2 learners as error in processing rather than correctly regard their mode of processing as the means through which “L2 learners are produced and made as non-native learners” (Kabel,
Some reasons account for it. From the macro perspective, as Barratt & Kontra (2000) state, NESTs lack familiarity with host educational system. Their lack of knowledge in the school syllabus leads to mismatch between the expatriate teachers’ instruction and the school’s expectations or students’ needs (Barratt & Kontra, 2000, p. 21). Similarly, Shin & Kellogg (2007) maintain that influenced by the notion of domination of native speakers, those expatriate teachers are “unable to attend to the complexities of the classroom culture” because his approach is that assuming “implications for language classrooms rather than reporting empirical observations of the classroom itself” (p. 160). Hence, students are easily turning away from those expatriate teachers because they find their approach to language learning academically light-weight, which can’t cover their needs for the requirement of local education system (Shin & Kellogg, 2007).

From their personal perspective, however, the lack of the similar routine of learning the target language brings about those NESTs’ short of sense of typical errors of their EFL learners and lack of ability in appreciating students’ problem of language transfer and cultural alienation clearly (Barratt & Kontra, 2000; Boyle, 1997, Medgyes & Árva, 2004). The NESTs can act as perfect language models they cannot be learner models since they are not learners of English (Medgyes, 1992, p. 346). They show low empathy in students’ needs and problems of learners because their lack of similar experiences undermines their sensitivity in understanding students’ difficulties and in anticipating language difficulties (Medgyes, 1992). Therefore, few of expatriate teachers can develop an anticipatory device with which they can “predict what is likely to go wrong before the students open his mouth” (Barratt & Kontra, 2000, p. 62), only if they get understanding of culture in hosting countries (Bright & Phan, 2011, p. 129). This situation is exaggerated by their unfamiliarity with general education goals including curricular and exam requirements (Medgyes & Árva, 2004, p. 362) and the fact that many novice NESTs often act as EFL specialist teaching in different classes, which aggravated the problem that she didn’t know the children’s language (Shin & Kellogg, 2007).

Finally, it is the lack of pedagogical ability that makes those NESTs unqualified (Amin, 2003; Boyle, 1997). Many novice NESTs failed to recognize the English as a global language which contributed to the need for broader definition of
native-speaker in English language teaching (Graddol, 1999; Boyle, 1997; Holliday, 2006; Bright & Phan, 2011). That is, the acceptance of legitimate varieties of English has become a central contention of the definition of native speaker (Boyle, 1997). To be more specific, Jin (2005) claims that China English, which is “based on a standard English, express Chinese culture, Chinese characteristics in lexis, sentence structure and discourse but does not show an L1 interference” (p. 39), is more appropriate and desirable in Chinese context than standard English. L2 learners actually feel more comfortable with the local English vernaculars (Jin, 2005). Most of the unqualified teachers fail to realize that EFL teaching stress “what makes the language foreign and how as a foreign language it might be taught most effectively” (Jin, 2005, p. 44), thus ignoring to address lexical variety and grammatical variety in their teaching (Barratt & Kontra, 2000, p. 22). So it is urgent to call for the appropriate pedagogical training for those unqualified NSETs (Jeon & Lee, 2006).

Amin (2004) claimed that good pedagogy is not the province of the native speaker but is dependent on learning the craft or skills of teacher ESL, despite the belief that English language teaching methodology is the ideal one for teaching English (Holliday, 2006). Novice expatriates are hard to accomplish effective students’ learning outcomes because they easily misunderstand that foreign language learning is a semantic system built on the native language, rather than simply on the basis of everyday experience (Shin & Kellogg, 2007). Boyle (1997) conducted a study to examine the relative merits of NESTs and non-native English teachers and claims that the pedagogical ability and professional training are two important factors that determine the qualification of a good English teacher, no matter whether they are native and non-native. Boyle (1997) further contends that the high proportion in believing the central status of native-speaker will “diverse their attention away from the solution for urgent pedagogical questions, and prevented the flourishing of local pedagogical initiative which could build on local strengths and linguistic realities” (p. 170). It echoes what Bright & Phan (2011) find in the study of NESTs in Vietnam, that appropriacy of Western teaching in non-Western context is the central problem in English language teaching. They found that some L2 learners have difficulty with Western teachers and their teaching methods, “resulting in a struggle to succeed” (p. 132). So it is necessary to recognize that it is the mismatch between Western ways of
teaching and non-Western contexts that leads to the failure of those NESTs’ teaching and they argue for a “middle ground on which the aspirations and goals of foreign EFL teachers can be turned into assets for the host country educational system” (Barratt & Kontra, 2000, p. 19). Those NESTs are advised not to take the responsibility for a group before “they become aware of the students’ needs in the particular contexts and are clear about the examinations in those contexts (Medgyes & Ārva, 2004).

2.1.5 Gaps in understanding L2 teacher professional identity

In summary, the literature on L2 beginning teachers’ identity often focusses on cultural and linguistic elements. However, there are still some gaps if we are to comprehensively understand how L2 beginning teachers develop their own philosophy in interpreting their roles as teachers and the teaching profession generally. Firstly, there is less understanding of teachers who have multiple individual aspects of their identity. For example, there is little research of the professional identity of the beginning teacher in Australia who is native-Chinese, teaching Chinese in English and has no teaching qualifications. While such new groups are increasing in number in Australia, there remains little understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities they may face, in terms of how they grow as teachers.

Secondly, in a great deal of literature on language teachers’ identity, much emphasis is on the linguistic identity and cultural identity of foreign teachers. There is, however, much less literature that further explores how linguistic ability and cultural competence contribute to their development of pedagogy and teaching practice in this particular context, and how the development of teaching practice further contributes to their development of teacher professional identity. That is, seldom do researchers focus on overseas-educated foreign teachers’ identity in practice. Finally, in spite of increasing researchers concentrate on how the identity of unqualified NESTs leads to their inappropriate TEFL, there are less of them keeping their eye on why the unqualified native Chinese-speaking teachers fail to teach their L2 learners Mandarin in Australia context. That is, seldom do they focus on how those novice expatriate teachers’ identity result in their failure in teaching Australian pupils Chinese in the particular Australian teaching context. In the following section, stage
theories about L2 beginning teachers’ development will be discussed in detail, to
demonstrate novice teachers’ development trajectories.

2.2 Theories of L2 beginning teachers’ development

2.2.1 Introduction: beginning teachers

“Beginning teacher”, “prospective teacher”, “student teacher”, “novice teacher”,
“pre-service teacher” and “early-career teacher” are all terms that refer to those
teachers who have just stepped into the teaching profession, without as yet, having
sufficient experience of or knowledge about ways of approaching real teaching
situations. Often, they refer to those who are still undergoing training, who have just
completed their training or who have just commenced teaching and still have little
teaching experience behind them (Gatbonton, 2008, p. 162). It is highlighted by
many scholars that the first-year engagement of these vulnerable groups in real
school and classroom teaching situations is a critical stage in their professional life.
This is also the case throughout the induction period, meaning the first three years of
teaching. Ginns et al. (2001) have articulated that the first year of teaching is critical
in a teacher’s professional growth, as it either promotes or inhibits an ongoing
commitment to effective teaching by the novice teacher.

2.2.2 Stages of the beginning teachers’ professional development

A large number of studies discuss stage theories about the development of beginning
teachers. One of the famous studies was conducted by Watzke (2007), who
investigated 79 student teachers graduating from the Master of Education for 2 years,
and, closely linking students’ learning, learning theories and instructional practice,
argued that there are three stages in the teacher’s professional growth, namely: the
survival, task and impact stages. The first three years for the novice teacher are often
termed the self-stage, described as “a reality shock” or “survival” experience
(Watzke, 2007, p. 107) in which teachers struggle with fundamental issues, such as
“meeting student’s socio-emotional needs and accommodating the academic learning
styles and preferences of all the students” (Watzke, 2007, p. 64).

The self-stage represents student teachers’ concern for themselves, for their
self-interests, such as feelings of inadequacy, their self-image in other people’s eyes,
and whether they are accepted by students and colleagues or not (Watzke, 2007, p. 107). Beginning teachers at this stage, focus on building a good relationship with students, so that they can “accomplish in other areas naturally without a great deal of further effort” (Allen & Toplis, 2009, p. 32). Kagan (1992) points out that survival and task focuses are the main preoccupations within the first year. Novice teachers always focus on practical and interest-related problems about their teaching (Ginns et al., 2001) including classroom management and discipline, instructions, motivating students, addressing individual differences and problems, assessing the students’ performances, organization of class work, insufficient materials and supplies, and a heavy teaching burden leading to insufficient preparation time (Ginns et al., 2001, p. 109). Beginnings teacher in this stage also face certain problems. They place excessive attention on their own teaching rather than on students’ learning. Often, they ignore students’ unexpected questions and view this initiation of students as non task-oriented and as a threat to instructional control, so they simply prevent students contributing (Kanno, 2011, p. 237). Ganser (1999) finds that a lack of spare time and the demands of a heavy teaching load are the main problems for the new teacher.

The second stage of a teacher’s professional career is often termed the task-stage, when a teacher begins to open a broader outlook on her teaching, particularly regarding learning tasks and teaching commitments. Learning tasks include “instructional methods, delivery of the curriculum, and in particular, perceived deterrents to effective teaching” (Watzke, 2007, p. 107). For example, too many non-instructional duties, poor instructional materials, high numbers of students. Teachers at this stage shift attention from themselves to a broader teaching perspective, like the whole-class learning conditions, how to develop effective teaching, how to organize useful materials how to motivate students to enjoy the teaching content, and so on. It is at this time that teachers need to “establish a more reflective, proactive view of teaching and the teacher’s role (Ginns et al., 2001, p. 113). Bartell (1990) calls for a framework on what is useful or effective in the beginning teacher’s own practice as an effective teaching routine. More comprehensive and reflective practice should be formed by systematic knowledge stimulating personal professional development. Novice teachers begin to spare no effort in making creative and well-prepared teaching plans, developing useful and
diverse strategies to control the whole class and to engage most of the students. Kagan (1992) contends, it is not until the second stage that teacher shifts to catering for individual student’s needs.

Within the stage theory context, the self-stage and the task-stage are considered the survival stages of the beginning teacher, which focus on “student classroom discipline, management of classroom routines, procedures, mechanics of teaching (lesson plan and instructional organization, development of effective teaching techniques, student interest, acceptance and intense feelings of emotional adequacy” (Watzke, 2007, p. 107). The developmental chronology is supported only in the transition from the self to the task stage (Watzke, 2007, p. 108).

The third stage is impact-related, meaning that the teacher’s attention has shifted to managing both the teaching-learning process and students. According to Schipull (1990), this stage represents “guiding, challenging and meeting the diverse needs of students” (p. 11). Different from the previous two stages, the focus is on reflection and teaching practice for the whole person that “views self-development and the impact of effective teaching within the broader context of student academic growth, motivation, and socio-emotional well-being” (Watzke, 2007, p. 107). It is at this stage that instruction is related to “contextual, intuitive and adaptive practice” (Watzke, 2007, p. 107).

Impact concerns are important for teachers at this stage and can be divided into academic dimensions and personal dimensions. Personal dimensions often emerge in the middle of the first year of teaching, and are “characterized by a focus on individualized student intellectual, emotional and socially oriented concerns” (Watzke, 2007, p. 117). The individual student’s differences and socio-emotional growth are two core concerns in this sub-stage. Academic dimensions arise in the beginning of the second year and are concerned with academic growth and motivating students to challenge and value learning of subject matter. These two dimensions do not support the chronology of stage theories and acknowledging the novice teacher’s capability for complex and student-oriented thinking (Watzke, 2007).
Also, in addition to the above categories, Conway & Clark (2003) divide the stages into inward and outward looking. Inward stages involve the self and tasks and argue for a shift to “increased critical reflection on curriculum and instruction and self-as-a teacher” (p. 467). Outward stages represent a focus on impact, concerning academic and personal dimensions, and the curriculum and instructional materials. This ongoing process offers a comprehensive extension of chronological stage theory and a reconsideration of the three different dimensions. In this way, the professional growth process is considered as “holistic encompassing recurring areas of concerns, which are experienced and addressed by the beginning teacher in different ways across time” (Watzke, 2007, p. 118).

### 2.2.3 Influential factors in the beginning teachers’ professional identity

Some studies try to identify the positive influential factors on the (re)formation of novice teacher identity from the perspective of the process of beginning teachers’ knowledge building. This knowledge can be divided into prior knowledge and practical knowledge. Prior knowledge is beliefs, knowledge and thinking that beginning teachers have already gained from their past relevant experience, that will be used as a base to recognize the value of new information, to assimilate it and apply it (Isaksen et al., 2011; Bliss et al., 2005). In that sense, it serves the purpose of acting as a background source to develop teachers’ new knowledge, including practical knowledge.

My study mainly focuses on the beginning teacher’s prior knowledge as learner and prior knowledge as teacher. Teachers’ practical knowledge is the general knowledge, beliefs and thinking that are found in the teacher’s practice (Borg, 2003). It is a particular way of reconstructing the past, like prior knowledge, and includes future intentions to deal with the exigencies of a present situation (Arýoðul, 2007, p. 170). Both are closely related to the building of teachers’ beliefs, knowledge and thoughts, and contribute to teachers’ knowledge building. Prior knowledge only includes past experience, while practical knowledge emphasizes the interaction of both past knowledge and current knowledge that generated by teaching experience and in particular, practice. To conclude, prior knowledge can be regarded as a background source in building teachers’ practical knowledge.
2.2.3.1 Prior knowledge

Prior knowledge is defined as the knowledge, skills or ability that a student teacher brings to the learning to teach process (Bliss et al., 2005). When the novice teacher first steps into the profession, they bring a great deal of personal life experience that shapes their initial understanding of how to be a teacher. MacGregor (2009) states that mature novice teachers capitalize on their life experience to inform their professional identity and that “pre-service teachers also cite the influence of past teachers as a reason for their decision to become a teacher” (p. 3). Similarly, Richardson (1996) found that the beliefs new teachers bring to the teaching profession are shaped by the kind of teaching they experienced as students.

Thus, the source of knowing about teaching derives from one’s prior knowledge as learner and prior knowledge as teacher. First, a growing body of research has recognized the influence of language teachers’ language learning experience on their language teaching (Borg, 2003; Numrich, 1996; Peacock, 2001; Freeman & Johnson, 1998). Borg (2003) has concluded that the effects of language teachers’ language learning experience are as follows:

Teachers’ prior language learning experiences establish cognitions about learning and language learning which form the basis of their initial conceptualizations of L2 teaching during teacher education, and which may continue to be influential throughout their professional learning (p. 88).

In this way, language teachers’ prior knowledge as learners is regarded as the teachers’ background variables that potentially build practical knowledge and form the initial teaching beliefs which structure their knowledge base for teaching (Ulichny, 1996; Beijaard et al., 2001). More specifically, Grossman (1991) conducted research into secondary English teachers’ subject knowledge and found that prospective teachers entered teacher education with an extensive apprenticeship of observation in teaching methods and prior knowledge in their subject area. A different study, which yielded similar results, was conducted by Golombek (1998), who found that college ESL teachers can create positive learning experiences for
their learners through reflecting on their negative learning experiences. Especially for grammar teaching, ESL teachers’ teaching methods are primarily influenced by their educational background, ranging from middle and high school grammar classes to graduate coursework in linguistic courses focusing on structure (Johnston & Goettsch, 2000, pp. 446-447).

The second important form of prior knowledge is the beginning teacher’s experience as a professional. Numerous researchers claim that critical episodes or experiences in their early teaching were influential on their present practice (Moran, 1996; Johnston & Goettsch, 2000). Once beginning teachers get authentic classroom teaching experience, their reflection on language teaching will shift from language learner to classroom teaching and students’ learning. This shift is a critical change in the beginning teachers’ developmental growth, and it is not until they build up their own teaching experience that prior knowledge catalyzes their own pedagogy and instructional practices (Watzke, 2007, pp. 69-70). Similarly, Moran (1996) investigated a Spanish teacher’s knowledge development and found that her experience as a Spanish learner, and her teaching experience, together with students’ reaction to it, contributed to the formation of her changes in classroom instruction. Novice language teachers can choose to accept or refuse a specific practice, due to the prior knowledge reflecting their “personal theories of language learning” (Watzke, 2007, p. 65), and to the pre-service teacher’s thinking and practice this makes more sense than theoretical courses (Moran, 1996; Numrich, 1996).

This brief discussion of this group of studies about teachers’ prior knowledge has shown that teachers’ practical knowledge building and changes of practice have been influenced to some extent by their prior knowledge as language learners, apprenticeship of observation and prior knowledge as teachers. The accumulation of prior knowledge, no matter whether positive or negative, helps to shape the teacher’s practice.

### 2.2.3.2 Practical Knowledge

Recently, a growing number of research publications have indicated the importance of teachers gaining practical knowledge, to address the “reality shock” that beginning teachers experience when they find their theoretical knowledge is not
applicable in real teaching practice (Korthagen et al., 2001, Loughran, 2007b; Beijaard et al., 2001; Lyhty & Kaikkonen, 2009). Korthagen et al. (2001) regard this situation as an “unbridgeable gap between our words and the student’s experiences” (p. 22). Also, Loughran (2007b) investigated the difference between theory knowledge and knowledge of practice, demonstrating that problems from the reality seem to be unresolved through the theoretical solutions. All of these studies support the importance of the beginning teacher gaining practical knowledge to solve classroom practice problems.

In recent years, practical knowledge has been regarded as being at the core of beginning teachers’ professionality and contributing to a more professional teaching practice (Joffe, 2001), as it puts more emphasis on contextual factors such as students and learning materials (Beijaard et al., 2001). Practical knowledge refers to the “integrated set of knowledge, conceptions, beliefs, and values teachers themselves develop in the context of the teaching situation” (Beijaard et al., 2001, p. 142) and also refers to a general framework of teacher cognition (Borge, 2003). Drawing on these ideas, the characteristics of teachers’ practical knowledge are identified by Beijaard et al. (2001) as follows: 1) It is action-oriented knowledge which can only be got from the accumulated wisdom of teachers themselves. 2) It is person—and context-bound because it derives from the teachers’ concerns about their own teaching context. 3) It is implicit or tacit knowledge, as teachers don’t articulate their practical knowledge. 4) It is integrated knowledge, including both prior knowledge and currently developing knowledge. 5) Beliefs act both as components of practical knowledge and as filters through which new knowledge is interpreted and subsequently integrated, in conceptual frameworks. In conclusion, teachers’ practical knowledge is knowledge practically known and developed by teachers.

Many scholars also give great attention to the sources of practical knowledge, given the importance and value of teachers’ practical knowledge (Chou, 2008; Beijaard et al., 2001; Lyhty & Kaikkonen, 2009). Chou (2008) investigated the practical knowledge of English elementary teachers in Taiwan and found that their practical knowledge was formulated through a process of reshaping their existing knowledge of teaching, learning from training programs and their classroom practices. A
different study, conducted by Arýoðul (2007), who investigated the sources of practical knowledge of three college English teachers, yielded similar results and found that teachers’ active, ongoing and negotiation-based practical knowledge is partly developed and shaped by their prior language learning experience, language teaching experience and professional coursework. When they experience conflict within the teaching context or struggle to understand their learners, they draw on their former identities to help them with their instruction. Drawing on this idea, the sources of practical knowledge can be divided into prior knowledge and teacher’s classrooms experiences, directed towards the handling of problems arising in their work (Sun, 2012, p. 761). Practical knowledge from previous personal learning experience can be immediately used in their teaching practice without their critically evaluating it (Beijaard et al., 2001; Lyhty & Kaikkonen, 2009). Previous theoretical knowledge learned from training courses can become part of practical knowledge through experiencing it in real practice (Lyhty & Kaikkonen, 2009). However, practical knowledge is not static, and for teachers, knowledge is ongoing, enriched by interactions between explicit knowledge and current class practices, created by the teachers themselves (Lyhty & Kaikkonen, 2009). It is an ongoing process of continuously building a new knowledge base, creating new information that is involved in and influenced by former experience and beliefs (Lyhty & Kaikkonen, 2009, p. 297). It is also a result of current teaching experience and reflections on experiences with students, in context (Lyhty & Kaikkonen, 2009). To conclude, the beginning teacher’s personal practical knowledge building is experiential, embodied, and reconstructed out of the narratives of a teacher’s life (Sun, 2012, p. 761).

2.2.4 Gaps in our understanding of beginning teachers’ development

To conclude, studies of beginning teachers’ development often focus on ESL beginning teachers who have received relevant teacher training, or who have a teaching or education background. Little research focuses on the professional growth of those marginal teachers who haven’t had the experience of training in local teaching practice. Also, while large numbers of studies address the chronological stages of teachers’ professional growth, seldom do they discuss about their nature in detail, and seldom do they study how informal professional learning strategies help to adjust the time spent on each stage. Finally, when it comes to knowledgeable factors that influence the beginning teachers’ identity, these centre on the definition
and source of practical knowledge. Seldom do they talk about how the native-Chinese L2 Mandarin teachers identify their thinking underpinning the use of specific teaching strategies. The next section talks about how the beginning teacher’s development can take place through various professional learning strategies.

2.3 Professional learning

2.3.1 Introduction: teaching professional learning

“Becoming a teacher requires not only the development of a professional identity but the construction of professional knowledge and practice through continued profession” (McCormack, Gore & Thomas, 2006, p. 95). This indication brings the teacher’s professional learning to the front-page of the teaching profession and encourages teachers to be lifelong learners (Fry, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2003). As Johnson & Golombek (2003) indicate, “teacher learning has been conceptualized as normative and lifelong, emerging out of and through experiences in social contexts” (pp. 729-730). Likewise, Feiman-Nemser (2001) claims that “learning continues for thoughtful teachers as long as they remain in teaching” (p. 1039). So recently, many scholars have highlighted the notion that professional learning is no longer just the beginning teacher’s affair, it extends through the whole teaching career and calls for a sustained, lifelong, valuable and reciprocal nature (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Johnson & Golombek, 2003; McCormack, Gore & Thomas, 2006; Opfer & Pedder, 2011).

Darling-Hammond (2003) found that teachers’ professional learning strongly relates to student achievements. Opfer & Pedder (2011) announce that the importance of improving teacher quality and improving students’ learning quality has led to a concentrated concern on the professional development of teachers and on further teacher professional learning. It has been said recently that professional learning cannot be isolated from students’ learning outcomes, as professional learning significantly affect professionals’ growth and the quality of teaching and students’ learning outcomes (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

2.3.2 Enhancing teacher professional learning

Teacher professional learning is primarily thought to be supported by formal
induction programs or mentoring. Recent research also highlights collaborative, informal, unplanned professional learning from colleagues and former peers (McCormack, Gore & Thomas, 2006; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Unstructured professional learning is embedded into daily professional life and is regarded as the most valuable and significant source of support.

2.3.2.1 Formal induction programs

Most formal induction programs are given before teachers enter the teaching profession, or focus on first-year teaching for survival (McCormack, Gore & Thomas, 2006; Walkington, 2005; Watzke, 2007). Many scholars agree that formal induction programs and mentoring are very useful for teacher professional learning, especially for beginning teachers (McCormack, Gore & Thomas, 2006; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Induction programs are significant for new teachers’ professional growth, quality of teaching and in furthering students’ learning outcomes (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Feiman-Nemser (2001) also highlights that high-quality induction, mentoring and professional learning programs will be vital to the retention and support of beginning teachers and also in achieving the goal of improving their quality of teaching.

2.3.2.2 Informal induction programs

Informal induction refers to school induction programs that reveal the school’s culture and relevant experiences in the new work setting. These are important for shaping new teachers’ professional identities in the future and can be referred to either as contextualization or socialization (Walkington, 2005; Flores & Day, 2006). Actually, the vital role of induction programs’ support in forming new teachers’ professional identity has been acknowledged by many scholars. For the new teacher, the first three years, itself called the induction period, entail real struggle, as a period of difficult adjustment (Fry, 2007; Fry, 2009). They are said to influence “teaching behavior for an educator’s entire career” (Fry, 2007, p. 216; Lyhty & Kaikkonen, 2009, p. 296) and this period “contributes to increased teacher confidence and skill, as well as retention” (Fry, 2009, p. 96). This echoes the indication that high quality induction support helps beginning teachers to “survive the classroom management challenges, seemingly endless curriculum and instruction questions and feeling of isolation that contributes to the nation wide attrition problem” (Fry, 2007, 217).
That is to say, induction is essential for supporting positive professional growth for the beginning teacher, and a good method to increase “survival” chances. Fry further calls for induction support in the challenging first years so that highly qualified teachers can stay and thrive in the profession.

Induction support includes administrative support, mentoring, continued support from teacher preparation institutions, seminars for teachers and colleagues with similar beliefs about this area of teaching (Fry, 2007; Fry, 2009). In particular however, mentoring and supportive communication with the administrator is the basic form of induction (Fry, 2007, p. 217). Mentoring and induction support is acknowledged to intervene in stage development by helping the beginning teachers to reframe problems and to use a variety of ways to understand classroom challenges with the mentor’s help (Langdon, 2011). Mentors open the door for the beginning teacher to address complex classroom problems and focus on student learning. When it comes to professional identity, mentoring focuses more on “developing the long-term professional identity of the future teacher than just improving the concrete functional competences”, as Walkington (2005) indicates that mentoring lies in “its capacity to foster an inquiring stance towards teaching and a commitment to developing shared standards for judging good practice” (p. 56). Based on the saying that the beginning teacher’s teaching is mould by experienced mentors to become engaged with the particular school context (Walkington, 2005; Fry, 2007), the mentor’s responsibility is to evaluate beginning teachers’ beliefs and practices, to question their personal views, paradigms and theories about their own practice (Walkington, 2005, pp. 55-56).

Mentors and supervisors are also considered as important elements for early career teachers’ professional learning, especially for primary teachers (McCormack, Gore & Thomas, 2006). For primary teachers, mentors or supervisors are often those experienced teachers with professional and personal qualities, to support and monitor new teachers’ professional learning. Primary teachers report their strong desire to form stronger relationships with their mentors who is teaching the same grade. This kind of support contributed to higher level of “professional conversation, advice and assistance including team teaching and observations of lessons” (McCormack, Gore
& Thomas, 2006, p. 107). Especially, the mentoring by and supportive communication with the administrator is a basic induction (Fry, 2007, p. 217).

Teacher professional learning is no longer just the pre-service teacher’s duty; it happens throughout the teaching profession, as an ongoing process (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; McCormack, Gore & Thomas, 2006). Feiman-Nemser (2001) states that new teachers must be offered more powerful learning opportunities throughout their early teaching years, to provide sustained learning opportunities. She identifies sustained learning opportunities as those that extend over the initial year of teaching and are flexible enough to allow teachers to build up their own agendas, based on unique personal and situational factors (Feiman-Nemser, 2001), and espouses the notion that it is through a complex interaction of personal and situational factors that “early-career teachers [...] form a professional identity and construct professional practice with the capacity for continued professional learning” (McCormack, Gore & Thomas, 2006, p. 97).

However, traditional induction programs often provide similar, “narrow sight” training but “fail to promote teacher professional learning and quality of teaching and learning as a focus” (McCormack, Gore & Thomas, 2006. p. 107). Feiman-Nemser (2001) states that the induction programs need to reform, to provide new teachers not only skills for survival, but also, more importantly, provide them with the skills to thrive and strengthen their ability for further professional learning. Based on this sustained perspective of teacher learning, Feiman-Nemster (2001) has developed a Central Tasks of Learning to Teach (CTLT) framework, built on what teachers need to know and to care about and on promoting substantial learning from pre-service teacher to continuing professional development. The elements of CTLT are as shown in Table 1 below:
Table 1. Central tasks of learning to teach (CTLT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-service</th>
<th>Induction</th>
<th>Continuing professional development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examine beliefs critically in relation to a vision of good teaching.</td>
<td>Learn the context: student, curriculum, school community.</td>
<td>Extend and deepen subject matter knowledge for teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop an understanding of learners, learning and issues of diversity.</td>
<td>Create a classroom learning community.</td>
<td>Strengthen skills and dispositions to study and improve teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a beginning repertoire.</td>
<td>Enact a beginning repertoire.</td>
<td>Expand responsibilities and develop leadership skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop the tools and dispositions to study teaching.</td>
<td>Develop a professional identity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


2.3.3 The complex system contributing to teacher professional learning

Teacher professional learning must be regarded as a complex system in which subsystems interact with each other, rather than just an event (Collins & Clarke, 2008). Subsystems have evolved into a nested system in interdependent and reciprocal ways, and within the overall system, teacher learning tends to be a simultaneous combination of “autonomous entities (teachers), collectives (such as grade level and subject groups), and subsystems within grander unities (schools within school systems within sociopolitical educational contexts)” (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 379). They learn from each other to adopt new information and processes
and in so doing transform themselves in a win-win way as they experience the world (Davis & Sumara, 2005, p. 312).

The researchers also attribute the complexity of teacher professional learning to being situational, contextual and ecological. Teachers bring their past experience and beliefs into teaching and learning, which contributes to what they are willing to learn (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 387). Teachers also bring their prior knowledge into their learning, which influences what teachers learn, in addition to new knowledge that arises and recursively affects further learning about teaching (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 389). Thus, some “motivators” push teachers’ orientation toward professional learning, and their power can be seen as the dissonance between personal expectations and their sense of efficacy (Wheatley, 2002) or cognitive conflict, including challenges about teachers’ thinking and beliefs (Cobb et al., 1990).

Many researchers announce that this teacher-orientation is not easily changed (Wheatley, 2002; Opfer & Pedder, 2011; McCormack, Gore & Thomas, 2006). Teachers are more likely to embrace evidence supporting their existing orientations rather than changing theirs (Tillema, 2000). The solution to this problem is to create a conceptual and practical coordination or coherence of learning activities, as they can change teacher orientation more easily (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 390), based on the empirical research that the learning activity system aims at changing teacher orientations and supporting professional activity features. Tillema (2000) highlights that reflection after practice enables novice teachers to change their beliefs.

2.4 Limitations of the current literature review

Though the field of teacher professional identity has been researched for many years, some gaps still arise in the literature I have reviewed. These gaps can be divided into three aspects: teacher professional identity, beginning teacher’s professional development and professional learning.

When it comes to professional identity, most researchers just focus on experienced teachers’ professional identity, or just on English as a Second Language (ESL) beginning teachers’ professional identity. However, there is little research on the professional identity of native-Chinese novice teachers who teach Mandarin in an
English speaking country. Similarly, there is little understanding of how Mandarin beginning teachers without teaching qualifications in Australia endeavor to be successful in teaching Mandarin in Western Sydney schools.

In addition to that, many studies focus on the formation and reformation of professional identity in unique contexts, and the professional identities of teachers who are foreigners are often referred to in terms of language identity or cultural identity. Seldom have scholars explored the journey of professional identity in the Western Sydney Region and seldom have they related foreign teachers’ professional identity to classroom practice.

Also, many researchers center on how the identity of unqualified NESTs contributes to their problematic declarative knowledge, lack of students’ knowledge and questionable pedagogical strategies, which further leads to their problematic practice in teaching L2 learners. Seldom have they explored the problems of a native Chinese-speaking teachers teaching Australian kids Chinese in the Australian teaching contexts.

In terms of the beginning teacher’s professional development in the language field, most researchers focus on how ESL beginning teachers who have a teaching or education background, bridge gaps between their applied teaching and what they have learnt in their ESL teaching education, to help them adapt to real teaching as soon as possible. However, there is little understanding of how a Chinese beginning teacher without formal education in teaching can contribute to teaching, and how vulnerable groups such as this struggle to bring about some changes to enhance their professional identity within a Western Sydney Region context. In addition to that, most scholars focus on stages of pre-service teacher professional development, or on the developing features during these stages; few of them synthesize new teachers’ professional learning and professional development and study how systematic professional learning helps to shorten particular stages of the novice teacher’s professional development, such as shortening the survival stage by studying action research methodology. Finally, recent studies put more emphasis on the definition of practical knowledge and sources of practical knowledge; seldom does literature focus on how the beginning teachers come up with their practical knowledge and
how they make practical knowledge explicit to themselves.

With regard to professional learning, most literature focuses on the effects of formal induction programs in the initial year of entering the teaching profession on surviving, and on the influence of mentors and supervisors in early professional learning. However, little research has been conducted on the informal learning system that L2 language teachers undertake from their own initiative within the Western Sydney Region, and few of them conduct long-term studies researching how Teaching Chinese As a Second Language (TCSL) beginning teachers thrive as teachers through continuous professional learning, rather than only focusing on short-term professional learning, which only aims to help new teachers to survive and easily enter the teaching profession. Besides this, although some scholars have already identified the complex system of professional learning related to situational, ecological and contextual factors, limited groups of empirical studies discuss in detail how L2 language teachers develop their different professional learning strategies and how they interact to form a complex learning system that contributes to development of a teacher’s professional identity.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the conceptual work and empirical studies that are related to my research topic and research questions. It offers a better understanding of what already has been done and locates the gaps in the current literature about beginning teachers’ professional identity development. For all the literature reviewed, it indicates that many scholars have studied how beginning teachers address the challenges of their professional identity within different professional development stages and through different kinds of professional learning. However, in spite of the abundant studies on beginning teachers in these relating areas, there is little research on how L2 beginning Mandarin teachers without formal teaching education enhance their professional identity within Western Sydney. In addition to that, another gap in the current literature is how informal professional learning contributes to the enhancement of professional identity of a native-Chinese beginning Mandarin teacher within the Western Sydney Region. Hence, the existing gaps stimulated my research questions: “How can I enhance my professional identity as a Chinese-native beginning Mandarin teacher in Western Sydney Region” The next chapter discusses
the methodology, including the qualitative research principles, research design, data collection and data analysis.
Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology and methods of this study and how they address the research questions. It demonstrates how the research process proceeded and the level of reliability of the research. The methodology is organized in four sections: qualitative research, self-study, action research and self-study of action research. For each, the relevant concepts, the benefits of using them and how they related to my research, are discussed. Qualitative research was employed as the main methodology in conducting the project, given the high involvement of the teacher researcher. Following discussion of this methodology the question of self-study through action research is introduced. Self-study was used to form the theoretical orientation of research questions, while action research was the theoretical framework for systematic data collection.

The second part of the chapter presents the research methods for data collection. Self-reflective journals are explained as the major data source. In addition, interview and observation data from the class teacher, a students’ questionnaire and formal discussion notes from my ROSETE peers are shown to be affiliated data sources to triangulate this research. Following this is an explanation of the data analysis procedure; the techniques used included content analysis and an open-coding process. Finally, validity, generalizability and ethical issues are included, to prove the value of this project, protect the participants’ privacy and minimize the negative effects of the projects.

3.2 The theoretical basis of the research process

3.2.1: Qualitative research design

The research questions explore the L2 beginning teacher’s shifting professional knowledge and identity. In order to address this focus, multiple realities are taken into consideration, including those of students, colleagues, the particular school
context and the broader WSR context, by employing multiple ways to explore the question. For this reason qualitative research was used in this study. Qualitative research is an approach that relies primarily on human perception and understanding by using personal experience, intuition, and skepticism working alongside (Stake, 2009, p. 11) and through inductive reasoning on specific and small-scale data to gain an overall idea (Lichtman, 2009, p. 5). It means that qualitative research depends on the voice of the researcher and also is influenced by worldviews or past experiences of teaching within interpretive and theoretical frameworks (Creswell, 2007). It echoes what Stake (2009) has announced: that the characteristic of qualitative study is that the “researcher is often the main research instrument” (p. 15). Some regard it in terms of “techniques seeking in-depth insights”, “exploring people’s beliefs by making them interactive with each other” while some hold even broader views (Lichtman, 2009, p. 5); this is why it makes a suitable framework for this study.

### 3.2.2 Self-study

This study used self-study to focus on the teacher’s shifting professional identity in practice. Hamilton & Pinnegar (1998) define self-study as:

> Study one’s self, one’s actions, one’s ideas, as well as the “not self”.

> It is autobiographical, historical, cultural, and political....it draws on one’s life with a thoughtful look at texts read, experiences had, people known and ideas considered (p. 236).

Dinkelman (2003) indicates that self-study involves “intentional and systematic inquiry into one’s own practice” (p. 8) to reveal “knowledge about the practice” (p. 9). It can also contribute to “generating understanding of the world” (Hamilton, 2004, p. 402) and “examining their personal values and professional work” (Hamilton, Smith & Worthington, 2008, p. 25). In that sense, it helps to give a deeper insight into one’s professional identity and to make the researcher’s knowledge explicit. It is a comprehensive way of giving a general picture of a beginning teacher’s professional growth. Self-study relies on reflection to flesh out the problem and then helps to realize the aim of improving teachers’ teaching practice (Kleinsasser, 2000).

Self-study also encourages a multiple-method-basis and interactivity; multiple means
of defining, finding, developing and conveying teaching knowledge in order to get a more comprehensive understanding of the self and how the self developed within complex educational contexts (Loughran & Northfield, 1998). As a methodology, self-study is where “researchers and practitioners use whatever methods will provide the needed evidence and context for understanding their practice” (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998, p. 240). They all call for other qualitative methods, combined with single self-study, to enhance understanding of professional practice and reframing of our thinking and teaching in a suitable way. Bullough & Pinnegar (2001) highlight the use of “borrowed methods” to assert authority.

### 3.2.2.1 Benefits of self-study for this project

The central purpose of self-study is to address the complex interwoven relations between my teaching and learning, to inquire into my L2 instruction and my professional identity development. Its multiple benefits helped me to address my research questions in the following ways. Firstly, self-study is self-initiated and improvement-oriented, which is in line with my research objectives. It offers me a good opportunity to explore understanding of self and a variety of professional, ethical and epistemological issues, through inquiry about my actions and thoughts in teaching practice (Loughran, 2007b). It helps me to understand my roles as professional learner, novice Mandarin teacher and native-Chinese teacher in an Australian school context, thus answering the research questions about how I developed my interpretations of these three roles. LaBoskey (2007) also indicates that self-study contributes to the immediate improvement of practice when beginning teachers begin to take full responsibility for teaching while keeping on exploring self.

Secondly, self-study also honors and integrates other voices, to get a triangulated way of looking at the profession or to reframe one’s practice (Kuzmic, 2002, p. 232-233, cited in Loughran, 2007b, p. 156). The nature of this interactive, multiple-methods basis helped to define validity as a process of trustworthiness (LaBoskey, 2007). It allowed me to use multiple methods to form a methodology triangulation and to value different people’s perspectives data triangulation, to assert the authority of the research. That is why I borrowed action research as the supporting methodology.
Finally, self-study helps to develop theories about teaching by “investigation of practice and students’ learning with the involvement of our personal roles, our own effort to facilitate learning process” (LaBoskey, 2007, p. 819). Through continuous investigation of effective teaching practice, in which students’ learning can flourish, it helped me to identify the important elements for effective lessons from the perspective of the teacher-researcher, thus guiding me to spare no effort to make changes in these particular factors. Also, it helped me figure out my own teaching theories about effective teaching strategies, such as the criteria for selecting suitable strategies that may cater for my Mandarin teaching, as well as how to arrange the teaching strategies in lessons so as to enhance students’ engagement and fruitful learning outcomes.

3.2.3 Action research

In addition to self-study, action research was also significant for this study, as the research questions focused on how to enhance my professional identity with my changing teaching practice. Mills (2007) indicates that practical action research emphasizes the [how to] approach and has a less philosophical bent (p. 7). The characteristics and benefits of action research support my endeavor to develop my professional identity by exploring such practical matters.

Action research is defined as “systematic inquiry done by teachers (or other related persons in teaching-learning environment) to gather information about—and subsequently improve—how their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well these students learn” (Mills, 2007, p. 20). It is used for improving professional practice and gaining insights into more effective educational outcomes by focusing on specific classroom or school problems. (Mertler, 2011). It encourages the teacher to focus on close relations between their professional growth and student outcomes.

3.2.3.1 The characteristics of action research

Action research is a participatory process in that “it engages people in examining their knowledge (understandings, skills and values) and interpretive categories (the ways they interpret themselves and their action in the social and material world)”
(Ginns et al., 2001, pp. 116-117). It demands the high involvement of the teacher researcher and focuses on a concern with problems for themselves, not for others. As Mertler (2011) concludes, “action research is not done ‘to’ or ‘by’ other people; it is research done by particular educators, on their own work, with students and colleagues” (p. 21). However, in spite of highlighting self, the action process is more than merely investigating teacher themselves. Action research is a collaborative process involving educators working together to improve their own practice by talking and working together to empower the relationship (Mertler, 2011, p. 20). Teachers conducted this methodology to develop their own solutions to their own problems. “Teachers are not outside experts; they are the authorities on what works in their classrooms” (Mills, 2007, p. 12).

Action research is a spiral action cycle process which aims to improve teaching practice. The systematic process is not only about solving problems; it involves “the specification of a problem, the development of something new (in most cases), and critical reflection on its effectiveness and justification of one’ teaching practice” (Mertler, 2011, p. 22). That helps to form a virtual circle in teaching practice as teachers plan systematically, (re)thinks flexibly about the teaching, tests the results in real practice that has the closest relationship with the results, to ensure their validity and to become more receptive to new ideas. For teacher researchers, the results are not conclusive, they do not concern right or wrong answers but are “tentative solutions that are based on observations and other data collection techniques and that need monitoring and evaluation to identify strengths and limitations” (Mertler, 2011, p. 22). Hence, action research is a dynamic, evolving process as the teacher researcher focuses on different angles even on the same question. Action Researchers regard solutions as an answer needing to be improved by amending their teaching methods, thus forming a sustainable, energetic teaching and researching practice.

3.2.3.2 The benefits of action research for this project

The primary benefit of action research for this study was that there was a close relationship between the problems of improving my L2 instruction and enhancing students’ Chinese learning outcomes. This study had three key views related to use of action research. Initially, my research problems derived from a real teaching
practice concern, namely, my lack of ability in enhancing students’ learning of Chinese and my incapability in managing the class. These issues needed to be supported by action research for systematic progress in a teaching context to be made. Secondly, action research helped to explicitly engage my identities, both as an effective language teacher and an educational researcher. Through this, I developed myself as a dynamic and knowledgeable teacher who kept changing practice and also used the process to become a researcher who relied on systematic and logical thought.

Finally, action research is a cyclical spiral. Through planning, taking actions, collecting and analyzing evidence, as well as developing a plan and reflecting on shortcomings in my cycle 1 plan, I could come up with a better plan, to work on changing my teaching practice through this process again and again, further contributing to my identity development.

Then, through such improvement my limited teaching knowledge base was improved, because action research helped me see things in the classroom that I easily ignored but that were essential for my professional growth (Johnson, 2008). Thus, action research helped to release the underlying potential for my teaching action and better achieves my teaching goals with the support of evidence-driven findings. Apart from gaining knowledge through systematic inquiry about best practice, action research is also beneficial in providing the pre-service teacher access to research findings and bridging the gap between theory and practice, through creating a two-way information model (Mills, 2007). In my study, the research findings from the literature could be used to inform best practice. Simultaneously, I employed various data collection techniques to analyze my own teaching practice into themes that reflected new theories about my teaching practice.

Finally, action research is beneficial because it is believed to be the “most efficient and effective way to address the professional development of teachers” (Mertler, 2011, p. 28). Through action research, I got the chance to improve my problem-solving skills and gain confidence in my teaching. This empowered me to be a decision maker, allowing me to bring my unique expertise, talents and creativity to bear, so as to best meet the needs of my students. In that sense, my teaching
professionalism was affirmed in my own voice in my professional development.

Action cycle plans

As stated above, action research is conducted through a cyclical process. Mertler (2009) defined a four-stage action research process as planning, acting, developing (or sometimes called observing) and reflecting, as illustrated in Figure 1. The planning stage involves identifying and limiting my theme to a particular focus, gathering related information through reading literature and recent theoretical works, and developing a research plan. The acting stage involves the conduct of the initial plan, collecting and analyzing data and coming up with findings. During the developing stage, the researcher’s main tasks focus on developing an action plan to improve future use, through professional reflection across the entire study. In the reflecting stage, I communicated the research results, reflected the whole action cycles to come up with suggestions for improvement through further research. The four stages served the purpose of gaining insights, developing reflective practice and advancing students’ learning outcomes (Mills, 2011). In my research, I used Mertler’s action cycle model to guide my action research process (see Figure 1 below). I used this action process to identify my critical achievements and challenges and then reflected on how these achievements and challenges contributed to my professional identity development.
Figure 1. Action Research Cycles Model (Mertler, 2009, p. 31)

My action research involved two cycles. Cycle 1 focused on the challenges that I had developed from the last two terms, while the theme of cycle 2 developed from the findings and reflections emerging from my cycle 1. It can be concluded that cycle 1 was a fundamental and indispensable component of cycle 2 as its provided the data and basis for cycle 2, where I developed my teaching practice. Following Mertler’s model, how the action cycle processes from cycle 1 to cycle 2 in this study was interpreted as follows:

**Cycle 1**

**Planning stage:** Three steps were taken at this stage. First was a line-by-line reading of my data, to identify my themes. I selected my self-reflective journals, which were
kept in the last two terms as target data because they could reflect my current teaching situation and the challenges of my teaching practice. Then I read through all the self-reflective journals line by line, highlighting the relevant sentences that reflected my achievements, challenges, and the changes in my teaching practice. I read through these highlighted samples, open-coded the samples and developed them into a coding chart. Finally, I read through the coding chart and identified two or three themes: something that “I feel passionate about, urgent to change or improve” (Mills, 2007, p. 26) and also that were of key relevance to development of my own teaching practice (Creswell, 2002). Enhancing students’ learning of Chinese and classroom management issues was regarded as the most important challenge in my teaching.

The second step was gathering relevant information about the themes of cycle 1. In order to gain deeper understanding of the challenges, I gathered information from reading the relevant literature, communicating with other volunteer teachers for information about effective strategies for enhancing Mandarin learning and managing their own class. Also, I sought advice from my primary supervisor about some theoretical concepts that I could refer to, to understand my problems in a deeper sense.

The third step was to develop a research plan. More specifically, I designed the specific identifications of the variables that are central to the action research investigation, through integrating the two themes developing from the second stage (Mertler, 2009, p. 34). These variables focused on comments and descriptions of students’ participation, students’ accuracy in assessment and students’ behavior. Then, the various elements of the research design, such as participants, data collection and data analysis were to be considered (Mertler, 2009). The details are shown under Research Design (Section 3.3).

**Acting stage:** In the first step of the acting stage, I implemented designed teaching strategies in my teaching practice. These strategies were those that I thought likely to be effective in addressing my problems, in terms of engaging and enhancing students’ learning, as well as classroom management. These strategies were applied for each Chinese lesson and I recorded my observation of students’ learning
conditions in my self-reflective journals. The focus of my reflective journals was on descriptions of and reflections on students’ participation, the accuracy of students’ answers and the condition of class behavior, after applying some specific strategies or the different actions I have taken. My observations focused on the level of students’ active participation into Chinese lessons and their academic performance during the class. Also, at the end of cycle 1, students were asked to finish questionnaires that focused on their interest, learning difficulty and learning outcomes in Chinese. Finally, I systematically collected and analyzed various kinds of data that emerged during the cycle 1 period, such as self-reflective journals, teachers’ interview, students’ questionnaire and ROSETE peers formal discussion notes, as well as coming up with some findings, results or conclusions. The results of this step showed that the teaching strategies that catered for students’ interests, learning differences and initiatives were the most helpful to engage more students in learning Chinese, as well as enhancing their understanding and long-term memory of Chinese content.

3) **Developing an action plan.** Based on the results, conclusions and interpretations above, I developed an individual level action plan within which the teacher researcher was both a conductor and research target, for future action research. The results of the study support the notion that the teaching strategies I used, such as using popular songs to enhance students’ learning of Chinese, teaching characters by using pictures, involving and empowering students’ learning of Chinese by Total Physical Response (TPR; for example, Simon Says) games were effective for engaging students’ positive learning of Chinese and enhancing students’ understanding and retention of Chinese knowledge. Most students reflected that these strategies helped to make learning Chinese easier and interesting. These teaching strategies would be reserved or modified to better ones in future classroom practice and would also be used in other Mandarin classes that I taught to test its validity. Also, I asked other volunteer teachers to use these strategies to test their effectiveness. Table 2 shows the detailed information on the action plans for the two action cycles, the details of findings, recommended actions, what to be done week by week, timeline and information resources.

4) **Reflecting stage.** This involved seeking feedback and advice on the action plan I
had undertaken. Seeking feedback from other professionals such as ROSETE peers, my primary supervisor and local class teachers helped to stimulate my further thinking about my teaching practice and provided me advice on the development of my further action plan. I began to share my results with other ROSETE 4 volunteer teachers in our formal university workshops, in informal discussion or in daily dialogue. I also shared my findings at academic conferences. My research my primary supervisor also monitored my findings and guided me to polish them. Secondly, it was crucial for me to review what had been done, determine its effectiveness and make decisions about possible revisions for future implementations of the project. In that sense, the findings achieved in cycle 1 provided the evidence and foundation for cycle 2, where I re-engaged effective teaching and generated further research-based knowledge. They prove that I became more skilled in using effective teaching strategies to engage and enhance students’ learning of Chinese. However, I hardly gained any improvement in managing classroom disciplines. I seldom had the ability to design my own teaching strategies and I seldom gave students a chance to take the initiatives to explore Chinese knowledge. So in the following cycle, I needed to change some strategies to address these two issues.

**Cycle 2**

**Planning stage:** Based on the findings and reflections about my teaching practice in cycle 1, the theme of cycle 2 focused on developing my ability in designing the effective teaching strategies to be more suitable for enhancing my students’ learning of Chinese, making sense of students’ learning and motivating them to explore knowledge, as well as giving effective instructions. These themes were identified because they were either questions I felt passionate to change or were challenges that I needed to address immediately. Then, similar to cycle 1, I sought advice from different professionals and read the literature about the topics “transforming teachers”, “student-centred” ways of teaching, and techniques for giving effective instructions. This helped me to gain knowledge to change my teaching practice and also contributed to a deeper understanding of my teaching trajectory.

The third step was to develop a research plan. More specifically, I used similar data collection techniques and analysis techniques to those of cycle 1, because I found they had helped me to understand both my teaching practice and my research profoundly. However, the action research variables changed because cycle 2 showed
a different focus on my teaching. The variables centred on the students’ feedback as to whether their interest and learning outcomes were improved with the adapted teaching strategies; the description of students’ participation and learning outcomes when I relaxed my own responsibilities to give students the chance to explore their own knowledge and to take responsibility for their own learning; as well as students’ reactions to the instructions I gave.

**Acting stage:** Initially, I implemented my designed teaching strategies in my teaching and simultaneously conducted my research plan in researching my classroom practice. On one hand, the designed strategies covered my adapted teaching strategies, the strategies that I searched for to motivate students’ sense of learning and their ability to explore Chinese knowledge, as well as to make my instruction effective. These strategies were applied for each Chinese lesson, and I recorded my observations of students’ participation, their understanding of Chinese and their understanding of my instructions. At the end of cycle 2, the students questionnaire and teacher’s interview helped to afford detailed information as to whether the three types of strategies helped with students’ depth understanding of Chinese, their motivation to explore Chinese and their retention of Chinese with limited lessons. On the other hand, the research plan was carried out systematically, to acquire initial findings and results. The initial results showed that my adaptive teaching strategies pushed students’ participation and learning outcomes to a higher level and that the constant use of a student-centred way of teaching proved to exercise students’ motor skills and independent learning ability.

3) **Developing an action plan.** Then I developed an action plan to test the validity of my initial results. As the results showed that my adaptive teaching strategies and use of student-centred strategies contributed to effective teaching, I recorded the information sources—where I was getting these strategies—and I reserved these strategies to use in other classes. Meanwhile, I recommended these strategies to other volunteer teachers to use in their teaching practice, for further feedback on the effectiveness of my actions. Detailed information of the action plan for cycle 2 is recorded in Table 2.

4) **Reflecting stage.** Similar to cycle 1, I collected advice on the action plan I had
undertaken to stimulate further thinking about the effectiveness of my teaching strategies and about what that I could improve to make those teaching strategies more effective. Through sharing my findings with different professionals, I could get a wide range of advice on these teaching strategies which helped me to reflect on my practical knowledge more extensively. Another function of this stage was to provide me space to review the whole teaching practice and research process, to conclude the merits and demerits in the cycle 2 process and make decisions about possible revisions needed for further research.

This research conducted two cycles, ultimately to find out how I enhanced my professional identity. The two cycles focused on how I changed my challenges into achievements which were identified at the planning stage, through different types of professional learning strategies. The extent of identity development relied on different levels of information and action developing my professional identity. The process started with searching for challenges in my teaching and then moved to planning, developing and acting on those changes. The process developed from the traditional action research cycle—observing-doing-observing-amending—to form a new cycle: planning, acting, developing and reflecting. Specific information on each stage has been provided above.

**Table 2. Action plans**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action cycles</th>
<th>Summary of Research Questions and Findings (What Happened?)</th>
<th>Recommended Actions (What’s next?)</th>
<th>What will be done week by week</th>
<th>Time Line</th>
<th>Information Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cycle 1</strong></td>
<td>The main challenge: students’ engagement with and retention of Chinese is bad. Also I was unskilled in managing the class. Findings:</td>
<td>1. Read through all the selected self-reflective journals, carry on initial open coding, come up with the categories, make notes about my first impressions of teaching.</td>
<td>1. Regularly read journal articles about formative assessment, effective teaching strategies and student-centred way of teaching.</td>
<td>Cycle 1 started at the beginning of term 2 of 2012 and ended at the end of term 2 of 2012 while cycle 2 happened at the beginning of term 3 of 2012.</td>
<td>1. Related literature &amp; research about assessment 2. Books, Internet sources for practical ways to conduct formative assessment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
teaching strategies I used such as using popular songs to enhance students’ learning of Chinese, teaching characters by using pictures, were effective for engaging students’ positive learning of Chinese and enhancing students’ understanding and retention of Chinese knowledge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cycle 2</th>
<th>The main challenges: how to adapt effective teaching strategies to be more suitable for students, motivate students’ ability in independent learning and exploring knowledge, and to give effective instructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cycle 2</td>
<td>Findings: my adaptive teaching strategies such as codes &amp; categories and reread again to polish them. 2. Count the numbers of all the codes, consider the appropriate achievement and challenges and choose the one which I am interested in. 3. Read through all the related literature about theory of assessment, read practical books and search the Internet and for getting practical ways to assessment the students’ immediate learning outcome, empower students learning and primary classroom management 4. Planning lessons with professionals in education. 2. Prepare lessons to assess students’ learning outcomes and try to get feedback from professionals. 3. Evaluate each lesson according to the question guidelines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycle 2</td>
<td>2012 and ended at the end of term 3 of 2012. 1) The self-reflective journals were recorded every week. 2) The ROSETE 4 formal discussion happened at the end of each cycle. 3) The interview happened at the end of each cycle after the class teacher observed the class once or twice. 4) Students’ questionnaires were collected at the end of each cycle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycle 2</td>
<td>3. Conversation with professionals about teaching plan design. 4. Referring back to the language teaching training workshop I attended at NSW DEC prior to teaching in schools.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
creating a new rhythm for Mandarin teaching, teaching pronunciation by creating stories for clue words and singing tones contributed to effective teaching.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student-centred strategies such as giving meaningful lead-in questions, making sense of students’ answers by using them as instructions, and enlarging learning of Chinese numbers, contributed to my effective teaching.</th>
<th>skills.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Discuss with my ROSETE peers to get some ideas, ask for advice from my primary supervisor and local class teachers to get ideas for effective teaching strategies.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The action plans covered two action cycles and were responsible for outlining the next action research cycle through paralleling the action research process (Mills, 2003). The action plans showed detailed information about the challenges in each cycle and described the action steps I used to confirm my teaching strategies as effective. The action steps are described in detail as recommended actions, what is to be done weekly, a timeline, and information resources.

**3.2.4 Self-study through action research**

Self study was used in this thesis to formulate the research questions in a particular theoretical orientation and then to use an action research framework to “identify the problem of practice for which questions will evolve, data will be collected and
systematically analyzed leading to further inquiry and understanding” (Feldman, Paugh & Mills, 2007, p. 958). Action research and self-study can be addressed simultaneously in the one research project in two ways. Self-study foregrounds the importance of self and in this study, self-study is regarded as the main methodology, as the research question mainly focuses on the teacher-researcher’s shifting professional identity and echoes the three features of self-study. Second, it makes the experience of the teacher educator a resource. Third, it urges those who engage in self-study to be critical of themselves and their roles as researchers (Feldman, Paugh & Mills, 2007, p. 959). Action research is regarded as a tool for “systematic critical inquiry” in self study (Feldman, Paugh & Mills, 2007, p. 974).

Self study through action research makes the methods of data collection and analysis cyclical: systematically collecting and analyzed data, reflecting and developing hunches, raising new questions, leading to ongoing reflections and plans of action (Feldman, Paugh & Mills, 2007, p. 962). This allowed me to utilize a cycle of selves in research and to conduct the research by contrasting past selves in practice with the current self in practice. Self-study was used to inquire into my own achievements and challenges, action research to systematically plan, collect and analyze my inquiry through a cyclical process. This systematic process started with identifying my achievements and challenges and presenting my initial professional identity. Then I planned strategies to address my challenges and took planned actions, such as searching practical and theoretical information about the various challenges in my teaching practice. Through systematic observation and logical analysis of my development, and in addressing these challenges, I present my current professional identity in the findings and compare it with my past identity to inform reflections on my professional development.

Second, self-study through action research can fully capitalize on the researcher’s own experiences as a data resource, in a more authorized way (Feldman, Paugh & Mills, 2007). This is because combing the two approaches together contributes to the diversity of data source, which seeks multiple ways of representation of data. This benefited my study in the following ways: First, Action research organized the research process while self-study privileges a focus on the researcher’s own experiences. Also, self-study through action research can provide valid, reliable and
systematic protocols for studying my professional identity development, because it assists in achieving triangulation of methodology (Hong & Lawrence, 2011).

3.3 Research Design

Research design is described as the way that the research goals are achieved. Almost every detail of the research, like theoretical frameworks, questions, generalizations, and presentational goals can be addressed with their methodological components, by using the appropriate resource for each goal. The design shows how the methodological components synthesize with each other. Site selection, sampling, participants, data collection techniques, data analysis, validity, generalizability and ethical issues are discussed in the following sections.

3.3.1 Participants

As the research question focused on my shifting professional identity as a beginning teacher-researcher and how I became a successful teacher in the complex Western Sydney Region schools, I was the main participant in this study by researching my own practice. However, “It is not sufficient to simply view a situation from one perspective. Reframing is seeing a situation through other eyes” (LaBoskey, 2007, p. 847). For self-study, besides the claiming for multiple methods, the data source should also be multi-faceted to benefit the validity and data triangulation to be more public (Loughran, 2007a). It was commonly acknowledged that I had to go back for the experience and reframe my own identity, so it was hard for me to give a general and neutral picture of my shifting identity because of my high involvement. Hence, I also drew on other data sources other participants to offer alternative perspectives and interpretations in the research process. They were detailed below.

3.3.1.2 Year 6 class students

The class participating in my research was a Year 6 primary classroom in a public school in the Western Sydney Region. There were 28 students in that class, in which half were girls and half were boys. Most of students showed their interests in learning Mandarin. My duty was to teach Mandarin as a second language, and basic knowledge about Chinese culture. Before action cycle, I had already taught them Mandarin as a beginning Mandarin teacher for 2 terms on weekly basis. I had selected this Year 6 class as research participants as they all had one-year Mandarin
learning experience prior to my teaching, therefore learning Chinese was not new for them. For this reason, students’ getting used to my teaching of Chinese would be an added complexity in the study. Choosing them as participants also challenged my professional identity development to be an effective teacher to a higher level.

All the students took part into the project by answering the questionnaire during the end of normal lessons as reflection for their learning outcomes. They were required to answer the questionnaire at the end of each action cycle, to share their feelings and feedback about my teaching, details of the questions are explained later in this chapter. Their feedback guided me about what they were interested in, whether my teaching style was to their liking and what they learnt during the lessons I taught. This information heavily influenced my decision what kind of teacher I can be and their opinion about my lessons, heavily influenced my confidence and feelings as a teacher within local context, thus sharing significant role in my teacher identity formation and reformation.

3.3.1.3 Year 6 class teacher

Secondly, one class teacher was involved because of her influence on my professional identity construction. She was an experienced Australian teacher who was the Year 6 classroom teacher. Her duty was to assist me in managing the class for me during my Mandarin lessons. I met her every Wednesday and sometimes, she informally observed parts of my lessons and provided me advice about my teaching practice. She only made formal observation of my teaching once or twice at the end of each action cycle. For this reason she was the ideal person for monitoring my professional development as a teacher and also the best person for interpreting her students’ response to me. The class teacher observed my Chinese lessons and witnessed my changes in professional performance continuously, from an outsider view, who lent me eyes to see my teaching more clearly due to the concentrated attention, different angles and large amount of experience in teaching. Her subsequent interview assisted me in my reflections as triangulations about my experience of teaching Mandarin and also more important, gave me feedback about my whole teaching. She can give more academic and practical advices for me to teach the students in her class, thus helping me to gradually grow to be a skilled Australian Mandarin teacher.
3.3.1.4 ROSETE 4 peers as critical friends

Finally, my ROSETE group peers were also very important for my professional identity development. They were the critical friends during my journey of exploring my professional identity. ROSETE peers referred to two ROSETE 4 graduates who came from China with me as beginning volunteer Mandarin teachers. We were both colleagues who taught in Western Sydney schools and classmates who study Master degree of Education. We shared the similar duties in teaching Mandarin and discussed about my teaching in the workshop on weekly basis. We lived in the same house and often, after teaching for a full day, we talked about our teaching, about interesting things, our confusion about what to teach, how to engage the students, and we asked for some advice learnt for others’ experience in our daily conversations. That was to say, we were a whole group with very close relationship. During our daily life, by sharing our teaching stories and asking for advice for teaching particular topic, we exchanged profound ideas and deepest feelings about teaching and life in Australia. From this collaboration with my ROSETE 4 peers, I felt “simultaneously humorous, blunt, supportive and confrontational, as well as educational and motivation” (Loughran, 2007b, p. 159). Within the positive professional learning atmosphere, I felt more free and motivated to share my ideas and gained knowledge through the confrontational or supportive professional collaboration, which benefited my professional knowledge development.

3.3.2 Data collection

Various types and amount of information were documented from various participants for this research to form a relatively comprehensive picture of my professional identity and professional development. Using different data was significant because it increases the validity of research by forming data triangulation (Mills, 2007). Also, the literature and artifacts helped to increase the accuracy of data. Data was constructed in narrative to reflect my dynamic professional identity as a beginning teacher and my teacher professional development. The information about participants and data collection was shown as follows (table 3):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. Participants and data collection</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
</tr>
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</table>

59
| The teacher-researcher herself. | The teacher’s own self-reflective journals, participant observation, | 1) Identify three sub-themes contribute to professional identity development.  
2) Documenting the shifting process of the teacher’s emphasis on class practice, emotion, beliefs and how she develops herself through professional learning.  
3) Documenting professional challenges and achievements important for my understanding of being a teacher. | 1) Identify three sub-themes help to find out critical factors about how to enhance my professional identity.  
2) Support to answer the subsidiary question “what professional challenges and achievements is important for me”  
3) Document changes I have made to my teaching, to further relates to “what changes can I make to my teaching” |
| Class Teacher | Interviews | 1) Class teachers’ perspective about my current teaching performance, teaching skill development, language use or development, teaching strategies or values, and research impact on my teaching.  
2) What changes they think I can make to further teaching.  
3) What aspects do they think I have enhanced in teaching. | 1) Find out positive and negative aspects in my teaching to help me find out professional achievements and professional demerits that I have made in my teaching.  
2) Provide information and opinion about how these changes contribute to being a teacher. |
| ROSETE 4 peers as critical friends | Informal discussions & formal topic-focused group discussions | 1) Provide new ideas about teaching strategies. Through daily talking to stimulate my ignoring part of my teaching practice.  
2) New ideas about how I can enhance my professional identity.  
3) Identify challenges that I will have as well | Provide information about what changes can I make for my teaching. |
| Year 6 students | Students’ questionnaire & Observation | 1) Students’ perspective of my teaching performance and strategies.  
2) What do they think about the changes I make and what they | 1) Provide information about positive aspects contribute to professional identity.  
2) Provide information for next cycle design from students’ |
3.3.2.1 Self-reflective journals

In this research, self-reflective journals (which combined field notes and journal writing as a method of creating field text) were the primary data source. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) indicate that journal writing is a vital writing form to create field texts for teacher-researchers doing narrative inquiry study (pp. 102-103). “Field notes combined with journals written of our field experience provided a reflective balance” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 104). Hence, writing self-reflective journal was a way that combine the observation and action research process which helped me to form a reflective routine about considering teaching and can be “kept by teacher to provide valuable information into the workings of a classroom” (Mertler, 2011, p. 128).

Two kinds of self-reflective journal were kept in this research during the two cycles. One was self-reflective journal that I kept for each lesson. Totally, I kept 11 journal entries for cycle 1 and 11 journal entries for cycle 2. I often wrote it once a week to reflect my teaching experience as a native-Chinese beginning Mandarin teacher here, but not always in the case that my lessons were cancelled due to some accidents. The reflections in cycle periods were focused on the cycle themes, with some focused guideline questions. Firstly, it centred on underlying reasons for conducting particular teaching strategies and assessing the effectiveness of teaching practice such as my instruction, teaching content, the whole arrangement was suitable or not and whether some particular strategies helped to enhance students’ interest and learning of Chinese. Also, the guideline questions pushed me to think about how these changes of teaching practice influenced my professional identity. They referred to questions such as whether teaching practice enhanced or decreased my feelings as an effective teacher, why? How did this feeling influence my professional identity? I used the guideline questions as framework to organize my self-reflective journals because it helped me with data collection. By writing more information closer to my research questions, I had abundant and profound evidence that can support to answer my research questions. I saved my time on producing meaningful data. In that sense,
I can get more and deeper findings about how my teacher professional identity developed because of high quality data.

Another self-reflective journal was the concluding summation which was written at the end of each cycle, to summarize all the important findings during the cycle respectively. I summarized some critical achievements and challenges that related to cycle themes during this cycle, and put some literature to support my views about achievements and challenges. The achievements and challenges were recorded chronologically so that it was easy to see my development in particular achievements and challenges. I also summarized all the changes I have made to try to address the challenges and provided description about whether the changes work or not. At the end of the journal, I reflected my changing process of how I felt about my teaching and what I thought about my roles as teachers.

The self-reflective journals included records of my achievements and challenges as field notes on my professional identity status, which captured the details about what was happening with students in school through my observation (Mills, 2007, p. 70). The journals also included my reflections on teaching observations, reflections on my practical teaching practice and reflections on other academic advice for my teaching, as well as my emotion and thoughts towards these reflections, during this research period. All the reflections provided me opportunity to think about what this means for future teaching episodes and to revise, analyze and evaluate their experiences over time (Mills, 2007, p. 70). In conclusion, self-reflective journals realized the aim to “keep my narrative accounts of their professional reflections on practice” (Mertler, 2011, p. 128). Detail information about my observation about students, thoughts and reflections about my teaching practice provided the trajectories of how my teacher identity developed with accumulation of teaching experience.

In this research, my reflective journals were considered the most important data because it accounted for the majority of data used in this study. It not only provided description of my teaching practice, but also helped to identify the most key sub-themes, those that contributed most to my professional identity. Secondly, it captured my introspection and observation relevant to this research. This
introspection helped to make connections between my thoughts of teaching strategies and how I really utilized them in my teaching practice, as well as assessing the effective of my teaching practice and gaining the ideas about how well students are learning (Pine, 2009). Thirdly, it also contributes to design of more effective teaching practice. In that way, reflection journals acted as a powerful way to know about my teaching self in research and practice as well as to unpack the very self in teaching practice (Hong & Lawrence, 2011) and finally contributed to building a better teaching self.

3.3.2.2 Students’ questionnaire

Data sources also included a student questionnaire to see how students experienced my Mandarin teaching. Students’ questionnaire was a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and prompts to collecting information from students. Questionnaires acted as the reflection task for the students in Chinese lessons, so it would not cost students’ spare time to finish it. Ideally, there would be 28 questionnaires returned for each cycle. However, this was decided by the numbers of returned parent/guardian’s consent forms and students’ consent forms. The sample was included in Appendix 13.

It is worth noting that the questions included in the student questionnaires for each cycle were a bit different, because of the different themes the action cycles focused on. In terms of cycle 1, the questions mainly focused on the students’ general ideas about my Mandarin teaching, focusing on what they learned from activities, their thoughts about my lessons, their further desire to learn and their willingness to share Chinese learning experiences during the research period. With regard to the questions of cycle 2, the questions focused on students’ own thinking about whether their learning ability and outcomes of Chinese being enhanced by my student-centred teaching strategies I used and my adapted teaching strategies. It had questions on their interest and their own perception about the effective teaching activities; it also tried to find out the difference between the particular lessons and previous ones. At the end, it asked about questions about the easy and difficult part of Chinese in students’ eyes, and whether my teaching strategies helped to address the learning difficulties. On these questionnaires, students were free to write their answers to some open-ended questions, as a guideline for reflecting on their learning
outcomes for this period. Students need not have been bothered by power relationships because there was no name demanded on the questionnaire.

Gathering data by using students’ questionnaire benefited my research in two aspects. First, exposing students’ observations, ideas, feelings about my teaching enabled me to get ideas of students’ problems and anxieties. It can guide me to change my practice or keep some good teaching strategies. Also, these questionnaires helped me to get valuable data from students’ perspective to reflect on my own teaching performance. It can offer me some ideas about my achievements and challenges through gaining insights about whether students’ interest and learning was enhanced by particular teaching practice. Thus, it acted as a guide to lead me to adjusting my particular teaching strategies and changing my understanding of teaching continuously.

**3.3.2.3 Formal group discussions among critical friends**

Formal group discussion was employed in this project with ROSETE peers. Formal group discussion is said to be more valuable than any representative sample as it “stimulates a discussion and uses its dynamic of developing conversation in the discussion as the central source of knowledge” (Flick, 2009, p. 196). It was the dynamics & collaboration that helped me to get data from producing, expressing and exchanging opinions within the groups. Also it was also a way for validating statements and views by reconstructing individual opinions more appropriately through the collective discussion (Flick, 2009, p. 197). Through all these corrections for opinions, it came to the aim to introduce the concrete problems, looking for the best strategies for solving problems through the discussion of alternatives (Flick, 2009).

At the end of both two cycles, I conducted a topic-focused formal discussion with two ROSETE 4 peers, with some guideline questions, to express ideas about particular problems that emerged in my teaching practice. Totally I had two formal discussion notes and each one lasted about 30 minutes. The questions were about their critical incidents and changes in their practice in recent lesson; factors that they wanted to achieve and currently have achieved to improve their teaching practice; feelings that enhanced or faded away their feeling as a real teacher and factors that
supported their teaching practice. By sharing these problems, I have encouraged them to discuss, whether they got the same problems, how they survived to be a teacher here. I have collected the information about their particular professional development trajectory and hence, to enhance my thoughts about my own professional identity.

3.3.2.4 Observations from one class teacher

Observation of my teaching was also used in this study. Observation is defined as the process of “carefully watching and systematically recording what you see and hear on a particular place” (Mertler, 2011, p. 121). During this project, two kinds of observation were involved: participatory observation of teacher-researcher and class teacher’s observation. Teacher-researcher took part into both teaching and observing class, and also kept her observation to her self-reflective journals weekly. As a beginning teacher, it is very important to “observe the activities, students, and physical aspects of a situation” and “to engage in activities that are appropriate to a given situation that give useful information” (Mills, 2007, p. 58). The teacher-researcher was involved into the teaching process and conducting the observation. As a participant observer, she monitored “the effect of our teaching and adjust our instruction accordingly” (Mills, 2007, p. 58). The observations were recorded in my reflective diary. The observation data was used to complement the other data collected.

The class teacher formally observed two of my lessons at the end of each cycle, and she was given the observation schedule and observation sheet before the lessons she observed. There were three 45-minutes observations. In these observations, the information was about my achievements and shortcomings in my teaching and also I sought advice about addressing some problems in my teaching practice. In order to make observation data closer to my research questions, some observation framework which is developed from interview questions, was provided to teachers to give her a clear idea about what parts she should pay attention to when observing and for her to give more valuable data. The framework was some specific questions I cared about such as my language, assessment, subject knowledge, as well as teaching strategies about enhancing students’ learning and managing the class. It also covered general inquiry such as my professional behavior, attitudes and my interactions with
3.3.2.5 **Semi-structured interview of the class teacher**

Based on the observation of the class teacher, two interviews were conducted subsequently with the class teacher of the experimental class at the end of each action cycle to triangulate the self-reflective journals source. This helped me to gain a deeper understanding of my teaching performance by involving other class teacher’s perception, opinion and advice about my teaching, from the outsider’s perspective. It can, to some extent, eliminate the basis of the assessment of my teaching. In addition to that, it was also an opportunity to know “what your interviewee thinks or feels about certain things to explore the shared meanings of people who live or work together” to reveal their feelings, intentions, meanings, sub-contexts, or thoughts on a topic, situation, or idea” (Litchman, 2008, p. 140). Each interview took 30 minutes and happened at the recess time in a classroom. A voice recorder was used to record the interviewee’s voice and the most important one was that, after the transcribing the interview, the transcription were shown to participants in the demand of member checking in qualitative research practice.

The interviews included a general set of questions and format that I could follow and use with all participants. Interviewer can vary the questions as the situation demands (Litchman, 2008, p. 141). They were open questions that explored the interviewee implicit knowledge and opened their mind. The semi-structured interview was introduced by open questions which the interviewee could answer on the basis of immediate knowledge. This was followed by w theory-driven, hypothesis-directed questions that made the interviewees’ implicit knowledge more explicit. This ended with the confrontational questions that the interviewee had presented up to that point, in order to critically re-examine these notions in the light of competing alternatives (p. 157). I thought it was suitable for accomplish the research aim because “the research asks several base questions but also has the option of following up a given response with alternative, optional questions that may or may not be used by the researcher, depending on the situation” (Mertler, 2011, p. 124). My interview questions were designed to focus on the three areas as follows: 1) my language teaching performance. 2) Engagement of student. 3) Elements of successful or unsuccessful. To be more specific, helping me to gather information about what I
had done well, what I still needed improvement and advice for how to improve them, in terms of language use, teaching strategies, formative assessment, subjective knowledge and development as a teacher. All the information was related to my research questions about my teacher identity enhancement and triangulated the data of self-reflective journals.

### 3.3.3 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is defined as the process and procedure that assists with the description, reduction, transformation, ordering and connection of data, aiming to achieve understanding, interpretation and explanation” (Sarantakos, 2007, p. xxiii). I continuously moved back and forth between the data I have gathered and the strategies to collect new data, which made analysis “an ongoing, lively enterprise that contributes to the energizing process of fieldwork” (Liamputtong, 2009, p. 133). In this research, I used content analysis to help to answer my research questions, developing and extending knowledge of my experience (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) as a beginning Mandarin teacher in Australia.

#### 3.3.3.1 Content analysis

Content analysis is defined as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data to make replicable and valid inferences, through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Krippendorff (1980). It is a tool to compressing text data into “content categories describing the phenomenon, based on explicit rules of coding (Stemler, 2001, p. 1). Through content analysis, I can attain a condensed and broad description of what happened in my teaching practice, understand the phenomena and thus gaining the knowledge about my development of my teaching practice and how the development influenced my growth of teaching professional identity. Content analysis is recommended as the best choice to achieve this goal as it is “impressionistic, intuitive, interpretive analyzes to systematic, strict textual analyzes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1277).

The object of content analysis is the “contextual meaning text”, including “narrative responses, open-ended, survey questions, interviews, focus groups, observations, articles, books and manuals” through all kinds of verbal, text form (Hsieh &
According to the coding schemes, origins of codes and threats to validity, three approaches, namely conventional content analysis, directed content analysis and summative analysis, derive from content analysis. Conventional analysis is a process where study data is directed from data, while directed analysis is guided by theory or research findings to analyze initial codes. Summative analysis, is somewhat quantitative in nature, and is an analytic way of counting, comparing the key words and interpreting the underlying context. The differences between three approaches are shown in Table 4 as follows:
### Table 4. Major coding differences among the three approaches to Content analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Content analysis</th>
<th>Study starts with</th>
<th>Timing of defining codes or keywords</th>
<th>Source of codes or keywords</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conventional content analysis</td>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>Codes are defined during data analysis</td>
<td>Codes are from data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directed content analysis</td>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>Codes are defined before and during data analysis</td>
<td>Codes are from theory or relevant research findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summative content analysis</td>
<td>Keywords</td>
<td>Keywords are identified before and during data analysis</td>
<td>Keywords are derived from interest of researchers or review of literature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In this study, conventional content analysis was employed as it was often used to describe the phenomena that had limited research literature or theory, hence, relying heavily on the data to come up with categories and codes. In that sense, I can “immerse themselves in the data to allow new insights to emerge” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1279). Conventional content analysis was selected because it facilitated exploring enhancement of my professional identity as a beginning Mandarin teacher without qualification within the Western Sydney Region. There were three aspects that can tell the limited theory and research on my project. First, as it was related to individual identity construction, issues regarding it varied from different individual. Second, from all the literature I reviewed, the research on Chinese foreign teacher
was very limited, let alone the beginning teachers’ identity in Sydney. Finally, most studies of pre-service teacher identity about the ones who had got the education background, seldom did they care about the novice teachers without qualification. Thus conventional content analysis was the most suitable data analysis strategies to analyze my data and helped me to develop new theory within the prerequisite of limited guiding research.

**Process of content analysis**

After identifying conventional content analysis as the analysis methods, it was also important to know the process of how it worked in my project. Elo et al. (2008) announced that the process of content analysis consisted of three main phases: 1) preparation phase as data description for comprehending the phenomenon; 2) organizing the data for reducing data logically and form coding scheme. 3) Interpreting data for making sense of data. To conclude, data description is prepared for the procedure of data organization, and interpretation of the data serves to conclusions and theories.

**Preparation Phase: initial data description to comprehend the phenomena**

Preparation data indicated the first data analysis stage, which included sampling considerations, formation of a unit of meaning and selecting the unit of analysis (Elo et al., 2008). The aim of this stage was to initially immerse me into mess data, and conduct error reduction, data minimization and presentation. I analyzed my research questions and identified that the key ideas in my research questions were achievements, challenges, professional learning strategies and my understanding of my role as a beginning Mandarin teacher. So data that had a close relationship with the key words stated above would be chosen as the sample for analyzing and would be analyzed in a deeper way. Also, it was essential to know that sample must be representative of the universe from which is drawn and in my case, so the excerpts that presented my impressive challenges or achievements would be selected from self-reflective journals. Then I organized the data through listing them on cards and reading them with writing memos about my self-reflective journals to get a deeper understanding of the data at the beginning. These writing memos were the notes of my first impression, thoughts and initial analysis about data. When writing the memos, I always kept the 5 questions as who was telling, where and when it
happened, what happened and why in my mind, so that I can keep immersing myself in the data and get familiar with data to serve the purpose of gaining insights and theories. I wrote the notes in the margins to highlight the points that seemed to be useful and significant for addressing my research questions, no matter they were contrary or supportive to my previous expectation. It was at this time that I began to learn what was going on and obtained a sense of whole (Elo et al., 2008). Then I spent several weeks to review the data again and again in a quiet environment. When I reviewed the data, I found that every time I would overthrow some of the premises because they were not completely useful for answering my research questions. I rearranged my ideas and revised the memos to make them more relevant to my research questions. The next step was to organize the data through observations from my self-reflective journals, end of action cycle journals, students’ questionnaire, teachers’ interview and formal discussion notes.

**Organizing the data to reduce it logically and into a form**

The main duty of the organizational step was to reduce a mass of narrative data logically from interview transcripts, journal documents and then to develop coding scheme, to produce reliable and accurate evidence. Open coding was used for this process. Open coding was defined as “the interpretive process by which data are broken down analytically” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 12), concepts were identified and developed in terms of their properties and dimensions (Flick, 2009, p. 310). The purpose of conducting open coding was to “give the analyst new insights by breaking through standards ways of thinking about or interpreting phenomena, reflected in the data” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 12). In this case, open coding acted as an essential strategy in addressing the organizing stage of content analysis. The following paragraphs discussed the several steps that were undertaken as open coding process, namely coding step and categorizing step.

**Coding the self-reflective journal**

The first step I used to organize my self-reflective journals is the ‘coding step’ where all the data was read through and broken down into different codes. Flick (2009) stated that it was a process of “segment data” and “use units of meaning classifying expressions in order to attach annotations and codes to them” (p. 307). This served to reduce data in a manageable form and to “express data and phenomena in the form
of concepts” (Flick, 2009, p. 307). I read self-reflective journals word by word to derive the codes by highlighting the exact words in sentences or label them by concluding several similar words, through comparing similarities and differences of events, actions and interactions in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 12). In that sense, codes were formed to capture the key concepts and thoughts. In order to present all the codes in a clear way, I designed a two-column chart to record the coding (Table 5), the left one showed the codes I developed from the data and the right column provided the explanation for the codes which summarized the themes and ideas in particular data.

**Table 5. Examples of code labels**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labels for codes</th>
<th>Explanation for codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1a. Too ambitious about students’ ability</td>
<td>I require students to master too much language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1b. Not enough practice and review for content that have been learnt</td>
<td>No time for practicing or reviewing what my students learn during normal Chinese lessons. I seldom conduct a whole class review as I am afraid of making them bored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1c not understand students’ learning ability about Chinese.</td>
<td>Even for the same content, same level of class, students show different learning ability for mastering it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1d. Get little idea about how my students’ learning of Chinese.</td>
<td>I seldom spare enough time for testing students’ knowledge of Chinese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second step of organizing my self-reflective data was to “categorize these codes by grouping them by phenomena discovered in the data, which were particularly relevant to the research question” (Flick, 2009, p. 308). It was at this time that these disordered and mess codes were systematically and conceptually grouped by their
similarities, to form categories (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). I read the list of codes again and again, and also reviewed the explanation for the codes for several times. This movement of back and forth, however, can be a healthy corrective for built-in blind spots and make analysis an ongoing, lively enterprise that contributes to the energizing process of fieldwork” (Liamputtong, 2009, p. 133). Then I developed my own ideas about how to group these codes into generic concepts and came up with the networks between the codes and categories. In this sense, codes were now regarded as the content and reference of the categories in a striking way. Once identified, the categories would be the basis for theoretical ground (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). All the categories would be shaped into three themes, namely challenges, achievements and actions to change.

Additionally, when forming these superior categories, I kept on writing the memos about impressions, associations, thoughts and ideas of mine when I read these codes and figured out general concepts. It helped to explain and define the content of codes and categories, and “striking observations on the material and thoughts that relevant to research question” (Flick, 2009, p. 310). In order to accomplish these analytic procedures, Strauss & Corbin have summarized some strategies, as follows:

The basic analytic procedures by which this is accomplished are: the asking of basic questions about the data, the making of comparisons for similarities and differences between each incident, event and other instances of phenomena. Similar events and incidents are labelled and grouped to form categories (p. 74, cited in Flick, 2009, p. 310).

Based on the principles stated above, I designed a coding scheme to keep the information of themes, codes, categories, and findings, with the red words acting as the memos (Table 6). Theme were the key words deriving from my research questions, codes were the selected unit of meaningful data while the categories were the general concept that developed from a particular groups of relevant codes. Findings in this coding chart were the abstraction of the codes, which I grouped together to demonstrate several main ideas developing from this group of codes. These can be seen as the subcategories that helped me to gain detailed insights into the categories.
Table 6. Example of coding scheme in action cycle 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenge</strong></td>
<td>What I define as the problems or weakness in my teaching practice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1a. Too ambitious about students’ ability</td>
<td><strong>C1 lack of knowledge about students’ knowledge</strong></td>
<td>a) what they are interested in,</td>
<td>C1a I always can’t finish what I plan to teach them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1b. Not enough practice and review</td>
<td></td>
<td>b) their learning ability of Chinese</td>
<td>C1b. I do not give time to check their learning outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1c. Not understand their learning ability about Chinese.</td>
<td></td>
<td>c) how well they are achieving in Chinese</td>
<td>C1c Seldom arrange systematic review lessons for them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1d. Get little idea about how much they learn</td>
<td></td>
<td>d) to what extent review can help them to really improve)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1e. No idea about appropriate content.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1f. Get few information about their interest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interpreting data to make sense of it

The final step of data analysis was to interpret and abstract the simplified and organized data to formulate a general description of the topic (Elo et al., 2007, p. 111). Data interpretation aimed to establish the meaning of data and sublimate the findings in categorizing stages into the implications of my study (Wolcott, 1994). It was a process for me to make sense of findings in the data. The content of interpretation in this case was concluded as follows:

Interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, making sense of findings, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, considering meanings, and otherwise imposing order (Patton, 2002, p. 480).
After I revised my coding scheme and came up with the initial findings deriving from my first analysis, I then involved more understanding of what evidence meant and what meaning I gave to the data. In order to present these findings in an effective and clear way, and also present the relationship between these findings, I extended my data analysis through answering a list of questions like what was important in the data, why it was important, what can be learned from the findings and so what. All the four questions were answered in a way that relevant to my research questions.

Finally, I also used some methods to help me interpret the data. First, I connected the findings with my personal conceptual knowledge and experimental knowledge (Wolcott, 1994). For example, the findings referred to professional teaching strategies, so it can’t be avoided that I also involved studies of professional development as a beginning teacher. Meanwhile, findings of the effects of professional teaching strategies heavily relied on my own experience of my professional development by using it, rather than relied on the theoretical studies. Secondly, I sought advice from “critical friends” (Wolcott, 1994). When I tried to summarize the findings and build up the implications, I sought advice from ROSETE critical friends who also conducted research in Mandarin teaching and also the most importantly, asked my primary supervisor to have a look and monitor my process of how I calculated these implications and talked about data interpretation on the weekly ROSETE meetings. Also, the ROSETE meeting provided chance to show my data interpretation and discussed about it with other ROSETE members. Finally, I employed many literature reviews in interpreting the data and the action of contextualizing findings of literature pushed me to link my research findings to the general theoretical environment.

3.4 Validity and generalizability

Validity refers to “the extent to which the data that have been collected accurately measure what they purport to measure” (Mertler, 2011, p. 131). That means that as a researcher, I must pursue the notion that “how we know the data we collect accurately gauges what we try to measure” (Mills, 2007, p. 84). It is allied with trustworthiness, which is examined by credibility and dependability. As Mertler (2011) states that there are three ways to ensure the trustworthiness: the first is triangulation of data source, data methods and even maybe the teacher researchers;
second is through the member checking and the third one is through the long-term engagement and persistent observation (Merlter, 2011, pp. 131-132).

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 strengthens the qualitative research “through collecting information in many ways, rather than relying sole on one” (Mills, 2007, p. 56). Due to the importance of triangulation, in my study, four types of triangulation were formed: multiple data source, multiple methods, multiple methodology, multiple theories, to confirm emerging findings (Merriam, 2009; Mertler, 2011). Multiple data source was the most important in forming triangulation matrix to answer the research questions (Mills, 2007). In my study, I used my self-reflective journals as the main data while the students’ questionnaire, observations and interviews from one class teacher and formal discussion notes from ROSETE peers were used to support or purify my views about my professional identity development. My self-reflective journals systematically reflected my feelings and interpretations about the lesson, and my future plans to make changes to become a successful teacher. Observation data collection techniques assisted in checking for nonverbal reactions to something “that is occurring in the classroom or when students are working in small groups in order to better understand how they interact and communicate with one another” (Mertler, 2011, p. 121). Interview also helped to triangulate the journal data as it permit me to “probe further and ask for clarification in class teachers’ response to a given question” (Mills, 2007, p. 128). Through the interview, I can get a deeper idea about my own teaching practice from the perspective of other professionals and used them as the feedback to reflect my future teaching practice.

The methodology triangulation and theory triangulation also formed in my study. Methodology triangulation meant using more than one approach to conduct research. I used self-study to inquire my own teaching practice and my identity development. Then the action research was used as an aid methodology to systematize the process of inquiry of my instruction and identity development. In terms of theory triangulation, it meant that my project involved more than one theoretical scheme in the interpretation of the phenomenon. In spite this research focused on my identity development, however, the project was also supported by the theory of stage theories
of teacher’s development, professional learning theories to give triangulated views of emerging findings.

Generalizability is a term refers to “the applicability of findings and contexts different form the one in which they were obtained. That is, based on the behavior of a small group of individuals, researchers try to explain the behavior of a wider group of people” (Mills, 2007, p. 96). The generalizability is divided as the internal generalizability meaning the generalizability within the community that has been studied and the external generalizability to the outside that has not been studied. Qualitative research often focuses on the previous one (Mills, 2007, p. 89) and it is improved as the multiple angles of the same methods were taken into consideration.

Action research was always far away from being generalizable. As stated above, action researcher was used for presenting what was happening in the classroom and which steps can improve the practice within the specific context. It did not pursue ultimate truth. Often, action research was considered as biased, unscientific and not generalizable as it didn’t follow the “carefully prescribed procedures that have come inscribed as scientific method” (Mills, 2007, p. 96). However, this did not mean action research is an unscientific research as the focus of action research was placed on “relevance of findings to the researcher or the audience of the research” (Mills, 2007, p. 97).

3.5 Ethical issues

Ethical considerations should be involved in all the research studies. The issue of ethics in qualitative research and action-oriented research has received considerable attention in recent years (Mertler, 2011; Gay et al., 2006; Creswell, 2002). The aim of ethical issues is that researchers should always take the well-being of the participants into consideration, and make sure the research study is built on the trust between researchers and participants (Mills, 2007). In order to achieve the goal, I applied both the National Ethics Application form (NEAF) for submitting COC to Human Research Ethics Committees and State Education Research Approval Process (SERAP) to get permission of collection data from students and school staff. According to specific ethical standards for researchers from American Psychological Association, the primary ethic principle is to ensure ‘participants’ informed consent
and freedom from harm” (Mills, 2007, p. 104). Hence, information sheets and consent forms for parents/caregivers, students, class teachers and ROSETE peers were also designed, to assist the process. All the documents were attached in the Appendixes.

3.5.1 Participant informed consent

Informed consent means that participants are free to choose to join in or not and should be informed about this study and any potential dangers that may arise. It is central to ethics and seeks to “ensure that all human subjects retain autonomy and the ability to judge for themselves what risks are worth taking for the purpose of furthering scientific knowledge” (Mills, 2007, p. 107). In my study, I explained all the information about my research, the risks participants needed to take and my contacts to welcome any inquiry about my research. Meanwhile, participation in the study was totally voluntary. They were not forced to participate and they could withdraw from the study at any time without reasons and consequences. All relevant written and audio data would be destroyed once the participants quitled.

3.5.2 Confidentiality

Freedom from harm means that participants should not be exposed to risks. Confidentiality is a main focus, to protect them from any potential for embarrassment or ridicule, and to preserve personal privacy. Confidentiality is important for “protecting researcher informants from stress, embarrassment or unwanted publicity” and “protecting the information provided for researchers by participants from being used against them by others” (Mills, 2007, p. 109). Based on the two principles, confidentiality of information was provided in the process of data collection, data storage and publication or dissemination of research results. When collecting data, any deception such as hidden microphone when interviewing were not allowed and participants had the right to require some of their words to be unpublished. Also, all the hard copies of data, including the questionnaires, formal discussion notes, audio tapes would be stored in a locked cabinet in my office for two years. The audio recordings would be stored in my computer with code. All of these data can only be accessed by the researcher or my primary supervisor. After 5 years, all the data will be destroyed.
Finally, the results were to be disseminated through a Master of Education (Honors) thesis and/or jointly-authored publications with supervisors. Pseudonymous names were used in the students’ and teachers’ data, and the schools also are pseudonymised.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the design of this qualitative, self study-action research and how it is matched to the research questions. It has illustrated that action research helped with systematic critical inquiry in self-study, while self-study helped to explore my own experience of teaching, which in turn helped to answer my research questions. The research design provided a plan of study that permitted me to investigate research questions, to control the extraneous factors and ensure the validity of my research. Triangulated data collection techniques make the research findings more reliable. Content analysis and open coding were employed to analyze the data. Finally, the validity and generalizability of the research, and ethical considerations in respect of the participants are addressed. We turn, in the following three chapters, to outlining the findings.
Chapter 4 Achievements and challenges in the first cycle

4.0 Introduction

This chapter is the first evidentiary chapter. It focuses on the challenges and achievements I encountered in my first action cycle. In terms of achievements, these centre on the effective use of teaching strategies that helped me to engage and enhance students’ learning of Chinese. The challenges focus on classroom management issues. As will be seen in chapter 5, some of the challenges stated here resulted in achievements in action cycle 2; others remained challenges in action cycle 2.

4.1 Achievements in the first cycle of teaching

The achievements I experienced during my first cycle of teaching focused on the development of pedagogy and in particular, engaging and empowering students’ learning of Chinese through development of my knowledge of students and pedagogy. My achievement in this area allowed me to develop my professional skills as follows: 1) learning to bridge the gap between Chinese and English cultural expectations to facilitate Mandarin learning; 2) motivating students’ learning by stimulating their interest and enhancing their learning outcomes; 3) Using different strategies to cater for students’ learning differences; 4) Creating a positive learning environment to make students more confident. In the section that follows, I define and explain my achievements, give concrete examples about my practice and analyze each example by using recent literature to support it.

4.1.1 Theme 1: Engaging and empowering students’ learning of Chinese

The theme Engaging and empowering students’ learning of Chinese refers to how I bridged the gap between English and Chinese cultures to motivate students to take part in learning Chinese actively and to enhance their Chinese learning outcomes. I furnish some examples in parallel to the process through which I developed such achievements in my teaching practice. First, I focused my teaching skills on developing students’ motivation and interest in taking part into Chinese lessons. For
example, I used cartoon pictures to engage students in learning Chinese. After I became more skilled in engaging students in learning Chinese, I took actions to combine the student engagement and empowerment factors of learning Chinese into consideration when I selected teaching strategies. For example, I used popular songs to enhance students’ learning ability, gave the stories behind Chinese characters, used phonetic similarities to bridge pronunciation gaps, as well as engaged and empowered students’ learning of Chinese by the use of TPR games. All of these examples demonstrate that the focus of my teaching gradually shifted from merely stimulating their interest in learning Chinese, to use various methods to facilitate and enhance students’ Chinese learning.

The two important aspects of my achievements were student engagement and empowering students’ learning. Student engagement refers to students’ behavioral intensity and emotional quality of active involvement in a task (Reeve et al., 2004). Student engagement usually focuses on increasing achievement, positive behaviors and a sense of belonging (Taylor & Parsons, 2011). Student engagement generally includes cognitive engagement, affective engagement, academic engagement and behavioral engagement (Appleton & Lawrenz, 2011).

Being able to engage students was an important achievement for me, because it functioned as a behavioral pathway by which students’ motivational processes contributed to subsequent learning and development (Reeve et al., 2004, p. 148). It was a good way to manage the classroom, enhance students’ independent learning ability, and assist me to succeed as a teacher because I could understand what motivated students in active learning, as a reference for subsequent teaching practice.

4.1.1.1 Introducing Chinese cartoon pictures to engage students

An example of my achievement in this area was when I successfully introduced Chinese cartoon pictures to engage students in discussing Chinese culture and guided them actively into the learning content. In that sense, by providing cultural elements that appealed to their interests, I helped to motivate students to be responsive and active learners (Cheung, 2001). Below I describe how I used the Chinese cartoon characters big head son and small head father to guide them to learn new vocabulary about family members. The benefits of using popular culture and visual aids in
teaching are well known (Cheung, 2001; Overland, 2004; Abbott, 2002). As Cheung (2001) states, popular culture makes learning easier because it reflects the students’ life experience, their language and their own culture. Before this class, I seldom used cartoons as visual aids, and students seemed to be bored by regular pictures. Never did I see them so excited, and never did I instill cultural learning in such a relaxed way as when I showed them pictures. The following excerpt was taken from a description of the lesson, written in my self-reflective journal data.

I showed the class a picture of the big head son. “How strange the children are!” : “Yeah, it is a character from a very classic Chinese cartoon Big Head Son and Small Head Father and then you will see his special farther!” : “Cool, why his head is so big! Miss, is there any other Chinese head is so big, how funny!” “Well, so exactly. Because in China, if your head is a bit bigger, that means you are smart, you put so many knowledge in your brain. Is there any one’s head is big in this classroom?” ; ‘Miss, M, but he is not clever!’ ; ”Haha,!” ; ‘All right, maybe he doesn’t do well in academic performance, but I think he is smart, because his head is big!” ; ”Haha, Miss I really want to see the big head son!” ; ”This cartoon is called big head son and small head father, then we will see his father!” ; ”Really, Miss, I want to see it!” (Researcher’s reflective journal, 24/04/2012).

Based on my understanding of students’ interest at this age, I chose appropriate pictures to interest the students. Visual aids drawn from popular culture helped me to capture curiosity and thereby channeling students’ attention into target language (Overland, 2001). It stirred fresh curiosity through new objects and their immersion was enhanced as they seamlessly transferred from the objects to the target language through the intervention of translating them into the mother tongue.

This situation was an even greater achievement for me when I related the cartoon images to learning to the stories behind the Chinese cartoons. It helped students to continuously be interested in the topic and provided them with the background knowledge of Chinese notions of family culture. The humor about “big head” in China helped students to gain an understanding of the Chinese symbol for
intelligence and, more importantly, helped to promote a happy and engaged learning atmosphere in which to start the topic. Also, the students were allowed to express their opinions more freely, and were allowed to question what I told them. For example, Chinese cultural notions and characterization of “smartness”; some students questioned them and I encouraged them to share their ideas with me. This reflected my development as a teacher: choosing the appropriate visual contents and the right lead-in questions to guide students into the language learning and also, importantly, treasuring students’ opinions.

4.1.1.2 Using popular songs to enhance students’ learning ability

Using popular songs to enhance students’ learning ability referred to how I used widely-appealing types of songs to increase the students’ engagement and maximize the Mandarin learning outcomes. The two issues concerning this achievement were hooking students’ interest and facilitating their learning of Mandarin.

The video brought the participation into the highest point. The video provided the hip-hop song which was just repetition of target numbers and repeated them at the frequency that the number showed. “yi”:”er, er!” :”bababababababa!” The funniest part was about ba, because it sounds like shooting. Most of students couldn’t wait to repeat “babababababa,bababa!” with showing hands like a gun to shoot sb. What made me surprise is their active participation when I asked them to repeat. I have never heard them repeat something in such loud voice, repeat such in order, so many students showed happiness in their face and so many students can remember them very well. They kept on asking for another round: ”miss, miss, could we listen to it again, I like it! That is cool!” (Researcher’s self-reflective journal, 12/06/2012).

This paragraph showed how I used a hip-hop song to consolidate students’ learning of Chinese numbers. Many scholars have acknowledged the benefits of using songs to teach language (Abbott, 2002; Paquette & Rieg, 2008; Trinick, 2011; Costa, 2008), pointing out that class teachers should take advantage to maximize learning
possibility (Bolton, 2008). The students showed high level of emotional and behavioral engagement in learning songs, which is helpful in creating a positive learning environments where children can thrive academically, socially and emotionally” (p. 227). They showed their initiative to repeat the 10 numbers happily in my case. Hence, the music immediately helped to increase students’ participation and to empower students’ learning of language.

The level and repetitive nature of lyrics was also an important element in teaching songs in my consideration. Repetition gave the students chance to practice their skills and use their new knowledge often, thus helping students adhering to the routine and be more skilled in participating activities. Through the active repetition, it can “promote the learning of formulaic chunks of language that can be used as ready-made expressions in future conversations” (Abbott, 2002, p. 10), and internalize the target language by making meaning of what they learn (Trinick, 2011, p. 7). The magic part of the number song was that when the video repeated the numbers, it repeated at the frequency that target number showed, for example, two, they repeated at twice. This kind of lyrics helped students understand the meaning without too much effort because students didn’t need to relate English meaning to target numbers. It sparked my thoughts that the easier students’ learning process can be, the more students can learn. It worked very well for my students to enhance their learning of these numbers.

4.1.1.3 Giving the stories behind Chinese characters

Giving stories behind written Chinese characters meant how I used or created characters as pictures and gave those characters stories to impress my students and help students to recognize some complicate characters during limited time.

This is a process of how I teach students to identify the complicated Chinese character. The first character I showed them is I explained:’ the left part looks like number 3, and the right part looks like the letter I, I am three, that is the character hong!”...Oh, really it is fantastic, I am 3, hong!” the students cheered when they heard about the explanation and they kept on repeating that clue
sentence. Another example was , I said: “Look at this character, please think about sun, what colour is the real sun, look! it is sunny outside.” “It is a bit white!” :“Yes, And the bottom part is what we learnt, like the shape of sun, then the top stroke, looks like ray of sun, is white, so the ray of sun is white, means bai, bai! You can also have a try to explain what the character looks like” :“It also looks like a white paper with a pencil.” A boy said, pointed to the stroke on the top part of : “ It is a pencil writing on the white paper.” ;’Oh, good guess!”

Then I played the missing game. I only showed the characters and got one of picture out and asked them to have a guess of what colour is missing. What surprised me was that, most of them were successful to get the right missing colour in the game even without too much time to revise character.

Actually, this was the first time I used pictures to help students recognize some characters. At first, I showed them character in the traditional Chinese way, asked them to copy after me. I knew it is hard for them, but from my experience, it was the only way to acquire this character. I tried this missing game because I had observed some similar classes like this which was junior high, enjoyed the success. But I didn’t think my students can succeed because they were much younger and they didn’t have enough time to practice it. However, the students’ high accuracy in this game proved that they have got the character (Researcher’s self-reflective journal, 15/05/2012).

This incident described above was an achievement because it made me think about my own teaching in several aspects. Firstly, it challenged my previous knowledge about character pedagogy and presented my success in creating the suitable character teaching methods. I actively explored and developed my own pedagogical knowledge within local practice through my previous experience of teaching. Although I had got the idea that Chinese characters were pictographs which depicted
the meaning, I never used it because I mimicked the traditional Chinese character learning experience. That is, asking the students to copy stroke by stroke. Also I thought learning character was impossible for my students. Tse et al. (2007) describe the traditional way of teaching Chinese character, demonstrating that “teachers follow a strict order of strokes and their position. Teachers write the character on the board and ask pupils to attend to it and learn strokes. Teachers require them to practice writing every character many times until its recall in automatic” (p. 379). Such teaching ways relied heavily on rote learning and caused heavy burden for memorizing them. My learning experience also made me think that the knowledge was statically stored by the teacher as knowledge source, transmitting from teacher to students. The effectiveness only depended on students’ hard work. This learning experience shaped my belief about teaching as teacher-centred.

However, then I developed my pedagogy by showing the strategies of “reading character”. I started to understand what students were interested in and what ways they can learn easily. This development of teacher knowledge contributed to my successful practice, as “teacher knowledge and knowing affected every aspects of teaching act” (Sun, 2012, p. 760). Also, Hill et al. (2008) claim that the knowledge base of teacher guides their pedagogical development. Under my newly developed teaching strategies, I was more sensitive to facilitate students’ learning by creating the pictures that related to students’ existing knowledge base, making it visual, vivid to remember the character rather than by rote learning.

Finally, I also viewed teaching as more student-centred way. I didn’t just made stories for every character and asked students to remember; instead, I also encouraged students’ to give their own stories and understanding about the character and highly appreciated their contribution. They were encouraged to “add associations to the character and its forms by using their imagination and creative thinking” (Tse, et, al, 2008, p. 382). I valued students’ contributions, respecting their “preferences for perceiving, thinking about and organizing information” (Whitton et al, 2010, p. 206). In this sense, students were involved in affecting my decision making. This has shown that my belief shifted from letting students do rote learning to letting students construct their own knowledge.
4.1.1.4 Using phonetic similarities to bridge the pronunciation gap

Using sound similarities to bridge the pronunciation gap meant that how I used the English words to indicate the pronunciation of Chinese to facilitate pronunciation learning. It reflected how I developed my crosslinguistic pedagogy in dealing with the native speakers. I would provide the example in two different periods to show how the crosslinguistic knowledge developed as the action cycle goes on.

When I first learned English, I used Chinese words to indicate English pronunciation. But I didn’t realize it as useful strategies for teaching Chinese until I have teaching experience.

: “Yi, yi, yi!” the clue words I give is letter E, means one, The second one is er, er, er, which means two, The clue words is an English letter, which one, what English letterer sounds similar like er?” : “Em, em, oh, Miss, the letter R. “That is easy to remember!” the students called out (Teacher self-reflective journal, 12/06/2012).

This time, I used two colours of pens to present initials and vowels to show them pronunciation. Also, I gave the clue words (English words sounding similar to) for initials and vowels, which were also presented in the corresponding color. For example, zou, which means walk, I use z as blue colour and ou as the red colour, then the clue word I gave was z and oh, with blue colour and red colour respectively. I told them, ”the ou part is sound similar like English words oh”. I used sound similarities between Chinese and English to facilitate the learning, also I was not only teaching the whole syllabus, instead, divided them into vowels and consonants which were like English. It aimed to develop students’ ability to identify different pinyin, even for the one which didn’t learn before. According to teacher’s interview, she viewed the teaching strategies as fantastic by using English clue words which helped students be prone to mastering pronunciation. Relating to what they know made them
more confident and willing to show their Chinese. (Researcher’s self-reflective journal & teacher interview, 20/06/2012).

This narrative presented two examples to show how I developed my crosslinguistic pedagogy to enhance students’ knowledge about Chinese pronunciation. It was my professional achievement because I have learned to facilitate my students’ learning of Chinese pronunciation by showing the Chinese pronunciation in the form of their first language. This use of phonetic similarities between two languages reflected how my recognition of using crosslinguistic similarities to comprehend and produce a foreign language (Shea, 2008). I not only showed my ability in designing the similar words that “function similar to a form of L1” (Shea, 2008, p. 700), but also in planning the “contrast relation words” which performed differently from students’ mother tongue, but shared “underlying similarities” (Shea, 2008, p. 700). In that sense, I made students sense of crosslinguistic similarities and get a positive transfer to their Chinese learning (Shea, 2008) by considering their existing knowledge about their first language and their learning features.

As stated above, this was not new for me as I had adopted this for my learning of English, however, it was not until my teaching skills became mature that I capitalized on my life experience in my teaching (MacGregor, 2009; Watzke, 2007). That meant the prior knowledge of me as learners was used to catalyst my own pedagogy and instructional practice only after I had built up my own teaching knowledge (Watze, 2007).

Secondly, I learnt to consider the importance of students’ feeling when trying to enhance students’ learning. My action of relating students’ learning of Chinese to their first language would make students feel more confident, comfortable and more willing to pronounce Chinese because they felt familiar with way of using English way to pronounce words, thus engaging them to trying new language. It indicated that I had already kept an eye on students’ emotion when I taught Mandarin, which meant I was much more task-focused (Watzke, 2007; Ginns et al., 2001).

In addition, as the time went by, I remodeled my teaching skills in using sound
similarities by deeper reflection about my previous teaching practice. At the beginning, what teaching strategy I used was just to regard single Chinese word as one whole syllable and provided the English clue words that sounded similar like the word. However, I found that not every Chinese word could find the corresponding English words and learning Chinese pronunciation as the whole syllable could not help students to identify the words they haven’t learnt before. As I started to care about students’ learning process in deeper sense, I learned to relate my knowledge about pinyin elements to sound similarities so that the students can make up pronunciation by themselves. This strategy which nurtured students’ higher order thinking proved that the increasing teaching experience catalyzed my own pedagogy and instructional practice (Watzke, 2007).

4.1.1.5 Involving and empowering student learning of Chinese with TPR games

This explained how I engaged students verbally in learning the target words by using Total Physical Response (TPR) methods and strengthened students’ memory about words by using the gestures. TPR here referred to a series of language teaching methods which built around the coordination of speech and action, and attempted to encourage learners to listen and respond to target language commands of their teachers. But I developed my TPR methods as involving not only the listening and physical response, but also intensive repeating.

Students love Simon Says! It is much easier game for stimulate their learning. Different from the traditional ones, I designed several sets of instructions for use so that it can cater for most of students’ learning needs. First I left the notes on the whiteboard and used both English & Chinese instructions to decrease difficulty. But it was still a challenge because I called out instruction in English and Chinese randomly; Sometimes, I called out command with different speed, or said them in continuous words like ‘tiao, dun, tiao, dun,’ without stop. When it was difficult, the gesture would be shown to remind them the meaning. All of them enjoyed it very much and I can see their face was laughing in red. ‘’Miss, miss, it is really wonderful!’’ The students all regarded the game as interactive, special, wonderful
and nurturing. They all learned from the game because it was easy for them to remember things when they did actions and called out the words simultaneously. It really helped to remember more words.

Another benefit of the game was that students were more willing to do repetition when I asked them to show movement simultaneously. I have used TPR as the way for teaching these action vocabularies, and also develop it as a repetition strategy. After that game, some of them can immediately tell the actions I showed them.

The teacher also appreciated my way of getting students physically involved as a strong assessment and effective way of teaching. With this game, I assessed students’ outcomes immediately and reflected on the lessons straight away, which was fantastic. Also I made the lessons verbal and made students repeat which was good because they needed large amount of repetition. I kept going with it in a good way (Researcher’s self-reflective journal & Students’ questionnaire & teacher’s interview, 20/06/2012).

This narrative reflected my successful experience in empowering the students learning of the action words because I used appropriate teaching strategies and flexibly changed the instructions to cater for students’ different learning needs during the class. I could see the development of my pedagogy from several aspects. Firstly, the lesson was successful because of my increased understanding of students’ interest. Also, I began to consider young students’ learning feature such as their attention time was short and mix-ability, so I used TPR to lift pace and mood through the whole lessons and meanwhile to stick students’ memories (Widodo, 2005). These positive evidence for using TPR all supported my right choice for empowering students in learning Chinese.

However, I didn’t just follow the rules of TPR; instead, I varied the instruction according to situations to cater for most students’ needs in classroom. The students here varied in ability, style and interest. It was very hard to keep students’ high mood with only one instruction. They needed to regard my teaching activities as doable,
but also at the same time, they needed to be challenged all the time. I had switched my focus from how to conduct the specific games smoothly to nurture students’ multi-level ability in using the target language. Also, by varying the instruction, all the students can find their right place to involve themselves and meanwhile challenge themselves to a high level.

At the end, the use of TPR also was a good way to get immediate feedback about students’ learning outcomes. The class teacher appreciated my designing formative assessment game because she thought it was very good for me to get immediate return and adjust my teaching strategy timely. She commented on this that my teaching skills had become more mature and considerate more about students’ learning.

4.2 How these achievements contribute to my professional identity

The teaching practices illustrated above were achievements because they were concerned with students’ learning Chinese more successfully. Students’ learning was a priority. What was important to me was that I had gained knowledge of engaging and empowering students’ learning of Chinese.

Through the interaction, it was evident that I was much more knowledgeable in teaching Mandarin than the initial two terms teaching before I began my action research. It was particularly meaningful for me because I lacked education background of teaching and didn’t experience western teaching before. I learned how to use different learning aids to hook most students’ interest and cater for the individual learning difference rather than only focused on pushing them learning as much as they can. That was to say, I was more sensible about quality of students’ learning outcomes rather than quantity of their learning.

Firstly, it was significant for me as the successful experience relieved my feeling as a “non-native” English speaker and achieved the demands teaching placed on my English language. As an ESL speaker, I have successfully given lessons that were easy to understand and supported students’ learning outcomes. These all contributed to my awareness of belonging to an imagined bilingual and multi-competence users community rather than marginal non-native community. Pavlenko (2003) found that
student teachers who regarded themselves as multilingual were eager to construct and reframe themselves in a more positive light and to position themselves different in terms of their language and competence (p. 262). It not only influenced their views about their linguistic competence, but also their self-esteem, transforming themselves into agents in charge of their own learning (p. 263). It was evident that relief was the theme of my experiences of teaching Chinese and engaging with students. Hence, being a teacher here was no longer just heavy burden, but a learnable business that I believed I could do well in. Consequently, I kept my eye on positive elements of learning to teach, repositioned my own linguistic competence, finally contributing to my own self-efficacy and self-esteem in my teaching practice. Also, by reflecting on these successful experiences, I found my previous belief, that students must have a fixed notebook, had to be questioned by myself because it would constrain my successful experience (Andersson, 2011).

Secondly, it was unique to me as I didn’t have the right disciplinary education background. I majored in engineering background rather than education, which made me feel weaker than other volunteer teacher because my lack of theoretical knowledge about the education. But my successful experience helped lessen my feeling of weakness as I proved my ability in teaching good lessons. My developed pedagogy and practice helped me to overcome the feeling myself as inferior and contributed to my increase in sense of self-efficacy in teaching local students.

The increasing building of practical knowledge has contributed to my practice being more professional (Joffe, 2001), because my attention was emphasized on contextual factors including students and learning material (Beijaard et al., 2001). Hill et al. (2008) states the significant effects of pedagogical content knowledge and knowledge about students in teachers’ professional constructions (p. 395). My increasing understanding about the students made me feel enlightened by finding right track of my own teaching practice rather than immerse myself in fear of losing my way. I began to feel myself hopeful and confident when I got the idea about what was suitable for students and this understanding contributed to positive teacher-students’ relationship and positive attitude about teaching profession. These positive elements all contributed to my positive professional development and enhanced self-efficacy as a real teacher (Beijaard et al., 2000, p. 750). The
achievements also conduced to my positive feeling that I had talents to be a good teacher. It was not until my gaining enough understanding about students that I thought myself as a real teacher, belonging to this teaching context. This reframing about my own professional identity had a positive light in positioning myself as a qualified teacher.

In addition, the construction of pedagogy knowledge also conduced to the positive feeling as a teacher. As stated above, understanding about students made me find the right track, while the development of pedagogy knowledge made me know how to run teaching practice smoothly. This achievement was significantly important as I felt more free and inspired in relation to my own teaching goals. It made me more willing and capable to change my practice through continually professional learning, as I narrowed the gap and attention between my designed professional identity and my actual identity (Sfard & Prusak, 2005). It echoed what Beijaard et al. (2000) claimed that teacher’s perceptions about their own professional identity affected teachers’ ability and willingness to “cope with educational change and to implement innovations in their own teaching practice” (p. 750). Besides, during the process, I changed my belief of curling teacher, who helped to sweep the floor for the students (Andersson, 2011). My identity now was clearer as pedagogy-focused and confident in giving the right strategies for teaching Mandarin. My pedagogy, actually, was now more student-centred rather than teacher-centred, pushed me to serve as a facilitator “who tried to develop students competencies as independence an autonomy” (Andersson, 2011, p. 451). I no longer suffered from being a knowledge-passer. Instead, I positioned myself as a manager and a guide in Mandarin teaching because I had gradually shifted my belief to student-centred way and became more competent in using the student-centred teaching strategies. My identity was clearer because I had moved from “unstable equilibrium” to “stable equilibrium” to close teaching gap (Tang, 2003, p. 485). It was clearer that my core self, who one as a person, had shared resonance with my satisfying teaching self (Tang, 2003), which meant that my identity was more stable than before.

These positive emotions about my own profession made me actively think of ways to improve the teaching practice. It was through these achievements in classroom teaching that I became more confident and competent in making changes about
teaching ways and started to construct my positive experience, knowledge and beliefs. Beijaard et al. (2000) have viewed teachers’ pedagogical capability as important elements of their perceived professional identity. They claim that teachers are pedagogical experts who “base their profession on knowledge and skills to support students’ social, emotional and moral development” (p. 754). In that sense, I learned to be aware of many norms and values within the interaction and relationship with students, aiming to enhance the quality of students’ learning process (Beijaard et al., 2000). Compared with the past, I had taken up my teacher’s professional identity to be a pedagogical expert, more than a subject matter expert and a didactical expert. With these productive teaching experiences, I suppressed my subject matter and didactical aspects of core self, and no longer a didactical person and no longer regarded myself as the knowledge authority (Beijaard et al., 2000).

4.3 Challenges in cycle 1

The challenges I experienced during my first action cycle focused on issues I experienced in classroom management. Classroom management refers to teacher’s practice in establishing order, engaging students’ learning (Emmer et al., 2001), and controlling the students’ disruptive behavior to create a positive and supportive physical learning environment and minimize disruptions and misbehavior. In that sense, issues I experienced with classroom management was a big challenge for me because it hindered empowering students’ learning and thus preventing me to become the good teacher I want to be.

The following section presented my findings regarding challenges. I organized it into three themes identified: ineffective teaching strategies, unskilled organizational skills and lack of authority. I explained each theme and provided narratives to describe how it related to classroom management issues and why it was the challenge for me. The narratives were constructed according to critical issues that resulted in my failure of managing class, to present how these issues influenced my professional identity.

4.3.1 Ineffective teaching strategies

This theme centred on the ineffective teaching strategies I selected to teach Mandarin that led to serious classroom management problems. Teaching strategy
was often termed as teaching techniques, defined as a body of fixed and stereotyped modes of procedures that was applicable to its appropriate subject (Puri, 2006; Iglesias et al., 2009, p. 91). Ineffective teaching strategies referred to those teaching strategies that failed to motivate students to learning, failed to enhance students’ understanding and hindered students’ needs of learning specific knowledge (Sandholtz, 2011). It resulted in fragmented and incoherent students’ learning that lacked intellectual rigor, failed to build on existing knowledge and skills and did little support in the day-to-day challenges (Musson et al., 2012).

As a pre-service teacher, the results of my ineffective teaching strategies lay in students’ disengagement and low-efficient learning because of my in providing clearly defined directions (Sandholtz, 2011) and unaware of students’ learning (Treiber, 1984). Lack of student engagement was first key issue, which was also defined as disengagement. Disengagement referred to “absence of engagement” in both behavioral and emotional aspects (Skinner et al., 2009). Behaviourally, it demonstrated negative action as “passivity, lack of initiation, lack of effort, and giving up and lack of attention” (Skinner et al., 2009, p. 496). Emotionally, it manifested as enervated emotion (tired, sad, bored), alienated emotion (frustration, anger), and pressured participation (anxiety)” (Skinner et al., 2009, p. 496).

The second issue was students’ learning. In that area, ineffective learning strategies brought about hindering students’ ability to conceptualize the particular concepts (Sandholtz, 2011, p. 35). The students didn’t grasp the key ideas about what I taught because the inappropriate instructional strategies failed to provide concrete examples. Also it led to students’ confusion because it didn’t connect with student prior learning experience or it misjudged students’ prior knowledge and their ability to understand the teaching content in particular teaching ways (Sandholtz, 2011).

The following section described one lesson in which ineffective teaching strategies were used. They were wrong teaching strategies because I taught them to write characters in the Chinese traditional way, which was boring, as well as too difficult for them to master. Because of the wrong teaching strategies, it further resulted in students’ disengagement, which manifested that the students didn’t listen to me and were not willing to follow my instructions. Finally, the disengagement led to my
losing control of classroom management. Below was the excerpt that would talk about this problem in details. This excerpt was my revised self-reflective journal which had removed detailed description.

The process of teaching Chinese character pushed me into hell. I explained the meaning of character and asked them to chase me to write the character stroke by stroke. I tried to slow down so that they can follow me. I lifted voice so that they can hear me, but actually not all of them followed me, most of them just took notes by themselves. They seemed to be bored to do this, I saw some were whispered with their desk mates. : “Ok, calm down, calm down, follow me, don’t take your notes, listen to my instruction!” I lifted my voice to show my anger. It seemed that the students were listening to me, however, when I returned to whiteboard, to show them the order and how to write it. Some of them still scattered their attention, some just looked at their notebook with a bored face, some kept on whispering with desk mates, others seemed to wander their thoughts. Even though I repeatedly emphasized on the importance that they must follow me, but some of them just did what they wanted. What can I do, just can insisting this embarrassing situation. :“I don’t want to say it again, stop-doing-anything, anything, I want you to pay attention to writing the character, you are not listening!” Even though I continued to be tough and insisted that they must follow my instruction, however, the whisper and distraction never ended. I really felt very depressed and felt just wanted to quit that part as soon as possible! I felt very uncertain about whether I was a real teacher, the students all left me along, ignored my instruction, even though I performed as I was so angry. Was that too hard for them, or they just showed no interest in it. But I remembered in the past, they loved Chinese character very much. What happened? (Researcher’s self reflection, 24/04/2012).

This excerpt demonstrated that I used an inappropriate teaching strategy in teaching Chinese characters, which led to students’ disengagement and misbehavior. I adopted traditional Chinese ways of teaching characters where I showed students
character on the whiteboard and then asked students to follow me stroke by stroke and ensured students’ memory as automatic by performing a repetitive copying tasks (Tse et al, 2007; Packard, et al., 2006). Such strategies emphasized memorizing sequence of strokes and relied on rote learning. Most learners found it tough to learn. This traditional teaching strategy for character, however, didn’t suit to these western children because of its boredom and difficulty for Western people. In this case, I didn’t consider the appropriateness of non-Western teaching in Western context (Bright & Phan, 2011). So there’s no doubt that the students showed their difficulty in following my teaching methods, which “resulted in a struggle to succeed” (Bright & Phan, 2011, p. 132). In addition, different from Chinese students whose learning efforts were intrinsically related to pursuit of social effort, Western students got used to learning for their own fun. So it was impossible for them to keep practicing such boring and tough tasks that needed them to do repetitive and mechanical copying of characters stroke by stroke.

Also Chinese characters were very complex. It needed high knowledge base if Chinese writings were taught in old ways. Students needed to know about the knowledge of strokes, rules of writing strokes, Chinese character structure and radical knowledge. All of the knowledge, however, was totally new for the students and it was hard to connect this learning with Western students’ knowledge existing knowledge base. Even though they learnt the knowledge above, the lack of connectedness between strokes and meaning, as well as phonetic system made it hard to master the character. It still needed large amount of repetitive practice until it became automatic. In conclusion, I found that once this traditional way was adopted, it can’t be separated from boring, mechanical and tough copying, which was prone to resulting in Western children retreating from learning Chinese characters. However, I still used this method because of my exaggeration of my significance by elevating my nativeness as a supreme position (Kabel, 2009), which “diverted my attention away from the solution for urgent pedagogical questions and prevented the flourishing of local pedagogical initiative which could build on local strengths and linguistic realities” (Boyle, 1997, p. 170).

In addition, it seemed that disengaging students would cause serious problems of classroom management; they frequently happened simultaneously (Wiseman & Hunt,
2008). The students in my classroom, however, were not paying attention when I was conducting instruction or when participating in an instructional activity was expected (Wiseman & Hunt, 2008, p. 157). They were not following my instruction, did their unrelated work like copying notes by themselves, looking back of previous notes and whispering with other classmates. This misbehavior, however, further reflected that their time on task was reduced to a low level and led to continuous disengagement and behavior problems in Mandarin learning. Their facial expression indicated that they felt bored about doing this part and some of students even gave up following me to write the character because they thought it was too hard. All the clues indicated that I disengaged the students in learning Chinese character.

I could hardly calm down the students; let alone present briskly paced drills. I became annoyed and upset about the chaotic classroom order. This led to my continuously meaningless comment (Ding et al., 2008, p. 306). I just kept on continuing commenting on students’ misbehavior and repeated command that reminded them to follow me. But this continuous reminder of their misbehavior didn’t work for these disengaged students or at least, it could not be lasting effect. That was to say, even though it seemed that I was trying to be tough to carry on my instruction by continuing reminding them, it was meaningless for managing the class order.

I showed my frustration at the students’ misbehavior and disrupted the learning by stopping teaching and criticizing the students’ misbehavior. I lost my temper and made empty threats, which I never carried out. I also conducted passive actions, such as talking over the noise (Sandholtz, 2009). All of these, however, were behaviours that “disrupted instruction and involved the entire class in a management issue that centred on a few students” (Sandholtz, 2009, p.41). My actions of frustration also resulted in negative outcomes like disrupting both student’ learning and teachers’ teaching, weakening students’ motivation and energy, wasting class time and making both students and me stressed (Charles & Senter, 2005). This was really harmful to developing a good teaching and learning environment, as well as enhancing students’ learning of Chinese.

Classroom management is a common issue for novice teachers during their survive
stage and is believed as a prerequisite before focusing on instruction and its impact on student learning (Watzke, 2007; Emmer, 2001; Ding et al., 2008; Sandholtz, 2009). It is prevalent during this early-career periods (Flores & Day, 2006; Emmer et al., 2001), because they do not seem to “have sufficient ability to use expert-like routines for classroom management and frequently conduct disorganized lessons (Emmer et al., p. 106). However, although I acknowledged that classroom management was still my concerned issue, I mainly focused on instructional outcomes before mastering classroom management. I attributed my classroom management problems to my immature instructional strategies rather than my classroom management skills. At this stage, instructional outcomes and students’ engaged learning was my main concern while establishing good classroom order was only an important element that assisted me in achieving the goal.

4.3.2 Lack of organizational skills

The theme “lack of organizational skills” focused on my experience of losing control of the class order because of my incapability to give clear and assertive instructions when I conducted the game. Disorganized teachers lose valuable teaching time and will find themselves repeating the same lesson over and over again (John, 2007, p. 41). I continually found my lesson instruction was not clear, because I put in too much information and mixed different parts together. I did not have the professional ability to give them a clear idea of what they should do.

The following was one example of this: it related to students’ playing a board game as part of their lesson. I lacked confidence in giving instructions and wasn’t assertive enough to make sure everybody understood and followed my instructions. Instead, I relied on passive trial of the game. Failure to achieve this brought about my losing control of classroom management. Below was a condensed excerpt from my self-reflective journals discussing this issue:

Stand up and guessing game started. I had to give instruction. I was really afraid of giving instruction because students can’t understand me. “Listen carefully about the instruction. First, I’d like all of you to choose two action words to write on your cover of your book. Then I will show flashcards and call out the word, if you get the vocabulary I
call out, just quickly stand up and sit down. Other classmates, you can choose one person to guess what she/he gets. Got it?” Silent, totally silent, from their face, I can tell that they got very confused! So I repeated my instruction again, in a quicker pace as I felt nervous. Still, no one got the idea. That made the class a little mess. I heard somebody say: “don’t know what to do” and did something nothing to do with learning Chinese. Others just laughed with other students and talked without my permission. I gave up explaining it again because it seemed to be useless. So I just gave them chance to conduct trial of the game and then pointed out the mistake. However, it exacerbated class order. Even if I wanted to change, however, it was recorded in my teaching plan. I wanted to finish it and I really didn’t know what I can do to address this problems. Changing teaching plan? That would be mess.

The teacher commented that I should not give students so much information before the game because they can’t remember it. I acknowledge that I was influenced by Chinese belief that a good teacher means preparing everything for the students. Giving all the information is a sign of good preparation. (Researcher’s self-reflective journal, 20/06/2012).

This excerpt illustrated my failed experience in giving clear, meaningful instructions and being assertive enough that made everybody follow my instruction. Firstly, it was very challenging for me to give clear instruction because of my deficiency in local language (Medgyes & Ârva, 2004, Medgyes, 1992). I came here with English as a second language, which made language a barrier for me. I didn’t know which kind of language made sense for them and I wasn’t so capable to speak good English, thus I can’t really “interpret the mistakes students make” (Medgyes & Ârva, 2004, p. 362). Just as Medgyes (1992) contends, “the more proficient in the learner’s mother tongue, the more efficient in the classroom” (p. 348). Additionally, Pavlenko (2003) claimed that L2 teachers who viewed them as non-native speakers usually encountered identity problems, due to their self-position themselves belonging to non-native community. In that sense, it was hard for me to position myself as a real powerful teacher because of negative effects of regarding myself as non-native
(Pavlenko, 2003, p. 258). As my previous experience of frustration, passive and incompetent in giving meaningful instructions, I lost my confidence in giving effective instruction.

In addition to the language, another barrier for me to give clear instruction was that I was incapable in organizing the instruction. The instruction was too long for students to remember without subsequent explanation or layered steps to scaffolding the idea. Also, I lacked ability in processing and applying information (Kent, 2000, p. 85). I pushed them all the information without organization, mixed up all kinds of information randomly rather than classified the information and told them step by step. Even though I prepared the instruction before the class, it was still very hard for me to clarify the idea because I lacked of knowledge of organizational management methods (Kent, 2000, p. 84).

What was even worse, I lacked flexibility in how to respond to unexpected events that occurred in the classroom (Emmer et al., 2001, p. 106). The students showed their confusion and incorporation in following my instruction. Instead of adopting any effective strategies to adjust the issues, I just repeated it again and hoped to get their understanding. But they still couldn’t get the idea. As a novice teacher, I tended to teach lessons that were constricted by the plans and objectives that I set for the particular lesson, which made my instruction vulnerable to students’ questions and disruptions (Emmer et al., 2001, p. 106). The lack of ability in giving organized instructions, however, limited my ability to adjust to changing demands of students.

Secondly, I failed to give assertive instruction because of my inability and self-distrust in giving clear instruction. As Kato (1998) claimed that beginning Japanese teachers failed because they can’t be assertive in classroom management in Australia. As a non-native, I encountered the similar challenges. I didn’t demand that all the students follow my instructions because I knew most of them couldn’t understand my instructions, even my language. But I felt very vulnerable to change this. I repeated in a faster pace, lack of eye contact and rise pitch, all of these showed my anxiety in teaching students. It was really hard for me to build my image of expert authority because of lack of classroom management skills.
It was special for me because it challenged my teacher-centred belief. I adopted the teacher-centred instruction in which the teacher decided what and how to teach (Andersson, 2011). I, actually, treated myself as a “curling teacher who solves possible problems and tensions before hand and thus making my students’ lives as smooth and easy as possible” (Andersson, 2011, p. 447). In my case, I tried to make and be in charge of all the important decisions of the content and pace of instruction. This management system, however, can orient students toward “passivity and compliance with rigid rules undercuts the potential effects of an instructional system that was designed to emphasize active learning, higher order thinking, and the social construction of knowledge” (Brophy, 2006, p. 40). In that sense, “compliance was valued over initiative and passive learners over active learners” (Garrett, 2008, p. 36) and moralistic perceptions, highly impersonal relationships, and attitudes of mistrust held domain in the classroom (Garrett, 2008, p. 35). What’s worth noting was that this custodial orientated instruction, however, needed high-level of ability for organizing the instruction and knowledge to give the instruction which students can understand. However, the lack of professional skills and experiences in instruction made me incapable to perfect all the aspects in teacher-centred instruction, I did not have sufficient ability to organize expert-like routine” (Emmer & Stough, 2001, p. 106) and “failed to implement a variety of instructional actions to students’ performance cues” (Kent, 2000, p. 84).

4.3.3 Failure to develop authority

Failing to develop an authoritative figure demonstrated my experience that I failed to build up my teacher authoritative figure as significant as the normal teacher, which further led to the serious problems in classroom management. I failed to achieve the goal that students could treat my instruction as important as their class teacher. My authority was challenged when the students ignored me and didn’t respect me as a real teacher, without the class management teacher. There were three reasons why I failed to show my teacher authority as normal teacher: Firstly, it was the lack of normal teacher’s effective support that I was not professional in being authoritative in students’ eyes. Secondly, I was unknowledgeable to show my power. Thirdly I felt vulnerable to show my authority because I was a Chinese beginning casual teacher in terms of classroom management. The following excerpt illustrated all the issues above.
I have taught this class for one year. In the past, I often succeeded in calming students down with the classroom teacher in classroom, although she seldom interfered in my management of the class. So I didn’t think classroom management was a big deal, at least in this class, what I should do was to show my power and serious attitudes to their behaviour problems.

However, this time, without class teacher, I had to lift my voice for the whole class to calm them down, as I found they were too noisy! I had to keep on repeating instructions so many times, it was like a vicious circle. When I asked them to review the vocabularies with me, however, they were not listening. They talked out of order and distracted their attention. I wasted most of time on managing the class! I just felt that in their eyes, I was not the real teacher. I didn’t have the power to manage the class. I didn’t know how to deal with them, I wanted to give up. That was really an unlucky day. I knew I was a casual teacher and came here for once a week. I didn’t have enough time to understand them and gave continuous feedback about their behaviour, but I tried hard. It was really hard to deal with.

How could they be so rude! I was really shocked and disappointed. Why they not listened to me, just as my authority was totally ruined. Don’t the teachers enjoy their authority naturally and students must respect teacher and follow the teachers’ instruction? If I just came here, I can comfort myself that I was a stranger and they were not familiar with me! However, I have been their teacher for almost one year, and I succeeded to control their misbehaviour before with class teacher. Only this time, class teacher was absent, the class was totally out of control. At that time, I really doubted about myself about being an authority teacher, I think I had already been a teacher in their eyes, but the truth was, never, I had never gained power in their eyes. They ignored me! (Researcher’s self-reflective journal, 29/05/2012).
This excerpt demonstrated that I failed to build my authority as a real teacher with the students. Firstly, I didn’t realize that they didn’t treat me as important as the real teacher until the normal teacher was absent. Before that, she just sat there as an authoritative figure to calm down the class and seldom interrupted me with classroom management issues. Although it seemed that I had succeeded to show my dominance over students, my dominance was never ensured because conflict and resistance were ready to spring (Pace & Hemmings, 2007, p. 4). Thus, authority relations between teachers and students were unstable and existed in a quivering balance that may be upset at my moment (Pace & Hemmings, 2007, p. 4).

As stated above, the class teacher was informed to take responsibility for classroom management, so I never thought about using proactive ways because the class teacher took the responsibility to manage the class. However, I was never informed about how to deal with students’ problems and never did I get feedback and advice about which way was appropriate to deal with classroom management. It was the lack of the normal teacher professional knowledge support that I felt challenged about how to deal with the students independently.

Secondly, it was my incapability in classroom management that led to my failure to show my strong teacher authority. I didn’t get clear idea about how to manage these students when encountering problems. I appeared to be less assured in the specificity and depth of my knowledge of classroom management (Emmer et al, 2001, p. 106). When I reflected about my successful experience in showing my power, I found even though I copied it again, it didn’t work. This was because I didn’t know how things played out in the classroom (Elliot, 2009, p. 200). I didn’t explore the deeper reason for why I took this action to manage students and what situation it worked. I just reacted when I encountered similar misbehavior rather than provided proactive approaches to prevent difficulties from occurring at the beginning (Elliot, 2009). In addition, My lack of interpersonal skills prevented students from perceiving me as a high-level expertise. Suffering from behavior problems, I just shouted in monotone delivery and rising pitch to show my anger at students’ mess order (Elliot, 2009), which showed my vulnerability in building teacher’s authority. During the process, I disrupted the lessons by giving them critical words rather than unobtrusive non-verbal behavior like eye contact or facial expression, and diverted other
Finally, my vulnerability in teaching also contributed to my feeling not as a real teacher. This vulnerability, however, was related to my experience of feeling threatened by “losing control of the processes and tasks I felt responsible for as a teacher” (Gao, 2008, p. 155). Initially, I came here as a beginning substitute teacher. I only taught once a week, I rushed between every class to teach Mandarin with lots of students.

4.4 How these challenges related to my professional identity

The teaching practices demonstrated above were challenges because they were concerned with my suffering experience, negative emotion and students’ negative reaction in classroom management. Specifically, it reflected my immaturity in managing the class discipline, motivated students, developing the instruction and organizing the activities. I not only suffered the common difficulties like lack of confidence, getting no idea about motivating students and inexperienced in organizing activities, as other novices also experienced, but also encountered some unique challenges because of my Chinese educational belief and understanding.

Specially, I experienced the negative emotions because of the misalignment and dissonance with my Chinese educational beliefs. My vulnerability was mediated by the shifting sociocultural teaching context (Gao, 2008). When dealing with classroom management, I considered that teacher authority can be gained once the students were familiar with me. I was influenced by traditional Chinese educational cultures, which claimed teachers’ status was highly valued because of the idea “

(Respect teacher and the knowledge)” embedded in Chinese education philosophy. I thought that “teacher-reverence seemed to underline the teacher’s professional authority and security, which was crucial for me to maintain the cooperation of students in pedagogic process (Gao, 2008, p. 155). However, I failed to gain such authority because Australian teaching context was different from that in China. In Australian context, students were the subject frequent reminders and often intense encounters from negotiation to confrontation (Elliot, 2009, p. 198). They emphasized a strong sense of communal commitment with rampant individualism.
(Elliot, 2009). The valuable Chinese culture tradition with teacher authority was impossible to get in Australian teaching context and disrupted my professional authority. Thus, my teacher-centre belief was challenged by the Australian student-centred classroom culture. As I never experienced how to deal with student-centred classroom management, I showed my lack of knowledge and negative emotion in disciplining the students’ behavior, which led to my continuous failure in teaching.

In addition, suffering in classroom management contributed to my strongly emotional professional identity construction. Flores et al. (2006) claimed that emotion was a “significant and ongoing part of being a teacher” (p. 220). It affected my “teaching attitudes and my practices of teaching and learning” (Flores et al, 2006, p. 220). When my long-held beliefs and practice were challenged, I emerged an array of negative emotions because of my personal emotion investment (Kington & Day, 2008).

Also, the linguistic feature was strongly connected with my professional identity construction. It was well known that linguistic identity was often regarded as one of the main reasons of L2 teachers’ negative emotion in teaching. Pavlenko (2003) entailed that non-native speaker teachers may feel “second class” and “less than a human being” because they regarded them as long-term L2 learners who portrayed L2 learning as a “never-ending elusive quest for native-speaker competence” (p. 259). Similarly, when I can’t get expected students’ reaction, I felt uncertain about my English ability. This linguistic identity, however, was still incentive crisis of my identity and sense of worth, which needed my “uncalculated personal investment” to “negotiate the insurmountable cultural barriers” (Nakahara & Black, 2007). The linguistic non-native competence, however, challenged my sense of worth to be a real qualified teacher in Australian teaching context.

More important, I constructed my professional identity with pedagogy. Most of time, I attributed my failure to the lack of effective teaching strategies and pedagogical content knowledge in classroom management. In that sense, I thought that only by gaining more pedagogy knowledge that I could be seen as a real teacher. My negative emotion, like shock, anger, anxiety, sad and stress aroused when I lacked
skills and knowledge to deal with students’ misbehavior.

The students’ disengagement in the lessons made me feel that my development as a good teacher wasn’t going well and I continued to question whether I could actually be a good teacher because the challenges seemed hard to go over with. It disrupted both my students’ learning and my teaching, weakened students’ motivation and energy, wasted class time and made both students and teachers stressed (Charles & Senter, 2005).

The failure in managing the students in terms of following my instructions decreased my feelings of worth as a true teacher. I felt that I had to rely on the class teacher’s power to manage the class, or I could never succeed at instilling knowledge in them. In Chinese educational culture, it is the students’ obligation to perform well, and failure means losing face and feelings of shame; quite a horrifying experience. Their educational efforts are intrinsically related to his or her pursuit of social advancement. That is to say, heavy burdens are placed on an individual, for them to conform to social moral norms and they are made to feel vulnerable to shame in the event of failure (Gao, 2008, p. 156). In that system, Chinese students value reverence very much and value the teacher’s authority. However, in Australia, the students are educated to care more about their own feelings and well-being rather than the collectivity. They don’t have Chinese notions of hierarchy in educational contexts, and that is why it was hard for me to build my teacher authority and used it as a student management tool in this particular context.

While there were both achievements and challenges in this first action research cycle therefore, there was plenty of scope to improve in both these areas. The following chapter takes up the question of how I took steps to learn from my early teaching experience, prior to taking up the second cycle of research.
Chapter 5 Learning strategies in developing my teaching

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on identifying the professional learning strategies that helped me to develop my teaching. Specifically, it illustrates how I systematically identified my teaching problems, gained new knowledge about teaching through continuous learning to teach, developed insights about what I could learn, and how these learning strategies contributed to my development of my teaching practice.

The challenges I identified at the end of cycle 1 pushed me to focus on professional learning strategies in order to help me overcome challenges and develop my teaching. Two challenges in particular required urgent attention: my lack of strategies to empower students’ learning, and my lack of ability to solve classroom management issues. The former refers to my lack of teaching strategies to enhance students’ ability to learn Chinese. I mainly focused on how to make full use of teaching time by enhancing review and teaching strategies that could ensure students’ retention in memory. The latter refers to classroom management issues, originally focused on building my authority as a teacher, to give clear and assertive instructions and make students respond quickly to my instructions.

The following section presents my findings about professional learning strategies in two parts. It begins by assessing the value of my collaborative professional learning ROSETE peers and my primary supervisor; both parties made significant contributions to my practical and theoretical knowledge. The following sections discuss my learning from the class teacher and from students; it is outlined that these interactions were less available to me and consequently, that the level of support and development from these sources made a lesser contribution to my learning to teach. This is followed by my analysis of individual-oriented learning.

5.2 The value of the collaborative professional learning strategies

Collaborative professional learning strategies contributed significantly to the
development of my knowledge of how to teach Mandarin. Collaborative professional learning is a form of professional development in which teachers work together over time to improve their teaching and learning. It brings teachers together to co-construct knowledge, share and distribute knowledge about teaching and learning and it is the least expensive, the best and the most professionally rewarding way to improve teaching (Schmoker, 2005, p. 137).

In my case, I found that some collaborative learning strategies, such as learning from ROSETE peers and learning from my supervisors, were very beneficial for my professional development, as there was easier access to getting advice from them and there was frequent contact. However, learning from the class teacher and students were less advantageous because I had less access to getting valuable advice from them.

5.2.1 ROSETE peers provided emotional support and experience as Chinese teachers

ROSETE peers provided the most practical advice about teaching, through sharing their teaching experience. I regarded these peers, my critical friends, as the most important professional learning support, because I understood them to be a positive learning community of like-minded and empathetic colleagues (Schuck et al, 2008, p. 216). The excerpt below demonstrated how the community operated to help me overcome challenges in teaching practice.

The most important action is the value of the ROSETE peers. There is no doubt they are the persons who are closest to me, no matter with regards to emotion, life and teaching profession. We share the most similar situations, we share our teaching stories and we share our sorrow and happiness during the teaching. First, as we are in the same situation, sharing about our teaching stories and exchanging our deepest thoughts and feelings will help me recognized my identity as a teacher more clearly, and also ease some of my struggling periods because their stories reminds me of how to go around the failure part and learn the successful part. Their advice can be the most practical ones as they are closer to local teaching situation and they were also
ESL teacher like me. Every time I get no idea about how to teach particular topic, I will ask for help from them because maybe they have taught it before and can tell me which way is easy for engaging students and enhance students’ learning or their failed experience and reflection about why it doesn’t work. In that way, I can get some valuable advice about what I should do and what I shouldn’t if I want to get effective lessons. Except for seeking advice from my peers, we also get chance to have a discussion about our lessons to exchange the ideas about what our lessons are like, what reflection do we get from the lessons and so on in our workshop, In that way, they have facilitated my struggling period about teaching ideas and stimulate more ideas and thoughts about my teaching practice.

Second, they are supporters of my emotion. Every time I feel depressed, I feel I don’t deserve the duty and I do want to give up, they encourage me to continue and say they also have the same situation and everything will be fine at the end. In front of them, I am more willing to open myself to share ideas and seek advice because we are in the same level. We share our feelings, sufferings together and encourage each other by comforting each other or offering their own good tips for teaching. That is to say, we have the most resonance in both our emotional needs and steeling our teaching skills. Without their help, maybe I gave up long ago or kept on sink and swim in this complex teaching profession. They help to enhance my teacher identity by providing both academic support and emotion support (Researcher’s end of cycle 2 self-reflective journal).

This narrative illustrated how informal community I built with ROSETE peers helped to develop my teaching. The essential ingredient for making sense of my professional learning was the pre-existence of strong professional and personal relationships (Schuck et al., 2008, p. 222) between me and my ROSETE peers. We lived together and all came to Australia from China as volunteer Mandarin teachers. These similarities, however, provided good platform for us to develop close personal and professional relationships, which enabled us to be more open to challenges and
more questioning of our own practice (Schuck et al., 2008). The elements of trust, openness, friendship and vulnerability we shared in our professional relationships, enabled us to surface our doubts and discuss the challenges we had (Schuck et al., 2008, p. 222).

Within this small community of ROSETE peers, I got valuable academic advice, valuable description of their teaching experience and collaborative reflection, which stimulated my deeper understanding about tacit knowledge. All of these provided chances for me to discuss and receive the feedback in my teaching. Although we got no chance to observe each other’s lesson, we described our own teaching critical incidents and our own reflection regularly, and had a subsequent professional discussion about how to teach the local students. We learnt from each other’s description and reflection about teaching practice so that we can avoid the same problems. From the collaborative description, we even reflected our identity as beginning teachers through continuous professional dialogue. The professional dialogue, however, acted as “a vehicle for encouraging professionals to develop our reflective thinking about our role and engage the development as a result (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005, pp. 222-223). By reflecting collaborative teaching experience together through professional dialogue, my professional learning shifted the focus to self analysis, self regulation, mutual support and reciprocal learning (Costa & Garmston, 2002; Wynn & Kromrey, 2000) and enlarged my reflecting experience.

Also, except by sharing teaching experience, sometimes, ROSETE peers performed like my coach who coached me in how to teach in their particular class through professional dialogue between us. When I lacked ideas of teaching particular topic, they would provide their experience in teaching this particular topic or just would provide their feedback about my teaching plan. In that sense, I gained some back-up teaching strategies for particular topic through their description about their lessons before real teaching class and can receive valuable feedback from those critical friends. Often their advices were the most applicable because they were the persons who shared similar teaching context with me and encountered similar problems as me.
When I sought help and advice from them, I was not worried about being ashamed because they were not judgmental and evaluated, which encouraged my risk taking in teaching strategies. It became easier for me to taking risk in the equal peer relationship than with a person in authority (Hawkey, 1995, p. 181). Also, as the close relationship between us, it was easier for us to provide comfort and encourage each other. This community, in some ways, provided us some emotional space that we can share our feelings without fear of being ashamed.

5.2.2 Gaining theoretical knowledge of teaching from my primary supervisor

My primary supervisor provided theoretical aspects of teaching knowledge and monitored my teaching through checking my teaching plan and giving practical advice about how to teach. It also highlighted that she provided me affective support by giving me more confidence to risk-taking in my teaching plan and encouraged me emotionally to try different strategies. Supervisors were considered as the most important elements in teacher learning of beginning primary school student teachers as they supported and monitored new teacher professional learning (McCormack, Gore & Thomas, 2006). This kind of teaching supervision facilitated my professional learning by bridging gap between what I took for granted and real practice. Below was the excerpt selected from the end of cycle 2 journal, that showed how my primary supervisor helped me with theoretical aspects of teaching and practical teaching knowledge, and how these help I got altered my feeling as a Chinese teacher.

One of the most helpful ones is the help I get from my primary supervisor. First, my primary supervisor is a lecturer of early childhood, who can offer me plenty of advice of how to deal with primary school students. She regularly checks my lessons plan, advises me what should be taken into consideration and how to make lessons a bit more fun. What is more valuable is that, she not only teaches me how to structure the whole lessons, but also advises me in some details such as writing words on whiteboard as hints for students, designing a chart to clarify their ideas. In this sense, getting advice and support from such a professional has really a lot of benefits in terms of improving my theories & skills of teaching.
addition to that, my primary supervisor is also a guide for the changes I make, every time I search the information and talk with her, she always can give me some guides about choosing the information, encourages me to get more information in different ways, and always guides me to put them into logic mind and clarifies the idea of using it. Finally, she has helped me to be much more confident in making changes because she has been a vital brace in my emotion. I feel supported and feel what I have done is significant; someone has valued my work. As a beginning teacher, actually, is afraid of making changes, because getting the success is not so easy, but making changes means unpredictable things, which often means failure. I feel both academically supported and emotionally supported when she checks my teaching plan. She highly praises my teaching plan first and then just gives advice for revised part. I feel that my work is accepted and valued by some professionals. However, as my primary supervisor will check my lesson plan regularly, she can be the monitor for my teaching before I really fail in real teaching practice, which means I can spare no effort to make any changes I want because my primary supervisor will monitor it all the time, which makes me not need to be upset about whether my teaching steps are reasonable and achievable all the time. She has released some of my struggling about lessons plans. It can be said that my primary supervisor supports me from both academically and emotionally. (Researcher’s end of cycle 2 self-reflective journal).

This example demonstrated that how I got both academic support and emotional support from my primary supervisor to help to address complexities in my teaching practice. Firstly, my primary supervisor gave me academic support through professional conversation. Through checking the teaching plans, she indirectly monitored my teaching practice and gave advice on both my teaching practice as a whole and detailed practical teaching strategies. Upon receiving advice, I developed more ways to facilitate students’ learning and clarified their ideas. I also appreciated her initiative in explicitly linking up theory to practice to facilitate my professional learning (Tang, 2003). Her suggestions was always very systematic, instead of just
told me what to do, she also told me why my teaching design was appropriate and why she chose another way to replace my old ones. Then she cited the relevant theories to help me form thoughts of how to design and evaluate effective teaching strategies. Even for the parts that she thought I have done well, she encouraged me to find some theoretical evidence underlining the reason why I chose these strategies, in that sense, assisting me in bridging the gap between the theory I learned in university and real teaching practice I experienced. Instead of telling me good practice directly, she promoted my reflection by asking questions to facilitate my professional learning (Montecinos et al., 2002, p. 790). Additionally, she acted not only as a supervisor for my teaching plan, but also as a guide for collecting information. It was really a big challenge for me to deal with massive and complex knowledge that needed by teaching practice (Flores & Day, 2006). However, under the supervision of my primary supervisor, I knew how to collect and select information through different ways, clarify them into systematic mind so that it can be clear enough for me to use in my teaching practice.

In addition to providing technical advice and evaluation, it was acknowledged that intense emotionality associated with student teachers was important (Montecinos et al., 2002). On one hand, when I felt unconfident about giving lessons, my primary supervisor always acknowledged the good points in my teaching plan and encouraged me to try more and more new thoughts. I felt someone really affirmed and valued my work rather than regarded what I did as immature trials and unprofessional actions. I perceived that I can find my position in teaching practice as my primary supervisor valued my efforts and achievements. On the other hand, her regular check of my teaching plan also provided me a safe place to make changes. As a beginning teacher, I was often frustrated by the overwhelming challenges, what I wanted was only to create some routines that can help to prevent suffering in teaching. I didn’t dare to make changes because it was high risk resulting in massive challenges. However, when my primary supervisor monitored my teaching plan, she provided me assurance that if I tried and failed, she was there to assist me to make it effective (Montecinos et al., 2002, p. 789). Under this circumstance, I, not only became more self-confident and found rewards in teaching, but also felt safe to make changes and released my pressure to struggle with the teaching plan. This assurance, created the conditions for open-mindedness and self-criticism which fostered
continuous reflectivity (Montecinos et al., 2002, p. 789).

5.2.3 Gaining insights in particular lessons through students’ feedback

Pupils’ characteristics and classroom dynamics were important determinants in my learning. This theme referred to the students’ negative and positive reactions and feedback, which acted as signs to me to validate or change my teaching practice. By identifying students’ negative reactions to my lessons I learnt to adjust my lessons so that they were more effective for the students. On the other hand, students’ positive engagement in my lessons validated my professional competence and made me more confident in perfecting the similar teaching strategy.

5.2.3.1 Students’ negative reactions

Students’ negative feedback to my teaching pushed me to develop my professional knowledge and adjust my teaching strategy. Observing students’ negative reaction like disengagement, low motivation in reviewing and bad learning outcomes all acted as motivators to push me to change the situation through professional learning. This resulted in a tension for me to change my teaching practice. In this case, I felt unsatisfied with my teaching strategies and felt urgent to push myself to figure out better strategies to develop my teaching practice.

This professional learning happened by recognizing the challenge itself and learning from mistakes (Eraut, 2007). Below was a summary excerpt that demonstrated my learning from students who acted as critical reality definers to help me learn from the experience of real-world teaching (Tang, 2003). In this case, students’ low motivation in reviewing, and my inability to provide them effective strategies to make them review were the challenges for me. They were challenges because both of them led to poor student learning outcomes. I failed to enhance their learning and failed to help them recall the knowledge I had taught.

In order to let my students review how to tell time, I asked them to do mechanical translation as usual, by translating what I said in Chinese. As expected, only few of good students put up their hands and gave the answer, but others, however, felt bored about this. All the class just presented me as low-motivation even though I used game as a
lure. Some just talked to other people, or some of them just slept on the desk. The students’ facial reaction told me that they showed no willing to practise words with me. I needed to change the situation, their disengagement pushed me to change immediately. By reflecting my teaching, I thought maybe the form of the review was not the one they like, so I needed to change the form. Fortunately, a good idea came to my mind. I used smartboard skills to pronounce the Chinese and then asked them to guess the time. It proved to be successful though I didn’t plan it in advance. It was through the dissonance that pushed me to make urgent changes to my teaching strategy. In this lesson, although I failed to hook their interest at first, I still got time and space to think of another effective way and successful brought the students back. That maybe because I didn’t encounter serious classroom management issues and that provided me chance to focus on my pedagogical knowledge development (Researcher’s self-reflective journal, 02/05/2012).

In this case, pupils constituted a powerful determinant of my negative teaching experience in driving me into being a better teacher (Tang, 2003). Their incorporation in reviewing the lessons told me that my teaching strategies was unsuitable for teaching, pushed me to be urgent to reflect the reasons about their disengagement and to find out other better teaching strategies. In that sense, I learnt from students about how to teach effectively (Ferry, 2010), thus reaching the goal of improving my teaching skills. In this way, students performed the role of experts in helping me to understand them and my teaching (Ferry, 2010) through disengagement, which acted as a sign alerting me of my wrong teaching strategies and pushed me to reflect on the reasons, thereby improving my teaching.

It was worth noting that appropriate amount of challenges also counted whether students’ negative participation in my class can help me learn something or hindered my development. Tang (2003) announced that too much challenge would drive the student teacher to retreat while without challenge, they would lack capacity of engage in producing teaching practice (p. 486). During this class, I encountered the challenge that I can’t use appropriate strategies to engage students in reviewing part.
However, it didn’t extend to serious classroom management problems. I did not have to invest heavy efforts in pupils’ discipline problems, which allowed me to concentrate on developing pedagogical aspect of teaching (Tang, 2003, p. 494). Also, I didn’t need to divert my attention to different challenges at the same time, which had freed me from overburdening complex problems. In that sense, I had space to address my pedagogical issues, and this made me feel that challenges could be solved within my own professional ability.

5.2.3.2 Students’ positive feedback in class & learning from students

The example below embodied my experience of enhancing professional knowledge through students’ positive feedback. The positive feedback contributed to validating my teaching strategies and student’s creation of Mandarin learning knowledge led to adding my source of teaching strategies. Students’ positive feedback here referred to my observation of students’ positive engagement and positive learning outcomes that helped me to validate my particular teaching strategies. Students’ creation of Mandarin learning knowledge referred to students’ creating their own way of learning particular topic. I learned from their learning strategies and used it as teaching strategies in my teaching. Below was the summarized excerpt that entailed how I confirmed my teaching strategies by observing students’ positive engagement and positive learning outcomes, as well as how I learned new teaching strategies through observing students’ own way of learning a particular topic. It was selected because it helped me to confirm my teaching competence and gained new knowledge about the most practical teaching strategies.

I tested their memory of direction words by involving into authentic problems. I asked them to tell me which part of China I came from? Which direction China lay to Australia? Or Sydney was in which part of Australia? They were very urgent to show their knowledge to me and they were so engaged in knowing the outside world. The successful experience, however, not only helped me to improve my self-efficacy in teaching students, but also validated my professional teaching strategies that can be stored as my knowledge base. Their positive engagement actually made me feel more like a teacher and a useful human being. It also helped me to confirm that this teaching
strategy was very powerful for these kids and encouraged me to perfect it in this direction.

Then I found when they answered my questions, some students showed their confidence in telling Chinese, “Miss, I know all the four directions, it is dong, xi, nan, bei” When they said Chinese, I found they held up their pencil case, waved it north, south, east, west. Then I found that it was the movement that helped them to remember how to pronounce the word and they were willing to practice it. After one year experience, I have gradually considered and expected that students can give me teaching ideas. This all contributed to my development of teaching experience and awareness of reflection. So next time when we reviewed the direction, front, back, left, right, I asked them to hold the pencil case and repeat after me with the movement. This idea, actually, was what I learned from students and it really worked well. It really opened my mind that I can use movement to learn some nouns. The students’ idea actually, acted as the best teachers that tell me how to teach them. (Researcher’s self-reflective journal, 08/08/2012).

Students’ positive feedback gave me insights into teaching and validated my own sense of professional competence (Tang, 2003). With regard to students’ creation of Mandarin learning knowledge, It enriched my teaching knowledge about how to make teaching content learnable by considering the students’ own ways of understanding target language. Many scholars highlighted that teachers’ professional learning cannot be isolated from concerning students’ learning achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Feiman-Nemser, 2001). By getting students’ positive engagement in learning, I confirmed that my teaching strategy was useful and found the right direction about how to teach Mandarin. In that sense, I can enrich my effective teaching knowledge base when I succeeded to test them in the real teaching practice and pushed me to think deeper in this strategy to modify it to be better. This all contributed to my improvement of my confidence in teaching, facilitated my professional development and affirmed my sense of self as a teacher.
5.2.3.3 Learning as reciprocal relationships between students and teacher

It was not until I gained some teaching experience and awareness of reflection that I realized the importance of learning from students. At this time, I started to regard learning as a reciprocal activity rather than one-way process (Ferry, 2010, p. 47). The students were the ones who understood themselves most, their performance, sometimes could provide me with valuable information about my teaching strategy. In some ways, they were experts about teaching. I learnt from the students that when they moved their pencil cases, most of them could give the right answers. In this way, students can provide me of their own learning methods about particular topic, for instance, they learned the words of direction by waving their pencil case. After I recognized it as an effective teaching strategy and used it in my teaching, I found most of students were willing to repeat after me and learned target words very quickly. It was through identifying students’ own way of learning particular topic and using it as teaching strategies that I gained success in this class. It was not until the successful experience of trying students’ ideas that I not only got ideas about how to deal with the subsequent activities for direction words, but also illuminated the idea of using movement to teach nouns. It helped with the development of my pedagogical content knowledge when I was more aware about interacting learning between students and me.

5.3.4 Gaining practical teaching and school knowledge from class teachers

In this case, class teachers provided some input in my professional knowledge development, but there was less of it because I didn’t have the opportunity to carry on professional conversation with class teachers. Interaction with other class teachers in the school provided me access to practical and academic advice about practical aspects of teaching in particular schools. I regarded class teachers as coaches, who can give me academic advice when I asked for help on specific topic and sometimes offered me chance to understand their local classroom. Regarding class teachers as coaches helped to reduce my feeling of isolation and acted as valuable external reference point for my own self-evaluation (Tang, 2003, p. 485). Below was summarized excerpt that reflected how I learned from class teachers about practical aspects of teaching in particular school. I selected it because it helped me to get more contextual-specific practical knowledge about teaching in particular schools and helped me more easily adjust my teaching strategies to being suitable for local
teaching culture.

The closer relationship with local teacher also gave me access to asking advice from them about what the students were really interested in and what they thought I can adjust to my teaching. I had to acknowledge that I didn’t get much help from class teacher as our school didn’t support Mandarin teaching very well, but gradually, I developed my own way to get ideas from teachers. I gradually developed good relationship with teachers and sometimes involved the teacher into our Mandarin discussion. In that way, the class teacher’s attention was back to my lesson. After class, I would like to chat with them and sometimes shared my vulnerability with them. I found actually they were not so cold as before, when I didn’t dare to talk with them. They gave me lots of tips like making students feel confident was the way that I can successfully get more students to actively answer my questions; I needed to modify the rules because it is unfair. In addition to that, they invited me observe other lessons and it was through this way that I witnessed how the local teacher carried on their lessons. The idea of using classdojo to manage the class was from the observation of one lesson in the local classroom. Although it was difficult for me get mentorship from the local class teacher because Mandarin was such a marginal and new subject in my school. There were still some valuable things they can provide me. They were just like academic peers that guided me to pay attention to some ineffective parts in my teaching practice and told me why it was ineffective. Although seldom did they actively provide me advice and observe my lesson, but the good relationship with class teachers made it possible for me to get guides and advice from class teachers (Researcher’s end of cycle 2 self-reflective journal).

This example demonstrated that the relationships I developed with other teachers supported my professional learning. It was hard for me get any support from them at the beginning because they didn’t regard me as a member in their school and all of them felt my lesson were nothing to do with them. In that sense, different from other
schole the (Ganser, 2002) who regarded class teachers as mentors, in my case, I regarded class teachers as academic coaches because they just offered their help when I consulted them, rather than actively offered me advice, monitored my teaching and scheduled to give me feedback after scheduled observation. By taking my initiative to interact with class teachers, I had located several regular teachers as resources to support my well-being as well as my professional learning. It was not until I developed good relationship with local teachers that I was willing and confident to ask for advice from the local teachers. By increasing frequency and length of interaction with regular teachers (Tang, 2003), I gradually understood the context knowledge and practical teaching strategies that I needed to address my challenges.

This awareness of building social understanding, contributed to a safe and encouraging milieu for productive learning to take place (Tang, 2003). I was more willing to share my vulnerability with the local teachers because I felt safe enough to share my feelings of struggling. This process broadened my knowledge about teaching (Schuck et al., 2008). They offered me observation of local class to help me with my Mandarin lessons, which had a powerful effect on my ideas and beliefs related to teaching (Flores & Day, 2006). The friendly informal interaction, the offer of a helping hand, the readiness to engage in professional dialogue all contributed to my sense of self as fitting into this school.

5.3 An individual-oriented professional learning system

While collaborative professional learning facilitated my overcoming challenges, individual-oriented professional learning was also of value to my learning. Individual-oriented professional learning referred to the capacity to build knowledge through individual reflection about external stimuli and sources, and through the personal re-elaboration of individual knowledge and experience in light of interaction with others (Siniitsa, 2000). This section mainly focuses on my ability to collect and synthesize the information that facilitated my learning, as well as my reflections after class, which helped me to transform my experience by pushing me continuously to think back on my teaching. By synthesizing the information, I enlarged my storage of teaching ideas and built my own routine of solving teaching challenges independently, while reflecting my own teaching, it helped to critically
examine my teaching practice and provided ongoing chance to change my teaching practice.

5.3.1 My individual-oriented professional research
This section is about how I developed systematic information collecting skills and how I used them step by step to address the particular challenges in my teaching. I learned to use existing theoretical and practical knowledge to systematically analyze different strategies and choose the appropriate ones to be applied in my teaching practice. Below was the revised example that I selected from my end of cycle 2 reflection. It was selected because it amply presents how I used various information to help with my professional learning during the whole cycle 2 period.

I was no longer like before, just sink and swim, immersed myself in miserable thoughts and tried hard to get experience and good teaching strategies by trials and error. It was just like I was swimming in the sea without the guide. However, this time, after my primary supervisor gave me some suggestions, I learned to design my individual professional learning more systematically, to form my own individual professional learning routine. After I identified the challenges I needed to address, I searched some theory books and journal articles to understand what the problems meant in theoretical background. I found that after I read some theory articles, I can get deeper understanding about what the issue was and empirical evidences about what can help to address these issues. Also I read some practical books to get some useful techniques and ideas to change my ways of teaching lessons. Then I made full use of Internet source to address my challenges. I searched the Internet for article about language teaching and practical teaching techniques. Meanwhile, I started to watch the Mandarin teaching videos, to see how the other teachers teach mandarin, to give me ideas about how to teach my own classes. For example, the way of teaching numbers and using head movement to teach tones, were all stimulated by the online video I watched. I found some of them were really effective for my children and broadened my horizon about ways of teaching particular
things. In that way, it can to some extent release the tension that I didn’t get mentor in Mandarin teaching. Finally, I gradually used some character software like hafala to gain ideas that it is better way to teacher local students characters with pictures and stories. Individual-oriented learning was no longer just sitting at home and keeps on thinking about ideas; it was systematic use of different kind of information, digested them and used them in my own teaching practice. I found I was much more knowledgeable when I knew how to collect information and synthesize them into my own teaching practice. It provided me more back-up strategies to give effective lessons and helped me to organize my individual professional learning in more systematic and effective manner. (Researcher’s end of cycle 2 self-reflective journal).

This excerpt illustrated how I used information I collected systematically to address my challenges effectively. This information helped with my professional learning in three ways: Firstly, I have enlarged my ideas of teaching strategies through collecting various kinds of information to address my problem. At the beginning, I relied heavily on learning from my trials and errors or just thought of ideas over and over by myself. It resulted in my heavy burden in figuring out good strategies and often resulted in ineffective strategies. By reading the books for practical teaching skills, searching the Internet for teaching strategies or watching the videos, using the software, I had gained large amount of information as knowledge base for me to figure out different kinds of teaching strategies and some can even be used directly in my practice because they were also the summary of former teachers’ teaching experience of ROSETE program. In addition to the information of practical skills, I also searched for the theoretical knowledge to help me analyze these problems in a deeper sense; this helped me to think about whether the strategies I used were suitable or not.

Secondly, I have learned to use relative theoretical and practical information and synthesized them into my teaching practice. Before that, I just hoped to get teaching strategies that can help me to escape burden of making decision about activities instead of searching the tacit knowledge underlying these activities. However, when
I connected theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge together, I no longer just got useful teaching strategies, but also understood why I chose them, why they worked well for my students and how I could modify them to be more suitable, based on the general principles I got in theoretical books. By linking them together, I succeeded to make tacit knowledge behind these specific practical strategies explicit and became more knowledgeable about choosing and designing my own teaching strategies.

Finally, I have built my own routine to get information to address my problem more independently. Routine is defined as “a collective recurrent activity pattern which serves as a frame of reference for appropriate behavior and incorporates the performance and competences” (Hoeve & Nieuwenhuis, 2006, p. 178). When I encountered the problem, I started with identifying the problems and then searched some theoretical books to get knowledge about some general principles for addressing these problems. Armed with these principles, practical strategies were searched and filtered. By building this kind of routine, on one hand, I freed my self of heavy mental burden from the complex decision-making when deciding what I should do to choose teaching strategies; on the other hand, the systematic routine had helped me to be more independent in analyzing the problems and then searching the useful solutions because of the coherent cognition I built. As a result, routines economized on scarce information processing and decision-making capacity of agents, or short on cognitive resources. Routines, then, freed up mental resources for deliberative action and more complex decision making (Hoeve & Nieuwenhuis, 2006, p. 179).

5.3.2 Reflections on my own teaching

Reflection was defined as a professional development strategy that provided professionals with “opportunities to explore, articulate, and represent their own ideas and knowledge” (Hsiu-ting, 2008, p. 40). In this excerpt, reflection involved a conscious and state purpose, with an outcome of specific action and professional learning (Chetcuti et al., 2011). This excerpt below was selected from part of end of cycle 2 self-reflective journals because it centrally presented the process of how I used self-reflection as a tool in improving my teaching practice. It illustrated that my reflection played an important role in helping me critically examine my teaching
experience and change my teaching practice through continuous trial of teaching strategies.

The most effective reflection was from my current regular reflection about my teaching practice. It encouraged me to be more aware about my teaching skills and teaching content and often pushed me to think about the theoretical knowledge that guided my teaching practice. With reflection, I gained a place to retrospect my teaching practice and theoretical knowledge, and think deep about relationship between each other. It also helped me critically examine my experience and also change my teaching practice. Every time, no matter my teaching strategies were successful or not, I would reflect why they were successful or not, how they helped students’ learning or not and also tried to deep my thinking by thinking of subtle reasons behind the phenomena. Keeping writing regular self-reflective journals also helped me understand my track of learning to teach and then found more effective ways to accelerate my learning to be a good teacher. This reflection helped me to reflect my problems and recorded my thoughts about how to address these issues and tried them into the following class. It helped me improve the practice through continuous thinking of ways to address these practice issues, continuous trying them into my teaching practice and then recorded and reflected their effects immediately. Luckily, as I taught many different classes simultaneously at the similar level, I had chance to modify and polish my teaching strategies and built up my effective teaching routines in some particular teaching topic. I found some normal topics like family member, number, zodiac and body parts, I can be confident enough to give effective lessons because I tested and modified my teaching strategies for many times and already developed my teaching routine (Researcher’s end of cycle 2 reflective journals).

This excerpt demonstrated that I formed my own manner of resolving problems in my teaching practice through constant examining and re-examining teaching practice through my regular self-reflective journals. These diaries performed like
documentation tools that captured vivid “snapshots” of critical moments in my growth (Chetcuti et al., 2011, p. 62). Firstly, writing self-reflective journals provided me chance to critically examine my experience, value and understand the consequence of my teaching practice. Through the reflection about every teaching experience, I was pushed to seek the underlying reasons behind both my teaching actions and students’ reactions as well as their learning outcomes for my teaching actions rather than simply identified the specific teaching strategies or practice as good or not. Writing self-reflective journal was like a critical professional dialogue with myself, and helped me to gain more professional knowledge through my own interpretation of my every day teaching experience (Chetcuti et al., 2011) and also pushed me to be more deeply thinking about my teaching and subject matter content and was more aware of theories that guided my teaching practice.

Then it also helped me to change my own teaching practice, based on the understanding of my teaching track and the chance to teaching the same topics for so many times. After I examined the subtle reasons behind my failure and successful teaching experience, reflection about further teaching strategies can be more comprehensive and effective about which kinds of teaching strategies may be better for my teaching practice or came up with my own teaching strategies based on my better understanding of life. This continuous trial of new teaching strategies had freed my teaching practice from mechanical copy of my teaching routines and stimulated my new insights about my teaching. It promoted “shift from routine actions rooted in common-sense thinking to reflective action stemming from professional thinking” (Chetcuti et al., 2011, p. 65).

5.4 How these changes contributed to my professional identity

The examples illustrated above were changes that I made to address my challenges in empowering students’ learning of Chinese and in classroom management. Identifying cognitive conflicts in my thinking and my beliefs about improving students’ learning and the class management (Wheatley, 2002; Cobb et al., 1990) pushed me to seek various kinds of effective professional learning and build up my own learning system. Wenger (1998) claimed that the level of participation in learning was determined by the engagement the beginning teacher afforded and the locations the beginning teacher’s learning trajectories (p. 109). When I found that
my professional learning system could cater for the immediate needs and interests of my teaching practice, I felt that I had found the right track to improve my teaching. Emotionally, I was more engaged and more willing to discuss my teaching, and actively searched for the information that would be useful for it. Also, I gained an increased awareness of learning from my own teaching practice, by paying more attention to students’ reactions in my class and reflecting on my teaching practice after class. I experienced collective joy, confidence and support during this process and came to welcome the toil of professional learning.

These positive emotions contributed to a form of authentic labor that was relevant to my interests and desires (Jeffrey, 2008, p. 256). Authentic labor came to be regarded, in one academic’s words, as “an integrity which expressed teachers’ determination to produce expressions of value and quality” (Jeffrey, 2008, p. 257). I sought to develop good relationships with school staff and sought their advice actively. I actively observed students in my teaching practice and reflected on my teaching practice regularly after class. Meanwhile, regular talks with supervisors and ROSETE peers and actively seeking out targeted academic information, also were reflections of the hard work that learning to teach entails. I started to control my own learning system and to focus better on task-oriented behavior. Finally, I became engaged intellectually. This was obvious when I independently built my own routines to collect various, information and became more skilled at reflecting on my teaching practice. It was at this time that I internalized my relationship with teaching knowledge and started to build a personal identity with it when it became more personally meaningful (Jeffrey, 2008, p. 254). In that sense, I started to clarify my identity as an active learner by experiencing positive professional learning outcomes.

Jeffrey (2008) claims that a learning career is a “continuous spiral” in which identity is seen as a representation of the self-belief and self-confidence that learners bring to new challenges and contexts. Identity is central to what learners become through interaction with significant others, to their experience of new learning opportunities and their engagement with dominant social representations within their culture (Jeffrey, 2008). When dealing with the students, I shifted my assumptions about roles from the teacher who enjoyed the absolute authority of knowledge, to the teacher who can learn from student reactions and other feedback.
I shifted from being a passive to an active learner. I actively discussed my teaching practice with others and sought both theoretical and practical advices. Then I started to craft my learning experience and tried hard to internalize it, to make it meaningful for me. It was at this time that I began to define the features of my knowledge, the technology and its use. I also learnt how to analyze and evaluate my teaching strategies by seeking every chance to collaborate with other professionals and to reflect on my teaching. I was more willing to exchange ideas with different professionals, to reflect on my teaching strategies and thus developing my pedagogical practice. I was becoming a “learnician”, who acted as a participant in the learning process through meaningful engagement and the subsequent effects on my personal identity. It was obvious that I had begun to realize what constituted my learning and had started to make sense of what was meaningful in my learning to teach. Finally, I was able to make contributions to my learning experience by building up my own routines for collecting relevant information, and developing my reflecting skills.

With various professional strategies to help to address my challenges in action cycle 1, I have developed some of my professional teaching during action cycle 2. The following chapter describes the achievements and challenges that developed in action cycle 2 in details.
Chapter 6 Achievements and challenges in the second cycle

6.0 Introduction

This chapter is the third evidentiary chapter. It mainly focuses on the achievements and challenges that I encountered in my second action cycle. In terms of achievements, it focuses on my capacity to adopt effective strategies and to make sense of students’ learning through stimulating students’ initiative as much as possible. With regard to the challenges, these center on my lack of knowledge about students’ lives, experience and interest, as well as my lack of expertise in organizing instructions. Meanwhile, how the achievements and challenges of cycle 2 relate to the achievements and challenges in cycle 1 and professional learning strategies I used, is discussed in detail in the following sections.

6.1 Achievements in the second cycle of teaching

The achievements I experienced during my second cycle of teaching focused on transformative personal practical knowledge, as well as on how to make sense of students’ learning. Personal practical knowledge referred to knowledge based on teachers’ classroom experience, and knowledge that was directed toward the handling of problems arising in their work (Sun, 2012, p. 761). It emphasized the teacher’s own understanding of personal and professional knowledge (Sun, 2012).

However, these achievements did not arise without the support of my achievements in cycle 1. First, my achievement in becoming more skilled in adapting teaching strategies developed from my successful experience of using effective teaching strategies to engage and enhance students’ learning of Chinese. Through my reflections on effective teaching strategies, I figured out the reasons for the success underlying them. Also, I asked my ROSETE peers for advice and feedback on my design of lesson plans so that I could make it more suitable for students. Second, my achievement in making sense of students’ learning and motivating their exploration of knowledge also had some relationship with my achievements in cycle 1. Making sense of students’ learning and motivating their learning was actually a concrete
example of how I came to internalize the student-centred pedagogical belief into successful action. It was the successful experiences in cycle 1 that helped me form this student-centred belief and pushed me to orient my professional development towards effective teaching strategies. Then, through self-reflective journals, through seeking advice from supervisors and ROSETE peers, I successfully used student-centred teaching strategies in my cycle 2 teaching.

My achievements in this area allowed me to develop a sense of myself as a good teacher in the following way: 1) learning to develop teaching strategies that were more acceptable to the students; 2) cultivating the ability to stimulate students’ independent learning; 3) encouraging the students to learn Mandarin emotionally and intrinsically, forming positive teacher-student relationships; 4) creating a safe and confident learning environment for the students. In the following sections, I defined and explained these achievements, and gave concrete examples which were supported by current literature.

6.1.1 **Achievement 1: More skilled in adapting teaching strategies**

The theme more skilled in adapting teaching strategies illustrated how I succeeded in creating my own pedagogical content knowledge, based on my various trials of recommended strategies. It included the refinement of my previous successful teaching strategies, which reflected my deeper cognition about my excellent teaching experience and understanding in specific teaching strategies.

6.1.1.1 **Creating a new rhythm for Mandarin teaching**

One example of my achievements in this field was my successful experience in combining students’ familiar melody with teaching content to create new rhythms for them to remember the teaching content. In this sense, song teaching strategies were no longer limited to those topics which had the corresponding rhythms. It could be extended to any kinds of topics and language bits. Below was the description of how I used the melody twinkle, twinkle, little star, to teach family members successfully. Never did I see them so willing and excited to do repetition and learned all the words in such short time. Before this class, I never cared about using songs to help them to remember the family member words, as there were no relevant songs can be used as learning aids. The excerpt was taken from a description of the lesson
in my cycle 2 self-reflective journal:

I created a song I love you by putting target content into the melody of twinkle, twinkle, little star. I came up with the idea because of my successful experience in introducing songs into my Mandarin teaching. It was really good for them to remember the teaching content. Children loved that song very much and it always can cause their resonance in following me, singing the melody. In addition, in order to design the song to be catchy, I adjusted the lyrics to one syllable one pitch. So that it was easier for everyone. First I gave them time to listen to the melody of this song, and then I taught them one sentence by one sentence about how to sing it.

At the end, even they just used 10 minutes to learn that song, most of them can sing it very smoothly and correctly. What surprised me more, singing songs together with the teacher helped them to revise their error-prone pronunciation such as gege effectively because it gave them more chance to repeat the words and revise their pronunciation. What was more important was that they loved repeating those words with the song, they loved it. Even after class, I heard someone sing this song by themselves in a very good accent. This really helped. (Researcher’s self-reflective journal, 22/08/2012).

This excerpt showed how I successfully created nursery rhythms in teaching family members. My previous successful experience in using ready-made songs and understanding of mutual benefits of songs in language teaching conduced to my willingness to use and explore this area (Sun, 2012). My subsequent analysis and reflection about the previous successful music experience also contributed to my personal practical knowledge of useful instructional strategies for overcoming learning difficulties (Chen & Jang, 2010, p. 561). For imitation part, I learnt from my successful experience and imitated my previous song teaching methods in new teaching situation with continuous reflection.

In classroom practice, and this in turn, guided my actions when dealing with specific
subject matter and teaching strategies (Chen & Jang, 2010, p. 554). In terms of transformative and integrative part, I tried to enlarge the use of songs by creating appropriate songs for students to refer to. I realized that there were limited songs for teaching Mandarin for beginners, and thought about ways to extend use of music in Mandarin teaching. It was at this time that I integrated my personal understanding of students’ prior knowledge and learning difficulty with other forms of teacher knowledge, as well as transformed different types of knowledge (Chen & Jang, 2010). Firstly, it was based on my accumulated understanding of students’ knowledge. I also considered about decreasing learning difficulties by putting what the students already practiced with movement into lyrics, so that the students did not need to care more about the pronunciation and meaning in the lyrics. Finally, it integrated my personal transformative knowledge about songs in Mandarin teaching. When designing the lyrics, I not only took the target language into consideration, but more importantly involved my personal knowledge about which kind of song was easy for students. I designed the song as one pitch one syllabus to make every word strengthened by the music (Kenney, 2008, p. 35), so that it was easier for those students who even performed badly in catching rhythm. In that sense, I expanded the scope to teachable content by innovative use of music in language teaching. It was possible for me to connect subject matter knowledge to my own teaching methods (Chen & Jang, 2010, p. 562).

6.1.1.2 Teaching pronunciation by creating stories about clue words and singing tones

Another example that reflected my ability in adapting teaching strategy was teaching pronunciation by creating stories about clue words and practicing tones by singing the tone. Firstly, it referred to the process of how I made sense of these clue words by linking clue words with students’ daily experience so that it was easier to strengthen their memories about pronunciation. Also it entailed my successful experience by introducing the way of singing tones to decrease students’ fear of making mistakes and linked to their familiar forms of learning.

As I enjoyed some success in using sound similarity in pronunciation, this time I developed the clue sentence related to both English
meaning and English clue words. When teaching rats, shu, I showed them clue sentence I want to shoot rats, I highlight the “shoo” in red and used two-way arrow whose other side pointed to rat on the whiteboard. Then I said: “shushu, shu, sounds like the English word shoot, remember the clue sentence, I hate the rats very much, So I want to shoot them, shoot them!” :”Haha,” all the class laughed, :”you cannot imagine how much I hate, shu, shu, shu, I really want to shoot them!” When I read the clue words, shoot, I have read it louder and slower to emphasize it. :”Can you tell me how to pronounce rats in Chinese?” :”Yeah, shu, shu, I want to shoot the rats!”

II

I asked them to practice four tones with Chinese music notes, la lalala and named it as singing tones. All of them were willing to follow me to practice tones in this way. I never expected so much high participation. Before that, I just asked them to practice it with specific words and repeated after me, few of them were willing to do it because they all said that tone was unlearnable. However, by using the pitch in music, they immediately get the perfect one. I found that when they pronounced the specific word, they would initiatively sing the four tones first, and then helped them to be more confident in getting the right tone. The class teacher also acknowledged singing tones was effective. She thought students had more fun, was more engaged and more willing to practice tones. (Researcher’s reflective journal, 05/09/2012; Teacher interview, cycle 2).

This excerpt above illustrated my successful experience in instilling Chinese pronunciation and tones, which were structured in my own developed personal practical knowledge. The previous extended use of sound similarities reflected that my personal practical knowledge pushed my subsequent teaching act to explore it to deeper sense. The latter creation of singing tones, however, was pushed by my failed past experience which urged me to make changes about my practice. Both of them reflected that my personal practical knowledge building was through experiential, embodied and reconstructed out of the narratives of a teacher’s life (Sun, 2012, p.
Firstly, I had developed clue sentences by related the clue English words to their meaning. It clarified all the important elements of pronunciation in one sentence without too much explanation and repetition about how to relate them together. My understanding of students’ life experience and my English knowledge allowed me to make elaborations that were semantically congruous and relevant to the target words, and encouraged students to use deeper processing encoding strategies. It helped the students create unique cues relating for long memory (Shen, 2004). This concentrated, creative sentence, however, reflected my accumulated cross-linguistic knowledge about phonetic similarities and my deeper understanding about student’s learning. My deeper understanding about the relationship between two languages helped me easily find the clue words, while the diverting clue sentence was based on my understanding of students’ daily life experiences like shooting a rat.

Secondly, I integrated my personal prior experience with student understandings, to teach tones successfully. Before that, I only relied on imitation and repetition of tones with specific words, because I lacked pedagogical knowledge about how to present tones in a more effective way. This way, however, undermined the students’ confidence, because they needed to pay attention to pronunciation and tones immediately when they learned tones. Through the accumulation of my understanding students’ learning ability and deeper reflection about my own learning experience, I came up with the way of singing tones. I facilitated tone learning by linking them to nonsense syllables and utilized the voice training tune by considering students’ interest in humming. Students were more willing to conduct tasks that were learnable, not too much of a challenge and interesting for them. I reflected voice training in singing class where students could easily get different various tones to hum with “lalala!” So similarly, I used the nonsense syllables to help students practice tones. I substituted a simple syllable such as da or la for the syllable of tones (Tuan & An, 2010, p. 22). It was like the process of young children learning songs in their mother tongue. Even for the students who were not naturally musical preferred to hum or la la the tune to help them learn melody first, and words later (Hicks & Littlejohn, 2004). The singing with vocalization seemed easier for the children to sing language than to speak it (Tuan & An, 2010, p. 22).
6.1.2 Making sense of students’ learning and motivating their knowledge exploring

Two important issues were in this theme. One was that I had understood the students’ prior knowledge and then I could consider how to involve their existing knowledge into teaching. Another one was that, I no longer cared about mastering everything in the teaching or just focused on few language bits in 45-minute class. Instead, I valued more about students’ ability to explore knowledge and ability to enlarge their learning outcomes as much as possible. Below were the examples that illustrated my successful experience in this area. Also, current literature was involved to support the points.

6.1.2.1 Giving meaningful and powerful lead-in questions for teaching

This narrative demonstrated how I succeeded in giving meaningful and powerful leading-in questions for teaching. Questioning here was treated as techniques that sought clarification, prompts and deeper thoughts, and provided students opportunities for further discussion and learning, thus providing insights into students learning and facilitating their learning (Morgan, 2008). Firstly, it reflected my development of understanding of students’ knowledge and learning ability, by connecting my own Chinese life experience with student’s prior knowledge, thus helping with students’ Mandarin learning. Student’s positive performance enhanced my teaching effectiveness; this further contributed to my acknowledgement as a facilitator and guide. That was a significant step in building my personal practical knowledge. Last but not the least, it also showed my awareness of intercultural teaching.

I started the discussion about family by asking them the questions close to students’ own life: “Who is your favourite family member?” When I threw the questions, all the students put up their hands and showed that they couldn’t wait to give answers. :”My second younger brother, he is a good guy! He is very kind” :”My mother, my dad, .... So many!” Almost all the students were proud and excited for sharing their favourite family members. Even for that simple question, I succeeded to bring all the students back to my lessons.
Then I guided them to guess how many children there were in Chinese family. They were so curious to know about their teacher’s life. They had randomly guess excitedly, some even said 16, So funny, I asked back whether their mother can give birth to so many babies, they all laughed. When some people guessed the right answer --one child, I asked them again. Why they thought my family had only one child? Then some of students said: “Miss, because your brothers and sisters are annoying!” :”Actually, I do really wish to have one! Think about the population in China, if we have many people….what would happen?” :”I know, Miss, Chinese has a large population, it is too crowded, if we give birth to too many babies, we will not have a place to stand!” :”Excellent! So that is why in China we have one-child policy, every family can only have one baby. Actually my Chinese children feel lonely because they don’t have brothers and sisters, I envy all of you!” :”Yeah, that is good for getting siblings!” I felt very good about myself, and I was confident that I can give a very good lesson (Researcher’s self-reflective journal, 22/08/2012)

In this class, questions were intended as a means of helping students to articulate their thinking about their own culture of family and rationales for me to lead them to learning about Chinese family. With my own thoughts about teaching, from the students’ perspective, it reflected the important elements such as background knowledge, narrative, connectedness and knowledge integration in Quality Teaching Framework (NSW, DEC, 2008).

This was an achievement for me because I was focusing more on developing student-centred instruction (Brown, 2008). Compared with the previous experience in giving guide questions, my attention shifted from academic thoughts that I should pour out Chinese knowledge for its own sake to my students, to designing Chinese knowledge impartation on the understanding of students’ daily life, which included students’ interests and knowledge. Now at this time, I started to understand my teaching context and the backgrounds of my students and be clear about just what it is that I want the students to learn, understand, or engage with in learning process. In
this way “students become not only active participants but also reflective observers in their language learning” (Morgan, 2008). By experiencing the totally different experiences, I began to identify the gap between my own granted good teaching strategies and the strategies which were truly useful to students. Also, I started to be self-aware to build my own pedagogical knowledge capacity and practice. I began to revise my belief that I regarded teaching as a place for me to show off my subject knowledge to more students’ investment in pushing their own learning. I fully considered students’ existing base and their interest in learning, guided them to explore the Chinese culture by themselves through discussing about their own life and preference.

Finally, I guided them to explore my life, by demonstrating the one-child policy and the loneliness of single child. My connection with my own life, on one hand, had contributed to positive relationship with students because it provided students chance to understand my life. They felt curious about their teacher’s life and felt more closed with me when they knew something about me. On the other hand, I created more positive and relaxed learning environment rather than serious academic learning environment by involving Chinese culture unconscientiously through my narrative about my life. This contributed to most meaningful learning because it was applicable to student’s interests, educational needs and lives in general (Brown, 2008, p. 31). This connectedness, which “instead of focusing on how lessons knowledge and activities rely on prior knowledge, it was focused on present or future utility” (NSW DEC, 2008, p. 23). By linking to authentic pedagogy, it preferred the “connection to the world outside the classroom” and “interactive instruction” (NSW DEC, 2008, p. 24). In that sense, I shared control of the classroom with students. Students were allowed to explore, experiment and discover on their own (Brown, 2008, p. 30). This all indicated that I learned to organize my practice in more professional way (Sexton, 2008).

Considering this excerpt to a high level, it also demonstrated my growing awareness of intercultural teaching. Questioning here was regarded as the “central component in developing intercultural understanding and competence in language learners that was used to raise sociocultural awareness and interactive language skills” (Morgan, 2008) By using these referential questions, first I articulated their thinking about
their own life and then pushed them to connect to my situation, I succeeded to build the connection between family cultures in both Chinese and Australian context. It helped to elicited students’ thinking about comparisons of Chinese cultures and Australian cultures in treating with the family, also their interrelationship. In that way, I sought to promote “sociocultural interactions for personalized meaning making by students” (Morgan, 2008)

6.1.2.2 Making sense of learning content by using their answers as instructions

The theme making sense of learning content by using their answers as instructions illustrated that I valued more about students’ performance and made their learning significant by involving their answers into my subsequent teaching sections. In order to empower the students’ review, it included the previous review of word meaning, inquiry about students’ learning outcomes, revision and finally, making their answers worthwhile by using them in the subsequent games. The previous stages all helped to ensure the right track of students’ answers. Below was the excerpt that supported this point.

I asked them to recall their memories, and told me how to say action in Chinese. The previous English games had already helped to recall their memories about the words meaning, while the Chinese version, they focused on the Chinese meaning. This evolutionary process helped to decrease the difficulty and to bridge the gap of four-weeks’ away from Mandarin. Different from before when I just asked them to give answers; I gave them the task, the responsibility to entail. I said: “Ok, do you love Simon Says game?:” Yes, Miss, can we play it again?: “Of course, in case you can provide the instructions. Now I want all of you to recall your memories about Chinese words for 7 actions, I will record your answers in the whiteboard, remember, I would like both pronunciation and tone right, so if you want to give me new answers or correct your partners answer, I welcome! Do it quick, and we can have more time to play Simon Says” The students seemed to be on fire, all the students actively shared their opinions because they really wanted to play that
game and the felt more active and proud when their answers were right and were recorded by the teacher. In that way, the students felt that they took responsibility for teaching and made their contribution. Sometimes if someone made mistakes about pronunciation, others would actively help to adjust it. Or even for the tones, I would record their tones on the whiteboard and asked someone else if they got other opinion. All the process, I didn’t try to correct them directly, however, I asked them to do peer assisting, and I only guided them to think about the right way. Finally, at the end, I recorded the right answers and cleaned the wrong ones to clarify the idea that they did not understand. It was at that time that I began to fill their gap about the words through my didactical teaching. At the end, I praised their fabulous work and told them that they were qualified to play Chinese Simon says, I felt that except for engaging in the game, they also felt very proud about themselves as they can cooperate to figure out the instructions (Researcher’s self-reflective journal, 25/07/2012; Teacher interview, cycle 2).

This excerpt illustrated several important points to explain why using students’ answers as instruction was worth noting achievement for me. I guided students step by step, helped to recall the students’ memories about learned words and made their contribution meaningful by explicitly using it in my teaching. This evolitional teaching was based on my developed understanding of students’ cognition, and I adjusted to my teaching process by providing appropriate learning difficulties. Also, the use of student ideas by me during teaching was important for enhancing student achievement through communicating with students about their ideas and input. Students had higher levels of meaningful participation and interest in their learning their ideas “were regularly incorporated into the learning” (Wiseman & Hunter, 2001, p. 98). They were more prone to be academically successful because “they perceived their teachers as valuing both them as individuals and their ideas” (Wiseman & Hunter, 2001, p. 98). In that way, most of students could find the right track for their learning and felt safe and confident to give answers, thus stimulating their trial of Mandarin.
Firstly, I adopted student-centred teaching by giving students more responsibility in learning. This way, I purposefully and gradually released responsibility for learning from teacher to student (Fisher & Frey, 2008, p. 33). Firstly, setting a clear goal for them to accomplish, for example, asked them to figure out the instructions for the next game and the instructional tasks aligned with it, so that the students can share responsibility for learning and would be motivated to do so (Fisher & Frey, 2008). Students were no longer just listening to me, or were buried by my constant questions. Instead, their performance was involved in the following teaching and their performance directly influenced subsequent teaching section. That was to say, I valued the opportunity that allowed students’ responses to steer lessons and create instructional strategies (Brown, 2008, p. 30). Hence, the students, to some extent, influenced the decision making in teaching (Brown, 2008). All of these, to some extent, stimulated students’ sense of autonomy in their learning. Also as a responsive teacher, I provided supportive and simultaneously challenged learning environment by accepting different level of answers and accepted students’ different developmental needs (Nuckles, 2000, p. 6).

It was worth noting that support like peer collaboration and guided instruction, was helpful for students to take their own responsibility in learning (Fisher & Frey, 2008, p. 33). Rather, while students retained their autonomy, they were not alone but were supported by the peer network (Fisher & Frey, 2008). I didn’t correct their mistakes directly; instead, I recorded all their performances and asked other students to share their opinions. The students’ interaction with each other enhanced their participation because of their cooperation in finishing this task. The whole class worked as a productive group through peer support, in which the students learned more and retained information longer (Fisher & Frey, 2008, p. 36). I just gave them guide during the process and helped with revision at the end. This engagement of the ongoing process of diagnosis with self and learners helped to improve both my instructional mastery and students’ responsiveness at the same time (Nuckles, 2000, p. 6).

6.1.2.3 Enlarging number learning

The theme that enlarging number learning demonstrated that I successfully taught 10-100 in short time. The students not only learned how to say such large numbers,
but also learned the rules about how to figure out Chinese number. In that sense, the students’ vocabularies were enlarged in such short time, and also enhanced their confidence simultaneously because they can create the numbers before the teacher taught them. In addition, I also reflected my past experience in teaching the same topic, pointed out that my development of pedagogical content knowledge made effective teaching practice. Below was detailed information about how I taught large numbers.

I changed my way to present the numbers in three ways, compared with my previous lessons. The first one, different from earlier when I taught them numbers by order, this time, I taught numbers by ten as a group because they all shared the same rules: one ten, two ten, three ten. … This time I was not going to tell them two multiple ten is twenty, which in Chinese we said two ten. That explanation can’t make direct sense for the students because students were so young that they couldn’t understand multiplication and most of them got no idea of how to develop the numbers as the class pace was so rushed. However, when I said one ten is ten, two ten was twenty, three ten was thirty, which in Chinese, yi shi just translated literally from one ten, er shi just translated literally two ten, then after I gave them examples of writing 10, 20, 30, wrote pinyin and literally English meaning in a column. They immediate found the rules, just claimed the rules: read first number and then ended with “shi” Then I stopped and asked them, ; “ok, could you tell me the other numbers in ten, can I just point one and you give me the answer?” What I found amazing is that the shiest girl in the class, who never took part into answering any questions or any kind of games, should put up hands so actively. I thought this may be because the rule was so easy, she had 100% percentage confidence to give the answer. Totally all the numbers were guessed immediately. It not only helped them learn new numbers at a very simple way, which we Chinese called “(juyi fan san), but also eased their memory of such a large numbers of words. At the same time, it then helped them to be sensible to review
the number 1-10. That could be a bi-win for learning numbers (Researcher’s self-reflective journal, 24/07/2012).

For example, 11, I told them that translated literally is one ten one, 12 is one ten two, 13, one ten three, and then asked them to figure out the rules. Some students said that they all had ten in the middle and one in the first place. “Ok, I really appreciated your performance, and contribution, you and you, good, now as what they told me, look at the numbers 11-19, just look at their first number, what are they?” :”One!” :”Great!” And what is the second number? “ :” Em, 11, is one, 12 is two, 13 is three!” :”So for example, put them together is…” :”one one!” :”but how to translate literally about 11?” :”One ten one!” :”So have you got the idea? just read first number and second number and then add ten in the middle! So who could tell me 19?” :”Wow, Miss, it is easy, I know, I know!” :”You please! Remember think about how to say individual number in Chinese!” :”Em, 1, yi ten, shi, 9, jiu, that is yishijiu!” :”Perfect!” (Researcher’s reflective journal, 14/08/2012).

This narrative illustrated my successful adoption of student-centred way of instilling knowledge about Chinese numbers. Different from previous experience which was dominated by direct authoritative instruction and one-way knowledge transfer, I adjusted to emphasizing more students’ self-sufficiency, creativity and their appreciation, and valued about the subject being taught (Brown, 2008, p. 33). This letting go of my teacher’s role gave students chances to explore ideas and teach themselves. In that sense, I positioned myself as a coach or instigator, who was there to assist and never gave direct answers (Brown, 2008, p. 33).

In addition, the successful student-centred way was supported by my appropriate teaching model and guide instruction. Although student-centred way encouraged student independent exploration about knowledge, it didn’t mean indulging students’ learning randomly. It needed scientific teachers’ modeling and guide instruction. Students were learning by imitating me, before they engaged in the task independently, they deserved the example of thinking and language (Fisher & Frey,
2008, p. 34). By showing how the number consists in Chinese, I revealed my own mind of how to generate the rules. It meant demonstrating the way the expert thought as they approached problem (Fisher & Frey, 2008, p. 34).

However, the modeling process was not dominated by didactic teaching. It was supported by the providing cues, prompts and questions to facilitate students’ thinking (Fisher & Frey, 2008). When teaching the numbers, I encoded numbers from their meaning and placed it in a volume to stimulate students’ exploration of rules. This deeper processing which involved instructional elaboration contributed to better retention of students’ knowledge as it associated students’ prior knowledge with new items (Shen, 2004). These associations, however, provided additional cues for later retrieval, and facilitated both memorization and retrieval of new materials (Shen, 2004, p. 177). With the constructive and learner-oriented guide instruction, I was provided opportunity to engage students’ thinking without telling what to think and a chance to scaffold students’ understanding (Fisher & Frey, 2008, p. 34).

In that way, students could get the new meaning and discovery through a process of personal discovery within appropriate learning pace and clear guided instructions. Also, I only gave two examples, while other numbers were all guessed by the students. Enough chances were provided for students to confront new information and experience them, to solidify their understanding of new knowledge. Also, giving explicit and meaningful explanation also encouraged those low-motivated students. This, however, helped to create a stimulating learning environment in which students felt safe and accepted (Harkema & Schout, 2008, p. 517). The students’ attitude for exploring the new numbers, however, was positive.

Finally, I made sense of their newly learning knowledge by building it on what they learnt. This process, not only helped students learn new knowledge, but also helped them review previous learning outcomes without sparing time for review only. This consistency in learning provided me opportunities to facilitate students’ learning by assimilating their new knowledge within their existing knowledge schemata (Sharma et al, 2009). I was a facilitator rather than a transmitter, and I emphasized more on scaffolding the processes of schemata development rather than telling them everything.
6.2 How these achievements contributed to my professional identity

The achievements above demonstrated my development about transforming the teaching strategies to be more suitable for the students and making sense of students learning by encouraging them to take responsibility for their teaching. During the process, I successfully guided the students into independent learning and exploration with meaningful encoding about Chinese knowledge. What was more important for me was that on one hand, I had transferred to be more student-centred teacher with my development of flexible pedagogical teaching practice. I had been more transformative teacher with my increasing understanding of the students’ knowledge, context knowledge as well as the accumulation of more teaching practice. On the other hand, I tried hard to make students’ sense of their learning and involved them into taking responsibility of their own learning. In other words, I had developed my maturity in student-centred teaching practice.

It was significantly important for me as the successful experience relieved my feeling as an unqualified teacher. Before that, I felt weak and unconfident in carrying on any strategies, let alone including my own thought in new teaching practice. But now I felt more capable of using instructional strategies effectively and ensuring student participation (Ozder, 2011, p. 1). This feeling pushed me more willing to overcome the problems and was open to new ideas and positive teaching attitudes, thus taking more responsibility in teaching (Ozder, 2011). The sense of achievement contributed to my high expectations of success, to the high effort I expended and the deeper extent to which I persisted in trying new activities (Fry, 2009). This contributed to the foundation of becoming a transformative teacher, regarding myself as a lifelong learner and my teaching professionalism as an ongoing process (Fry, 2009).

Also, it was valuable for me as it stimulated my motivation to be a transformative teacher. I regarded my teaching self as creative developers of curriculum and innovative pedagogy because I gained “adaptive expertise”. With the adaptive expertise, I was more willing to be flexible and grow with the changes I faced (Trust, 2012, p. 138). I no longer thought myself just as a weak imitator who was just limited to current teaching strategies and material. I was now a mature designer and
active creator who spared no effort to contribute to students’ better learning outcomes according to the demands of different teaching context. I valued divergent and risky thinking in myself and by doing so, I assisted students in the development of their own critical and transformative capacities (Mockler, 2005). I was more open to transform my teaching strategies and perform continuous self-assessments to see where I can improve (Trust, 2012). Thus, I took an enormous risk in devolving teaching responsibility and developing new ways of supporting and sustaining learning (Mockler, 2005, p. 742). This creativity, to some extent, decreased my heavy burden to find appropriate teaching strategies and made me feel more suitable and flexible to be a qualified teacher. What was more important, as a transformative teacher, I started to use metacognitive strategies to examine my knowledge and continually sought to improve my expertise (Trust, 2012). This metacognition, however, was conducive to my ability to self-regulate learning about teaching.

In addition, these approaches to teaching were very new to me, as I had been cultivated in Chinese educational culture. Traditional Chinese education was actually textbook-centred and government-controlled curriculum. Teachers did not have the authority to adapt material in textbooks or develop learning resources according to specific needs (Hua et al., 2011, p. 193). That meant I never experienced or witnessed creation of material. So it seldom came to my mind about creating the material. What I thought at first, was just how to find the right material for the teaching content as I was lack of authority textbook. However, after accumulation of successful teaching practice, I began to make some creation on the current teaching strategies.

Secondly, it was also salient that I was more mature in employing the student-centred teaching practice. Before that, I just reached the level that using teaching strategies catering for students’ interest and knowledge base, however, my teaching practice was still teacher-oriented. As the time went by, my teaching strategies were shifted to more focus on students’ responsibility for their learning and their capability in exploring knowledge. Students’ learning outcomes were involved in constructing the teaching practice to show their responsibility in teaching. It was at that time that I really developed my whole teaching practice as the student-centred one and released my some responsibility for teaching. I actually
gradually positioned myself more like a facilitator.

Through bringing the student-centred instructional practice, the active learning happened with huge interactions between student peers, as well as students and me, the instructor. With these interactions, however, students can get consistent opportunities to apply their learning in the classroom. Active learning which improved the students’ ability in learning processing made me feel easier to instill knowledge and feel easier in academic communication with the students. This all enhanced my feeling as a facilitator, as the one who can understand their students deeper in their learning track. This was more important for me as a Chinese beginning teacher due to change of understanding of teacher’s role and learner’s role, which transferred from “direct authoritative instruction to the facilitation of student learning and an environment of questioning and debate” (Hua et al, 2011, p. 193). For a long time, I thought the teachers should take the main responsibility for the success of teaching and learning. Teacher’s laziness should be blamed for the ineffective teaching (Fu, 2008). But my beliefs of transferring two roles enhanced my sense of self-efficacy and created more teaching space for myself. I didn’t just blame my own teaching practice, which really made me always feel like an outsider in teaching profession because of huge challenges. I emphasized more on cultivating students’ sense of responsibility in considering students’ own learning, thus promoting their instinct motivation to learn.

6.3 Challenges for cycle 2

The challenge I underwent in my second cycle focused on two issues: my lack of knowledge about students’ life, experiences and interests, as well as my lack of expertise in giving effective instructions. These were important challenges because they resulted in students’ disengagement and hindered students’ learning of Mandarin. Some of challenges in cycle 2 were similar to my challenges in cycle 1 such as giving ineffective instructions, because I didn’t push my professional learning orientation towards that problem. Influenced by Chinese educational culture about instruction and classroom management, this problem didn’t receive enough attention during cycle 1. Also the less access to learning from local class teacher made it difficulty for me to address the instruction issues. However, other challenges such as lack of knowledge about students’ life experience and interest was new
challenges that did not arise in cycle 1. That was because I seldom related target content to their life experience during cycle 1 period, although I did spare no effort to address the problem through various professional learning strategies.

From a contextual view of learning, engagement of the learners towards learning depends on personal, physical and sociocultural aspects (Uitto et al., 2006). Understanding students’ activities that are out of the school and experiences may enhance children’s interest in subjects because it allowed the possibility to closely relate lesson content to students’ life experience (Uitto et al., 2006). I failed to use students’ life experience appropriately in my Mandarin teaching because I didn’t get enough ideas about their life experience. On one hand, I took their life experience for granted, that they had similar experience with the Chinese children in using the Internet, rather than investigating what their true life was. On the other hand, I got no time to communicate with students; it also resulted in my lack of knowledge about students’ life experience. Finally, failing to use students’ life experience in teaching led to students’ disengagement and lost understanding of what I taught.

Lack of expertise in giving effective instructions related to my lack of academic organization of content of instruction and subsequent effective conduct of the instruction made it incomprehensible to others and failed to get students to understand what they should do next (Galguera, 2011). My lack of expertise in this area was a big challenge for me because it prevented me from organizing my classroom activities in an effective way and hindered the effectiveness of my activities that can help students to enhance their learning. It also challenged my sense of being an expert teacher. Without it, I was unable to help students learn and practice Mandarin effectively, in an orderly way.

The following section presented my findings regarding these challenges. I categorized them into two themes: a) teaching strategies unrelated to students’ life experience and b) ineffective instruction. I defined each theme and offered examples to show the problems related to each challenge and how these challenges limited students’ learning of Mandarin.

Each challenge was supported by a critical incidence to this theme. Critical incidents
were defined as “a surprise or a problematic situation, which stimulated a period of reflection or a solution of the problem” (Angelides, 2001, p. 433). It was useful to construct the narratives around critical issues because they would reflect the turning points in my teaching. The following narratives were constructed according to critical issues that resulted in my failure of enhancing students’ learning of Mandarin. Also at the end of each critical incidence, I further explained the reason why it was hard for me to develop such teaching expertise in knowing students’ life experience and giving effective instruction.

6.3.1 Teaching strategies unrelated to students’ life experience

The theme centred on the wrong teaching strategies I selected to teach Chinese which led to students’ low-motivation in practicing Chinese and failed to enhance students’ learning about this topic. It was wrong teaching strategy because it separated teaching content from students’ specific life experience and failed to hook their continuous interest. It led to the students’ disengagement in learning Internet culture and faded away students’ meaningful learning in Mandarin class. Meaningful learning was considered as deeper understanding about material, organizing it into a coherent cognitive structure and integrating it with relevant existing knowledge (Mayer & Moreno, 2003, p. 43). Consequently, in order to stimulate students’ meaningful learning, it was important for me to comprehensively understand students’ interest and existing knowledge, and then also had the ability to build up abstract and new concepts based on what the students knew and what they were interested in. However, in my case, I failed to address the problem of building up my language teaching with the students’ life experience, thus resulting in meaningless lesson. This has caused the failure of enhancing students’ learning of Mandarin because the students were bored in learning it and couldn’t understand the lesson.

The following narrative demonstrated an issue documented in own self-reflective journals during the cycle 2 period. This example referred to my failed experience in enhancing Mandarin learning when I taught SMS language. I used this particular example because it was a critical moment where I identified the importance of understanding students’ out of class experiences of Mandarin teaching and the necessity to understand students’ learning difficulties. In this example, it illuminated that guiding Mandarin learning without use of students’ life experience would lead
to students’ low interest in Mandarin learning. This low interest, however, further led to students’ low intrinsic motivation in learning Mandarin. However, at the end, it illustrated that my identity as a casual teacher would cause trouble for me to understand students’ life.

### 6.3.1.1 Teaching SMS language

The purpose of the lesson was to teach SMS language, which are commonly used in China as shortcuts for communicating online. For example, 88 means bye, 39 means thank you, in that way, students can practice numbers by involving them into their daily greetings. The aim of the lesson was to help them practice numbers and simultaneously introduce Chinese Internet culture. It helped students make sense of numbers by providing authentic situations for them to use. Although it was a good idea to teach numbers, it failed, because I didn’t consider the fact that my students didn’t use online chatting in their daily life, let alone showing interest in online chatting and was capable in understand such language. Below was a revised part of my self-reflective journals that described my experience in detail:

I used Da Vinci’s code to engage them to practice these numbers and simultaneously taught them to use numbers to present feelings. In China, even for the primary school students, they often use them in qq communication. So I thought since Facebook was so popular here, it would work for them as well because of similar experience we had. I taught the number, 520, which meant I love you in website in Chinese, 88, which meant bye et al. I just asked them to communicate with these codes without much explanation. They were not active and seemed to feel very confused and cold. They students just felt curious that I can use numbers to express feelings, but they seemed to get no resonance. They seemed to be confused about why they needed to learn it and what I wanted them to do.

That was failure because I didn’t understand their culture. The class teacher said it was a good part for involving numbers in Internet culture; however, it was not related to students’ real life experience.
because they were not allowed to use Facebook. They were not like Chinese children who played QQ when they were still young. So it was difficult to hook their interest in learning website language. But it was really hard for me to know their lives as a casual teacher here. I came here only a week and I rushed between many classes. I didn’t have time to communicate with students and teachers. It was so hard to know students’ life thoroughly (Researcher’s self-reflective journal, 24/07/2012)

This lesson was of little interest to the students because my teaching strategy was based on wrong understanding about my students’ life experience. I took for granted that Australian students loved Internet communication such as Facebook, like Chinese children. However, my students were not motivated to practice numbers. Children were not engaged because I did not involve their real life experience in Mandarin learning. They were less confident and less willing to communicate with me during the lesson. Even worse, when the students got confused, I got no idea about how to explain the ideas clearly, so I just pushed the students to have a try. I found the students felt very nervous when I asked them questions about these codes. They seemed to be upset and didn’t know what to do.

As I separated my teaching from students’ life, the students were not motivated intrinsically in Mandarin learning. My students can’t find any related things from their life experience that can help them understand what the teacher taught, and can’t find something interesting because it was beyond their cognition. That was to say, learning was not meaningful to their immediate needs and interests. It resulted in failing to produce organized, coherent and integrated mental models to enhance their enduring learning because of lack of building their learning of new concepts on their authentic life experience (Ferguson, 2011; Karpicke & Grimaldi, 2012). In this case, this failure was due to my identity as an expatriate teacher. My approach was that assuming “implications for language classrooms rather than the empirical observations of the classroom itself” (Shin & Kellogg, 2007, p. 160), which failed to address the complex classroom culture and particular students’ needs. As a result, I failed to encourage students’ practice of this numbers and enhance their culture knowledge about Internet because I failed to hook their interest and build up their
new knowledge based on their existing knowledge. It resulted in students’ lost understanding of Chinese Internet culture and students’ lost of interest to learn that topic.

Also, it reflected my weakness in understanding local students’ learning difficulties in learning Chinese. Lacking the similar routine in learning Chinese as a second language, I was short of sense of typical errors English-speaking students would make and appreciating students’ problem in culture alienation and language transfer (Barratt & Kontra, 2000; Boyle, 1997, Medgyes & Ârva, 2004). In my case, students can’t understand the knowledge behind those SMS language. For instance, Why 520 sounded like “I love you” in Chinese, because they didn’t think they were similar sounds, why they had to use these SMS language because in their daily experience, it was nonsense. However, my lack of encountering similar problems in Chinese undermined my sensitivity in understanding students’ such difficulties and in the ways of anticipating language difficulties (Medgyes, 1992). In that sense, I was unable to “predict what was likely to go wrong before the students open his mouth” (Barratt & Kontra, 2000, p. 62). And also students were easily turning away from my teaching as my teaching was academically light-weight for them and couldn’t cover their learning needs (Shin & Kellogg, 2007)

However, even though I spared no effort to understand students’ life and communicated with them as much as possible, it was very hard for me to gain profound idea about their life because I didn’t have enough time both in class and after class, to understand their life experience. I travelled from one class to another without time for communicating with teacher and students once a week. I did not have a chance to take part into school activities and no chance to develop good relations with students. I hardly had any chance to get chance to understand their daily life. What was even worse, Mandarin lesson was totally new and marginal subjects of this school, it was hard for me to communicate with teacher about that because they didn’t understand and showed no interest in attending such a new subject. Both of negative factors contributed to difficulty for me to understand students’ life and to use it in my own teaching.
6.3.2. Ineffective instruction

This theme concentrated on my ineffective instruction, which referred to the disorganized content of instruction and lack of ability in carrying out the instruction effectively. This ineffective instruction, however, led to students’ confusion about their responsibility in their learning as they either did not understand what they were supposed to do or how to do it (Wiseman & Hunter, 2001, p. 61). This ineffective instruction, however, hindered my ability to pre-empt many disturbance and distractions before they become serious problems (Wiseman & Hunter, 2001).

This excerpt below showed my inability in providing effective instructions for activities. This resulted in students’ lost understanding about what they should do in the game. It was concerned with my incapability in academically organizing the content of instruction and also lack of useful routines in carrying out instruction effectively. Below was the summarized excerpt that from my self-reflective journals and teacher’s interview from cycle 1. I used these two particular data because they all reflected my failure in giving effective instruction which made students lose their understanding about what they were expected to do in the game and both of the data supported each other to form more powerful validity.

I prepared clear rules and tried to give them clear instruction about this game. I put all the information in front and told them to pay attention to the problems that they might make mistake in. The students couldn’t wait to play it and they enjoyed it very much. But problems came out. During the first three rounds, when they met each other at the middle, they stopped and looked at me! The two students felt very confused what to do, so I repeated the instruction again, However, new problem came out. They knew to do paper, scissors and rock, but the loser should stop at the middle, and didn’t move. I have no choice but repeated it again. It was not until several rounds that the students get idea. However, as my explanation for the game was repeated again and again, I found the other students not calm down, most of students just talked randomly with their classmates and
paid no attention to this game, and they seemed to get lost about what I wanted them to do.

What happened, was I so poor in English, or they just cannot understand my language. Maybe that was because I didn’t know how much they understood my instruction, I didn’t check. The teacher said that students felt very confused in their face, but I ignored it. Although I prepared all the information in advance, but maybe it was too hard for them, it didn’t work. I needed to change on the spot, but I was not so professional to do it. After class, the teacher also commented on my instruction, pointed out that although in the instruction, I gave all the information in advance and the sentences were understandable, the arrangement of the information was mess which made it unclear for the students (Teacher self-reflective journal, 01/08/2012, Teacher’s interview, cycle 1).

My instruction of the game was problematic because the students did not understand how to participate in the game. Although I repeated the instructions again and again, students didn’t follow them. I attributed the failure to poor instructions which confused the students and also my lack of awareness and methods to check the students’ mastery of my instruction, which exacerbated my ineffectiveness of my instruction because I didn’t know how much the students understood it. Thirdly, I lacked flexible strategies to make instruction understood by the students and finally, I was unconfident in my own language ability which exacerbated my challenges.

Initially, I failed to make students understand me because I can’t give clear and organized instruction. I was short of ability in organizing the instruction academically. It meant that my ordering and arranging information for instruction was problematic which made it hard for students to understand the information communicated and made them confused about what they should do (Wiseman & Hunter, 2001, p. 103). Although each of my sentences was understandable and all the important information was informed in advance, it was still ineffective because the students can’t understand the disorganized information. In addition to content of instruction, bad academic organization also referred to the fact that I was not
well-prepared to carry out instruction in a way that assisted the students when they tried to learn and remember what was being taught (Wiseman & Hunter, 2001). Students got confused with my instruction when I just orally told them what to do and didn’t show them effective examples. In that sense, only the students who learned by listening can effectively get the instruction while for the other types of learners, it was hard because I didn’t present information in their preferred way in which they can understand. As a disorganized teacher, I had fewer achieving students than organized teachers had (Wiseman & Hunter, 2001), because I couldn’t be clear in “communications in many ways related to the teacher’s ability to be academically organized” (Wiseman & Hunter, 2001, p. 103). Also I would enjoy less academic authority and expert reputation in the perception of students when I lacked academic organization in the instruction.

Secondly, I did not understand the importance of checking whether students understood my instruction. I provided instruction without asking them to recall the information. When designing the instruction, I just concerned about constructing my own instruction to be clearer and meaningful, and I just emphasized most of my attention on my performance of teaching strategies, rather than the students’ understanding (Watzke, 2007). Although I wanted to take whole responsibility in giving instruction, rather than involve in students’ contribution, my unprofessional knowledge made it hard to achieve this goal. In addition, lack of double-check of instruction from students left the gap between the instruction I gave and students’ understanding, which led to my continuous and time-consuming repetition of instruction. Always I adopted aggressive actions like criticizing students’ misbehavior in a screaming voice rather than being far-sighted to prevent problems occurring (Rahman et al., 2010, p. 99). I expressed classroom management more reactive rather than preventive (Emmer & Stough, 2001; Garrett, 2008) because I didn’t get enough knowledge to make proactive teaching strategies.

Thirdly, I was lacking diverse strategies in routines to ensure the effective conduct of the instruction. When my instruction was not thoroughly understood by the students, what I did was just orally repeated instructions again and again. I didn’t have any back-up strategies that helped to switch the confusion. For example, I didn’t provide valuable information for them to refer such as writing instruction on the whiteboard
in case that they can’t remember the instruction, or used pictures, videos or other types of resource to enhance validity of instruction for various types of students. In this case, students who cannot learn effectively through listening would lose their priorities in understanding my instruction effectively. However, as I was not knowledgeable enough to build up such diverse routines for instruction conduct, I was vulnerable when I encountered the problem that students can’t understand my oral instruction.

It was even worse when I felt unconfident in my own language ability. Kato (1998) found that the reason for the Japanese teachers’ failure was language barriers. Similarly, Pavlenko (2003) claimed that L2 teachers who viewed them as non-native speakers usually encountered identity problems, because they positioned themselves as belonging to non-native community. Pavlenko (2003) also found that the non-native teachers found it hard to position themselves as teachers because of negative effects of regarding themselves as non-native (p. 258). They suffered from frustration, desperation and torment and described themselves as passive, incompetent, stupid and childlike (Pavlenko, 2003, p. 260). This made novice teachers lose their confidence in communicating effectively in the classroom. I faced up the similar situation in this Australian classroom.

6.4 How these challenges contributed to my professional identity

The teaching practices demonstrated above, and my suffering setbacks in making Chinese lessons understandable, illuminated some of the challenges I encountered. Specifically, they reflected my lack of understanding of students’ lives and interests, and the ineffective instructions I gave during the activities. All of these negative experiences hindered my sense of being a good teacher. I considered that effective teachers would have a better developed scope for classroom teaching of the subject matter, and better ways to teach it. They would be more effective lesson implementers, would be more flexible and reflective in facilitating students’ academic growth (Walls, et al., 2002, p. 46).

Through my interaction with students, it became obvious to me that I was lacking organizational knowledge and knowledge about the students, both of which hindered my aim of being an effective teacher. These challenges all contributed to my
perception that my teaching practice was ineffective and unprofessional, thus decreasing my confidence about becoming an effective teacher. My low confidence in my teaching overshadowed my intuitiveness, my courage to try new things and particular ideas. As narrative 1 showed, I was afraid of creating new teaching strategies in my teaching, such as using Internet culture to help students practice numbers; instead, I wanted to choose model strategies that would be safe for my teaching. This failure led me to underestimate my professional capacities. Also, I would have preferred students to sit down and listen to me, rather than have given them more chances to develop their learning actively.

All of these attitudes limited my ideas about teaching. I even felt that I was employed “out of my field” due to the ineffectiveness of my teaching. The main perceived causes of my teaching ineffectiveness were three components of pedagogical knowledge—classroom management, lesson implementation skills, and rapport with students which were all involved in in-class teaching skills being pressed into action when interacting with students. That was to say, the primary reason I perceived my teaching as ineffective was due to my apparently inept pedagogy, boring presentation and unproductive learning environment (Walls et al., 2002).

The challenges, such as my lack of knowledge about students’ lives, experiences and interests, as well as my lack of expertise in giving effective instructions, actually can be partly attributed to the professional learning strategies I had adopted. As stated earlier, the reason why I lacked expertise in giving effective instructions was because I did not get enough assistance from local class teachers. Seldom did I have the chance for professional conversation with the class teacher, to talk about what kind of instruction would be acceptable to the students, and how to give effective instructions in this particular school. Similarly, my lack of knowledge about students’ lives, experience and interest also was due to this lack of formal contact with the class teacher, as it was hard for me to find opportunities or the time to discuss students’ life experience and interests. What was even worse, as a casual teacher, I had less chance to be in contact with my students compared to fulltime teachers at the school. Similarly, Shin & Kellogg (2007) demonstrate, that the fact that many novice NESTs often act as EFL specialist teaching in different class,
which aggravated the problem that she didn’t know the children’s language. All these factors contributed to blocking my path to understanding my students better.

The challenges I experienced also resulted in negative emotions, which in turn led to negative internal, meaning-making about aspects of my professional identity as a teacher (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Ugaste & Timoštšuk, 2012), since emotions acted as a dimension of the self that helped to express identity both consciously and unconsciously (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Some critical moments that caused strong emotional reactions in me heavily influenced how I understood myself as a teacher in an Australian teaching context, and how I participated in the teaching. As a beginning teacher, my practice resulting in pupil’s misbehaviors revealed to me the shortcomings in my teacher self, which is concomitant with my early stage of professional identity; my first forays were “intrinsically highly emotional complicated and contradictory” (Ugaste & Timoštšuk, 2012, p. 422). Strong emotions, like confusion, disappointment, insecurity, anxiety and anger highlighted and intensified my teaching experience. These overshadowed other more positive emotions experienced at the same time, and hindered my ability to take a comprehensive and balanced view, and to choose positive strategies (Ugaste & Timoštšuk, 2012, p. 430). These two examples actually illustrated that in spite of some good parts in these two exceptions, I still tried to avoid using these two strategies in my future Mandarin teaching because I felt that I was unable to handle the class management and failed to encourage students’ learning of Chinese when I used these two strategies. That was to say, I lacked confidence in making such kinds of changes in my teaching practice. My negative emotions dominated my early-career professional identity in the following ways: Firstly, they primarily influenced my choice of models, which were central to identity (Ugaste & Timoštšuk, 2012). What I lacked was organizational skills and understanding about the students, so this experience pushed me to be a teacher who was self-consistent and knowledgeable about the students. Secondly, the resulting performances in my teaching role were affected by emotions such as confidence and pride (Ugaste & Timoštšuk, 2012). It was my failure to organize the games adequately and to successfully engage students with new teaching strategies that made me perceive I was not competent in these particular areas. Thus, I lacked confidence to do it and preferred to escape such creative areas, and regarded them as unsuitable for my
abilities and competence.

However, these negative emotions also made positive contributions to my professional identity, due to their powerful propensity for attracting attention and focus (Ugaste & Timoštšuk, 2012). The challenges I encountered contributed to deepening my understanding of teaching that teaching didn’t just mean passing knowledge on to students and helping them remember teaching contents, but also meant entailing a deeper understanding of students themselves, and the skills of academic organization. I no longer just emphasized understanding about academic knowledge, but also took students’ life knowledge into account in my teaching. Academic approaches had to be matched to students’ lives in order to succeed.

A similar principle applied to games. Beforehand, I had considered that games should be interesting, challenging and appropriate to student ability, but my emphasis was on feasibility and interestingness. However, as the time went by, I learnt from failure that conducting a game well went beyond just the game itself; it necessitated taking many elements into consideration and organizing them in a multifaceted academic exercise. While my failures affected my professional self-identity in terms of my perceived shortcomings in expertise and authoritativeness, the development of a professional teacher necessitated learning from experience, applying that knowledge in practice, and hopefully developing a more balanced view of one’s professional identity. I turned to this aim in chapter 7 in reflecting on my achievements and challenges during this action research.
Chapter 7 Discussion

7.0 Introduction

In this chapter I draw together the findings presented in the previous three evidentiary chapters. The first research question focuses on the professional achievements and challenges I identified as being important in my first year of teaching. Firstly I discuss the types of achievements and challenges that I experienced. Then I compare those to the familiar experiences of locally born beginning teachers and then note their different nature due to my Chinese education and previous lack of teaching or education study.

The second research question asks: What changes can I make to address the challenges? In the second section of this chapter, this second research question is addressed. It is noted that, while factors like learning from the class teacher are regarded in the literature as useful contributors to the professional learning of beginning teachers, I experienced less benefit from them, due to less opportunity. On the other hand, the ROSETE network, with which I had a sense of belonging, was found to be most effective in helping me to adopt appropriate professional learning strategies. All of these strategies lent me emotional and academic support in regard to the practical teaching strategies I needed.

The third research question asks how these changes contributed to my teacher identity. The third section of this chapter responds to this question and focuses on my teacher identity development, which was influenced by developments in my practical knowledge and in my sense of belonging during the process of learning to teach. It was identified that the development of my practical knowledge contributed to my professional teaching ability and intercultural competence, which in turn contributed to my identity as a professional with pedagogic expertise, and as an interculturally-competent teacher. However, as a Chinese, I had valued teachers’ authority unquestioningly and at first did not change my belief in the Australian classroom. This hindered the development of my identity as an effective teacher.
Meanwhile, the marginalization I felt at school reduced my professional identity due to being merely a casual teacher, while a strong sense of belonging to ROSETE peers did contribute to my positive identity formation.

7.1 Teachers’ professional development stages

7.1.1 Achievements and challenges reflected the experiences and concerns of beginning teachers

My achievements and challenges were similar to those of other beginning teachers in that they reflected the most common types of concerns of the beginning teachers. That was, they focused on improving my classroom teaching. According to stage theory, teachers move through a series of stages: the self-concerned, task-concerned and impact-concerned stages (Watzke, 2007; Ginns et al., 2001). The self-stage is the first stage and is often attributed to novice teachers, as pre-service teachers have a greater proportion of self-concerns and are less concerned with the refinement of tasks (Watzke, 2007). My initial classroom teaching focus was consistent with the stage theory of the novice teacher’s development. At first, I only focused on the fundamental issues, such as “meeting student’s socioemotional needs and accommodating the academic learning styles and preferences of all the students” (Watzke, 2007, p. 64). These phenomena all indicated my being at the self-concerned stage in which beginning teachers concern only about themselves, with preoccupations such as feelings of inadequacy, their self-image in other people’s eyes and whether they are or not accepted by students and colleagues (Watzke, 2007, p. 107).

In the task-concerned stage, beginning teachers focus on “instructional methods, delivery of curriculum, and in particular, perceived deterrents to effective teaching (Watzke, 2007, p. 107). Gradually, my teaching emphasis was put on empowering students’ learning of Chinese through ways that were fun for them. All of my achievements centred on effective teaching and on motivating students to enjoy the teaching content. As Ginns et al. (2001) state, it is at this time that teachers need to “establish a more reflective, proactive view of teaching and the teacher’s role” (p. 113). Also, with the accumulated experience of using effective teaching strategies, my concerns developed into a higher level of this task-stage, where my efforts were
put into creative, well-prepared teaching plans, into developing useful and diverse strategies to control the whole class and to engage most of the students (Bartell, 1990). I developed a concern for developing my own effective teaching methods in cycle 2. Some of the achievements in cycle 2 were similar to those of cycle 1, but I approached them in different ways. The details are discussed later in this chapter.

Classroom management was a significant and continuing challenge for me throughout my first-year teaching. Also, this was a common issue for beginning teachers. Watzke (2007) states that the “survival stage often focuses on students’ classroom discipline, management of classroom routines and procedures” (p. 107). It is the main preoccupations in the first year. Also, Ginns et al. (2001) claim that at the self-concerned stage, novice teachers always focus on the practical and self-interested problems in their teaching, including classroom management, and discipline and giving instructions (p. 109).

My achievements and challenges also demonstrate some features of the impact-related stage. This was evident in the second action cycle. According to Schipull (1990), this stage represents “guiding, challenging and meeting the diverse needs of students” (p. 11). In the second action cycle, an important concern for me was guiding and challenging students to explore Chinese knowledge by themselves, and also challenging them to share some responsibility for teaching and creating instructional strategies. In that sense, learning Chinese contributed both to positive learning outcomes and independent learning ability for student’. So at this stage, I started to “view self-development and the impact of effective teaching within the broader context of student academic growth, motivation and socio-emotional well-being” (Watzke, 2007, p. 107).

However, the focuses of my concerns throughout this study cannot be divided clearly into self-concern, task-concern and impact-related stages. The achievements and challenges in both action cycles were interwoven each other, rather than showing clear boundaries between task- or impact-related concerns. My development of practical knowledge about using effective strategies, and personal practical knowledge about developing successful strategies to motivate students and empower their learning, was gleaned simultaneously. Rather than taking place in discrete and
linear stages, this was an ongoing, recurring process that closely linked to students’ learning with learning theories and instructional practice (Watzke, 2007). Also, it can be seen that some of my achievements in Cycle 2 developed from the achievements of Cycle 1. At this latter stage, I only succeeded in developing successful effective strategies that were more broadly applicable to all kinds of students, and great achievements in addressing the challenges were not shown in this cycle. That meant some challenges I associated with the task-concern stage were still problems for me in cycle 2. So in this case, the stages were better divided according to inward concerns like self and task, and outward concerns, such as impact, rather than time issues (Conway & Clark, 2003). In this way, the professional growth process can be considered in terms of “holistic encompassing recurring areas of concerns, which are experienced and addressed by the beginning teacher in different ways across time” (Watzke, 2007, p. 118).

7.1.2 Challenges and achievements different to other beginning teachers: culture and professional knowledge

The achievements and challenges I experienced were also different from local beginning teachers, due to my cultural and knowledge backgrounds. I choose to focus on the theme of classroom management to explain this, as it was an ongoing issue for me throughout both cycles.

Firstly, my notions about classroom management issues were influenced by an Eastern schooling tradition. I was educated in China, which made me believe that teacher authority was gained naturally. I expected that once the students knew I was serious about their behavior, they would behave well in my class because they would have been cultivated to obey whatever the teachers said. Just as the old Chinese saying goes: “(yi ri wei shi, zhong shen wei fu; To be a teacher for one day is like being your father forever), teachers enjoyed high authority and status in Chinese cultural values. In this way, Chinese cultural traditions provided me with the security to assert my professional authority, which was crucial for me to maintain the cooperation of students in the pedagogical process (Gao, 2008, p. 155). Similarly, Horwitz (2005) studied the classroom management issues of an immigrant Japanese teacher and found that it was important to identify the cultural differences between the teachers and students. She further highlighted that the
differences in perspective about the roles and responsibilities of teachers and students, and the nature of schools between natives of Japan and the United States, all led to classroom management issues for the Japanese teacher. Likewise, the cultural difference between native Chinese education and Australian education resulted in my holding different beliefs on the importance of dealing with classroom management issues and the perspectives I held regarding which problems should be identified as serious ones in classroom management.

Researchers also attributed the complexity of teacher professional learning to being situational, contextual and ecological. Teachers bring their past experience and belief into teaching and learning, and this contributes to what they are willing to learn (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 387). Teachers bring their prior knowledge into their learning, which influences what teachers learn, the new knowledge that arises, and also recursively affects further learning about teaching (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 389). In my case, my prior notions about classroom management developed from my own experience as a student in China, as Chinese schools emphasized students’ learning outcomes much more than classroom management. Classroom management issues were seldom valued in Chinese classrooms. I did not expect classroom management to be an issue; I did not even realize that it could be an issue. Reflecting on the experiences I chose, from the beginning of my teaching, I chose to focus my attention on developing my pedagogy, over classroom management issues. Looking at both action research cycles, I chased close-up teaching skills development, and never made obvious progress in addressing my classroom management issues. It was plausible to argue that I made little progress in classroom management because I was still developing an understanding of what it was.

Secondly, as stated in Chapter 1, my role in schools was as a semi-responsive teacher, which meant that the class teacher always stayed in the class when I was teaching to help me monitor students’ behavior. This organization allowed me to spend less time on classroom management and more on developing practical knowledge, such as teaching strategies. However, as shown in chapters 4, 5 and 6, the class teacher’s presence in the classroom did not remove my need to engage in classroom management. In some ways, the class teacher’s presence, together with my lack of knowledge of learning theories or pedagogy, made it more difficult for
me, because I often did not recognize or understand the management problems I was experiencing, and how I was contributing to them. As a pre-service teacher, I missed out on critically examining my beliefs in relation to visions of good teaching, particularly in terms of classroom management and understanding of students’ behavioral features, whereas I had tended to treat my students like Chinese students. Other beginning teachers also have shown a different focus, compared to local expectations, when dealing with classroom management (Emmer & Stough, 2001, p. 107).

7.2 Valuable strategies for addressing my challenges

Research question 2 focuses on the initiatives I took to address the challenges I was facing. As discussed earlier in this chapter, a sense of belonging was important to me. So it was valuable to develop my professional learning strategies, to enhance my opportunities to gain professional development. Influenced by the old Chinese saying, "Three people are walking together and at least one of them is bound to be good enough to be my teacher," I believed that gaining help from different professionals to build up my own professional learning strategies was very important for my professional development.

7.2.1 Collaborative learning helps with teachers’ development

The most beneficial help to my developing my knowledge of teaching was the one that from my ROSETE peers and my primary supervisor. Unstructured, collaborative, informal, unplanned professional learning embedded in daily professional life was regarded as the most valuable and significant source of support (McCormack, Gore & Thomas, 2006; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). The ROSETE peers helped a lot, because they had the most academic contact with me. Stoll et al. (2006) claim that the time and frequency of teachers’ talking about professional issues are the key indicators of a learning community, especially for non-superficial learning. Studies suggest that schools should make an effort to allow enough time for teachers to meet and talk regularly (Stoll et al., 2006). Timperley et al. (2007), also hold similar views, point out that frequency of contact is particularly important, because the process of changing teaching practice involves substantive new learning, in an iterative process (p. xxviii).
These sources also benefited my professional development by providing me emotional support, as they understood comprehensively the problems that a teacher from China might experience, and provided me with the most practical teaching knowledge of local schools. I understood my peers to be a positive learning community of like-minded and empathetic colleagues (Schuck et al., 2008, p. 216), which was very beneficial for my professional learning, through the strong professional and personal relationships between each of us (Schuck et al., 2008, p. 222). This kind of close, trusted and equal relationship played a powerful role in enhancing my professional development, because it enabled me to be more open to challenges, more questioning of my own practice, raising doubts and discussing the challenges I had (Schuck et al., 2008). Academically, peer collaboration supported my reflective thinking about my role and my active engagement in my own development (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005), and also shifted my focus onto self regulation, mutual support and reciprocal learning (Costa & Garmston, 2002; Wynn & Kromrey, 2000). In conclusion, peer collaboration enhanced professional learning because beginning teachers shared the quest for knowledge with a willingness to clarify perceptions for others, providing security which is born of mutual respect and prolonged engagement with ideas that mattered to them (Schuck et al., 2008, p. 224).

Similarly, my primary supervisor provided knowledge in an informal collaborative learning manner. However, she also acted as a mentor to me. Many scholars agree that mentoring is very useful for teacher professional learning, especially for beginning teachers (McCormack, Gore & Thomas, 2006; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). In the absence of a school-based mentor, my primary supervisor provided me with the expertise and personal qualities to support and monitor my learning. She had a common interest with me in helping me with my research, and this kind of supportvaluably contributed to a higher level of “professional conversation, advice and assistance including team teaching and observations of lessons” (McCormack, Gore & Thomas, 2006, p. 107).

The support I received from the ROSETE peers and my primary supervisor provided me sustained learning opportunities. Sustained learning opportunities are those
valuable chances that extend over the initial year of teaching and that are flexible enough to allow teachers to build up their own agendas, based on unique personal and situational factors (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). It is through complex interactions of personal and situational factors “that early-career teachers form a professional identity and construct professional practice with the capacity for continued professional learning” (McCormack, Gore & Thomas, 2006, p. 97).

The most useful school-based support I received was help from the class teacher. Class teachers are often regarded as mentors, experienced teachers with professional and personal qualities who play an important role for early-career teachers through “professional conversation, advice and assistance including team teaching and observations of lessons” (McCormack, Gore & Thomas, 2006, p. 107). The value of such mentors lies in their “capacity to foster an inquiring stance towards teaching and a commitment to developing shared standards for judging good practice” (Walkington, 2005, p. 56). On one hand, the class teacher helped to intervene in my stage development through helping me reframe complex teaching practice problems, such as how to understand classroom challenges (Langdon, 2011). This contributed to developing my long-term professional identity rather than just improving my concrete functional competences (Walkington, 2005). Through this mentoring, my teaching in a particular teaching context was shaped (Walkington, 2005; Fry, 2007).

The benefits of being mentored by other experienced teachers did not extend to the other teachers within the school where I taught. Other teachers could only provide occasional academic advice about teaching specific groups of students and mostly contributed to providing general advice on teaching methods in this particular school. This was because none of them had ideas about teaching Chinese in the school. This knowledge gap made it harder for me to follow good models, and it was hard for the school to be able to provide me with suitable specific mentoring. It was hard to adopt an inquiring stance about teaching while referring to shared standards of good practice. The school didn’t offer me a professional learning induction, and this decreased my interaction with class teachers at an academic level. I needed to take a long time to feel comfortable about consulting these class teachers, and this also lessened my opportunities to get mentoring support from the school.
High-quality induction, mentoring and professional learning programs is understood to be vital to the retention and support of beginning teachers and also to achieve the goal of improving their quality teaching (McCormack, Gore & Thomas, 2006). However, I experienced myself, as a teacher of Chinese, to be marginalized in the school. Other teachers did not assign much importance to learning Chinese. Also, as Chinese was totally new for them, it was hard for me to pique their interest in talking about Chinese lessons. McCluskey, Cheryl & Johnson (2011) investigated a case where a Chinese teacher felt excluded and accounted for this in terms of her positioning in the community. She perceived that “people don’t value Chinese as a subject” and that Chinese learning was regarded as similar to “accounting and junior business” (p. 84). Similarly, in my experience, my position seemed to be considered inferior to that of other teachers.

Exacerbating this marginalization was that I was at the school only one day per week, and was additionally therefore regarded as a visitor or casual teacher in the school. I was seldom involved in the school’s professional learning events or groups, because they thought it was not necessary to involve me. In addition, I had few opportunities to avail myself of the valuable support of class teachers on a less formalized, even accidental basis (Marsick & Watkins, 1990). Other casual or marginalized teacher groups had similar experiences. Anderson (2007) investigated a number of contingent teachers and found that they gained their academic professional development mainly through informal professional learning. However, the reliance on informal learning opportunities can be problematic as “contingent staffs need confidence to seek help and need to know who to approach” (p. 116). The exclusion of contingent teachers from routines of local feedback and communicating would cause unproductive consequences for the development of those casual teachers (Coombe & Clancy, 2002).

7.2.2 Individual learning as a form of professional development

In addition to collaborative professional learning, individual learning, including my own professional research and self-reflective journals supporting my professional development, was also valuable for my professional development, because as I reflected on new knowledge, it then became my own. Over time, this manifested in changed practice.
My own professional research also helped to enrich both practical and theoretical knowledge simultaneously. This improvement in professional knowledge contributed to my professional development by through the constant gleaning of new knowledge and information (Kwakman, 2003). Kwakman (2003) claimed that keeping up to date was the very essential for professional learning as it provided new insights and developments which influenced the professional field (Kwakman, 2003). Developing the habit of researching my practical teaching issues was also very helpful in keeping me informed about the new knowledge and about new teaching ideas, from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Also, I developed the ability to use theoretical concepts to reflect on my practical teaching experience, and this contributed to my understanding the rules underlying a group of specific teaching strategies. It was through the process that I succeeded in making this kind of teaching strategies as my own. Finally, the design of my research routine assisted in lifting this heavy burden of learning to teach, and also contributed to my ability to develop responses to teaching problems more independently.

Reflection was my main source of data. It was very important for gaining professional knowledge and changing practice. Self-reflective journals helped me align with local teaching practice through examining and changing my practice. Reflection was regarded as a cornerstone of my professional development, as it was prerequisite to recognizing and changing routine behavior (Kwakman, 2003). By building up my teaching routines after reflection on changing practice, I tried to realize the aim of improving the quality of my teaching practice. In addition, the act of reflection also helped me improve my use of the feedback that may spring from different learning sources within the work environment (Kwakman, 2003, p. 153), such as supervisors’ advice, conversations with class teachers, students’ feedback and well peers learning activities.

My individual professional learning was a way of negotiating myself within a broader context and of repositioning my identity as a Chinese teacher, thus contributing to the enhancement of my professional identity.
7.3 Supporting the identity of a beginning non-native language teacher

The third research question of this study was: How do these changes contribute to my professional identity in the process of learning to be a teacher within Western Sydney context? It demonstrated that development of my teacher identity processed through “reflecting my ideas of ‘how to be’, ‘how to act’ and ‘how to understand’ my work and my place in society” (Sache, 2005, p. 15). “How to be”, reflected the process of choosing which knowledge to change during my teaching. “How to act” reflected a series of teaching strategies that I adopted to realize my vocational goals, and “how to understand” reflected my final reflections on my teaching process as a whole, over its development.

The findings showed that my achievements in practical knowledge influenced my professional identity to a great extent. They contributed to my identity from the perspective both of academic and intercultural needs. Practical knowledge refers to the “integrated set of knowledge, conceptions, beliefs and values teachers themselves develop in the context of the teaching situation” (Beijaard et al., 2001, p. 142). It can also be understood as a general framework of teacher cognition (Borge, 2003). Once armed with practical knowledge, this can help to solve the problems in reality that seems unsolved through theoretical solutions (Loughran, 2007b).

From the academic perspective, I tended to develop my teacher identity as a professional pedagogical expert, “who based their professionalism on knowledge and skills to support students’ social, emotional and moral development” (Beijaard, et al., 2000, p. 754). I came to spare no effort to become a pedagogy expert because I didn’t have the right education background and I was just starting to teach. This pushed me to find that pedagogical theory was the most important and urgent ability that I needed to develop. In chapter 4 it is noted that all of my achievements in action cycle 1 focused on my effort to master some effective teaching strategies. In chapter 6, my achievements were demonstrated to have reached for a higher level of practical knowledge, where I showed my professionalism in adapting teaching strategies to be more suitable for students, and in using student-centred teaching strategies. My professional teacher identity was formed through the pursuit of
practical knowledge, which was particularly important for me due to my “previous experience and personal background” (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 108).

In particular, my practical knowledge development also contributed to my professional identity as an interculturally-competent teacher who was able to “mediate between cultures” and who knew both foreign students’ culture and my own culture (Sercu, 2006; Nakahara & Black, 2007). Through my developed understanding of the cultures of China and Australia, I gradually learned to teach Chinese culture through students’ own culture. For example, I successfully used understandable lead-in questions to inquire about their family conditions, and connect their family experiences to those of Chinese families. My intercultural identity was formed through the interaction of linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competence (Sercu, 2006, Morgan, 2008).

In my case, practical knowledge was regarded as the core of my professionality, as it contributed to my professional teaching practice (Joffe, 2011). The continuous development in my practical knowledge led both to my positive sense of being a competent teacher (Beijaard, 2004) and also to my identity as an intercultural teacher. This resulted in a high degree of agency, in devoting myself to increasing my professionalism in pedagogical development, and developing it by being more willing to take more risks, by developing new ways of supporting and sustaining learning (Trust, 2012; Mockler, 2005).

Also, it cannot be ignored that my challenges also contributed to my identity formation in Australian context. As a native-Chinese teacher, the most significant problems for me were the classroom management issues. Both action cycles demonstrated that my ineffective instructions, using the wrong teaching strategies and lacking authority were the main reasons I failed to manage class. This was due to my Chinese cultural background, which had influenced my understanding of teaching. I had thought there was no doubt that teachers should get authority and respect naturally. So I had seen no need to put much attention and effort towards classroom management issues. From my perspective, class order would be better once the students were familiar with me. Yet classroom management was always my problem. As Beijaard et al. (2004) noted, nationality was likely to “link to the core of
my professional identity” (p. 122) and therefore being important for all aspects of my professional identity. Influenced by Chinese beliefs, I regarded myself as the commander whose order should be followed without question, and this hindered my identity development as an effective teacher.

Finally, the findings illustrated that both school context and the ROSETE context had big influences on my changing professional identity. Firstly, an unsupported school context had a negative influence on my professional learning and contributed to diminished identity as a casual teacher. Beauchamp & Thomas (2009) claim that contextual factors such as school staffs’ attitude and school administration can be active in forming new teachers’ professional identity. In my case, the school administration never arranged any professional learning activities for me to take part in, and they never arranged a mentor, despite the fact I was a novice teacher in their school. I found that the class teacher never offered me advice about my teaching, even though they were in class with me for every lesson. I supposed that class teacher’s negative attitude in helping me was caused by disregards for my needs from school administrations. This made me feel ignored and rather depressed; I did not feel myself to be a real teacher. Often, I felt pushed out by the school staffs, an outsider to the school groups. I positioned myself as inferior to the other teachers because their perceived impressions and thoughts about my teaching area, as I felt that “teachers didn’t value Chinese as a subject” or that it was not highly regarded, more like “accounting and junior business” (McCluskey, Sim & Johnson, 2011, p. 84). This led to my positioning myself as an outsider in the local teaching community, and I developed my identity of an inferior casual teacher.

On the other hand, I enjoyed full support from the ROSETE context in my professional learning, which contributed to developing my identity as a legitimate teacher. When I sought advice from this group, as an equal and legitimate member, I experienced joy, confidence, support, and a willingness to speak out freely. These positive emotions further contributed to a form of authentic labor that was relevant to my interests and desires (Jeffrey, 2008, p. 256) and that expressed teachers’ determination to produce expressions of value and quality. In that sense, the full support of my ROSETE peers helped my learning unfold in the tendency of “continuous spiral” in which my professional identity was seen as a development of
the self-belief and self-confidence that learners can bring to new challenges and contexts (Jeffrey, 2008). In their company I felt that I was professional enough to be a legitimate teacher.

In conclusion, as a native-Chinese L2 teacher teaching Mandarin in an Australian context, my professional development could be theorized in terms of social identity and situated learning identity (Varghese et al., 2005). Influenced by both Australian social culture and Chinese social culture, my practical knowledge development bolstered my identity as a professional pedagogical expert and an interculturally-competent teacher. However, as my beliefs about classroom management were dominated by Chinese social culture, I initially regarded myself as a powerful commander. In terms of situated learning, the marginalization I felt at school resulted in my feeling an outsider, a mere casual teacher, while the belonging I felt with ROSETE peers contributed to my feeling a real teacher. My professional identity was formed through such complex relationships between membership, competence, and legitimacy of access to practice (Tsui, 2007).

7.4 Chapter summary

This chapter summarizes the findings from the three evidentiary chapters. I have categorized and discussed these findings according to the three research questions. The first question was about my achievements and challenges during the research period. The findings showed that some of my early achievements and challenges were similar to those of other beginning teachers, because my professional development shared a similar trajectory with them in terms of shifts in my concerns about teaching. It is worth noting that my practical knowledge development showed that I had already moved from the self-concern to the impact-concerned stage, while my classroom management skills indicated that I remained at the level of the task-concerned stage. Hence, my staged development is best seen in terms of contrasts between inward-concern and outward-concern stages, rather than according to strictly linear time.

I have also shown how my challenges and achievements were distinct from those of other beginning teachers, because I was educated in China, which has a different educational culture from Australia. My Chinese belief that classroom management
was not a serious issue and would improve naturally, led to my lack of a professional learning orientation on such issues. Also, my identity as a semi-responsive teacher exacerbated this issue, and led to little development in class management at first.

The second research question focused on various professional teaching strategies that I used to develop my profession. This group of findings demonstrated two features of my professional learning system. First, although the support I got from the class teacher helped me gain knowledge about teaching in the particular school. However, it was less beneficial than it could have been, because of the restricted access to support. The fact that Chinese was a marginal subject and that I was at school for only a short time, may have resulted in this limited school-based support. Second, the support from ROSETE peers and supervisors was valuable for developing my profession because I felt I was a legitimate member of the professional learning community we developed. This provided me with both academic and emotional support.

The third question inquired into my identity development within these changes. It demonstrated that my professional identity was formed through the interaction of social and situated learning elements. First, the fact that I lacked the conventional educational background pushed me to put my professional learning focus on developing my practical teaching knowledge, which further contributed to my identity as a pedagogical expert. It was also worth noting that teaching Mandarin in an Australian context urged me to be an interculturally-competent teacher. Second, dominated by Chinese beliefs about of classroom management, I regarded myself as a powerful commander; this only hindered my development of classroom management. Third, the marginalization I felt with class teachers, made me regard myself as just a casual teacher, while the belonging I felt with ROSETE peers contributed to my feeling myself to be a legitimate teacher.
Chapter 8 Conclusion

8.0 Introduction

The project set out to explore the trajectory of my teacher’s identity development as an L2, beginning Mandarin teacher in an Australian context. It has identified my critical achievements and challenges, how I addressed these challenges through various kinds of professional learning and finally, how my teacher’s identity was reframed in the process. The study also sought to distinguish my distinct professional development from the conventional pattern of other beginning teachers, due to my cultural and educational background. The general theoretical literature on L2 teachers’ professional identity is inconclusive in respect of the teacher’s identity discourse. This study helps to bridge this gap and answers questions regarding: 1) the teacher identity of overseas-educated Mandarin teachers in Australia and 2) the teacher identity of those who do not have a teaching or education background.

This chapter starts by summarizing each of the previous chapters separately, recapping the whole process of how I developed my teaching professionalism and my teacher’s identity through two action research cycles. This is followed by reflections on implications for L2 teachers’ professional identity development, from the perspective of my developing teaching knowledge, my developing understanding of teaching, my changing teaching orientation and, finally, the enhancement of my teacher’s professional identity. Through researching my identity development trajectory, it has been demonstrated that other groups of L2 beginning teachers can refer to my experience and figure out better ways of developing their own identity.

8.1 Overview of the thesis

This thesis was a self study through action research, focused on my development as an L2 beginning teacher in western Sydney schools. As stated in chapter 1, my concerns in embarking upon my new teaching career in Australian were focused on the issue as to how I give could effective Chinese lessons when I was unskilled in oral English, lacked systematic knowledge of grammar and pedagogy, due to my
uncharacteristic educational background, and lack of experience in western schooling. For these reasons, the research questions that informed this thesis related to how I could enhance my professional identity as a beginner volunteer Mandarin teacher in Western Sydney schools. I aimed to find out the trajectory of how a beginning teacher like myself can thrive as an effective Mandarin teacher in English speaking countries.

Chapter 2 presented a theoretical framework that defined the key themes included in this study, and also some recent empirical studies presenting a contemporary understanding of those themes. These themes included: “professional identity”, “theories about beginning teachers’ development and influential factors of professional identity” and “professional learning”. Finally, gaps in the current empirical studies were discussed. They mainly focused, first, on the professional identity, professional learning and professional development of L2 beginning teachers without the right educational background and training experience for a particular teaching context. Second, how does this kind of teacher reason their practice and develop it into personal practical knowledge, and finally, how do professional learning strategies help to shape their professional identity?

Chapter 3 explained that self-study was suitable as a methodology because of its high involvement of self and reflexive dimensions, while action research was also involved, to serve the purpose of systematically collecting and analyzing data, as well as improving my teaching practice. It then showed that multiple data was used for triangulation, to validate this research through diverse sources, such as self-reflective journals, teachers’ observations and interviews, students’ questionnaire and formal discussion notes. Subsequently, the data were analyzed by conventional content analysis, to generate theories about how I enhanced my professional identity. The final section discusses the generalizability, validity and ethical issues of this research.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 were evidentiary chapters, organized to address the critical achievements, challenges and professional learning strategies in different cycles, to demonstrate how I developed my teaching practice through action research. Chapter 4 centred on critical achievements and challenges in action cycle 1. In terms of
achievements, it developed a storyline around the theme of engaging and enhancing students’ learning of Chinese. This achievement helped me to construct my trajectory of learning to be a teacher. It related my professional identity development to the development of my professional knowledge in Mandarin language teaching. My challenges focused on classroom management problems, including the use of ineffective teaching strategies, my lack of ability to give clear and assertive instructions, and my lack of authority in pushing students to follow my instructions. This demonstrates that my power and positioning in the classroom influenced my identity formation as an L2 beginning teacher.

Chapter 5 showed the collaborative and individual-oriented professional learning strategies that helped me to develop my teaching practice. In relation to collaborative learning, help from the ROSETE community (ROSETE peers and supervisors) was regarded as the most effective, because I felt a sense of belonging with this group, and they provided me practical and theoretical advice, as well as emotional support. However, learning from students and class teachers benefited me least, as I had less access to them and felt marginalized as a casual, Chinese language teacher. Individual-oriented learning strategies helped with digesting my reflections on teaching practice and incorporating reflections into my own knowledge. Among the various individual learning strategies, my own research into the profession aided me by keeping me informed with updated information, gleaning a deeper understanding of teaching strategies and the ability to solve problems independently. Reflections, however, helped with changing my practice and improving the availability of feedback from other learning sources.

Chapter 6 analyzed the achievements and challenges of cycle 2. For my professional achievements, the findings indicate I had developed my beliefs about student-centered pedagogy and successfully internalized such beliefs in using and adapting new teaching strategies. These achievements contributed to developing myself as a transformative and student-centred teacher. With regard to challenges, it reflects on my terrible experience of being unable to make Chinese lessons understandable, due to my lack of knowledge about students’ lives, experience and interests, as well as my inability to give effective instructions. The challenges can be attributed in part to my identity as a casual teacher, which led to my lack of access to
knowledge about addressing these two challenges.

8.2 Reflections on and implications of the research

8.2.1 Developed knowledge of teaching

This thesis documents my progress towards: “(zhi dian jiang shan, ji yang wen zi; Pondering national affairs, setting people afire with my words). As stated in Chapter 1, my aspiration was (and still is) to be skilled in teaching my disciplinary area well and to inspire my students to learn and achieve. The accumulation of professional practical knowledge supported my professional growth and capacities. As I stated in Chapter 1, I lacked ideas about teaching because I didn’t have the right background, so my idea of how to become professional quickly was to accumulate practical strategies. I took initiatives to develop my knowledge, to master some effective teaching strategies that could cater for all kinds of students, with different learning styles. This helped me to stimulate increasing student engagement in Chinese learning and to improve their learning outcomes through facilitating the learning process. Then, with the accumulation of successful experience, these strategies helped to guarantee my successful experience of Chinese lessons, which made me more confident again to give successful lessons and to try different things. In that sense, my development of practical knowledge was no longer just an accumulation of effective strategies, but can be understood as understanding the students’ knowledge base as a whole, as well as my ability to analyze these effective strategies and to develop strategies of my own that could be more suitable for students and more widely used. It was at this time that I found I could support students’ learning by finding the right teaching strategies in regard to students’ interest, ability and learning styles. Once the students showed sustained interest in my lessons and showed continuous positive performance, my teacher identity was enhanced as more confident and supportive.

8.2.2 Development of my understanding of teaching

The development, extension and refinement of my conceptualization of teaching are also documented in this thesis. In Chapter 1 I introduced the expression “(shi zhe, suo yi chuan dao shou ye jie huo ye; teachers are those who instill knowledge, train skills and dispel doubt for students). Prior to
undertaking this research, my understanding of a good teacher was of one who enjoyed authority through knowledge and had to acquire all the knowledge to answer students’ questions. My understanding reflected dominant Chinese constructions of the teacher. However, after the two action research cycles, my understanding of teaching professionals was changed. I found that in learning to teach, a good teacher is also a learner, so that their practice can continually undergo reflection and refinement. It was only with this continual learning and refinement that a teacher can meet students’ distinct learning needs at a particular time and in particular teaching contexts. If teachers want to successfully and continuously make students master subject knowledge, their primary duty is to gain knowledge about students, both by engaging with them in class and through varied assessment strategies. Once the teachers understand students, it is easy for them to choose ways of helping them to understand.

I also began to value answering students’ questions. As stated in Chapter 1, answering students’ questions was different from my experiences in China. At the beginning of action cycle 1, answering students’ questions was like a way of showing off my professional knowledge; what I did was just tell them the answer. Also, I often just answered the questions that sounded related to the topic. However, during the process of the action research cycles, answering students’ questions became more like a process of guiding students to explore the answers by themselves even sometimes including questions that seemed to have no relationship to the teaching topic. I would then try to guide them to think about the target topic by giving them some related questions. In a word, students’ unexpected questions came to be welcomed and became part of my Mandarin teaching. Their answers were elicited through some easy guiding questions and by their trying to figure out the answers by themselves.

8.2.3 Changed orientation of teacher

This study indicates that some of my teaching orientation changed in the process of the professional identity transformation in a Western Sydney teaching context. With the multiple actions I undertook to improve my teaching, some of my beliefs shifted because they worked well in the local teaching context, while some of them I didn’t acknowledge, as they didn’t work well in my lessons. The most important and
obvious orientation change was the culture-orientation change, which influences my beliefs and choices in respect of my pedagogy and classroom management.

It was identified that my prior experience as a Chinese heavily affected my initial professional identity. Then, by experiencing the difference between Chinese teaching philosophy and Australian teaching philosophy, I took many actions to adjust my teaching to being suitable for the local teaching context. Those actions which were successful changed my mind about teaching. In other respects I still relied on my Chinese beliefs, such as in relation to classroom management. This implies that cultural-orientation was hard to change, but once practical experience provided me with successful experience and I could immediately reflect on such experience, my orientation gradually changed. This suggests that teachers’ preparation programs should emphasize the importance of recognizing cultural differences in respect of pedagogy and classroom management, and designing professional learning activities and microteaching to gain successful experience in particular strategies. The schools should provide beginning teachers as many chances as possible to take part in the school’s activities and provide them with information about particular teaching contexts.

8.2.4 Enhanced professional identity: native Chinese L2 teachers in Australian schools

This study helped to identify my identity development from the initial basis of being an L2 beginning teacher with no teaching background. An important gap I have addressed is that as an intercultural L2 novice teacher, my identity exploration mainly happened through interaction with students and professionals. Many critical achievements and challenges happened mainly in my classroom, because of the cultural differences between the two teaching context. This study has provided abundant practice to demonstrate how the culture dimension of my identity development influenced my teaching in the local classroom. What is more important, this study has also provided detailed information on how I developed a rationale for my own practice through reflection, and how this process of reasoning developed into my own personal practical knowledge.

Many things can be learnt from the study in respect of enhancing the professional
development of native Chinese L2 teachers. First, it provides abundant concrete examples of effective teaching strategies in an Australian teaching context, which could act as a reference for future ROSETE volunteer Mandarin teachers. Second, my initial failure to improve classroom management was due to my unchanged beliefs about classroom management. This suggests that training groups or local schools should pay more attention to designing professional learning activities to educate novice teachers about intercultural differences in educational norms. Finally, it is also potentially valuable for beginning teachers who don’t get much support in their professional learning, as my professional learning system may provide a good example of how to make full use of resources to enhance their learning opportunities, and how to deal with multiple information sources in forming one’s own learning routine.

This study also provided detailed information about how I, as an L2 beginning teacher, developed my own informal professional learning system through ongoing academic dialogue and how different professional learning systems played different roles in developing my teaching. It implies that academic support should be sought from universities, local schools and in daily life, to form a sound collaborative learning system to support the beginning teacher’s academic and emotional development. Also, my informal professional learning system was improved when I involved individual-oriented reflection and information analysis. This study implies the importance of cultivating the beginning teacher’s ability to reflect on their own practice, and their ability to collect academic information and synthesize it as a reference for lesson planning.

This study has of course certain limitations. Further valuable research could be made into how to enhance the professional identity of native Chinese L2 teachers in Australian schools. First, it would be important to identify how the broader Western Sydney teaching context influences the native Chinese L2 teachers’ identity development in Australian schools. Second, further research is also needed into other ways of changing native Chinese L2 teachers’ teaching beliefs and making them more suitable for teaching in Australia. Third, the underlying factors affecting how this kind of beginning teacher reasons about and reflects on their teaching practice should be researched in greater depth. Finally, given the primary role played by
professional identity in helping the beginning teacher to develop the necessary confidence and self-esteem, collaborative research is needed to study the professional identities of a group of native Chinese L2 teachers, to improve the validity and generalizability of this kind of research.

I note in my introductory chapter to this thesis that two important elements in my early schooling shaped my passion for becoming a teacher. Firstly, the great respect in which this role is held in China, and the likely results on my identity that I might hope to experience by becoming one myself. Secondly, a crucial incident where one important teacher broke the convention of favoring only the top students in class and recognised my own needs and potential as an individual. I found in the course of this research, that while Chinese cultural assumptions about education are different to those in Australia, this approach of recognising student individuality and needs is both the norm and a necessity, and this realisation may have exciting implications for my future career as a teacher.


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Appendix 1: University of Western Sydney Ethics Approval

27 April 2012

Doctor Joanne Orlando,
Centre for Educational Research

Dear Joanne,

I wish to formally advise you that the Human Research Ethics Committee has approved your research proposal **H9508**“Self study of a native-Chinese novice Language 2 teacher’s professional identity in Western Sydney schools”, until 28 February 2013 with the provision of a progress report annually and a final report on completion.

Please quote the project number and title as indicated above on all correspondence related to this project.

This protocol covers the following researchers:
Dacheng Zhao, Joanne Orlando, Qian Liu.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Dr Anne Abraham
Chair, UWS Human Research Ethics Committee

j.orlando@uws.edu.au
Appendix 2: Letter to Principal of Participant School

Letter to the Principal

Dear Principal,

As part of a research project for the degree of Master of Education (Hons), researcher Qian Liu-a volunteer Mandarin teacher in your school, would like to conduct interviews with one class teacher in 6W, as well as invite them to observe and evaluate her teaching practice as data source for studying how the researcher enhances her teacher professional identity. The interview will take no more than 30 minutes after observation of Chinese lessons. Both teaching observations and interviews will happen once a month. In addition to that, students will also be asked to fill in some questionnaire at the end of lesson every four weeks. It will take 5-10 minutes during the class.

This project is designed to investigate how the beginning Mandarin teacher enhances her professional identity within Western Sydney Schools. The researcher will schedule interviews and invite class teachers to commit teaching observation. The researcher will also arrange some questionnaires for the students in experimental class during the normal Chinese lessons.

Participation in this research will be totally voluntary. Participants may withdraw at any stage if they want to. Should anyone have done this, unprocessed data can also be withdrawn at that stage. If you wish to know more about the research, please contact Qian Liu by email: 17320391@student.uws.edu.au.

Thank you in anticipation of your valuable contribution to this research project.

You sincerely,
Qian Liu

Centre for Educational Research, UWS

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is H9508. If you have any complaints or reservation about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel 02-4736 0083. Fax 02—47360013 or email humanethics@uws.edu.au. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidentiality and being investigated fully, and also, you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix 3: Information Sheet for Class Teacher

Human Research Ethics Committee
Office of Research Services

Participant Information Sheet

Project Title: Self-study of a native-Chinese, novice, Language 2 teacher's professional identity in Western Sydney Schools

Who is carrying out the study?
The Mandarin teacher Miss Qian Liu is carrying out this study.

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Qian Liu, a student of Master Degree of Education (Honors) in Education Research Centre in University of Western Sydney

What is the study about?
The purpose is to investigate how beginning Mandarin teachers develop their professional expertise.

What does the study involve?
For class teachers, this study will involve a classroom observations of Qian Liu's teaching and a follow-up 30 minute interviews. Each observation and interviews will happen 4 times during the whole research process

How much time will the study take?
The classroom observations will occur during the scheduled Mandarin class. There will be 4 observations over a period of 6 months. The 30 minute interview will take place after the classroom observation and a time suitable for the classroom teacher. In total the classroom teacher will be asked to participate in 4X30 minutes in total.

Will the study benefit me?
The study will be a professional discussion about Mandarin teaching which will help to improve Mandarin teaching by volunteer. Meanwhile, It can also stimulate the understanding of Chinese lessons of class teachers.

Will the study involve any discomfort for me?
This study will not cause any discomfort for the teachers. All the participants will use anonymous name and participant can withdraw whenever they want. There will be no consequence for non-participation like influencing relationship between class teacher and the Mandarin teacher. For the information from you will be kept in a locked cabinet to ensure confidentiality of the data.
How is this study being paid for?
The study is voluntary work.

Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?
The results will be presented in the thesis as an essential part in getting diploma of Master Degree of Education (Hons). It will be disseminated in the University of Western Sydney.

The results will also be presented in the report. The report will be submitted to NSW Department of Education Communication as an useful material for Mandarin teaching in NSW. Secondly, the report will be provided to the ethic committee of DEC. Finally, the report will also be provided to school if the school ask for.

Can I withdraw from the study?
Participation is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to be involved. There will be no consequence for non-participation like affecting relationship between class teachers and the Mandarin teacher. Even if you have participated -you can withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without any consequences. Just tell me in advance and I will destroy the previous data collected from you.

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, I will be available to answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please be free to contact me:
Qian Liu by calling 0416184533 or via email: 17320391@student.uws.edu.au
Dr. Joanne Orlando by calling 97726273 or via e-mail: j.orlando@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 [H9508]

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 +61 2 4736 0229 Fax +61 2 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 4: Information Sheet for ROSETE peers

Project Title: Self-study of a native-Chinese novice Language 2 teacher’s professional identity in Western Sydney Schools

Who is carrying out the study?
The Mandarin teacher Miss Qian Liu is carrying out this study.

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Qian Liu, a student of Master Degree of Education (Honors) in Education Research Centre in University of Western Sydney

What is the study about?
The purpose is to investigate how beginning Mandarin teachers develop their professional expertise.

What does the study involve?
The study will involve 30 minutes formal discussions once a month, with apparent guidelines and I will take notes about their opinions.

How much time will the study take?
The study will involve formal discussions once a month, each discussion will take 30 minutes.

Will the study benefit me?
It is a professional discussion about Chinese teaching practice in your school. It will help to stimulate your new ideas about Mandarin teaching and help to build up your professional identity as beginning Mandarin teachers.

Will the study involve any discomfort for me?
This study will not cause any discomfort for the teachers. All the participants will use anonymous name and participant can withdraw whenever they want. There will be no consequence for non-participation like affecting the relationship between ROSETE 4 peers. For the information from you will be kept in a locked cabinet to ensure confidentiality of the data.

How is this study being paid for?
The study is voluntary work.
Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?
The results will be presented in the thesis as an essential part in obtaining a Master Degree of Education (Hons). It will be disseminated in the University of Western Sydney.

The results will also be presented in the report. The report will be submitted to NSW Department of Education Communication as an useful material for Mandarin teaching in NSW. Secondly, the report will be provided to the ethic committee of DEC. Finally, the report will also be provided to school if the school ask for.

Can I withdraw from the study?
Participation is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to be involved. There will be no consequence for non-participation like affecting the relationship between ROSETE 4 peers. Even if you have participated - you can withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without any consequences. Just tell me in advance and I will destroy the previous data collected from you.

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, I will be available to answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please be free to contact me:
Qian Liu by calling 0416184533 or via e-mail: 17320391@student.uws.edu.au
Dr. Joanne Orlando by calling 9776273 or via e-mail: j.orlando@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 [H9508]

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 +61 2 4736 0229 Fax +61 2 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 5: Information Sheet for Students

Participant Information Sheet (for Students)

Human Research Ethics Committee
Office of Research Services

University of Western Sydney

Project Title: Self-study of a native-Chinese novice Language 2 teacher's professional identity in Western Sydney Schools

Who is carrying out the study?
The Mandarin teacher Miss Qian Liu is carrying out this study

Your are invited to participate in a study conducted by Miss Qian Liu, a student of Master Degree of Education in Education Research Center in University of Western Sydney and will form the basis for the degree of Master of Education at the University of Western Sydney under the supervision of Dr. Joanne Orlando.

What is the study about?
The purpose is to investigate how beginning Mandarin teachers develop their ability to teach you Chinese lessons.

What does the study involve?
During this study, you will only need to answer some questions about Mandarin teaching during normal Mandarin lessons. No extra time will be occupied.

How much time will the study take?
Recordings will be:
Collected on term 2 during Mandarin lessons
Stored in locked cabinet for 5 years, after which they will be destroyed.
Accessed by the researcher and her supervisors
Used in the following ways:
The information from this study will be used to complete a thesis for the Master of Education (Hons). The results will be reported to NSW Department of Education and Training and participating schools as requested.
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 accessed in the following ways:
Qian Liu by calling 0416184533 or via email: 17320391@student.uws.edu.au
Dr. Joanne Orlando by calling 0414723384 or via e-mail: j.orlando@uws.edu.au
Children not participating in the study will be ... no consequence, during the time the research is being carried out. Non-participation will not affect the relationship between students and the Mandarin teacher.

Will the study benefit me?
The study will focus on how beginning teachers develop their professional expertise, which will indirectly
be beneficial for you to learn Chinese.

Will the study have any discomforts?
This study will not cause any discomfort for you. Your true name will not be used and participants can withdraw whenever they want. There will be no consequence for non-participation like affecting relationship between the Mandarin teacher and students. For the information from you will be kept in a locked cabinet to ensure confidentiality of the data.

How is this study being paid for?
The study is voluntary work.

Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?
The results will be presented in the thesis as an essential part in getting diploma of Master Degree of Education (Hons). It will be used to complete a thesis for the Master of Education (Hons).

The results will also be presented in the report. The report will be submitted to NSW Department of Education Communication as an useful material for Mandarin teaching in NSW. Secondly, the report will be provided to the ethic committee of DEC. Finally, the report will also be provided to school if requested.

Can I withdraw my child from the study?
Your child's participation in the study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to consent. 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, I will be available to answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please be free to contact me:
Qian Liu by calling 0416184533 or via email: 17320391@student.uws.edu.au
Dr. Joanne Orlando by calling 97726273 or via e-mail: j.orlando@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 [H508]

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 +61 2 4736 0229 Fax +61 2 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 6: Information Sheet for Parents/Caregivers

Human Research Ethics Committee
Office of Research Services

Participant Information Sheet (Parent/Caregiver)

Project Title: Self-study of a native-Chinese novice Language 2 teacher’s professional identity in Western Sydney Schools

Who is carrying out the study?
The Mandarin teacher Miss Qian Liu is carrying out this study

Your child is invited to participate in a study conducted by Miss Qian Liu, a student of Master Degree of Education in Education Research Center in University of Western Sydney and will form the basis for the degree of Master of Education at the University of Western Sydney under the supervision of Dr. Joanne Orlando.

What is the study about?
The purpose is to investigate how beginning Mandarin teachers develop their professional expertise.

What does the study involve?
During this study, your child will only need to answer some questions about Mandarin teaching during normal Mandarin lessons. No extra time will be occupied.

How much time will the study take?
Recordings will be:
Collected on term 2 during Mandarin lessons
Stored in locked cabinet for 5 years, after which they will be destroyed.
Accessed by the researcher and her supervisors

Used in the following ways:
The information from this study will be used to complete a thesis for the Master of Education (Hons).
The results will be reported to NSW Department of Education and Training and participating schools as requested.
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 in the following ways:
Qian Liu by calling 0416184533 or via email: 17320391@student.uws.edu.au
Dr. Joanne Orlando by calling 97726273 or via e-mail: j.orlando@uws.edu.au

Children not participating in the study will be no consequence during the time the research is being carried out. Non-participation will not affect the relationship between students and the Mandarin teacher.

Will the study benefit me?
The study will focus on how beginning teachers develop their professional expertise, which will indirectly

Page 1 of 2
be beneficial for your children in Mandarin learning.

Will the study have any discomforts?
This study will not cause any discomfort for your children. All the participants will use anonymous name and participant can withdraw whenever they want. There will be no consequence for non-participation like affecting relationship between the Mandarin teacher and students. For the information from you will be kept in a locked cabinet to ensure confidentiality of the data.

How is this study being paid for?
The study is voluntary work.

Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?
The results will be presented in the thesis as an essential part in getting diploma of Master Degree of Education (Hons). It will be disseminated in the University of Western Sydney.

The results will also be presented in the report. The report will be submitted to NSW Department of Education Communication as an useful material for Mandarin teaching in NSW. Secondly, the report will be provided to the ethic committee of DEC. Finally, the report will also be provided to school if the school ask for.

Can I withdraw my child from the study?
Your child's participation in the study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to consent. 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, I will be available to answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please be free to contact me:
Qian Liu by calling 0416184533 or via email: 17320391@student.uws.edu.au
Dr. Joanne Orlando by calling 0414723384 or via e-mail: j.orlando@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 [H9508]

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 +61 2 4736 0229 Fax +61 2 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: Participant consent form for Class Teacher

Human Research Ethics Committee
Office of Research Services

University of Western Sydney

Participant Consent Form (class teachers)

Project Title: Self-study of a native-Chinese novice, Language 2 teacher’s, professional identity in Western Sydney Schools

I, ........................................, consent to participate in the research project titled: Self-study of a native-Chinese, novice, Language 2 teacher’s professional identity in Western Sydney Schools.

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 class observations and interviews. Class observation will be presented by your written feedback with some guidelines questions on it. Then a 30-minute interview will follow. Audio-tape will be used to record the interview. I consent to recording my views by audio-tape.

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: Locked Bag 1797, School of Education, University of Western Sydney, Penrith NSW 2751, Australia.

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee.
The Approval number is: [H6508]
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 +61 2 4736 0229 Fax +61 2 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.
Appendix 8: Participant consent form for ROSETE Peers

Project Title: Self-study of a native-Chinese, novice, Language 2 teacher's professional identity in Western Sydney Schools

I, ________________, consent to participate in the research project titled: Self-study of a native-Chinese, novice, Language 2 teacher's professional identity in Western Sydney Schools.

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 formal professional discussion. This discussion will take 30 minutes and I will just take some important notes about your teaching. After discussion, all the taking notes will be modified and then give the information you provide to you to check.

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: Locked Bag 1797, School of Education, University of Western Sydney, Penrith NSW 2751, Australia.

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee.

The Approval number is: [H0508]

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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 +61 2 4736 0229 Fax +61 2 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.
Appendix 9: Participant consent form for Parents/Caregivers

Human Research Ethics Committee
Office of Research Services
University of Western Sydney

Participant Consent Form for Parents/Caregivers

Project Title: Self-study of a native-Chinese novice Language 2 teacher’s professional identity in Western Sydney Schools

I, [print name]…….., give consent for my child [print name]……..to participate in the research project titled Self-study of a native-Chinese, novice, Language 2 teacher’s professional identity in Western Sydney Schools.

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 child’s involvement in the project with the researchers.

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 allowing my children to take part in the filling reflective questionnaire about the lessons. The questionnaire consists of 3-4 questions to help students to reflect what they learn. It will happen during the normal Chinese lessons and will take 5-8 minutes. Please cross out any activity that you do not wish your child to participate in.

Signed (Parent/caregiver): ____________________________ Signed (child): ____________________________

Name: ____________________________ Name: ____________________________

Date: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

Return Address: Locked Bag 1797, School of Education, University of Western Sydney, Penrith NSW 2751, Australia.
This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee.
The Approval number is: [H9508]

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 +61 2 4736 0229 Fax +61 2 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.
Appendix 10: Achievement-Work Schedule Measures

Research Timeline (July 2011—Dec 2011)

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Research Timeline (Jan 2012 - Dec 2012)

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Appendix 11: Interview Questions

Cycle 1

1. What do you think I have done well? Why?

   a. Could you talk about language I use in the lessons (Explanation to the words, is it clearly or and instruction language?)? What do you think about that? (Good part and negative part) Give some examples…

   b. Could you explain your opinion about my assessment part, like the activities I asked them to stand in a line and must do the right movement I called? Do you think it has achieve the following roles.

   c. What other advice that you could give me about improving that part?

   d. What do you think about the whole lessons organisation, do you think it is good for them to learn something or not, why? Could you provide me some advice about how to improve that part?

1. As I have been a teacher in this class for so long, so could you remember my first time to give lessons, could you just lists some of the parts that I have improved a lot from the beginning? Could you describe in details about how I develop in this aspect?

2. What part I haven’t done well, Could you give examples?

3. What part do you think I need to improve urgently, could you give me two examples and explain in details? Could you also provide some advice about how to improve it?
4. What else do you think I can make progress to stimulate students’ Chinese learning outcomes?

5. Except my effort to improve my practice, what else do you think the class community can be beneficial? Do you think it helps me to improve my profession expertise as a Mandarin teacher?

**Cycle 2**

1. From these two lessons, Is there anything that would found worked well in the ways I taught the lessons, could you give me examples?

2. What changes have you seen in my teaching? What I have done well and What aspects that I am not doing well
   a) Please comment on my process of encouraging students to learn more Chinese
   b) Please comment on the activities that I used to manage the class and students’ misbehavior
   c) Anything else that I have developed as a Mandarin teacher or some parts that still needs effort to improve

3. Please comment on the interactions with students

4. From your experience, what do you think is the challenge for learning Mandarin. Do I develop some ways to facilitate their learning and remembering of Mandarin, please give me some detail comment.

5. Please comment on the teaching competencies I have developed (teaching skills, language, subject knowledge).
6. Please comment on my development of teaching attitudes and behavior.

7. If you have to describe all the aspects of a good mandarin teacher both in and out of the classroom, what would you like to include. Could you give more description? If there any particular difficulties facing teachers of mandarin that other new teachers may not have to deal with.
Appendix 12: Observation sheets

Observation Sheet

Guideline Questions:

1. What do I do well in this lesson?
2. What do I need to improve for my teaching? Could you give some suggestion on the part that I need to improve.

The framework for observation is just help interviewee to expand the thoughts, but she didn’t need to limit her thinking on that.

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Framework of the observation:

Empower students learning (make students to learn more and remember more in limited time)

Whether I make students understand the goals before carrying every teaching
section.
Do students spend more time involved in learning than listening to the teacher
Whether students have positive interaction with teachers
Whether they got chance to reflect what and how they learnt
Whether students have engage in multidimensional tasks
Welcome other comments on my strategies in empowering students learning.

**Classroom management:**
Care about whether the Mandarin teacher:
Assertive and quick to students misbehavior
Encourage students and instill confidence in them
Whether I can handle the class by myself
Students interaction with my instruction is positive or not
Other parts that I have done well or also needs to improve in my class.

**Interaction with students**

**Comment on my teaching competency:**
Language (explanation & instruction)
Teaching skills & strategies
Subject knowledge
Other valuable things

**Professional attitudes & behavior**
Appendix 13: Students’ Questionnaire

Students’ Questionnaire for Cycle 1

1. What sorts of words would you use to describe today’s lesson (3 words)?

2. What have you learnt from these activities, are they valuable for you?

3. Would you like to take part in this kind of lessons more in the future, why?

4. Have you ever talk about this kind of lesson to the other people? How did you describe it?

Student Questionnaire for cycle 2

1. What you are interested in this Mandarin lesson? What helps you to remember more Chinese in the lessons (the way teacher teach, or activities, video or other things).

2. Do you think the activities help you learn more and remember more about Chinese? Please list the name of activity and explain which part does it help you to remember Chinese.

3. Do you enjoy the lessons? Why? If you did, would you like to follow teacher’s instruction to go through the lessons?

4. How was the lesson different from other lessons you have got, anything special feeling that you can share with me for having the lesson?

5. What is the most difficult part for you to learn in Chinese lessons, what activities would help you to make learning this part easy? Why? And what is easy part for you to learn, how do you learn it quickly?
Appendix 14: Formal Discussion Questions (ROSETA Peers)

1. What important things happened in your teaching this week? Why they are important?

2. Is there any changes have happened in your teaching in the past couple of weeks class? (role, teaching, confidence, relationships)

3. What things do you try to improve as a teacher, why and what sorts of things you have done so far to improve yourself as a teacher?

4. What sort of things will make you feel like a real teacher, and what sort of things will lessen your feeling as a teacher.

5. What do you think can help you get development as a teacher? Which support do you think will be most helpful to help you to be a teacher.