A ‘self-study’ of a Chinese teacher-researcher’s practice of transnational knowledge exchange:
Stimulating students’ Mandarin learning in Australia

HUANG Xiaowen

Bachelor of Arts
International Business and Communications Studies
(University of Nottingham, 2009)

Research-Oriented, School-Engaged Teacher Education Program
Centre for Educational Research
College of Arts
University of Western Sydney

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

8 January, 2011
Declaration

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 Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

HUANG Xiaowen
7 January, 2011
Acknowledgements

During my 18 months working as a volunteer Mandarin teacher in Western Sydney public schools and producing this MEd (Hons) thesis about what that involved, I have received great support from many people. It was their generous help and care that provided me ample opportunities to immerse myself in the local Western educational culture, as well as to engage in dynamic intercultural conversations. Those experiences have made this thesis in its present form.

First and foremost, my true gratitude goes to my principal supervisor, Professor Michael Singh, who consistently gave me encouragement during my study. His guidance was sound in regard to transnational knowledge exchange, his extensive feedback on the relationship between writing, reasoning, research and the production of this thesis, and professional advice on conducting Mandarin teaching. This resulted in my growing professional knowledge about research and education, and increased my confidence as a beginning transnational teacher-researcher.

Second, I sincerely thank Dr Dacheng Zhao, who always helped fix personal problems, and did so the first time these were raised. He also cared about my well-being in Australia, offering all of us volunteers a sense of “home.” Without his generous help and care, my Australian life would not have been as smooth and warm as it was.

I also would like to express my thanks to the research educators in the ROSETE team: my associate supervisor Dr Joanne Orlando, who gave me detailed suggestions for my thesis through discussing my research project; Associate Professor Wayne Sawyer, Dr Kevin Watson and Dr Katina Zammit, from whom I gained knowledge about educational theory and research through training workshops.

Third, I own my sincere gratitude to the Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau, the NSW Department of Education and Training (Western Sydney Region) and the Centre for Educational Research, University of Western Sydney for their valuable support. It was their collaborative efforts in establishing and maintaining the
ROSETE program that made my experiences as a volunteer in Australia possible. In addition, I have received extensive instruction from language methodology courses in both Ningbo and NSW, and this benefited me significantly in developing professional knowledge of teaching. I would like to especially thank Ms Cheryl Ballantyne for her support and insights into intercultural language teaching. Thanks also to Ms Evelyn Mark, the lecturer in the language method course provided by NSW DET. Her lessons were beneficial for me – a university graduate with no teaching experience – helping me to adapt and identify as a teacher in a markedly different educational culture.

I truly appreciated the efforts of the people with whom I worked in the local public schools, for helping me quickly adapt to this new teaching context. Their initiative in working out the complications of establishing my Mandarin teaching as part of the school routine was successful to a large extent; I appreciate the opportunities I was given to contribute to this endeavour. Their enthusiasm and warm consideration provided me valuable opportunities to experience the dynamics of Australian school life.

I am greatly indebted to my parents, who have always tried their best to offer me opportunities for receiving the best education. It was their support and care that made it possible to argue for a position as a teacher-researcher in the ROSETE Program. It was their financial and emotional support that allowed me to progress as a Mandarin teacher-researcher for 18 months in Australia. My thanks also go to my dear friends. They were always with me emotionally, giving me the faith and strength I needed to struggle with difficulties, homesickness and discouragements.

Lastly, thanks to all the researchers whose studies have been cited in this thesis. Their research greatly extended my professional understanding of the teaching and research issues that emerged during my study.
Table of Contents

List of Tables................................................................................................................. v
List of Figures ................................................................................................................. vi
List of Work Samples...................................................................................................... vii
List of Abbreviations...................................................................................................... viii
Author’s Conference Publications .............................................................................. ix
Abstract ............................................................................................................................ x

Chapter 1...................................................................................................................... 1
An Introduction to the Research Project ................................................................. 1
  1.1 Introduction .............................................................................................................. 1
  1.2 Context for this research project ............................................................................ 1
  1.3 Autobiographic review ......................................................................................... 2
  1.4 Refining the research questions .......................................................................... 5
  1.5 Significance and value ......................................................................................... 7
    1.5.1 Australian educational policy ........................................................................ 7
    1.5.2 Chinese educational policies .......................................................................... 9
    1.5.3 Transnational knowledge exchange .............................................................. 9
    1.5.4 “A paradigm shift” ........................................................................................ 11
  1.6 Overview of the research literature ...................................................................... 11
  1.7 Overview of research method .............................................................................. 12
  1.8 Thesis Statement ................................................................................................ 12
  1.9 Structure of the thesis ......................................................................................... 13

Chapter 2...................................................................................................................... 15
Intellectual context: .................................................................................................... 15
A conceptually driven review of the literature ...................................................... 15
  2.1 Introduction .............................................................................................................. 15
  2.2 Beginning teacher development .......................................................................... 15
  2.3 Factors influencing beginning teachers’ professional growth ......................... 17
    2.3.1 Support programs ......................................................................................... 17
    2.3.2 Self-reflection research ................................................................................. 17
    2.3.3 Prior knowledge ............................................................................................ 18
    2.3.4 Emotions ...................................................................................................... 18
  2.4 Language learners’ motivations .......................................................................... 20
  2.5 Quality Education ............................................................................................... 23
  2.6 Different approaches to language education .................................................... 26
    2.6.1 “Traditional” language teaching approaches ............................................. 28
    2.6.2 Communicative Language Teaching ............................................................ 29
  2.7 Context ................................................................................................................... 32
  2.8 Classroom management ....................................................................................... 33
  2.9 Cultural learning .................................................................................................. 34
  2.10 Knowledge ......................................................................................................... 35
    2.10.1 Prior knowledge and Connection/s .............................................................. 36
    2.10.2 Transnational knowledge exchange ............................................................ 38

Chapter 3...................................................................................................................... 41
Research method: ...................................................................................................... 41
Rationale, concerns and implementations .............................................................. 41
  3.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................. 41
  3.2 Flexible research design ...................................................................................... 41
  3.3 Research methodology: Teacher as researcher ................................................. 43
List of Tables

Table 1: The dimensions and elements of the NSW model of pedagogy .......... 24
Table 2: An Example of scoring classroom practices according to the QTF..... 25
Table 3: Participants in this research ................................................................. 74
Table 4: SWOT analysis for Mifeng HS/PS ...................................................... 95
Table 5: SWOT analysis for Mifeng HS/PS with strategies .............................. 96
Table 6: Overview of the interviewee’s values, beliefs and attitudes............. 102
Table 7: Overview of the interviewee’s values, beliefs and attitudes............. 103
List of Figures

Figure 1: Three dimensions of pedagogy in NSW public schools ......................... 24
Figure 2: Initial research design ............................................................................ 41
Figure 3: Experiential learning model based on second language learning .......... 44
Figure 4: The mapping of key concepts and themes .............................................. 75
Figure 5: Flow model of learning ....................................................................... 112
Figure 6: Model of interest–prior knowledge relationship ................................. 124
Figure 7: My practice of “transnational knowledge exchange” ......................... 170
List of Work Samples

Work sample 1: Dictation by student Lily ....................................................... 113
Work sample 2: Stroke-order practice ............................................................. 117
Work sample 3: Tracing 1-10 by stroke order ................................................. 118
Work sample 4: The historical development of Chinese characters .............. 126
Work sample 5: Grid system task in Chinese ................................................. 127
**List of Abbreviations**

CER: Centre for Educational Research (University of Western Sydney)
CLT: Communicative Language Teaching
DET: Department of Education and Training
ICT: Information Communication Technology
L1: First Language
L2: Second Language
LMP: Language Methodology Program
MEd (Hons): Master of Education (Honours)
NMEB: Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau
NSW: New South Wales
PE: Physical Education
ROSETE: Research-Oriented School-Engaged Teacher Education Program
SERAP: State Education Research Approval Process
UNNC: University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China
UWS: University of Western Sydney
**Author’s Conference Publications**


Abstract

Learning about the local educational context and then making decisions about teaching goals, methods and contents according to that context are the priorities for a foreign language teacher. This research thesis addresses the issues of a beginning teacher-researcher’s reflective professional learning while engaged in “transnational knowledge exchange” to stimulate Mandarin teaching and learning in Australian public schools from Stage 1 to Stage 4 classes. In this self-study research, data was gathered from researchers’ self-reflection journals. Three classes of primary school student, and a range of high school classes from different faculties, were involved in an 18-month Mandarin program of teaching and research. They contributed to this study through work samples produced during Mandarin lessons, in accordance with ethical procedures, ethics and parental approvals. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three teacher participants: classroom teachers who supervised the Mandarin lessons. The findings suggest that foreign language lessons in Australia do not always serve communicative purposes, so that the prevailing approach of “communicative language teaching” is questioned. It is suggested that what students “do not know” is a missing link between this language teaching method and making significant connection to students. In this study, the teacher-researcher found through reflection that the priority for teaching these Australian students was to stimulate students’ learning of Mandarin, and to eliminate their “ignorance” of modern China. This thesis argues that teaching Chinese knowledge and 21st century Chinese culture presents a possible way of eliminating students’ ignorance and stimulating their motivation to learn Mandarin. For the language teacher, this requires knowledge of Australian educational culture, so as to manage Mandarin classes, while also engaging prior knowledge about Mandarin teaching and research.
Chapter 1
An Introduction to the Research Project

1.1 Introduction

The research reported in this thesis is based on my experiences as a beginning teacher-researcher in Australian public schools. This chapter begins by providing background information about this research, introducing the teacher-researcher program in which I was involved, and provides a brief educational autobiography. Next, the process of refining the research questions is explained, along with the significance and value of this project. Finally, this chapter provides an overview of the research literature and the research methodology, and of the contribution this research makes. It concludes with a thesis statement and an indication of the structure of this thesis.

1.2 Context for this research project

The context for the research reported in this thesis was my participation as a volunteer teacher-researcher in an international educational partnership, namely the Research-Oriented School-Engaged Teacher Education (ROSETE) Program. The partners involved in this program are the Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau (NMEB) in China, the Centre of Education Research (CER) in the University of Western Sydney (UWS), and the New South Wales (NSW) Department of Education and Training (DET), Western Sydney Region. The three parties signed a Memorandum of Understanding promising that over five years, the NMEB would select up to fifty Chinese University graduates to work and study as volunteer teacher-researchers in Western Sydney. The volunteers work for 18 months as volunteer teachers in Western Sydney Region public schools to promote Mandarin \(^{1}\) and Chinese cultures. Simultaneously, the volunteers also pursue a Master of Education (Honours) research degree at UWS to produce a thesis that records and analyses their professional learning.

---

\(^{1}\) Mandarin is also known as “普通话” putonghua, “common language.” It is the legitimated official language in China. It is learnt by all Chinese students at school and spoken by over 650 million people in China, including Taiwan. Besides Mandarin, there is a huge variety of dialects spoken across China, and Cantonese has been one of those most commonly used overseas till recently (Zhao & Huang, 2010).
gained through their language teaching experiences in Australian schools. To prepare
the volunteer university graduates, the NMEB provides a one-month intensive course
about teaching Mandarin as a foreign language and an orientation to Western culture.
Likewise, the NSW DET also provides a twelve-week Languages Methodology
Program (LMP; see Appendix 13) for these beginning teachers to prepare them for their
language teaching experiences in Australia. The LMP develops the volunteers’
knowledge of language learning theory, practical classroom strategies, the NSW Quality
Teaching Framework (QTF) (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003) and
the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach, along with school visits and
observations (see Appendix 14).

Through the ROSETE Program, the NSW DET believes that the participation of these
Chinese volunteer teacher-researchers enriches the intellectual resources available for
Mandarin teaching in the Western Sydney Region. Thus, students in this less
economically advanced area of Sydney are able to gain opportunities to access a foreign
Asian language, and to be better prepared for their future development since Australia
has a close economic relationship with Asia, and particularly with China, in the 21st
Century. Moreover, UWS aims to develop the research capabilities of these volunteer
teacher-researchers through pursuing an MEd (Hons). Notably, Singh and Zhao (2008)
point out that using their bilingual capabilities and the knowledge these provide access
to, the volunteer teacher-researcher is able to and encouraged to, access intellectual
resources from China and locate these in relation to the evidences gained from their
teaching and life experience in Australia. It is expected that this will lead to the
“collaborative production and sharing of their funds of knowledge” (Singh & Zhao,
2008, p. 9) through the research candidates and their research educators working on
joint-authored papers arising from this thesis (Kamler, 2008). Finally, through the
ROSETE Program, the NMEB expects these Chinese volunteers to develop Western
pedagogical knowledge from their experiences as teacher-researchers in Australian
public schools, and to improve their English language proficiency. This pedagogical and
linguistic knowledge is expected to contribute to improving Chinese education when the
volunteers return to China.

1.3 Autobiographic review
The selection of Chinese volunteers for 2009-2010 began in November 2008 in Ningbo. As one of the qualified candidates, I passed the IELTS test with an overall score of 7.0, and scored Second Class Division One on the Mandarin test, which is the level required for teachers. As a university student, I also had practical experience as an employee, in the marketing division of an electronic banking company for one month. In addition, I had worked as a volunteer English language teacher during my university summer holidays, offering free English lessons at the homes of high school students who wanted to do extra study of English lessons during their holidays but could not afford the extra fees. My capability in the English language, as well as these work-related social experiences, gave me confidence in my performing well during the final interview for the selection of volunteers. Half a month later, I was told that I had been selected to be a volunteer teacher-researcher to work in Sydney.

My educational background is complex. I had been schooled for 12 years under China’s educational system, learning Chinese literacy, mathematics, English, and social and natural science. After graduating from one of the most competitive key high schools in Zhejiang province, I entered a British university in Ningbo – namely, the University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China (UNNC). At this overseas campus of the University of Nottingham, UK (UNUK) I majored in International Business and Communication Studies. The curriculum for this degree was fully developed at UNUK. Besides learning academic knowledge, I developed an understanding of Western educational culture, which is different from China’s. This degree was an exciting challenge to my English language proficiency, since all the modules were delivered by native English speakers; everything related to my degree followed the procedures as established in the UK. During my four years of university life my English improved significantly, especially my confidence in communicating with native English speakers. My academic skills were developed consistently through courses, and I also earned the opportunity to study at UNUK for one semester as an exchange student. I was regarded as an excellent student by my teachers and was seen by my relatives as an example of a successfully educated young woman.

Excellent Chinese students are supposed to develop their knowledge in five key fields, namely: 德 (dé) morals, 智 (zhì) academic studies, 体 (tǐ) sports, 美 (měi) art and 劳 (láo) work. Therefore, good academic performance is not believed to be the only
virtue of an excellent student in China. As a result, I was sent to learn art when I was a primary school student. Besides studying Chinese traditional painting, calligraphy and Western sketches, I also learnt to play the bassoon from my father and later, played as a member of a symphony orchestra at my high school. My childhood and life as a student were fulfilled with learning, practice and trying to gain good results from both art competitions and academic examinations. I became familiar with and well adapted to this educational philosophy: students should work hard to gain good results, and the idea of “having fun” cannot result in good results. The aim of learning was believed to be “good results”, rather than having fun or enjoyment – although I was highly motivated to learn arts.

Growing up in one of the most beautiful tourist cities in China – Hangzhou – I came to like travelling. I travelled across China during the winter and summer breaks. Shanghai, Nanjing in the east near my hometown; Beijing, Qingdao, Dalian and Harbin in the north; Yunnan in the west; and Guangzhou, Shenzhen in the south. A huge number of photographs in my computer capture the everyday real life of modern Chinese citizens and what is happening in 21st century China. During my experience as an exchange student, I travelled around Britain and Switzerland, talking with people from different cultures. All of these travel experiences enriched my knowledge system.

The development of my knowledge system was shaped by my 20 years of education and life experiences in China, 4 years of Western education and a one semester stay in the UK. In other words, both Chinese and Western educational culture contributed to the development of my knowledge system prior to coming to Australia. I am a kind of cosmopolitan person (Rizvi, 2005), who is able to move between the boundaries of two systems of intellectual resources and cultural beliefs, to position myself in a local/global context. Growing up in China, I am still very much a Chinese person; my 20 years of Chinese schooling influenced my development. My 18 months of study at UWS, including my teaching at Australian public schools and living with Australian families, have been part of my ongoing learning, informing my critical reflections. Like all valuable learning, this was filled with shocks, questions, challenges and growth. The research reported in this thesis provided a useful way to conceptualise these shocks, questions and challenges and this growth, in a novel way. Notably, the study records language teaching and learning situations of China and Australia. The difference between second language teaching and learning is part of the teacher-researcher’s
knowledge system. Although the teacher-researcher understands these differences, she failed to reflect on this as part of her Mandarin teaching pedagogy at the early stage of teaching in Australia. However, this thesis reports a self-study and not a comparative study. This self-study explored the teacher-researcher’s professional learning over time. Readers looking for a comparative study, and in particular a comparison of teaching strategies to deal with those differences, will be disappointed, because this is not the focus of the research reported in this thesis. Moreover, the teacher-researcher illustrates the idea of different “contexts” by focusing on teaching Mandarin in different schools across Western Sydney, as this was the focus of this research. If the discussion had been extended into a comparative study, the reflection would not be as powerful as it is. A key point made in this thesis is that the context of second language (Mandarin) teaching and learning varies dramatically within Sydney, the focus for my research. This study did not require a comparison between two different societies.

1.4 Refining the research questions

My initial research focus was informed by reflection on my complex knowledge system and differences in language teaching approaches and educational cultures between China and Australia. Initially I thought I would set out to investigate how beginning teachers such as myself used their prior knowledge, mainly based on my “traditional” learning experiences in China, as I tried to learn different pedagogical knowledge (about CLT) so as to stimulate the learning of Mandarin in Australia. When learning English in school in China, I was heavily influenced by the grammar-translation approach [see 4.2.3], but I also experienced some CLT at UNNC. In learning to be a Mandarin teacher in Australia I expected to follow the CLT approach, but anticipated that my teaching would be influenced by my prior knowledge of teaching and learning a foreign language. So, I anticipated that there would be tension as I negotiated the borders that I would have to cross between these different approaches to teaching. How I worked out this tension, negotiated an approach to language teaching and learned to become a Mandarin teacher seemed like a promising focus for my investigation. It seemed that in order to achieve quality teaching I would have to shift between my two knowledge systems and establish my own position. Thus, I came up with the following main research question: Can a beginning teacher successfully bridge the complexities between different knowledge systems to achieve quality teaching as defined in the NSW DET Quality Teaching Framework? My initial contributory questions were:
1. How can I characterise the complexities of my current knowledge system?
2. What are the complications in my current knowledge system?
3. How are the ‘tensions’ in negotiating the boundaries between the complex knowledge systems worked out in my teaching of Mandarin in Australia?
4. What advances in pedagogical knowledge can BE derived from an analysis of the tensions involved in negotiating the borders of these knowledge systems?
5. Do I successfully generate new pedagogical knowledge as a beginning teacher?
6. Does the new pedagogical knowledge learnt in Australia, together with my prior knowledge from China, enhance the quality of my teaching of Mandarin in Australia?

After teaching Mandarin for several months in Australia, with different groups of students, I found that the particular school in which I was working as a volunteer raised researchable issues that had a significant impact on my understanding of being a Mandarin teacher. My studies at UWS gave me deeper insights into my role as a Chinese teacher-researcher. As I analysed the data set I refined my research questions several times. The research investigated my development as a beginning Mandarin teacher in a particular context: Mifeng High School (HS) and Mifeng Public School (PS) in Western Sydney Region. I, as a Chinese volunteer teacher, tried to teach a group of Australian students who knew little about China and were not motivated to learn Mandarin. This thesis records and analyses evidence of the changes in my concerns when I was teaching, and the changes in my teaching strategies to address these different concerns. This thesis argues that identifying the context of teaching is necessary to ensure learning benefits to students. The idea of transnational knowledge exchange provided a useful tool to guide me through these challenges and helped me to clarify the importance of “two-way” communication and learning in both research and teaching.

This led me to my research question: Can a Chinese teacher-researcher’s practices of transnational knowledge exchange motivate Australian students’ learning of Mandarin? My contributory questions were as follows:

1. How does the educational context create tensions in teaching?

---

2 This name of “Mifeng” and all other names used in the thesis are pseudonyms.
2. How can the tensions of teaching Chinese knowledge to students at Mifeng HS and PS be addressed?
3. How does transnational knowledge exchange contribute to teaching in Australian schools?

1.5 Significance and value

This section identifies the significance and worthiness of this study in terms of Australian and Chinese educational policies, as well as the importance of transnational knowledge exchange.

1.5.1 Australian educational policy

Mandarin as an Asian language has been included in the National Asian Languages and Studies in School Program (NALSSP) since 2009 (Australian Government, 2010). This Australian government program aims to promote Asian languages, including Mandarin, among Australian school students. As stated in the NALSSP Guidelines, the Program aims to “significantly increase the number of Australian students becoming proficient at learning the language and understanding the cultures of our Asian neighbours [and to] increase the number of Asian language teachers and develop a specialist curriculum for advanced language students” (NSW DET, 2010, p. 1). Documenting my volunteer experiences and professional learning as a beginning Mandarin teacher through this self-study research might provide evidence for NSW DET to examine key issues reflecting to NALSSP from the perspective of an overseas teacher-researcher. Moreover, this reflective research shows that a beginning teacher-researcher’s professional knowledge about Mandarin teaching can grow, through a robust and rigorous process. This approach to improving professional understanding in language teaching and Australian education can improve the quality of teaching and benefit students. Mandarin teachers from China are likely to face tensions dealing with the dramatic differences between Chinese and Western teaching/learning. This self-study research provides a picture of how these tensions are worked out through positioning one’s intellectual resources and taking a position on the productive use of Chinese knowledge. Moreover, it could be especially meaningful for Chinese teachers who find themselves struggling in the same situation and provide some suggestions or inspiration.
1.5.2 Chinese educational policies

The Chinese Government has established policies to stimulate Mandarin learning overseas (Zhao & Huang, 2010). Since its economic rise, China has been increasingly relating to the rest of the world through international trade (Bussière & Schnatz, 2009). This is especially evident in the preponderance of products labelled “made in China.” The rest of the world now faces a situation where being a world citizen means knowing not only English but also Chinese, and knowing the intrinsic worth of Chinese culture. The situation is such that “China needs foreign languages, the world needs Chinese” (Gil cited in Zhao & Huang, 2010, p. 129). The Chinese government has established Confucius Institutions all across the world to offer opportunities for non-Chinese speakers to be educated in the use of the Mandarin and about Chinese culture. Although China has achieved significant increases in the number of overseas Chinese learners and the number of overseas Confucius Institution, the most immediate concern is the serious shortage in “teacher trainers who can provide meaningful pedagogical professional development for pre-service or practising Chinese teachers” (Wang cited in Zhao & Huang, 2010, p. 137). Curriculum and pedagogical adjustments are required by Mandarin teachers from China to meet local educational cultures in different countries. Differences between Chinese and Western educational cultures make the curriculum and Mandarin teacher education, issues for the Chinese government. This self-study research will contribute to ideas for improving teacher education for beginning Mandarin teachers from China, as well as offering some insights into curriculum adjustment that may be useful for the Chinese government.

1.5.3 Transnational knowledge exchange

The idea of transnational knowledge exchange (Singh, 2008; 2009; 2010) is explored in this thesis at two levels and across four dimensions. At the school level I taught Chinese knowledge to my Mandarin students in local public schools, and acquired local pedagogical knowledge to be a better language teacher. At the research level, I was enrolled in the MEd (Hons) Program as a teacher-researcher, learning Western research skills while using my Chinese conceptual knowledge for my data analysis and

---

3 Confucius (孔子 kǒng zǐ) was one of the greatest educational sages in China. His ideas have shaped Chinese educational culture and everyday cultures to a significant extent, and have been debated across the centuries up to the time of modern society.
interpretation, aiming to engage Western educational researchers with Chinese intellectual knowledge.

Thus, in terms of the significance and value of the research reported in this thesis, it contributes to the exchange of pedagogical and academic knowledge between China and Australia. Of particular note, this research contributes to the field of language education through the exchange of Chinese and Western conceptual knowledge, thereby extending my bilingual research capabilities.

For China, my learning of Western pedagogical knowledge at local schools and of academic knowledge at UWS provides an insight into how China can learn about Western knowledge. This would be useful for my future work in China. Further, this self-study research provides a methodological model for beginning teacher education which might be useful in China. The model focuses on engaging beginning teachers in educational research by having them collect data about, analysing and reflecting on, their own teaching practices. In addition, the NMEB and other educational authorities in China might learn from this study about the possibilities for employing this method systematically in the education of beginning teachers, to deepen and extend their professional learning. Moreover, this study generates new pedagogical knowledge that is different from that traditionally used in China. It is expected that the results from this might inform English language education in China.

For Australia, this study provides an account of how to engage a beginning language teacher in research, since the idea of “learning by doing” emerged as a key theme in this project. Together with the studies produced by the other teacher-researchers in the ROSETE Project, this study provides insights into ways of better engaging beginning teachers in research. My thesis, and those of my fellow volunteer teacher-researchers, will be available for analysis in terms of the benefits and limitations of teacher self-study. This in itself will provide a strong evidentiary base for introducing more effective beginning teacher professional development programs. Second, this research employs Chinese philosophical concepts as theoretical tools for data analysis and thus echoes the claim that Westerners need to be educated in and about Chinese theories. This is one of the key reasons why Chinese terms have been employed for conceptual analysis in this research. In addition, through analysing my Chinese educational perspectives on negotiating the Australia educational context, this study provides an
opportunity for Australian educators to learn about how China is developing a significant number of foreign language (English) speakers and bilingual intellectuals.

1.5.4 “A paradigm shift”

“Paradigm” is a concept made famous by Kuhn (1962) in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, in relation to science. It basically means a firm, trustworthy and commonly accepted foundation upon which further (science) practices are carried out (Kuhn, 1996). A “paradigm shift” can take place during a scientific revolution: It is a successive transition from one paradigm to another via revolution. This concept can be applied to language education. Currently, the major paradigm of language teaching in Australia is the CLT; this is evident in the NSW Department of Education and Training Language Methodology Program. The paradigm of language education in China is not CLT but is mainly traditional language teaching, such as the grammar-translation method. It was within that paradigm that I learnt English as my L2 sufficiently to gain an IELTS score of 7.0. However, the research reported in this thesis suggests a potential “paradigm shift” towards a third position, a paradigm which considers the context of learners as the basis for determining what to teach and how to teach. This leads to questioning the expanded use of CLT for language teaching regardless of the educational context.

1.6 Overview of the research literature

The literature review chapter (Chapter 2) presents what is already known from current research about the major topics addressed in this thesis. The first section in the literature review is about beginning teacher development (Arends, 2004; Ginns, Heirdsfield, Atweh, & Watters, 2001; Leask & Moorhouse, 2005; O’Neill, Moore, & McMullin, 2005; Watzke, 2004) and the factors influencing beginning teacher practices, which includes teacher support programs (Ginns, et al., 2001), self-reflective research (Ginns, et al., 2001), teacher’s prior knowledge (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Watzke, 2007) and emotions (Befus, 1988; Pavlenko, 2003; Pedersen, 1995; Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008). Also, the issue of quality education in China (Yao, 2002) and in NSW (NSW DET, 2003a) is examined. Contextualised in language education, literature respecting different approaches to language education is reviewed, mainly traditional language education (Harmer, 2007; Hinkel, 2005) and communicative language teaching (Ellis, 1996; Littlewood, 1981, 2007; Nunan, 2004; Richards &
Rodgers, 2001; Swan, 1985). Literature concerning the educational context (Bax, 2003; Burnaby & Sun, 1989; C. J. Kramsch, 1993; Seddon, 1995), language learning motivations (Bult, et al., 2010; Comanaru & Noels, 2009; Dörnyei, 1998; Dismore & Bailey, 2010; Li, 2005; Lucas, et al., 2010; Tobias, 1994), cultural learning (Kubota, Austin, & Saito-Abbott, 2003; Liddicoat, 2002; National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999) and classroom management (M. Ding, Li, Li, & Kulm, 2008; Lewis, Romi, Katz, & Qui, 2008; NSW DET, 2003a) contributes to understanding issues raised in the evidentiary chapters of this thesis. Finally, literature on knowledge construction, namely prior knowledge (Comanaru & Noels, 2009; Cummins, Davison, & Dörnyei, 2007; Holden & Hicks, 2007; NSW DET, 2003a), connections (Ellis, 1996; McCombs & Miller, 2009; NSW DET, 2003a; Tobias, 1994) and transnational knowledge exchange (Singh, 2009; Singh & Han, 2009), has been examined.

1.7 Overview of research method

In the methodology chapter (Chapter 3), the ideas of teacher-as-researcher (Griffiths & Tann, 1992; Harmer, 2007; Kohonen, 1992; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2008), self-study (LaBoskey, 2004; Loughran, 2004, 2005; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2008) and auto-ethnography (Chang, 2008), and issues of validity and credibility (Bernard & Ryan, 2009, p. 46; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007) are addressed. The notion of flexible research design (Robson, 2002) is then explained, along with details about the research site and participants. After that, the data collection strategies are outlined: these include self-reflections, personal memory data, teachers’ interview data and students’ work sample data. Data analysis strategies are also presented, followed by an explanation of how triangulation of data was used in the analysis. Grounded theory (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007) was used to guide the data analysis. Data analysis strategies (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Saldana, 2009) are presented in detail, followed by Singh’s (2010) model of the argumentative Chinese student, an analytical method for using Chinese concepts to analyse evidence of Australian education. I include a summary of Singh’s rationale and explain my implementation of it. Lastly, concerns and issues about research ethics emerging from this research are addressed.

1.8 Thesis Statement
This thesis argues that for beginning teachers from China, stimulating Mandarin learning among Australian students requires an ongoing process of reflecting upon the local educational context so as to develop engaging, strategic teaching practices.

Here I elaborate on this thesis statement. To simulate the learning of Mandarin among Australian students it is important for Chinese teacher-researchers to appreciate the Australian educational context, so they can use their strengths to overcome their weaknesses. This means learning about Australian students’ motivations and lack of knowledge (ignorance) about modern China. Strategies to stimulate Australian students’ learning involve making intellectual connections with their lives so as to create an interest in learning Mandarin, learning to manage students’ classroom behaviours, selecting Chinese knowledge that engages their interests, and teaching them about modern China.

Metaphorically, stimulating Mandarin language learning among Australian students is like establishing a Chinese business in Australia. This business metaphor, as I am a business studies graduate, integrates my prior knowledge into data analysis. While education is not a business, successful international business is based on the marketing process, which involves knowing the target market and the consumer, to determine effective strategies. Borrowing the Price, Place, Promotion, Product (4Ps) model of marketing mix (McCarthy, 1975) for use in this educational research, the place is the context of teaching (which has been discussed in Chapter 4). The product is the content of Mandarin teaching and my teaching practices, what and how I teach my students. The price is the extent to which students can “afford” Mandarin learning and Chinese knowledge, with Chinese considered a language requiring considerable investment. These issues of product price are examined across Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Lastly, promotion – that is, the issue of motivating learners – is analysed in Chapter 5. However, education is different from business, which seeks financial profit: the teaching of a foreign language aims to bring benefits to students. Educational “marketing” is to achieve higher Mandarin learning motivation, better understanding of 21st Century modern China and Chinese culture, and a positive classroom learning environment.

1.9 Structure of the thesis
The foregoing argument is developed through the following six chapters.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the research literature, to establish what is known and not known in terms of the research issues that are the focus of this study. It identifies key gaps in knowledge.

Chapter 3 explains and justifies the research process used in this study, including research design. It presents the methods by which original, primary evidence was generated and analysed.

Chapters 4 to 6 outline the evidence upon which the argument presented and analysed above is based.

Chapter 7 presents a summary of the research capabilities demonstrated throughout the chapters in this thesis; key findings which present the main contributions to knowledge arising from this study, the limitations and delimitations of this study, implications for stimulating the teaching and learning of Mandarin, and recommendations for further research.

The next chapter sets out to locate this study in the intellectual context provided by contemporary research literature.
Chapter 2
Intellectual context:
A conceptually driven review of the literature

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the key intellectual context for the study reported in this thesis is provided, in terms of relevant key concepts addressed in the research literature. For the self-study research project, the first section focuses on studies of beginning teachers and their knowledge, and also points to the importance of making decisions about teaching according to the local context. The focus of this self-study then turns to the literature on language teaching methodologies, including traditional language teaching methodology and communicative language teaching. The next body of literature to be reviewed concerns key aspects of language teaching and their importance. Literature about language learners’ motivation, context, connection, classroom management and transnational knowledge exchange is briefly reviewed. The presentation of key concepts in Chapter 2 mainly follows my development as a teacher-researcher. These themes came up in a chronological order.

2.2 Beginning teacher development

The early professional growth of beginning teachers can be categorised into various stages. These stages recognise that a beginning teacher moves from novice to professional; this is compatible with my novice experiences in Australia as a beginning teacher. Ginns, Heirdsfield, Atweh, and Watters (2001) argue a four stages theory of beginning teachers’ development. These four stages are survival, consolidation, renewal and maturity, with the first two stages characterising the initial one or two years of teaching. During the “survival stage”, beginning teachers focus on their self-interest, while during the “consolidation stage”, their concern shifts to students. Therefore, during my 18 months teaching I could expect to progress far into the consolidation stage. In contrast, Arends (2004, p. 30) and Leask and Moorhouse (2005, p. 22) add to this debate by claiming that there are three stages in the development of beginning teachers. First, during the survival stage the beginning teacher is concerned with self-image and
classroom management. The second stage focuses on the teaching situation and concerns whole class learning. Finally, attention shifts to concerns about individual pupils’ learning. Like the four stage model, these three phases also emphasise the progress of beginning teachers from self-concern to student-interests.

Ginns and others (2001) also identified a three phases model, moving from a non-concerned phase through an early teaching phase focusing on self-concern, through to a late teaching phase that focuses on students’ concerns. These three stages of concern: self, task, and impact, see a beginning teacher’s concern changing from self to tasks, to impact. However, there is limited evidence to indicate whether the direction of moving from “self to task to impact” is smooth, jumpy, or even reversible.

During the initial stages, beginning teachers “focus on practical problems and finding solutions to those problem” (Ginns, et al., 2001, p. 109), including issues such as classroom management, learning differences, and motivation. This solution-finding phase is experienced by beginning teachers, but for me the key question was how to identify the problems. In particular, I wanted to know whether there is an “authentic” strategy that could be applied to all the conditions. However, rather than seeking authentic solutions, Ginns and others (2001) point out the importance of “progression towards the establishment of a more reflective, proactive view of teaching and the teacher’s role.” Reflectivity, inquiry and a disposition to examine one’s teaching practice and beliefs, and being prepared to question one’s practice, can enhance one’s knowledge. These desirable attributes are developed by effective teacher-researchers. The suggestion is that:

beginning teachers should develop a framework for making decisions about what is, or what is not, useful or effective in their own practice . . . it is essential for a professional to have the freedom to make his or her own judgements with regard to appropriate practice. (Ginns, et al., 2001, p. 110)

This literature suggests the importance of beginning teachers being self-reflective and developing a teaching framework, to gain freedom in decision making. This is challenging for beginning teachers. Notably, it focuses on the importance of reading the context of language teaching and of making locally informed decisions, rather than following any standard syllabus. Questioning, reflecting and developing can empower a beginning teacher to develop and grow professionally. This process is strongly evident in the self-study research reported in this thesis.
2.3 Factors influencing beginning teachers’ professional growth

2.3.1 Support programs

Support programs help beginning teachers. As a teacher support program, the ROSETE Program fuelled my professional development as a teacher-researcher. A typical beginning teacher support program is a mentoring program (Ginns, et al., 2001), which assigns experts to help individual teachers to provide support and advice. I was involved in a mentoring program when I went to local public schools. Another support program for beginning teachers is to hand out materials and documents about employment and school regulations, and to provide school orientation before going to classes (Ginns, et al., 2001, p. 111). However, this model does not necessarily focus on empowering teachers to take control of their own professional development. In contrast, the ROSETE Program focuses on empowering beginning teachers to take control of their own professional development by analysing and reflecting on evidence of their practical teaching.

2.3.2 Self-reflection research

Engaging beginning teachers in critical analysis and self-reflection on the evidence of their research through teaching provides a pathway to achieving effective improvements in their teaching (Ginns, et al., 2001). The change in relationship between beginning teachers and university staff is worth considering at this point:

The beginning teachers’ experiences with the university staff had changed from a student-teacher relationship to a co-researcher relationship within a very short period of time. Arguably, the initial expectation of some of the teachers in joining the study was that they would receive continual support from some of their former lecturers during the first year of teaching. Some may have expected us to act as experts and mentors. In contrast, the attributes of action research imply strongly that reflection on practice is the process to use for improving practice, rather than expert advice. (Ginns, et al., 2001, p. 117)

This is a significant change for beginning teachers, from acquiring expert advice to making decisions about their own practice. This suggests that “learning by doing” is an appropriate way to develop the professional capabilities of beginning teachers, whose working contexts and background knowledge vary from one to another. I was learning
to be a language teacher by working in the field: conducting lessons to gain pedagogical knowledge through my practical teaching experiences and mentoring. The immediate relationship between myself and the field of practice offered me significant opportunities to contextualise the knowledge and strategies in my classroom practices.

2.3.3 Prior knowledge

A foreign language teacher today was a language learner yesterday, and the experience of the student can have a significant impact on a beginning language teacher’s classroom practice. Watzke (2007) defines prior knowledge in this context as follows:

The prior knowledge of preservice FL [FL=foreign language] teacher is represented by learning experiences as a FL student and by the modelling provided to them by past teachers. Preservice teachers either adopt or avoid specific practices from their prior knowledge based on the extent to which such practices reflect their personal theories of language learning. The research suggests that prior knowledge may be a more influential factor on the thinking and practice of preservice teachers than FL education courses or programs. (Watzke, 2007, p. 65)

Prior knowledge is a powerful factor that influences beginning teachers’ practice. In other words, a beginning language teacher cannot expect to escape being influenced by their prior language learning experiences and the modelling provided by their language teachers. Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) argue that “internal factors” also influence beginning teacher development, namely, personal knowledge such as teachers’ own language learning experience. Therefore, my past experience as an English learner could be expected to influence my classroom practices to a significant extent.

2.3.4 Emotions

Several factors may contribute to negative emotions in beginning teachers. In the language classes that were the focus of study, I had to use English – my L2 – to teach students who speak English as their L1. This situation put me into an “imagined community” which, according to Anderson (cited in Pavlenko, 2003, p. 253), means “imagination is a way to appropriate meanings and create new national identities; as such it has important ideological and identitary functions.” An imagined community can be defined in the following terms:
the invention of printing technology acquired an especially important role as a way to influence public imagination and to aid in the creation of nation-states, which he sees as imagined communities “because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” (Pavlenko, 2003, p. 253)

I anticipated that my Australian students who were learning Mandarin would probably imagine me as belonging to a different community. In other words, their self-positioning and positioning of myself was expected to influence their attitude toward the Mandarin learning process. This is because imagination:

plays both an educational and an identitary function: She [Norton] argues that if we do not acknowledge the imagined communities of the learners, we may exacerbate their nonparticipation and impact their learning trajectories in negative ways. (Norton cited in Pavlenko, 2003, p. 253)

Therefore, to identify one’s imagined community is important for L2 learners. For someone who is positioned in a non-native speaker/L2 learner community, they might see themselves as speaking an inferior language compared to the native speaker community. As a beginning teacher using English (my L2) to teach in a class where all students speak English as their first language (L1), I expected to be positioning myself in a non-native speaker community. This meant I had less confidence in my English, seeing it as inferior to my students, who are native speakers of English. In this particular context, a lack of confidence could lead to negative emotions such as depression and fear at the beginning of my teaching.

Traditionally, foreign language learners are not considered bilingual, as they have not grown up with two languages from birth (Pavlenko, 2003, p. 253). However, contemporary views on bilingualism are changing. Bilinguals are not only those who can manipulate L2 as fluently as L1, but also those who have acquired another language in classrooms and can use it at appropriate occasions in their daily life. This is despite the fact that:

They had never considered a possibility of seeing themselves and their future students as multicompetent users and as bilinguals and multilinguals rather than as those L2 learners. (Pavlenko, 2003, p. 253)

The changing attitude towards multilingualism is having a significant influence on L2 students. The concept of ‘multicompetence’ can be applied to such students. Cook (cited in Pavlenko, 2003, p. 262) defines multicompetence students as those “who know
more than one language” and “have a distinct compound state of mind, not equivalent to two monolingual states, and can be considered legitimate L2 users.” In other words, focusing on the multicompetence of L2 learners gives them a new identity, through which they can gain more confidence in using their L2. Therefore, as a L2 user working in Australian classrooms, seeing my identity in terms of multicompetence could give me confidence as a beginning teacher.

The second factor that can contribute to negative emotions is the “culture shock” of working in a new educational context. The term “culture shock” was coined by Kalvero Oberg, and is defined as “the anxiety resulting from not knowing what to do in a new culture”; it applies to an individual who has to adjust to “an unfamiliar social system where previous learning no longer applies” (Pedersen, 1995, p. 1). Befus (1988), Furnham and Bochner (1986), and Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping and Todman (2008) have analysed the causes of cultural shock among immigrants. It might be seen as necessary to eliminate negative emotions arising from cultural shock: however, those cultural shocks might possibly contribute to personal development. In my case, I took cultural shock as a source of my professional development as a teacher.

2.4 Language learners’ motivations

Language learners are motivated by complex and variable factors, which play important roles in the language learning process. To identify how motivation works for L2 learners was significant for my Mandarin teaching practices. Motivation is an important element in understanding human behaviour. Goal-setting motivation has an integrative orientation and an instrumental orientation (Dörnyei, 1998, p. 120). The former refers to a desire to learn L2 in order to make contact with the members from L2 (Lucas, et al., 2010, p. 5), and is influenced by the learners’ attitude towards the L2 community (Dörnyei, 1998, p. 123). Li’s (2005) analysis of her language acquisition process shows integrative motivation at work in her L2 acquisition:

I lived in an extended family with my mother, her brothers (my uncles) and her parents (my grandparents) for most of the time in Ningbo, where I acquired my first language, ND. Meanwhile my periodic visits to Shanghai gave me the chance to get involved in another language environment, where I learned some vocabulary of SD but soon forgot it after going back to my ‘regular’ language environment. Sometimes I learned some ancient Chinese poems in Mandarin from my father but never used Mandarin in my daily conversation. (Li, 2005, p. 96)
Language acquisition can take place automatically when a learner is in the L2 environment. The case above indicates integrative motivation works when L2 learners embrace the target language community. Comanaru and Noels (2009, p. 142) also demonstrate a link between integrative motivation and learning Chinese as a heritage language learner. Instrumental motivation is based on learners’ need to meet instrumental ends, such as examinations at school and promotions in the workplace. This literature suggests that integrative orientation aims to fulfil interpersonal needs, while instrumental orientation seeks to meet goals having a practical interest. However, consider for a moment the situation of an English speaker working in China. He/she needs to meet interpersonal communication needs as well as the practical needs of his/her workplace. This calls for the integration of two motivations working in a single person, which would make the analysis of his/her L2 motivations more complicated, if not confusing.

Intrinsic motivation is believed to give a significant impetus for L2 learning (Comanaru & Noels, 2009; Dörnyei, 1998; Lucas, et al., 2010). Intrinsic motivation refers to being engaged in certain activities that are “enjoyable and satisfying to do” (Lucas, et al., 2010, p. 6). Dörnyei (1998, p. 121) explains that intrinsic motivation works: a) to promote learning, which means gaining satisfaction in knowing something new, satisfying curiosity and exploring the world; b) promoting achievement, which means gaining pleasure in surpassing oneself, coping with challenges or creating something new; and c) enjoying stimulating experiences, which means to engage in activities to experience exciting sensations. In contrast, extrinsic motivations meet instrumental needs such as career promotion and prizes. Extrinsic motivation is typically believed to undermine intrinsic motivation, such that school students will lose their intrinsic interest in learning certain subjects if they have to meet extrinsic requirements imposed from schools. However, Dörnyei (1998, p. 121) points out that “internalised-extrinsic rewards” sometimes can lead to intrinsic motivation. Therefore, it is believed that integration of intrinsic interest and extrinsic rewards is effective in motivating L2 learners.

“Situational interests” (Tobias, 1994) focus on the motivating factors that emerge from, and are necessary at, the practical classroom level. Initially, students exhibit limited knowledge about a topic at the beginning stage of their learning. Situational interests can be stimulated “in the absence of much knowledge about the subject” (Tobias, 1994, p. 49). According to Tobias, this situational interest can develop into topic interests, that
is: “a preference for particular activities, text segments, or bodies of content” (Tobias, 1994, p. 47). However, this topic-based interest is different from domain interests, which are “more general interests in the domain to which that activity belongs” (Tobias, 1994, p. 47). Domain interest is a key for further knowledge acquisition, and is one of the important sources for developing intrinsic motivation in learning Mandarin and acquiring Chinese knowledge.

To contextualise motivation in L2 classrooms, classroom-specific elements need to be taken into consideration, including an appraisal of the teacher and the course. Cummins, Davison, and Dörnyei (2007) argue that the language teacher plays an important role in establishing a motivating classroom learning environment. There is a range of classroom-specific practices that can motivate L2 learners.

First, learners’ language-related values and attitudes need to be enhanced by promoting integrative and instrumental values. This might be a challenge for young Australian students; in this teaching-research context, a positive attitude towards learning about Chinese culture and modern China was essential. Second, increasing learners’ expectancy of success means to provide the students with pleasant experiences of learning Mandarin, thus increasing their intrinsic motivation for learning this language. Capeness, Kolatsis and Woods (2001, p. 41) point out that because of this type of motivation, learners are willing to take initiatives to learn a foreign language and take up the challenges this involves. Third, increasing goal-orientation means helping learners understand why they are learning Mandarin. This goal-related dimension of motivation (Dörnyei, 1998, p. 128) suggests that completing a task related to the target language may increase students’ expectancy of and confidence in learning the language. However, this might be challenging, especially for young students in primary school who do not actually know why they are at school, let alone why they are learning Mandarin. Fourth, it is important to make teaching relevant for the learners. This notion of relevance or connection is addressed later in this Chapter [See 2.6]. Fifth, creating realistic learner beliefs is necessary to eliminate or at least minimise inevitable disappointments, especially for learning Mandarin – one of the more difficult languages for English-speakers to learn. Enjoyment and having fun is another factor that can produce motivation among young learners. Bult, Verschren, Gorter, Jongmans, Piskur and Ketelaar (2010) centre children’s learning on enjoyment. Also, Dismore and Bailey (2010) mention the role of “enjoyment and fun” in the production of learning
motivation. Their research into students’ attitude towards Physical Education (PE) shows that students like PE because it is fun. It is also believed that learners are optimally motivated when their perceived skills and challenges are balanced: too much challenge leads to anxiety while easy tasks lead to boredom. Therefore, teachers should design tasks to suit learners’ capabilities.

2.5 Quality Education

Let us begin by briefly considering the issue of quality teaching in China. Using the term “quality” to describe modern education is popular in both Australia and China. Education reform in China advocates the idea of “quality education”, to replace the current examination-oriented education system. The concept of “quality education” is supported by Tao Xingzhi (cited in Yao, 2002, p. 272), who defines it as a:

   comprehensive education necessary to achieve all-round development as well as development of the individuality of a student including “moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education.”

Quality education in China focuses on raising the quality of living, as much as the overall ability of students’ learning. Moreover, it deals with psychological and moral issues, and pays attention to multiple intelligences. Contrary to examination-oriented education, quality education emphasises other competencies that need to be developed in students. However, although quality education is the central task for education reform in China, the effects of these reforms are largely limited, for various reasons. First, it requires “reform in every aspect of education and school work” (Yao, 2002, p. 272), and second, the development of curriculum for quality education is crucial. However, schools cannot make a radical change towards quality education under the strict examination-oriented, selective educational system which still prevails in China.

Now I turn to consideration of quality teaching in NSW and its model of pedagogy. The quality teaching model is a pedagogical approach developed by NSW DET (2003). There are three dimensions to pedagogy, namely:

   pedagogy that is fundamentally based on promoting high levels of intellectual quality; pedagogy that is soundly based on promoting a quality learning environment; pedagogy that develops and makes explicit to students the significance of their work. (NSW DET, 2003b, p. 5)
The three phrases in bold make up three dimensions of quality teaching, and each of these dimensions contains six elements (Table 1).

Table 1: The dimensions and elements of the NSW model of pedagogy

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

Source: NSW DET, 2003, p. 9

The importance of this pedagogical model has been described in the following terms.

Research has consistently shown that, of all the things that schools can control, it is the quality of pedagogy that most directly and most powerfully affects the quality of learning outcomes that students demonstrate. While teachers work in extremely complex environments, with a host of factors impacting on their work, the nature and quality of pedagogy is their core business. (NSW DET, 2003b, p. 4)

Therefore, analysing evidence of teachers’ classroom practices in terms of pedagogical quality is a tool that can be used to improve the quality of learning outcomes for students. These three aspects of this pedagogical model make it a useful and reliable framework for teacher-researchers to use to improve their classroom practices.

Figure 1: Three dimensions of pedagogy in NSW public schools
Source: NSW DET, 2003, p. 8
The NSW DET Quality Teaching Framework (QTF) (Professional Support and Curriculum Directorate, 2003) is a potentially appropriate model for analysing evidence from my Mandarin classes, due to the nature of my teaching content and the learners in my classes, because it “can be applied from Kindergarten to Year 12 and across all key learning areas” (NSW DET, 2003b, p. 4). Mandarin is a key learning area as “a language other than English”, and is widely promoted throughout Australia, as illustrated by the NALSSP. Moreover, learners in my classrooms ranged from Kindergarten to Year 6. Therefore, in terms of these two criteria the QTF is applicable to researching my teaching practices.

Second, the QTF claims to be relevant to complex contexts and a wide range of teaching approaches and strategies. The discussion paper claims that the model has been designed to cater for a wide variety of student and teacher individual differences. That is, across all the individual differences teachers take into account in their teaching, and across all the different styles of and approaches to teaching. (NSW DET, 2003b, p. 4)

For an early beginning teacher-researcher who has not developed a fixed teaching style, the model is an appropriate framework to use, to critically reflect upon my work. The individual differences between students and the differences in context are not a significant focus of my analysis.

In addition, one of the main purposes of developing this model is for teachers to critically reflect on their teaching. According to the discussion paper,

Teachers can use the [quality teaching] model as a self-reflection tool to help them to understand, analyse and focus their own teaching practices for improved student learning. (NSW DET, 2003b, p. 3)

Therefore, the QTF is used in this thesis as an aid to my reflection and analysis as a teacher-researcher (see Table 2). Its key elements and criteria are user-friendly. The criteria are explicit, thus reducing confusion or misunderstanding.

Table 2: An Example of scoring classroom practices according to the QTF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage/Year 5</th>
<th>KLA/Subject</th>
<th>Unit/Lesson</th>
<th>Everyone active everyday</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Element</td>
<td>Evidence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Deep</td>
<td>There is a sustained focus on the key concepts of the benefits of different kinds of physical activities, from personal, social and cultural perspectives.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Deep understanding</td>
<td>Students are required to provide information, analyse, evaluate and appraise for a substantial part of the task.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Problematic knowledge</td>
<td>Much of the knowledge is required to be treated as socially constructed, and interrogated from a number of perspectives, with opportunities to question students’ assumptions about physical activities and their health benefits.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Higher order thinking</td>
<td>Throughout the unit students are asked to organise, apply, analyse, question, predict, justify, synthesise, and evaluate information and create new meanings.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Metalanguage</td>
<td>Students are not explicitly required to refer to or comment on language and how it works.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>Substantive communication</td>
<td>Tasks require students to communicate their knowledge and understanding in a variety of modes – oral, written, visual and graphic – in a sustained and coherent manner around the key concepts.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Explicit quality criteria</td>
<td>No explicit statements regarding the quality of the work are made.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>High expectations</td>
<td>The majority of tasks present serious challenges for all students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Student direction</td>
<td>The unit provides opportunities for students to design their own physical activity program for the term.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Background knowledge</td>
<td>Tasks require students to substantially draw on their background knowledge. Connection to out-of-school knowledge is integral to most tasks.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Cultural knowledge</td>
<td>Students are required to substantially recognise and value the cultural knowledge of diverse social groupings, and to challenge the framework of the dominant culture.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Knowledge integration</td>
<td>The unit integrates knowledge within and between some subjects and KLAs, such as ICT, literacy, HSIE and gender equity. However, the links are not made explicit to students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Connectedness</td>
<td>The unit activities are highly connected, giving students opportunities to engage with and influence audiences beyond the classroom.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Narrative</td>
<td>Students are required to employ some narrative (listen to, read, view and tell stories) to illustrate and bring to life the knowledge they are addressing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NSW DET curriculum support (2009, p. 1)

**2.6 Different approaches to language education**

This research initially began with a concern about different approaches to language education. As an English learner from China, which has a different approach to language education, I was expected to conduct CLT in my work with Australian students. Therefore, there was a tension in my teaching between my experience and
expectations. Nevertheless, the process of working out this tension led me to explore more significant issues, considering the standardisation of language teaching. Although language teaching methodologies were no longer my primary research focus, the reviewing of the literature in this section provided me with necessary knowledge about Western educational culture and the disputes over language teaching methodologies.
2.6.1 “Traditional” language teaching approaches

Consider for a moment “traditional” language education. In the English language, the term “traditional” usually refers to something that is “less advanced”, but Chinese language suggests neither advancement nor inferiority when employing this term [see 3.6.4]. Based on this understanding, this thesis employs the term “traditional” to refer to some widely-adopted language teaching methodologies as “traditional” approaches – such as the grammar-translation method. Generally speaking, “traditional” approaches focus on mastering grammatical rules to construct sentences and on memorising vocabulary. The “grammar-translation method” (GTM) emerged early in the nineteenth century. According to Harmer (2007, p. 63), the GMT meant:

Students were given explanations of individual points of grammar, and then they were given sentences which exemplified those points. These sentences had to be translated from the target language (L2) back to the students’ first language (L1) and vice versa. . . . In the first place, language was treated at the level of the sentence only, with little study, certainly at the early stage, of longer texts. Secondly, there was little of any consideration of the spoken language. And thirdly, accuracy was considered to be a necessity.

In a “traditional” language class, GTM usually involves translation between the L2 and L1. In other words, L1 is used most of the time. Fotos (cited in Hinkel, 2005, p. 661) points out that the GTM was based on the assumption that “students had to know the grammar of their own language in order to learn an L2 through translation, paraphrase, and dictation.” Sometimes, a long sentence with complicated grammar requires translation. By strictly following the grammatical pattern, the result of the translation is judged for its accuracy.

A second “traditional” language teaching approach is the Audio-lingual teaching method, which is rooted in behaviourist studies from the 1920s to the 1930s. According to Harmer (2007):

[Audiolingualism used] the stimulus-response-reinforcement model, it attempted, through a continuous process of such positive reinforcement, to engender good habits in language learners . . . Much Audiolingual teaching stayed at the sentence level, and there was little placing of language in any kind of real-life context. A premium was still placed on accuracy; indeed Audiolingual methodology does its best to banish mistakes completely. (Harmer, 2007, p. 64)
In this widely adopted traditional language teaching method, the most common task is repetition. Students are asked to memorise vocabularies by writing them down and reading them out many times. Some typical sentence patterns are required to be memorised by students so that they can form similar sentences by changing some parts. Some students learn to manipulate some sentences just as a habitual reaction after many times of repetition; whether they understand the language is an open question.

The third “traditional” language teaching approach is called the “direct method”, which heavily focuses on oral language learning. Like the GTM, the sentence is the main object of interest, and accuracy is important (Harmer, 2007, p. 63). However, it differs from the GTM in that the direct method relates “the grammatical forms they were studying to objects and pictures, etc. in order to establish their meaning” (Harmer, 2007, p. 63). Moreover, a key feature of the direct method is the use of the target language in classrooms. This produces a prohibition against the use of L1 in language lessons. In addition, Fotos (cited in Hinkel, 2005, p. 663) argues that in the direct method, “reading and writing were based on oral practice and correct pronunciation was emphasized.” This feature promotes L2-only usage.

2.6.2 Communicative Language Teaching

In contrast to these “traditional” language teaching approaches, communicative language teaching has emerged as increasingly important. Communication is believed to be “at the heart of second language study, whether the communication takes place face-to-face, in writing, or across centuries through the reading of literature” (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999, p. 2). Communicative language teaching (CLT) is the major approach to teaching a second language in Western societies, including Australia. It emphasises interactions, conversation and the purposeful use of the target language. Language education has given first priority to CLT in virtually every Western society. Nunan (2004, p. 6) claims that “language is more than a set of grammatical rules, with attendant sets of vocabulary, to be memorized. It is a dynamic resource for creating meaning.” In other words, the CLT approach assumes that meaning is the priority for language teaching. Also, in order to acquire “meaning”, a strong CLT approach assumes that learning should be based on experience; in other words, unconscious development of the target language system by using the language for real communication (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 162). This experience-based view leads to CLT classes that claim one should engage students in
meaningful and authentic language use rather than the mechanical practice of language patterns. Since CLT gives priority to meaning rather than structure, “items which belong together semantically are taught together, even if they are structurally quite diverse” (Swan, 1985, p. 78). This means that students might be confused by different structures with similar meanings, and despite the interesting communicative activities, it need not achieve satisfactory language learning outcomes. Swan (1985) points out that:

Some points of grammar are difficult to learn, and need to be studied in isolation before students can do interesting things with them. It is no use making meaning tidy if grammar then becomes so untidy that it cannot be learnt properly. (Swan, 1985, p. 78)

It is quite important for English-speaking students to learn the grammar of Mandarin, which involves a different set of sentence structures from English. If students cannot make their meaning clear, the activities do not make sense. However, to study grammatical and structural knowledge in isolation is not considered worthwhile in the communicative approach. Communicative ability is considered the goal of foreign language teaching from the perspective of CLT. Bringing about communicative ability is understood in terms of teaching outcomes and the purpose of learning a language:

The students produced under the communicative approach are believed to be able to communicate with native speakers in a way appropriate to their mutual needs. And the desired outcomes can be ranged from functional tasks to academic complexity. And they will regard it as meaningless if learning is removed from their social context, such as pronunciation, grammar and spelling. (Ellis, 1996, p. 214)

Communication is important in the process of language learning, as is the social function of learning a language. The priority of using the target language in a social context is but one of the key ideas of CLT. Wilkins (cited in Littlewood, 1981, p. 4), one of the pioneers of CLT, believes that “the concern was with spoken functions as much as written grammar, and notions of when and how it was appropriate to say certain things were of primary importance.” In terms of teaching language functions or grammar, Nunan (2004, p. 9) points to the debates over whether grammar is an essential resource in making meaning and how it might be embedded in the curriculum. In this regard, Littlewood (1981) claims that,

The most efficient communicator in a foreign language is not always the person who is best at manipulating its structure. It is often the person who is most skilled at processing the complete situation involving himself and his hearer, taking account of what knowledge is already shared between them (e.g.
from the situation or from the preceding conversation), and selecting items which will communicate his message effectively. (Littlewood, 1981, p. 4)

Therefore, CLT is assumed to introduce the target language together with its functions and meaning, in order to make communication successful. However, there is debate about the weight given in language learning to function, relative to structure. Swan (1985) points out that,

[We] really need to question the whole idea that one syllabus, whether structural or functional, should be ‘privileged’, acting as the framework on which a whole course is built . . . to make sure that our students are trained to become fluent in whatever aspects of speaking, understanding, reading, and writing relate to their purpose. (Swan, 1985, p. 79)

CLT focuses on speaking, listening and understanding, while reading and writing are neglected, at least to some extent. This feature can lead to a lack of structure in knowledge acquisition and thus, to learning problems. It is assumed that vocabulary is important, to construct what students want to talk or ask about the world. According to Swan (1985, p. 81), “functions without lexis are no better than structure without lexis.” However, CLT de-emphasises grammar and vocabulary, which are important for constructing sentences.

Students might know what a particular phrase means, but may have no idea about how it is grammatically constructed and how it is linguistically different from their L1. As a result, it is noticeable that students who have been taught “你叫什么名字? (What’s your name?)” and “我叫. . . (My name is . . .)” cannot clearly distinguish the differences between “你 (you)” and “我 (me)”, even if it involves no change in subjective and objective position in Mandarin. A metaphor might be used, to capture the problem of learning “meaningless” structural language: A person who wants to play Beethoven on the violin could spend much time doing “irrelevant” practices rather than playing the passage for thousands of times:

[It] should be clear that effective learning can involve various kinds of ‘distancing’ from real-life behaviour that is its goal . . . we include some (repetition, rote learning, translation, structural drilling) which seem to have no immediate ‘communicative’ value. (Swan, 1985, p. 83)

To communicate in a target language is like “playing a passage of Beethoven’s violin music”, while learning to do so involves a variety of practices all the time. As a multi-skilled learner during my childhood, I learnt to play the bassoon and to draw. This involved a variety of practices, some of which seemed meaningless and boring, but did
provide a useful and firm foundation for further learning. Perhaps, a joint approach that combines both “traditional” and CLT approaches can be explored, so that the limitations of one can be supplemented by the strengths of the other.

2.7 Context

The concept of “context” is frequently used in the field of education. Seddon (1995, p. 394) argues that the use of “context” experienced a dramatic increase in this field from the 1980s onwards. This increasing use of “context” in everyday educational talk and in research, drew attention to the need to better understand it, and to consider its implications for the theory and practice of education. Interestingly, Collins (cited in Seddon, 1995, p.395) noted that NSW schooling was experiencing a reconstruction from the “traditional universal system of state-funded education” to “market niches: the state sector, the Catholic sector, the independent (private) sector”, which resulted from “a change in government [and was] accompanied by an explicit jettisoning of traditional liberal, social democratic Keynesian practices of public policy.” This educational restructuring represented a significant socio-political change in the context of a macro-environment of education, which included changes in its social organisation, cultural beliefs, economic configuration and government policies.

The broad context of the society shapes Australian education to a large extent. My work as a volunteer in NSW public schools was informed by this broad context; especially the changes borne of contemporary globalisation and the relationship between Australia and China. The National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP), which was initiated in 2008, aims to increase opportunities for Australian school students to become familiar with Mandarin and the Chinese culture/s (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2010). The broad socio-economic context shapes the agenda in this area of public education.

While the macro-context is influential, the micro-context of the classroom shapes teachers’ practices to an even greater and more significant extent. Bax (2003), in questioning the dominant role of CLT in Western language education, argues that it is the context – or contextual factors – in which language education takes place that should determine the teaching methodology that is adopted. The argument is that CLT neglects the importance of the context of teaching, and assumes that the “traditional”
Methodologies are backward while CLT is seen as “modern”, without considering the effectiveness of language teaching methods in given contexts. Bax’s (2003, p. 281) “context approach” claims that CLT is just one option in learning a language and that other methods may be equally valid. Burnaby and Sun (1989) argue that context is a priority in teaching English in China. Contextual factors, such as the learners’ communicative needs, equipment and resources, class sizes and teacher’s professional knowledge substantially influence teaching practices and learning outcomes. However, those arguments specifically focus on the language teaching method – how to teach; the validity of applying this to the language teaching content – what to teach – is not yet explored. In addition, Sun and Cheng (2002) argue that the implementation of CLT in China’s English education should negotiate with the context of the curriculum, including teaching objectives, methodologies and activities. They point out that the context of English as a foreign language taught in China determines that CLT could only be used partly, and it would be constrained by students’ knowledge and motivation, and the teacher’s knowledge and proficiency. Suggestions are offered, such as obtaining help from foreign volunteer teachers. However, Li (2001) raises other questions, on the difficulties of cooperation between foreign volunteer teachers and local language teachers in implementing CLT, including lack of communication, coherence and freedom of decision making during the teaching process.

2.8 Classroom management

Discipline is a key contextual factor in Australian schools and classes. Therefore, classroom management is an important contextual factor in teaching. Effective classroom management leads to a positive and productive teaching/learning environment. In Australia, part of a teacher’s responsibilities is to create such a learning environment, for learners to achieve ever higher learning outcomes (NSW DET, 2003a, p. 34). For instance, one of the dimensions in QTF is to maintain a “quality learning environment” for learners. Research in the field indicates that Australian teachers report a high deal of concern about students’ misbehaviour, such as “talking out of turn” (M. Ding, et al., 2008, p. 307). The way to achieve responsible behaviour from students does not entail the use of aggression, punishment or yelling, but instead requires recognition, praise and reward for students’ responsible learning behaviours (Lewis, et al., 2008, pp. 721-723). In addition, the NSW DET (2003) lists student self-regulation as one of the elements to be achieved as a quality of students. Lewis and others (2008)
argue that negotiating with misbehaving students about responsible behaviour is an effective way to stimulate their self-regulation.

In China, Chinese classic philosophy has been applied to classroom management for a long time. Research shows that generally, 65.5% of Chinese teachers do not take classroom management to be a serious issue (M. Ding, et al., 2008, p. 305). Interestingly, research indicates that the most frequent and troublesome misbehaviour in Chinese classrooms is “daydreaming”, being about 40% on average, up to a high of 58% (M. Ding, et al., 2008, p. 307). Chinese students perform excellently in showing respect to their teachers and make minimal noise during class, with few teachers reporting any kind of misbehaviour taking place in Chinese classrooms (M. Ding, et al., 2008, p. 316). In other words, Chinese students’ misbehaviour does not disrupt the classroom, and they perform well at self-regulation. The contrast in the behaviours of students in Chinese and Australian classrooms raises the question whether Chinese philosophical knowledge could be used to manage a class in Australia. Hue’s (2007) research illuminates the influence of Chinese knowledge in Hong Kong classrooms; this could have implications in Australia for both classroom practice and policy level. As this thesis does not address this issue, it remains a question for future investigation as to whether such practices could stimulate positive behaviours in Australian students.

2.9 Cultural learning

Learning about a foreign culture and developing intercultural understanding, are closely integrated with foreign language education (Kawasaki, 2007; C. Kramsch, 1993; Kubota, et al., 2003; Liddicoat, 2002). The USA National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project (1999) advocates the “5Cs” principle for foreign language teaching: that is, Communication, Cultures, Connection, Community and Comparison. Cultural learning is important, because students cannot truly master the language “until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs” (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999, p. 2). The focus is on the appropriateness of language for its cultural context. Moreover, comparisons are used in cultural learning to develop students’ “insight into the nature of language and the concept of culture and realize that there are multiple ways of viewing the world” (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999, p. 2). The cultural learning that occurs in language classes contributes to important contextual knowledge.
However, Kubota and others (2003) claim that not all kinds of cultural learning can reduce prejudices and racism towards different cultural groups, particularly in those classes which “view language and culture merely as ‘objects’.” Rather, they argue that the focus would be on “critical inquiry into the political economy of language and culture, or the contradiction and conflicts that it manifests” (Kubota, et al., 2003, p. 14). Thus, the importance of making CLT a focus, is critiqued in this thesis.

Liddicoat’s intercultural language teaching approach addresses the role of cultural elements in L2 education:

Culture shapes what we say, when we say it, and how to say it from the simplest language we use to the most complex. It is fundamental to the way we speak, write, listen, and read. (Liddicoat, 2002, p. 5)

Liddicoat (2002, p. 6) categorises cultural knowledge into two types, namely: static culture and dynamic cultural knowledge. In the static view, culture is taught as facts or artefacts, separate from the other material being taught in the language, and very remote from the language itself and its users. In contrast, the dynamic view of cultural learning “underlines how language is used and how things are said and done in a cultural context” (Liddicoat, 2002, p. 8). Therefore, intercultural language teaching focuses on making a close link to language so as to build learners’ capability for understanding language use in varying cultural contexts.

2.10 Knowledge

At the beginning of this thesis, the concept of paradigm was used to refer to different knowledge systems, to foreshadow the issue of knowledge in language learning. “Knowledge system” is a term to describe different ways of knowing different personal cognitive processes, attitudes, understandings and learning. The term “paradigm” refers to more general or common beliefs; in this case, language teaching approaches in the field of L2 education. “Paradigm” was made famous by Kuhn (1996) in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Normal science is defined as:

[Research] firmly based upon one or more past scientific achievements, achievements that some particular scientific community acknowledges for a time as supplying the foundation for its further practice. (Kuhn, 1996, p. 10)
The paradigm for normal science is based on what is assumed to be a firm, trustworthy and commonly accepted foundation. The definition of paradigm given by Psillo (2007, p. 174) is based on Kuhn’s work:

The dominant characteristics of a paradigm, as this was conceived by Kuhn, are: (1) it stands for the whole network of theories, beliefs, values, methods, objectives, professional and educational structures of a scientific community; and (2) it stands for a set of explicit guides to action (what Kuhn sometimes calls “rules”).

When paradigm shifts take place this is said to lead to scientific revolution. Kuhn (1996, p. 12) defines a paradigm shift thus: “the successive transition from one paradigm to another via revolution is the usual developmental pattern of mature science.” This is exemplified in language education, with the development of different teaching paradigms over time, especially the shift from traditional methods to CLT.

2.10.1 Prior knowledge and Connection/s

The notion of “connection” is a term used to discuss our increasingly globalised society. According to Comanaru and Noels (2009, p. 138) this global connectivity is producing “greater relatedness [which] is associated with more internalized motivation to learn the language.” Holden and Hicks (2007) point out the importance of connecting high school students to global issues, arguing that it is the responsibility of teachers to make this kind of reflection happen. In the context of L2 education, making global intellectual connections is necessary, in terms of cross-cultural understanding. Moreover, teaching language that is relevant to learners’ lives is expected to stimulate their learning motivation. In this thesis, several synonyms are employed when referring to connection: these include relevance, link, and connectedness. There are many other concepts which are also related to this idea of connection – for instance, students’ self-reference, background knowledge and prior knowledge.

NSW DET (2003) lists “connectedness” as one of the key elements in achieving quality teaching: that is, by making learning significant to students. “Connectedness” in classrooms focuses on linking contextual factors to students’ learning:

Lesson activities rely on the application of school knowledge in real-life contexts or problems, and provide opportunities for students to share their work with audiences beyond the classroom and school. (NSW DET, 2003b, p. 15)
This idea of connectedness focuses on applying school knowledge to real-life problem-solving, confronting situations and interpersonal interactions, thereby connecting knowledge and life. However, this thesis reports that connecting new school knowledge into real life is not as straightforward as implied above. Students might not necessarily use the knowledge in real problem-solving, but the new knowledge is relevant to them in any other aspect which would stimulate their learning and motivate the class. It is important to make “teaching materials relevant to the learners” (Cummins, et al., 2007, p. 727). NSW DET (2003a) describes this influence in terms of using “background knowledge”:

High background knowledge is evident when lessons provide students with opportunities (or they take opportunities) to make connections between their knowledge and experience and the subsequence of the lesson. Background knowledge may include prior school knowledge, cultural knowledge, personal experience and knowledge of media and popular culture. (NSW DET, 2003a, p. 40)

The importance that the QTF attaches to “background knowledge” is recognised in the research reported in this thesis. This two-way influence of existing and new knowledge contributes to an intellectual bridge, a connection in the language class, and promises to achieve higher quality learning. For instance, McCombs and Miller (2009, p. 153) claim that relevance is one of the key elements in classrooms since “relevance of what students are learning is closely related to their taking responsibility for their own learning.” Students are expected to show higher motivation when they are learning something that is relevant to them.

New learning is influenced by prior knowledge because “learning involves the incorporating of new information into old sets of beliefs and knowledge for the purpose of maintaining a consistent world view” (Damen cited in Ellis, 1996, p. 214). In other words, students locked into a certain knowledge system would probably learn new knowledge that is consistent with that system. That is why relating their prior knowledge to their new learning is important.

It is also assumed that prior knowledge is related to students’ interests and can be used as a source of intrinsic motivation (Tobias, 1994). Building intellectual connections between new knowledge and students’ prior knowledge may be a way to keep students motivated. However, having prior knowledge in a certain domain does not necessarily or automatically lead to the motivation to learn a subject at school, even though limited
prior knowledge does lead to less motivated learning. A teacher’s role is therefore important in balancing the extent of this intellectual connection, drawing upon prior knowledge and extending new knowledge in order to keep students motivated.

To make such intellectual connection happen requires teachers to understand the knowledge to be learnt, what is already known, and what kind of connections can be made. That is why the role of a teacher as knowledge mediator empathises with the intellectual experiences of students: “extensive intercultural communication often possesses an accepting and affirmative attitude toward culture difference” (Ellis, 1996, p. 217); more than this, to different knowledge systems. Therefore, a language teacher with multicultural intellectual experience might be able to understand students from different educational cultures. A beginning teacher who is not familiar with the local context needs to learn about it.

2.10.2 Transnational knowledge exchange

Today, the world’s education is significantly influenced by globalisation, which is led and dominated by Western societies. However, Western-centred knowledge transfer has been critiqued because it encodes local intellectual cultures. This phenomenon exists in education where there is:

   national chauvinism and parochialism of teacher education in an increasing interconnected era of globalisation, with the curriculum and language used focusing on European-American students from middle-class family. (Singh & Han, 2010, p. 1304)

Where globalisation means employing teaching methodologies from Western societies in the rest of the world, this reinforces the neglect and undervaluing of the knowledge of non European-American societies. The West’s neglect of knowledge from other intellectual heritages also happens in some multi-cultural communities, where Asian, African and Latin American immigrants make up a great proportion of the population, such as in the United States and Australia. As a result, there is considerable ignorance about non-Western countries such as China among students from these countries. Thought of negatively, this implies that ignorance is not only about the absence of information or irrationality; it also indicates that ignorance is “borne of the manipulation of the public via education, examinations, the media and historical knowledge” (Singh, 2009, p. 188).
Efforts to eliminate the marginalisation of non-Western knowledge can be integrated into the process of internationalising Western education, and especially to learning a foreign language. Research has pointed out the potential of making this kind of ignorance productive. “Productive ignorance” is a “mechanism which provides an incentive for learning” (Singh, 2009, p. 187), with new areas of ignorance emerging from the acquisition or production of knowledge. The ongoing process of moving from what is not known to the known stimulates knowledge creation. In teacher education, knowledge transfer is no longer believed to follow a single direction, but the two-way exchange of knowledge is possible:

One dimension of this focus is that student-teachers are taught that the knowledge their students bring to school provides intellectual resources to be encouraged through productive pedagogies. (Singh & Han, 2010, p. 1305)

This view of knowledge exchange suggests that “the global dynamics of knowledge are heterogeneous and interdependent” (Singh, 2009, p. 187). After I came to Australia, I learnt that Australian educational scholars see the importance of connecting Chinese higher-degree research students’ intellectual heritage to the process of enriching Australian education and research (Singh, 2009, p. 186). As Singh points out:

[The] internationalisation of research education focuses on building connections between the intellectual resources international students can draw from varying points in the global hierarchy of knowledge to inform research, thereby making unanticipated and unexpected contributions to knowledge. (Singh, 2009, p. 186)

On one hand, as a research student in Australia, I was positioned as an intellectual agent able to contribute to knowledge of education by integrating Chinese concepts into my research. On the other hand, teaching Mandarin in Western Sydney schools, I could not neglect the intellectual heritage I could bring to my language students. Accordingly, this thesis uses Chinese concepts and facts.

This chapter presents the factors and themes turned up through the teaching and researching process. Beginning teachers’ development and the factors which influencing their practices are the main theme for this self-study. By examining literature and concepts related to second language learning motivation, Quality Teaching Frame, language teaching methodology, I developed theoretical and professional knowledge about being a teacher-researcher in Australia. Then, the literature and concepts being
investigated are context of language teaching, classroom management issues and cultural teaching and learning. Those are issues related to my classroom practices. Finally, literatures related to transnational knowledge exchange has been reviewed, which are employed as an analytical tool to examine my data. Now I turn to an explanation and justification of the research methodology and methods of data collection and analysis.
Chapter 3
Research method:
Rationale, concerns and implementations

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the main principles which were considered in the process of this research. As a beginning teacher-researcher, I expected to develop research knowledge and skills during this research project, and this chapter recounts my professional development as a researcher by recording the changes and concerns I have addressed in this study. This chapter begins with a brief introduction to the main research methodology – self-study research – explaining how it fits into the design of this research project. The data collection and data analysis strategies are then explained and justified. Finally, issues of research ethics raised by this project are discussed.

3.2 Flexible research design

The initial research design for this research was to explore the tensions in my knowledge system, my progress as a beginning teacher-researcher, and how I learnt about the NSW DET QTF (2003). I conceived the research process in a chronological order. I initially planned to select crucial moments that I expected to emerge during my teaching, then to identify my concerns over that period of time. Finally, I anticipated analysing my teaching outcomes in terms of the QTF (2003) (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Initial research design
This research design model was not adopted, for the following reasons. First, the significant findings are not best presented in chronological order. They are presented according to the different themes, which show the different issues that emerged from analysis of the evidence of my teaching. Second, the NSW QTF (2003) has not been used as a tool to systematically and quantitatively measure my development. Third, a “three-level” research design (Figure 2) would require a significant amount of time to match the time points and the events. I realised that within 18 months it would be highly challenging to complete data collection after NEAF and SERAP ethics approvals, then to analyse the data at three different levels and finally synthesise them in chronological order. Time constraints meant this was not feasible. Fourth, I found that stage theory was not appropriate for framing this thesis. Change of concerns did not become the very major element that determined my teaching practices.

In this modern world, there is a great number of dynamic factors that lead to everyone’s lives being open to question. The same applies to educational research. The initial design of the research reported in this thesis — let alone its realisation and reflective reconsideration — was constrained and influenced by the field of study. The research questions that have been answered in this thesis, and which contribute to new knowledge, are not necessarily those that were initially proposed. As a beginning teacher-researcher at UWS, one of my first lessons was “the story of Penicillin.” Alexander Fleming discovered Penicillin in 1928 and won the Nobel Prize for its discovery and medical implementation. However, he did not anticipate discovering penicillin, as the standard research process might lead us to believe. What is more, if he had thrown away that one “polluted” sample from his experiment which was mouldy, he would never have discovered penicillin. This story inspires our understanding of the importance and charm of “accidents” for the researcher.

I anticipated a flexible research design because it would allow me to explore any accidents and sparkles that might emerge from researching a dynamic field. Here it is important to examine the rationale for adopting a flexible research design. Changes may arise during the various stages of data collection (Robson, 2002, p. 165). In this study, interviews with students were constrained by the limited time available and the limited number of student participants whose parents or caregivers allowed me to conduct an interview. These constraints in data collection mechanisms and sample sizes made it
necessary to refine the research question (Robson, 2002, p. 165). Since CLT issues were not the centre of investigation, this research did not require data from my former English teachers in China nor the NSW DET language methodology lecturer.

I also addressed concerns about reliability and validity. To avoid threats to validity, a flexible research design requires “description, interpretation and theory” (Robson, 2002, p. 171). First, description of what I had seen or heard was necessary for accuracy and completeness of the data. To record data, for instance, I kept an audio-recorder with me all the time. Second, rather than imposing a theoretical framework or meaning on the evidence, I used open coding to identify themes that emerged from what I learnt during my involvement with research settings. Interpretation validity also arises from our interpretation of other participants. Finally, I considered alternative explanations or understandings of the phenomena I was studying (Robson, 2002, p. 172). Accidents or challenges sometimes imply important issues to be considered from an alternative perspective, including changing the research design to understand the impact of the setting on the research. To eliminate bias, Robson (2002, p. 173) suggests the use of “reflexity”: that is, considering taken-for-granted assumptions, clarifying personal values system and subjectivity, describing potential role conflicts, identifying gatekeepers’ interests and negative feelings. To avoid a lack of neutrality, it is necessary to consider new and exciting possibilities from the data, re-framing the data analysis process, pursuing ongoing reflection on what I have written, reconsidering the literature and double-checking the data.

3.3 Research methodology: Teacher as researcher

The idea of engaging personal experience in theory can be traced back to Dewey’s progressive approach, which attributes individual thought and action to social experience (also see Yao, 2002). This experience-based belief is claimed as:

Giving life, texture, and subjective personal meaning to abstract concepts and at the same time providing a concrete, publicly shared reference point for testing the implications and validity of ideas created during the learning process (Kolb cited in Kohonen, 1992, p. 37)

The value of engaging teachers in research is based on supplementing their personal experiential knowledge with established theoretical frameworks. Nevertheless, there is a gap between theory and practice, a mismatch between the observer’s theory and the
practitioner’s own theory (Griffiths & Tann, 1992, p. 70). From everyday teaching experiences, which help them keep pace with the current state of education, teachers generate information. Updating that information is needed to inspire, criticise and improve existing theories and practices.

The idea of “teacher as researcher” is expected to reduce the gap between theory and practice, by enabling teachers to theorise their experiences of practice into personal theories. According to Griffiths and Tann (1992, p. 71), the “theories they discovered for themselves through library research were to be tested against their own experience and assessed against their own professional values.” Through linking theory and personal practice, a teacher-researcher becomes a reflective practitioner. Kohonen (1992) has constructed an experiential learning model (Figure 3). The model is a circle of “experience – reflect – conceptualise – apply” which implies that “developing the learner’s awareness of all of these aspects of learning is seen as a way of empowering [them] to be a more competent person and learner” (Kohonen, 1992, p. 45). It encourages a paradigm shift from “teacher-centred learning” to “learner-centred learning.” Expanding this notion to teacher education, to improve education it is important for beginning teachers to know what is happening in classrooms. Recording evidence of teaching practice, and theorising, is research that can contribute to education, as well as helping teachers to develop as professionals.

Figure 3: Experiential learning model based on second language learning
Source: Kohonen (1992, p. 45)

Being a reflective teacher requires teachers to develop professionally together, through a collaborative process of discussing with other colleagues in order to sort out what is on their mind. Kohonen points to the importance of mutual support and cooperation, noting that “professional growth is facilitated in an atmosphere of support and trust whereby teachers see their colleagues as resources for each other” (Kohonen, 1992, p.
Such collaborative professional development is a process that involves intellectual conversations, requiring a trustworthy relationship between all the parties involved. Harmer (2007, p. 418) argues that it is important not to interpret or judge what one hears, but to check the meaning with speakers. Peer relationships are welcomed by teachers, where the purpose of talking or observing is to improve their classroom practices.

The Research-Oriented School-Engaged Teacher Education (ROSETE) Program is basically appropriate for engaging beginning teachers in researching their practices in schools as a way of enhancing their professional development. The Program involves ten teacher-researchers and eight research educators who make up a collaborative research and professional development team. The educational backgrounds of the teacher-researchers are similar; they share the same Chinese cultural background and they experience similar challenges in Australian schools. Therefore, to consult with other ROSETE team members was quite beneficial for me. In addition, in the Mifeng schools, qualified classroom teachers supervised the classes in which I taught. They might be considered “outsiders” who would offer critical suggestions upon my teaching. Together, these people were important for my study. Other people’s experiential and conceptual knowledge can be used to improve one’s own practices:

Interactions with critical others can cause the sharpening, reshaping, and refocusing of questions in unpredictable ways that make for more interesting, more significant, or stronger study. . . . engagement with them and their ideas forces the researcher to think more deeply about the research study. (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2008, p. 113)

However, it is also notable that sometimes collaborators might only have a tangential interest in one’s professional development, and some might serve only to obfuscate issues. Therefore, this requires teacher-researchers not to simply adopt their ideas or recommendations, but to critically use their ideas to facilitate their own study. It is the teacher-researcher who makes the final decision about his/her own professional learning.

3.3.1 Self-study

Self-study research is, as its name suggests, a method for researching one’s own practices. This research method is a vehicle for a teacher-researcher to develop knowledge about teaching and learning that is grounded in classroom practices where
teaching and learning actually take place (Loughran, 2004; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2008). The research reported in this thesis employed self-study as the main research methodology, recording my professional development and my contributions to knowledge as a beginning teacher-researcher in NSW public schools during 2009 to 2010. Before choosing self-study I carefully considered other qualitative educational research methodologies, including action research\(^4\), autobiographic research\(^5\) and auto-ethnographical research.

There are several key features to self-study research. Pinnegar and Hamilton (2008, pp. 98-101) indicate that there are five elements to this form of research, namely: being self initiated and focused; being improvement-oriented; being interactive and collaborative; employing multiple methods and employing validation. A four-part process was identified by LaBoskey (2004, pp. 820-821), which is “initiated by and focused on us as [teacher-researchers]”, “improvement-aimed”, “interactive at one or more stages of the process” and “multiple [in terms of methodologies]” since “a mix of methods will tell you more than a single approach” (Hutchings cited in LaBoskey, 2004, p. 821). Loughran (2004, p. 6) points to similar steps but describes the first one as formalizing the research and sharing with the professional community, to get their judgement and to test claims. This implies the importance of validation.

1. Self initiated and focused

\(^4\) A teacher-researcher can employ action research to construct knowledge. According to Altricher et al. (2002, p. 129), the phases of action research include planning, acting, observing and reflecting. In other words, teacher-researchers use action research to improve their practices and their understanding of these by reflecting on their own work. Action research may also be defined as having two parts: an ‘axiomatic part’ and an ‘empirical part’. “From here we present two working definitions of action research that are even more pragmatic. One is a product of public discussion and the other is to inform public discussion” (Altrichter, et al., 2002, p. 129). Action research is suitable for generating knowledge by engaging in reflection and action. Teacher-researchers investigate their own practices and develop their own explanations, which are then subject to public discussion.

\(^5\) Autobiographical research is often applied to record teacher-researchers’ practical experiential knowledge in education. Connelly, Clandinin and He (1997) define autobiographical writing as where “people write about their histories, their hopes, their ambitions, their personal and professional stories, and so on.” Also, narrative inquiry (story telling) can be applied as a part of the data sources, to reflect on personal practical knowledge which, according to Connelly, et al. (1997, p. 19), is related to teachers’ past experience, expressed in current classroom work, and influences their further action. It can help us to understand our beliefs, views, and values, and to see how they influence classroom practice. The protagonist and author is mostly the same person in autobiographical research. Though stabilising thought, body, person, time and space, and making them knowable, are maximized, so that the act of writing becomes the opportunity to eventually gain greater self-knowledge (Mitchell, Weber, & O'Reilly-Scanlon, 2005, p. 29). A piece of brief autobiography at the beginning of Chapter 1 shows my prior knowledge and experiences when I was in China.
Of Pinnegar and Hamilton’s (2008) five elements, this aspect is straightforward: it means that the one who does the research is also the one being researched. In the research reported here the focus is on my professional development over 18 months as a beginning teacher, including my teaching strategies and practices in language classes; how my prior and new knowledge influences my teaching. This research centred on my “complex self” in terms of my knowledge systems in language learning and teaching, and how I worked out the tensions in these complex knowledge systems and finally came to position myself at the particular teaching site – Mifeng HS and Mifeng PS.

2. Improvement-aimed

Self-study research aims at improvement. This means that through a cycle of critical reflection (understanding – transformation – reformation), the teacher-researcher reconceptualises his/her teaching practices using evidence and theories through the research process. I have been able to explore my understanding of my transformation and to reform my practices. This is comparable to the action research cycle. By doing this research, I learnt to be a teacher by absorbing new pedagogical knowledge from each lesson, to improve my teaching. By giving lessons, writing my reflections in my journal and analysing their content, I worked to improve my classroom practices. I brought my prior knowledge into my newly acquired pedagogical knowledge to conduct Mandarin lessons according to my perspective.

3. Interactive nature

Although self-study research is self-initiated and focused, it is necessary to separate the “self” from the “non-self” by including evidence from students, peer teachers, supervisors, educational literature and other researcher educators (Loughran, 2005, p. 6). Pinnegar and Hamilton (2008) state that dialogue is a key component in self-study research, because it is a key element in the process of coming to know:

[Self] study researchers engage in dialogue, recognizing it as the site of their study from which they assert the authority of the claims they make and as a way to expose the ontological understandings and their practical actions. In turn, it becomes the way they develop their trustworthiness as a researcher in the ways they process and develop their ideas and develop their knowledge. (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2008, p. 75)
Dialogues include employing other researchers’ ideas and opinions to analyse one’s own stance and supplementing their ideas with one’s critical reflections. The purpose for engaging in these dialogues is to improve the trustworthiness and strength of one’s argument. Moreover, it may also help to generalise from a specific case to apply one’s findings to a number of groups, to some extent. The interactive nature of self-study research also indicates that “context” and “relationships” play important roles in this method. As Pinnegar and Hamilton (2008) state,

What we study is always particular: particular to us, in a particular time, location, and to the specific people we are interacting with. Because we take ontology stance, study out own practice, and are thus located in a particular place, time, and setting, attention to and understanding of context is crucial. (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2008, p. 82)

It is important for self-study researchers to realise that the phenomenon observed is always in relation to a particular time and place, and the relationships among people. Therefore, neglecting these elements is likely to create misleading outcomes. However, it is also important not to over-generalise from self-study research; it is necessary to take into consideration the limiting influence of different “contexts” and “relationships.” In addition, typically in research, the researcher and the researched are at a distance, and this may help to minimise bias. However, in self-study research, “the relationship is dynamic, interactive, and temporal,” because they are the same person (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2008, p. 84). This raises questions about the trustworthiness of self-study research.

In this self-study, relating “self” to the others around me through interaction was essential. It was this educational context that shaped my teaching practices and understanding in certain ways. Through dialogue with the “non-self”, I was able to identify my positions, explore my understandings and recognise my intellectual transformations. I read the importance of “interaction” as a benchmark for analysing my improvement, also a way to increase the trustworthiness of my research. This research was conducted through a highly collaborative and interactive process. I was working with the ROSETE research educators to direct my research, sharing my understanding and concerns with other ROSETE teacher-researchers and gaining feedback and support from my students, classroom teachers, mentors and DET lecturers throughout the whole research process. The discussion of triangulation below, argues the importance of interacting with “non-self” as an aspect of the data collection process.
4. Multiple methods

Self-study research includes multiple research methods, which allows the teacher-researcher to have “different, and thus more comprehensive, perspectives on the educational processes under investigation” (LaBoskey cited in Loughran, 2005, p. 6). LaBoskey (2004) points out that this mix of mainly qualitative methods can enhance our understanding of our professional practice settings and help us to reframe our thinking and our teaching in appropriate and defendable ways. (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 851)

Employing elements and concerns from auto-ethnographic research is an example of how I used multiple methods as a means of methodological triangulation. Auto-ethnography is discussed further in the section below. In addition, I employed narrative method to develop vivid evidences based on my classroom inquiries and my prior educational experiences. The nature of improvement-aimed research also required me to complete action-research spirals of practice-reflection (Altrichter, et al., 2002) in order to improve my practices based on reflection. This is an element I used from action-research. These elements from multiple methods have all contributed to my self-study research.

5. Validation

Validity is a process for establishing the trustworthiness of the research process. As the one who conducts the research and the one researched is the same person, establishing validity is an essential part of this research. This issue is discussed in the Validity and Credibility section (3.3.3) below.

3.3.2 Auto-ethnography

Some elements of auto-ethnographic research proved to be highly transferable to this particular research, although self-study is the primary method that has been used. Auto-ethnographies are written in the active voice rather than the passive voice to portray human behaviour. The researcher usually follows chronological order to record the development of his/her experiences, and give readers a vivid insight into them. One of the key features of auto-ethnographic research is that teacher-researchers look at
themselves in relation to the difference between the educational cultures they share with others. This can include friends, strangers and enemies:

[. . . ] self is consistently connected to others in the realm of culture . . . The view of self to others is not fixed in people’s lives. Rather, the positionality of self to others is socially constructed and transformable as the self develops its relationship to others – especially strangers and enemies – and reframes its views of others. Understanding self and others is one of the tasks that autoethnographers may undertake. (Chang, 2008, p. 29)

Auto-ethnographic research constructs a picture of a teacher-researcher as part of an intellectual community and an educational culture. The individual teacher-researcher is considered to be a cultural or intellectual agent. Through auto-ethnographic research, a teacher-researcher identifies the “forces” which “shaped their character and informed their sense of self” (Kennett cited in Chang, 2008, p. 52). The recognition of other people in relation to educational culture was important for examining my knowledge system, based on my Chinese educational culture and the Western educational culture I was involved in when interacting with my Australian students. Being aware of the different cultural perspectives was essential for this research since the tensions that emerged from my teaching were rooted in different educational cultures.

Technically, employing the auto-ethnographic method brings benefits to both researchers and readers. It is easy to collect data, and the writing style is easy to produce for a researcher; this sounded user-friendly for me, since I had little knowledge about conducting research when I first started the project:

This inquiry method allows researchers easy access to the primary data source from the beginning because the source is the researchers themselves. . . . autoethnography is also reader-friendly in that the personally engaging writing style tends to appeal to readers more than conventional scholarly writing. (Chang, 2008, p. 52)

A teacher-researcher can produce and analyse a rich data set based on their own experiential knowledge and memory. It delivers ideas in an accessible language, especially for teacher-researchers, who share similar experiential knowledge or cultural understandings. Accordingly, I generated my reflective journal in a way with which I felt comfortable. My reflections on my Mandarin teaching were written both in plain Chinese and English, mostly in a narrative way.
However, auto-ethnographic research is open to the risk of some pitfalls. These pitfalls are also applicable. First, when portraying a story of self, an auto-ethnographer could about write themself but neglect the cultural context and the presence of others. Secondly, the validity of data can be questionable. I questioned the validity of qualitative educational research, such as self-study and auto-ethnography, due to concerns about data sources, such as reflections and personal memories. Muncey (cited in Chang, 2008, p. 55) states that “memory is selective and shaped, and is retold in the continuum of one’s experience, [although] this does not necessarily constitute lying.” What is essential here is to admit that a teacher-researcher’s memory cannot be the only source of evidence for an auto-ethnographic study. In addition, auto-ethnographic research is about the individual in relation to culture and others. In other words, it is essential to use internal and external data simultaneously so as to provide a more accurate picture of a given situation. According to Chang (2008, p. 55), “multiple sources of data can provide bases for triangulation that will help enhance the content accuracy and validity of the auto-ethnographic writing.” Therefore, it is important to ensure that data from both internal and external sources is provided to support the argument derived from self-study research. This issue is examined in the triangulation section, and in the validity and credibility section (3.3.3) below.

### 3.3.3 Validity and credibility

Validity research emerges from a consideration of several issues. According to Winter (cited in Cohen, et al., 2007, p. 134), “honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher” are all elements that contribute to the validity of research. The issue of validity is a matter of degree rather than an absolute state. As a teacher-researcher it is my practices that form the main focus of what is researched, so it is impossible to be completely objective in this situation. Therefore, Maxwell (cited in Cohen, et al. 2007, p. 134) suggest that the term “validity” could be replaced by a more suitable term such as “understanding”, which is represented by five elements: descriptive validity, interpretive validity, theoretical validity, generalisability and evaluative validity.

The issue of generalisability is an important one in this research. As a self-study, the generalisability of this study is limited. I cannot make generalisations based on myself as the sole source of evidence. There is also much debate around research validity in
terms of data collection. Cohen, et al. (2007, p. 134) argue that intensive personal involvement and in-depth responses of individuals can enhance validity. This claim is contested by Silverman (cited in Cohen, et al., 2007, p. 134), who believes that individuals have no privileged position for making interpretations. It is not valid to move beyond the selected data to preconceived conceptions or to make a self-interested claim.

In the process of collecting data, I tried to increase the validity and credibility of my study in the following ways. Most of the data comes from my self-reflections about my field work at Mifeng PS and HS. Like a diary, it recorded my interpretations of lessons, feedback from students, critical insights into my lesson design and conduct, and other issues relating to my teaching. The key validity issue in self-reflection is getting distance from the data, while recognising “the amount of information lost in the process of recording it” (Bernard & Ryan, 2009, p. 46). Human observers get overloaded with information quickly, so that some conversations can be neglected, especially when doing self observation. The making of field notes itself entails a massive reduction of data – “we filter what to record, choosing some things and ignoring others” (Bernard & Ryan, 2009, p. 46). For this reason I wrote my self-reflections as soon as possible after lessons, as human beings forget events. Therefore, all reflections were written down on the day I conducted my teaching. The date was recorded for each reflection. I also kept an audio-recorder with me to record my opinion immediately after each class if this proved necessary.

In my self-reflections, I also wrote about the volunteer-teachers’ group meetings. When I reflected on others’ opinions and talks, I tried to include their original words. Sometimes I also recorded someone else’s opinions, as expressed during meetings or daily conversations. Therefore, an issue which emerged was the boundary between my self-reflections, meeting records and records of my observations. To increase the validity of my study, I specifically recorded who gave me the idea, and the context in which this idea arose. Also, I tried not to paraphrase others’ talk, and tried to describe the context, to eliminate my bias. Moreover, if I found an interesting point in a meeting, I asked the person’s consent to do an interview with him/her rather than just employing his/her idea as part of my self-reflections. In terms of semi-structured interviews, all my interviews were recorded as audio files, with the permission of interviewees. I negotiated the time and location with the interviewee before conducting the interviews.
3.4 Research site

The sites for this study were a high school and a primary school where I was teaching. The schools are located in the Western Sydney Region. I have given the schools pseudonyms, specifically Mifeng (written as 蜜蜂 in Chinese hanzi) Public School (Mifeng PS) and Mifeng High School (Mifeng HS). Mifeng means “bee”, which suggests that the teachers and students were hardworking.

Neither Mifeng HS nor Mifeng PS have a Language Other Than English (LOTE) program, besides the visiting Chinese language program in which I was involved. I was the only visiting Chinese teacher at Mifeng PS, while Mifeng HS had another two volunteer teachers working with me, teaching different classes. There was no qualified Chinese language teacher in either school, which means we were responsible for the language teaching, including programming, designing materials and assessing students’ achievement. There was one classroom teacher with me during my teaching because I was not supposed to take sole responsibility for the class (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2009). At Mifeng PS I had three classes, namely Stage 1 (Year 1-2), Stage 2 (Year 3-4) and Stage 3 (Year 5-6). Each lesson lasted from half an hour to an hour once a week. At Mifeng HS, I taught Chinese language and cultural knowledge to students across different faculties during 2010. This “teaching Chinese across faculties” was new for me and the school: I visited the faculties of Geography, PE, Art and Cooking to teach lessons with their class teacher. The aim was to promote Chinese knowledge among a broad range of students. Therefore, students in my school were expected to benefit from experiencing China’s rich cultural knowledge and to have a chance to access another language. This was important for this group of students who had limited cross-cultural awareness, and it helped me to develop their understanding of another cultural group. Nevertheless, this program created confusion for students and even the classroom teachers. They asked why and how can the two learning areas – for example, PE and Mandarin – be connected so as to make sense for students. When I talked about this program to other teachers at the school, they commented, “it is weird” or “I do not understand.” I felt my presence in their class was read as an “invasion” for the classroom teachers as well as their students.

3.5 Data Collection
Data were collected from my personal memory as an L2 learner in China, my reflective journals and from other participants, namely, my students and the classroom teachers. These data were analysed to produce evidence to develop the argument that is central to this thesis. This section explains and justifies the various data collection methods.

### 3.5.1 Personal memory data

An autobiographic diary was written, recording reflections on experiences from my educational life when I was in China. This data was used to develop an organised account of my educational life in the beginning of Chapter 1. In writing this personal memory data I followed a timeline, listing educational events in chronological order. Rather than including every detail from my life, I described events on certain educational themes relevant to this research. Chang (2008, p. 73) explains this theme-focus approach:

> If you intend to create a thematically more focused timeline – your educational development, for example – you are likely to select your school experience, educational accomplishments, and educational encounters for your autobiographical timeline.

My thematically focused timeline dealt with my professional learning and was intended to give readers a useful picture of the different educational influences in my life. It was relatively easy for me as the researcher to recall and to organise these memories to increase the logic and coherence of my educational autobiography. As part of this thematically focused timeline, my border-crossing experiences were identified as appropriate for this research, explaining my introduction to unfamiliar situations or different cultural settings, such as learning a foreign language, visiting overseas, or meeting someone from a different educational culture. Goodenough’s (cited in Chang, 2008, p. 73) description echoes my experiences:

> Such experiences with the unfamiliar cultural characteristics of others often challenge and cause you to adjust your cultural “standard” of thinking, perceiving, evaluating, and behaving.

The timeline I developed for this research focuses on my experiences of “cultural shocks”, what I learnt under different cultural settings and how I accessed my different languages during my learning in university and at school. These cross-border
educational experiences are portrayed in chronological order to make my autobiography more organised.

In contrast to following a timeline to portray my educational life experiences, I could have presented fragments, which would be similar or different to each other to a certain degree. To organise my autobiography using this approach would require a series of thematic categories to group different reflections; in effect, this would mean generating an inventory about myself (Chang, 2008, p. 76). However, I did not use this strategy to write about my life experience, because a focus on thematic categories would limit my recall and not engage my memory satisfactorily. Instead, generating my memory data by following a timeline prevented my missing relevant data points. I was concerned that employing thematic categories would lead me to neglect valuable data. Nevertheless, after generating my autobiography, I tried to use this strategy, reorganising essential educational events according to different themes and categories.

3.5.2 Self-reflection

Self-reflection data are the main source of evidence used for this self-study research. One hundred reflections were created between July 2009 and August 2010, ranging in length from five to ten paragraphs. These reflections were mostly written in my home after teaching, although some were written in the staffroom of the schools in which I volunteered. The date when each reflection was generated was identified for each entry to enhance the credibility or reliability of the data. The self-reflection dairy was produced in Chinese initially and then translated into English. The purpose of using this bilingual presentation of data is to show the researcher’s bilingualism. Moreover, keeping the original data helps people who speak Chinese to develop vivid understanding of the data. Lastly, by presenting the translation provide an opportunity for other bilingual people to look at the difference of underpinning means between the two languages.

Through introspection, self-observation and self-analysis, I generated the self-reflection data, which is otherwise known as field notes. In my self-reflections, data relating to the research sites was recorded, including my personal emotions and feelings. My self-reflection diary is like a personal diary that records my life and emotions during a
certain period of time. There is a vague line between what is regarded as “objective” data and “personal feeling”:

It is difficult to keep “subjective” feelings and “objective” facts completely separate from each other because, while keeping field notes, ethnographers invariably apply their “subjective” judgement and interpretation and, while recording their emotions, they may document situations objectively. Especially in more contemporary subjectivity and objectivity, the division becomes more blurred. (Chang, 2008, pp. 95-96)

Therefore, it is difficult to say that my self-reflections represent “facts”. For these self-reflections, I made the decision about what to write. Inevitably, the documented situations were chosen in accordance with my personal values, but this does not make it invalid data. The reason for this is that generating self-reflective data is “a highly introspective process” (Chang, 2008, p. 96), and is significant for self-study research. Furthermore, Hamilton and Pinnegar (2009) point out that to be “objective”, the self must be portrayed together with the context; I have followed this advice:

[For] a researcher engaged in [self study of teaching and teacher education practice], fieldnotes might depict details about the setting (say a classroom or group) and about the students or teachers or others involved. . . . And, because the self is also the researched, the reflexive aspects of fieldnotes would be intertwined. (Hamilton and Pinnegar, 2009, p. 120)

Although my self-reflections could be subjective to some degree, I included contextual descriptions in my self-reflection data. I recorded the context of certain events in which myself and others were involved, and took the cultural background into account to capture the larger reality. Besides these field notes, I recorded my emotional responses. Hamilton and Pinnegar (2009, p. 123) point out that journalling originated as a pedagogical tool to gather evidence, including exposing one’s personal feelings and perspectives. This allowed me to be freer in revealing my emotions as well as recording the descriptive field notes. I followed Hamilton and Pinnegar’s (2009, p. 124) suggestion: journalling details of the day and the events of my teaching along with reflections and interpretations. However, I knew that when the data comes from a single source, its trustworthiness cannot be guaranteed. Therefore it was also important to triangulate my reflections by employing external data from “non-self.”

3.5.3 Triangulation

“Triangulation” is a collection of external datacollecting methods used to increase validity and trustworthiness of the main data which is self-reflection data. That is the
reason why I put it in Chapter 3 as methodologies. The use of external data in this thesis provides an essential perspective from which to view my self-development. The data used for triangulation purposes included texts, observations and interviews with other people. Triangulation is an important issue in research design. According to Pinnegar and Hamilton (2008, pp. 151-152), triangulation is defined as using a variety of data collection procedures in order to eliminate bias, and to increase the credibility of the research. Triangulation can involve three different focal points: the data, the investigator and the methodology. There is a Chinese Suyu: “当局者迷，旁观者清” (dāng jù zhě mí, páng guān zhě qīng) – “当局 dāng”, means: involved in, “局 jú” means a situation (in this Suyu it is a word used for chess games – round); “者 zhě” means person, “迷 mí” means confused. Therefore, the former part means the person is who playing a round of chess is confused by the situation. “旁观者 pángguānzhě” refers to a person who stands aside and watches; and “清 qīng” means clear. Thus the second part of this Suyu means that the person who stands aside watching the chess game is clear about the situation. In other words, when we confused by something, it is possible that others can help us to sort out the problem by drawing on their different perspectives. This is one way to conceptualise triangulation.

Triangulation means to examine the data from different perspectives and angles. The researcher is responsible for taking factors which would lead to biased results into account, and mitigating these if possible: “researchers must interrogate with alacrity the bias they bring – looking under and around lives they think they lead for disconfirming evidence” (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2008, p. 152). In my self-reflections, I explicitly recorded the context of every critical event. I identified elements which possibly led to bias in my interpretation of the data so I could consider them closely. In addition, Cohen and others (2007) point out that triangulation means engaging more than one person in data collection, through their participation in observation or data discovery. Therefore, this self-study research was not limited to me as the sole source of data. To triangulate my self-reflective data, data were collected from different people, to gain their perspectives. They were students in my Mandarin classes and the classroom teachers who supervised the class when I conducted my teaching.

3.5.3.1 Interviews

Suyu is a Chinese analytical tool which is explained in Chapter 3, see 3.6.4.
Interviews are “purposeful conversations” (Bogdan & Biklen cited in Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2008, p. 115). Prior to my semi-structured interviews, I prepared open-ended questions, to ask for peoples’ views about certain issues. I recorded the interviews, with participants’ permission, so as to capture words, language and context, all of which could be relevant in the data analysis process. Likewise, I asked subsequent questions or probes during the interviews in order to explore the interviewees’ responses and to get further details and examples.

My approach to the interview was different from formal structured interviews, where all the questions are prepared prior to the interview and are asked in a prescribed order. These can be used for gathering detailed “perceptions, meanings and thoughts from various participants on specific issues that have an influence on the study” (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2008, p. 116). Informal interviews take place in a relatively relaxed context, and the process is more like a natural conversation. These are especially useful when interviewees have no time to conduct a semi-structured interview or when the topic is sensitive. The purpose of an informal interview is to test support for an “observation made by researchers and [to delineate] ideas developed by the researchers about what they think they see” (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2008, p. 116). However, data from informal interviews is difficult to analyse, since the questions and context vary among different interviewees, and it requires a trained memory to recall details (Bernard & Ryan, 2009, p. 28). I chose semi-structured interviews because they are based on an interview guide: a list of questions and topics to be covered in the interview (see Appendix 6; (Bernard & Ryan, 2009, p. 29). Compared to structured interviews, semi-structured interviews meant I was not limited to questions on the schedule and I could ask for detailed information by using probe questions.

Three semi-structured interviews were conducted. The three interviewees were the teachers of my three Mandarin classes at Mifeng PS. They had observed my Mandarin classes, because I was “not permitted to take sole responsibility for the teaching or management of classes and the classroom teacher should be present in classroom at all times during Volunteers’ classroom experience” (NSW DET, 2009, p. 7). The three interviews were conducted in the middle of August 2010, and they were undertaken during the time of my Mandarin class, while the Mandarin lessons were replaced by other classroom activities with another teacher. A list of interview questions (see
Appendix 6) was prepared and made available to the interviewees prior to the interview. The three interviews were all audio-recorded, with the teacher participants’ permission, and each lasted about 20 minutes. All the interviews were transcribed, and the interview scripts were double checked by each interviewee, to increase their credibility and trustworthiness.

Although student interviews were not part of my data, students had been an important group of potential interviewees in this study when I designed the research, so it was necessary for me to carefully consider the most appropriate type of interview for use with them. It is believed that “semi-structured interviews are particularly useful for interviewing people who you really can’t interview formally – like children” (Bernard & Ryan, 2009, p. 30). This method was employed in interviewing children, with the questions printed on a separate page as a way to stimulate the interview (Bernard & Ryan, 2009, p. 30). Therefore, I considered employing this strategy when interviewing children, and producing pictures and drawings to encourage their contributions during the interview. The interviewing context had to be relaxed, so as to help the children to express their opinions easily. Their parents’ permissions were obtained before conducting these interviews. The purpose of interviewing the children was to access their opinions about my Mandarin class.

### 3.5.3.2 Written feedback

In addition to the interviews, I gave out feedback sheets to these classroom teachers with two guided questions on them (see Appendix 7). They were asked to write their feedback on my lessons, based on their observations. Observation is the key method in studying a classroom. Stenhouse (1975, p. 158) says that a “game player often uses a coach, who is in effect a consultant observer. Similarly, a teacher may . . . invite an observer into his [sic] classroom.” However, the ability to interpret, and the reliability of the data an observer collects, can be questioned. If direct observation is a major way of studying a class, it requires the observer to have a high degree of sensitivity and the ability to make judgements about what to observe and what to record.

An observer has to be capable of examining a classroom while their background knowledge is made explicit, so as to build a detailed picture of the class. It can be difficult for a teacher to conduct observations during his/her lesson. Therefore,
supplementary technology such as an audio recorder can be used to capture details of life in the classroom. Through technological supplements, teachers can focus more on different levels of analysis and examine the information in detail after class. In addition to making a recording, teachers also require an “adequate degree of self critical awareness” (Stenhouse, 1975, p. 159). In other words, like all research methods, self-directed observation or recording has some limitations as well as advantages.

Mentors include teachers and supervisors as well, people “from whom you have learned new knowledge, skills, principles, wisdom, or perspectives that have made an impact on your life” (Chang, 2008, p. 79). In my research, many people could be referred to as mentors, such as my university research educators, classroom teachers in local schools, directors from the DET, and people in my daily life, including the people with whom I live, research colleagues, and my family and friends. All of these mentors are acknowledged for their influence in terms of my knowledge acquisition and the transmission of certain knowledge and perspectives. The teachers in my Mandarin classes observed my every class, so they made observation notes about my teaching practices. They could be in a position to score my teaching according to some selected criteria from the QTF (2003). The observations from my mentors provided a systematic way to generate quality data about my teaching.

However, this part of my data collection was not successful. First, I did not develop a list of well-structured questions or guidelines which the teachers could use to make focused comments. The two questions (see Appendix 7) led to a variety of focuses and comments. This contributed to my teaching, but not necessarily to this research. Second, sometimes either the classroom teachers or I forgot about the observation sheets; sometimes they failed to complete it during the lesson or had lost it by the end of the day; sometimes a casual teacher worked with me and did not know what was required. As a result, I did not have a consistent data set from which I could draw comparisons. Third, the teachers mostly made positive comments about my teaching. They wanted to be nice, but their positive comments did not help me to identify concerns I should address about my teaching. For these main three reasons, I did not analyse the teachers’ feedback data separately. I used their feedback to triangulate the self-reflections I recorded on the same day, either to construct a “whole story” or to provide another perspective on reading my particular teaching practices.
3.5.3.3 Artefacts

The use of cultural artefacts produced by people manifests societal norms and values and can be used as a method to collect self memory data (Chang, 2008, p. 80). However, cultural artefacts can also apply to external data collection, where the cultural artefacts include students’ work samples and classroom displays. Students’ work samples can manifest certain aspects of educational culture and provide evidence of changes in that culture. A classroom is like a small version of society, whose culture is reflected in its cultural artefacts. In other words, by collecting cultural artefacts for analysis, these can help teacher-researchers to analyse classroom practices and establish their impact on teaching and learning. I collected a folder of textual artefacts which I used for my Mandarin teaching as well as students’ work samples during the 18 months of teaching. They are part of the evidence that contributed to and strengthened the analysis presented in this thesis.
3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis guidelines and strategies are examined in this section. Initially, all the data were analysed according to different data sources. After the first round of data analysis, significant findings were identified, and then a second round of data analysis led to the reorganisation of evidentiary chapters to capture the thesis. Through this two-step data analysis process, I was able to see my professional development over 18 months, and to identify the contribution my research had made to pedagogical and theoretical knowledge. Interestingly, I employed Chinese concepts as a theoretical tool for data analysis. This strategy raised my awareness of the value of using my bilingual intellectual knowledge in educational research, and strengthened my understanding of my role of teaching Chinese knowledge to my students, the ones sitting in my language classes, and those sitting behind their desk reading this Masters thesis.

3.6.1 Grounded theory

There are two different approaches to analysis: induction and deduction, neither of which exists in research without the other: “Inductive research is required in the exploratory phase of any research project . . . Deductive research is required in the confirmatory stage of any research project” (Bernard & Ryan, 2009, p. 265). In other words, to explore my research questions, I employed an inductive research method – “to suspend our preconceived ideas as much as we can and let observation be our guide” (Bernard & Ryan, 2009, p. 265). Moreover, “the study of human experience is always exploratory” (Bernard & Ryan, 2009, p. 265), this is consistent with the present study, in which theories and experiences have been analysed using an array of data. To explore patterns in the data, grounded theory was employed in this self-study research, to analyse the progress and changes in my teaching practice by identifying similar categories or themes from which to construct new knowledge grounded in my data.

3.6.2 Analysing self-reflections

To analyse my self-reflection four steps were followed:

1) open coding
2) axial coding
3) mapping of key themes
The first stage of data analysis was to undertake the open coding (or In Vivo coding) of the reflections. According to Saldana, In Vivo coding “is appropriate for virtually all qualitative studies, but particularly for beginning qualitative researchers learning how to code data, and to prioritize and honor the participant’s voice” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 74). This technique was employed during the initial stage of my analytical coding process. Saldana also suggests that In Vivo coding is “particularly useful in educational ethnographies with youth” and with action research (Saldaña, 2009, p. 74). In this research, open coding was applied to the first stage of data analysis, for several reasons. First, as a beginning teacher-researcher, I wanted to gain a basic understanding of the coding process by doing open coding. Second, the reflections contained a rich source of data about everyday teaching practices and school issues, and touched on a wide range of educational themes and concepts. Open coding of these self-reflections provided an opportunity to explore these issues without being limited by academic disciplines or professional practices. Moreover, open coding allowed me to build a systematic account of what the reflections I had recorded were all about.

In this research, the coding process specifically involved assigning a key concept to each reflection: for example, “value of teaching Chinese educational knowledge”, or “success of teaching in CLT methodology.” Sometimes it involved identifying a key word from the reflection which captured the main point. Alternatively, I chose a term which summarised the main ideas in the reflection. Sometimes one reflection needed to be assigned multiple codes, because it related to more than one key idea. This initial identification of topics through the open coding process was an exploratory process, allowing me to ponder the codes’ grounding in the data and how they could be categorised. Open coding, being different from content analysis, is an inductive process (Ezzy, 2002, pp. 86-87). The codes were induced from the data, rather than determined prior to the analysis.

When the reflections were identified by codes, the next step was to group or categorise them. Axial coding was employed to categorise the codes and thus to re-organise the data set. This process involves:

specifying a category (phenomenon) in terms of the conditions that give rise to it; the context (its specific set of properties) in which it is
embedded; the action/interactional strategies by which it is handled, managed, carried out; and the consequences of those strategies. (Strauss & Corbin cited in Ezzy, 2002, p. 91)

These categories might focus on dimensions such as context, strategy, processes and consequences. In this research, seven categories of themes were initially identified as a base for grouping all the codes, namely: bilingual issues, classroom management, Australian educational culture/knowledge, Chinese educational culture/knowledge, language teaching methodology, classroom practices and transnational knowledge exchange. My purpose was to integrate all the codes into a series of categories that could then be abstracted into a higher level of themes (Ezzy, 2002, p. 91). The categories were then used to identify themes that provided different ways of interpreting these reflections as evidence. Therefore, when I generated the whole reflection data set, those categories needed to be revised several times.

When conducting axial coding, I selected evidence from my self-reflection journals because of the need to reduce the large volume of self-reflections I had produced. Here it is important and necessary to explain and justify my choice of evidence for detailed analysis. The selection of evidence was guided by the identified themes. First, portrayals of the daily routines, everyday life and personal emotions, have been excluded from the evidence used for analysis in this thesis. Thus, reflections on homesickness and travel are not included, because they did not contribute evidence relating to the research questions. However, the exclusion of this evidence did not mean that it was ignored. It remained in my data set in case it could contribute to my analysis. Second, I selected evidentiary excerpts that could provide insights into the complexity of the issues at stake in this research.

I literally cut out each piece of evidence and grouped it into different pieces of coloured paper (see Appendix 8). If some pieces of evidence told the same story, they were glued in a list on one paper. The same coloured paper was used to indicate evidence about a given theme. However, I found that some pieces of evidence could be interpreted in different ways, fitting into different themes. Moreover, some evidence from a different theme (coloured paper) was linked with other ones, which created analytical challenges, but reflects the complexity of teaching. This “messiness” in the data analysis indicated the complexity of the issues at stake in the research, and made a useful contribution to the emerging argument. By doing this selection and grouping, I gained a visual sense of what my data looked like, what kind of interactions happened across themes, and how
could I organise them for “evidentiary unit commentary analysis” (Emerson, et al., 1995). However, when a self-reflection was excluded during this step, it did not mean that it was totally excluded from my data analysis. When I generated open coding and categories, some details from one piece of evidence might be summarised within a category or theme. However, as I knew this evidence very well, I could recall certain pieces of evidence which might contribute to the analysis of certain themes. This made it necessary to go back to my original data and select relevant excerpts. Therefore, after I undertook all of this I reorganised my themes, categories and codes to keep them consistent with the data that had been analysed.

The next step was to map key themes. The mapping of key themes helped me to explore the relationships between the different topics in my reflections, thus providing a visual picture of what the whole thesis would look like. The first time I produced this map I was able to answer the question “what did I find out from my data?” The second time I revised the map, the argument took shape. Figure 4 shows my initial mapping of key concepts and themes.

The fourth step in my analysis of this data is known as “evidentiary unit commentary analysis” (Emerson, et al., 1995, p. 180). An evidentiary unit commentary analysis was undertaken by selecting a direct quotation from my self-reflections; this quotation is known as an “evidentiary excerpt.” This evidentiary unit is indented, to clearly distinguish it from the accompanying analytical commentary which was created to provide a conceptual interpretation of the evidence (Emerson, et al., 1995, p. 180). Using this excerpt from my “original” records enabled me, as a teacher-researcher, to establish some distance from, and to identify my own stance on, the data I generated as a teacher, so as to analyse it from the perspective of a researcher. According to Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995),

to maximize the interplay between analytic idea and excerpt, [an evidentiary unit commentary analysis] focuses attention through an analytic point; illustrates and persuades through a descriptive excerpt introduced by relevant orienting information; and explores and develops ideas through

---

7 I started my teaching in Australia with tension between adopting an Australian CLT methodology or a Chinese language teaching methodology. I struggled to learn more about these different language teaching strategies. I found that both CLT and the Chinese method of language teaching work to some extent. I conducted lessons that were disasters in both methodologies, but I also carried out successful lessons with both methodologies. Therefore, I began to question whether there is a single best language teaching method that fits all classes.
To understand this evidentiary unit commentary analysis I began by selecting the evidentiary excerpt. Then, I wrote the conceptual commentary that related a concept (theory) to the data; this came after the excerpt. Third, I then wrote a conceptual statement to identify the key concept grounded in the data; this was placed before the excerpt. Finally, I wrote an orientating statement about the evidentiary excerpt – about the speaker, the context or the background; this followed the conceptual statement and came before the evidentiary excerpt.

To create a conceptual statement for the evidentiary unit commentary analysis, the first step was to indicate the analytic point, followed by the orienting information (Emerson, et al., 1995). The analytic point links the excerpt or quotation “back to ideas in preceding paragraphs, thus contributing to the theme of the section and to the overall story of the ethnography” (Emerson, et al., 1995, p. 183). Moreover, it also contributes to directing the attention of readers to how the researcher intends the evidence to be read and interpreted. The orienting information acts as a connection between the analytic point and the quotation. Finally, an analytic commentary follows the quotation (which is presented in indented form), in order to tell readers what the researcher wants them to see in the evidence. In the analytic commentary, the concept and the evidence are tested against each other, so as to persuade the reader that the interpretation and the excerpt are justified (Emerson, et al., 1995, p. 184). In addition, Emerson, et al. (1995, p. 185) argue that the progression of these analytical units is such that: “each unit both repeat[s] the theme but also through small increments adds some further ideas and glimpses of people.” Therefore, a series of “evidentiary commentary units” construct consistent stories and develop the argument.

3.6.3 Interviews and feedbacks

The first step of data analysis, open-coding, produced a table of codes and themes. Based on those categories, the interviews and feedback data were analysed according to the different focuses in the interviews or responses. Several different ways were considered when identifying different units of analysis for this data. The most straightforward method was identifying the answer to the interview questions and probes. However, when these interviews were undertaken, the answers tended to
overlap each other. For this reason, the unit of analysis used in this thesis was the topics in the interview transcripts. Next, the interview data was re-organised into three parts. First, there were several codes and themes that emerged from the analysis of my self-reflection data. This interview data was used to triangulate my self-reflection data and moved to self-reflection data analysis, where the same issues were analysed. The triangulation of this data is intended to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of my research findings. Second, several significant new issues emerged in the interview data. These issues identified by the classroom teachers contributed another perspective to the research. Lastly, the rest of the information, which was not relevant to my research questions, was excluded in this stage of the analysis. However, through the research process, such data might be brought back into discussion and contribute to certain arguments.

“Values coding” is one of the coding strategies that was applied to interview data. I tried to explore participants’ values, attitudes, and beliefs with the goal of determining “participant motivation, agency, causality, or ideology” (Saldaña, 2009, pp. 89-90). By adopting this coding method, my commentary analysis was able to focus on the values, attitudes and beliefs embedded in interviewee’s responses. However, my use of this coding method found it to be “slippery”, making it difficult to distinguish between the interviewees’ values, attitudes and beliefs. I developed my own set of definitions to guide my analysis, even though I thought I could use the following:

A value is the importance we attribute to oneself, another person, things, or idea. [. . .] an attitude is the way we think and feel about oneself, another person, things, or idea. [. . .] a belief is part of a system that includes our values and attitude, plus our personal knowledge, experiences, opinions, prejudices, morals, and other interpretive perceptions of the social world. (Saldaña, 2009, p. 90)

However, when I was actually doing the coding, this definition was still not clear enough for the drawing of boundaries between values, attitudes and beliefs. For example, Saldaña uses “values and attitude” to define the term “belief”, which makes the boundary between these two vague. Therefore, when doing Values coding, I chose synonyms for the three key terms. “Value” is similar to worth, price, cost, importance, conviction. “Attitude” can be replaced by approach, stance, outlook, manner, position, and feelings. “Belief” is like faith and principle. These synonyms offer a broader understanding of these codes, to help analyse the interviewees’ responses. These synonyms were used in this analysis to help distinguish the three codes: “Value, Belief,
Attitude.” However, “Value coding” has not been applied to all the interview data because of the limitations of the analytical focus, which is interviewees’ attitude and beliefs towards certain issues. When the analytical focus was not about their attitude, this coding strategy was no longer applicable.

3.6.4 Using Chinese analytical concepts

The history of China’s participation in knowledge exchange with other intellectual cultures can be traced back to the Han Dynasty (202 BC-220 AD), when Buddhism was introduced from India, later followed by the introduction of Islam and Christianity (Li, 2001). Blue (2001) claims that Chinese intellectual culture had a significant impact on Europe in the early modern period. The exchange of science and technological knowledge between the West and China has been “active and of long standing”, and Chinese intellectual cultural influence on its neighbouring Asian countries was powerful and significant during the Han and Tang Dynasties (618-907 AD) (Li, 2001, p. 290). However, when the Qing Dynasty (1636-1921 AD) began, the country decided to close these possibilities for knowledge exchange with the rest of the world, which meant that China missed the rise of science, industry and capitalism on the other side of the globe. This was so until its gates were forced to open during the Opium Wars (1840). Due to the closed gate policy during the Qing Dynasty and during the later governance of Mao, intellectual and economic exchange was lost, and China lost the abundant economic power which it had centuries ago.

The lesson learnt by modern China is the importance of intellectual and economic communication with the rest of the world. Also, the Western world knows that Chinese philosophical knowledge, which has been developed over thousands of years, definitely carries great value. Applying knowledge from China creates opportunities for Western educational researchers to develop informed arguments with dynamic and sophisticated Chinese concepts and theories.

There are various forms of Chinese philosophical concepts which can be used in Australian educational research, such as 成语 chéngyǔ, 俗语 suyǔ, 歇后语 xiēhòuyǔ or quotations from Chinese classical writings – 文言文 wényánwén. Except for this last form, these are usually made up of four to eight Chinese written characters – 汉字 hànzì. They are highly refined phonologically and linguistically to represent key
philosophical concepts, expressing “the essence of the language, adding to it [sic] beauty and colour by virtue of its richness and originality” (Y. Yang & Zhang, 2007, p. 10). Interestingly, some chengyu originated from foreign intellectual cultures, such as Indian Buddhism and foreign languages (Y. Yang & Zhang, 2007). This heritage of Chinese philosophical knowledge is rich and dynamic in terms of quantity and quality. Those concepts have been circulated, developed and refined for centuries, are still alive in modern China. Students learn these concepts from classic literature at school, and people phrase their conversations using these concepts so as to shape a certain context, circumstances or attitude. In other words, this Chinese intellectual heritage is applicable in modern society, and has high potential for contributing to global knowledge flows.

However, linguistic and attitudinal ignorance creates various obstacles for knowledge exchange. A large number of Chinese people are learning academic English for higher educational purposes, while the number of people learning Chinese in English speaking countries is significantly small. As a result, intellectual resources in the English language are used in educational research while those from China are less likely to be used in Western international research.

The reasons for the problem are first, that there are great linguistic obstacles when applying Chinese concepts in Western educational research: most Westerners do not read Chinese, so English equivalences are often used as a translation for these concepts, which can make the Chinese concepts seem less important. Also, the equivalent English has its own contextual baggage when a native reads it, as does the Chinese concept. They share different historical contexts, so one cannot actually explain the other. Second, these concepts are sometimes called “old Chinese sayings” or “traditional beliefs” in texts. There is an attitudinal difference towards the terms “old” and “traditional” in the Chinese and English languages, which causes a misunderstanding of they are positioned. In Chinese the words “old” and “traditional” most often mean “classic”, “needs to be respected” or having been “tested over time.” In English, these terms are read to mean “out of time” or “out of date”, especially in academic contexts. Those obstacles create a dilemma for me as a Chinese teacher-researcher, carrying rich and dynamic Chinese philosophical knowledge. I hesitate to use Chinese concepts as intellectual capital to support my research about stimulating Mandarin language learning in Australia.
It is as possible as it is necessary to articulate Chinese theoretical resources in research through the intellectual heritage carried by, and accessible to, Chinese international researchers studying in Australia. Singh and Zhao (2008, p. 8) argue for the need “to find the power in the knowledge they bring with them and in the intellectual resources available in [Chinese] by explicitly subjecting these to formal pedagogical explorations.” Western educators can use their ignorance of Chinese productively, to have Chinese research students in Australia explore possibilities for the exchange of intellectual knowledge between Western and non-Western societies (Singh, 2010). Thus, my supervisors’ ignorance of the Chinese language and knowledge has been used in this research to encourage me to identify “Chinese concepts” to interpret my evidence of Australian schooling, applying the four dimensions strategy to conceptualise, contextualise, challenge and connect (Singh, 2010). By means of this analytical strategy of using Chinese concepts, Westerner educators might learn a little of the rich history and the unique intellectual perspectives carried by these concepts. This could stimulate further knowledge exchange in educational research. The use of the Chinese Suyu “当局者迷，旁观者清” (dāng jú zhě mí, páng guān zhě qīng), which means “the person is who playing a round of chess is confused by the situation the person who stands aside watching the chess game is clear about the situation” in the Triangulation section [see 3.3.5] has been given in this thesis as an example of how implementing Chinese concepts can be used to develop an argument.

For the purposes of this study, Singh’s (2010) analytical method has been employed as follows. First, to contextualise means to give a literal translation of the Chinese concept, rather than giving a general equivalent. Chinese concepts concentrate an idea into several hanzi, and therefore a literal translation is required, so that Westerners can have some idea of how the Chinese language is formed. Second, the concept is contextualised. The background history and origin of the concept can be explored. For instance, some Chinese concepts use famous historical personages or special animals as a substitute for a group of people who share particular characteristics or virtues. Some Chinese concepts use the habits of animals to represent certain human actions or behaviours, and some use historical incidents to talk about contemporary circumstances. Some of the connotations of these concepts have no equivalent in English. It is also important to contextualise Chinese concepts by explaining how they are used in modern, 21st century Chinese society. Chinese concepts are used in both written and spoken languages, and sometimes they function as general guidelines in a certain field. Some
are regarded as a moral standard for the public and governors. It is important to make this clarification when applying these concepts in Western research. Such contextualisation benefits from being accompanied by examples. It is then important to show how these Chinese concepts can bring a critical perspective to Western contexts. This entails explaining why and how the Chinese concept is applicable as a critical tool in the Western context. Therefore, when applying a Chinese concept in Western research, it is essential that it provide a critical interpretation of the evidence. Last but not least, it is necessary to explain the contemporary impetus for applying Chinese concepts to Western research: that is, to explain the value of these intellectual connections.

In this thesis, three main intellectual conceptual connections are made. Initially, as a Mandarin teacher-researcher, my responsibility was not only to bring Chinese cultural and linguistic knowledge to my students, but also to educate Westerners about China’s dynamic intellectual capital through my research. Moreover, using my prior Chinese knowledge – both linguistic and ideological – provides a way of demonstrating my “bilingualism” as a researcher. My capability for drawing on concepts from Western and Chinese knowledge systems shows my distinctive position as a Mandarin teacher-researcher in this field and provides a novel analytical perspective in this research. Besides, if the globalisation of capital and travel brings modernity to societies, so does the globalisation of multi-dimensional knowledge flow, which benefits global academies. However, the direction of knowledge transfer today is mainly from Western countries to the rest of the world. Knowledge transfers in the other direction rarely happen. In other words, globally, universities and research are heavily centred on Western knowledge. The dominance of Western knowledge suggests an ignorance of knowledge from the non-Western world, such as China. By learning Chinese knowledge, including Chinese chengyu and suyu, and start to accepting Chinese educational philosophy, the Westerners might understand more about China and its language to eliminate “ignorance.” In this thesis I demonstrate that China’s rich intellectual heritage could contribute to the world’s knowledge flows. By introducing concepts that are used in modern China into Western education I hope to stimulate a two-way intellectual conversation, otherwise called transnational knowledge exchange.

3.7 Research Ethics
The research reported in this thesis was approved by the UWS Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00314) (see Appendix 1) and the NSW DET SERAP (see Appendix 2). In this section, issues concerning research ethics are discussed, because:

All human interaction, including the interaction involved in human research, has ethical dimensions. However, ‘ethical conduct’ is more than simply doing the right thing. It involves acting in the right spirit, out of an abiding respect and concern for one’s fellow creatures. (National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council, & Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, 2007, p. 3)

According to the National Health and Medical Research Council (2009, p. 3), most research is harmless; certainly there was minimal risk of harm associated with the research reported in this thesis. However, if ethics issues are neglected, risks are involved, despite the best intentions and care in planning and practice. According to the National Health and Medical Research Council (2009, p. 3), there are two main reasons for this. Firstly, participants will probably engage in a relationship with researchers, whom they do not know but need to trust in the research process. This trust adds to the ethical responsibility borne by the researcher on whom it is placed. Secondly, people who contribute as participants in human research do so for the common or public good, with little thought about their time and effort. This underscores the importance of protecting research participants.

The important ethical issues in this research project arose mainly from the involvement of children and young people. These concerns related to three aspects, namely: children’s limited capacity to understand what the research involves, and therefore whether their consent to participate is sufficient for their involvement; possible coercion by parents, peers, researchers or others to participate in research; and conflict in the values and interests of parents and young people (National Health and Medical Research Council, et al., 2007, p. 55). Besides young participants, there were the teachers/mentors involved in my Mandarin classes, who provided supervision for the whole class, witnessed my teaching practices, and supported my teaching development; Table 3 outlines these research participants from Australian schools. Initially, I planned to interview the language methodology lecturer from NSW DET, who provided the Language Methodologies Program, and my former high school English teachers in China. It should be noted that, as the teaching and researching progressed, it was not necessary to compare Chinese L2 education at either classroom or policy level, so I did not interview my former high school English teacher nor the NSW DET lecturer.
Further, the limited time for data collection did not allow me to conduct student interviews either.

The students in this study were recruited from my Mandarin classes. All the students in my Mandarin classes were provided with a written invitation to participate in this project (see Appendix 4). Their parents or caregivers were given the information sheet (see Appendix 4) and consent forms (see Appendix 5) for their written permission, before any young person was involved in data collection. Parents were told that they could contact me to discuss the project or any issues they had about it. To ensure the children’s participation was fully voluntary, I also asked children about their willingness to participate in this research. Once I had the parents and care-givers’ approval for this I used a dialogue sheet (see Appendix 3). All the participants could withdraw at any time, and data collected from them would then be destroyed. There was no consequence for non-participation or withdrawal.
To ensure the confidentiality and privacy of all participants, pseudonyms have been used when participants’ data and their schools are referred to in this thesis. The information collected about participants was identified which group they belonged to. Information gathered from the child participants was limited to questions about my engagement with students and my success in teaching them. The information about participants has been made de-identifiable. Some of the teachers might be identified by their occupation, but that would be the only means of identification. Pseudonyms have been used. All hard copies of the data that has been collected were stored in a locked filing cabinet. Electronic data was stored on a computer at the Centre for Educational Research, UWS, and requires a password for access; I am the only person who knows this password. Now that the project has been completed this information will be stored

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of activity (e.g. survey, interview, video observation)</th>
<th>Participants in each school (number + type) (e.g. 50 yr 3 students, 2 teachers)</th>
<th>Amount of time activity will take (e.g. 30 mins)</th>
<th>When activity will take place (e.g. in class time, Term 2 2008)</th>
<th>Classes (number + year levels) (e.g. 5 yr 3).</th>
<th>Participation strategy (e.g. whole class/ students withdrawn from class)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviews Terms 1-2 2010</td>
<td>6 students in my each Mandarin classes (N = 30) 10 teachers and mentors in school (N = 10)</td>
<td>15 mins for the students, and 30 mins for classroom teachers</td>
<td>In Term 2, 2010</td>
<td>1 class from Stage 1-3 2 classes from Stage 4</td>
<td>volunteer students from classes and classroom teachers and mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written feedback Terms 1-3 2010</td>
<td>6 students in my each Mandarin classes (N = 30) and classroom teachers (N = 10)</td>
<td>15 mins for the students, and 20 mins for classroom teachers</td>
<td>In Terms 1-3 2010</td>
<td>1 class from Stages 1-3 2 classes from Stage 4</td>
<td>volunteer students from classes and classroom teachers and mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UWS Ethics Committee approved information sheet and consent forms</td>
<td>Participating teachers and students</td>
<td>10 mins</td>
<td>In class time, or lunch time for students, recess or after school for teachers by the end of Term 1, 2010</td>
<td>1 class from Stages 1-3 2 classes from Stage 4</td>
<td>volunteer students from classes and classroom teachers and mentors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Participants in this research
five years, which is the mandatory period for storage of raw data.

Figure 4: The mapping of key concepts and themes
Chapter 4
Struggle and tensions in my Mandarin teaching

4.1 Introduction

Based on the analysis of my self-reflections and its triangulation with other data, this chapter uses the evidence to establish my position in Mifeng PS and Mifeng HS as a bilingual Mandarin teacher with a complex knowledge system. Metaphorically, this was the process of introducing a Chinese business into a particular dynamic marketplace in Western Sydney with sophisticated stakeholders. Of course, education is not the same as running a business, since the latter focuses on increasing its profits by all possible means.

4.2 Entering the “market”

The business market is becoming sophisticated. On the one hand, so-called globalisation and transnational superpower enterprises keep making the global market increasingly homogeneous. On the other hand, local situations differ from place to place, and this makes it nearly impossible to introduce generalised products or services across the world successfully. Even the largest enterprises – Coke or McDonalds – need to establish different marketing strategies or launch different menus in different places. It is the same in world education. Students all over the world are basically learning similar things, like science, mathematics, and English; but the processes of teaching and learning, and the educational culture, differ dramatically. Australia is a multicultural society and its educational context differs across different communities and regions. Teachers meet a dramatically different range of students even across Sydney, and this is a challenge for experienced teachers, let alone a novice like me.
4.2.1 Shocks

I first entered NSW local public schools to undertake lesson observations for the DET LMP in August 2009. I recorded my reflections about the Mandarin lessons I observed in these schools, which were mostly located in Chinese-Australian communities. Through this observation, I thought that Australian students had a self-initiated and motivated attitude towards Mandarin learning. The following reflection was about a Mandarin class in a girl’s high school:

[. . . .] 学生有很多是中国人。[. . . .] 她们的课感觉和我们诺丁汉的语言课差不多的。学生的纪律很好。老师分了两个组 – 高级组和初级组。课堂很自由。她们很多时候都是自由讨论，也没见她们说什么闲话。课堂气氛很轻松，老师走来走去给予她们帮助。

[. . . .] many students are Chinese-Australian. [. . . .] their lesson is similar to my language lessons at the University of Nottingham. Students are divided into two level groups, they all behaved really well. Students are free to have free discussion with their groups, and few of them were chatting about irrelevant topics. The classroom atmosphere is very relaxed, their teacher walks around to offer help. (Self-reflection, 3 August 2009)

Initially, I found that to teach students here in Australia is completely different from teaching in China. A teacher is more like a helper, rather than the authority of knowledge. Students looked for problems and, together with their teachers, discovered solutions. They enjoyed learning with little stress or pressure. I anticipated these differences from Chinese classrooms because of my educational experiences in a British university. I felt confident about conducting language lessons in this kind of class. In other words, I did not expect any need to establish a strict and harsh teacher image in front of students. Instead, what I anticipated was that I would systematically design Mandarin language tasks, and enjoy helping students solving problems to sure their learning.

However, on the next day I entered the class of Mifeng HS, where I was going to work as a volunteer. There I received a “shock”. The students’ behaviour was so different from what I had observed at the girls’ high school:

学校里没有中国人。我也不能说出学生主要是什么样的种族文化背景。
[. . . .] 课堂上喝水吃东西已经不是什么值得大惊小怪的事了。他们

---

8 In some Sydney regions, the residents are mostly, but not exclusively, Chinese-Australians. These areas are called “Chinese-Australian communities.”
的坐相，站相，实在是放松，还有躺在教室地板上的，实在是无法用言语形容。

There is not a Chinese face at school. I cannot tell any major racial and cultural background to describe them either. [ . . . ] It seems normal to eat and drink during class. Their way of sitting and standing is very relaxed, there is even one laying on the floor, I cannot describe the situation with words. (Self-reflection, 4 August 2009)

The above evidentiary excerpt from my reflections is about students in a drama class.

The following excerpt is about a PE class conducted by another local teacher:

下午我们去看了一节 PE，学生都很疯狂，跳舞大笑好像旁若无人。这节课根本没有纪律可言，就是让他们在一个室内篮球场内疯狂的蹦跶。我真是无奈了，这样的学生真不知道怎么管。

In the afternoon, we went to observe a PE class. Students are like crazy; they dance and laugh like nobody is beside them. There is no sense of discipline at all. They are allowed to move, jumping, dancing in an indoors room. We felt speechless about the students. I think I can never control this kind of student. (Self-reflection, 4 August 2009)

I found the students’ behaviour at Mifeng HS challenging. New teachers would probably experience such “shocks” when moving from a school with a completely different behavioural situation. Although I had studied at a British university for 4 years and was quite familiar with Western educational culture, what I observed in Mifeng HS came as a surprise. From this close, real experience I began to see how an Australian classroom could differ from Chinese ones, and how schools differ from each other within Sydney. This indicated that it was highly likely there would be some things I did “not know” about Australian education.

This reflection points to the “educational culture shock” I experienced, which is like the “cultural shock” experienced by international students. It also refers to an individual who has to adjust to “an unfamiliar social system where previous learning no longer applies” (Pedersen, 1995, p. 1). As a beginning teacher with a non-education major⁹, my schooling experience as a student in China could not be applied to this educational context. Realising that I did not know anything about how to handle this type of class was the beginning of my journey of learning by reflecting upon and analysing what I was doing. This learning journey – as a teacher-researcher – focused on an “educational model” of culture shock: it was a painful learning process, “a state of [professional]

---

⁹ UWS students have to complete a content degree (e.g. B.A, BSc) before enrolling in a Master of Teaching Program.
growth and [personal] development”, that has produced “positive and even essential insights” (Pedersen, 1995, p. 2). This ignorance might be seen as negative, or alternatively as a productive basis for learning; I opted for the latter approach (Singh, 2008).

The term “culture shock”, coined by Kalvero Oberg, describes “the anxiety resulting from not knowing what to do in a new culture” (Pedersen, 1995, p. 1), so anxiety is an emotional consequence of “not knowing.” All this “not knowing” produced in me an emotion of anxiety, which is also an immediate emotion resulting from “culture shock.” I felt anxious about entering into a classroom with students jumping around, talking out of turn and being naughty. I wrote about my worries in my reflections on the day when I first observed students at Mifeng HS:

[ . . . ]我觉得以后的教课很艰苦。还好每周只有一节课，不然真是会做人命的。

[ . . . ] I felt that my task of teaching will be really tough. I will die if I need to teach them more than once a week. (Self-reflection, 4 August 2009)

The anxiety that results from “culture shock” can also be an indicator of the self-adjustment or learning that is taking place (Befus, 1988, p. 385). Multiple levels of one’s functioning are impacted by culture shock, and these interact with each other, contributing to increased anxiety and stress. Stress and anxiety tend to appear first, followed by resistance, acknowledgement and change. This is all part of the gradual process of learning that takes place. Moreover, Befus (1988, p. 385) argues that the initial culture shock evident in anxiety or stress lowers one’s self-esteem; these are the “defense mechanisms of a person fighting guilt and depression for not living up to the self’s expectations.” After feeling stressed about the students, I worried about how to teach, how to bring knowledge to these students who seemed “scary” to me. Therefore, when I went home, I undertook a “self-treatment” to deal with my anxiety:

[ . . . ]我觉得很担心。但是后来也试图安慰自己想通一点，学生不听话，那就让他不听话吧，我能怎么办呢?我好好的教课，好好学习，就好了啊，不要 care 太多。不要有太高的期望值，就不会失望。

[ . . . ] I was worried about my teaching. But later I convinced myself, if students are naughty, it is the way they are, I can do nothing about it. Preparing lessons and studying hard, that is what I should do. Do not care too much about other things. If I have no high expectations, I will never be disappointed. (Self-reflection, 4 August 2009)
Interestingly, by lowering my expectations I relieved my anxieties to a large extent. I was quite ambitious about bringing high quality and enjoyable Mandarin lessons systematically to students, especially after visiting schools in a Chinese-Australian community. Not to be able to fulfil this expectation in my schools might have led to poor adjustment and mental depression. Instead, it seems that the advice provided by Loss worked for me: “set reasonable goals, don’t take your job too seriously, . . . be flexible” (Loss cited in Befus, 1988, p. 385). An overly high expectation is a factor which leads to “culture shock” among migrants (Furnham & Bochner, 1986, p. 174). My initial expectation was among the causes leading to this shock.

Finding relief from cultural shock is difficult even when a newcomer has some awareness of the socio-cultural differences beforehand, let alone when the differences come as a surprise (Zhou, et al., 2008, p. 63). Lowering my expectations led to my better self-adjustment, but this is not a long term strategy for overcoming the shocks and challenges I faced as a teacher-researcher. Adopting a low expectation is not a productive attitude towards the challenges of education, but is a short-term solution to avoid oneself moving into a cyclical pattern of an increasingly intense and negative nature. The immediate result was to move my expectations towards “teaching to survive” in my Mandarin lessons.

In dealing with the initial educational culture shock, my major concern was to survive the Mandarin classroom at Mifeng HS. I was more concerned about myself and I cared less about the results of my teaching. A typical example was the first time I conducted a Mandarin lesson in the high school. I wrote two sentences in my reflection after class:

我们打算快快结束，让他们自己画脸谱去消磨时间。不过还好，今天总算 survive 了，没有被虐待得很惨。

I planned to finish teaching earlier, so we asked kids to colour in Beijing Opera masks to kill time. Today was not so bad, I survived, and I was not tortured so badly. (Self-reflection, 15 September, 2009)

This concern about “surviving” in the classroom occurs at the early stage of most beginning teachers’ professional development. The four stages for beginning teacher professional development are survival, consolidation, renewal and maturity (Ginns, et al., 2001, p. 110). Ginns and others (2001, p. 109) also suggest that this professional development may proceed through three phases, beginning with the non-concerned
phase, through the early teaching phase, which focuses on self-concern, through to the late teaching phase, which focuses on students’ concerns. These three stages of concern – self → task → impact – mean that with beginning teachers, concerns change from self to tasks to impact. Therefore, during my “survival stage”, I focused on my self-interest for much of this period. Due to the “shock” of getting to know my students, I tried to keep myself away from increasing anxiety and being unconfident. Furthermore, later during my interactions with local teachers, I found that some of them still have such concerns, focusing on themselves and their own survival. For example,

Therefore, as a novice who was not familiar with the local context at all, I understood that a beginning teacher necessarily experiences this survival stage. It is a stage all must pass through.

4.2.2 Educational clashes

As mentioned in Chapter 3, teaching Chinese knowledge across different faculties within the school’s curriculum was a new and challenging task for me. I experienced a clash of educational culture in mainstream classes when I first started this task. I had anticipated that a Western classroom would be creative, but it seemed not the case at Mifeng HS.

I cannot believe that it is a so called creative art class. For example, the teacher asked them to draw a circle, then a line, and then to join the line and the circle, then to make a middle line, find the half way point to make a mark, then divide the line into 5 parts to determine the length of eyes. The middle of the horizontal line is for the nose, and the 1/4 part is for the mouth and so on. I was very confused – the students drew identical faces as a result. [. . . ]
nothing to do with creative art then, much more standard than a Chinese art class – unbelievable. (Self-reflection, 4 May 2010)

Although the class was named “creative” arts, I could not see any creative elements in this lesson. I learnt both Chinese and Western art, but neither one would allow to use a ruler to measure on drawing. Students followed the instructions strictly. As a result, they would draw quite similar faces.

A similar situation happened when I observed a cooking class after which I was to teach them relevant Chinese knowledge:

What surprised me when I was doing a demonstration of cooking fried rice was that the teacher emphasised “follow the recipe.” I cut the carrot into cubes rather than “matchsticks” as the recipe says, so the teacher corrected me. I tried to tell her that in Chinese cooking we prefer to cut ingredients smaller, but she insisted that students should learn something that was in the curriculum. Lastly, when I put sauce in the fried rice, I did not use measurements, similarly to what I do in China, but she insisted on me using measurements as the recipe said, even though I explained that Chinese cooks do it differently. Maybe it is a difference in educational culture, but shall I compromise to their culture? (Self-reflection, 9 June 2010)

This excerpt points to the way in which official curriculum was used in this case to dictate what this teacher taught about Chinese cooking, even though a person from China was available to explain the limitations of this view. The following reflection about a cooking class shows a tension between Australian and Chinese educational culture:

There is one trouble [when I taught them to make dumplings] as I do not have a recipe. I did it as I learnt from my mother. So I did not know the measurements. There is not a single recipe – there are thousands of recipes in China for making dumplings. I explained it to students but the teacher still
insisted that a recipe is important, otherwise, students could not do it by themselves. The teacher also asked me how to make steamed dim sum. I told her that steamed dim sum is something families cannot make, it requires highly trained techniques. I suggested her to check on the Internet. She said she thought I would have some secret recipes. I was speechless. Some forms of Chinese cooking are so complicated that not everything can be made at home with – or without – a written recipe. (Self-reflection, 24 June 2010)

Difference in educational cultures is evident in this classroom, where teaching Chinese knowledge can challenge Australian educational culture. Introducing Chinese cuisine into Australia has been a successful business because the food has been adjusted to local Australian tastes and eating habits. This compromise makes Australians happy, but it is not at all the same as the cuisine to be had in China. However, education is not a business. I did not believe that in order to make Australian students happy or to make my teaching easy that I should compromise my teaching of Chinese cuisine to their educational culture. When Chinese knowledge clashes with their educational culture and their curriculum requirements, it posed an important question for me. This reflection shows that my self-concern had progressed to concerns about what my students should be learning, although I was still experiencing struggles. My anticipation was challenged by the classroom reality, which was quite similar to the “cultural shock” experiences I had at the beginning of teaching, but my concern was not about how to survive, but a struggle over what to teach – either what the curriculum prescribed about Chinese cooking or what I as a person from China knew about such cooking.

4.2.3 Language teaching methodology

During the DET LMP and the initial stage of this research project, the training was largely about CLT; therefore, during classroom practice at schools, my lesson designs were heavily influenced by CLT, and linguistic knowledge teaching took a large part of my teaching. As a result, a round of teaching focusing on CLT and traditional teaching strategies had been conducted by me. However, I found that CLT did not stimulate students’ engagement with language practices. When I helped another volunteer Mandarin teacher with a Year 8 Mandarin class at Mifeng HS, the lesson was about teaching the names of stationery items. At the end of the lessons the students made a Chinese national flag using given materials:

根据 CLT 我们的看法是, 把材料放在桌子上, 学生要什么材料必须用中文说。可是现实上, 学生们都不愿意上来说, 宁可坐着。于是学姐只能拿着东西走到他们前面问问他们, 你们要这个吗?要那个吗?...很无奈。
According to CLT principles, the lesson was designed like this. After they learnt the name of the stationery, we put them on the desk. If a student wants to use one of the items for making the flag, he/she must say it in Chinese. But the reality was that few of them were willing to say the Chinese words. They would rather sit there and do nothing. So we asked the ones who did not say anything, “Do you want this?” trying to encourage them to speak, but they would not speak. I felt hopeless, I just gave them material so that they would not disrupt each other. [ . . . ] lastly, they did not learn to say “scissors” “glue” and so on. I felt uncomfortable. (Self-reflection, 20 August 2009)

This lesson made me question whether CLT is the only answer to a productive Mandarin class, even within this Western educational context:

I wear a name-tag so when I was teaching “wo jiao . . . (I am called . . . )” in Mandarin, I pointed to my name-tag. I put a question mark on the board when I asked them “ni jiao shenme mingzi? (You called what name)” in Mandarin. Stage 3 students understood this conversation. But they always said it wrongly as “nihao (means hello) shenme mingzi?,” which doesn't make sense. They knew nihao before and maybe they experienced a linguistic block. Maybe I should show them the sentence structure. [ . . . ] But KL and Stage 1 students could not understand the conversation from just hearing me speak. They sat there being confused; they could not repeat it with me. When I stopped to teach the question sentence, some students finally could say “wo jiao . . .” At the end, the KL classroom teacher wanted to help me, she literally translated one word to another for them. And . . . they understood! Finally! I felt I was hopeless.

Once again, this beginning teaching experience led me to question the role of CLT and traditional language teaching methodologies. Kindergarten or Stage 1 students could not understand what the sentence was about from hearing the sentence, even with clues I gave using body language. Maybe they were not motivated to make such guess? Perhaps, because I am a non-native speaker, my English was an obstacle for the students, especially for those whose L1 was not English either [see: 4.2.5]. It was a
challenge for me to make myself fully understood when such students constituted a significant proportion of the student population at Mifeng PS.

4.2.4 Communicative needs

There was not one student who spoke Mandarin at home, or had parents who spoke the language at home as a “background” language. Mifeng HS and Mifeng PS are not located in a Chinese-Australian community, so Chinese did not function as a community language in my students’ lives. Therefore, my students had limited communicative needs in their daily lives to use spoken Mandarin. Through teacher interviews, all three classroom teachers indicated that teaching communicative skills should not be my priority:

In terms of where you should be going now, I think you should focus on your culture, maybe not so much the communication and the greetings now. (K, interview, Stage 1 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

No, they don't (use Chinese at home). [. . . ] I don't even know a child who was Chinese. (R, interview, Stage 3 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

I think the thing that I would probably be persistent with at this age is more the tolerance, the acceptance of cultural difference more than anything else. [. . . ] They still like to learn the language. But ... I think they will start to get bored with just the communication side, the language. (C, interview, Stage 2 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

The teacher’s judgement about this distance between the need to stimulate their language learning, and the interest or capacity of their students to do so, suggests that the teachers at Mifeng HS and Mifeng PS saw no communicative needs for Mandarin. This questioned my adoption of CLT as my only pedagogical approach. At the very beginning of my teaching, I tried out CLT with my classes, but with only about 45 minutes of lessons each week the students quickly forgot, and became bored and distracted. This also challenged my early expectation of teaching Mandarin in a systematic way to my students.

4.2.5 Dynamic language background

There is a major difference between China and Australia: the former tends to have homogeneous classes in terms of the learners’ background knowledge, while the latter is more likely to have learners from multiple cultural backgrounds. At Mifeng PS, the ESL teacher told me that almost half of the students (269 out of 510) spoke English as their
second language, and 19 out of these 269 students were bilingual. Those with a strong cultural identity sometimes even refused to be identified as an Australian. This created challenges for me. When comparing cultural norms, I realised that I needed to consider these other cultural perspectives, especially of those students who spoke English as their L2 and were still developing their English language proficiency. At the very least, they might have a problem understanding my English.
4.2.6 Family attitude

Family and home circumstances also had an impact on students’ attitude towards Mandarin learning at Mifeng HS and PS. The family within which a child has been brought up can heavily influence his/her own attitude towards another cultural group. However, the growing diversity of the population in Australia, especially during the last few decades, now makes understanding among different cultures essential in everyday urban life. This transition in the population creates problems for local people in adjusting to the sharing of public spaces, such as beaches, with different people of another culture, or in dealing with their beliefs about the ways of doing things. One of the classroom teachers expressed her concerns on the issue:

I think it is important because Australia is not the traditional Australia it used to be. When I was a child, it wasn't as multicultural as . . . it was mostly Australian people. Over the last 20-25 years lots of different people are coming in from lots of different countries. I think sometimes, maybe some of these children’s parents. [. . . ] it’s a shock for them. (C, interview, Stage 2 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

In this interview excerpt teacher C uses the word “shock” to conceptualise the attitude that some of Anglo-Australian parents have; they do not have a positive attitude towards different cultural groups. They are “shocked” by what they see as a huge change in the makeup of the Australian population. As a result, these families’ beliefs about different cultures are probably less than favourable. Living with such an attitude, students would probably develop a similar attitude. This attitude would heavily influence their motivation in engaging in my Mandarin class. Teacher K also expressed similar concerns on this issue:

a lot of [students] are brought up with different attitudes and values towards other cultures. I think it is not necessarily their attitudes, and I think it’s more to do with the family attitudes. It makes it hard when you try to make that connection and try to share your culture with them when they’ve already got pre-conceived attitudes towards what you were trying to do. (K, interview, Stage 1 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

Teacher K emphasised that having pre-conceived attitudes, especially potentially negative attitudes towards learning Mandarin, would make language teaching more challenging. Students would be more likely to disrespect another cultural group, and they would probably show low engagement in classroom activities intended to stimulate their language learning. Therefore, language teachers have a responsibility to conduct
cultural awareness education that is mindful of such culturally embedded negativity and potential antagonism:

Some of the kids are coming from homes that are very racist. They are not taught tolerance at home. They are not taught to just appreciate that the things are different. They are not taught to be respectful of difference, and I think it is really important that we teach them you might not like something, but you don't have to be disrespectful or racist or [ . . . ] you don't need to love it, but you need to accept that everyone is different and that’s something we need to accept and cope with and deal with. (C, interview, Stage 2 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

At Mifeng PS and HS, it is possible that a child will be brought up in a family that is racist and does not share a culturally tolerant attitude towards another cultural group. They could possibly carry a pre-conceived negative attitude towards language learning. They are probably not respectful about learning the ways of doing things in another culture either. What is more, one’s attitude, once formed, is less likely to change. To make such a cultural change would be comparable to a “paradigm shift,” a transition of attitude which comes through “revolutions” (Kuhn, 1996), not through cultural awareness lessons. This attitudinal problem, was recognised by these teachers as an obstacle to stimulating Mandarin language learning in my classes.

4.2.7 Active learners

Having conducted lessons in both Mifeng HS and Mifeng PS, I recognised that classroom management was an issue for me in both. As a Chinese teacher-researcher, proficient in Mandarin and English, working in a cross-cultural educational context, I perceived and interpreted the students’ misbehaviour as challenging, but also interesting. Compared with a Chinese classroom, Australian classrooms are challenging, especially for me as a beginning teacher. I realised that classroom management was a problem for me when I first entered Mifeng HS in 2009 [see: 4.2.1]. Moreover, I quickly found that students’ behaviour could be much more challenging when a lesson did not interest them. The following excerpt was written after I visited a Physical Education (PE) class to teach them about a special “eye-protection” routine followed in all the primary and high schools in China:

我先介绍了这节课的 plan，这时候，有一个女生就把书包一扔，大声说，“That’s boring！”[ . . . ] 然后我开始介绍保护眼睛原因。我说中国学生看书看书很勤奋，视力削弱，近视率很高。你们虽然不带眼镜，但是你们也用电脑看电视，所以也要保护视力。他们开始装作听不懂我的 English,
When I introduced my lesson, a girl slammed her bag on the desk and said, ‘That is boring!’ [...] I began to teach them the importance of protecting their eyes and the reason why Chinese students have problems with it. But they had no interest in this topic at all. They pretended that they could not understand my English. They tried to capture my accent with a funny voice and laughed. This made me feel angry and sad. I felt like crying. It was the worst behaviour I had ever seen. The teacher and I tried to control their behaviour, but it did not work. (Self-reflection, 9 March 2010)

At Mifeng PS I also had a classroom management problem. Although I found it was much nicer, compared with Mifeng HS, I still faced challenging behaviours. I had no experience of dealing with such misbehaviour – I had never seen it before. A classroom teacher told me that:

[ ... ] They are a very difficult group of children; they are very active particular group. They find it very hard to sit for a very long time. And they have come a long way from the beginning of the year when I first had them. They could barely sit on the carpet together. But a lot of them are coming from backgrounds where they like sport, they are active, they are ... all the time, dancing around so that ... calm activities are really hard for them to stay focused on for a long time. (C, interview, Stage 2 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

In China, no one would be learning to teach a foreign language without calm tasks. Learning is not being active – except for PE lessons. I felt anxious when the students were distracted and disruptive during lessons. I also felt guilty if I did not teach them proper language throughout the class – it was what I was here to do. I was here to teach them Chinese rather than play with them. My lack of the English language skills of a classroom teacher and of classroom teaching experience, made behaviour management an issue for me.
4.2.8 “Ignorance”

Most of my Australian students knew little about modern China. Stereotyped images of China and Chinese people existed among students at Mifeng HS and PS, as they do among other Australians. At the beginning of 2010, when for the first time I met the students in my new class, they raised questions about the Mandarin language and China. I reflected upon their questions:

[ . . . . . . ]很多人就问了一些问题。有人问，中国有没有麦当劳。还有个同学问为什么所有的东西都是 made in China 时，下面有个同学说，“Because Chinese people are poor.”

[ . . . . . . ] they raised many questions, some students asked: “Does China have McDonalds?” Another student asked “Why is everything made in China?” In response another student called out, “Because Chinese people are poor.” (Self-reflection, 17 February 2010)

What a strange view from a student in a country which has Chinese as its top trading partner, that is the single largest source of external revenues (Bussière & Schnatz, 2009). Moreover, seeing China only as the world’s factory, rather than a source of conceptual and theoretical knowledge, is an added cause for concern. The following evidentiary excerpt concerns a question raised during my first cooking class:

[ . . . . . . ]我回答了一些关于成龙，中国奥运之类的问题之后，有一个纪律不错的女生小声小心翼翼的问我，中国有彩电吗？

[ . . . . . . ] when I answered some questions about Jackie Chan and the Beijing Olympics, there was a girl who always behaved well in the class who asked me in a low voice: “Does China have colour TV?” (Self-reflection, 26 May 2010)

By asking these questions students showed that there was much they did not know about modern 21st century China and this “ignorance” (Singh, 2010) provided a valuable stimulus for my teaching and their learning. Ironically, sometimes their classroom teachers tried to answer the students’ questions, their comments revealing much about what they also did not know. The following excerpt is an illustrative example:

一个同学举手问我，中国大还是澳洲大？我刚想回答，被老师抢过了话头说。这要看哪方面了。中国人口比澳洲大，但是中国面积没有澳洲大。我心里一惊，然后我表达了我的观点。这时候老师居然还不相信我说的，一口咬定澳洲比中国面积大。班里当时还有 2 个老师，她们也不觉得中
One student asked the question “Is China larger than Australia?” I was about to answer when the class teacher said that China is larger in terms of population, but China is not geographically larger than Australia. She did not know the exact size, but she said that Australia as a continent is larger than China, which is just a part of the continent of Asia. The other two teachers in classroom agreed with her. They were all quite sure about their opinion, even when I told them that China is actually larger. I was quite surprised about this. (Self-reflection, 2 June 2010)

This excerpt indicates ignorance about modern China, at least in these instances. There was a lack of general knowledge about modern China and its development, in these classrooms. This ignorance made the challenges of my teaching even more complex. Students, even teachers, had no idea about general knowledge of China. I could imagine that the only source for them to know about China before my presence was probably the Western mass media – television news, the Internet and the Hollywood movies. These probably emphasised typical problems in China, such as its population problem, and government policies, and the China of times past (Cao, 2007). Even though Beijing held the 2008 Olympics, which was a great event reported by the world media, some students even thought that Chinese people live without economic complexity, cultural consumerism or super-modern information and communication technologies.

4.3 A “market” analysis

Let me now return to exploring my business metaphors. Since the entering of this “market”, it seemed that my first round of “product” trial and testing was not successful – it was full of anxieties, stress, disappointment, mismatching expectations and challenges. However, from these shocks, clashes and experiences, I also learnt important lessons. The chengyu 失败乃成功之母 (shībài nǎi chénggōng zhī mǔ) captures the significance of my failed experiences. 失败 (shībài) means failure; 乃 (nǎi) is an ancient form of the language and is equal to 是 (shì) in the modern Chinese language, which means “is” or “are.” 成功 (chénggōng) means success. 之 (zhī) is

---

10 The size of Australia is actually 7.6 million square kilometres: it is the largest island but the smallest continent on Earth. There is some debate about the size of China, for political reasons: 9.6 million square kilometres is the official size, making it the third largest country in the world (this data is from the Ministry of Land and Resources of the People’s Republic of China). If we exclude the area of Taiwan, China is 9,596,961 square kilometres, which makes it the fourth largest country and ‘slightly smaller than the USA’ (Central Intelligence Agency, 2010). In fact, China is nearly 2.5 to 2.6 million square kilometres larger than Australia.
also ancient language and 的 (de) is the modern form of this word, which means “something/someone’s.” 母 (mǔ) means female, in this case, mother. This chengyu originated in a Chinese legend “山海经 Shan Hai Jing”. 鲧 (gǔn) tried to stop the flooding on Earth but he failed. His son 禹 (yǔ) carried on his mission of fixing the flood. He learnt from his father’s lesson and finally he was successful. Nowadays, Chinese people use this chengyu to encourage those who have failed at one stage to persist, saying that, “Don't worry, please carry on, success will be born out of this failure.”

The first lesson, I realised, was that I was ignorant about Australian public schools and students. This “not knowing” was an important source of impetus for my professional learning (Singh, 2009). The “shock”, and also the clash of educational experiences, like cultural shock (Furnham & Bochner, 1986), was a “stimulus for acquisition of cultural-specific skills that are required to engage in new social interactions” (Zhou, et al., 2008, p. 65). For me, I needed to learn teacher-specific skills of classroom management, the English language of the Australian teaching professions and other classroom practices related to language teaching. As Singh (2010, p. 31) argues, it is this not knowing that can stimulate learning and the production of knowledge. Not-knowing fuelled my inquiry as a teacher-researcher. My desire to overcome the problems and tensions led the way in my professional learning, opening up possibilities for exploring the likelihood of my not knowing many things. Kerwin (cited in Singh, 2010, p. 34) argues that “… to inquire, we must face what we do not know.” Therefore, my recognition of my limited understanding of Australian schools and students was a key stimulus for my professional development as a beginning teacher-researcher.

Second, I realised the importance of educational context (Bax, 2003; Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Seddon, 1995). Although I learnt about CLT during the LMP from DET, and was told that CLT was the “most advanced” language teaching strategy for a L2 learner, the students and classroom teachers at Mifeng HS and PS were telling me that communication was not the answer. My students were diverse in terms of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as well as their family attitudes towards such diversity [see: 4.2.5 and 4.2.6]. Their interest in Mandarin learning was markedly different from what I observed from another group of Mandarin learners in the Chinese-Australian community schools, which we were taken to observe [see: 4.2.1]. Given the lack of an everyday communicative need, teaching CLT did not seem to represent a significant
benefit for their lives. My teaching through this experience echoes the claim of Ginns, et al. (2001) that critical reflection helps beginning teachers to improve their practices and make their own decisions. Metaphorically, this is the process of “localisation” for an international business. The reason why decision-making should not, and cannot always to be centralised in the head-office in the homeland is that sometimes the business head office does not know the details of each small market. It requires local managers to react and engage with the local context and make local decisions. Once again, “ignorance” is a productive driver for learning to do things differently.

As a teacher I had to position myself in the educational context of Western Sydney rather than Eastern Sydney schools since Western Sydney is economically disadvantaged and have many difficult schools. To recognise the “reality” I was facing, so I could engage productively in effective classroom teaching and maximise the learning benefits of my students. Continuing with the business metaphor I have been employing, my positioning into the educational context of Mifeng HS and PS was like positioning my business in the Mifeng market. My Mandarin lessons, together with my teaching practice, could be regarded as a “product.” I needed to “promote” my lessons to my students, a group of less than enthusiastic consumers. Most of my students seemed to have no “need” or no interest in making a purchase. I needed to conduct appropriate “marketing” strategies to capture their interest.

To achieve success in this particular marketplace, I needed to know first, the needs of my target groups (my students at Mifeng HS and PS), and second, the nature of my business, which products (lessons, task and contents) I could bring to my customers (students) that are of high quality and have a competitive advantage. What a business might do in this circumstance is to conduct a SWOT analysis. SWOT analysis is a commonly used technique by enterprises undertaking strategic planning. This analytical tool was developed for decision-makers (Piercy & Giles, 1993, p. 5), where SWOT is the acronym for “strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.” In this model, strengths and weaknesses refer to the internal factors of an enterprise, while opportunities and threats refer to external market forces. The collection of data about and analysis of these four factors which interact with each other, enables an enterprise to make wise decisions in a complex market. Interestingly, key features of a SWOT analysis, for instance customer-orientation and environmental analysis, share similarities with the educational field, especially the complex school situation and the
divided and diverse students needs. In this case, strengths and weaknesses refers to my professional knowledge as a Mandarin volunteer teacher-researcher, while opportunities and threats refer to the school context. This analytical framework provides an interesting link between my prior knowledge and the experiential knowledge I gained in Mifeng HS and PS. This is in itself a central principle of quality teaching and learning. I actually used this metaphor in my reflections:

忽然想到一个问题。我来了那么久了，如果要我重头来过，我会对我的教学做什么改变呢？然后我就想到了一个模型“SWOT”。我想我会先分析一下自己的 S/W，再看一下教书地方的 O/T，结合自己的 S/W 和学校的 O/T 制定教学方案。

I arrived in Australia one year ago. I suddenly asked myself the question, “If I started over again, what kind of change would I make in my teaching?” Then the ‘SWOT’ model jumped into my head. I would first analyse my S/W, and then analyse the O/T at school site, then make a strategic teaching plan according to the four factors to fit me into the context of the school. (Self-reflection, 1 June, 2010)

I then generated the SWOT analysis (Table 4), listing up my strengths and weaknesses as a beginning teacher. My strengths were identified along three dimensions. First, I had been living and studying in China, interacting with cultures and people for a long time, travelling around, I knew China very well. Second, I had been an L2 learner for more than a decade and therefore I understood the challenges of L2 learning. I could very much understand my students when they could not see the sense of learning Mandarin. They were just like me when I was learning some subject I did not like during my schooling, such as natural science. Third, I am good at Chinese cultural arts, namely traditional ink painting and calligraphy. I brought ink and paper with me from China. My weakness is a lack of classroom management skills. My English language proficiency (IELTS 7.0) was not sufficient for communicating with young children. I had limited knowledge about local students – what did they already know? As a beginning language teacher, I had not developed a methodology with which I could feel comfortable as a teacher. I was still exploring and trying out pedagogical possibilities.
In terms of the environmental analysis of the school context, I identified opportunities at school. First, there was no Chinese teacher at Mifeng HS and PS, so I was fully responsible for the content of the lessons and the method of teaching. My students knew little about China, so they would possibly have some curiosity for learning about it. They were active learners who liked being busy with their hands, rather than sitting for a long time repeating the language. Of course, some of the “opportunities” could have a negative side, posing “threats.” The absence of a qualified Chinese language teacher meant I had limited help in terms of professional knowledge of language teaching. That the students knew little about China actually indicated the considerable distance between their lives and the learning of Mandarin. They had limited communicative needs, and they were not highly motivated to learn the language [see: 4.2.4]. These “threats” created challenges for my Mandarin teaching, but they greatly empowered my reflection and professional development. The SWOT matrix (Table 5) shows that through using my strengths and opportunities at Mifeng schools, I was able to mitigate or otherwise mediate these “threats” as I tried to eliminate my “weaknesses” to maximise the benefits I could bring to my students. As a whole, the SWOT matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Strengths</th>
<th>Opportunities at school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My experiential knowledge</td>
<td>1. School does not have a strict language program, so what to teach depends on me to a large extent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My educational knowledge of language learning</td>
<td>2. Students like “hands-on” activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My knowledge of Chinese culture and art</td>
<td>3. Students are from non-Chinese background and they know little about China.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Weaknesses</th>
<th>Threats at school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Poor classroom management</td>
<td>1. Limited help from qualified language teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. English</td>
<td>2. Students’ low motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I have not developed a methodology in which I can conduct proper language lessons.</td>
<td>3. Behaviour problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Limited knowledge about local students</td>
<td>4. Students have limited communication needs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: SWOT analysis for Mifeng HS/PS
indicated my “not known,” showing places where I could make progression in terms of presumed strengths and opportunities and develop new knowledge in areas of threats and weaknesses.

Table 5: SWOT analysis for Mifeng HS/PS with strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Opportunity</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1+O1/O3:</td>
<td>a flexible curriculum allows me to design lessons about Chinese knowledge rather than be limited to language itself. Students can be benefited from that and their ignorance of China can be eliminated.</td>
<td>S2+T2: my class can end up with ‘hands-on lessons’ rather than a language class, which it is supposed to be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2+O2:</td>
<td>I can bring cultural arts activity to classroom which students love, to stimulate their learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weakness</th>
<th>Opportunity</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W1+O2:</td>
<td>I can use Chinese philosophy to get students’ attention, and avoid harsh classroom behaviour problem.</td>
<td>W1+T2/3: I can be in trouble with classroom management problems at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W1/2:</td>
<td>for me, practical lessons are an opportunity to develop my teacher’s professional skills.</td>
<td>W2+T2/3: I cannot engage students in language learning activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>W2+T1: without a guide at school as a professional language teacher and a well-established plan, my teaching can be not effective and it may improve only slowly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4 Conclusion

The introduction of my “business” into this new market was tough. From the “shocks” and the trials experienced during my Mandarin teaching, I was able to identify two major tensions that emerged for me at Mifeng HS and Mifeng PS.
I could not apply my Chinese prior knowledge to my work at Mifeng HS and PS to overcome all the challenges and problems I met. New pedagogical knowledge was definitely required to conduct high quality Mandarin lessons. This was the first tension that emerged for my teaching. Australian students differ in significant ways from Chinese students. As a Mandarin teacher I needed to learn much about Australian students. To understand them I interacted with them so I could learn how to motivate them. Together with their new knowledge and my prior knowledge, I was able to position myself better in this particular context, making improvements in my teaching and students’ learning.

Teaching Mandarin to a group of students who were not motivated to learn the language was another tension, manifesting itself in multiple dimensions at the classroom level. Pedagogically, both CLT and “traditional” language teaching methods focus on teaching to enhance linguistic ability. However, in working with these particular students I found that it was not linguistic learning that comes first. My priority was to eliminate students’ ignorance about a modern China as a way of engaging them in, and stimulating their desire to learn, Mandarin. The detailed processes of identifying and working out some different dimensions of this tension at the classroom level are analysed in Chapters 5 and 6.
Chapter 5
Promoting language learning motivation

5.1 Introduction

This chapter centres on the issue of motivating Mandarin learning. In Chapter 4 it was proposed that conducting Mandarin lessons with students in Australia can be likened to selling a product to a group of consumers who have no idea about the product. Effective “promotion” may empower consumers’ understanding of the product and help grow their interest in it. Therefore, “promoting” this “product” means finding ways to motivate Australian students to engage in learning Mandarin. This chapter begins by analysing the issue of learner motivation and its role in second language (L2) learning. Then my “promotion” strategies are analysed according to different dimensions of motivation and its sources. It also analyses some possible strategies that were not implemented, but were suggested by classroom teachers.

5.2 Importance of language motivation

Motivation is a key factor influencing second language learning. Students’ motivation can vary from individual to individual, and their motivation can significantly inform teachers’ practices. Students with a strong motivation contribute to a positive learning environment by taking the initiative to learn. Conversely, if students are not motivated to learn and the teacher fails to cultivate their motivation, this can lead to an unproductive class with behaviour management problems. Australian educational situations differ across regions and suburbs. One significant reason for the substantial differences across schools is that immigrants make up a significant proportion of the Australian student population in some communities, and less in others. This diversity is one of the factors that can lead to complexity in students’ motivation to learn Mandarin across Sydney.
5.3 Instrumental motivation

An L2 learner who takes the initiative to learn an L2 to fulfil an instrumental need is driven by a kind of extrinsic motivation. A large number of L2 learners, especially adults, are motivated by instrumental needs, such as meeting a job requirement, or to position themselves competitively for their career (Capeness, et al., 2001). The facilitation of learners’ motivation is inseparable from external outcomes, or extrinsic motivating factors (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In Australian schools, the immediate forms of extrinsic motivators are to encourage students to engage in learning tasks. For instance, teachers at Mifeng HS and PS used lollies as a prize to encourage positive learning behaviours in their classes. This did promote students’ engagement with certain learning tasks, but it is doubtful that it has any lasting impact on stimulating students’ learning with respect to particular subjects.

5.3.1 Examinations

Students in China are externally motivated to learn English, because of the examination system and the promise of a better economic future – something they can actually see and experience in the lives of people around them. Conversely, at Mifeng, as in schools throughout Australia, learning Mandarin is not driven by examinations governing university entrance or graduation. I wrote the following reflection after attending a staff meeting at Mifeng high school:

DET 在网上公布了一些数据，把学校和学校相比较分成了好几等，学生和家长都可以看到。[... ...]他们一直在说这个是不好的，数据是有猫腻的之类。然后 DET 好像出了一套试卷要统考然后要上交考试结果，老师们又不高兴了，说什么我们不可以 prepare students for tests, 要拒绝参加考试。然后全部的 Staff 举手表决要写信反对这个考试，还要去校门口给家长分发拒绝参加 DET 考试的传单。

DET compared schools, gave out a rank and published the results on the Internet, through which family and students are able to access it. [...] Teachers disagreed with it, claiming that the data are corrupted. At that time, DET was about to hold an examination and acquire the exam results from schools. All teachers again objected to it. They said that it is not right to prepare students for tests. Finally, all staff voted for a decision to send a letter to present their opinion to DET, and they were going to give out newsletters to parents at the school gate. (Self-reflection, 28 April 2010)

The attitude towards examination in this community was the opposite to the attitude of school teachers in China. In China, examinations are the most important function of the
education system (W. Ding & Lehrer, 2007), and Cheng (2008) attributes the success of China’s English education to all kinds of English tests. They function as a standard for ensuring equal competition and a mechanism to externally motivate “slow students” to catch up, and to provide “good students” with a sense of success. A Chinese Suyu can be used here to interpret this situation: 考考考，老师的法宝; (kǎokǎokǎo, láoshī de fǎbǎo) 分分分，学生的命根。 (fēnfēnfēn, xuéshēng de mìnggēn); it literally means “exam, exam, exam, teachers’ magic weapon; score, score, score, students’ life roots.” 命根 (mìnggēn), “life root” in China means something that carries great treasure, personal meaning or value for a person. For example, when a mother loves her son, we can say, this boy is the mother’s life root. This Suyu captures the importance of examinations for Chinese students and teachers, indicating students and teachers’ different interests in engagement with examinations and their attitude towards them. Examination is an extrinsic motivator, playing an important role in stimulating students’ learning and in directing teachers’ work. However, I could not draw upon examinations as an external motivator in my work as a teacher in Australia, and the students were not motivated by the possibility of getting a high mark on examinations.

5.3.2 Personal development

Speaking English is a globally important skill that is highly valued internationally by companies and universities (Cheng, 2008; Selmer, 2006). Generally speaking, in an English-speaking country such as Australia, foreign language skills are not as highly valued as in non-English speaking countries, because of the world-wide use of their first language. Nevertheless, a growing interdependence and interaction between Australia and China implies that L2 capability is essential for Australia’s English speakers for increasing cross-cultural communication. Teacher R, who teaches Stage 3, attributes the advantages of learning Mandarin as a foreign language to an Australian student’s further career development, given the close economic relationship between the two countries:

One of the things is China is one of the biggest nations we trade with, and you have got not just what comes to product and services. I’ve got my sister who works in financial services, and she had to learn some Mandarin to be able to communicate with their international offices and things like that. So yeah, it’s one of those things if you know Mandarin or any other languages like Pilipino or Korean, then you have got a really good foundation for being able to work in international companies. (R, interview, Stage 3 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)
The two economies are interdependent in terms of business cooperation. Therefore, bilingual speakers can expect to gain significant opportunities by working in international companies. Learning Mandarin as a foreign language could expand students’ career opportunities.

The reality at Mifeng HS is that a large portion of students who graduate from high school do not continue on to higher education. This limited educational prospect largely constrains their imaginings of future developments. In other words, their expected future work does not require L2 capability, so knowing another language is not expected to bring significant benefits to their future careers. For the students in Stage 1 to Stage 4, I did not educate them about how Mandarin contributes to fuelling their future personal development. Children at that age seem to be less concerned about learning something for future development.

However, teachers from Mifeng PS did believe that educating students for their future development was one of the significant aspects which learning another language could benefit. “Values coding” (Saldaña, 2009) [see: 3.5.3.2] was one of the analytical strategies applied to the following evidentiary excerpt from an interview with teacher R, who explained why primary school students should learn the Mandarin language:

| R: I think to be honest I think kids are . . . they are very adaptive. The more ways you teach them things, the better it is. Like when you are an adult, you are trying to learn another language or something else, it’s very very hard, but when children, like learning multiple languages it’s so much easier for them than it is for us as adults, trying to pick up the second language. So, because they are still children they are still developing their vocabulary. So, when you are teaching them things from another language and another culture, they pick it up much easier. Because they are learning both at the same time. For us adults, we already got it, and we have to then add vocabularies yet kids they got both avenues to go down. | B: young learner are adaptive
| A: more is better
| B: adult learners are less adaptive
| A: more is better
| V: second language
| V: culture and language
| B: learning at same time is good
| V: more pathway to develop
| V: second language
| B: young learners learn well

[ . . . ] I think our kids should learn a second language. I worked with kids with more background I think they learn two languages from their birth, that’s the
language they cope with for the rest of their life. So like if they got bilingual parents, or they speak another language with grandparents, they may need to keep going, like they need to learn that when they are younger, and keep with them through the rest of their life. Having two languages is so valuable that is something to use forever, and it's awesome for them to be able to speak two languages.
(R, interview, Stage 3 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

Table 6 summarises Teacher R’s values, belief and attitude towards Mandarin learning at Mifeng PS. Teacher R values second language learning to a large extent. She kept repeating the role of a second language in students’ learning and how it benefits them in different aspects, including offering an alternative pathway for a student to develop in, and providing lifelong benefits. Moreover, learning another language from an early age or from birth is significant for language learners to master another language, since Teacher R considers developing both first language and second language simultaneously is beneficial to language learners, and that younger learners in particular are much more adaptive than adult learners. In addition, Teacher R believes environment is one of the key points in promoting language learning, both within and outside the classroom. Language teachers should try to explore as many methods as possible to promote students’ language acquisition. Therefore, as Teacher R suggests, trying to educate adaptive young students by appealing to their instrumental interests for learning L2 might stimulate language learning.

Table 6: Overview of the interviewee’s values, beliefs and attitudes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>second language</th>
<th>Speaking two languages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belief</td>
<td>young learners</td>
<td>learning at same time is good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>more method is better</td>
<td>environment is important</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teacher C expressed her concern over this issue, noting that it depended on the different ages of students. She believed that learning another language could bring different advantages to students, including their future development. Furthermore, for young
learners, it is important to build their cultural awareness, which Teacher C saw as a benefit of learning Mandarin as a foreign language.

I think when [students] get older, it opens their eyes or . . . opens doors for them to perhaps pursue a career whereas a second language may . . . maybe needed. Or they are becoming more employable for having a second language. When it is just with the younger children, it is more a [matter of] cultural awareness. But as they get older, if they like [the Chinese language], and they start to pursue [it as] an interest and then it can open up a lot of doors for them to access to different things. And probably as I go to [teach] stage 3 and into [teach] high school, I would then start looking more in terms of future development.

(C, interview, Stage 2 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

Table 6 summarises the values, beliefs and attitudes of Teacher C towards L2 learning. Like Teacher R, Teacher C values L2 in terms of employment. In addition, her attitude was that the purpose of L2 teaching could be variable, depending on the students’ age group and their needs. Younger children are more likely to prefer developing their cultural awareness through language classes. The importance of pursuing children’s interest to stimulate their language learning is an essential impetus for engaging in higher levels of language learning. This “interest” can take the form of intrinsic or extrinsic motivation.

Table 7: Overview of the interviewee’s values, beliefs and attitudes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belief</td>
<td>L2 opens opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>personal development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>education from high school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The role of examinations in Australian education indicates the limitation of using examinations as a motivator for Mandarin learning at Mifeng HS and PS. Moreover, both of the teachers suggest that L2 education could empower students’ motivation in L2 learning to pursue competitiveness for their future careers, but my Mandarin lessons...
did not focus on this kind of awareness raising. Without this awareness, I anticipated that my students might be less likely to learn Mandarin for external needs.

In summary, based on the analysis of this evidence it was assumed that using examinations to stimulate students’ extrinsic motivation to learn Mandarin would not be feasible or effective at Mifeng HS and PS. The interviews with teachers indicated that students’ instrumental motivation might be stimulated by educating them about their personal development for future careers. However, this was not part of my Mandarin teaching at these schools because they were relatively young students in Year 1 to 8. As this evidence came at the end of this study, it did not investigate how the awareness of personal development could affect students’ Mandarin learning motivation.

5.4 Integrative motivation

In contrast to extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation is a particular willingness to learn a language or undertake a task because “it is enjoyable and satisfying to do” (Lucas, et al., 2010, p. 6). As Ryan and Deci (2000, p. 55) argue, intrinsic motivation results in high quality learning and creativity. Therefore, this section primarily analyses integrative motivation as one kind of intrinsic motivation. It begins with analysing integrative motivation and its effects on heritage language learners, and then shifts to the different effects and limitations for foreign language learners.

Integrative needs may emerge from Mandarin learners – both heritage language learners\(^{11}\) and foreign language learners. Lucas and others (2010, p. 5) point out that

---

\(^{11}\) Integrative motivation is a powerful form of intrinsic motivation for L2 learning (Dörnyei, 1998), but this kind of motivation for Mandarin learning is mostly observed in Chinese-Australian communities, since Chinese-Australian students’ background knowledge, beliefs and learning motivation seem to vary dramatically from other Anglo-Australian students. Moreover, heritage language learners living in Western societies believe that they have an obligation to maintain the language and pass it on to their children, because it is the major source of their self-concept and a factor determining who they are. The reason given by Comanaru and Noels is that heritage language (HL) learners are more motivated in L2 learning because of:

a self-imposed feeling that they ought to learn the language . . . . HL learners originated from a Chinese family and community, it is not surprising that these students considered Chinese central to their sense of self . . . . [and more had] a strong sense of relatedness to others in the class and to the Chinese community and culture than did the non-HL learners, greater frequency of contact with the community and more language use outside the classroom. (Comanaru & Noels, 2009, pp. 151-152)
this L2 language motivation is nurtured by attitudes towards the L2 community. This creates a desire to learn the language for the purpose of contacting and identifying with members from that language community. Unlike Chinese-Australian students, Mandarin is a foreign language for them, but their positive attitude towards the Chinese community drives motivation to learn the language. In Mifeng PS and HS, students’ attitude towards Mandarin learning was not all positive. Besides an absence of communicative needs for learning Mandarin, this limited motivation was influenced by students’ lack of knowledge or ignorance about modern China [see: 4.2.8], and their families’ pre-existent negative attitude towards other cultural groups [see: 4.2.6].

To eliminate students’ ignorance, stereotypes and negative attitudes about a modern China and Chinese knowledge, it is necessary to grow their cross-cultural awareness, as a way to stimulate engagement in learning Mandarin. That was an important reason why I conducted Mandarin lessons that were centred on knowledge about dynamic China rather than on systematic linguistic knowledge. Teaching students knowledge about modern China was aimed at promoting a positive attitude towards China. Students showed considerable interest in knowing more about China and a desire to visit China [see: 6.3.2.2]. This approach to studying China seemed to increase integrative motivation, which could possibly stimulate their L2 learning. Chapter 6 focuses on analysing the rationale, concerns and practices for teaching Chinese knowledge to increase students’ positive attitudes about a modern China.

### 5.5 Classroom-specific motivations

As discussed above, I had limited opportunities to promote “integrative motivation” among my students at Mifeng HS and PS. It takes a long time for such a motivation to take effect, beyond that suitable for this visiting Mandarin teaching project. Another set of intrinsic motivations might be produced through classroom teaching/learning activities, namely situational factors. Compared with integrative and instrumental motivation, classroom-specific factors of motivation are associated with “situation-specific motives rooted in various aspects of language learning in a classroom setting” (Dörnyei, 1998, p. 125). Classroom-specific motivators offer a pedagogical

---

These reasons could be categorised into “integrative motivation”, which occurs when “the learner wishes to identify with the culture of the L2 group” (Capeness, et al., 2001, p. 39). This category of language learner is highly motivated by the high relevance that the target language has for their appreciation of, and integration into this culture. In this research project, none of my students at Mifeng HS and PS could be identified as belonging to this group of learners [See: 4.2.4 and 4.2.5].
extension for L2 learning. In this research project, several categories of situational motivator were identified, including fun and curiosity, achievement and connections. These factors provided a focus for analysing my teaching practices. Additional factors were given, driven from teachers’ advice and observations.

5.5.1 Achievement

A sense of achievement and confidence is essential for L2 leaning. Capeness and others (2001, p. 41) state that “learners who think they are likely to succeed are more highly motivated than those who think they are likely to fail.” For example, heritage language learners probably have higher expectations about their ability to handle the language. Chinese-Australian students probably believe that they are likely to learn Chinese language, and so they are likely to be more highly motivated than those who believe that they cannot learn the Mandarin language. For non-Chinese background speakers, Mandarin is a language that is quite different from the English language. Many English speakers regard it as a difficult language for them to learn. Therefore, as a teacher I praised students often, so that they were given a sense of achievement. Also, my setting of reasonable expectations in Mandarin lessons led to positive learner attitudes and increased confidence in learning the language.

5.5.1.1 Praise

Frequent praise was a strategy used for promoting learners’ sense of achievement and thereby motivating students to learn Mandarin. I learnt from Australian teachers not to hesitate in praising positive behaviour or students’ attempt to learn:

[. . . ] The thing I have learnt in my years of teaching is praise, praise, praise. I know you do that really well. There are times that I feel like I don't praise them enough as a class, and you come in and you [praise them a lot] . . . even when they made mistakes, you do correct them but in a positive way. You don’t all of a sudden get “no, no, no, no, no!” [. . . ] You accept their tries and attempts. (C, interview, Stage 2 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

This is different from the “criticism-driven” educational culture in China. Australian teachers are much more “tolerant” of students making mistakes, seeing these as a way of identifying what students need to be taught. As a result, students are used to being praised or being corrected in a positive way. Offering “praise” for students’ efforts and giving corrective feedback in a positive way is highly valued by Australian students. As
an experienced classroom teacher, Teacher C praised my well-developed “praise” strategy in my Mandarin classes. Teacher K also wrote the following positive feedback, “The verbal encouragement and praise was excellent, especially for students who are tough” (K, written feedback, Stage 1 classroom teacher, 12 May 2010). Teacher R also found, about another strategy I used, that “positive rewards like stickers are great because it helps keep the class on track finishing their work” (R, written feedback, Stage 3 classroom teacher, 12 May 2010). All three teachers found that substantial praising had a positive impact on my Mandarin lessons. Students could gain a sense of achievement and confidence through completing language learning activities.
5.5.1.2 Learning expectations

I conducted several lessons about Chinese calligraphy, and all the students were interested in writing with brush pens, ink and xuan paper [see: 5.5.2]. However, learning calligraphy involves much more than that. The writing itself contains rules and connotations, which require deep understanding of requisite Chinese knowledge, and basic skills for writing characters. Therefore, teaching Chinese knowledge of calligraphy through this interesting activity created a dilemma for me: should I use cultural knowledge of Chinese “crafts”, or insist on teaching the cultural and linguistic knowledge that these “crafts” embody? The following reflection concerns my calligraphy lesson with Mifeng PS students in Year K-3:

我教了他们 “文房四宝”和拿毛笔的方法。我用水在黑板上写了毛笔字，让他们在宣[xuān]纸上跟着我一起写。他们很喜欢写毛笔，写的很开心。但是其实他们写的也不是书法，只是用毛笔写字罢了。我也没有用真正写书法的要求来要求他们。他们甚至不能坚持用正确的方法拿笔，也不能按笔顺写字，何谈书法呢？只是让他们看一下毛笔字是个什么东西吧。

I told the students about the “Chinese four treasures of study” and the way of holding a brush pen. I used water to write on the board and asked them to follow me writing on the xuan paper. They were very interested in it; everyone enjoyed it. But due to different culture, they did not write “real” calligraphy. I did not ask them to write in a real calligraphic way. They could not hold the pen correctly, and they wrote in wrong stroke order, let alone the standard way of writing the characters. They just learnt a little of what Chinese calligraphy is like. (Self-reflection, 8 December 2009)

As an art heritage, calligraphy carries a wealth of Chinese cultural knowledge (Zhang & Fang, 2004). This extends beyond brush pens, xuan paper and ink, to a Chinese chengyu such as 修身养性 (xiū shēn yǎng xìng). 修 xiū means fixing, but it also carries the meaning to shape, to perfect, to progress. 身 shēn means body. 养 yǎng means grow or raise. 性 xìng carries multiple meanings: here it refers to characters or nature. This is a beautiful chengyu, describing people cultivating their moral character and nourishing their nature through art. If I insisted that Australian students write Chinese calligraphy following a specified stroke-order according to the standard rules, they would not be motivated to do so, as it could be very difficult for them. Learning real Chinese calligraphy seems to be impossible for my students, given their limited knowledge. Rather than having fun and feeling achievement, they would feel boredom, disappointment and failure as they could not achieve the expectations.
To appreciate calligraphy adequately requires that deep cultural knowledge be understood; this requires a higher stage of language and cultural learning by students. I could not expect my students to understand the spirit of Chinese art; this would apply even if the students had knowledge of Western arts. I had to lower my expectations in the Year 8 art class, but I still found it was a challenge for me:

我教的时候还是觉得文化这个东西很难用英语给他们解释。我只是给他们看了一下水墨画，他们在学画脸，所以我给他们展示了国画中的人物。我试着说，国画不是写实，不像西方的绘画，但是其实国画也是有写实的一部分的。有些词用英语根本无法解释因为本身就有很深的文化底蕴。我的糟糕的解释让我觉得很不靠谱，很痛苦。

When I was introducing Chinese traditional art, I found it is very different to explain a culture in another language which is a second language to me. I simply showed them some Chinese paintings – mainly plants and faces, which was in their learning area in the art class. I tried to say that Chinese painting is not realistic like Western art, but actually it is more than that and I failed to express that. Some terms to describe Chinese art are in ancient words, which is even harder to interpret. My language makes me feel uncomfortable, and I felt I could not put my ideas into words, which was very painful.

(Self-reflection, 18 May 2010)

The complexities of teaching Chinese knowledge create obstacles in cross-cultural teaching and understanding. Without knowing the philosophy of Chinese art, Australian students might see Chinese painting merely as another art style that uses different painting tools. However, understanding Chinese art requires both basic linguistic and philosophical knowledge. Based on my teaching context at Mifeng HS and PS, one of my important goals in teaching Chinese culture was to motivate students, which required me to set reasonable teaching/learning expectations.

5.5.2 Fun and Curiosity

“Hands-on” activities seem to be highly engaging for students in language classes. Such hands-on tasks are available in Chinese textbooks and curriculum resources (i.e. ShuoShuoXiaoXiao) for Mandarin classes in Australia. Those hands-on tasks were designed for two key purposes. To teach Chinese culture, hands-on tasks included paper-cutting for Chinese New Year and making Beijing opera masks. To complement language teaching, hands-on activities included making dice when teaching numbers, and making animal origami or paper cutting when teaching animals. Those hands-on tasks were supposed to fuel students’ interests in learning Mandarin.
They love the hands-on activities. Kids are being kids, they love a lot of crafts, stuff, they love craft activities, and they like being busy with their hands. (K, interview, Stage 1 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

Teacher K suggested that students like hands-on activities; this was be used to fuel their interest in learning Mandarin or engaging in other learning activities. Teacher C gave another example relating to hands-on activity:

[Students] liked the lesson when you gave them the envelope [hongbao]. Do you remember the red envelope you gave them at the beginning of the year? They loved that. To them that was more real than just sitting there and repeating the language all the time. But when you do your lesson, you do make it real for them with the language . . . like, you always try to bring it down to their level. That’s good. (C, interview, Stage 2 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

Giving out a hongbao cannot be literally described as a hands-on activity, but it was “more real than just sitting there and repeating the language all the time.” It was how Teacher C described this kind of learning. One of the purposes for implementing hands-on activities in my Mandarin lessons was extended to making the learning process more realistic, so as to motivate the students. The assumption was that when students get opportunities to see, to touch and to be busy with their hands, they are less likely to get bored in learning the language.

Implementing hands-on tasks during my cultural lessons engaged all the students in my classes. They were highly involved in learning about China’s culture during these lessons:

很多同学告诉我他们很喜欢剪纸字，还谢谢我教他们。我觉得很开心，只要他们觉得开心就好。

Many students told me that they liked paper cutting “double-happiness.” They also thanked me for teaching them. I felt so happy, as long as they felt it was enjoyable. (Self-reflection, 25 August 2009)

This reflection indicates that my goal in this lesson was to have my students “enjoy” learning Chinese so as to stimulate a more “perennial interest” (Dismore & Bailey, 2010) in learning about China. My large aim was to stimulate their interest in learning philosophical, socio-cultural and linguistic knowledge. In education it is important to develop young learners’ positive attitudes:

Attitude towards physical education is an issue of perennial interest . . . promoting food attitudes towards physical education is an important
component in encouraging an active lifestyle among children and young people. (Dismore & Bailey, 2010, p. 1)

Chinese language teaching in the Mifeng schools has an analogous aim to physical education – namely, to develop Australian students’ positive attitude towards Mandarin and their interest in modern Chinese culture, beliefs and values. Moreover, Dismore and Bailey (2010, p. 14) claim that “Fun and enjoyment were found to be central to these attitudes.” In addition, in the Netherlands, it has been found that enjoyment is an important criterion that children have for participating in teaching/learning activities (Bult, et al., 2010, p. 2). Therefore, it seems reasonable that my Chinese lessons should be enjoyable so as to stimulate my students’ interest in learning Mandarin and about China.

However, sometimes “interesting” learning activities about Chinese knowledge do not lead to intellectual engagement, due to their irrelevance [see: 5.5.3] or to the linguistic challenges they pose for students [see: 5.5.1.2]. When I first taught numbers in Mandarin, there was a heavy emphasis on “stroke-order”, since I was introduced to a series of interesting activities in the Language Methodology Program, based on knowledge of “stroke-order.” Also, I thought that learning “stroke-order” was an essential part of learning Mandarin; otherwise, Australian students cannot understand the nature of Chinese hanzi. However, my students at Mifeng did not engage in these learning activities. A typical example of this was the lesson I undertook with Stage 1 students:

[... . . .] 学习写 “一到十” 先复习，再介绍写汉字的基本规律。课堂有点吵，男孩子扎堆儿说话。说什么也没什么用。说 “安静” 也没用。一直到 classroom teacher 来了好才好一点。同学总觉得很游离。[... . . .] 最后的那个游戏也没有见他们玩的很开心。

[... . . .] during this lesson they learnt to write numbers “one to ten” in Chinese. I did revision first, and introduced the rule for writing a character and taught them to write each character in correct order, which is “top to bottom, left to right.” The class was noisy. The boys chatted a lot even when I asked them to be quiet. Then the classroom teacher asked them to do so. The whole class was quiet but seems to be drifting a lot. [ . . . ] It seemed that they did not play the game based on stroke order very happily. (Self-reflection, 10 November, 2009)

Based on knowledge of “stroke-order”, I was able to organise some interesting learning games. Nevertheless, I anticipated that the gap between knowledge of “stroke-order” and students’ memory of stroke-order would probably make these games seem “boring”
for some students, and thus lead to low level intellectual engagement. Learning what is beyond one’s cognitive ability may create anxieties in the learning process (Dismore & Bailey, 2010). My students showed boredom or anxiety when the tasks were not balanced in terms of challenges and skills. Optimal enjoyment in learning took place when the students could undertake certain tasks which are balanced in challenge and skills (see Figure 5). For instance, in my calligraphy lessons, the students were not required to understand the deep connotations of calligraphy, since it contains great challenges which would not lead to a sense of achievement [see: 5.5.1.2]. I taught them to hold a brush pen in a certain way and to write Chinese characters. This was still challenging – but the challenge was not so great as to reduce their enjoyment. For these reasons, tasks such as “stroke-order” and Chinese philosophy were no longer taught in my lessons.

Figure 5: Flow model of learning
Adapted from Dismore & Bailey (2010, p. 5)

Chinese knowledge is distant from my Mifeng students’ everyday lives, and this distance created a sense of “curiosity”, a form of situational motivation during their desire to learn. Although making connections was also important in motivating students [see: 5.5.3], distance created a “curiosity” which for some students at least, encouraged them to engage in my Mandarin lessons. The following excerpt is from my reflection on a calligraphy lesson with a high school art class:

他们都写的很开心，很多人写的很好，描的很好。我之前介绍的时候他们纪律也很好，很尊重我，很安静。也很认真，看得出的。然后我就一个一个分别细致的指导，根据他们不同的问题。虽然我没有教，但是
They are really enjoying writing calligraphy. Many students wrote or traced good characters. They behaved well throughout the whole class – respectful, quiet and focused. Then I gave each individual suggestions to improve, based on their different problems. They also asked me to write their Chinese name with ink and brush although I had not asked them to do so. They liked it very much. (Self-reflection, 1 June 2010)

Despite limited prior knowledge the students had the curiosity to learn this new knowledge. As it was relevant to students’ own self-identity, in this case their name, it created an interest in learning Mandarin [see: 5.5.3.1]. In this Chinese lesson, the curiosity and interests of students were two important factors that led to a positive learning environment. I had managed to create “an eagerness to approach some activities and situations motivated by curiosity and interest” (Tobias, 1994, p. 47).

When students realised that this goal was achievable, they would attempt to try challenging tasks. I introduced Chinese numbers to students, with a focus on hanzi. My expectation in this lesson was that the students would recognise the hanzi. Students were not expected to actually write them down in the correct stroke order [see: 5.5.3.1]. Later, in the revision section of that lesson, I conducted a dictation test of Chinese numbers. Students were asked to write down the number they heard in Mandarin in the right order, but not necessarily in Chinese hanzi; Arabic numerals were acceptable. Surprisingly, I found one student Lily took the initiative to write some of the numbers in hanzi (see Work Sample 1). She wrote the numbers 2, 7, 4 and 1 in hanzi. I recognised that she made an attempt to write number 9 (in the first box) in hanzi as well. This work sample suggests that students can be motivated to learn Chinese numbers and to write them in hanzi, if the teacher introduces the knowledge in an encouraging way with reasonable expectations.

**Work sample 1: Dictation by student Lily**

![Dictation by student Lily](image)

(Collected during lesson with parents’ and student’s approval, 12 May 2010)
5.5.3 Connection and relevance

Making the learning target relevant to learners is important in terms of stimulating their motivation. For Mandarin learning, this target language is distant from students’ lives. Teacher C described students’ reaction to Mandarin learning as: “A lot of children here at the moment they are like, ‘Why are we doing this?’ ‘Why are we doing this?’” (C, interview, Stage 2 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010). Students cannot see the relevance of learning Mandarin to their lives. As a result, there is an absence of motivation for language and cultural learning. To look for connections to introduce new knowledge to students based on their prior knowledge is challenging, because of the limited knowledge students have about China, and my limited knowledge – that is my ignorance – about their country. This “thin connection” is evident in global connections:

Studying connections between sites, however, proved to be much more problematic than we had anticipated, mainly because from any one site connection fan out in multiple directions, so that the relations between any two sites are usually thin. (Burawoy, Blum, & George, 2000, p. 30)

To connect Australian students’ knowledge with Chinese knowledge is similar to building relations between two of a multitude of sites across the globe.

5.5.3.1 Self-reference

L2 learning motivation may be increased by “promoting cognitive aspects of motivation, especially those related to the learner’s ‘self’ [and] focusing on situational factors relevant to classroom application” (Lucas, et al., 2010, p. 4). Therefore, even though my students had few external goals as an incentive for learning Mandarin as a foreign language, their learning could be encouraged by the intrinsic motivation of gaining satisfaction from completing a language task; by making connections between their prior learning and new learning; by enhancing their “self-concept” for engaging new foreign language knowledge, or by creating situational interests in my classes. For example, in China a common strategy for students to establish a positive “self-concept” for learning English is to adopt an English name.

Self-reference in learning is related to students’ Mandarin learning. Teacher R pointed to the importance of making this relationship explicit:
talking about them is good, actually very good. They can relate it to themselves more. And if you ask them what they like, what their favourite colour and things like that, they can relate to that because they know that it’s about them. Whereas if you are talking about someone else, they got very . . . that’s when they get distracted and not on task. (R, interview, Stage 3 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

A lesson with no connection could lead to students being distracted from their task, but this is not to say that a lesson with a high degree of relevance to students would necessarily lead to high learning involvement. However, a lesson with no connection leads to students being distracted during the class. In other words, making connections is not sufficient to get students’ intellectual engagement, but it is quite difficult to engage student learning in a class with no connection to their own lives.

It might be assumed that Chinese cultural knowledge is unlikely to be connected to students’ lives. However, when a teacher can bring this knowledge back to students’ lives so they can find or make self-references through cultural learning, they enjoy the lesson more:

Usually at this age, it is counting and it's looking at the landscapes, the . . . what China actually looks like, what the people wear, how they used to dress, and some traditional things. [. . . ] they know Chinese New Year, they really enjoyed the, it was the time when they enjoyed it because you brought it right back to their world when you are talking about the year they were born, and what animal they were and they could really put it back to themselves, and put themselves in. [. . . ] at this age it’s all about them. (C, interview, Stage 2 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

In my classes I referred Chinese cultural knowledge to students’ own lives, which made them more interested in the learning process. In this case, their prior knowledge about Chinese New Year was engaged during the learning process. This knowledge was extended, based on what they already knew. Therefore, students’ intellectual engagement was high, as a result of this self-reference. Lastly, as Teacher C mentioned, making self-reference is essential to young learners’ self-centred cognition. This means that young learners are more interested in learning about themselves: “Students enjoyed the lesson especially when you talked about the 12 animals. They were excited to hear what animal they were” (K, written feedback, Stage 1 classroom teacher, 26 May 2010). This is how Teacher K described my class introducing the Chinese zodiac based on students’ self-reference.
The concept of “self-reference” is important to considerations of teaching Chinese knowledge. Learning Mandarin by learning about “self” involves introducing the “self” anew through the target language. The following evidentiary excerpt describes the students learning to make self-introductions in Mandarin:

The students’ task was to complete a self-introduction, such as ‘Hello, I am . . . I am an Australian person. I am a student. Thank you. Bye.’ This is a long statement but the students did very well at learning each part. Some girls’ work impressed me. They could all say, ‘I am an Australian person’ very well. Some could say ‘I am a student.’ Later I expanded the sentence to, ‘I am not . . . ’ Then, they made sentences such as, ‘I am not a Chinese person. I am not a teacher.’ This could they do once they learnt to say, ‘Chinese person’ and ‘teacher.’ Some of them also added these additional sentences to their work. (Self-reflection, 17 March 2010)

The students extended and deepened their knowledge of the Mandarin language through this “self-introduction.” This kind of “connectedness” became a key idea I used for organising my Mandarin lessons.

Besides teaching them to introduce themselves, I also taught them to say “I like . . . ” in Mandarin. The following evidentiary excerpt shows that students took the initiative to learn the language when they used it to talk among themselves.

I held a flower and said “I like flowers” in Mandarin. Then holding a block of chocolate, I said, “I like chocolate” in Mandarin. They like chocolate as well so they are excited to see me holding the chocolate. I then said, “I like Australia.” and “I like China.” They made a guess that I was saying “I love . . . ,” which was very close. I told them it means “I like . . . “ and then they practised this sentence. They tried very hard to say “I like Australia/chocolate.” Because they learnt to say Australia in Mandarin they actually said this. (Self-reflection, 24 June 2010)
When students talked about what they liked, they were highly involved in the learning tasks. Teaching Mandarin through ideas with which they were familiar made it possible for the students to quickly gain a sense of ownership, and thus stimulated their motivation to engage in follow-up learning tasks.

Building connections to Mandarin through topics that were not immediately related to having the students talking about themselves, was a pedagogical challenge for me. Teaching the characters for Chinese numbers was one such example. The NSW Chinese textbooks and associated resources, such as ShuoShuoXiaoxiao, emphasise stroke-order when teaching numbers. The main reason for this is that the characters for numbers are simple, so students are expected to learn them quickly. Additionally, understanding stroke-order is significant knowledge needed for learning written Mandarin and hanzi. Therefore, introducing this idea with numbers is preferred. Work Samples 2 and 3 are examples from Chinese resources under the theme of Chinese numbers. They are typical examples of stroke-order practice.

**Work sample 2: Stroke-order practice**

*Unit 3 Activity 6*

Adapted from Chinese resources from LMP
The change in teaching focus during my lessons about numbers indicates my growing awareness of the significance of responding to students’ interests as a basis for stimulating their learning:

I finished teaching the pronunciation of numbers. From this lesson it seemed that I should teach the students how to write in stroke order. Last year another Chinese volunteer Teacher Ye taught her students to write Chinese characters. But I finally decided not to teach this as it was not related to their life. To show them what the characters look like was sufficient. (Self-reflection, 12 May 2010)

Teaching knowledge that has significance to students’ lives is important. Young students are highly motivated to learn something related to themselves. Therefore, instead of teaching “stroke-order”, my Mandarin lessons introduced Chinese knowledge concerning numbers in a way that was intended to capture the students’ interests:

Adapted from Zhongwen Baibaoxiang, 2008, p. 49
I revised numbers. I put a paper cake on the board and changed the number of candles to represent different ages. They were excited to guess that I was talking about ages. I told them how to say, ‘I am __ years old.’ Then we all practised many times to say their age. I noticed one student who used to participate little in my lessons was now highly engaged, making no interruptions during today’s lesson. After that, I introduced the Chinese zodiacs and how Chinese children celebrate their birthday differently from Australian culture, they eat noodles and cakes. They were very interested in that. They were very happy to know their own zodiac animal. (Self-reflection, 26 May 2010)

Chinese numbers were taught in way that contained dynamic cultural elements and cross-cultural comparisons. This offered another possibility for teaching numbers without focusing on “stroke-order.” This lesson was a success with all students from the three Stages. They learnt Chinese culture through reference to what it meant for themselves; this made them highly motivated during these learning activities. The students also enjoyed learning the language of Chinese numbers in a way that was appropriate to their age.

5.5.3.2 Prior knowledge

Students’ prior knowledge is also important in teaching and learning Mandarin. Their prior knowledge provides connections which may be drawn upon to stimulate students’ learning motivation. With limited background knowledge about contemporary China and its language, students may not have the motivation to learn these through the detailed routine studying of specific language items. NSW DET (2003) points to the importance of engaging students’ background knowledge as integral to “quality teaching”:

Lessons regularly and explicitly build from students’ background knowledge, in terms of prior school knowledge as well as other aspects of their personal lives. [. . . ] Tasks explicitly build from students’ background knowledge and require students to demonstrate links between old and new knowledge. (NSW DET, 2003b, p. 15)
My students’ background knowledge is limited in terms of “knowing about China”, therefore it did not seem possible for me to build on students’ existing knowledge. There was no apparent link between students’ prior knowledge about China and the new knowledge I was required to teach in the classroom. The direct result of this missing link was that students lost interest in participating in learning Mandarin. Holden and Hicks (2007) indicate the problematic relationship between prior knowledge (background knowledge) and motivation:

Prior experience (living/working abroad) and contact with other cultures appear to directly influence trainees’ interest in and knowledge of global matters. The undergraduate students who have the least experience of other cultures and who are least likely to have lived or worked abroad, are much less motivated to teach about global issues. (Holden & Hicks, 2007, p. 21)

Prior knowledge influences the motivation that trainee teachers have for teaching about global issues with students. This is comparable to the motivation my students had for learning about knowledge from another culture. Therefore, in order to stimulate Mandarin learning in Australia, students’ prior knowledge is an essential resource for a Mandarin teacher, especially in a school with little contact with Chinese community.

The first time I visited the Physical Education (PE) faculty to teach Mandarin based on students’ prior knowledge was a total failure. The topic I decided to teach was about eye protection and facial features. Due to the high level of concentration during study, the eyesight of Chinese students is seriously weakened: more than 70% of high school students suffer from weak eyesight, so the government of China introduced “eye protection exercises” based on acupuncture massage. This exercise routine has developed over a long time and has became a dynamic part of Chinese school culture. I supposed that PE students would have prior knowledge of a healthy lifestyle. The PE head teacher also agreed that it would be worthwhile to teach this:

The introduction of the eye exercise was a disaster. Some students claimed that they felt a headache when doing the exercise and refused to do it, laughing and chatting instead. Some girls asked each other ‘What are we doing?’

[ . . . ] Finally, I taught them facial features. They did not follow me and learn, but chatted a lot. Some students made ridiculous comments like ‘She is not a Chinese!’ and ‘Miss, did you buy your mobile from Japan?’ I had no method to control them and teach them. [ . . . ] The following task was to draw a face and label out facial features in Chinese. Some of them did it, but most of them threw the work into the bin after they finished. After the lesson, their work
filled the bin. [ . . . ] I cannot teach this class, I do not want to see them anymore. (Self-reflection, 9 March 2010)

Although this lesson attempted to connect Mandarin and Chinese cultural learning with their prior knowledge about PE, students found no point in engaging in this lesson. It had seemed that there should be a close connection between this lesson and this Australian PE class, but the lesson was largely based on knowledge about Chinese schools, so students were not necessarily interested in these school routines. The problem here is what to regard as “prior knowledge” that can be made the focus of Mandarin lessons, and what knowledge can be taken for granted. The problem of teaching about Chinese schools routines was that students needed more background information about this topic. In the first few lessons, students had no basic knowledge about China and thus, learning about detailed aspects of China and the Mandarin language had no connection with their real-life. This “disastrous” lesson indicated that a point of connection is not the only necessary condition that leads to motivated learning. I needed to choose an appropriate connection and to carefully consider what knowledge I could really take for granted.

I realised the importance of connectedness and students’ background knowledge after the failed PE lesson. As a consequence, I carefully considered the lesson plan when I prepared to teach a geography class. I did not put the focus on the language but located it in knowledge about China. The information I presented was closely linked to students and what the students had been learning in their geography lessons:

我在黑板上先画一个中国地图，一个澳洲地图，还有一个我的名字。（指着自己）“我叫黄晓雯。”（再指黑板上的我的名字）（指着黑板上的中国地图），“我是中国人。”（然后在地图上的沿海地区画一个人）然后就可以教他们说“中国（人）”。接着介绍了首都北京（顺便奥林匹克），和上海（顺便EXPO，其实我也不知道是什么东西）。然后介绍了我的家乡。大体介绍了中国以后，我（指着同学们“你们是澳大利亚人。”）（指黑板上的澳洲地图）。然后他们就很感兴趣，因为他们可以听出来Australia和澳大利亚的有点像，再加上我指着地图。然后就教他们说，“澳大利亚（人）”。

他们对澳大利亚很感兴趣的，说的很好。然后我就问他们，你们猜，从我家飞悉尼要多久呢？他们猜测的很起劲。然后我再告诉他们，10-11小时。然后顺便说下中国和澳洲气候相反，坐飞机很纠结。我说我夏天在上海拿着大衣坐飞机飞悉尼，感觉很奇怪。
On the board, I drew a map of China and a map of Australia, and then wrote down my name. What I did was as follows. The words in brackets refer to my action and the words in quotation marks refer to what I said in Mandarin:

(I pointed to myself) “I am called Huang Xiaowen.” (then I pointed to my name on the board).

(I pointed to the map of China) “I am a Chinese person.” (then I drew a person’s shape on the eastern coastal of China). At this time, I ask them to say “zhōngguó rén” together, which means Chinese person.

Then I asked them to guess where the capital Beijing is, and where Shanghai, China’s biggest city is. I mentioned the Beijing Olympics and the Shanghai EXPO. Finally I told them where I came from.

After introducing China, I (pointed at students) “You are Australian persons” and then (pointed at the map of Australia on the board). They started to get excited because they could recognise the pronunciation for “Australian” in Mandarin. They knew I was talking about them. Then they learnt to say “ào da lì ya rén”, which means “Australian person.” They really got excited at this point since they started to learn something in Mandarin – about China and themselves. At this stage, I started to get them guessing how long a trip from Sydney to my hometown would take. I gave them some information about time zones, the Northern hemisphere, the opposite seasons, and my story of flying to a different season. (Self-reflection, 17 March 2010)

In a geography class, it seemed reasonable to expect these students would have some prior knowledge about world geography, including China. In teaching Mandarin based on their prior knowledge of geography, I had expected the students would have some “familiarity” with the items being taught. In other words, a “situational interest” would stimulate their motivation to learn this knowledge during this particular lesson. In this particular lesson, I made some connections between Chinese information and students’ Australian knowledge. First, when I drew the map of these two countries, the students could see how these two countries are geographically related to each other. Second, when teaching the Chinese language I introduced 中国 zhōngguó (China) to them, and then introduced 澳大利亚 aodaliya (Australia), explaining that pronunciation of aodaliya is a transliteration. The students were able to guess what zhongguo means. To show that the word 人 rèn means “person”, I drew a person beside it. The purpose was to make the explanation of this translation challenging but interesting. The similarity in the sound of aodaliya and Australia stimulated the students’ linguistic ability to make a connection between the two languages: thus, they could guess what zhongguo means. Moreover, learning to say “Australia” in Mandarin was a means of linking what the students were learning to their background knowledge.

I extended students’ understanding of certain Chinese cultural events during my Chinese cultural lessons by engaging their prior knowledge. In Australia, the public
celebrates various Chinese Festivals. Great festivities take place in the city of Sydney. Therefore, Australian students have some prior knowledge about those Chinese festivals as celebrated in Australia:

Australians celebrate Spring Festival mainly with dragon and lion dances, but they have no idea about the older generations giving ‘hongbao’ [which is a red envelope with money in it] to children. It is a very important tradition for Chinese children. Therefore, I brought a lot of hongbao to Australia. [. . .] I did not explain too much about how Chinese eat and have fun but focused on this tradition of hongbao. They were very excited about receiving their own hongbao. [. . .] One of my students actually received a hongbao from a Chinese person who is a friend of her parents. She was very happy to find the reference of her experience. (Self-reflection, 16 February 2010)

Teaching about this cultural celebration required knowledge to be drawn from both the Australian and Chinese cultures. Building awareness of these cultural celebrations was a learning experience for my students as it was for me, their teacher. Therefore, teaching Chinese cultural knowledge based on the students’ current understanding of Chinese festivals practised in Australia provided a basis for extending their understanding of everyday cultural celebrations in China.

Students’ prior knowledge also determined how deep I could go in teaching them Chinese cultural and philosophical knowledge [see: 5.5.1.2]. It should be noted that even in China, of the many Chinese students who study Chinese art, it is challenging for them to understand its philosophical base. In Chinese language, the term for “learning” particular cultural knowledge is “积淀 (jī diàn)” which does not literally mean “learn.” 积 (jī) means “accumulate” and 淀 (diàn) means “sedimentary deposit.” It is believed that culture learning requires a long-term process of self-education through self-reflection, rather than a simple cognitive process. It requires a significant amount of time to deepen students’ intellectual engagement with this knowledge. Therefore, my Australian students were not expected to understand the Chinese philosophy of calligraphy and painting, since I was only teaching them for less than one year.
Sometimes, students’ limited prior knowledge of China was not a problem and did not inevitably lead to a low level of interest [see 5.5.2]. Tobias’ (1994) model of “interest-prior knowledge relationships” (see Figure 6) categorises four possible relationships between students’ prior knowledge and their interests. In this model there is a category involving low prior knowledge with high interest, which is related to the idea of situational interests:

Some people may be attracted to a topic or activity by such attributes as novelty, the unexpected, and different life situations [. . . ] and have limited knowledge of it for a short time. Situational interest may be stimulated by such attributes in the absence of much knowledge about the subject. (Tobias, 1994, p. 49)

This suggests that even limited prior knowledge of Mandarin and China could be used to attract students to learn the target language. As a result of rethinking these connections, I was able to highly engage students in one class which certain Chinese knowledge.

![Figure 6: Model of interest–prior knowledge relationship](image)

Adapted from Tobias (1994, p. 48)

5.5.3.3 Curriculum

Teaching cultural knowledge is part of the curriculum in some schools in Western Sydney. For instance, some schools included Aboriginal perspectives in their units of work across all the faculties because they have Aboriginal students in the school:
There are some very challenging tough schools, and a lot of them have high numbers of Pacific Islanders, Aboriginal students, and they have extra people to work with them. What they have is a Pacific Islander’s Community Office. Schools with lots of Aboriginal children have Aboriginal workers to help with the outcomes and with the . . . putting the Aboriginal perspectives across all the units of work across school. So not only the Aboriginal children are learning but all the children all learning about Aboriginal history. (K, interview, Stage 1 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

This is a case where schools included cultural perspectives in their curriculum. In my school, the makeup of the student population was much more complex; that was one of the reasons why students there were not receiving any systematic cultural studies education. Moreover, the emphasis of schooling is more on literacy and numeracy – specific literacy learning groups are conducted for all the students in my school. Therefore, other learning areas were marginalised to some extent, especially Mandarin language learning. Nevertheless, my Mandarin lessons at Mifeng HS, which involved teaching Chinese across faculties, allowed me to teach Mandarin and Chinese cultural knowledge based on their curriculum and normal units of work. This required extensive communication with classroom teachers and extra work designing lessons – since no curriculum resources were available in these areas for teaching Mandarin across the curriculum.

The first time I attempted to make a link between Chinese knowledge and the curriculum was in a geography lesson. Students had just learnt to read map symbols in their unit of work, so I built a connection between the Chinese written system (hanzi) and map symbols:

Writing system 的介绍我是和地理上次讲的 map symbol 联系起来了。因为 map symbol 是图片的简化，漫漫的演化，也是汉字的来源。手头又正好有这样的 worksheet 可以做了。我用了 “山” 这个字作为例子，然后把 worksheet 发下去，上面有其他的字和它的早期写法。他们做的很认真，很有兴趣。[ . . . . . ] 我们对了答案。讲到 “人” 这个字的时候，我还特意返回去复习了 “中国人” 和 “澳大利亚人”。

I drew a link between the Chinese writing system and map symbols which they learnt in their geography class. Map symbols look like early Chinese writing, which is how characters came into existence. I took ‘山’ (mountain)’ as an example, and then handed out a worksheet, asking students to work on it in groups. They needed to find out the picture, the early written and modern form of some Chinese characters. They were highly devoted and interested in this activity. [ . . . ] at the end, we checked the answer together. I also reminded them about ‘zhōngguó rén (Chinese person)’ and ‘aodaliya rén’.
Work Sample 4 was used for this lesson. Students were asked to match the development of different Hanzi, from its pictorial to the modern form. Students worked in groups, and completed the task with high interest. They were all highly motivated during this lesson, and they all said that they liked learning Chinese.

Work sample 4: The historical development of Chinese characters

In another geography lesson, I taught students Chinese numbers based on their curriculum, using the grid system:

这节课是和 Grid System 结合教学数字和中国的地标。所以我今天要先教他们用中文念数字，再教他们认中文的数字。然后教他们看中国的地图，找出来：北京，上海，杭州，珠穆朗玛峰，长城的坐标。最后还有一张连点的 worksheet，是我自己做的。连起来是“中国”两字。[... ...] 这节课同学们没有吵闹，都学的很投入。

In this lesson I integrated the grid system in their curriculum with my teaching of Chinese numbers and cities/landmarks in China. I taught them to read and recognise Chinese numbers – along with some background knowledge about Chinese numbers. Then I showed them a map of China, and asked them to find several cities, Mount Qomolangma and the Great Wall – according to grid coordinates given in Chinese. Finally, I designed a tracing
game on a grid to produce two characters – ‘中国 zhōngguó’, which means China. [. . . ] I did not have to spend much time managing their classroom behaviour; they were all quite focused on learning. (Self-reflection, 31 March 2010)

Numbers were used on a grid map to locate sites. I borrowed this idea from the curriculum to build their Chinese knowledge. During the lesson, both Chinese cultural and linguistic knowledge were developed. Work Sample 5 was used in this lesson as a learning task. Students were especially interested in learning knowledge embedded in Chinese culture.

Work sample 5: Grid system task in Chinese

I also taught cooking and visual art classes, where knowledge was dynamically exchanged across cultures. In geography, knowledge was based on the curriculum, and the connections made, drew upon language components. Art contains significantly rich and dynamic cultural knowledge so there are greater connections upon which Chinese knowledge can be delivered in these lessons:
美术课能教的东西太多了。我第一个想到的是给他们看国画。我以前学过国画，所以对此很有信心。所以我上网找了一些水墨画的图片，动物植物还有人像什么的。我觉得他们应该会喜欢。 

There are many things to be talked about in an art class. The first thing I thought of was to show them Chinese traditional paintings. I learnt Chinese painting in my childhood so I was confident about that. I found many Chinese ink paintings on the Internet, including animals, plants and portraits of people. I thought they would be interested in these. (Self-reflection, 18 May 2010)

On the one hand, significant Chinese cultural knowledge can be imported into art lessons. Art students might be expected to have an interest in learning cross-cultural art knowledge. On the other hand, where the school curriculum focuses on Western art, students have to be engaged in such cross-cultural learning though their situational interests in Chinese art, which is significantly different from Western art. As a result, my teaching emphasised artistic rather than linguistic knowledge. The decision to teach Chinese cultural knowledge rather than linguistic knowledge was based on my experiences from the PE and geography lessons. Students enjoyed learning Chinese cultural knowledge, rather than the Mandarin language. Therefore, when teaching across faculties, I chose to teach Chinese knowledge in relation to their curriculum knowledge.

However, building a connection based upon the curriculum did not work all the time. When I conducted another lesson with the art class, students did not fully participate in the part that was integrated with their curriculum:

因为他们在学画脸，所以在他们的美术老师的要求建议之下，我给他们安排的内容是用面部的汉字来画一张抽象的脸。[...]于是我说，这节课我们来画一张脸，先要学会五官的说法。[...] 他们很规规矩矩的画了一张脸，五官用汉字代替而已，没有很大的热情。[...] 倒是对我额外给他们看的一些抽象汉字组成的图画很感兴趣，一直看不够。还要拿出本子自己试着照样画下来。

Since they are learning to draw a face, their teacher asked me to have a lesson which required the students to use Chinese characters to construct a human face. [...] So I told students that we were going to learn facial features in Chinese and then use those words to construct a face. [...] they soon drew a standard face with Chinese characters (hanzi) but with little passion. [...] this time what they were interested in was some abstract art pictures constructed by Chinese characters. They also tried to copy them into their own notebooks. (Self-reflection, 30 June 2010)
Curriculum connections do not lead to intellectual engagement all the time. In other words, a connection with the curriculum is not necessarily where students’ interests lie [see 5.5.2 and 5.5.3.2]. During my teaching of Chinese across the faculties, I explored whether integrating components from their curriculum into Chinese lessons would give students a reference to their own lives and studies. In addition, it would make Chinese teaching easier when new Chinese linguistic and cultural knowledge is constructed based on students’ prior learning at school. However, I also found that a connection does not necessarily lead to higher learning motivation. Sometimes, students were more willing to be “refreshed” by some interesting Chinese knowledge which was different from their everyday schooling.

5.5.4 Visualising the language

Students have limited communicative needs in their everyday lives, and the classroom is a place that can encourage students to practise the target language. Therefore, a positive classroom language environment helps learners to practise language. Two of out my three language classes had a “Chinese Wall” on which students’ work samples and language posts were displayed. This kind of visual aid in classroom environment reminds students about what they have learnt, and they had more chance to see it as part of their lives. Teacher K thinks that the Chinese display in the classroom environment fuels students’ communicative needs:

Last term I didn't have a wall of anything for you to have stuff up on, and I think having it there so they can say it like when they are walking past and when they are moving around the room, they are looking and I can hear them saying and practising. They are doing more practices. […] Like I can hear them some time, like when I go to the (Chinese) display wall, they . . . I can hear them “That is . . .” “That is . . .” they talk to each other and it is not in your time, it's in the other time. (K, interview, Stage 1 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

The classroom environment in this Stage 1 class did help students to practise the language outside my language class time. The effect of creating a “learning environment” is significant: by having a display wall, it reminded students about the language when they saw it so that they would practise the language more frequently. Although students did not use the language to communicate with each other, they talked about the language when referring to the display. This growing awareness of what they had learnt indicated progress in terms of their self-initiation in Mandarin learning. Teacher R pointed to the importance of having a classroom display:
I start to put [languages] on the wall where they can see them and they can say them, and they know exactly what they are. Just as a reminder and a repetition for them. [ . . . ] I put them up to the wall and I heard them saying it so they’ve just have that opportunity to practise the language, like the colours for example, they were saying them when they looking at the display. [ . . . ] Also, the way you associate the colours and the things around the room is really really good. It’s like visualise, they can see it and it is there. (R, interview, Stage 3 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

Teacher R attributed students’ increasing practice of the language to the classroom environment. In addition, she mentioned my teaching “real things” in the classroom environment and associating them with language as another way to integrate the classroom environment into the learning process. On the one hand, the existing classroom displays provide rich resources to learn the language, and on the other hand, they increase the connectedness of students to the language. They could find references in their learning environment to the target language. Therefore, visualising the language in the classroom environment fuelled students’ interest in practising the language, since visual displays were more real to the students. This idea is similar to implementing hands-on tasks in classroom activities.

In this classroom environment, however, students’ language practices were largely limited to talking about the language rather than using it to communicate. When I asked Teacher C whether students spoke Mandarin outside my teaching time, she replied that:

Yes, they talked about it. They talked about the things that they liked, and they talked about what they didn’t like. They practised it with each other. Yeah sometimes, they will just use it in conversation, they say “No, you say it this way, you don't say it right. This is how you say it”, or “you can’t do it.” So I don't know whether they are showing off, or they trying to help each other. (C, interview, Stage 2 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

In her reply, Teacher C indicated that students speak the language as a “language” rather than a tool to communicate. This was a similar issue to the observation made by Teacher K and Teacher R as well. In an English language environment, their communicative needs are largely fulfilled, so that Mandarin language is just a subject like mathematics and literacy. Teacher C mentioned that not all the students would practise the language in the classroom:

[ . . . ] You find the ones that are really enthusiastic are the ones do talk about it, and the ones [who are not enthusiastic], just . . . they won’t talk about it. They just like . . . we just have to be here because it is Ms C says what we got to do. (C, interview, Stage 2 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)
In this class, creating a language environment to stimulate students’ Mandarin language learning benefited those who had the motivation to learn the language. Visualising the language in the classroom environment was less likely to stimulate learning motivation among those who did not have a strong motivation to learn language.

Besides the classroom environment, I used pictures as a visual tool for teaching Mandarin, and this supported my use of English for narrating stories about Chinese culture. This strategy is analysed in the next chapter [see 6.4.2].

5.6 Conclusion

Promoting motivation is a consistent, long-term task required of language teachers in Western Sydney, to consciously reinforce students’ learning. Each of my Mandarin lessons, which only lasted 45 minutes per week for 18 months, was not likely to promote the long-term motivation to learn Mandarin among students. However, the analysis of evidence from my lessons shows that students’ motivation to participate in Mandarin lessons and to learn the language could be increased by engaging students in fun tasks and giving them a sense of achievement. Also, building connections to points of self-reference, connecting their prior knowledge and making links to the school curriculum provides possibilities for growing their motivation to participate in Mandarin lessons. Even with limited prior knowledge, they were motivated by a sense of curiosity. Moreover, when students had a positive attitude to China, their integrative motivation for learning Mandarin could be strengthened. Potentially, all these strategies could promote their motivation for learning the Mandarin language. Notably, the investigation reported in this thesis addresses motivation with respect to “classroom-specific motivation”, “fun and curiosity” and “connection and relevance.” Some of these are actually part of integrative motivation and some are expressions of intrinsic motivation, depending on the different definitions and categories used by researchers. The investigation reported here is data driven, and these points are detailed with reference to the teacher-researcher’s language teaching practices. That is why Gardner and Lambert’s (1972) concepts are not explored in detail, but only been presented briefly as background knowledge. An analysis of the evidence of teaching to promote this positive attitude is presented in Chapter 6.
Chapter 6
Transnational knowledge exchange

6.1 Introduction

The concept of transnational knowledge exchange (Singh, 2008; 2009; 2010) is used in this chapter to analyse the “two-way” knowledge exchange at classroom level. Related background, theoretical underpinnings and concerns are analysed as well. On the one hand, I taught Chinese knowledge to eliminate, or at least reduce students’ ignorance about modern China. On the other hand, to minimise my own ignorance, I learnt Australian knowledge to improve the quality of my teaching, including knowledge of how to manage behaviour problems, recognising potential connections which could be implemented in teaching, and improving my English language proficiency.

6.2 Reasons for “two-way” learning

6.2.1 Mutual benefit

Australia realises the importance of knowing its key regional Asian neighbours, including China, Indonesia, Japan and Korea (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2010). In addition, China is Australia’s largest trading partner. It is essential for Australians to better understand Chinese knowledge, beliefs, culture and language. The Chinese chengyu “知己知彼，百战不殆” (zhī jǐ zhī bǐ, bǎi zhàn bù dài) is especially relevant here. 知 zhī means to know, understand or meet. 己 jǐ means myself and 彼 bǐ means other people, a partner or opponent. Together these make the first part of this chengyu, which means, know the characteristics of myself as well as the characteristics of my opponents. 百 bǎi means hundred, 战 zhàn means war, fighting in a war, 不 bù means no, none and 殆 dài means risks. Thus the latter part of this chengyu means, you would not become involved in risk, even fighting a hundred wars. Having its origins in classical military literature, this chengyu proposes that if people want to win, they must know themselves as well as their opponents. Although China and Australia are not opponents, in this context, this chengyu suggests that knowing key international partners can help avoid unexpected
misunderstandings and increase mutual understanding, which can lead to a win-win situation for both parties.

Chinese immigrants make up a significant proportion of the Australian population. The Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship (2009) reported that of the Australian population of approximately 19.9 million according to the 2006 Census, 4.7% were Chinese immigrants. This means that Anglo-Australian people necessarily and increasingly interact with Chinese-Australians in public forums and workplaces. Acquiring Chinese knowledge and language, and learning about Chinese culture are becoming important in everyday Australian life.

As a teacher-researcher from China I wanted to investigate Western educational culture in Australia to enrich my personal experiences; to learn from the Western knowledge system and to acquire Western pedagogical knowledge that could be beneficial for me and the educational community in China. As a developing country, China needs knowledge from a developed nation to make progress: “师长技以制夷” (shī yí chángjì yǐ zhìyí). Here 师 (shī) means to take someone as a teacher, 夷 (yí) means Westerners or foreigners, 长技 (chángjì) means specialised techniques (which are more advanced than China), 以 (yǐ) means in order to, 制 (zhì) means suppress or compete. Thus this sentence from Chinese literature, namely 海国图志 (Hai Guo Tu Zhi), means “to take [Western] foreign specialists as teachers, learn from them in order to compete with them.” This proposition was developed in 1842 (Qing dynasty) by Wei Yuan, when China was involved in the Sino-British Opium War and suffering from a recession. He argued for the importance of knowing the rest of the world rather than feeling self fulfilled. China should send its officers overseas to learn, to open their mind. This idea of learning from Western society became so important; it now influences people in modern China. Increasing numbers of Chinese students go overseas to be educated, as well as there being increasing numbers of English language learners in China (J. Yang, 2006).

6.2.2 Language education and cross-cultural understanding

This section includes four aspects of language education and cross-cultural understanding. The first one is the general policy and theoretical context in Australia,
followed by three aspects of the Mifeng school context, which concern students’ ignorance, their families’ attitudes and those of the classroom teachers.

**6.2.2.1 Policies and theoretical context**

Learning a language involves learning multiple kinds of knowledge, of which developing linguistic proficiency is just one dimension. The Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999) identifies “Five Cs” for language education, namely: “Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons and Communities.” The Chinese Teachers Conference in Sydney in 2010 identified these as the core considerations for Mandarin teaching. According to the “Five Cs” framework, communication in the target language requires conceptual knowledge, cultural knowledge and knowledge about interpersonal relationships to be addressed. The framework also points out that learning a foreign language enables learners to understand a culture, its worldview, and unique ways of life that are different from their own. This helps to reduce ethnocentrism and stereotypes. One aim of foreign language teaching is to broaden learners’ worldviews and to promote intercultural communication (Kubota, et al., 2003). Therefore, to teach the Chinese language is not only a matter of teaching Mandarin. Moreover, what benefits students is not just the language itself. This is especially so for learners who are from a completely different cultural background and know little about China.

Australian educational policy also emphasises increasing students’ awareness of their relation to the rest of the world. Teaching “problematic knowledge” is one of the elements of the Quality Teaching Framework (NSW DET, 2003a). This means that “knowledge is seen as socially constructed, with multiple and/or conflicting interpretations presented and explored to an extent that a judgement is made about the appropriateness of an interpretation in a given context” (NSW DET, 2003a, p. 57). In other words, in quality teaching, knowledge is not presented as a “taken-for-granted fact” based on the context students are familiar with, and teaching about Chinese knowledge is a way to introduce a different social context. Therefore, Chinese language lessons can provide students another cultural perspective to read and interpret their understanding about modern China.
The language education literature also suggests that cultural knowledge is one of the key components of language teaching, not only the “transmission of information about the people of the target country, and about their general attitude and world views” (Kramsch, 1998, p. 205), but also “putting that [target] culture in relation with one’s own”, “teaching culture as an interpersonal process”, “teaching culture as defence” (Kramsch, 1998, pp. 205-206). Besides communication using the language itself, cultural knowledge and knowledge about interpersonal relationships are major focuses for language education. Moreover, Liddicoat (2002, p. 8) argues that intercultural language teaching – that is, learning Chinese knowledge and culture – is especially important and effective in a language classroom. Therefore, bringing Chinese knowledge into my classroom to widen students’ worldviews became one of the aims for my teaching.

6.2.2.2 Ignorance

According to the evidence of the analysis in Chapter 4, considerable ignorance of modern China existed among students and teachers at Mifeng HS and PS [see 4.2.8]. This ignorance suggests a situation in which Australians have limited knowledge of a country which is so economically important to them, such that few Australians have “an understanding of China’s political and physical geography” (Kendall, 2005, p. 46). Pedagogically, the ignorance was productive, as their questions indicated their desire to be informed and the necessity of introducing this type of Chinese knowledge. The cross-cultural ignorance in Western countries informs imaginings of China as a communist, totalitarian society, living without economic complexity or mass consumption. Western media also contributes to reproducing stereotypes of China through Kung Fu and historical adventure movies set in the countryside or in ancient imperial China, rather than the modern developed China which underwrites Australian’s economy, and much of the world (Cao, 2007). Limited awareness of 21st Century China was a significant obstacle for motivating these students to learn Mandarin. This reality led to my reflection that, before teaching linguistic knowledge and communicative ability in Mandarin, students needed to be informed about a modern China, its dynamic culture and its knowledge for dealing with the changing world.

6.2.2.3 Family attitudes
Chapter 4 presented evidence indicating that students from Mifeng HS and PS came from diverse family language backgrounds [see 4.2.5]. Some students reportedly came from families with apparently racist attitudes toward other cultural groups [see 4.2.6]. Students were not taught about being tolerant to different cultural groups – rather, they had grown up with an attitude centred on their own cultural values and beliefs while marginalising those of others. This was another reason why I decided my Mandarin lessons should focus on cultural knowledge of modern China.

This does not mean that all students came from cultural backgrounds with a racist attitude. However, being involved in the mainstream Western educational system, they might be more motivated to learn about cultural knowledge from their own background communities rather than Chinese. One of my classroom teachers gave herself as an example:

I am Aboriginal. I do not know the language, but I know cultural aspects. And I learn, I have an awareness of, you know, creation stories beliefs and values of Aboriginal people. (K, interview, Stage 1 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

This teacher’s own cultural awareness is generated from her family background. However, for young students who are growing up in mainstream education with their own cultural perspectives, it is much harder for them to take the initiative in learning about a third culture, including understanding their beliefs and values, and knowing their different cultural perspectives. This issue also relates to the absence of Mandarin learning motivation from a “thin connection” [see 5.5.3].
6.2.2.4 Classroom teachers’ attitudes

“Being respectful” is one of the three key rules at Mifeng schools. One of the key aims of Mifeng PS and HS is to teach students to respect other people – teachers and peers, parents and siblings, friends or those you don’t know, people who you share the same set of value and beliefs with and those you don’t. Respect for others is a basic principle in these students’ everyday education. However, students have limited opportunities to access different cultural perspectives through everyday teaching outside of my language lessons. Teacher K explained the limitations of the school curriculum:

I don't get support within my class with those children, in bringing their own cultural knowledge in. But I ask things, what they are doing within their country even in their religion because we have done things like celebrations, when we talked about what does your family celebrate and they talked about their cultures. [...] but I do not have any help with that. I just have to do that myself. (K, interview, Stage 1 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

Teacher R expressed her opinion of the need for cross-cultural education:

Australia is very very diverse, being able to understand another culture for kids is really really important because they may learn to appreciate not just the Australian way of life and English they learn, but another language and another culture as well. (R, interview, Stage 3 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

These two interview excerpts show that, on the one hand, cross-cultural education is highly dependent on the teacher bringing another cultural perspective into their teaching (or not) at Mifeng PS. On the other hand, living in a culturally diverse society like Australia, it is inevitable that students have to deal with people from different cultural groups with different attitudes, beliefs and ways of doing things. There is tension between a lack of opportunity for teaching cross-cultural understanding to students and the need for cross-cultural education. Therefore, for these classroom teachers, my Mandarin lessons were appreciated for teaching students another cultural perspective.

Since these three teachers interacted with my students every day through various learning activities, they strongly supported and had a positive attitude towards, my teaching of Chinese knowledge and bringing Chinese perspectives to their students. This was another reason informing my decision to teach Chinese knowledge as a priority.
6.3 The Value of Chinese knowledge

6.3.1 Concerns

There were various concerns about the value of Chinese knowledge for research as well as teaching. These concerns emerged from my prior knowledge about Western education, theoretical disputes in the literature and my reflections about my classroom practices. By analysing these concerns I defended and extended my critical disposition towards the decisions made about my research project and my Mandarin teaching.

6.3.1.1 Using Chinese knowledge as a teacher-researcher

I have acquired Western knowledge since I started to learn the English language when I was six years old. This meant learning to say “Thank you” rather than “No, no, no,” when someone complimented me, and knowing not to ask a lady’s age because it is impolite and must be kept a “secret.” This learning was extended during my studies after entering a British university where I was immersed in a Western educational system. When writing essays, students at that university were not encouraged to use Chinese academic sources as references; let alone Chinese concepts. Too many Chinese citations would lead to a minus mark. I reflected on what this education did for my attitude towards Chinese knowledge:

我用了“traditional”来形容中国的教学法，用“new”来形容CLT，这个用词也暗示了，我对中国的教学法“没有信心”，因为traditional有点贬义在里面，而 new 又有一点宣扬褒义的成分。在 UNNC, Chinese knowledge 是不受到推崇的。所以在一个西方国家做学术也好，教书也好，我都是很谨慎的运用中国的知识。中国的知识也经常被打上 traditional 的标签，而西方兴起的教学法常常是“new”，这可能也是 globalization 给我们灌输的意识。所以，我现在本身就是一个矛盾体。

I used the term “traditional” to describe the Chinese language teaching method and “new” to describe communicative language teaching (CLT), which suggested my recognising Chinese knowledge as “inferior” to CLT. I remembered when I was studying at this British university: UNNC, Chinese knowledge [linguistic, cultural or conceptual] was not encouraged to be cited in our assignments. Therefore, this thinking [of Chinese knowledge as inferior] became deeply rooted in my mind, so I was conservative when it came to using Chinese knowledge in Australia – either in university or at school. Chinese knowledge is always labelled as “traditional” while Western emerging knowledge is often labelled as “new”. This opinion is informed by
However, my attitude towards using Chinese knowledge in my research and teaching became a challenge for me. Although teaching Chinese culture is an important element in Mandarin lessons, what is often taught is so-called “traditional” Chinese culture: for instance, spring festival, dumplings, paper cutting and calligraphy. However, at UWS I was encouraged to use my Chinese knowledge in both my research and teaching. The idea was for Western students, teachers and research educators to learn from China, which has a culture and knowledge system that has been developed for more than 3000 years by the wisdom of elites and the masses. As Singh (2009; 2010) argues, it is these intellectual resources of concepts and theories that a modern society like China can contribute to and have tested through global knowledge flows. Thus, as a result of this Australian’s valuing of Chinese knowledge I have demonstrated my bilingual capabilities (using both English and Chinese to generate and analyse evidence in this study). More importantly, I have been taught how to make use of “traditional” Chinese ideas as conceptual tools to interpret evidence analysed in this thesis.

6.3.1.2 What cultural knowledge to teach?

The book Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century (1999, p. 6) suggests that “Culture” contains two dimensions, namely, practices and products. Practice is like the dynamic aspects of a culture. It focuses on “the use of forms of discourse, the social ‘pecking order,’ and the use of space” (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999, p. 7). Products centre on reflection of the cultural perspectives, values and beliefs embodied in a cultural product such as a dance or an oral tale. It seems that the two carry equal weight. However, under another C – “Comparison” – in Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century, the suggestion is that students understand “the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studies and their own” (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999, p. 7). This idea is more closely linked to the cross-cultural knowledge teaching through which I was aiming to achieve transnational knowledge exchange.

Of course, not all cultural knowledge is suitable for teaching in a foreign language. The DET teacher Xue provided guidance for teaching cultural knowledge in Mandarin lessons:
A DET teacher Xue gave us two readings: one was about learning a foreign language not negatively influencing children’s learning first language; rather that it helps to develop their literacy ability (Liddicoat, 2000-2001). Another one was about how to teach cultural knowledge in a language class (Liddicoat, 2002). Culture can be categorised into static culture and dynamic culture. We were encouraged to bring modern dynamic Chinese culture into our classrooms. I was a little confused about how to teach dynamic culture through my lessons. Xue said, bringing knowledge of China’s dynamic culture to Australian students was why we are here teaching Chinese as a volunteer. As at the University, Xue said use your Chinese name so Australian students get to learn about you: as a person. She encouraged us to introduce our social life and studies in China to students so they could learn about the way of modern Chinese life. (Self-reflection, 20 April 2010)

With respect to intercultural language teaching, Liddicoat (2002) defines a static view as follows:

[A] cultural lesson is viewed as teaching pieces of information about the culture that are often separated from the other material being taught in the language. As such, the culture component is self-contained and is often very remote from the language itself. (Liddicoat, 2002, p. 6)

In contrast, a dynamic cultural lesson is defined as:

[. . . Seeing] culture as a set of practices in which people engage in order to live their lives. The practices are variable. [. . . ] cultural knowledge is not therefore a case of knowing information about the culture; it is about knowing how to engage with the culture. [. . . ] Thus, cultural competence is seen as intercultural behaviour. (Liddicoat, 2002, p. 7)

According to this view, dynamic cultural knowledge is the preferred focus for teaching in language lessons that aim to engage students in intercultural communication. Static cultural knowledge is not particularly relevant or useful to language classes, because it does not develop students’ communicative competence in the target language. It may be better taught in other types of classes.

As a volunteer Mandarin teacher at Mifeng PS and HS, this particular educational context led to the necessity for me to make local decisions. First, Australian students
appear to be given few opportunities to learn about Chinese calligraphy, star signs, festivals, and food. This points to a missing link between language and culture in other classes. At Mifeng HS and PS, students did not have any educational opportunity to be exposed to modern China and its cultural perspectives outside my language class. Teaching about Chinese culture and knowledge is not part of the mainstream curriculum. For this reason I found it was necessary to share my personal and academic knowledge about modern Chinese culture with my students.

Furthermore, while systematic Mandarin language courses have been taught in other Sydney Regions for a long time, Mifeng HS and PS only established a Mandarin program in 2008. My purpose in teaching at the Mifeng PS and HS was not to have students master the Chinese linguistic code, but to reduce their ignorance and to stimulate them to learn about China – its language, culture, people and other forms of knowledge. Developing this positive attitude towards China was expected to extend to supporting the school’s effort to teach the language. Teaching culture through “static” artefacts means the students would have an opportunity to learn through hands-on activities. Bringing the enjoyment and fun of hands-on cultural activities was seen as one way of stimulating students’ motivation to engage new knowledge [See 5.5.2]. Nevertheless, dynamic cultural knowledge was also an important part of my Mandarin lessons. Through teaching knowledge of China’s dynamic culture, students learnt about how modern Chinese people relate to each other in real life settings and in different contexts.

6.3.1.3 The “trade-off” between language and culture

Teaching Chinese cultural knowledge raised various concerns. There was limited linguistic knowledge being taught in my lessons about Chinese culture. A lack of language input made my language class more like a “cultural activity lesson” than a Mandarin lesson. The following excerpt was written after a calligraphy lesson in a Stage 2 class:

整节课下来，我可以说是没有教任何语言，也没有强调和文化相关的语言。同学们只是用毛笔和宣纸写了字。我不知道这样是不是一节合格的语言课，如果只是做手工，何必要我来这里教他们呢？

I did not teach any language for the purpose of communication, I did not emphasise language related to culture either. Students just used a brush pen
and xuān paper to write calligraphy. I do not know if it is a good language lesson. If it is just about teaching them hands-on activity, their teacher can do it as well, I am not necessary. (Self-reflection, 19 May, 2010)

In addition to the cultural lessons that I conducted at Mifeng PS, I taught students at the high school with limited language input, given the task of “teaching Chinese across faculties.” When I conducted a cooking class to teach Chinese knowledge, the whole lesson involved making Chinese food. The only chance to introduce Mandarin was to teach the name of foods, which was not standard language learning.

Even when I taught language items, such as Chinese numbers, students were mostly interested in the cultural knowledge. They were interested in Chinese lucky and unlucky numbers, but they lost patience when I asked them to recognise Chinese characters for these numbers – that is, linguistic knowledge:

然后我就一个个介绍数字, 开始还介绍详细一点, 后面就有点快了, 因为看出来他们不是很感兴趣。开始有很多人开始聊天开小差了。介绍完了 10 个数字, 我开始扯一些和数字有关的小知识。吉利和不吉利数字，这下参与性又高了，效果很好。

I began to teach characters of numbers one after another. But I found students began to lose attention; more noise was made, so I passed ten numbers quickly. Then I began to introduce number knowledge – unlucky and lucky numbers. Students participated in making guesses, they enjoyed learning about it. (Self-reflection, 31 March 2010)

Students enjoyed learning about Chinese knowledge, but when I began to teach the linguistic aspects, the students paid less attention. I recalled my “disaster PE lesson” [see 5.5.3.2] in which I taught all the facial features at once. A lack of connection to the students’ interests and too much language input led to students to lose interest in participating in the class. The trade-off between teaching Chinese knowledge and teaching the Mandarin language became a key question for me. When I taught a Mandarin lesson with little language input, I questioned my responsibility as a “language teacher” in Australian schools.

Given my situation at Mifeng HS and PS, situational interests were essential during the initial stage of students’ learning. However, situational interests reduced over time because the students “find it more difficult or less pleasurable than originally anticipated” (Tobias, 1994, p. 49) after they become involved in the learning which initially attracted them. In this case, students found it was interesting to learn some Chinese cultural knowledge such as cooking food, or Chinese lucky and unlucky numbers. They also
found that to learn Mandarin – the actual language – was much harder. I needed to be patient about their progression. Even a baby step was encouraging since it indicated that students were making attempts. Chinese educational philosopher Zhu Xi commented on Confucius’ idea with the chengyu 循序渐进 (xún xù jiàn jìn): 循 xún means in accordance, 序 xù means order, 渐 jiàn means gradually, 进 jìn means progress or improve. Nowadays, this chengyu is used in education to indicate the importance of making progress and improvements in study or working at a reasonable pace. In this context, 序 xù, the pedagogical sequence, began with stimulating students’ interests first, then teaching them language. Following this order seemed to be a reasonable approach in Mandarin teaching. Students would also benefit from gaining a sense of achievement with an expectation; they could learn more, thereby leading to the higher motivation needed to learn Mandarin [see 5.5.1].
6.3.2 Classroom practices

The aim of analysing this evidence about classroom practices differs from the analysis undertaken in the last chapter, which focuses on practices for stimulating students’ motivation to learn Mandarin. In this section, evidence of two dimensions to the value of teaching Chinese knowledge in classrooms is analysed, namely, promoting cross-cultural comparisons and educating students about modern China.

6.3.2.1 Culture comparison

Teaching cultural awareness through my Mandarin teaching was observed by the classroom teachers. Building up an awareness of the differences is the initial step for students. In a language class, the learning target touches multiple aspects of everyday life, which is a rich carrier of cultural norms. Teacher K mentioned the value of comparing the different cultures and traditions in language classes, referring to my “birthday” lesson, a unit on teaching numbers:

I think that it is good for children to recognise that not everyone has the same set of beliefs and culture. And I think it is good that they get to learn about it: the way you do things and they do things in Australia, and comparing their own tradition with another person’s traditions and cultures is great. [. . .] I liked how you did the birthdays, the celebration food: we have cakes but sometimes you have cakes and noodles. Students are like “Oh noodles, where to put candles?” Or “they don't have candles when they eat noodles!” which they thought was fascinating because we all have cakes. (K, interview, Stage 1 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

During this lesson, students firstly learnt that not everyone celebrates their birthday by sharing a birthday cake. This idea probably challenges students’ understanding of “birthday” – their worldview of what a birthday looks like. On the one hand, it was hoped that this idea would complement their understanding of other issues – for example, that not everyone celebrates Christmas or that not everyone eats with a knife and folk, which is quite common knowledge for Australian students. On the other hand, this knowledge would extend to other issues, which students might regard as “unacceptable” based on their prior knowledge. Teacher C mentioned one of my lessons about the differences in dining habits between Australia and China:

You said that it's OK to share food from one bowl. I think they are really interested in that, because that’s very different to us. We are very . . . Australians’ culture is very individual, and very clean, very . . . like Errrrrr
germs, no germs, yucky germs, and whole concept of sharing . . . to them it’s just really unusual. (C, interview, Stage 2 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

On a family dinner table, serving dishes from one bowl with individuals using their own chopsticks (kuaizi) is very common – it is not a specific “tradition” but it is a Chinese way of doing things. However, this way of eating is different from that of many Australians – each individual uses his/her own plate. In this case, having an understanding that not everyone shares a similar set of principles in their lives provided a basis for building up understanding at the dinner table and beyond. Therefore, if one of my students attends a dinner with Chinese person, he/she is less likely to be “shocked”, since they learnt about it during my language class.

6.3.2.2 Authentic materials

To teach my students about the great Chinese landscape – its cities and famous places of interest – was the first idea that came to my mind. I assumed that the students might be interested to see exciting pictures, thus stimulating their interest in learning Mandarin and reducing negative attitudes. Therefore, I chose some typical cities\(^{12}\) from across China, and collected pictures through the Internet. I selected exciting ones with wonderful colours, which seemed to be taken by professional photographers. After that, I put them into a Power Point (PPT) presentation to create a digital story. I also designed a hands-on activity (see Appendix 11) in relation to “travelling to China.” However, this first lesson for a Year 8 Mandarin class at Mifeng HS about the landscape of China was another failure:

“Travelling to China” 这节课恶心。一堆 PPT 关于中国的各地风景名胜古迹，全部是我在讲，学生已经无可奈何了。索然无味的介绍完了风景，他们开始做手工劳动，就是把中国的名胜贴在一个中国地图上。可能是因为课很无聊，他们手工劳动也不太愿意做，就等着下课了。以后的课，觉得还是要教一些他们感兴趣的，和他们生活相关的没有学过的东西。Travel to China，永不再上。

The lesson of “Travelling to China” was disgusting. I prepared many PPTs about places of interest of historical and/or cultural heritage in China. When I went through slides, I found students were extremely bored. When I finished the introduction, I asked them to match the heritage from each city on a Chinese map. They were too bored to do their work, they just waited for the bell. I think for the next lesson I should teach them something more related to

\(^{12}\) The cities I chose were Beijing, Xi’an, Shanghai, Harbin, Hong Kong and Yunnan.
their life. Travel to China is not going to be taught a second time.  
(Self-reflection, 10 November 2009)

Here my idea was to introduce images of modern China, as these were likely to be quite different from students’ pre-existing imaginings of China. However, showing my students pictures of Chinese landscapes was a failure. I realised there must be a problem. I suspected that the problems arose from two dimensions, the content of what I taught and the way I delivered the lesson.

Was the content I taught in class too distanced from their lives? The photographs from the Internet seemed “authentic;” the images might be considered “official” ones because they are often seen on Chinese Government websites. However, those images are usually used for tourist promotion by the mass media which, as is the nature of all advertising, makes China look “perfect and exciting.” These features created scepticism because of their distance from students’ lives, if not because of negative attitudes to China. Students had no pre-existing interest in knowing about places for Australian tourists to visit in China, having no desire to visit China at all, so they were less likely to be convinced by what they saw as “fake” images. This was one of the reasons why the students were bored during my lesson.

My way of conducting my lessons – using PPT to present images of China – might be described as “broadcast teaching.” This could also have led to students’ negative reactions. I realised this problem when I discussed my failed lesson with the peer volunteer teachers during a group meeting. One of my colleagues expressed her concern, saying that broadcasting teaching was not an appropriate way to teach:

“你这样给他们看图片，他们学的也是你希望他们知道的，而不是他们自己想知道的。这还依然是非常 traditional 的教学，而不是更好的 student-centred 的教学方法。”

“What you showed them by pictures is the knowledge you wish them to know, rather than the knowledge they wish to know. This is still very ‘traditional’ teaching rather than an ‘advanced’ student-centred teaching.” (Self-reflection, 18 June 2010)

Centring one’s teaching on students’ learning and/or broadcasting knowledge are two orientations in teaching. In student-centred learning “knowledge is constructed by students and . . . the lecturer [or teacher] is a facilitator of learning rather than a presenter of information” (O’Neill, et al., 2005, p. 28). Moreover, in student-centred
learning, what students know, affects the choice of topic they learn about: “students might not only choose what to study, but how and why that topic might be an interesting one to study” (O'Neill, et al., 2005, p. 28). The teacher is responsible for the students’ learning, not for broadcasting information. In addition, “student-centred learners are assumed to regulate their learning and their motivation synergistically” (MacLellan, 2008, p. 411). While this literature favours student-centred learning, research evidence also shows that student-centred learning is not effective all the time, and “there is growing evidence that student-centred learning is ineffective for around 30% of students” (Hockings, 2009, p. 83). There is a series of factors that reduce the effectiveness of student-centred learning, such as class-size, the beliefs that students hold, and the resources available for teachers. What is more, the student-centred approach, which privileges individualism, is questionable:

[If] each child is unique, and each requires a specific pedagogical approach to him or her and to no other, the construction of an all embracing pedagogy or general principles of teaching become an impossibility. (Simon cited in O'Neill, et al., 2005, p. 33)

This debate creates a space for teacher-researchers to critically reflect upon the particular teaching/learning methods to be adopted with a specific class. When I was going to conduct my second lesson about modern China, I decided to continue to use the “broadcast teaching” but to change the content of my teaching.

There were three reasons for this decision. First, students at Mifeng HS and PS have problems with self-regulating their behaviour, which means a learning task requiring a high level of self-autonomy might well lead to chaos. In other words, they would “mess around” rather than learn. Second, there was limited room in the school’s timetable to schedule a lesson in the computer laboratory, and my timetable was fixed, so it was nearly impossible to organise a student research lesson in a short period of time. This shortage of ICT resources meant that student-centred research-based learning was less likely to occur in my classes and those of the class teachers. Last but not least, what the students can find on the Internet about China is a large amount of information. Most of the information on official websites is for tourists –the same material used in my failed lesson.
As a result, I made some changes to the images which I was going to present. This time I chose pictures not from the Internet, but from my own camera files on my computer (see Appendix 11):

I chose photographs taken by myself in my high school – my school life, my friends, the city where I lived, my home, cities in China to which I travelled. I thought, they would probably be quite familiar with images of Beijing and Shanghai produced by the mass media. What they might be interested in is a “real China” – real pictures taken by a Chinese citizen. (Self-reflections, 18 May 2010)

This second lesson was in an art class and it was very successful, even though I used the broadcast method of teaching. The following excerpt gives a detailed description of what I did teach and how the students reacted to this lesson about modern China:

I showed students photographs of my high school. [. . . ] Students were surprised that it is clean, large, and so beautiful. They were also surprised to know that a classroom contains more than 50 students. I told them that is why Chinese students do not make trouble in their classroom, because teachers will not be able to teach if they misbehave and they do not want to lose out. After I finished the school photographs, I showed them photographs of snow in my hometown in 2008, so they could have an idea that it snows in some cities in China. I also showed them the surroundings of the place where I live in Hangzhou. Students told me that they never thought a city in China would be so beautiful. Lastly, I showed them photographs of when I travelled to Harbin, in the very north of China, the ice sculpture city and its frozen river. They were now totally excited about China. Some girls even started to ask me how much a flight to China would cost and what the exchange rate was. I felt so happy about their ‘desire to know about China.’ (Self-reflections, 18 May 2010)

Comparing these two lessons, using the same teaching method, there was a difference in teaching materials used and the learning outcomes. Unlike my earlier teaching about
“travelling to China,” showing photographs of my everyday life, accompanied by my lively explanations, stimulated my students’ interest in knowing more about China. By using photographs of everyday life of my schooling in China, the distance between my students and China was shortened. The students could build an understanding of China by relating this to their identity as a student. Later, when planning their “trip to China”, they indicated a great desire to be “informed.”

This lesson led to my critical reflections on the importance of the particular curriculum materials adopted to teach about China as a modern society. I asked myself what might be considered “authentic” Chinese materials to teach Australian students. In language education, the concept of “authentic” is regarded as:

a reaction against the prefabricated artificial language of textbooks and instructional dialogue; it refers to the way language is used in non-pedagogic, natural communication. (C. Kramsch, 1993, p. 177)

This notion of “communicative authenticity” is consistent with the “intercultural language teaching approach,” in which Liddicoat (2002) argues that language learners should learn the language which is socially appropriate to the cultural setting. It is a “natural” way of communication. Kramsch (1993) gives examples of materials which might be regarded as authentic: for instance, local newspapers and a menu from the local restaurant. They are carriers of authentic language used as part of everyday life. This is relevant to teaching and learning about China – its society, people and landscapes. Of course, the best way of seeing and studying China is for student themselves to actually visit China, but this is difficult for my students at the Mifeng schools. That is the reason why I used photographs taken by myself as a Chinese tourist, student, and Chinese resident who kept a visual record of my everyday life. The credibility of these images seemed to be higher than the images produced by the media. Moreover, the information provided by the Western mass media about China is sometimes partial or biased for sophisticated purposes. For example, Latham’s (2009) research outlines the differences of propaganda associated with the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games from China and from the Western media.

6.4 Value of Australian knowledge

It is interesting that initially I did not problematise the value of Australian knowledge as I did with Chinese knowledge [see 6.3.1]. I began by unquestioningly accepting
Western knowledge as more “advanced” than Chinese knowledge. However, as my journey to become a teacher-researcher progressed, I questioned part of Western knowledge, namely the prevailing “communicative language teaching” approach [see 4.3.2 and 7.3.1.2]. The point of this section is not to reject Western knowledge outright, but to look for the benefits of learning Australian knowledge.

6.4.1 Recognising a connection

The role of a teacher is significant in drawing a link between learning and students’ lives. As a volunteer language teacher from China, I needed to learn about the lives of local students in order to make such a link. Teacher K mentioned that when a teacher is making this kind of connection, learners can probably understand better:

If you make relevance and it is significant to their lives, it is easier for them to understand. So it is teacher’s responsibility to draw a link between what they learn and what is in their lives. That’s what the Quality Teaching Framework is about. (K, interview, Stage 1 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

Pointing out the difference between two cultures requires knowledge and skill to recognise the differences and similarities. However, my limited knowledge about the lives of local students made it hard for me to draw a link, initially. The following excerpt describes what happened in my Mandarin lesson when I first started teaching:

今天教数字。[ . . . ] 别的都教的好的，就是教到 8 的时候，同学喜欢加一个颤音，然后拖的很长，还笑的很乱。我不知道为什么，真是无聊啊。

Today I taught numbers. [ . . . ] it went well except when I was teaching number 8. Students always say it with a trill and prolonged voice sound, and then laugh. I did not know why, they are so naughty. (Self-reflection, 17 November 2009)

This student’s reaction could be taken simply as students being “naughty.” It was later, when I talked to an Australian that I learnt the pronunciation of “8” in Mandarin (bā) is basically the same as the sound sheep make in Australian English. It was then that I realised the reason why students in my class made a funny sound when I taught this number. It was not because they were trying to be naughty. For them the sound resonated with their prior knowledge: that is, the sound a sheep makes in Australian English. Therefore, I consciously addressed this point when I taught numbers in a subsequent lesson:
When I taught the number 8, students made the funny sound again. I then told them that in China sheep actually make a different sound, “mie”, not “bā” as Australian sheep do. Students were very interested in this point, that different cultures describe something which we take for granted differently. (Self-reflection, 28 April 2010)

After this lesson, teacher K said it was “great that you related the number 8 back to sheep: ba – mie” (K, written feedback, Stage 1 classroom teacher, 12 May 2010). Here the problem for me was not addressing this cross-cultural comparison during my first lesson. This was an instance of my ignorance – my “not knowing” about students’ knowledge of Australian English that happens to sound like Mandarin. I failed to recognise a point which I could have brought forward for class discussion. In other words, besides teaching Chinese culture to students, I needed to learn Australian cultural and linguistic knowledge. I also needed to learn something about Australian popular culture and children’s preferences. An educational link could then be found and embedded into learning activities. My local knowledge was developed as I spent time talking with local people at the university, school and in the community – I was able to make a connection between what I wanted them to learn and students’ lives. Making this ignorance productive means that “two-way” learning is necessary for cross-cultural education. It sees a bilingual language teacher moving between cultural, linguistic and intellectual boundaries.

6.4.2 English skills

Since Australian students were beginning learners with no Chinese language background, English was the main language used in my classes for detailed instructions and explanations. This was a factor that seemed to influence the students’ learning of Mandarin. The most direct result was students’ not understanding me. Sometimes I faced distracted behaviour from students during class and attributed it to their losing interest in learning. However, Teacher K suggested another possibility, namely, that some students’ distraction was produced by their “confusion”:

I have three students who go to ESL [English as second language] classes; I have one student who speaks very strong Aboriginal English. And I have about four who require extra help because they have processing problems.
I think the majority understood [your English], my children with English as their second language didn't quite understand and that is because English is their second language as well. But, when I speak to them sometimes I have to rephrase what I am saying to them so that they understand. (K, interview, Stage 1 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

For students who speak English as a second language, it was probably more difficult to understand my English, because I am not a native English speaker either. Moreover, when I was conducting my lessons, I was more concerned about whether the students understood the Chinese, rather than whether they could understand my English. I presumed that my students were all fluent English speakers. This indicates that trying to improve my English would probably help students’ understanding of my instructions. Furthermore, this also suggests the necessity of adopting certain language teaching strategies, such as using the target language as much as possible, and using body language, or using pictures, so that students can understand through explanations given in other forms.

Employing a story-telling and guessing strategy to teach knowledge about China gave the students a story focus that promoted high concentration. The Quality Teaching Framework (NSW DET, 2003b, p. 15) defines “narrative” strategy as lessons that “employ narrative accounts as either (or both) a process or content of lessons to enrich student understanding.” During my language lessons, my personal stories about being a traveller between cultures seemed to stimulate students’ interests in learning cultural knowledge about China [see 5.5.3.2]. A story-telling approach to teaching requires high English skills, so as to make a story sound exciting. However, my English may not have been sufficiently proficient to make a story sound exciting:

这节课要介绍 12 生肖，并把那个森林赛跑 12 生肖，猫为什么不是生肖的故事说了。大概是我英语太烂了，故事说的没有感情色彩，他们并没有听得很兴奋。我有点尴尬。

The lesson aimed to teach the 12 Chinese zodiac. I also told a story about how the 12 animals were chosen through a racing competition, and why the cat is not one of the zodiacs. Maybe my English is so poor, the story sounded pale. Students were not interested in listening to it. I felt a little bit guilty and disappointed. (Self-reflection, 25 May 2010)

I attributed the failure in telling this story to my “poor” English. I did realise that telling a story requires advanced English presentation skills. I was trained as a business student at UNNC, and was learning to be a researcher when at UWS, and now I had to learn strategies for telling exciting stories. I was not a good storyteller in my L1. It was
unlikely that I would develop this particular English skill in a short period of time. Therefore, I sought other ways to improve the skills I needed as a narrator of stories. Later, I conducted a lesson about Chinese Valentine’s Day and Mid-autumn Festival, and needed to tell another legend. I used visual aid as a solution. I prepared a set of pictures (see Appendix 12) as a scenario guide to explain the development of the legend. Also, I tried to speak slowly, with more questions, and a rising and falling in cadence, and raised many questions during the story. Students really enjoyed this lesson, because they had visual aids, and were involved by anticipating the story through looking at pictures and trying to answer my questions. Within a limited time, I realised that my English proficiency could not achieve a significantly higher level, but adopting alternative strategies could be much more effective in achieving similar teaching outcomes.
6.4.3 Classroom Management

Classroom management is important because it is a basic element in conducting a successful lesson. Despite interesting lesson plans having been prepared, problematic student behaviours can negatively affect the whole lesson, especially when the classroom teacher is absent:

因为 classroom teacher 今天不在，所以他们很乱。我给他们看毛笔宣纸的时候他们不停的说话，推来推去抢来抢去的。我很无奈，意识到时间不够了，因为等下还要教他们笔顺。前几节课强调读音都没有教写字，但是我也不能教的太详细，因为时间不够，而且就算我教了他们也不会按照笔顺写的。但是我总不能不教吧。等我让他们坐在位子上去写的时候，他们聊天聊的更激烈了，我真的很生气。[... ...] 我告诉他们你们自己浪费时间。当我发下宣纸的时候，那个 casual teacher 弱弱的告诉我说这节课只剩下 5 分钟了。

They did not sit well due to the absence of their own classroom teacher. I showed them calligraphic art, xuān paper; they kept chatting and pushing each other. I felt that the time was not enough since I had to teach them stroke order. I was mainly focused on communicative tasks rather than writing. I introduced stroke order even though they did not pay attention [I knew it was a waste of time as they could not follow the order when they were actually asked to do it.] But I cannot choose to ignore. Then I ask them to sit on their desk – they chatted even more. I felt really angry [...] I told the class they were wasting their time. When I was about to hand out paper, the casual teacher told me that I only had 5 minutes left. (Self-reflection, 19 May 2010)

This diary entry indicates the difficulties of conducting cultural lessons with misbehaving students. I had to organise the class and to manage their behaviour problems, which took up a significant proportion of lesson time. As a result, they did not have enough time for the actual learning activities, even though they were supposed to be fun. Without a positive learning environment, fun learning activities are less likely to happen, let alone to motivate students’ Mandarin learning [see 5.5.2]. Due to limited experience, I was only able to deal with classroom misbehaviour with the classroom teacher’s help. Establishing a series of classroom management practices by myself was a challenge that meant learning local Australian pedagogical knowledge and putting it into practice in these schools. This was highly valuable in terms of my development of a teacher’s professional knowledge.

6.4.3.1 Established rules
Classroom teachers from Mifeng PS all suggested that I learn established classroom management strategies by observing other, experienced, classroom teachers. This was beneficial for me, a beginning teacher:

To do observation lessons to get to know the children, and to see how the classroom teacher interacts. [. . . ] I think first, before they let you do lessons, I think that you should be familiar with the class, be familiar with the routines. Because it makes it a lot easier if you already have established rules with the students. (K, interview, Stage 1 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

Learning established classroom management strategies made it easier for me, as the students were already familiar with these. I learnt to use hand gestures to instruct students to stop them from talking. I learnt basic classroom management by observing existing practices or codes used in the school. The strategy I used most frequently with primary school classes was “clapping”:

他们做 worksheet或者什么的很投入, 快下课了, 我就拍手让他们可以停止手上的工作。

They were involved in doing a worksheet or other activity, and it was time to finish a class. I then clapped to ask them to stop working. (Self-reflection, 9 June 2010)

前排的同学学的特别认真。但是后面的同学实在是讲话的很厉害。我几次停下来拍手, 让他们的注意力回来。

Students sitting at the front were paying full attention. But students who sat back were not paying attention, but started their own conversation a lot. I stopped several times, clapping to attract their attention. (Self-reflection, 30 June 2010)

Another strategy I learnt was to give students points. This was a reward system used in the school. The students were given rewards at school assemblies when they had earned a certain number of points. However, without knowing students, I could not use this strategy to stimulate their positive behaviour at my classroom:

这节课很好, 老师在课结束前要我点几个名字给 points, 但是我不了解学生, 我真的记不得他们的脸。而且我上课总是训导表现不好的同学, 至于谁表现好, 不太记得的啊。他们的座位也不固定, 很难定位。于是我点了几个同学, 感觉很不好, 因为我觉得我没有专心了解, 对其他人不公平。

This was a good class so the classroom teacher asked me to pick some students to give points. However, I could not match the students’ faces with their behaviour: I could not remember their names, and they did not have a
fixed seat. Sadly, I remembered those who badly behaved better than who were well behaved. As a result, I picked some student but I felt awful. It was not fair. (Self-reflection, 3 March 2010)

This strategy was effective, but remembering their names and matching their name to their face was a challenge for me. For this reason, I was in a situation where I could not directly stop misbehaviour nor praise a positive behaviour by calling students’ names. This also made it difficult for me to adopt strategies like “happy face” or moving students’ position when they were distracted. Teachers suggested that I not “be afraid to ask students to move if they are distracted” or “use the happy face and sad face” (C, written feedback, Stage 2 classroom teacher, 26 May 2010). However, I felt uncomfortable with conducting these strategies, as I was not able to remember their names.

When I observed cooking lessons, the classroom teacher repeatedly illustrated the importance of clear instructions for me. The students were asked to follow detailed steps, even in creative art classes. Therefore, explicit classroom instruction became part of my classroom management strategies:

我写了“TO DO NOW”，让他们回忆了我的名字和上节课学习的内容。同学开始有点吵，但是看到我写了问题就知道他们要干什么，于是都开始低头写字，课堂从开始上课前的激动慢慢平静下来。

I wrote ‘TO DO NOW’ on the board, asking them to recall what we had learnt from last lesson. Students were talking a lot initially. They knew what they were supposed to do when they saw the questions. So they started to write. The class gradually calmed down. (Self-reflection, 31 March 2010)

Compared with Chinese students, I found that Australian students require explicit instructions for completing a learning task. This made them focus on a given task rather than chatting with each other.

Learning established rules also helps a teacher to give accurate information to misbehaving students. Thus, accurate information promotes understanding about school rules – being a safe, respectful learner:

I like about Mifeng the three rules we have got: be respectful, be safe, and be a learner. Because it doesn’t matter what they do, you can always go back to these three core rules. So if they are hurting each other, you say you are not respectful to your friend, you are not being safe. If they are being naughty to a teacher you say you are not respectful to grown-ups
you are actually getting very accurate, giving them very accurate information about their behaviour. (R, interview, Stage 3 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

One of the main ideas behind classroom management is that students learn about the importance of being respectful. Also, they are reminded repeatedly that school is a place to learn, and whatever activities they are doing, they need to be safe – and not hurt others. Teachers develop their own classroom management practices to inform students about the school’s three principles. This is similar to the 校训 (xiàoxùn) used in Chinese schools: every single school has a sentence, or couple of words, often from a famous person or from classic literature, as a motto to encourage all school students.

Being different from Australia, Chinese school mottos focus on students’ academic efforts and future contributions to society. For example, the school motto of my high school is “立志 lìzhì, 努力 nǔlì, 为公 wèigōng”, which means “establishing an ambition, making great efforts, contributing to the whole public.” This is the expectation for all the school students’ future development. The difference between Australian and Chinese students and their educational cultures means the school mottos differ greatly—thus informing teachers’ different emphases and practices to a large extent. Australian schools focus on students’ behaviour while Chinese schools focus on students’ learning outcomes.

6.4.3.2 Changing strategies

Different kinds of classroom management problem emerged in different classes: therefore, it became a question of whether classroom management strategies should keep changing or not. “以不变应万变” (yǐ bùbiàn yìng wànbiàn) is a classic Chinese strategy to deal with a dynamic situation. 以 (yǐ) means use, 不 (bù) means no or none, 变 (biàn) means change, 应 (yìng) means to deal with, 万 (wàn) is a number, meaning ten thousand. This Suyu shows a Chinese philosophical idea, which is adopting a non-changeable strategy or principle to deal with ten thousand kinds of change, given the dynamics of any situation. Implementing this idea in my teaching, I recalled the most basic classroom management strategy used in Chinese classrooms – silence. Despite different situations and disruptive behaviours, I adopted “silence” as a strategy to deal with them:
为了管理学生的纪律问题，我只能保持严肃，说，I will wait... 但是学生依旧自己说话如故。[... ...] 在 Stage2 因为是一个代课老师，学生很放松。还有一个女生居然因为和一个男生发生争执，夺门而出。我只能停顿一下。[... ...]在 Stage3，当我不说话，学生很多都走神做自己的事情了。

To manage students’ behaviour, I tried to keep serious, saying “I will wait...” then kept silent, but students continued chatting as before. [... ...] in Stage 2 class, there was a casual teacher so students were more relaxed. I stopped and kept silent for several seconds. One girl had a quarrel with a boy and she just left the classroom. [... ...] in Stage 3, when I kept silent, most students kept being distracted, or busy with their own business.

(Self-reflection, 24 November 2009)

There were three different problems with the different classes that I taught, namely, talking out of turn, non-participation, and disruptive behaviour. I used a “calming” strategy or “silence” to deal with these student management problems, but this seemed not to work. Teacher silence is an important classroom management strategy in China. However, silence by both students and teachers seemed to have different meanings here. The two parties had to negotiate the boundary of being silent. Silence is “an active behaviour that conveys culturally appropriate, meaningful messages that cannot be expressed through verbal communication, or that are best expressed through silence” (Tuafuti, 2010, p. 2). In western classrooms, silence tends to indicate “trouble and difficulty”: people who keep silent are “suspicious, insecure, reserved and tend to produce longer pauses” (Sunkim cited in Tuafuti, 2010, p. 3).

Second, my relatively “poor” teacherly English was another reason for being silent. I could not immediately construct a “sharp” sentence which would make sense and stop the disruptive behaviour. I did not have confidence in the English used by Australian teachers, which I needed to manage these students’ behaviours [see 6.4.2]. When I applied the silence strategy in my Mandarin class, it was not effective in managing students’ behaviour:

我试着沉默让他们意识到，但是他们彻底忽略我。倒是一沉默，classroom teacher 就马上意识到了，然后主动帮我维持了纪律。

I tried to be silent so the students would realise that their behaviour was unacceptable, but they ignored me totally. Instead, when their classroom teacher saw me being silent, she immediately managed the class for me.

(Self-reflection, 24 November 2009)
By my being silent, I expected the students to realise that their behaviour was not acceptable, while my classroom experience showed that this was not the case in these particular Australian classrooms. However, teachers from Mifeng PS suggested that “silence” was actually a commonly adopted strategy for effective classroom management. Teacher C applied this strategy to the Stage 2 class:

[... ] But in the classroom, little things like you learn as you go, is when you want to talk, wait until all the children are looking at you. They learn to stop talking very quickly. (C, interview, Stage 2 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

“Silence” was rephrased as “waiting” in this excerpt, but the idea is the same: the teacher does not talk when students are expected to stop talking and listen. Although I could not gain students’ attention effectively when I used this strategy in my language class, the Stage 2 classroom teacher suggested that students did realise that they were making unnecessary comments when their classroom teacher stopped talking. This suggests that a single classroom management strategy does not necessarily have the same application and effectiveness for different teachers. I could no longer apply “不变bu bian” to deal with the dynamics of Australian student misbehaviours. This point led me to think about establishing my own distinctive way of managing students.

6.4.3.3 Unique prizes

Establishing my own regulations for classroom management was essential. Instead of giving out points at the end of the class, I kept praising students’ positive learning behaviours and their attempts to learn Mandarin during class. I also gave them Chinese stickers as prizes for being respectful learners in my Mandarin classes:

我一边上课，一边注意哪些小朋友很专心，很积极回答问题，我就给 ta 一个中国特色的贴纸作为奖励，也是对别的小朋友的刺激。拿到贴纸的很开心，这样其他小朋友也有了动力。

I paid attention to students’ positive behaviours during classes and gave them Chinese stickers during class. These were prizes as well as incentives for other students to behave well. Students who got a sticker were very happy and others tried to control themselves as well (Self-reflection, 12 May 2010)

My system of rewards encouraged positive learning behaviours rather than looking for negative behaviours. This had a significant positive impact on students’ learning and the classroom environment. “A good classroom management model addresses prevention,
teaching expectations, encouragement, and correction” (Knight, 2009, p. 95). Encouragement became an important element in my classroom management strategies during my Mandarin lessons. I provided verbal encouragement in Mandarin, using Mandarin repeatedly so students grew in confidence in responding to and speaking, the target language. Moreover, external rewards, such as Chinese stickers, provided extrinsic motivation for students and gave them a sense of success in completing a language learning task. Additionally, because giving Chinese stickers was unique to my classes, students had greater impetus to behave appropriately, in order to receive one as a reward.

In a movie called Dangerous Mind, an English teacher says: “reading a poem in my class is a reward.” Similarly, learning about Chinese cultural knowledge was itself a reward for my students’ positive behaviour. It stimulated students’ intrinsic needs for engaging in learning tasks – and thus created a positive learning atmosphere:

When I taught them to say “I like flowers” I found they liked my paper-made flower very much. So I told them you can learn to make these Chinese paper flowers if you behave appropriately and learn well during this lesson. They all became very quiet and tried to be self-controlled. (Self-reflection, 24 June 2010)

Rewarding my students meant engaging them in my teaching practice to stimulate positive behaviours. Since my language classes used various teaching tools, I asked my students to hold these tools during the lessons. All the students tried to behave well in order to be given this opportunity:

I had a lot of teaching tools on hand, so I gave a well-behaved girl a chocolate package to hold. The others thought they could be my helper if they behaved well. Everyone tried to behave well then. I did not know whom to give the next helper task. [ . . . ] Later I found a naughty boy was behaving himself today, so I give the Australian flag to him to hold. He was surprised and kept his good behaviour for the whole class. (Self-reflection, 24 June 2010)
Praising students’ positive behaviours empowered their exercise of self-control. I realised that praising would not only result in students’ sense of achievement and higher motivation [see 5.5.1.1], but also promotes a positive learning environment, which in turn improves learning outcomes for the whole class. This promoted a virtuous circle in classroom learning activities.

Engaging students into lessons was essential for managing their behaviour. After I conducted a lesson with PE students, I conducted a Chinese cooking lesson. Surprisingly, the girl who did not behave in the PE class [see 4.2.7] was fully engaged in the cooking lesson:

I asked some volunteers to be my helper to wash dishes or to do some chopping. I found the most active one was the girl who dropped her bag on the desk and said my PE class was ‘boring.’ She also told their cooking teacher that I once visited her PE class. I am so surprised that she seemed a different student in the two classes. (Self-reflection, 26 May 2010)

The movie Dangerous Mind describes how a teacher educated a class of problematic students to realise their value. Every student could be motivated to learn through certain methods, and it is the teacher’s responsibility to find the right methods, and make learning happen for each student.

The dynamics of classroom situations require teachers to have a series of behaviour management strategies and apply them flexibly in these situations. In other words, learning to conduct efficient classroom management is a long term learning process, requiring deliberate, thoughtful practice:

Each class has different behaviour management, but they will have an overall school behaviour management, like we have the rainbow charts, but then teachers all have their own things like I have tickets, and I do ‘happy face’ whereas other classes you go to they don’t do that [. . . ] a lot of classes have different behaviour management strategies, something works for some classes, and something doesn’t, and that’s a matter of changing it all the time to see what works. (K, interview, Stage 1 classroom teacher, 26 August 2010)

Changing strategies for different classes as well as for a single class is necessary, according to these experienced teachers. The Chinese concept “以不变应万变” (yǐ biàn bù yīng wàn biàn)
6.5 Conclusion
Transnational knowledge exchange (Singh, 2008; 2009; 2010) is a concept that provides a theoretical framework for practices that involve this “two-way” learning, as happened in my classrooms. It focuses on my responsibility as a teacher, to teach students Chinese knowledge and simultaneously to learn Australian pedagogical knowledge, with the aim of conducting better teaching and research practices. This chapter has examined the theoretical bases, concerns and practices of teaching students particular Chinese knowledge. My aim was not just to reduce students’ ignorance, but also to create a positive attitude towards a modern China and learning Mandarin. It has also pointed to the potential to grow an integrative motivation in students, making possible a long-term self-initiated process of foreign language learning.
Chapter 7
Conclusion:
Summary, propositions, implications and recommendations
7.1 Introduction
This thesis records my professional development as a beginning Mandarin teacher-researcher. It provides an account of my efforts in trying to work out tensions at my local teaching site – Mifeng HS and PS. My research focused on my teaching practices to stimulate Australian students’ Mandarin learning, and my exploration of the concept “transnational knowledge exchange” through my actions as a beginning language teacher and researcher. This chapter gives a summary of each chapter, including my reflections about the research capabilities I developed through the process that led to producing the main chapters. It also presents key propositions concerning my major findings from this research project. Some of the limitations of this research project are noted, along with implications for practice, and recommendations for further research are presented.
7.2 Summary of each chapter

This section summarises each chapter in this thesis by focusing on the research capabilities I have developed through this teaching research project. Chapter 1 provided an account of my educational background, indicating how it contributed to my complex and rich knowledge system. It also provided the background for this “self-study” research project, explaining the ROSETE Program I was involved in, and explained how I argued for a place in that Program. Research questions were presented, and the significance and worthiness of this research project was justified.

Chapter 2 reviewed literature related to the research project reported in this thesis. It examined the key intellectual concepts relevant to the evidentiary analysis, exploring the gap between what is known and the “not-known.” This required me to identify concepts from my data, and then look for related literature. I also checked synonyms, because sometimes the literature employs different terminology to describe a same issue. Besides, reviewing the literature through organising different opinions, analysing disputes and contextualising the issues pertinent to my research, I also developed skills in summarising key points and critical thinking. Finally, through reviewing the literature, I was able to investigate the theoretical underpinnings of the issues raised by my data set.

Chapter 3 began with an introduction to “self-study” methodology (Loughran, 2004; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2008; LaBoskey, 2004), which was adopted for this research project after a comparison with other qualitative educational research methods, and addressing concerns about its validity. The data collection and analysis strategies used in this study were explained in this chapter. Through studying these various methodologies and data management strategies, I came to understand educational research better. Comparing these methods and strategies, I was able to make an informed decision about my research method, its advantages, potential threats and how could I minimise them. In addition, this chapter indicated how Chinese philosophical concepts would be used for the purpose of data analysis. This was not only a significant contribution of this research, but also an opportunity for me to learn how to use my bilingual knowledge in this research to develop a theoretical rationale and pedagogical process. This chapter finished with an account of the ethical principles and procedures.
informing this research. As a beginning teacher-researcher, I realised that I had to consider issues which could potentially cause harm to the participants.

Chapter 4 offered an analysis of my teaching at Mifeng HS and PS. From the “shocks” and the trials of Mandarin teaching, two major tensions that emerged through my teaching were identified. First, Australian students differ from Chinese students, so I needed new pedagogical knowledge to conduct quality Mandarin lessons. I also needed to learn about Australian students, to understand, to interact with and to motivate them. Together with new knowledge and my prior knowledge, I was better able to position myself into this particular context and make improvements in my teaching. Second, teaching Mandarin to a group of Australian students who were not motivated to learn this language for various reasons, was another source of tension, having multiple dimensions. Methodologically speaking, conducting CLT or traditional language teaching methods put the focus on teaching to enhance students’ linguistic ability. However, it was not linguistic learning that came first. There was a need to reduce students’ ignorance about modern China and promote their motivation to learn Mandarin.

Chapter 5 argued that motivation or promotion is consistent with the long-term need for language teachers to consciously stimulate students’ interests in learning Mandarin. My Mandarin lessons, which only lasted 18 months, were unlikely to promote a long-term commitment to the language among students. However, my lessons showed that students’ motivation to participate in learning Mandarin could be raised by engaging them in fun tasks and building their sense of achievement. Also, by building connections through self-references, their prior knowledge and school curriculum, it is possible to grow their motivation for learning Mandarin. Even with limited prior knowledge, they can be motivated by a sense of curiosity.

Chapter 6 provided an empirical explanation of the concept of “transnational knowledge exchange.” This concept provides a theoretical framework for examining the “two-way” learning process in the classroom. It focused on my responsibility, to teach Australian students Chinese knowledge and simultaneously for me to learn Australian pedagogical knowledge, with the aim of improving my teaching practices. Chapter 6 examined the theoretical bases, concerns and practices of teaching students particular Chinese knowledge so as to eliminate their “ignorance” about a modern China, thus to build up a
positive attitude towards a modern China and the learning of Mandarin. Developing a positive attitude towards China among students was seen as a necessity, to grow integrative motivation for learning Mandarin, and potentially stimulating their long-term interest in learning the language.

7.3 Key propositions in this self-study

Four key propositions concerning the important findings emerged from the evidentiary Chapters (4 to 6). These key findings fall into the following categories:

1) the importance of teachers’ reflections on context;
2) teachers’ professional development through contextual engagement;
3) context shapes teaching practices; and
4) the significance of “transnational knowledge exchange.”

7.3.1 The importance of context

Chinese philosophical concepts can provide important tools for making sense of the Australian context in which I found myself as a volunteer teacher-researcher. Considering the Chinese chengyu 因地制宜 (yīn dì zhì yí), 因 (yīn) means according to 地 (dì) (different) location/places/earth, 制 (zhì) means making 宜 (yí) appropriate plans/measures. Originally, this concept referred to an agricultural strategy while di literally means earth. In modern Chinese society, the application of this concept has been extended: di is understood as the natural environment, the socio-cultural environment and economic conditions. Thus, this concept now means that an appropriate plan always has to take local conditions into consideration. For education, there is a similar concept 因材施教 (yīn cái shī jiào) which is a chengyu about the importance of learners. 因 (yīn) means “based on, according to.” 材 (cái) literally means “the wood which is used as material for building” and it is widely accepted as a metaphor for “students.” They need to be educated to make a contribution to their country, just as wood needs to be shaped for building a house. 施 (shī) is a verb, meaning “conducting” and 教 (jiào) retains its original meaning, which is “education, teaching.” As a whole this chengyu means, teachers should conduct their teaching in accordance with each individual student’s characteristics and capability. The “context” for this research, was the teaching of Mandarin at Mifeng HS and PS where a group of
students were not motivated to learn Mandarin and Chinese knowledge, for a series of reasons.

7.3.1.1 Teacher’s professional development and “context”

At the very beginning, what I was concerned about in my teaching was how to survive the “shocks” [see 4.2.1] and “clashes” [see 4.2.2] of a different educational culture. I was most concerned about myself, rather than considering the students’ learning or what impact I could have on their education. This coincides with the first stage of beginning teachers’ development, which is the self-survival phase (Arends, 2004; Leask & Moorhouse, 2005). I expressed strong emotion about the behaviour problems [see 4.2.7], as Ginns and others (2001) argue a beginning stage teacher does. However, in this thesis, I also argue that as a teacher, “my sense of self” was another important component of this educational context [see 4.3]. At the beginning stage my role in my class was passive, and I was working for my own survival.

When I reflected on my position later and analysed the relevant data, my concern had progressed beyond only “myself” to considering my “impact” on students’ learning. Concerned about my students’ benefits from participating in my Mandarin classes, I explored “context” as a crucial focus for reflection and analysis [see 4.3]. This suggests complexity in the idea of stages in the development of beginning teachers. On the one hand, I was still at the stage of struggling with students’ behaviour problems: this is the initial stage. On the other hand, I was also concerned whether my teaching was impacting on my students in beneficial ways. This was supposed to be the final stage, where the concern is students’ learning outcomes as a result of teachers’ impact (Arends, 2004; Ginns, et al., 2001; Leask & Moorhouse, 2005). I engaged in these two stages simultaneously. This challenges the linear, single-direction, staged view of beginning teachers’ professional development.

Lastly, from the crucial moment of reflecting on my “own position” in this particular context, I extended the SWOT model to explore my position as a Mandarin teacher [see 4.3]. This implies that the teacher is an important factor in any particular teaching context. Here I would like to draw attention to the difference between “teacher’s awareness of the context he/she is involved in” and “teacher as a factor of a certain context.” The Chinese concept yin cai shi jiao [see 7.3.1] is an example. When it
suggests that teachers should teach according to learners’ individual differences, it also assumes that an individual teacher is able to teach flexibly in terms of teaching methods and contents. However, I observed that experienced teachers had difficulty achieving this flexibility; so much greater then was the challenge for me as a beginning teacher. To consider my strengths and weakness in this particular context, I found the educational SWOT analysis (see Table 5) valuable, to improve the quality of my teaching. My point here is to dispute stage theory (Arends, 2004; Ginns, et al., 2001; Leask & Moorhouse, 2005), which posits teachers’ focusing on concerns about “themselves.” Rather than seeing “self-concern” as a “novice” stage for a beginning teacher’s professional development, teachers should not hesitate to address concerns about themselves as a way of establishing their own position in their particular teaching context.

7.3.1.2 “Context” shapes teacher’s practices

After learning about communicative language teaching (CLT) from the NSW DET’s language method program, I struggled between conducting CLT lessons, which were said to be the “advanced method”, and “traditional” language lessons, with which I was more familiar [see 4.2.3]. This was my first understanding of what Mandarin teaching might involve, and it centred on linguistic knowledge and the teaching of language. After a period of Mandarin teaching at Mifeng HS and PS, I realised that before I could systematically teach them the language, my students needed to be motivated to engage in learning Mandarin. This was the “context” for my teaching in these sites. Their limited knowledge of, and thin connections with modern China [see 4.2.8]; their limited communicative needs for knowing Mandarin [see 4.2.4] and their families’ attitudes [see 4.2.6] constrained their motivation to learn Mandarin. Therefore, to eliminate my students’ negative ignorance of China and to stimulate their interests in Chinese cultural and linguistic knowledge, became the priority aim for my teaching. This led to a shift in my goal for teaching Mandarin from systematically teaching the Mandarin language to stimulating students’ motivation and engagement in Mandarin lessons.

As I came to realise the importance of Chinese cultural knowledge to my students, I tried exploring the use of this knowledge in my teaching and to stimulate their learning. My engagement with the intercultural language teaching approach (Liddicoat, 2002) raised another question for Mandarin teaching in Australian schools. Liddicoat (2002)
argues that “dynamic culture” is more appropriate for teaching than “static culture” in language classes. Rather than unquestioningly adopting this advice from authorities, I initially reflected upon my teaching context [see 6.3.1.2]. Moreover, when considering one of my failed lessons, in which I had used the “less advanced” broadcasting teaching method, I also reflected upon the available teaching resources, my students, and other aspects that influenced my teaching [see 6.3.2.2]. These all show my capability for thinking critically about the claims of authorities and the principle of considering the local context as integral to teaching decisions.

Ginns and others (2001) argue for the importance of encouraging beginning teachers to make their own decisions, as these tend to be more useful and effective. The NSW DET educational policy captures this idea, in part at least. On the one hand, the government report “One size doesn’t fit all” (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2005) points to the importance of “local decisions.” On the other hand, the NSW DET’s language methodology program for beginning teachers did not mention “local decisions” but focused on the adoption of a particular teaching method, namely CLT. This was supplemented later by an introduction to intercultural language teaching. As a Mandarin teacher-researcher, my reflective attitude questioned this approach to language education by embracing the idea that “context shapes teaching practices.” This focus on “context” emerged from Burnaby and Sun’s (1989) and Sun and Cheng’s (2002) argument that the CLT approach does not fit China’s English teaching context. In addition, Bax (2003) raised similar concerns, and suggested that a “context approach” requires a “paradigm shift” from the dominant view that only one language teaching approach is certain to work, to the need to “localise” language teaching decisions and use this knowledge to inform the particular methods adopted. What is more, this study extended the “context approach” for deciding how to teach the language (Bax, 2003), to argue that context shapes the method of teaching cultural and linguistic knowledge. Thus, this study suggests that in some contexts, rather than being limited to linguistic knowledge, language classes might usefully function as a dynamic source of cultural knowledge [see 6.3.1.3]. Language teachers should consider the local context to make decisions, not only about “how to teach” but also “what to teach.”

7.3.2 “Transnational knowledge exchange”
This thesis explored possibilities for “transnational knowledge exchange” (Singh, 2008) through my professional development as a Mandarin teacher-researcher in Western Sydney public schools. My practice of the two-way exchange of Western and Chinese intellectual knowledge occurred at two levels (see Figure 7). The circle in the middle represents me – the teacher-researcher. The outside circle represents the two essential Australian contexts for me: the Mifeng schools where I worked as a volunteer, and the university where I learnt to be a researcher. In the schools, I taught Chinese linguistic and modern cultural knowledge to my students. At the same time, I also learnt about the Australian educational culture through my own teaching experiences, as well as through practical advice about classroom teaching strategies from the teachers at these schools.

At the university, I pursued a MEd (Hons) research degree by analysing evidence of my Mandarin teaching through self-study research. This required me to learn about conducting Western educational research, Australian pedagogies and language teaching methodologies. Also, I was encouraged to foreground and emphasise my role as a Mandarin teacher in this research by employing Chinese intellectual concepts to interpret my reflections and the evidence from my Australian Mandarin classes.

Figure 7: My practice of “transnational knowledge exchange”

Singh (2008) argues that in post-graduate research education, monolingual Western educators can use their “ignorance” of overseas students’ language and intellectual heritage productively. This assumes that the overseas students’ homeland has equally useful theoretical knowledge. International research candidates are encouraged to verify this by engaging intellectual resources from their homeland through their research in Australia. This thesis has tested the proposition in this teacher-education program by a
beginning teacher-researcher undertaking an MEd (Hons) research degree. Moreover, this thesis systematically implemented Singh’s (2010) analytical tool, which enables the use of Chinese concepts in Western educational research. It was found that this analytical tool can strengthen bilingual teacher-researchers’ understanding of the potential value of their own homeland knowledge imported into an international context, and empower their argumentative development through engaging in critical thinking by drawing on another knowledge system, positioning these concepts in a global scholarly conversation.

My practice of “transnational knowledge exchange” also resonates with the notion of “imaged community” (Pavlenko, 2003) from a linguistic perspective, but also from a larger educational perspective. The term “non-native speaker” applied to overseas students from Asia emphasises their low English language proficiency. This thesis shows the benefit of their being recognised as having “bilingual capabilities.” Similarly, traditional Western education positions overseas students from Asia as those who come from less informed knowledge systems to learn advanced Western knowledge. By engaging overseas students’ homeland intellectual knowledge, and by being recognised as bilingual researchers, they can be a bridge for creating global knowledge networks.

7.4 Limitations of this study

There were several limitations to the research project that provided the basis for this thesis. The first issue centres on the question of subjectivity. In this self-study research, it might have been thought it would be subjective, given that I was researching my own teaching practices. The closeness between the researcher and the issue being researched made explicit the challenge of dealing with subjectivity during the data analysis. As my personal emotions were involved, I was aware of the danger of my being less likely to analyse the data from an impartial perspective. This made it necessary to explore other sources of data. The close relationship between myself and the classroom teachers added to these questions about subjectivity. They mostly suggested positive comments about my teaching practices; they all showed enthusiasm toward the Mandarin program and they agreed about its significance for their students. The teacher participants probably thought that giving positive comments would be “nice” and “helpful” to my research. My role as a researcher, as well as Mandarin teacher, probably stopped these teacher participants from expressing their opinion freely. They probably tried to give me
information which they thought was appropriate and nice to say; alternatively, it may be that they really did have only positive feedback for my work.

The second source of potential bias comes from the limited contribution from student participants to this research. The initial design for this research proposed conducting student interviews. However, this was not possible, due to the limited time for data collection and the limited number of student participants. A key reason for this was that the NSW DET SERAP application for collecting data from students was not approved until the end of May 2010. This was the end of the second term of the school year. The distribution of consent forms (see Appendix 5) to the prospective student participants to obtain their parents’ permissions took another several weeks. This was not completed until the end of July 2010, and all the data analysis was planned to be finished by the end of September. Time constraints did not allow the conduct of both student and teacher interviews within a month. Moreover, most of the students did not return their consent form, for various reasons, especially those in the Stage 3 class, where I only received 4 forms out of 31. The limited number of student participants affected the use of student work samples in this study. I could not use their work samples in this study without their parents’ permission, even though this would have greatly contributed to the argument.

Finally, the critics of Communicative Language Teaching Approach seem overlooked its true value. The reason is that, when I first started this research I was interested about learning the CLT Approach. However, as the research went on, I stopped investigating this teaching method and started to think about the context of using this method. Of course, due to the methodology training provided by the NSW Education Department, my teaching was heavily influenced by this teaching method, but my reflection seemed to emphasise the drawbacks of “only caring about the method” and the worship of this method. That was the main reason I questioned its appropriateness throughout my thesis: I also understand this to be a basis of developing a critical, scholarly argument. Further, it is important to recall that the research focus of this study was to explore the importance of the “context” of my teaching. For these reasons any further the discussion or exploration of Communicative Language Teaching literature was not warranted.

7.5 Implications for practice
The implications of this study for practice concern how to stimulate students’ engagement in class learning activities and how to motivate their learning of a foreign language which does not necessarily serve instrumental needs.

First, intellectual connection and relevance are essential for teaching a foreign language. Such connections may build from learners’ self-references [see 5.5.3.1], their prior knowledge [see 5.5.3.2] and the curriculum [see 5.5.3.3]. Significantly, these stimulate learners’ interests, as exemplified by the analysis of evidence concerning my Mandarin lessons. It seems that beginning language learners are willing to start by learning items that refer to themselves and that have some connection or relevance to their everyday lives. This was especially important in my teaching context, when students were not motivated to learn the language. Dynamic connections were made by drawing upon Chinese cultural knowledge learning, which my Australian students could apply to their lives by making cultural comparisons and stimulating reflections.

Second, “fun” learning activities engage students. This was found to be particularly so for a group of active learners who could easily be distracted during lessons. Sitting on the carpet, listening and repeating the language, was challenging for them. Therefore, Chinese linguistic and cultural knowledge in the form of hands-on learning activities, proved useful in promoting these students’ engagement in my Mandarin lessons [see 5.5.2]. Enjoying participation in language lessons could gradually build Australian students’ motivation for learning Mandarin.

Third, it is necessary to consciously give students a sense of “achievement” through the learning process. Teachers need to encourage students by using praise to motivate their learning [see 5.5.1.1], as well as establishing reasonable goals [see 5.5.1.2] for their learning. In my Mandarin lessons, students did not understand the Chinese philosophical ideas carried by those cultural-linguistic activities, but they were highly engaged in active learning tasks that they enjoyed more as they gained a sense of achievement.

Using “authentic” materials is an effective means for introducing a real-life picture of another culture to a group of learners who know little about it. In this study, authentic texts, photographs and artefacts represented the everyday lives of Chinese people and everyday scenarios about modern China [see 6.3.1.1]. This included photographs I had
taken during my days in China, in areas such as my schooling, travelling, and my
everyday routines such as cooking, dining and shopping. “Official” images of China are
modern and exciting but are far from a normal Chinese person’s everyday life, so they
seem less convincing.

7.6 Recommendations for further research

During the production of this thesis, I identified several points that could be explored
through further research. First, I examined the interesting relationship between Chinese
and Australian students’ behaviour problems [see 2.8]. I also adapted some Australian
strategies as part of my classroom management practices [see 6.4.3]. This study
investigated my use of Chinese knowledge as an intellectual resource to inform my
Mandarin teaching. Further research could be centred on how Chinese philosophical
knowledge might contribute to classroom management in Australian classrooms.

Second, when my Mandarin lessons were centred on teaching Chinese cultural
knowledge, I identified a concern about balancing the inputs of linguistic and cultural
knowledge [see 6.3.1.3]. Based on my teaching context, I made the decision to limit the
linguistic inputs, but I did not specifically examine what was the appropriate proportion
to achieve a result where students could experience effective language learning.
Moreover, when I was implementing hands-on learning activities, I did not specifically
examine how much knowledge they acquired through these “fun” activities. It was
important to focus on promoting motivation as a first step. However, further research
needs to be conducted over a longer duration, to further explore this important issue.

Finally, my Mandarin lessons were integrated with the curriculum of a range of other
faculties at Mifeng HS. This was a novel approach to foreign language education. As
this study was limited in time and resources, it explored one key issue, which was how
knowledge from across the curriculum might stimulate students’ motivation for learning
Mandarin. Contextualising the teaching of language across faculties is an iterative
pedagogical move. Further research could explore how to integrate Mandarin and
Chinese cultural perspectives across the mainstream curriculum. Such research could
investigate students’ language learning outcomes from this approach to language
education.
7.7 Reflections on becoming a teacher-researcher

Eighteen months ago, I considered myself as a Chinese student who was going overseas to start a journey as a volunteer and to undertake research studies in Australia. I had no idea of what it would mean to teach Mandarin in Western Sydney public schools or to pursue an MEd (Hons) research degree. I was such an ignorant novice teacher-researcher that I realised that there was a great amount of knowledge I needed to learn, and many issues that I needed to investigate. My initial “not-knowing” functioned as a productive impetus which guided my developing understanding of language teaching methodologies, educational research principles and procedures. Through the interrelated processes of reflection and practice, analysis and action, I improved my teaching, developing an informed critical view about language teaching methodologies as I established my distinctive position in schools. Also, I established my stance as a beginning teacher-researcher able to bring to bear a complex array of knowledge in this thesis.

Pinnegar and Hamilton (2008), Loughran (2005) and LaBoskey (2004) point out that self-study research aims at improving one’s teaching. It was through “intentional and systematic inquiry into one’s own practice” (Dinkelman, 2003, p. 8) that I was able to achieve this improvement. When analysing all my reflections about my teaching, I was able to see a novice teacher’s professional growth, as experienced by working through tensions and concerns. When finalising this thesis, I saw a reflective teacher-researcher conceptualising these major concerns and tensions, and engaging systematically in the process of working through them. This added much value to all the reflections I had made throughout the past 18 months. It was the methodology of self-study that enabled me to integrate these issues and make a contribution to educational knowledge.

Singh’s (2008, 2009, 2010) concept of “transnational knowledge exchange” was another intellectual resource that contributed to my professional development over the past 18 months. It was a surprise to me that my prior knowledge of Business and Communications studies, as well as my Chinese intellectual knowledge, was encouraged for use in both my Mandarin teaching and research. I extended and emphasised my role as a Mandarin teacher through establishing a “virtual classroom” in this thesis. I realised that I needed to be informed by Australian knowledge of teaching and research, while my students, as well as Western educators, needed to be informed
by Chinese knowledge. Learning to conceptualise my Chinese knowledge as a theoretical resource for use in Western research was another important feature of this thesis. Therefore, throughout this 18 month program as a volunteer teacher-researcher, my professional development was not only about acquiring new knowledge nor the Chinese knowledge I brought to my Australian students, but also a recognition and re-positioning of myself as a Chinese overseas student volunteer and a reflective teacher-researcher who has extended and deepened their capability to negotiate moves between educational cultures and to access intellectual resources using my bilingual competence.
References


Li, B. (2001). A brief Overview of Sino-Western Exchange Past and Present. In R. Hayhoe & J. Pan (Eds.), Knowledge Across Cultures: A Contribution to Dialogues Among Civilizations (pp. 289-295). Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre The University of Hong Kong.


Appendix

Appendix 1: UWS ethics approval
Appendix 2: SERAP approval
Appendix 3: Dialogue sheet
Appendix 4: Information for groups
Appendix 5: Consent form
Appendix 6: Teacher interview focused questions
Appendix 7: Teachers written feedback
Appendix 8: Coding for self-reflections
Appendix 9: Work samples
Appendix 10: Hands-on activities for the first lesson of “travel to China”
Appendix 11: Selected photographs used in the second “Travel to China” lesson
Appendix 12: Visual aid for Mid-moon Festival story
Appendix 13: Schedule of Language Methodology Program (NSW DET)
Appendix 14: School observation schedule
Appendix 1: UWS ethics approval

HREC Approval H7705 - UWS Student Email - Msg

From: "Kay Buckley" <K.BUCKLEY@uws.edu.au>  
To: "Michael Singh" <m.singh@uws.edu.au>, 16636346@student.uws.edu.au
Subject: HREC Approval H7705

Notification of Approval
23 February 2010

Email on behalf of the UWS Human Research Ethics Committee

Dear Michael and Xiaowen Huang

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

**Title:** A self study of a Chinese teacher-researcher’s practices of transnational knowledge exchange: Engaging educational boundaries to stimulate Hanzi learning in Australia

**H7705**

Student: Xiaowen Huang (Supervisor: Michael Singh)

The Protocol Number for this project is H7705. Please ensure that this number is quoted in all relevant correspondence and on all information sheets, consent forms and other project documentation.

Please note the following:
1) The approval will expire on 31 December 2010. If you require an extension of approval beyond this period, please ensure that you notify the Human Ethics Officer: humanethics@uws.edu.au prior to this date.
2) Please ensure that you notify the Human Ethics Officer of any future change to the research methodology, recruitment procedure, set of participants or research team.
3) If anything unexpected should occur while carrying out the research, please submit an Adverse Event Form to the Human Ethics Officer. This can be found at:
4) Once the project has been completed, a report on its ethical aspects must be submitted to the Human Ethics Officer. This can also be found at:

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

The Committee wishes you well with your research.
Yours sincerely;
Associate Professor Janet Perz,
Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee

Kay Buckley
Human Ethics Officer
University of Western Sydney
Locked Bag 1797, Penrith NSW 1797
Tel: 02 47 360 883
http://www.uws.edu.au/research/ethics/human_ethics


184
Appendix 2: SERAP approval

Miss Xiaowan Huang
1 West Street
KINGSWOOD NSW 2747

SERAP number: 2009220

Dear Ms Huang

I refer to your application to conduct in NSW government schools (Western Sydney Region) a research project entitled "A self-study of a Chinese teacher-researcher's practices of transnational knowledge exchange: Engaging educational boundaries to stimulate Mandarin learning in Australia.

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

Your approval will remain valid until 31 December 2010.

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

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

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

Yours sincerely

Kerrie Ikin
School Education Director, The Hills
Western Sydney Region Education Research Manager
25 May 2010

NSW Department of Education & Training
Western Sydney Region, Building T3C, Nirimba Education Precinct, Eastern Road, Quakers Hill NSW 2763 T 9208 7611 F 9208 7635
www.det.nsw.edu.au
Appendix 3: Dialogue sheet

Dialogue Sheet

Human Research Ethics Committee
Office of Research Services

University of Western Sydney

Project Title: A self study of a Chinese teacher-researcher’s practices of transnational knowledge exchange: Engaging educational boundaries to stimulate Mandarin learning in Australia

Who is carrying out the study? 
Ms Xiaowen HUANG: The Mandarin teacher in Plumpton PS

What is the study about? 
This study is to investigate my learning of how to be a successful language teacher in Australia (by using Communicative Language Teaching), and how can I integrate my knowledge about language teaching methods from China into my Mandarin classes in Australia. This project also aims to investigate whether and how a beginning teacher-researcher can successfully bridge the complexities of the Chinese and Australian knowledge systems to achieve quality teaching.

What does the study involve? 
The study involves my students in Mandarin classes, teachers in the school, and a language methodology lecturer from NSW DET, my former English teacher in China, and myself.

You are invited to my research because you are the most important ones in my Mandarin classes. You are the learners in my Mandarin classes, you involve in normal learning activities as designed by me, the teacher researcher. You will be observed during the lessons, and some of your written work samples will be collected. I will talk with you about my teaching in interviews, and I will also ask for some written feedback from you.

How much time will the study take? 
Interviews and written feedback will last about 15 minutes for you; your work samples will be collected during class and it not will take up extra time.

Will the study benefit me? 
This study will also benefit students in my Mandarin classes, because I will present language class with multiple cultural elements. Students will have opportunity to access to another language as well as its rich cultural knowledge.

Will the study have any discomforts? 
This study is not expected to cause you any discomfort.

How is this study being paid for? 
This study is not being funded by any agency. I am undertaking this study for my MEd(Hons) research degree.

Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated? 
The result of this research will be disseminated by a thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Education(Hons) University of Western Sydney and in associated publications. Neither individual participants nor their work units will not be identifiable in the thesis or other publications. Data will be de-
identified for purpose of public dissemination.

What if I have a concern?
When you have read this information, Ms Xiaowen HUANG will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Xiaowen HUANG, MEd (Hons) research candidate, 0404674758 or via E-mail: 16536046@student.uws.edu.au

Can I withdraw from the study?
This project is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time with no consequence.

Ask the students if they have any further questions before commencement.
Appendix 4: Information for groups

Participant Information Sheet (Parent/Caregiver)

Project Title: A 'self-study' of a Chinese teacher-researcher's practices of transnational knowledge exchange: Engaging educational boundaries to stimulate Mandarin learning in Australia.

Who is carrying out the study?
My name is Ms HUANG Xiaowen,
I am the volunteer Mandarin teacher in Plumpton PS.
I am also a research candidate research candidate in the Centre for Educational Research at the University of Western Sydney.

Your child is invited to participate in a study conducted by me, Ms Xiaowen HUANG, research candidate in the Centre for Educational Research at the 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 Professor Michael Singh, Centre for Educational Research

What is the study about?
I am a beginning teacher-researcher with prior knowledge based mainly on Traditional second language learning experiences in China, these include Audiovisual and Grammar-Translation Method. I am learning to use Communicative Language Teaching to stimulate the learning of Mandarin among non-background speakers in Australia. My aims are to investigate whether and how I beginning teacher-researcher can successfully bridge the complexities of the Chinese and Australian knowledge systems to achieve quality teaching, as defined in NSW DET Quality Teaching Framework?

What does the study involve?
The study involves in part an interview with you as a student involved in my Mandarin classes. Other potential participants are classroom teacher/mentor in schools, my former school English language teachers at No.2 Middle School, Hangzhou, and a language methodology lecturer from NSW DET.

The purpose of inviting your child, one of the Mandarin learners in the classes I teach, is because they are involved in normal learning activities as designed by me, the teacher-researcher. As a learner, they are the most important part in my Mandarin lessons. Their responses to my lessons will be observed by me. By talking about my Mandarin teaching with them, I could realize that how can I improving my teaching. Some of their written work samples will be collected. I will talk with them about the Mandarin lessons during interviews, and a written feedback will be used as well.

Data to be collected from your child will include interviews, work samples and written feedbacks in forms of audio tape, written scripts and paper copies.

How much time will the study take?
1. I would like to collect information from your child between on March, 2010 and July, 2010 during
interviews and written feedback. Each interview will take about 15 minutes, and written feedback requires about 10 minutes to complete or it may happen during the time of interview, and the collection of working samples will happen in the classroom activities.

2. Data will be securely stored in the Centre for Educational Research for five years, after which they will be destroyed.

3. Data can only be accessed by the principal researcher and her supervisors.

4. Used in the following ways:
   to reflect the Mandarin teacher’s teaching practice and construct a thesis
   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: to contact the Mandarin teacher to access a hard copy of recording.

5. Children not participating in the study will be involved in normal class activities which is the same as participants during the time the research is being carried out.

Will the study benefit me?
This study will benefit students in my Mandarin classes, because I will present language class with multiple cultural elements. Students will have opportunity to access to Mandarin as well as Chinese rich cultural knowledge.

This educational research will benefit L2 teachers by bringing elements from another educational culture into the pedagogy in Australia with the aim of improving the teaching quality. If the findings of this research are beneficial to teachers in this context, then students will also indirectly benefit in terms of their learning.

Will the study have any discomforts?
This study is not expected to cause you any discomfort.

How is this study being paid for?
This study is not being funded by any agency. I am undertaking this study for my MEd(Hons) research degree.

Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?
The result of this research will be disseminated by a thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Education(Hons) University of Western Sydney and in associated publications. Neither individual participants nor their work units will not be identifiable in the thesis or other publications. Data will be de-identified for purpose of public dissemination.

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, Ms Xiaowen HUANG will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Xiaowen HUANG, MEd (Hons) research candidate, 0403497458 or via E-mail: 16836046@student.uws.edu.au

What if I have a complaint?
This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is [enter approval number]

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

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.
Participant Information Sheet (General)

Project Title: A 'self-study' of a Chinese teacher-researcher's practices of transnational knowledge exchange: Engaging educational boundaries to stimulate Mandarin learning in Australia.
(this sheet is for the Group of classroom teachers)

Who is carrying out the study?
My name is Ms HUANG Xiaowen

You are invited to participate in a study being conducted by me, Ms Xiaowen HUANG, I am a master of Education (Hons) research candidate in the Centre for Educational Research at the University of Western Sydney.

What is the study about?
I am a beginning teacher-researcher with prior knowledge based mainly on 'traditional' second language learning experiences in China, these include Audiolingual and Grammar-Translation Method. I am learning to use Communicative Language Teaching to stimulate the learning of Mandarin among non-background speakers in Australia. My aims are to investigate whether and how I beginning teacher-researcher can successfully bridge the complexities of the Chinese and Australian knowledge systems to achieve quality teaching, as defined in NSW DET Quality Teaching Framework?

What does the study involve?
The study involves in part an interview with you as a classroom teacher/mentor in schools. Other potential participants are students involved in my Mandarin classes, my former school English language teachers at No.2 Middle School, Hangzhou, and the NSW DET language methodolody lecturers.

The purpose of inviting you, my classroom teachers to participate in this study is so you can to provide data from your perspective as you have professional knowledge of teaching. They are the ones presents at my Mandarin class and witness my every Mandarin lesson. Therefore, they can provide opinions on my teaching, including my development, and what I still lack of. With their comments on my teaching, I can triangulate my self reflective journal to examine how I manage a transnational knowledge exchange in my Mandarin class.

The method of collecting data will be an interview, in-class observations and written feedback for the observations. Data will be stored in forms of paper copies, electronic audio records and written script.

Further information are provided as follows for you to know more about the participants in this study.

The students participants in this study are the Mandarin learners in the classes I teach. They are involved in normal learning activities as designed by me, the teacher-researcher. Their responses to my lessons will be observed by me. They will be observed during the lessons, and some of their written work sample:
will be collected. I will talk with them about the Mandarin lessons during interviews, and a written feedback will be used as well.

Data will include interviews, work samples and written feedbacks collected from students in the form of audio tape, written scripts and paper copies. My language methodology lecturers in NSW DET and my former school English language teachers at No.2 Middle School, Hangzhou will be asked a number of questions by E-mail, and this data will be in forms of electronic texts.

How much time will the study take?
1. I would like to collect information from you between on March, 2010 and July, 2010 during interviews and written feedback. Each interview will take about 20-30 minutes for you. During Mandarin lesson time, you will be asked to do observations for me, the Mandarin teacher. Written feedback is required, which will take about 15 minutes to complete, depending on the what happened during the lessons.

(Below is details about data collection from other potential participants)
- Interview with students will take about 15 minutes, and written feedback requires about 10 minutes to complete or it may happen during the time of interview.
- Collection of working samples will happen in the classroom activities.
- Online interview with NSW DET methodology lecturer will take about 20 minutes to complete.
- Online interview with my former English teachers in China will take about 20 minutes to complete.

2. Data will be stored in the Centre for Educational Research for five years, after which they will be destroyed.

3. Accessed by the principal researcher and her supervisors

Will the study benefit me?
Like most research this study is unlikely to be of immediate personal benefit to you, however, your participation in this educational research will benefit L2 teachers by bringing knowledge from Chinese educational culture into the pedagogy in Australia that aim to improve teaching quality.

For the teaching/education community, the study will have several benefits:
Mandarin is promoted to foreign countries such as Australia by exporting teachers from China. They face tensions dealing with the dramatic differences between Chinese and Western teaching/learning philosophies and pedagogy. This research will provide a picture of how these tensions are worked out through ones positioning and position taking in Australian schools. Furthermore, this study will bring an outsider’s perspective to researching Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Australia. A perspective which does not value CLT as highly as appears to be the case in the West, opens up the possibility for more critical questioning or challenging insights. This project will use the teacher-researcher’s “traditional” Chinese language teaching practices in the CLT classes. It is expected that NSWDET and Australian teachers who consider CLT as the only pedagogical priority, might be able to think about adopting some features of Chinese language pedagogies.

Will the study involve any discomfort for me?
This study is not expected to cause you any discomfort.

How is this study being paid for?
This study is not being funded by any agency. I am undertaking this study for my MEd(Hons) research degree.
Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?
The result of this research will be disseminated by a thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Education (Hons) University of Western Sydney and in associated publications. Neither individual participants nor their work units will not be identifiable in the thesis or other publications. Data will be de-identified for purpose of public dissemination.

Can I withdraw from the study?
Participation is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to be involved and - if you do participate - you can withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without any consequences.

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

What if I require further information?
When you have read this information, Ms Xiaowen HUANG will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Xiaowen HUANG, MEd (Hons) research candidate, 0404974758 or via E-mail: 16836046@student.uws.edu.au

What if I have a complaint?
This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is [enter approval number].

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel 02-4736 0883 Fax 02-4736 0013 or email humane@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.
Participant Information Sheet (General)

Project Title: A 'self-study' of a Chinese teacher-researcher's practices of transnational knowledge exchange: Engaging educational boundaries to stimulate Mandarin learning in Australia.
(this sheet is for my former English teacher in China)

Who is carrying out the study?
My name is Ms. HUANG Xiaowen

You are invited to participate in a study being conducted by me, Ms Xiaowen HUANG. I am a master of Education (Hons) research candidate in the Centre for Educational Research at the University of Western Sydney.

What is the study about?
I am a beginning teacher-researcher with prior knowledge based mainly on 'traditional' second language learning experiences in China, these include Audiolingual and Grammar-Translation Method. I am learning to use Communicative Language Teaching to stimulate the learning of Mandarin among non-background speakers in Australia. My aims are to investigate whether and how I beginning teacher-researcher can successfully bridge the complexities of the Chinese and Australian knowledge systems to achieve quality teaching, as defined in NSW DET Quality Teaching Framework?

What does the study involve?
The study involves in part an interview with you as my former school English language teachers at No.2 Middle School, Hangzhou. Other potential participants are students involved in my Mandarin classes, classroom teachers and mentors in schools, and the NSW DET language methodology lecturers.

The purpose for interviewing you, my former school English teachers in this study is to investigate my second language learning environment - the formation of my prior knowledge as a language student - to triangulate my personal memory data in my autobiography. Furthermore, your opinion represents Chinese second language educational belief, which can be compared with the situation in Australia.

As my former school teachers I would like to interview you by E-mail or other online contact tools. These data will be stored as electronic texts.

Further information are provided as follows for you to know more about the participants in this study.

The students participants in this study are the Mandarin learners in the classes I teach. They are involved in normal learning activities as designed by me, the teacher-researcher. Their responses to my lessons will be observed by me. They will be observed during the lessons, and some of their written work samples will be collected. I will talk with them about the Mandarin lessons during interviews, and a written feedback will be used as well.
Data will include interviews, work samples and written feedbacks collected from students in the form of audio tape, written scripts and paper copies. Data will be collected from classroom teachers and mentors, including written feedbacks and interviews in forms of paper copies, and audio tape and written script. My language methodology lecturers will be asked a number of questions by E-mail, and this data will be in forms of electronic texts.

How much time will the study take?

1. I would like to collect information from you between on March, 2010 and July, 2010 during interviews and written feedback via E-mail. Online interview with you will take about 20 minutes to complete.

(Below is information for other participants in data collection)
-Each interview will take about 20-30 minutes for teachers/mentors in school;
-During Mandarin lesson time, classroom teachers will be asked to do observations for the Mandarin teacher. Written feedback is required, which will take about 15 min to complete, depending on the what happened during the lesson;
-Online interview with NSWDET methodology lecturer will take about 20 minutes to complete;
-interview with school students will take about 15 minutes, and written feedback requires about 10 minutes to complete or it may happen during the time of interview;
-collection of working samples will happen in the classroom activities.

2. Stored in the Centre for Educational Research for five years, after which they will be destroyed.

3. Accessed by the principal researcher and her supervisors

Will the study benefit me?
Like most research this study is unlikely to be of immediate personal benefit to you. However, your participation in this educational research will benefit L2 teachers by bringing knowledge from Chinese educational culture into the pedagogy in Australia that aim to improve teaching quality.

For the teaching/education community, the study will have several benefits: Mandarin is promoted to foreign countries such as Australia by exporting teachers from China. They face tensions dealing with the dramatic differences between Chinese and Western teaching/learning philosophies and pedagogies. This research will provide a picture of how these tensions are worked out through ones positioning and position taking in Australian schools. Furthermore, this study will bring an outsider's perspective to researching Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Australia. A perspective which does not value CLT as highly as appears to be the case in the West, opens up the possibility for more critical or questioning or challenging insights. This project will use the teacher-researcher's "traditional" Chinese language teaching practices in the CLT classes. It is expected that NSWDET and Australian teachers who consider CLT as the only pedagogical priority, might be able to think about adopting some features of Chinese language pedagogies.

Will the study involve any discomfort for me?
This study is not expected to cause you any discomfort.

How is this study being paid for?
This study is not being funded by any agency. I am undertaking this study for my MEd(Hons) research degree.

Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?
The result of this research will be disseminated by a thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Education(Hons) University of Western Sydney and in associated publications. Neither individual participants nor their work units will not be identifiable in the thesis or other publications. Data will be de-identified for purpose of public dissemination.
Can I withdraw from the study?
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are not obliged to be involved and - if you do participate - you can withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without any consequences.

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

What if I require further information?
When you have read this information, Ms Xiaowen HUANG will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Xiaowen HUANG, MEd (Hons) research candidate, 0404974758 or via E-mail: 16836046@student.uws.edu.au

What if I have a complaint?
This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is [enter approval number]

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

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

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.

Page 3 of 3
Participant Information Sheet (General)

Project Title: A 'self-study' of a Chinese teacher-researcher's practices of transnational knowledge exchange: Engaging educational boundaries to stimulate Mandarin learning in Australia. (This sheet is for my methodology lecturer)

Who is carrying out the study?
My name is Ms. HUANG Xiaowen

You are invited to participate in a study being conducted by me, Ms. Xiaowen HUANG, I am a master of Education (Hons) research candidate in the Centre for Educational Research at the University of Western Sydney.

What is the study about?
I am a beginning teacher-researcher with prior knowledge based mainly on 'traditional' second language learning experiences in China, these include Audiolingual and Grammar-Translation Method. I am learning to use Communicative Language Teaching to stimulate the learning of Mandarin among non-background speakers in Australia. My aims are to investigate whether and how I beginning teacher-researcher can successfully bridge the complexities of the Chinese and Australian knowledge systems to achieve quality teaching, as defined in NSW DET Quality Teaching Framework?

What does the study involve?
The study involves part an interview with you as a NSW DET language methodology lecturer. Other potential participants are students involved in my Mandarin classes, my former school English language teachers at No 2 Middle School, Hangzhou, and the classroom teacher/mentor in schools.

The purpose of collecting data from you, a language methodology lecturer is because my knowledge about Communicative Language Teaching is from going to language methodology sessions in NSWDET. The lecturer has built up my CLT knowledge, which is the dominant way of language teaching in Australia. Therefore, to interview you will help me to investigate how I build up my CLT knowledge and to what extent I becoming a CLT teacher after the methodology course - where is my start point of a Mandarin teacher. Moreover, the opinion of your lecture towards CLT will basically represent the Australian educational believes, which can be an evidence of my teaching context and later to compare with the Chinese educational believes. As Language methodology lecturer, you will be asked a number of questions by E-mail, and this data will be in forms of electronic texts.

Further information are provided as follows for you to know more about the participants in this study.

The students participants in this study are the Mandarin learners in the classes I teach. They are involved in normal learning activities as designed by me, the teacher-researcher. Their responses to my lessons will be observed by me. They will be observed during the lessons, and some of their written work samples
will be collected. I will talk with them about the Mandarin lessons during interviews, and a written feedback will be used as well.

Data will include interviews, work samples and written feedbacks collected from students in the form of audio tape, written scripts and paper copies. Data will be collected from classroom teachers and mentors, including written feedbacks and interviews in forms of paper copies, and audio tape and written script. My former school English language teachers at No.2 Middle School, Hangzhou will be asked a number of questions by E-mail, and this data will be in forms of electronic texts.

How much time will the study take?
1. I would like to collect information from you between on March, 2010 and July, 2010 during interviews and written feedback via E-mail. Online interview with you will take about 20minutes to complete.

(Below is details about data collection from other potential participants)
-Each interview will take about 20-30minutes for teachers/mentors in school;
-During Mandarin lesson time, classroom teachers will be asked to do observations for the Mandarin teacher. Written feedback is required, which will take about 15min to complete, depending on the what happened during the lesson.
-Interview with school students will take about 15minutes, and written feedback requires about 10minutes to complete or it may happen during the time of interview.
-Collection of working samples will happen in the classroom activities.
-Online interview with my former English teachers in China will take about 20minutes to complete.

2. Data will be stored in the Centre for Educational Research for five years, after which they will be destroyed.

3. Accessed by the principal researcher and her supervisors

Will the study benefit me?
Like most research this study is unlikely to be of immediate personal benefit to you. However, your participation in this educational research will benefit L2 teachers by bringing knowledge from Chinese educational culture into the pedagogy in Australia that aim to improve teaching quality.

For the teaching/education community, the study will have several benefits: Mandarin is promoted to foreign countries such as Australia by exporting teachers from China. They face tensions dealing with the dramatic differences between Chinese and Western teaching/learning philosophies and pedagogies. This research will provide a picture of how these tensions are worked out through ones positioning and position taking in Australian schools. Furthermore, this study will bring an outsider’s perspective to researching Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Australia. A perspective which does not value CLT as highly as appears to be the case in the West, opens up the possibility for more critical or questioning or challenging insights. This project will use the teacher researcher’s “traditional” Chinese language teaching practices in the CLT classes. It is expected that NSWDET and Australian teachers who consider CLT as the only pedagogical priority, might be able to think about adopting some features of Chinese language pedagogies.

Will the study involve any discomfort for me?
This study is not expected to cause you any discomfort.

How is this study being paid for?
This study is not being funded by any agency. I am undertaking this study for my MEd(Hons) research degree.
Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?
The result of this research will be disseminated by a thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Education University of Western Sydney and in associated publications. Neither individual participants nor their work units will not be identifiable in the thesis or other publications. Data will be de-identified in dissemination.

Can I withdraw from the study?
Participation is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to be involved and - if you do participate - you can withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without any consequences.

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

What if I require further information?
When you have read this information, Ms Xiaowen HUANG will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Xiaowen HUANG, MEd (Hons) research candidate, 0404974758 or via email: 16536046@student.uws.edu.au

What if I have a complaint?
This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is [enter approval number]

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel 02-4736 0833 Fax 02-4736 0013 or email humanethics@uws.edu.au.

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

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.
Participant Consent Form for Parents/Caregivers

Project Title: A ‘self-study’ of a Chinese teacher-researcher’s practices of transnational knowledge exchange: Engaging educational boundaries to stimulate Mandarin learning in Australia.

I,[print name].........................., give consent for my child [print name]..............................to participate in the research project titled A ‘self-study’ of a Chinese teacher-researcher’s practices of transnational knowledge exchange: Engaging educational boundaries to stimulate Mandarin learning in Australia.

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 researcher(s).

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

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

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

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

I consent to the interview in forms of audio taping and written script; written feedback; work samples. 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: Room J.G.13, Building J, the University of Western Sydney, Penrith (Kingswood), NSW

200
Participant Consent Form

Project Title: A 'self-study' of a Chinese teacher-researcher's practices of transnational knowledge exchange: Engaging educational boundaries to stimulate Mandarin learning in Australia.

I, ................................., consent to participate in the research project titled A 'self-study' of a Chinese teacher-researcher's practices of transnational knowledge exchange: Engaging educational boundaries to stimulate Mandarin learning in Australia.

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 interview in forms of audio taping and written script; written feedback.

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: Room J.G.13, Building 1, the University of Western Sydney, Penrith (Kingswood), NSW
Appendix 6: Teacher interview focused questions

1. I think English-speakers are lucky because English is sufficient to use everywhere on the earth. Do you think it is necessary for an English-speaker to learn Chinese, or another language?

2. What kind of Chinese knowledge do you think students need most?

3. When you are observing my lesson, do you think my teaching of Mandarin is serving the purpose of communication?

4. When you observing my lesson, to what extent do you think the students can really achieve the lesson expectation?

5. In which way do you believe I can help students can learn better?

6. In what areas of language learning do you think students benefited most from my Mandarin lessons? (E.g. language, the knowledge about China, …)

7. In what ways do you think I can improve my teaching?

8. Could you tell me two things from my lessons which you learnt about China?
Appendix 7: Teachers written feedback

Guided Questions:
1. Please give me some comments on my teaching
2. Could you observe some elements about the quality of my teaching?

Stage1: 12 May

Great that you related the number 8 back to sheep – ba – me. You really had their attention at the beginning of lesson. Reviewing previous lessons – fantastic.
The verbal encouragement and praise was excellent especially for students like William.

Stage1: 26 May

Great use of behaviour management – using 5L’s and making sure students put their hand up and praising. Try to use happy and sad face also. Fantastic review of previous lessons. Year 1 really need things to be repeated over and over. Great how you related birthdays to them. Australians have cake and Chinese have noodles. Students enjoyed the lesson especially when you talked about the 12 animals. They were excited to hear what animal they were.

Stage2: 12 May

You have a very calm/approach. You are very patient and you praise the students for their efforts. You ignore ‘silly’ ‘attention seeking’ behaviour. Significance – background knowledge, engagement, cultural knowledge, inclusivity.

Stage2: 26 May

Be firmer to the students with your expectations. Insist on respectful listening. Don’t be afraid to ask students to move if they are distracted. Use the happy face and sad face to promote positive behaviour. Using cultural knowledge for students to apply to their own learning – well done

Stage3: 12 May

Good review of the lessons you have already taught, reminded the class of what they has learnt. It helped to refresh their memories. Positive rewards like stickers are great because it helps keep the class on track finishing their work.

Stage: 23 June

Good explanations and review of previous lessons and content taught. Went through new words and phrases explicitly and repeatedly which is really good. Put examples and suggestions on the broad to help with task on the worksheet. Always walking around and checking if students need help.
## Appendix 8: Coding for self-reflections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>category</th>
<th>sub-category</th>
<th>Reflection entry / Key words</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Year/person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Australian</strong></td>
<td>schools</td>
<td><strong>learning</strong></td>
<td>school display, language class like UNNC</td>
<td>2009-7-30</td>
<td>Burwood Girls High</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>shock</td>
<td>environment</td>
<td>agriculture/art/engineering lesson interesting,</td>
<td>2009-8-4</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>students into relationship is absolutely OK</td>
<td>2009-8-4</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>primary stu. relax learning like Kindergarten</td>
<td>2009-8-5</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>School Display</td>
<td>2009-8-20</td>
<td>Willoughby Girls High</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>realise Plumpton is different from Chatswood regions</td>
<td>2009-8-4</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>teacher-student relationship</td>
<td>supportive learning environment is created by teacher, while in China it is students’ responsibility.</td>
<td>2010-4-20</td>
<td>UWS Meeting</td>
<td>Cherly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Drama / PE lesson: free communication with teacher, eat and drink, lay on the floor, move around</td>
<td>2009-8-4</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>teacher is not to examine students, but a helper</td>
<td>2009-10-7</td>
<td>UWS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>teacher is very helpful and kind, equal with stu.</td>
<td>2009-8-5</td>
<td>PPS PHS</td>
<td>Fred, Kristy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
art teacher told his students he cannot draw a bike. Teacher is not supposed to know everything.

students sit on floor

student wear T-shirt in winter

students Valentine's Day Chocolate

Year 5 cannot do complex Math add up

learning incentive can be lollies and class learning practice is competition/colour in

doing homework must have step by step instruction, with sample and support

art class is a beginner level: given detail STEPS is important, and students use rules to draw. There is a standard; it is not creative at all.

Given STEPS is important. Recipe is necessary. It is different from Chinese cooking.
a lack of huge extrinsic motivation to learn (like exam in China), therefore, children's motivation is difficult and changeable.

School thinks 'we cannot prepare students for examinations'. Extrinsic motivations deny. They do not emphases on outcome.
Use activity/worksheet (hands-on art) can draw their attention and situational interests. But I do not know does it help with their Chinese learning.
some students are motivated by engaging with / helping teachers: washing dishes, chopping vegetable … while some are just drafting, chatting.
Students are interested by real China pictures; they ask questions about China and ask me airline ticket to China.
Students interested in family title - they asked me about how to address family member.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010-6-24</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage2&amp;3</td>
<td>in worksheet, students wrote '我不喜欢 Chinese，中国，中国人'. They show their no interest in Chinese intrinsically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-6-24</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage3</td>
<td>students interested in sports names, they asked me about how to say all kinds of sports in Chinese.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-6-30</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage3</td>
<td>I always tell them how much they learnt; they felt pound of learnt so much.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-3-3</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Y8 Geo</td>
<td>A student organised BEE play in Stage3 is a good way to engage the whole grade activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-8-3</td>
<td>Chatswood</td>
<td></td>
<td>teacher-centred learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-8-15</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Liye, stage1</td>
<td>learning a foreign language, hard to speak out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-8-5</td>
<td>PJS</td>
<td></td>
<td>visiting school with students guide, good students criteria is similar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Stage</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-8-3</td>
<td>DET</td>
<td></td>
<td>good teacher criteria is similar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-8-11</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td></td>
<td>good students criteria is similar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-4-28</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage3</td>
<td>I found the pronunciation of 8 is same with sheep's sound in Australia. I told them how sheep 'speak' in Chinese. They found it interesting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-5-12</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage1</td>
<td>I decide NOT to teach writing Hanzi after pronunciation 1-10. Just recognising them is enough. And finish with a number jigsaw (Beijing opera mask) they learnt to say 'aodaliya' very fast. And remember well. They can say I am Australian person well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-5-18</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>ART</td>
<td>I introduced general China information, Chinese painting tools and style and make a connection with art and Chinese hanzi. Students show interests. - not expect a lot language teaching like PE class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-5-19</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage1-3</td>
<td>teach numbers - followed by birthday and zodiac. Students draw a cake with their own zodiac - a sense of ownership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-6-24</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage1-3</td>
<td>I teach them '我喜欢澳大利亚，我喜欢巧克力。' they really liked it and learnt very fast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-6-30</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>I make connection with face and hanzi. Using hanzi to construct a abstract face. I prepared 'Magic hanzi' picture to draw their attention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-5-12</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage2</td>
<td>Natasha told me to be tough in classroom management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-5-12</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage3</td>
<td>students have no interest listening class, so they chatting all the time. They chatting while dictation numbers. I yowling - doesn’t work - I offer them a worksheet and survive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-5-19</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage1</td>
<td>classroom teacher are out when I decide to do calligraphy. I consume most of time manage their behaviour and no time left for real writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-6-9</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage2</td>
<td>students sit well with 5L instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-6-24</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Cooking Y8</td>
<td>in cooking class, a bad behaviour girl I met in PE class behaved really good - she engaged a lot into my lesson.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Leanne was left. William in 1K just ignore my direction, playing ball and I am not able to control. Julianne and another girl play with each other at class. Kelala cried and I try to comfort her. I cannot control them well with hands on head. I tried to encourage their positive behaviour by giving them teaching tools to hold. Isaac got a flag and showed good behaviour later on.

I used color square (happy face) to control students, it good but not worked as well as classroom teacher.

I used clap to manage students. It is effective but cannot last long. It draw students attention well.

I found students sit uncomfortable, so I arranged an activity to let them stand up and walking. But they start to run and play with each other. I walked around to ask Q as well. One doesn’t fit all. Re-schooling model: it is a paradigm shift.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-9-9</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chinese teacher's day gift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40260</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Y8 PE</td>
<td>I feel uncomfortable when I cannot spell some words on broad, I am laughed by students. After class, they enjoyed calligraphy, thank me after class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-5-19</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage2</td>
<td>Students greet me very well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-6-24</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-8-20</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Y1 Kristy</td>
<td>Introduce some Chinese knowledge when observing a class (飞鸿传书)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-9-9</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Y8</td>
<td>LiYe's cooking class preparation scared us. Students don’t appreciate, just enjoy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-9-29</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td></td>
<td>Which to begin with writing hanzi &quot;中&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-12-8</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage K-2</td>
<td>Calligraphy/chopsticks, students play with it, rather than see it as a culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2-17</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td></td>
<td>Integrate Chinese with other faculty (plan about PE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2-17</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td></td>
<td>The importance of learning Chinese and action (paper cutting, 红包.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Activity Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2-23</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Y8 PE</td>
<td>the importance of learning Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-3-3</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage3</td>
<td>a student use 红包 to complete his task - drawing with language components, I am very happy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-3-23</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Y8 PE</td>
<td>PE with Chinese knowledge (eye exercise)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-3-17</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Y8 Geo</td>
<td>Geography with Chinese knowledge (Map symbol and hanzi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-3-31</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Y8 Geo</td>
<td>Geography with Chinese knowledge (Grid system with Chinese numbers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-5-12</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage1</td>
<td>students guessing lucky/unlucky numbers excitingly. They have a lot of interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-5-18</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>ART</td>
<td>I use real life photos to show them a true China. My school, my home, my travelling… they are dynamic and real.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-5-19</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage3</td>
<td>I showed them photos of China and a Chinese panda cartoon, CCTV commercial. They like the cartoon and Harbin's ice, and the CCTV ink effect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-5-26</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Cooking Y8</td>
<td>I introduced China to Cooking class with no OHP. Students ask question: Dose China have colour TV? China have beach? Students are confused by Chinese food without pictures. They felt yuk with Chinese eating whole fish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Course</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-5-26</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Cooking Y8</td>
<td>Students practiced chopsticks with spinach triangles successfully (curriculum cooking content, teacher demo). Students are happy to know their zodiac, and they learnt Chinese birthday food: noodles. Students are very happy and interested in it. They drew their own cake with their own zodiac.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-5-26</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage1-3</td>
<td>Chinese calligraphy lesson - I introduced brush pen 毛笔, and 中国。students trace to write 中国. And they asked for their name in Chinese. I offered help person by person. They are so interested in it. Class is very quiet - I did not spend a minute on class management. stage 1&amp;3 watched &lt;&lt;36 hanzi&gt;&gt;. They quite like the video.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-5-26</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage1-3</td>
<td>I teach students the difference between Australian fired rice and a Chinese fried rice. (I compromise with their curriculum recipe to a large extent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-6-1</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>ART</td>
<td>stage 1&amp;3 watched &lt;&lt;36 hanzi&gt;&gt;. They quite like the video.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-6-2</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage1,3</td>
<td>I taught students to make dumpling at cooking class. I practiced at home a lot and I am good at it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-6-9</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Cooking Y8</td>
<td>I showed them Xmas in China - street view pictures and a Xmas tree in my home, commercial newspaper. They are interested in snowman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-6-9</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage3</td>
<td>I showed them Xmas in China - street view pictures and a Xmas tree in my home, commercial newspaper. They are interested in snowman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-6-24</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Cooking Y8</td>
<td>I showed them Xmas in China - street view pictures and a Xmas tree in my home, commercial newspaper. They are interested in snowman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-6-24</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Cooking Y8</td>
<td>I showed them Xmas in China - street view pictures and a Xmas tree in my home, commercial newspaper. They are interested in snowman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Stage/Class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-6-24</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage1-3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-6-30</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>ART</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-6-30</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### The Importance of Chinese Knowledge

- They like my hand made Chinese school flower when I use it as a teaching tool to say ‘我喜欢花’, so I plan to use it next lesson.
- I show CCTV ink commercial and Magic hanzi to students to let them feel Chinese changeable art. But they still produce quite standard face with hanzi.
- I get stage1 kids to make paper flowers. They loved it.

- Chinese knowledge is not important?
  - I aware Chinese knowledge is important to me when reading a history novel
  - the number of Chinese people speaking English is increasing - one language is not competitive in the labour market.
  - Chinese knowledge philosophy is important in classroom e.g. respect
  - they need to learn respect in primary school again, I felt Chinese students are lucky - they are almost good people.
  - DET hold a perspective that teaching Chinese dynamic culture is necessary.
integrate with Cooking class: teaching language around EAT. Teach them Chinese culture around food/eat. Different dinning habit.

Chinese knowledge is important for al lot interesting activities - calligraphy. If you cannot write hanzi, you cannot play with it.

teachers do not know how large is China. They think Australia is larger than China and quite disagree with my teaching.

students like Magic hanzi a lot, they copy the picture on the broad. They quite well behaved.

I brought making paper flower to staff room, all teachers are interested in it and ask me how to do it.

difficult to explain some Chinese knowledge link to politics/communist. i.e. 少先队员

quits is not popular at all, no one focused. Students do not like video about Chinese movies knowledge, but like Kongfu Panda.

to integrate Chinese knowledge - I need to know the curriculum
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-9-15</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Y8</td>
<td>Chinese knowledge (Beijing Opera) is a way to consuming time and attracts their attention to keep quiet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2-23</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Y8 PE</td>
<td>Does learning Chinese (knowledge) means nothing to local students? Like us learning L.A. cinema in Uni.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-3-3</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Y8 Geo</td>
<td>What to teach in a geography lesson? PPT of Chinese geography? Or build language and other into a lesson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-3-23</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Y8 PE</td>
<td>Students showed no interest in Chinese knowledge - eye exercises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-5-19</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage1</td>
<td>Calligraphy knowledge is too hard for Stage1, so just let them play with it? So I reduced deep cultural info in lower stages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-6-2</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage1-2</td>
<td>A lot of Chinese knowledge involves video form, technology always doesn’t work at key point.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-6-2</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage3</td>
<td>They watched 36hanzi cartoon, most of them paid attention to story rather than the evolve of hanzi. They have difficulty in worksheet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-6-9</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage1,2</td>
<td>36hanzi worksheet is too difficult for Stage1/2, consumed a lot of time on offering help - better to be a group work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
when I teach cooking, Chinese cooking does not measurements with ingredients.- which is conflict with cooking faculty's rule- standard recipe. Teacher thinks I can make everything according to a recipe, but Chinese cooking is not all about recipe.

A cooking class involved little language input.

But it is difficult for them; I almost helped the whole class to make it. They made mistakes every single step. They learn limited language.

A CLT German language lesson is so hard for learners.

Observing LiYe's class, I found 'CLT' is a lot of activities, a lot of repetition. Different stage diff. activities

I explain the challenge of CLT lesson, but Katina think what I did with 9-15 class is not CLT.

Learning CLT activities, I found they are interesting.

Evelyn Man observed my class. She suggests me to use more classroom instruction in Chinese.
a trade-off teaching content with CLT because Mark's German lesson makes me feel CLT is so challenging for naughty kids.

2010-2-23 PHS Y8 PE

Uses of exchange name-tag activity, students use a lot of target language.

2009-11-10 PPS Stage2&3

classroom teacher help me to build Chinese into their class routine, so students can say 老师好 to greet me.

2009-11-10 PPS KL

the use of classroom instruction 对/不对 is good. Students found it interesting. But later they make strange sound in it.

2009-11-17 PPS K-3

when activities are designed just for keeping them on task, the lessons can be boring as well

2009-11-24 PPS Stage1

I use CLT to introduce myself and China basic knowledge in Y8 classroom, students showed high attention and interests.

2010-3-17 PHS Y8 Geo
I finally use target language to introduce myself. And to teach basic words in Chinese. But I cannot help use English in classroom instructions.

I ask students to go to the front and do a self-introduction presentation - use stickers as incentive. They all want to go but they cannot actually say it rather than looking at the broad and read.

I used CLT to introduce numbers: by counting students, pencils and markers. Students guess what I am doing and then move into teaching numbers.

I prepared a picture of cake, and some candles. I say '我 X 岁'by changing the candles. Students guessing what I am talking about.

I introduce my class by CLT '我喜欢巧克力、花、澳大利亚、中国。'I say and act - they guess my meaning. They guessed well and they remember my action.
I use CLT to introduce question sentence: using ma? And gesture tones. But I cannot make clear distinguish between I and you. Students get confused without explanation.

| CLT challenges | Observing LiYe and WuTing's class - student are not willing to use target language to ask for 剪刀胶水. They rather sit there and do nothing but talk. KL students cannot understand teacher-student greeting without explaining in English | 2009-8-20 | PHS | Y8 |
| students learn nothing about block meaning, so made mistakes “你好什么名字” and some students even cannot understand me. Students like to 'read after me' rather than guess my meaning. students mistake like 你好什么名字 | 2009-9-15 | PPS | KL |
| add a little GTM into CLT, but still not clear enough for them to say a correct greeting | 2009-9-15 | PPS | Stage1 |
| students mistake like 你好什么名字 | 2009-10-28 | PPS | K-3 |
| | 2009-11-10 | PPS | Stage3 |
students learnt 你好&我叫 ， but they cannot make sentence like 你好，我叫—— 2009-11-10  PPS  Stage2

They have no interest in guessing game. Maybe knowledge about number is better. BUT stage2 like guessing game. 2009-11-17  PPS  Stage2/3
they feel boring about guessing game, or they are not able to say a number from their head. so I change into reading to reinforce. 2009-11-17  PPS  Stage2

they cannot distinguish small language block. i.e. 我，我叫; 你，你好. 2009-11-24  PPS  Stage2

I say a sentence with body language cues - students are still confused. 2010-3-3  PPS  Stage1

student can communicate with me in Chinese, but when I ask them what's meaning, they do not know! 2010-3-23  PPS  Stage1

a lesson with one name tag activity; they always use the wrong sentence!!! Like 你好什么名字...我叫什么名字 2010-3-31  PPS  Stage1
difficult to implement CLT into the 1st lesson of teaching numbers. I used a boring 'game'. 2010-4-28  PPS  Stage1

CLT introduce no clear 'you' and 'I', so I have to re-emphasis on that. 2010-6-30  PPS  Stage2
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010-6-30</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-8-3</td>
<td>Chatswood</td>
<td>Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-9-24</td>
<td>Ashifield</td>
<td>Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-9-29</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>stage2/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-11-10</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>stage2/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-12-1</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>KL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-12-1</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-3-3</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Traditiona l teaching**

**Traditional methods in classrooms**

- Chatswood Primary teaching in a teacher-centred way
- In Ashfiled, LOTE and CLOTE class are taught in a non-CLT way.
- Practice makes greeting work. And explain '老师'and'小朋友们', students know what are they doing.
- Teaching stroke orders (traditional) and put it into an competition game/activity
- In KL, I confused kids with CLT, but Tanya can make them understand with GTM, which is have both English and Chinese
- When I introduce stroke order, students cannot follow but at least build up the understanding. They did task well.
- When I use GTM to explain each block meaning you 什 么 你 字, students can say that.
Most knowledge in Geo is follow the way I think a teacher should be: from class design to worksheet. I introduce Chinese writing system comparing to pictures on maps.

teach a theme 'self-introduction'. 你好，我叫 ___。我是 ___. 我叫 and 我是 must be explained in a GTM, because they meaning similar but use in different ways. Students did very well on a work sheet.

I introduced Numbers and lucky/unlucky numbers. And I ask them to look for city in a grid map (they learnt to read grid map).

the last lesson of a term, I did a summary/revision lesson; self introduction, went through all vocabularies and some culture knowledge like：吃了吗

they miss one lesson. So it is a revision lesson - did all revision learnt in term1 and asked them to do self-introduction as stage2. finally they finished up a drawing task

teaching numbers by repetition from 1-10, reading with me and build up their memory of the pronunciation of 1-10. I felt it must be boring.
A lot of number game is based on hanzi. So I teach them to recognise hanzi 1-10. They did not aware of strokes, so I found they draw hanzi rather than write them.

I use dictation strategy in classroom to revise 1-10. They paid attention well. They think it is a 'game'.

I explained date in Chinese is converse from Western style. But they do not understand what I ask them to do with the worksheet - I should write the instruction clearly.

Repeat and revise before class begins. Students can say 你叫什么名字 well, they greet me well. Repetition is productive. I will add up revision with 我喜欢 next time.

to go with drawing a face, I teach face, eye, nose … with a quick broadcast way of teaching - quick and effective.

I revised lessons - students remembered well. A girl can replace none to say I like Marinade, which is brilliant.

Replace lexical part to change meaning. Students understand well.

I teach them you, I, you, we, he, she. Purpose is to understand the diff. in Chinese and English.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-9-15</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-11-10</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Y8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-11-17</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-3-3</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-3-11</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Y8 Geo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-4-28</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-5-12</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**challenges in traditional teaching**

- Use traditional method to explain, still cannot make sense to students
- A class with PPT, I talked most of the time - failed. Students show no interests. Content is travel to China
- Simply repeating 1-10 to reinforce their memory of numbers is boring for them
- Giving a little upgrade knowledge based on their current knowledge is my thinking. But students love revising - esp. doing activity they did with Liye to show their knowing.
- When I introduce stroke and hanzi of numbers, they began to talk. So I quickly went through. I did not expect them to remember, but give them awareness.
- We practiced tones in number lesson. They can do it well when I guide them to say the correct tone. But they forget tones at all when I do not emphases it.
- Students forget tones very easily
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-8-11</td>
<td></td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Mark says 'get everyone into the activity', but I cannot spend the whole lesson managing those who have no interest and ignore other students who are willing to learn. I name 3 students who behave well but I did not really pay attention. I feel bad later and next lesson I gave all class a small prize.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-8-25</td>
<td>DET</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>I name 3 students who behave well but I did not really pay attention. I feel bad later and next lesson I gave all class a small prize.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-11-17</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage1</td>
<td>the distribution of classroom is not good. Just one 4-person-group participate. One boy and one girl is really willing to study, so they learnt and others lose out. there are only some student participate in class activities. I have to just teach them and ignore others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-11-24</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage3</td>
<td>I cannot remember students' face and their behaviour in classroom. So it is difficult for me to give prize when finished.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-12-1</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage3</td>
<td>students behave differently - talking, and a girl always want to help me to hold sth. - I do not know how to be equal to them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
a table with girls paid much attention but they do not raise hand. A boy always raise up his hand. I don’t know if I keep let the boy answer?

Some students learnt numbers before, therefore they pick up quick and read loud. They call out lucky/unlucky numbers. I will unconsciously teach quickly. If I ask those who haven’t learnt before, they may feel uncomfortable. Students are talking on the back while some are listening at front. I tried to manage back students but then give up. I do not want to waste time on them. I give front students prize for being good.

first lesson I did not expect such a lot of things to prepare before lesson

it is difficult to prepare a lesson with students with different Chinese level

Evelyn Man observed my class. She suggests me to prepare a unit work. E.g. name tag sheet: add sentence.

I did not explain why we using counter to practice numbers, which confuses students

a class is really noisy, I lose interest in preparing good lesson.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Class/Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010-2-17</td>
<td>Fred told me to do a systematic lesson preparation</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2-23</td>
<td>Use Fred told me &quot;TO DO NOW&quot; on the broad</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Y8 PE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-3-17</td>
<td>I did not plan how I make encouragement during the lesson</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-3-31</td>
<td>I felt comfortable even if students finished task earlier, I can ask them to read by themselves, I won't feel it is a failed lesson because I did not have enough preparation.</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-8-5</td>
<td>I received a mug and was introduced to the whole school. I felt I am a guest in the school.</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-9-15</td>
<td>Students cannot understand me. I felt nervous.</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>KL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-9-29</td>
<td>I slow down my speaking students understand better.</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-12-8</td>
<td>I really want to introduce calligraphy to Stage1, but classroom teacher think it is too mess so we did chopstick.</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2-23</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Y8 PE</td>
<td>I cannot feel I am a teacher in this classroom. Students talked over me and laugh at my name.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-3-17</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage2</td>
<td>Teacher praised me saying, her class is a hard to manage but I did very well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-3-23</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Y8 PE</td>
<td>Students throw away the worksheet; I felt sad and gave up that class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-3-31</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td></td>
<td>PHS give us a key to room5 and science staff room. And now I know where to photocopy. I feel I am part of the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-11-10</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage1</td>
<td>casual teacher have problem to calm down students. They do not follow my instruction. A spider attracts their attention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-11-17</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage3</td>
<td>when classroom teacher leave, they talk much.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-11-24</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage2</td>
<td>I still cannot use PPS model to keep them quiet. I just say 'I will wait...‘</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Stage</td>
<td>Comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-12-1</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage2</td>
<td>Classroom teacher came they talk less. I use Chinese classroom instruction and calligraphy incentive to keep them on task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-3-17</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Y8 Geo</td>
<td>I can only use simple language to ask for attention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-3-17</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage1</td>
<td>Classroom teacher takes almost all the discipline problem for me, I have no enough time to teach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-3-31</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Y8 Geo</td>
<td>Ms Hooper told me to take disciplines a serious thing - use points, and do not talk when they are talking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-9-24</td>
<td>Ashfiled</td>
<td></td>
<td>Aus teacher did not pay attention to QTF?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-11-10</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Y8</td>
<td>No significance, student have no incentive to learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2-23</td>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Stage1-3</td>
<td>Narrative teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2-23</td>
<td>PHS</td>
<td>Y8 PE</td>
<td>Problematic knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
high expectation 2010-3-3 PPS Stage1
narrative teaching 2010-3-17 PHS Y8 Geo
Appendix 9: Work samples

\section{The writing}

Chinese is the oldest living language. It is believed that the history of Chinese writing spans over 5,000 or 6,000 years. The earliest writings discovered, dated between 1480 BC and 1122 BC, are inscribed on oracle bones and turtle shells, and are called jiâgǒwén [甲骨文]. These writings are the records of kings in the Shang dynasty who asked the gods about their fortune for hunting, going to war or any important event.

Some Chinese writing was developed from simple pictures taken from nature, such as animals, birds, mountains and rivers. The style of writing was changed several times and gradually transformed into the characters used today.

\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
 & sun & moon & mountain & tree & person \\
\hline
Picture & \includegraphics[width=1cm]{sun.png} & \includegraphics[width=1cm]{moon.png} & \includegraphics[width=1cm]{mountain.png} & \includegraphics[width=1cm]{tree.png} & \includegraphics[width=1cm]{person.png} \\
\hline
Early writing & \includegraphics[width=1cm]{early_sun.png} & \includegraphics[width=1cm]{early_moon.png} & \includegraphics[width=1cm]{early_mountain.png} & \includegraphics[width=1cm]{early_tree.png} & \includegraphics[width=1cm]{early_person.png} \\
\hline
Seal form & \includegraphics[width=1cm]{seal_sun.png} & \includegraphics[width=1cm]{seal_moon.png} & \includegraphics[width=1cm]{seal_mountain.png} & \includegraphics[width=1cm]{seal_tree.png} & \includegraphics[width=1cm]{seal_person.png} \\
\hline
Modern form & \includegraphics[width=1cm]{modern_sun.png} & \includegraphics[width=1cm]{modern_moon.png} & \includegraphics[width=1cm]{modern_mountain.png} & \includegraphics[width=1cm]{modern_tree.png} & \includegraphics[width=1cm]{modern_person.png} \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
Unit 3 Activity 6

Here are the characters for numbers 1 to 10. Follow the stroke order, writing each number five times. Make sure your characters are sitting up straight and are well balanced.

The bottom line of 三 should be longer than the top two lines.

The hardest one to write is 四. Make sure you follow its stroke order and close the box last.

The two legs in 六 should be well placed so that the character will not tip over.

yi 一
liu 六
er 二
qi 七
san 三
ba 八
si 四
jiu 九
wu 五
shi 十
Following the chart and instructions, let's make two Chinese characters.

The grid system

九

八

七

六

五

四

三

二

一

0

一二三四五六七八九十

(一, 六) 和 (一, 四) (一, 六) 和 (五, 六)

(五, 六) 和 (五, 四) (一, 四) 和 (五, 四)

(三, 八) 和 (三, 一)

(六, 八) 和 (六, 一) (六, 八) 和 (十, 八)

(十, 八) 和 (十, 一) (七, 七) 和 (九, 七)

(七, 五) 和 (九, 五) (八, 七) 和 (八, 二)

(七, 二) 和 (九, 二) (九, 三) 和 (十, 三)

【和】this character in this context means “and”. The pinyin of this character is [hé]. But be careful, the pronunciation is different from English word “he”, but is similar to “her” in English. with a second tone.
Appendix 10: Hands-on activities for the first lesson of “travel to China”

Please cut out the pictures, and glue them to the place where they belong on the map of China
Appendix 11: Selected photographs used in the second “Travel to China” lesson
Appendix 12: Visual aid for Mid-moon Festival story
Appendix 13: Schedule of Language Methodology Program (NSW DET)

**Ningbo Volunteer Teachers’ Course Outline 2009**

Classes from 10.00am until 1.30pm at Penrith District Office, 51 Henry St. Penrith

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Presenter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>27 July 29 July 30 July</td>
<td>9.00 am Child protection training 10.00am Teaching in NSW schools Chinese syllabus K-10 and technology resources Introduction to observation in primary and secondary schools</td>
<td>Lynda Campbell Evelyn Mark Evelyn Man Evelyn Mark with Ningbo volunteers Wednesday 29: Chatswood primary Thursday 30: Burwood Girls High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+2days</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>3 August</td>
<td>Discussion about observation Background/Communicative Approach Learning styles</td>
<td>Evelyn Mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>10 August</td>
<td>Practical classroom teaching strategies</td>
<td>Ayumi Dalpadadp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>17 August</td>
<td>School visit and discussion with practising classroom teacher</td>
<td>Ningbo volunteers with Evelyn Mark: Willoughby Girls High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>24 August</td>
<td>Classroom organisation Intro to Quality teaching and learning cycle</td>
<td>Evelyn Mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>31 August</td>
<td>Visit to the Hills Sports High QT reflective assignment</td>
<td>Evelyn Mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>7 September</td>
<td>Quality Teaching – intellectual Quality</td>
<td>David Jaffray Evelyn Mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School visit – over 2 days during week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>14 September</td>
<td>Quality Teaching – Environment &amp; Significance</td>
<td>Elisabeth Robinson Evelyn Mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School visit – over 2 days during week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 9</td>
<td>21 September</td>
<td>School visit discussion with practicing classroom teacher using QT framework for observation</td>
<td>Ningbo volunteers with Evelyn Mark: Ashfield Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>28 September</td>
<td>Hanzi, Pinyin and Tones</td>
<td>Cynthia Haskell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>5 October</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>12 October</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 13</td>
<td>19 October</td>
<td>Planning and Programming</td>
<td>Enri Parolin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 14</td>
<td>26 October</td>
<td>TBA – depend on needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 15</td>
<td>2 November</td>
<td>Evaluation program</td>
<td>Evelyn Mark</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 14: School observation schedule

SCHOOL OBSERVATION PROGRAM

The School observation program that forms part of the Ningbo Languages Teaching Methodology Program will provide volunteers with the opportunity to see good language teaching in practice.

Visits to primary and secondary schools to observe lessons and to discuss teaching ideas and strategies with experienced Chinese language teachers will take place a number of times during the program.

Week 1: One full day in a primary school and one full day in a secondary school (outside normal session times)

Prior to attending their allocated schools, participants will “shadow” a Chinese language teacher to:

- see language teaching in a school context
- observe how schools operate, and
- meet with the teacher to discuss issues that arise.

Week 4: One day in a secondary school (part of session time)

Participants will “observe” a secondary Chinese language teacher in action (for one to two lessons). Teacher will present a session on classroom teaching practice and field questions.

Week 9: One day in a primary school (part of session time)

Participants will “observe” a primary Chinese language teacher in action (for one to two lessons). Teacher will share programs and ideas on lesson planning.

Volunteers will be encouraged to arrange to visit the classrooms of the 2008 Ningbo volunteers.

VOLUNTEER OBSERVATION PROGRAM

The Volunteer observation program that forms part of the Ningbo Languages Teaching Methodology Program will give volunteers the opportunity to receive feedback on their classroom teaching practice and will allow the methodology coordinator to see the context in which the volunteers work.

Weeks 7 & 8: over 4 days (outside normal session times)

Methodology coordinator will visit participants in their schools and provide feedback.