Teacher Engagement in Second Language (L2) Classrooms:
Teacher-as-Researcher

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Declaration

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 Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

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Signature: Wu Ting
Date: March, 2009
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<tr>
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<td>ROSETE</td>
<td>Research-Oriented School-Engaged Teacher Education</td>
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<td>NMEB</td>
<td>Ningbo Education Bureau</td>
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<td>UWS</td>
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<td>VTR</td>
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Abstract

This study is about student and teacher engagement. It is about a teacher from China learning how to become a more engaging teacher while teaching Australian school students Mandarin. The study addresses the relationship between student engagement and teacher engagement. Specifically, how increased student engagement interacts with and influences teacher engagement and promotes teacher learning so that the teacher becomes a better teacher.

The main research question addressed by this study is: How does a teacher of Mandarin engage with learning how to successfully interest and engage students to learn Mandarin? The subsidiary research questions are: How does a teacher engage students in learning Mandarin? How does a teacher improve his or her teaching proficiency as a language teacher?

This study uses the MeE Framework (Munns & Martin, 2005) to position student engagement. The MeE Framework shows the interactive relationship between motivation and engagement from both psychological and sociological perspectives. There are two levels of engagement: small ‘e’ engagement which is classroom level engagement and big ‘E’ engagement which is school level engagement. This study is limited to the classroom component within this theoretical framework. The REAL Framework (Munns & Woodward, 2003) is used to provide student feedback to the teacher on student classroom engagement. This feedback provided a basis for the teacher to learn how to teach in a more engaging way.

The research design used the teacher-as-researcher as a theoretical basis for the research methodology with an action research component. Field notes, including observations and informal discussions, and interviews were used to collect
contributory data while the main data source was the volunteer teacher-researcher’s reflective journal which was analysed using content analysis. There were two timeframes employed for the data analysis of reflective journal. The first was lesson cycle by lesson cycle and the second was a timeframe over the entire period of data collection. Multiple data sources provided a way to continually improve the selection of teaching resources and teaching strategies and so enhance the volunteer teacher-researcher’s ability to engage students.

The study showed that the teacher improved her ability to engage students using student-centred teaching strategies, such as hands-on activities, group work, a variety of Chinese and Australian cultural artefacts and so on. The engaging teaching resources developed used technology, music and audiovisual media. Student-centred teaching approaches were consistent with constructivism and the Quality Teaching Framework (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003). The volunteer teacher-researcher increased in teaching confidence throughout the study and was shown to follow a beginning teacher model (Leask & Moorhouse, 2005; Allen & Toplis, 2009) of teacher development.

Teacher engagement was shown to be promoted by the teacher learning how to teach well using student-centred teaching approaches. The overall study was shown to be consistent with an interactive, constructivist view of teaching and learning. The teacher learning component of the study also followed a constructivist process where teacher learning built on previous experiences. The study showed that it was impossible for the volunteer teacher-researcher to discount the way she had been taught and experienced teaching in China. The study showed that the volunteer teacher-researcher built on her life and educational experiences in China and linked them to her learning about how to engage students in Australia.

The study concluded by presenting what became the main argument of the study which was that there is an interactive relationship between student engagement and
the teacher. Student engagement promoted teacher engagement which, in turn, promoted further student engagement. Importantly, the study suggested that the relationship between student engagement and the teacher in the classroom was strong and indicated that the MeE Framework, as outlined by Munns and Martin (2005), may need to show this close and powerful connection more clearly.
Chapter 1

Introduction

From student engagement to teacher engagement

1.1 Introduction

This study focuses on a Chinese Volunteer Teacher Researcher (VTR) and her engagement with learning how to become a more engaging teacher while teaching Australian school students Mandarin. This chapter describes the personal and study background of the researcher and explains why the researcher was interested in classroom engagement. It contextualises classroom engagement in terms of the cultural background of the student participants and the teacher. This chapter outlines what the study was about and why the classroom engagement of the teacher and the students was important, both in Australia and China. It details the significance of the study in terms of the partnership between Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau (NMEB), the University of Western Sydney (UWS) and NSW Department of Education and Training (DET). This chapter concludes with a statement of the research question and a summary of the remaining chapters in this thesis. The VTR at the centre of this study is the researcher and also the person reporting the study. The background of the VTR influenced the way she constructed the study, therefore the background section introducing her will help readers to connect with and understand the study as a whole.

1.2 Background

Jones (2009) argues that locating ourselves in the past – where and how we grew up indicates that we are thinking about our own identities – who we are. When we illuminate the construction of self-identity, we draw on that “which is most memorable to us as we think about our childhoods and family backgrounds” (Jones, 2009, p.294). This study is contextualised by the VTR’s life story and educational
background which interact to construct her identity. The identity of the teacher, and therefore the researcher, will have an enormous influence on this study and its subsequent findings.

1.2.1 Life Story

I was born in northwest China, Xinjiang Autonomous Region. I lived there for more than ten years. When I was twelve years old, my family moved to northeast China, Hebei Province, which is two hours by road from Beijing. I studied in Hebei Province for nearly ten years and then enrolled at Ningbo University in 2004 which is located two hours by road from Shanghai. In 2008 I was selected to be one of the Volunteer Teacher Researchers (VTR) to come to Australia. My personal living and study experiences have had a great influence on my values, habits and thinking. My early attitudes and knowledge shaped my later thinking as an adolescent and now as an adult (Leeming, Dwyer & Bracken, 1995). The experiences I had shaped my becoming who I am, especially my interest in cross-cultural influences.

Cultural awareness is embedded in my mind – it is part of who I am. There are two reasons for this. The first is the influence of my parents, and the other is my own life experiences. My father comes from northern China and my mother comes from southern China. They have different habits, beliefs and values. In addition, they belong to different ethnic groups. My father is from a Chinese ethnic minority group, Manchu. My mother is from the dominant ethnic group, Han. They have different cultural backgrounds and so think differently and value different things. I am not sure if this is because they belong to different regional backgrounds (north vs. south) or because they belong to different ethnic groups. It may be a combination of the two; it may be for other reasons, such as gender.

Because of the Cultural Revolution in China, my parents left their hometown and moved to Xinjiang in the 1970s. I was born in Xinjiang which is in northwest China.
Islamic culture is dominant there. Although I am not a Muslim, I do not eat pork. Islamic culture has had a number of influences on me, my beliefs and the way I think. Not eating pork is just one of them. When I was twelve years old, my family moved to Hebei Province. Living in a new place, I found that I had to change myself and adapt to a new environment. But one thing never changed I still do not eat pork. My ways of thinking are important influences on what I do, what I learn and why I learn.

In 2004, I enrolled at Ningbo University. The four years I spent in Ningbo was a turning point in my life. My English teacher, named Lee, was interested in learning Chinese. She is an American. I taught her Chinese and she taught me English. We exchanged ideas about language, education and politics. We engaged in cross-cultural communication. We cooperated with and taught each other for one and a half years. She continues to be a strong influence on me. I became determined to go abroad, not only to further my studies, but to expose myself to a different culture and different ways of thinking. I am curious about different cultures. I see stories about different cultures as a way of interesting and motivating students to learn – to learn a foreign language. In my classes in Western Sydney Region, I used culture as a ‘hook’ to interest students.

In 2008, I was selected by NMEB to be a Volunteer Teacher Researcher (VTR) to help stimulate the learning of Mandarin in Australia for one and a half years. The cooperation among NMEB, UWS and DET is very important. A key challenge is to engage the different interests of the three parties to maximise the benefits for all, especially the VTRs. There is a memorandum of understanding between NMEB and DET where NMEB selects ten qualified Chinese Volunteer Teacher Researchers (VTR) from hundreds of applicants each year. The responsibility of the VTR is to stimulate learning of the Chinese language in the Western Sydney Region of New South Wales. Meanwhile, the VTRs study a Master of Education (Honours) at the University of Western Sydney (UWS). In addition, the DET conducts teaching methodology classes for the VTRs to help them adapt their teaching to the Australian
context. All three partners provide scholarships for the VTRs. This international and cross-sector cooperation seems to be mutually beneficial for all parties. As one of the VTRs, I taught Mandarin from Kindergarten to Year 8 students in an education community. When I began to teach Mandarin, I faced some difficulties. I reported these difficulties at a supervisory panel meeting and to my DET methodology teacher and was given some professional teaching guidance. I applied this guidance to what I taught in class and began to think that this is what I would like to research – how to improve my classroom teaching. I also thought that by improving the teaching expertise of VTRs it would improve their ability to be bilingual teachers back in China.

In Australia, I taught Year 7 Mandarin at a high school in a low socioeconomic area of Western Sydney Region in the second half of 2008 and continued to teach this group of students Mandarin when they became Year 8 at the same high school in 2009. There were four girls and fifteen boys in the Year 7 class. I found that students, especially boys, could be very naughty and easily distracted from learning in class. Stimulating students to learn Chinese, especially the boys, was very difficult. Giving them worksheets kept them ‘on task’, but not ‘in task’. Mandarin was an elective subject for these students. They did not care whether they passed the exam or not. I talked with my students about their Chinese exam. Half my students did not prepare for their oral presentation which was 20 percent of their final exam mark. They did not consider Chinese to be very important. Most of the students attending my class just wanted to have fun. If my class was boring, they would not be stimulated to learn Mandarin. They would be very noisy and naughty. Student motivation and engagement was identified as a major issue for stimulating student learning. Motivation and engagement was important, not just to keep students quiet and on task, but to stimulate learning as well.

In order to engage students, I incorporated cultural perspectives into teaching the language as a ‘hook’ to interest them. The boys loved competitions. I created different
kinds of games for them to participate in. Once, in the last period of the day, when I organised students to compete with each other, two boys punched each other. I soon realised that they behaved differently in the last period compared with the first period of the day. Importantly, if the game was too competitive, students would be too anxious to win. I learnt to create more gentle games for students instead of having highly competitive ones. There were four girls in the class and I realised that I should also take their interests into account.

By the time I was beginning to shape my study, I realised I had to consider gender and the interests and behavioural differences of each of the individual students in the class. I had to consider the backgrounds, interests and individual differences of the students I taught. By conducting research on engagement, I expected to learn more about how to engage students. Importantly, I would know how to engage myself in teaching and learning. When I felt bored with reading articles and my research, I stopped for a while and listened to music or watched movies. My recipe for refreshing myself was to cook some Chinese food and enjoy it, which also helped me to overcome my homesickness. When I felt good, I learnt better because I felt energetic and had engaged myself. I thought about the articles I read and wrote a reflective journal and prepared teaching resources. I made various choices to engage myself. When I feel good, I can think better and participate in my learning – I am fully engaged. I am ‘in task’ not just ‘on task’.

1.2.2 Educational Background

I was educated in an exam-oriented education system in China where teacher-centred teaching strategies and processes dominated all aspects of my education. Littlewood (2006) states the importance of having awareness of Chinese students’ previous experiences of learning in China and of their own cultures of learning. A consideration of your own cultural background was identified as being important for people coming from a different cultural background if they are to relate to and
understand people from a different culture to their own. This study will consider the VTR’s experiences in learning English as a second language as a high school student and her time at university in China. Hu (2005b, p. 653) argues that the traditional Chinese culture of learning is identified as one in which “education is conceived more as a process of knowledge accumulation than as a process of using knowledge for immediate purposes, and the preferred model of teaching is as a mimetic or epistemic that emphasises knowledge transmission”. Therefore, teacher-centred methodologies are highly supportive of Chinese classrooms. This Chinese view of teaching conflicts with the student-centred methodologies generally practiced in Australia.

The VTR started to learn English as a second language in China from Year 7. My English teacher taught me pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and sentence structure. When I had mastered the basics of the language I then learnt from passages in textbooks. I was required to remember new words, recite passage and complete homework to consolidate learning. The English teacher would test our learning by dictation. In addition to undertaking regular dictation tests, we would sit many other tests to assess our learning in a variety of specific language contexts like grammar and vocabulary. The English teacher would rank the whole class from top to bottom based on these test results. At university the situation was the same. As an English major student I had to remember vocabulary lists and prepare for a battery of examinations. The university teaching process emphasised and focused on teaching vocabulary, grammar, sentence structures and reciting passages to achieve good results in the never ending stream of exams. Jin and Cortazzi (2006, p.10) stated that “in the middle school, memorisation of vocabulary lists, knowledge of grammatical rules and the ability to recite texts become increasingly important and by the end of senior middle school English learning becomes dominated by exam-preparation activities”. Li (2006, p. 91) shares the same view with Jin and Cortazzi (2006) and further explains that at the university level, teachers focus on “explaining new words, emphasise grammar and sentence structures and read passages in the textbook”.
A strong feature of Chinese learners is that they are self-disciplined. Chinese learners learn to concentrate their attention. They are able to focus on listening and observing and exert a tremendous effort to remember what is taught in class. Chinese learners adopted the image of ‘duck stuffing’ (填鸭式教育，tian ya shi jiao yu) where teachers pour in and fill students (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). It is the opposite of using student-centred learning strategies. Graham (2002, p. 2) argues that students are “not empty vessels waiting to be filled by the all-knowing teacher”. However, such views do not exist in Chinese classrooms.

Chinese learners are crowned as people who can make a disciplined effort and memorise texts. These learning strategies and habits stem from a Confucian heritage. Jin & Cortazzi (2006, p. 12) state that “the Confucian tradition defined practical approaches to learning as careful study of a canon of texts combined with the practice of moral self-cultivation”. Yao (2000 in Jin & Cortazzi, 2006, p. 12) argues that “Confucian values are significant for modern socio-cultural attitudes affecting learning and communication practices”. Confucian heritage significantly influences the relationship between students and teachers. There is an old Chinese saying, ‘一日为师，终生为父’ (yi ri wei shi, zhong sheng wei fu) which means although a teacher taught me for one day, he or she would be regarded as my parent for the rest of my life. It indicates that in the relationship between teachers and students, teachers are regarded as an authoritative parent while students respond to teachers with total respect and obedience. Students are also encouraged to enslave themselves to work and study effort, since diligence ultimately outweighs intelligence. There is a popular saying, ‘只要功夫深，铁杵磨成针’ (zhi yao gong fu shen, tie chu mo cheng zhen). It means that “if you make enough effort, you can grind the iron pillar into a needle” (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006, p. 12). Chinese people think highly of rote-learning or repeating what they are to learn as a way of promoting understanding. Another old saying is ‘书读百遍，其意自现’ (shu du bai bian, qi yi zi xian). Literally, it means if you read a book one hundred times, you will eventually understand its meaning through repetition. Essentially, it means that if you internalise and memorise the input,
you will understand the meaning in reflective practice later (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). On (1996, p. 36) argues that there are four basic components of learning according to Confucian tradition: “memorising, understanding, reflecting and questioning”. Memorisation precedes understanding and leads to deeper understanding.

On (1996) states that Chinese students are aware of the importance of education intrinsically and externally. Intrinsically, education is significant for personal development in perfecting oneself. Externally, education is important for social mobility and family glory. Chinese learners study very hard to pass university entrance exams so they can enrol in university. Rote-learning and textbook-based teaching strategies help achieve this outcome because students can acquire an intense amount of knowledge within a relatively short time. This is consistent with an exam-oriented education system which is known as ‘千军万马挤独木桥’ (qian jun wan ma ji du mu qiao). It is like “an army crossing a one-log bridge” (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006, p. 10) where there is only one way for everyone to get to where they want to go. Consequently, Chinese understand the importance of education and compete for a place at university as well as in society.

Chinese traditional culture emphasises the importance of education. The huge population in China promotes a culture steeped in competition. Consequently, education is hugely competitive and students work hard to ‘emerge from the grass’. Teacher-centred teaching approaches dominated by rote-learning are efficient ways of educating large numbers of willing students where wastage from those who fall by the wayside is not a significant concern. It is in this context that this volunteer teacher-researcher built her identity as not only a student but as a person since education has dominated my life.
1.3 Research Questions

The main research question addressed by this study is:

- How does a teacher of Mandarin engage with learning how to successfully interest and engage students to learn Mandarin?

The subsidiary research questions are:

- How does a teacher engage students in learning Mandarin?
- How does a teacher improve his or her teaching proficiency as a language teacher?

Student engagement was a major issue in my Mandarin class. It was difficult to engage students to learn Mandarin. The classroom teacher tried to help. She suggested that in class I provide students with more colouring-in activities which they liked. I should teach less because if I teach more the students will learn less. She kept telling me that students in the class want to be relaxed. In addition, she also suggested that I should raise my voice and yell at misbehaving students. I followed her suggestions, but they failed. I became very depressed. When I was alone at home, I even cried. I thought I was not a capable teacher. I was afraid of going to the Year 8 classroom, let alone teaching there. In reality, I wanted to teach the Year 8 students, but I did not know how to do it appropriately. I asked for help, but the help I received was insufficient. I was disappointed in the students, my teaching and even myself as a teacher. I also felt guilty about wasting student learning time. Gradually, I found that I was less engaged in teaching. I discovered that if I, as the teacher, was less engaged in teaching, the students were far less engaged in learning. At that moment, I realised the importance of teacher engagement in the classroom.

My negativity about students and teaching impeded my ability to engage students in learning Mandarin. I was determined to change myself. I asked my research
supervisor to help me with teaching. He observed one of my lessons and then team taught with me for three lessons. These three lessons were the turning point of my teaching practice. I regained my confidence to teach and my ability to cope with distracted students, especially boys. Increasingly positive student feedback about my lessons encouraged me to improve my teaching proficiency and also stimulated my enthusiasm to become an engaging teacher. It was then that I discovered the interrelationship between teacher engagement and student engagement.

The study addressed engagement in two different but interrelated ways. Engagement was investigated as teacher engagement while learning how to improve teaching proficiency and as student engagement when the teacher promoted student engagement in learning. When preparing and delivering lessons, the teacher developed different teaching strategies and materials to purposefully engage in the process of interesting, motivating and engaging students. This study also explored student engagement as a way of monitoring and providing feedback to the teacher about her engagement as she attempted to stimulate student learning. The MeE Framework (Munns & Martin, 2005) provided a basis for conceptualising engagement. While teacher engagement was the subject of this study, student engagement was used as an important indicator of the success of teacher engagement. To explore teacher engagement and student engagement, the Volunteer Teacher Researcher (VTR) wrote a reflective journal, informed by a number of data sources, to find ways to improve her teaching and her ability to engage students in learning Mandarin.

The MeE Framework (Munns & Martin, 2005) highlighted three key dimensions of engagement, namely behavioural, emotional and cognitive engagement. However, this Framework was broad and covered more than the classroom context. Consequently, this study focused on classroom engagement or small ‘e’ engagement in the MeE Framework (Munns & Martin, 2005). To communicate with students and to enable students to provide feedback about the lesson, this study used the REAL Framework (Munns & Woodward, 2006). Feedback from students about the lesson served two
purposes. One was to indicate the level of student engagement. The other was for the
teacher to learn how to gauge the level of engagement required to engage students.
The REAL Framework consisted of 60 questions categorised into affective, cognitive
and operative dimensions. Twelve questions were selected to be used by this study.
Their selection and use is explained fully in Chapter 3. The REAL Framework
(Munns & Woodward, 2006) encouraged students to assess their engagement in
classroom activities and to assess the level of engagement required for students to
become engaged classroom learners.

1.3.1 Why is engagement important?

Munns and Martin (2005) explained the relationship between motivation and
engagement. The MeE Framework functioned to contextualise engagement as part of
a much broader relationship that extended beyond the classroom. However, this study
was confined to the classroom and therefore concentrated on the classroom
component of the MeE Framework. Munns and Martin (2005) argued that
engagement was when cognition, behaviour and emotion came together at high levels.
Woodward and Munns (2003) made the point that there is a major difference between
procedural and substantive engagement and used the REAL Framework to help
establish the level of engagement in classrooms. “Small ‘e’ engagement was the
substantive engagement in current classroom experiences” (Munns, 2007, p.304).
This study focused on small ‘e’ engagement, that is, substantive engagement.
Procedural engagement was not explored by this study. The REAL Framework
(Munns & Woodward, 2006) was used to collect data from students to find out about
their engagement in class. This data was used as evidence to distinguish whether
students were engaged procedurally or substantively. Additional evidence, collected
from a variety of sources, was used to validate the data collected from students.
1.3.2 Why was engagement important in this context?

If students were unable to engage in learning, the lesson was deemed a failure. If teaching was not successful, I felt depressed and became less engaged in the lesson and in teaching overall. In order to retain student interest in learning Mandarin, their engagement had to be maintained. Using worksheets as a teaching strategy, students were just ‘on task’, but they were not ‘in task’. They were only engaged superficially. The students needed to be engaged emotionally and cognitively not just occupied by tasks. The purpose of this study was to find out what engagement is and how a teacher knows when students are engaged.

In the second lesson I delivered to my Year 8 class, I taught about the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in Beijing. I prepared a PowerPoint presentation consisting of 30 slides. I talked about the history of the printing press, paper scrolls, the Great Wall and the legend of change (嫦娥) for half an hour. I thought the class would be wonderful and the students would enjoy my presentation. But to my surprise, some students fell asleep after 10 minutes of my presentation. A few students began to muck around. Other students began to talk with their friends without listening to me. At that time, I realised that they were not interested in the lesson. I stopped talking about the Olympics and asked them what they wanted to learn. Some boys said numbers. I changed my plan and taught them numbers. After class, the classroom teacher told me that my presentation was too long. Students in Australia are not used to listening. They like talking. I was told that during the presentation, I should have invited students to share their opinions and ideas instead of focusing on my ideas. As for the reading comprehension exercise about the legend of chang er ben yue (嫦娥奔月), I was told that I should have provided questions for students to answer. In this way, they would have been engaged instead of just listening.

After the lesson, I thought deeply about the teaching strategies used. I had prepared a great deal of wonderful materials which I thought students would be interested in. But
the reality was they did not want to be lectured to for half an hour. They wanted to talk and share their opinions. They were not engaged by being lectured at. In addition, when I created the reading comprehension task, I let them read without any purpose as far as they were concerned. At that time, I struggled with how I could engage students. Giving a presentation or lecturing to students was the traditional Chinese way of teaching.

I was educated in a traditional Chinese way – teachers transmit knowledge to students. Students take notes and receive information. Students remember this information and then sit an exam based on it. The teacher ranks students according to their academic marks from the highest to the lowest. Students who achieve high academic marks are labelled as good learners. Students with less successful academic results are grouped as poor students. However, when I used Chinese teaching strategies in Australia they did not work. Australian students were not used to being taught in this way. I learnt that it was a problem to transfer a Chinese system of education and Chinese teaching strategies to an Australian context. I realised that I had to change my teaching strategies and more importantly change my view of teaching and learning if I wanted to engage Australian students in learning Mandarin. In addition, I also realised that I did not receive adequate teacher training in China. In Australia I was being educated to be a different type of teacher.

1.4 Significance of this study

This study is contextualised by the Research-Oriented School-Engaged Teacher Education (ROSETE) project developed as an international partnership between NMEB, UWS and DET (Singh & Zhao, 2008). The ROSETE project is significant because it is a tangible outcome of international and cross-sector cooperation between NMEB in Ningbo, China and UWS and DET schools and students in WSR Australia. It also has implications for international education research as well as research about
next practice’ teacher education. The study reported in this thesis is consistent with current Australian National Goals and NSW DET WSR Goals.

1.4.1 Significance for NMEB, UWS and DET.

The Chinese Volunteer Teacher Researcher program was initiated by NMEB in Ningbo, China and UWS and NSW DET WSR in Australia. The cooperation among them was important for the success of the program. The success of the program would be determined by its ability to deliver maximum benefit for all three partners. To achieve this outcome, a memorandum of understanding was signed between Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau, the NSW Department of Education and Training, Western Sydney Region and the University of Western Sydney. The responsibility of Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau was to select qualified VTRs. The responsibility of the VTR was to stimulate the learning of Mandarin in Western Sydney Region schools. Consequently, NSW DET benefited from an authentic, culturally grounded Mandarin language program while NMEB benefited from the VTRs being trained in western research techniques while experiencing and learning how to teach from a more student-centred teaching and learning perspective. UWS benefited from an increased international student intake that enables those involved to learn from each other. This cross-country engagement achieved mutual benefits for all parties. The VTRs were able to apply what they had learnt from their UWS and DET studies to their classroom teaching practices. Teaching Australian students Mandarin also improved their English proficiency. The VTRs in-school teaching experiences improved their capacity to become bilingual international teachers. The Australian students learnt authentic Mandarin.

1.4.2 Significance for schools and students.

The ROSETE project enabled the VTRs to undertake a Master of Education (Honours) degree at UWS. What happened in the classroom was discussed with professional
supervisors. Their suggestions and ideas helped the VTR to apply theory and guide their teaching practice which benefited classroom student engagement. DET conducted language methodology training for the VTRs. DET language methodology training helped the VTRs accommodate Australian teaching contexts and provided an opportunity for the VTRs to adjust to schools and students in WSR and engage them in learning Mandarin.

Student engagement in lessons is necessary to learn Mandarin. When students ‘think hard’, ‘feel good’ and ‘participate in learning activities’, they are engaged in Mandarin classes (Munns & Martin, 2005, p. 3). They can make full use of the Mandarin class. In order to engage students, cultural stories were used to ‘hook’ student interest. Students compared Australian and Chinese cultures. Using cultural stories and experiences was great fun in class. Engaging students in class provided me with a real sense of achievement. When they were less engaged it made me reflect on the teaching strategies used. Progress in engaging students was made by changing to more student-centred teaching strategies. The necessity for engagement encouraged me to think hard about teaching in interesting ways.

This study provided insights into student engagement for teachers who want to teach Mandarin as a second language. The feedback from students and teachers provided useful information about the preparation and delivery of Mandarin lessons which will benefit current and future students. This is consistent with NSW DET policy on ‘Reaching Higher’ and ‘Supporting Enhanced Learning’ (Department of Education and Training, 2006). To engage students in learning Mandarin, classroom experiences have to connect with the world of students. Lessons need to engage students by mobilising their interest. The context and pedagogy employed by this study is nested within the ‘middle-years’ with continuity across primary and secondary schooling. This study provided insights into the professional learning made possible by utilising the expertise of teacher educators.
As a teacher-researcher, I worked to teach students Mandarin so they can ‘Reach Higher’ (Department of Education and Training, 2006) and so potentially increase their contribution to a globalising world. I worked with teachers in a way that helped them engage with the pedagogy used and the strategies developed to engage students. I made my lessons available to teachers and schools so they could benefit from my work. A copy of this thesis will be made available to NSW DET.

1.4.3 **Significance for the field of educational research**

The research reported by this study used an existing theoretical framework, the MeE Framework (Martin & Munns, 2005) to position student engagement in terms of student motivation and engagement and employed the REAL Framework (Munns & Woodward, 2006) to collect student data in a systematic way. Consequently, this study consolidates the MeE and REAL Frameworks as innovations in combining psychological and sociological theoretical perspectives. The MeE Framework was developed from the literature on disadvantaged students. Its application to research on second language learning strengthens its theoretical underpinnings.

Although traditional models of ‘apprentice’ type of teacher education can suffer from the inherent disadvantage of perpetuating problematic practices, the model of Research-Oriented School-Engaged Teacher Education (ROSETE) developed by Singh and Zhao (2008) actively informs practice with theory via the analysis of evidence and so actively reduces this tendency.

1.4.4 **Reach current DET Goals and Strategies**

The research reported by this study:

- investigated innovative and more flexible ways of using learning environments to provide engaging learning experiences for students in the Middle Years by
providing lessons that were tailored to student needs and specific interests that improve their desire to learn Mandarin; and

- enhanced the capacity of teacher education institutions to investigate and develop professional learning linked to teaching and learning in the Middle Years by using the expertise of UWS staff to inform the development and implementation of engaging pedagogy and content (Department of Education and Training, 2006).

1.4.5 The National Goals for Schooling

The aims of the ROSETE project were for school students to:

- attain high standards of knowledge, skills and understandings through a comprehensive and balanced curriculum in languages other than English, specifically Mandarin; and

- develop the capacity for, and skills in, communicating ideas and information and collaborating with others using the Chinese language Mandarin (The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century, 1999).

1.4.6 Significance of teaching Mandarin in Australia

Orton (2008) outlines a dense and varied linkage between Australia and China. In Australia 2008, China is one country which is:

- a regional neighbour;
- its largest trading partner;
- a rising world economic power;
- a major source of immigrant workforce;
- a major source of international students;
- a major source of tourists to Australia;
- a major destination for Australian tourists;
- the source of its biggest immigrant settlers;
- a country with a long and prestigious culture; and
- home to 1 in 5 human beings on the Earth (Orton, 2008, p.8; Department of Education, Science and Training, 2006).
To achieve mutual benefits for both Australia and China economically and socially, it is important to further develop present positive Australia-China relationships by engaging China at greater depth. Orton (2008) argues that Australia’s fate is inclined to bind with its relationship with China, no matter what economic development and climate upheavals take place in the world. Therefore, to understand China and to speak the Chinese language well is identified as vital to Australian future prosperity. “Urgent development in the breadth and quality of Chinese teaching and learning in Australian schools is needed as a matter of national strategic priority” (Orton, 2008, p. 9).

Hence, stimulating Mandarin in WSR schools as a VTR is consistent with Australia national strategic priorities. The VTR used a wide range of Access China teaching materials and taught authentic Mandarin language, along with promoting Chinese culture and Chinese values. This is consistent with Engaging Young Australians with Asia (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2006).

Orton (2008) argues that learning Mandarin as a second language for speakers of English has some very particular learning difficulties. These include intrinsic language difficulties and a number of extrinsic factors. The Mandarin language has four challenges for the English speaking learner: “tones, homophones, characters, and the system of particles and verb complements” (Orton, 2008, p. 35). There are about 48,000 known characters used in the Chinese language since ancient Chinese times. A scholar might master 8,000 characters, while an average educated person might need 4,000 to read a Chinese newspaper. Australian Year 12 learners might learn 500. Orton (2008) makes the point that in Mandarin, the stroke that comprised the written character, the pronunciation and its meaning are three independent factors all of which need to be learnt. Chinese characters are confusingly alike requiring a great deal of effort and patience to learn. One of the more effective ways to learn them is through repetition and rote-learning (Orton, 2008). This is not one of the favoured
teaching strategies employed in Australian schools. Some of the external deterrents for Australian learners of Mandarin are that support is low because curriculum languages are regarded as a ‘second tier’ Key Learning Area (Yule, 2007 in Orton, 2008). Consequently, to understand the importance of bilingualism as an advantage over English-only competence demands changes both cognitively and affectively not only for students, but for schools and school systems.

Stimulating Mandarin in WSR schools as a VTR is of great significance and consistent with Australia national strategic priorities. Importantly, as a bilingual, the VTR could apply her cultural capital to teach Mandarin by incorporating Chinese culture into Australia culture which is likely to make Mandarin lessons easier and understandable for none-Chinese background students to learn.

1.5 Research Outcomes

The outcomes of the research reported by this study are:

- appropriately developed teaching plans for engaging Australian students in studying Mandarin;
- resources for teaching Mandarin that promote student engagement;
- teaching strategies to interest students to study Mandarin;
- teaching Mandarin by exploring Chinese – Australian cultural differences and similarities; and
- determining the impact of student engagement on student interest in studying Mandarin.

1.6 Overview of the Methodology

Qualitative methods were used in this study. The research reported by this study used action research to embed lesson cycles within an overall research timeframe. This produced two timeframes for the research, a lesson cycle timeframe and a timeframe
in which the whole study took place. During each lesson cycle, data were collected as field notes from a classroom teacher in a high school, a classroom teacher in a primary school, a colleague VTR, the research supervisor and students answering 12 questions selected from the REAL Framework. In addition to these data sources, a reflective journal was generated by the researcher that drew on all the above data sources in an attempt to gain insights into student and teacher engagement. For the overall research timeframe, data were collected as interviews from the classroom teacher in the high school, the classroom teacher in the primary school, the colleague VTR, the research supervisor and selected students. These data sources were also used to generate a reflective journal that focused on learning from the entire study and the research processes as a whole. All together there were twelve data sources with the reflective journal as the main data source. The process of data collection was validated by triangulating the different sources of data.

This study was about student and teacher engagement. It addressed engagement from two different perspectives. Teacher engagement was investigated while the teacher was engaged in learning how to become a better teacher as well as while the teacher was trying to engage students in their classroom learning. When preparing and delivering a lesson, the teacher developed different teaching strategies and materials to purposefully engage in the process of interesting and engaging students. The research also explored student engagement as a way of monitoring and providing feedback to the teacher about her engagement as she promoted student engagement. Student engagement occurred in a number of different forms (Munns & Martin, 2005). The research considered engagement comprehensively as cognitive, emotional and behavioural engagement. The REAL Framework (Woodward & Munns, 2003) was used to collect student feedback on lessons in these three forms.

Data from all sources were compared from a number of perspectives to generate the study findings. This study was limited to one school context and therefore the findings are not able to be generalised or transferred to other language classes or to other
teaching contexts. However, the findings are useful as an evidence-based, conceptually informed reference that builds the collective knowledge available about student and teacher engagement. This study functions as a case study that can inform future research.

The main limitations of this study are:

- the findings are characterised by the Australian classroom context, with each lesson nested within an established pedagogical framework;
- the findings are not transferable to other cultural contexts, since there is a cultural component to each lesson; and
- although the methodology can be generalised, the specific nature and background of participants significantly influenced the findings.

1.7 Outline of the Thesis

The research reported in this thesis is a study of teacher engagement in a second language classroom. The argument advanced by this study is that there is an interrelationship between teacher engagement and student engagement. It is developed through seven chapters.

Chapter 1 introduces the background of the Volunteer Teacher Researcher (VTR) and explores the impact of life and educational experiences of the VTR on the research reported by the study. It then outlines the reasons for, significance of, outcomes, and methodological conduct of the study.

Chapter 2 provides a theoretical framework to contextualise engagement and motivation. It introduces the MeE Framework and focuses on small ‘e’ engagement in the classroom as opposed to other forms of student engagement. It then outlined the REAL Framework as a way of assessing student engagement. Chapter 2 served as a theoretical basis for motivation and engagement.
Chapter 3 described the theoretical basis of the methodology. This study has an action research component which enables the researcher to collect data from two timeframes – lesson cycles and the timeframe for the overall study. It then outlines the research design. Twelve data sources were collected in the form of interviews, observations, field notes and a reflective journal, with the reflective journal as the major data source. It reported on procedures for establishing validity and reliability through the data collection and analysis.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the reflective journal analysis which is the most important data source. The reflective journal of the VTR is analysed using content analysis. It is analysed from the perspective of lesson cycles as well as over the full length of the study to assess the improvement of the teacher-researcher’s ability to engage students in learning Mandarin.

Chapter 5 reports the analysis of interviews and field notes which function to triangulate the reflective journal analysis. Interviews include student and teacher interviews. Field notes include classroom observation of the VTR, teacher discussion and student discussion.

Chapter 6 explores the research findings. It illustrates student engagement and teacher engagement and examines the relationship between the two.

Chapter 7 explores the implications of the study. Some important questions are recommended for future study. It summarises the important ideas developed and explored in the previous chapters and concludes with a diagram that extends the MeE Framework stressing the interactive relationship between student and teacher engagement.
Chapter 2
Literature Review
Motivation and Engagement

2.1 Introduction

This review examines the literature in the field of student classroom engagement. Some researchers (Kuh, Laird, & Umbach, 2004) view engagement as not intimately related to motivation while others (Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004; Libbey, 2004; Munns & Martin, 2005) see it as clearly related to motivation. The extent of the relationship between engagement and motivation is still subject to debate (Appleton, Christenson, Kim & Reschly, 2006). The research reported by this study views engagement and motivation as inextricably linked. Engagement is viewed as a complex construct that includes behavioural, emotional and cognitive dimensions (Fredricks, Blumenfield & Paris, 2004). Behaviour, emotion and cognition are dynamically interrelated with student engagement. The interplay between student classroom engagement, appropriate teaching strategies and student achievement is prominent in the literature and form the basis for exploring the research questions. This literature review positions classroom engagement within a theoretical framework that connects the MeE Framework (Munns & Martin, 2005) with the REAL Framework (Munns & Woodward, 2003) which operationalises student classroom engagement within the context of action research.

2.2 Classroom engagement

“To teach is to engage students in learning” (Christensen, Garvin, Sweet in Smith, Sheppard, Johnson & Johnson, 2005, p.2). This saying represents an old-fashioned view of engagement. An alternative to the “pour in” model is the “keep it flowing around” model (Smith, Sheppard, Johnson & Johnson, 2005). This model suggests that knowledge is not only transmitted from teacher to students, but also from students to teacher and among students.
Another interesting approach to engagement is ‘flow’ theory as cited by Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider and Shernoff (2003). Flow is a subjective state of complete involvement, whereby individuals are so involved in an activity that they lose awareness of time and space (Csikzentmihalyi, 1988 in Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004, p. 63).

Based on ‘flow’ theory, Shernoff et al. (2003) suggest that concentration, interest and enjoyment in an activity must be experienced simultaneously in order for flow to occur. Flow experiences are described as states of intense concentration or absolute absorption in an activity (Csikzentmihalyi in Shernoff et al., 2003, p. 161). Interest in an activity is a fundamental aspect of flow experiences, setting the foundation for continuing motivation and subsequent learning (Deci & Ryan in Shernoff et al., 2003, p. 161). Flow activities, including intellectually demanding tasks, can also be enjoyable and satisfying. They often provide a feeling of satisfaction.

Marks (in Klem & Connell, 2004, p. 3) defines engagement as “a psychological process, specifically, the attention, interest, investment, and effort students expend in the work of learning”. Other researchers define engagement as “students’ involvement with school, (a sense of belonging and an acceptance of the goals of schooling)” (Finn in Klem & Connell, 2004, p.3); their “psychological investment in and effort directed toward learning, understanding or mastering the knowledge, skills, or crafts that academic work is intended to promote” (Newmann in Klem & Connell, 2004, p. 3).

Early attempts to define student engagement share similar theoretical understandings (Archambault, Janosz, Fullu & Pagani, 2008). However, conceptualisations of student engagement remain fragmented and untested (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Libbey, 2004). Different researchers refer to student engagement in a variety of ways. Archambault, Janosz, Fallu and Pagani (2008) argue that engagement has been
viewed as school bounding and connectedness, attachment, belongingness and involvement or commitment.

More contemporary researchers including Appleton, Christenson, Kim and Reschly (2006), Fredricks et al. (2004) and Jimerson, Campos and Greif (2003) propose a more integrated definition of student engagement using multiple dimensions. One advantage of a multidimensional concept of engagement is that it addresses related facets of human development such as behaviour, values and cognition (Archambault et al., 2008). Another advantage is that multiple dimensions are able to prescribe prevention and intervention strategies.

Appleton, Christenson, Kim and Reschly (2006) derive their multidimensional view of engagement from Finn's (1989) model, which comprised behavioural (participation in class and school) and affective components (school identification, belonging, valuing learning). Appleton et al.’s (2006) view of engagement is influenced by Fredericks et al. (2004) and Jimerson et al. (2003) who conclude that engagement is comprised of three dimensions – behavioural, cognitive and emotional or affective. Sinclair, Christenson and Thurlow (2005) further influence Appleton et al.’s (2006) view of engagement so that it becomes conceptualised as a multi-dimensional construct comprised of four dimensions – academic, behavioural, cognitive and psychological. However, they refer to these as subtypes rather than dimensions. Jimerson et al. (2003) make the point that there are a number of overlapping dimensions of student engagement. This implies that engagement has a multifaceted nature rather than being manifest as a number of subtypes.

The academic dimension of engagement consists of variables such as time on task, academic results and homework completion. The behavioural dimension of engagement comprises student attendance, suspensions, voluntary classroom participation and extra-curricular participation. The cognitive dimension of engagement includes self-regulation, relevance of schoolwork for the future, value of
learning and personal goals and autonomy. The psychological dimension entails feelings of belonging and relationships with teachers and peers.

Jimerson et al. (2003) categorise engagement into three dimensions – the affective, behavioural and cognitive. The affective dimension refers to student feelings about school, teachers and peers. The behavioural dimension includes student observable actions or performance, namely participation in extracurricular activities, completion of homework, as well as academic achievement. In addition to behaviours listed above, Finn and Rock (1997) include measurements of delinquency, truancy or misbehaviour in their investigation of engagement.

Early definitions of engagement rarely include affective and cognitive dimensions and even contemporary researchers are not unified in the way they view non-behavioural dimensions of student engagement. For example, Appleton et al., (2006) differentiate between a cognitive dimension of student engagement and an academic dimension, whereas Jimerson et al., (2003) do not make this distinction and choose to combine them as a cognitive dimension. This suggests that the dimensions of student engagement are still being debated and refined but that a behavioural focus combined with an affective dimension is largely uncontested. The cognitive dimension seems to centre on student beliefs related to self, school, teachers, and other students. How this includes academic performances is still being debated.

Fredricks et al. (2004), like Jimerson et al., (2003), argue that student engagement is a multidimensional construct that unites behavioural, emotional and cognitive dimensions in a meaningful way. They define behavioural engagement in three ways. The first concerns student conduct. The second entails participating in the learning processes and the third involves taking part in school-related extracurricular activities (Fredricks et al., 2004, p. 62).
Fredricks et al., (2004) use a variety of indicators of conduct, work involvement and participation. Conduct includes positive behaviours and negative behaviour. Positive behaviours refer to completing homework and complying with school rules. Negative behaviours incorporate frequency of absences and tardiness, fighting or getting into trouble, and interfering with the work of others (Finn & Rock, 1997). Participating in the learning processes involves effort, persistence, concentration, attention, asking questions and contributing to class discussions. School-related extracurricular activities include participation in sport, drama, debating and school governance (Finn & Rock, 1997).

Emotional engagement refers to inner processes such as: “students’ affective reactions in the classroom, including interest, boredom, happiness, sadness, and anxiety” (Fredricks et al., 2004, p. 63). Emotional engagement duplicates an earlier body of work on attitudes, which examine feelings towards school such as liking or disliking school, the teacher or school work; feeling happy or sad in school; or being bored or interested in school work. Emotion also includes interest in and valuing schooling, which also overlaps with motivational research (discussed in Section 2.3) (Fredricks et al., 2004, p. 63).

Indicators of emotional engagement include student-teacher relationships (whether students get along well with teachers or not) and the value placed on school and schooling (such as maths will be useful in the future and satisfaction with school because learning is taking place) as well as an orientation towards work transferable skills and attitudes (sticking to tasks and maintaining an interest in things that take a long time). Cognitive engagement depends on the use of intelligence and thinking:

Cognitive engagement draws on the idea of investment; it incorporates thoughtfulness and willingness to exert the effort necessary to comprehend complex ideas and master difficult skills (Fredricks et al., 2004, p. 60).
Cognitive engagement is defined as being strategic or self-regulating. Strategic students use meta-cognitive strategies to plan, monitor and evaluate their cognition. They use learning strategies such as rehearsing, summarising and elaborating to aid memory, organise and understand material (Fredricks et al., 2004, p. 60). Indicators of cognitive engagement are self-monitoring, exchanging ideas, giving directions, justifying an answer, using learning strategies and control strategies, evidence of persistence; relating the task to prior knowledge, requesting clarification and using analogies as measures of cognitive engagement.

Behavioural engagement encompasses doing the work and following the rules; emotional engagement includes interest, values, and emotions; and cognitive engagement incorporates motivation, effort, and strategy use (Fredricks et al., 2004, p. 65).

Overall, the literature cites behavioural, emotional and cognitive elements as the three key dimensions of engagement.

2.2.1 Different levels of Engagement

In schools, students can be engaged at a number of different levels. For example, they can be engaged in a single activity or event like a classroom lesson or sport. They can also be engaged in a number of different ways over a long period of time and so be engaged at the school level.

Drawing on the work of the Fair Go Project, engagement can be divided into two levels (Munns & Martin, 2005, p. 3). The first is small ‘e’ engagement. It is complex and is informed by the work of Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004). Although engagement at this level is recognised as having cognitive, emotional and behavioural components, Fredricks et al., (2004) argue that these components do not operate in isolation from one another. They contend that student small ‘e’ engagement really only occurs where multiple components come together (Fredricks et al., 2004). They
see this first level of engagement as a ‘multi-dimensional construct’.
They see it operating at this level of complexity in teaching and learning settings such as the classroom:

Engagement is when the behavioural, the emotional and the cognitive come together powerfully (Fredricks et al., 2004). It means that classroom behaviour is not just following rules but actively participating; emotion is not just liking but deep valuing; cognition is not just simple memorisation but reflective involvement in deep understanding and expertise – in other words, high levels of doing, feeling and thinking (Munns, Arthur, Downes, Gregson, Power, Sawyer, Singh, Martin & Steele, 2005, p. 27).

Small ‘e’ engagement is divided into substantive engagement and procedural engagement. Substantive engagement is when students are ‘in task’ or students are strongly engaged in the tasks they have been set. Procedural engagement is when students are ‘on task’ or when students are simply obeying the wishes and instructions of teachers:

When students are strongly engaged they are successfully involved in tasks of high intellectual quality and they have passionate positive feelings about these tasks (Munns, 2004b, p. 3; also see Munns, 2007, p.305; Munns & Johnson, 2002, p. 9; Munns et al., 2002, p. 3).

Substantive engagement and procedural engagement are different:

Substantive engagement is a sustained commitment to the content of schooling, which is similar to cognitive engagement. Procedural engagement is trying to complete task requirements, which lasts only as long as the task itself (Fredricks et al., 2004, p. 67).

“Small ‘e’ engagement was the substantive engagement in current classroom experiences” (Munns, 2007, p.304). This study focuses on small ‘e’ engagement which means substantive engagement only. Procedural engagement was not explored by this study.
The second level is big ‘E’ engagement. It differentiates itself from small ‘e’ engagement because of its wider relationship with schools and education generally. Big ‘E’ engagement is in operation when students have a sense that school is a place for them and that education is worthwhile as a resource they can use both now and as future needs determine (Munns & Martin, 2005, p. 3). Schools offer students “a sense of belonging and achieving”. Students realise education is a “resource that they could profitably deploy in their present and future lives” (Munns, 2004b, p. 2). “Big ‘E’ Engagement is an emotional attachment and a commitment to education: the belief that ‘school is for me’” (Munns, 2004b, p. 3; see also Abowitz in Munns, 2007, p. 305). The relationship between small ‘e’ engagement and big ‘E’ engagement is described as:

Two levels of engagement are dialectically linked. Small ‘e’ engagement is embedded within big ‘E’ Engagement and this provides an important opportunity for classrooms to become critical sites where the immediate educational experiences build to a future-oriented consciousness that sees education as a resource to be profitably employed within students’ lives (Munns, 2004b, p. 3).

Munns and Martin (2005) suggest there is a ‘temporal and embedded’ link between the two levels of student engagement:

... the daily ‘e’ngaging experiences in classrooms that provide opportunities and support for students to think hard (high cognitive), feel good (high emotional) and actively participate (high behavioural) build to a powerful ‘school is for me’ relationship (Munns & Martin, 2005, p. 3).

The strength gained from embedding the two levels of engagement in each other relies on the ‘power of classroom messages’ which operate ‘within discourses of power’ (Munns & Martin, 2005 p. 3). Munns and Martin (2005) argue that classroom messages are underpinned by Bernstein’s (1996) classroom message systems such as curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation while discourses of power refer to knowledge, ability, control, place and voice. The power discourses influence the way teachers
teach and how students view themselves as learners (Munns & Martin, 2005 p. 3). An example of the power discourse would be whose voice has more power in the teaching space. They also contend that embedding the two levels of engagement helps to make connections between classroom practices and the wider community and social structures.

2.3 Motivation

According to Ryan and Deci (2000, p. 54) “to be motivated is to be moved to do something”. When a person has impetus or inspiration or is energised or activated toward an end, they are considered to be motivated.

There are four motivational theories that appear in the contemporary literature. They are self-efficacy theory (personal assessment of ability to perform a task – I can do this), attribution theory (personal explanation of why an outcome occurred – I am too short to be a basketball player), self-worth theory (Personal attempts to maintain self worth – I am OK because people like me) and achievement goal theory (the desire to achieve a particular goal – if I study hard enough I will do well) (Seifert, 2004). However, Seifert (2004) posits that although these theories appear to be separate, they are, theoretically interconnected. Seifert (2004) argues that motivation, specifically student motivation, is derived from beliefs and emotions.

Self-efficacy is closely related to confidence. It refers to a judgment about the ability to perform a task. If students lack confidence, they view tasks as challenging or difficult. While students are effective, they are willing to take risks and solve problems (Seifert, 2004, p. 137).

An attribution is a feature or characteristic. Sometimes people use their attributes to explain a cause of an outcome. In the academic field, there are many common
attributions such as effort, skills, strategies, ability, luck and mood (Seifert, 2004, p. 138). Weiner (in Seifert, 2004, p. 140) divides attribution into three dimensions:

Locus of causality (does the cause originate within the individual? e.g. effort), stability (is the cause stable and enduring or changing? e.g. illness) and controllability (is the individual able to affect the cause? e.g. amount of study). How students perceive causes in terms of these characteristics give rise to emotions and those emotions have behavioural consequences.

Students who attribute success or failure to internal and controllable causes are more inclined to feel pride, satisfaction and confidence. Therefore, they will persist longer in demanding tasks and display a high level of engagement. Students who attribute failure to external and uncontrollable factors are more likely to feel helplessness and blame others. Consequently, they will make little effort and not be highly involved in tasks.

Self-worth theory of achievement motivation tries to explain the reason why students attempt to maintain, protect or enhance their self-worth. Self-worth refers to the judgments made about dignity and self-esteem. A person with a sense of self-worth knows that he or she is loved, valued and respected by others.

Achievement goal theory posits that academic motivation can be seen as an attempt to achieve goals (Seifert, 2004, p. 142). This theory poses two dominant goals – learning (called mastery) and performance (called ego-oriented). Students achieving mastery goals are self-regulating and self-determining. They believe that effort is related to success and “conceive of intelligence as a malleable quality” (Dweck & Leggett, 1988, p. 256).

Although there are many theoretical perspectives debated about motivation, some have a long history and have influenced contemporary understandings about motivation. Self-determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008) is an example of a
theoretical perspective on motivation which has led to a view that there are two basic types of motivation – intrinsic and extrinsic. The distinction between the two is based on the different reasons that lead to action.

Intrinsic motivation refers to doing something because of internal joy or interest, whereas extrinsic motivation refers to satisfaction achieved not by the task but by something else such as a reward (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 55). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are important to developmental and educational practices. Intrinsic motivation results in high-quality learning and creativity. Compared with intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation is characterised as less powerful. However, there are various types of extrinsic motivation. According to Self-determination Theory, some extrinsic motivation leads to resentment, resistance, and disinterest, while some reflect an inner acceptance of the value of a task (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 55).

In teaching practice, educators can not always rely on intrinsic motivation to promote learning. Some learning tasks are not inherently interesting or enjoyable. It is therefore important to promote more active forms of extrinsic motivation that are inherently more engaging. Promoting student motivation becomes an essential strategy for successful teaching.

Martin (2003, p. 44) conceptualised “motivation as students’ energy and drive to learn, work effectively and achieve to their potential at school, and the behaviours that follow from this energy and drive”. He claims that motivation can be seen as a cognitive orientation towards themselves, school, and schoolwork (Martin, 2002). Psychologists think that student motivation is an individual process (Munns & Martin, 2005, p. 1). This is because thinking is thought to occur within an individual. Hence, motivation occurs cognitively. Psychologists also believe that thinking occurs before action. They hold that motivation precedes engagement. Psychologists transfer their psychological view of motivation to the action (engagement) that follows (Munns & Martin, 2005, p. 2). Psychologists, therefore, view the relationship between
motivation and engagement as psychological. Consequently, the psychological perspective (individual and cognitive) of motivation is, by association, transferred to engagement. This is exemplified by Martin’s Student Motivation and Engagement Wheel (Munns & Martin, 2005, p. 2) (See Figure 2.1).

2.3.1 The relationship between motivation and engagement

Motivation and engagement interact with each other as discussed above. They are significant in determining student interest and enjoyment of school and therefore underpin student achievement (Martin, Marsh, Willianson, & Debus, 2003; Martin, 2006). Martin (2001, 2003 & 2006) developed a student Motivation and Engagement Scale to assess the thoughts, feelings and behaviours underpinning the relationship between these concepts. These thoughts, feelings and behaviours are focused by what Martin (2006) calls factors that reflect motivation and engagement. He divides these factors into three basic categories – factors that enhance; factors that impede and factors that constrain motivation and engagement. They are formally called adaptive, impeding and maladaptive dimensions. Adaptive dimensions comprise cognitions (self-efficacy, mastery orientation and valuing school) and behaviours (persistence, study management and planning). The impeding dimensions are comprised of anxiety and failure avoidance. The maladaptive dimension is comprised of uncertain control and self-handicapping. These are all very asocial and individualistic attributes.

Motivation and engagement also share a common theoretical and practical perspective with each interdependent on the other (Munns, n. d.). Martin (2005) also sees motivation and engagement as related and interactive, defining “engagement as the thoughts, emotions and behaviours that follow from energy and drive”. Martin’s Student Motivation and Engagement Wheel (Martin in Munns & Martin, 2005, p. 2) describes this complex and interactive relationship between motivation and engagement (See Figure 2.1).
The wheel is divided into four parts, namely adaptive and impeding cognitive dimensions, and adaptive and maladaptive behavioural dimensions. Motivation is a determinant of engagement. Positive motivation leads to positive behaviour, while negative motivation results in negative behaviour (Munns & Martin, 2005, p. 2).

The adaptive cognitive dimension includes self-efficacy, mastery orientation and value of schooling. Self-efficacy, according to Midgley, Maehr and Hicks et al (1997 in Martin, 2006, p. 77), is where “Most students in my class believe they can do a good job on their schoolwork”. Essentially, self-efficacy is about a student’s confidence and belief in their ability. Their ability to understand and to do well in
their schoolwork, to meet the challenges they face and to perform to their capacity. Mastery orientation, according to Nicholls (1989 in Martin, 2006, p. 77), is where “Most students in my class are focused on learning and improving more than competing and being the best”. Mastery orientation is about being focused on learning, solving problems and developing skills at a high level. Value of schooling, is outlined by Pintrich, Smith, Garcia and McKeachie (1991 in Martin, 2006, p. 77) as “Most students in my class believe that what they are taught at school is important and useful”. Valuing schooling is about students believing that what they learn at school is useful, important, and relevant to them as an individual or to the community in general.

Impeding cognitive dimension includes anxiety, failure avoidance and uncertain control. Anxiety is where “students in my class get quite anxious about their schoolwork and tests” (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990 in Martin, 2006, p. 78). Anxiety can be divided into two components, feeling nervous and worrying. Feeling nervous is an uneasy or sick feeling that students get when they think about their schoolwork, assignments and exams. Worrying is when students become concerned about not doing well in their schoolwork, assignments and exams. Failure avoidance occurs when “students in my class mainly do their schoolwork to avoid failure or disapproval from parents or teachers” (Harmer, Whitesell & Kowalski, 1992 in Martin, 2006, p. 77). Failure avoidance is when the main reason for students doing their schoolwork is to avoid disappointing others rather than working to achieve for themselves. Uncertain control is when “students in my class do not think they have much control over how well they do at school” (Connell, 1985 in Martin, 2006, p. 78). It occurs when students do not know how to do well or more often, how to avoid doing poorly.

The adaptive behavioural dimension includes persistence, planning and study management. Persistence occurs when “students in my class use their study time well and try to study under conditions that bring out their best” (Miller, Greene, Montalvo, Ravindran & Nichols, 1996 in Martin, 2006, p. 77). Persistence is when students keep
working to understand and complete a task even when the task is difficult or challenging. Planning is when “students in my class plan how they will do their schoolwork and check how they are going as they do it” (Miller et al., 1996 in Martin, 2006, p. 77). Planning occurs when students think through what they want to achieve and keep track of their progress as they work towards predetermined outcomes. Study management is when “students in my class use their study time well and try to study under conditions that bring out their best” (Pintrich et al., 1991 in Martin, 2006, p. 77). Study management refers to the way students use their study time. How they organise their study timetable, what and where they study.

The maladaptive behavioural dimension includes self-handicapping and student disengagement. Self-handicapping occurs when “students in my class seem to reduce their chances of doing well, for example, waste time, not study, disrupt others, procrastinate, etc” (Midgley, Arunkumar & Urdan, 1996 in Martin, 2006, p. 78). Students self-handicap when they do things, or don’t do things and so reduce their chances of success. Disengagement is when students “seem to be absent regularly, misbehave, and exert low academic effort and then dropout of school” (Balfanz, Hersog & Mac Iver, 2007, p. 224). Student disengagement can be defined as “a high order factor composed of detaching from school, disconnecting from its norms and expectations, reducing effort and involvement at school, and withdrawing from a commitment to school and to school completion” (Balfanz, Hersog & Mac Iver, 2007, p. 224).

Martin’s (2003) wheel brings together psychological and sociological perspectives. Psychologically, teaching focuses on individual students, largely ignoring their socio-cultural formation. Interventions concentrate on teachers and students and show that the teaching environment can impact greatly on student engagement. However, looking at classroom environments should not be confined to psychological perspectives alone. In order to increase student motivation, it is important that motivation and engagement interact in students’ everyday lives as well as the
classroom and so incorporate a relational component – a sociological dimension. The model suggests that educators should help students increase the positive dimensions while decreasing the negative ones (Munns & Martin, 2005, p. 3).

The function of the wheel is to help students understand the connection between their thoughts and behaviours. It also helps teachers to discuss thoughts and behaviour with students and to plan useful pedagogy and interventions. These interventions can not only improve individual students’ approaches and attitudes towards learning, but also develop their skills to plan and manage their schoolwork. Positive aspects of motivation and behaviour should be maximised while the negative aspects should be minimised (Munns & Martin, 2005, p. 3).

The next section presents a framework that attempts to integrate the understandings gained from psychologists (research on motivation) and sociologists (research on engagement) about student motivation and engagement.

### 2.4 Framework for positioning engagement: The MeE Framework

It is not suggested that there is no sociological perspective recognised by psychologists or that sociologists do not consider psychological dimensions. However, it is proposed that the two perspectives need to be purposefully combined to better understand the relationship between student motivation and engagement so that each can enhance the other. The MeE framework reduces the limitations of a purely psychological perspective by recognising the power of social interactions. Similarly, it reduces the limitations of a sociological perspective by using the complexity of individual approaches (Munns & Martin, 2005, p. 1).

This framework situates motivation and engagement in a harmonised tension and in so doing addresses Furlong’s dilemma by utilising the combined strengths of the psychological and sociological approaches (Munns, & Martin, 2005, p. 1).
Furlong (1991) argues there has been a tension between psychologists and sociologists in education for some time. Psychologists view education, teaching and learning from a more individual, cognitive perspective. Psychologists rarely consider the dimensions of social power and how their interactions affect students. In a similar way, some sociologists deny there are important psychological questions to explore and answer about social enquiries into education and educational issues (Munns, & Martin, 2005, p. 1). Furlong (1991) cites Connell when stating:

A weakness of much academic research is the product of two forms of occupational blindness – the inability of sociologists to recognise the complexities of the person and the unwillingness of psychologists to recognise the dimension of social power (Connell in Furlong, 1991, p. 293).

In examining the theoretical structures around disaffected students, Furlong (1991) focuses on the relationship between students and education at an emotional level. Emotions associated with disaffection are historically examined from a psychological perspective. However, Furlong reconceptualises emotion from within sociology (Furlong, 1991, p. 295). He argues that rather than ignore emotions, sociologists should use them as a starting point. He advocates the construction of a ‘sociology of emotion’ (Furlong, 1991, p. 296). Furlong is not only extending a traditional boundary of sociology but is suggesting that a sociological study of disaffection begin with a psychological construct – emotion. In this way those working with disaffected students can begin to understand the complexity of student situations and develop social solutions to what were once seen as psychological problems (Furlong, 1991, p. 305).

In summary, Psychologists think that student motivation is an individual process (Munns & Martin, 2005, p. 1). This is because thinking occurs within an individual. Hence, motivation occurs cognitively. Psychologists also believe that thinking occurs before action. They hold that motivation precedes engagement. Psychologists transfer their psychological view of motivation to the action (engagement) that follows
Psychologists, therefore, view the relationship between motivation and engagement as psychological. The psychological – individually, cognitive – perspective of motivation is, by association, transferred to engagement. This is exemplified by Martin’s Student Motivation and Engagement Wheel (Munns & Martin, 2005, p. 2).

Sociologists hold that student engagement is focused on the relationships among students, schools and community (Munns & Martin, 2005, p. 1). Hence, a sociologist would think of engagement in more relational terms. Munn’s sociological view of engagement builds on and compliments Martin’s (in Munns and Martin, 2005) Student Motivation and Engagement Wheel. It also connects with classroom pedagogy and discourses as well as the wider school, education and social environments. Together these psychological and sociological perspectives on motivation and engagement are brought together by Munns and Martin (2005) as the MeE Framework of Motivation and Engagement (Figure 2.2).
Figure 2.2  The MeE Framework of Motivation and Engagement

**Motivation**
- Students have adaptive thoughts:
  - Self-efficacy
  - Mastery orientation
  - Valuing school
- Students effectively manage/minimise impeding thoughts and affect:
  - Anxiety
  - Fear of failure
  - Uncertain or low control

**Engagement**
- School is a place that "works" for me
- Education is a resource that I can successfully employ now and in the future

**e'ngagement**
- Students are involved in classroom pedagogical relationships, learning experiences and discourses that emphasise:
  - Active participation (high behaviour)
  - Genuine valuing (high emotion)
  - Reflective involvement in deep understanding and expertise (high cognition)
- Realisation of engaging classroom messages – knowledge, ability, control, place & voice
- Personalisation and adaptation to messages – strategy, support, direction, connection

**Joint Effect of the Relational and Individual Levels**

Relational Level

Individual Level

Mums & Martin – It’s all about MeE. A motivation and engagement framework
The MeE Framework shows different ways to view the relationship between school and the classroom. Importantly, the Framework highlights the interaction of school life and the individual and the relational procedures that construct this interaction.

This framework is not only a guide to student engagement but also an evaluative device. The multifaceted approach helps students to be motivated and engaged in the class. Its focus is on the positive aspects, but by reduction it can lead to some negative ones. In both motivation and engagement, it is the combination of positive thoughts, feelings and behaviours that help students display a good relationship with school and education (Munns & Martin, 2005 p. 5). The argument is that it is this combination that will work strongly towards big ‘E’ Engagement.

Individuals are supported and encouraged through their relationships with teachers, peers, curriculum and pedagogy (Munns & Martin, 2005 p. 5). It might be improved by special programs and individual guidance. Positive action comes about in two ways. First, individuals put these motivating cognitions into action. But if the information is disengaging, it is difficult for students to be motivated continuously. Second, in order to be well-behaved, individuals adapt to positive strategies and directions.

Small ‘e’ engagement is more than the individual; rather, it is “social relationships involving reciprocity and mutual understanding” (Munns et al., 2005, p. 27). In this way, a teaching and learning relationship strongly involves teachers and students in order to create a highly productive learning environment. Importantly, it connects classroom engagement with wider dimensions of power.

The MeE Framework is the “joint effect of the individual and relational levels within the psychological and sociological frames” (Munns & Martin, 2005 p. 5). Big ‘E’ Engagement is about positive social outcomes at a whole-school level that encourages students to feel valued, supported and catered for in the total school environment both
emotionally and cognitively (Munns & Martin, 2005, p. 6). Schools need to work on policies and practices that help students to feel supported. The ultimate goal for schools is to help students feel that ‘school is for me’. Strategies that schools can employ include “a positive school ethos”, “curricula choice” and “peer support” (Munns & Martin, 2005, p. 6). Big ‘E’ Engagement helps students believe that school looks after them and educates them. Importantly, school supports them when they have learning and behavioural problems. Students view school as a place in which they can learn useful things for their future lives – that school is one of life’s resources. Engagement is impacted by school and class factors such as shared control. Engagement is also impacted by a student’s understandings of work norms. Individual needs are important for the development of positive school and class relationships.

The MeE Framework helps to understand the relationships among students, school and education (Munns & Martin, 2005, p. 6). The MeE Framework offers a model for understanding the relationships between actions, beliefs and goals. Each of these, as well as the sum of the whole, is impacted by and integrated through a variety of social factors. Through the joint efforts of psychological and sociological dimensions, students gain a core sense that ‘School is for me’. Through the interconnection of psychological foundations (individual student cognition and behaviour) and sociological foundations (pedagogy, classroom messages and discourses of power), students feel that ‘School is for me’ at cognitive, emotional and participatory levels. It shows that schools are able to integrate social, economic and cultural significance with individual student needs.

2.5 Operationalising student classroom engagement using the REAL Framework

Munns and Martin (2005) divide engagement into two levels – small ‘e’ engagement and big ‘E’ Engagement. The research reported by this study centres on the small ‘e’ component of the MeE Framework. Small ‘e’ engagement focuses on student
engagement in the classroom. It is comprised of cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions. Consequently, this study will investigate student engagement in learning Mandarin from each of these three dimensions. Following Fredricks et al. (2004) student engagement is viewed as when students are simultaneously:

- reflectively involved in deep understanding and expertise (high cognition);
- genuinely valuing what they are doing (high emotion); and
- actively participating in school and classroom activities (high behaviour) (Munns & Woodward, 2006, p. 194).

This study measures student engagement from each of these three dimensions. Woodward and Munns (2003) use the REAL Framework to investigate the relationship between student engagement and self-assessment. The REAL Framework focuses on the participation of students in making decisions in the classroom (Woodward & Munns, 2003, p. 6).

Fredricks et al. (2004) position student engagement where cognition, emotion and behaviour come together at high levels. The REAL Framework measures small ‘e’ engagement from three dimensions, namely the cognitive, affective and operative dimensions. Both Fredricks et al. (2004) and the REAL Framework share a similar view of cognitive engagement. However, there are differences between Fredricks et al. (2004) use of the term emotional engagement and affective engagement as it is employed by the REAL Framework. Similarly, Fredricks et al. (2004) use of the term behavioural engagement is different to the term operative engagement used by the REAL Framework.

Affective engagement indicates that “the teacher and students are involved in pedagogical conversations that highly negotiate learning situations that can bring about mutually stimulating and enjoyable emotions associated with classroom work” (Munns, 2004b, p. 6). Therefore, the affective dimension offers a clearer pedagogical focus for teachers to build a positive and enjoyable classroom learning environment.
According to Munns (2004b) operative engagement means students are guided to become competent and empowered learners in the classroom. In this sense, operative engagement does not focus on classroom compliance. Importantly, operative engagement provides for a stronger pedagogical focus for both teachers and students compared with behavioural engagement. Therefore, Munns (2004b) argues that to develop a deeper student relationship with classroom work, engagement should be defined as composed of cognitive, affective and operative dimensions.

There are sixty questions categorised according to affective, cognitive and operative engagement in the REAL Framework (see Appendix 1). These questions cover five subjects, namely thinking about achievement, looking for evidence, working with other people, overcoming barriers and reframing the task:

The Solo Taxonomy is a systematic way of increasing the structural complexity of learning and assessment tasks through unistructural, multistructural, relational and abstract sequences. When applied to student self-assessment, the idea is that it promotes deeper reflections about learning and works against the compliant and routine nature of self-assessments that have been observed among many students (Munns et al., 2002, p. 6).

There is a strong “theoretical and practical connection between student engagement and student self-assessment” (Munns & Woodward, 2006, p.193). The aim of self-assessment is to encourage students to “be substantively engaged in their classroom learning experiences” (Munns & Woodward, 2006, p. 193). The importance of self-assessment is that it provides opportunities for students and teachers to share thoughts and feelings about their learning. Second, it provides feedback to teachers about whether students are engaged. Third, it helps teachers to understand students’ internal processes and encourage students to think about learning (Munns & Woodward, 2006, pp. 194-195).
The relationship between engagement and self-assessment is critical. It is important to promote a classroom philosophy of individual and collective self-assessment. Self-assessment provides opportunities for students to share their thoughts and feelings with teachers and classmates. Importantly, it provides feedback to teachers about student engagement (Munns et al, 2006, p. 16). Engagement is essentially about internal feelings and thoughts which are hard to assess from external signs. There are external classroom signs, such as quietly complying with tasks or talking animatedly. However, there is another important interaction between student engagement and self-assessment:

At a theoretical and practical level student self-assessment is often seen as a set of tasks to be completed by students so that they make an appraisal of their learning (Hart in Munns et al, 2006, p. 16).

We needed to focus on the internal processes: the ways of encouraging students to think and talk seriously about the content, the processes and feelings relating to their learning (Munns et al, 2006, p. 16).

The aim was to see how self-assessment could move form being a useful classroom tool to a vital pedagogical activity (Munns et al, 2006, p. 16).

This section has highlighted three important influences on this study. The first is how self-assessment can improve engagement. The second is, at what point do students become engaged. Third, how does self-assessment improve classroom learning and teaching and change the classroom environment.

### 2.6 The differences between motivation and engagement

Martin (2003, p. 44) conceptualises “motivation as students’ energy and drive to learn, work effectively and achieve to their potential at school and the behaviours that follow from this energy and drive”. He claims that motivation can be seen as a cognitive orientation towards themselves, school, and schoolwork (Martin, 2002). This is because thinking is thought to occur within an individual. On the other hand,
engagement can be defined as “the behaviours that follow from these cognitive orientations” (Munns & Martin, 2005, p. 1). Hence, motivation occurs cognitively and before behaviour (engagement). Therefore, the distinction between motivation and engagement is that motivation is cognitive and precedes engagement which is behavioural.

According to Munns and Martin (2005) small ‘e’ engagement is when emotional, behavioural and cognitive engagement come together simultaneously at high levels. Sociologists hold that student engagement is focused on the relationships among students, schools and community (Munns & Martin, 2005, p. 1). Hence, a sociologist would think of engagement in more relational terms, while a psychologist would think of motivation in a more individual way. Munn’s sociological view of engagement builds on and compliments Martin’s motivation view (Munns & Martin, 2005). Motivation and engagement have an interactive relationship. It is sometimes difficult to make a clear distinction between motivation and engagement. Consequently, it is important to have clear and conceptually defined criteria to distinguish them and to minimise subjectivity and maximise objectivity in classifying classroom interactions that involve motivation and engagement.

Discourses of power are one set of criteria that can be used to distinguish between motivation and engagement. Discourses of power refer to knowledge, ability, control, place and voice and are what the Fair Go Project (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006) called engaging messages. Therefore, student messages, in the form of discourse of power, can be used to classify student responses in this present study as engaging rather than as motivating.

For teachers, knowledge means “reflectively constructed access to contextualised and powerful knowledge” (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 78). For students, knowledge means their understanding and connection to meaning. Indicators of when knowledge is being dealt with in class are when “students’ local knowledge
and experiences are used and valued as a contribution to everyone’s knowledge and learning” and when there are “frequent and serious conversations to show how learning has real life and immediate application” (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 78).

From a teacher’s perspective, ability refers to “feelings of being able to achieve and a spiral of high expectations and aspirations” (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 78). For students, ability means “I am capable” (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 78). According to the NSW Department of Education and Training (2006, p. 78) student ability is indicated when, “tasks are positive and allow all students to demonstrate what they know and can do but also challenge them to learn more” and when “students are encouraged and helped to see the connections between working well, thinking hard and feeling good”.

The NSW Department of Education and Training (2006, p. 78) sees control, from a teacher’s perspective, as “sharing of classroom time and space: inter-dependence, mutuality and shared power”. From a student’s perspective it means “we can do this together” (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 78). Classroom control is often viewed as a struggle between what teachers want and what students would like. When viewed this way there are no winners. According to the NSW Department of Education and Training (2006, p. 78) classroom control is best negotiated when students get the chance to think about, discuss and look after their own behaviour.

Teachers view place as where students are “valued as individual(s) and learner(s)” and have “feeling(s) of belonging and ownership over learning” (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 78). For students, place simply means it is a site or place “to be a kid from” (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 78). According to the NSW Department of Education and Training (2006, p. 78) place, as a discourse of power, is indicated when “learning activities” help students “to make
constructive connections with their own real world” and where there is “continuous and positive affirmation about the importance of all learners within their own community”.

For teachers voice means a “discussion and reflection about learning with students and teacher’s playing reciprocal, meaningful roles” while for students it simply means “we share” (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 78). The NSW Department of Education and Training (2006, p. 78) suggest that voice is indicated when “students are given lots of time, opportunities and tools to reflect on, assess and drive classroom learning” and when “classroom talk becomes more like a series of conversations between students, their teacher and each other”.

The Fair Go Project (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006), used seven questions to identify motivating individual support strategies. If student responses, in this present study, are consistent with these seven questions, it indicates that they are motivational rather than engaging. The seven questions are:

1. Was there support for individuals to develop belief and confidence in their ability to succeed at school, overcome challenges and perform at their best?
2. Was there individual encouragement that focused on learning, solving problems and developing skills?
3. Were individuals helped to see that school is useful, important and relevant?
4. Was there individual help for students to overcome anxiety, take risks (not avoid failure) and have more control over their learning?
5. Was there pedagogy that promoted effort and persistence?
6. Was teaching and learning fostered for key self-regulatory processes such as planning, monitoring and study management?
7. Were there practices that helped students manage or minimise maladaptive behavioural dimensions such as self-handicapping and avoidance (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003).
The Fair Go Project (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 11) described the three dimensions of engagement as:

The focal point for the design of the classroom learning experiences is the balanced interplay of the high cognitive (thinking), high affective (feeling) and high operative (doing). Within the balanced interplay, high cognitive activities might consider elements from the intellectual quality dimensions of ‘productive pedagogies’ or ‘quality teaching’. The high operative component would play careful attention to developing students as competent and empowered learners across all their classroom experiences. High affective assumes that the teacher and students are involved in conversations that negotiate learning situations to bring about mutually simulating and enjoyable emotions associated with classroom work.

High cognitive engaging pedagogy refers to pedagogy that encourages students to reflect and develop deep understandings and expertise. Students are encouraged to strive for intellectual quality (deep knowledge, deep understanding, problematic knowledge, higher-order thinking, metalanguage and substantive conversation). High affective engaging pedagogy is pedagogy that promotes deeply valuing learning. An example is when teachers and students negotiate learning situations that they both enjoy. High operative engaging pedagogy refers to pedagogy that actively encourages participation in experiences that work towards students becoming more effective learners. Students become involved in learning experiences that help them become more competent and empowered learners.

The Fair Go Project (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 78) found that “engaged students really need engaged teachers. If we want to take up the challenge of ‘e’ngaging and ‘E’ngaging our students, teachers and students all have to be in it together”. Becoming an engaged teacher means questioning engagement and what it really means and looks like in the classroom. It means being passionate about teaching. It means focusing on learning rather than classroom behaviour. It involves setting high expectations for learners and teachers. It requires teachers to engage in
professional dialogue and reflective on their teaching practices. It requires the development of a whole school ethos that addresses quality teaching and student engagement in learning (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 78).

2.7 Teaching Strategies

Teaching strategies have a great impact on student classroom engagement when teaching a second language. When teaching strategies are appropriate, students are more likely to be engaged. There are different types of language learners. Therefore, to engage students, teachers should use different kinds of teaching strategies to meet the different needs of students (Barry & King, 1998: McInerney & McInerney, 2002). Pedagogically, there are a large number of approaches to teaching and learning. When a teaching approach is used it directs the teacher towards the selection of particular teaching strategies. Language teachers are then able to select from a variety of teaching strategies while implementing a particular approach. In this section, a number of commonly used teaching approaches or methods are outlined which are used in most Australian language classes. These include: Grammar-translation, the Direct Method, Audiolingualism; Presentation, Practice and Production (PPP); Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-based learning (TBL) (Harmer, 2007).

Grammar-translation methods require students to learn individual points of grammar. Students are then given sentences to work with which exemplified these grammatical points (Harmer, 2007). Language lessons taught using this strategy focus on the teacher rather than students. This method stresses the accuracy of grammar and vocabulary. Students are required to memorise grammatical rules. This method is commonly used in China which is exam-oriented. However, Australian students do not respond well to teacher-centred strategies. Students are not engaged using this teaching method (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2008).
The Direct Method resulted from the reform of the grammar-translation method. It shifts the emphasis from teaching grammar to teaching the use of language for everyday use (Harmer, 2007). A critical feature of this method is that it only uses the target language in the classroom. It is difficult for adolescent students to relate to this method when the exposure to the second language is so intense (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2008).

The Audiolingual Method requires that teaching take place mainly in the target language. The focus is on manipulating sentence structure rather than on teaching how to communicate (Harmer, 2007). Students are encouraged to reinforce their language learning through repetition of sentences. This method is not engaging for students because it concentrates on pronunciation, intonation and sentence structure through repetition rather than engaging students in the use of language for communication (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2008). It does not connect students with their everyday lives.

Presentation, Practice and Production (PPP) places language learning in a situated context (Harmer, 2007). Teachers show students a picture that interests them and students are required to present and describe the picture in the target language. After practicing and repeating the sentence several times, students enhance their language proficiency. Production allows for and promotes student creativity. Students use the new language to describe the picture in their own words. This method provides for student ownership of their learning and is therefore more engaging (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2008).

The Communicative Approach recognises that the purpose of learning a language is to use the language. Consequently, it focuses on learner-centred teaching strategies (Harmer, 2007). This approach recognises learners as individuals with different learning styles (Nunan, 2004). The Communicative Approach enhances language
development through interactive, student-centred tasks which are planned to maximize the student’s use of the second language while actively involved.

Task-based Learning (TBL) is when students are given a task to do. They have to undertake a particular activity or solve a problem. Figure 2.3 describes the TBL Framework (The Willis TBL Framework cited in Harmer, 2007, p. 71).

![Figure 2.3 The Task-based Learning Framework](image)

In the pre-task stage, the teacher introduces the topic and task and highlights useful words and phrases. The teacher ensures that students understand the task they are being asked to complete. During the task cycle, students work through the task in small groups while the teacher observes student progress. As part of this framework, students plan to and report on their task to the whole class. The report can be oral or in written form. In the final part of the cycle, the teacher analyses the mistakes or inaccuracies in the students’ work. Throughout, students are encouraged to practice their vocabulary and sentence structure.

It can be seen from these teaching approaches that some promote student engagement more than others. The purpose of this study is to promote student engagement. The first three teaching approaches described above are more teacher-centred. In a
contemporary Australian context, student-centred approaches should be adopted to engage students. Consequently, the last three approaches described above are more student-centred approaches and consistent with enhancing student engagement. The Communicative Approach and Task-based Learning are the main approaches used throughout this study. These approaches informed the selection of the teaching strategies employed.

Consequently, a range of student-centred teaching strategies were employed by this study. They included group work, student discussions, individual and group internet research, cross-words, drawing pictures, listening to music, tracing Chinese characters, reading comprehensions and games. The teaching strategies were selected according to lesson content and context. The integration of these various teaching strategies enhances the interaction between students’ resources and the teacher. These strategies were activity-based to interest students and arouse their curiosity. In Mandarin classes, different teaching materials were provided to accommodate the teaching strategies. The use of a variety of teaching materials and interesting teaching strategies were designed to engage students in learning Mandarin.

2.8 Constructivism

Constructivism is a theory of learning where people construct meaning from current knowledge structures (Resnick, 1982). Constructivism itself does not suggest a specific pedagogy. Instead, it describes how learning occurs when learners construct knowledge built from their previous experiences (Resnick, 1982.). Described as a form of human cognition, constructivism is related to pedagogic approaches that promote learning from hands-on activities (Skamp, 2004). This indicates that hands-on approaches to teaching and learning are consistent with constructivism. Learning by ‘doing’ is consistent with behavioural engagement according to Munns and Martin (2005). The research reported by this study suggests that constructivism, as a teaching approach, can be used to promote student learning in the classroom.
Constructivism advocates that a facilitator should support learning which is initiated and directed by the learner (Hammond, 2001). Teachers act as facilitators who then work with students as they construct knowledge based on student past experiences (Hammond, 2001). The role of the facilitator is to support the learner to become a critical thinker. Therefore, student-centred teaching strategies are the main strategies used when implementing constructivism views of teaching and learning. The background, culture and belief systems of the learner help them shape the knowledge they encounter and build on in the learning process (Wertsch, 1997).

Graham (2002, p.1) defines student-centred learning as “putting more responsibility on the learners for their own learning”. Involving students in decision-making processes is essential when implementing student-centred learning strategies. Group work is aligned with student-centred learning strategies because group work provides students with choices and requires that they participate in negotiations and decision-making.

Student learning by ‘doing’ is student-centred and is consistent with behavioural engagement according to Munns and Martin (2005). Student-centred learning relates learning to a student’s everyday life and experiences so that it brings learning ‘alive’ and makes it ‘real’ for them. Therefore, teaching in context and relating teaching to student real world experiences is essential for promoting learning.

There are some features of student-centred learning that translate to basic classroom practice. For example, teachers should ask questions to promote student questions rather than tell students or give them information (Skamp, 2004). Students are “not empty vessels waiting to be filled by the all-knowing teacher”. This view of teaching conflicts with an exam-oriented education system where the teacher determines the questions to be asked and the student tries to guess the answer the teacher expects (Graham, 2002, p. 2). Graham (2002) argues that acknowledging student ability and
experience of life contributes to the student learning process. In addition, (Graham, 2002, p. 3) suggests that there are guidelines to be followed when developing and preparing teaching materials. The materials should “have variety, be attractively presented, account for different learning styles, attitudes and needs of students” (Graham, 2002, p. 3).

By distinguishing between a teacher as a facilitator and a teacher as an information transmitter, it becomes necessary to distinguish between students as passive learners and as active learners. With active learning, a facilitator supports the learner to develop their understanding of what is being learnt. Learners play an active role in the learning process. Therefore, a teacher as a facilitator of learning displays a range of different teaching skills as a consequence of a different concept of teaching. Rhodes and Bellamy (1999) argue that a facilitator uses questions to help the learner take ownership of the learning process. A facilitator of learning challenges learners to think critically and to arrive at their own conclusions. A facilitator participates in a dialogue with learners. Therefore, it is important for a facilitator of learning to shape the curriculum so that it reflects student understandings of what is being taught rather than just repeating what is expected in assessment tasks.

Therefore, from a constructivist, student-centred perspective, the learning process is an interactive interplay between the teacher as a facilitator of learning and the learner. It requires a view of learning where the background of both the facilitator and the learner interact to shape meaning. Consequently, it is essential for the teacher to develop a strong rapport with students in the classroom.

According to Von Glasersfeld (1989), maintaining motivation to learn relies largely on learner confidence. Learners need to believe in themselves and their potential to learn. Feelings of competence originate from first-hand experiences in successfully solving problems. When learners are successful in solving problems they then become intrinsically motivated to solve additional problems. This then motivates learners to
embark on new challenges. Constructivism requires high quality facilitation of learning to motivate and engage learners to take responsibility for their own learning. As a novice teacher, my teaching experience was limited. As a teacher from a different cultural background, my knowledge of student background and student everyday life was restricted. Consequently, the challenge for me to become a good teacher was to not only learn how to engage students but to learn how to establish rapport with them. I had to learn about their backgrounds, their culture, their interests and how to use what I had learnt in my teaching.

There are a number of teaching strategies which are consistent with constructivism. Collaboration or group work enables learners with different expertise and backgrounds to share their knowledge and discuss problems so they arrive at shared understandings of what is learnt in class. Learning in context enables students to apply their learning in that context. As a teacher, it is important to keep a balance between structure and flexibility. Flexibility enables a teacher to respond to student needs as they emerge in the classroom. However, there still needs to be enough structure to provide clear direction for student learning. Importantly, learning experiences should be open enough for students to discover, enjoy, interact and arrive at their own, socially verified version of truth (Skamp, 2004).

Scaffolding is an effective teaching strategy which is consistent with constructivism. The purpose of scaffolding is to provide experiences upon which the student can base further learning. Van Der Stuyf (2002) argues that learners do not passively listen to information and remember facts. Instead, they use their prior knowledge to inform new learning. Positive teacher feedback encourages students to interact with new knowledge. It also serves to build self-esteem. Scaffolding helps students to learn and build their confidence to face new challenges. Scaffolding also minimises learner frustration because they can relate more easily to new learning.
According to Van Der Stuyf (2002) there are some disadvantages of scaffolding. Scaffolding is time-consuming. This can be challenging if there are large numbers of students in a class. Another disadvantage is that scaffolding requires a high degree of teacher expertise. Therefore, teachers need to be trained to implement scaffolding. Student-centred teaching approaches require the teacher to give up some of their authority or control and to be tolerant of student errors. This is hard to implement in an exam-oriented education system. Finally, scaffolding involves guiding teachers about how to teach. It does not have specific examples or methods to guide teaching practice. This is because it is dependent on student background and the past experiences they bring to the classroom as well as teacher background and experiences. Although there are some disadvantages to using scaffolding as a teaching strategy, the benefits outweigh the disadvantages.

As a beginning teacher, it was hard for me to implement student-centred teaching strategies and to scaffold student learning of Mandarin. I was educated in China and my entire education was dominated by teacher-centred teaching approaches. The only form of assessment I experienced was exams. Scaffolding student learning and using student-centred approaches was totally foreign to me. As a teacher-researcher, the research reported by this study helped me to learn about and understand student-centred teaching strategies and to incorporate them in my teaching practice. I also learnt that the purpose of following a constructivist view of teaching and learning and employing student-centred teaching approaches was to place the student at the centre of learning. I also learnt that it is not so much the strategy itself that is important but the intention to view students as the focus or centre of learning. If this principle is followed, then even if a teacher is not as effective as they would like to be, they will still be able to teach from a student-centred perspective.

2.9 Quality teaching
The NSW DET conducted methodology training for all volunteer teacher-researchers to learn about teaching in a NSW school context. The training focused on quality teaching and followed a Quality Teaching model. Pedagogical reform movements have a long history. At the beginning of the 20 century, educational reformers advocated that classroom learning was alien to student everyday life experiences since classroom knowledge was formal and abstract (Erik & Jan, 1999). In the middle of the 20 century, educational reformers, such as John Dewey, conceived of learning processes based on student experiences which removed the barrier of schooling irrelevance (Erik & Jan, 1999). ‘Authentic pedagogy’ is an example of contemporary pedagogical practice that builds on existing ideas of educational reform including Dewey’s idea of using real or authentic learning contexts. Authentic pedagogy capitalises on using student experiences and their interests in those experiences. “Learning experiences are lifelike and instantly applicable to social situations.” (Erik & Jan, 1999, p. 203).

However, many educationists hold the view that knowledge taught in school is “inert knowledge” which is hard to transfer from school to real life (Erik & Jan, 1999, p. 203). In addition, students are generally educated using set curricula which regard students as passive listeners instead of active learners. In order to overcome these issues, Vygotsky (1978) argued that learning should take place in a specific context. He used the term situated learning to specify this context.

Authentic Pedagogy is influenced by constructivism. Constructivists argue that knowledge is constructed by learners who relate new knowledge to their past experiences or existing cognitive structures (Bruner, 1993). “Knowledge is created by doing, researching and actively experiencing reality” (Erik & Jan, 1999, p. 204). One of the most important roles of the teacher is to scaffold student learning by stimulating and coaching them. In this way, students develop and internalise an independent and critical attitude towards learning that benefits themselves and society (Taylor, 1992). They increase their social capital.
Authentic Pedagogy exhibits features based on constructivist theory and is characterised by situated learning. The most important of these features are:

- the meaningfulness of the learning context;
- the connection between learning and behaviour;
- knowledge as a tool rather than as a goal in itself;
- the significance of the interactions among learners;
- the influence of cultural attitudes; and
- the idea of the learner as an active researcher” (Erik & Jan, 1999, p. 205).

Newmann, Marks and Gamoran (1996) distinguish three standards of authentic performance: construction of knowledge, such as the organisation of knowledge; disciplined inquiry, such as substantive communication; value beyond school. Take value beyond school for example, when students use knowledge to analyse personal experiences or social problems, students build connections between knowledge, school and beyond. There are two levels of valuing beyond school. The first is personal value when students build connection to their personal world (Erik & Jan, 1999). The substantive construction of knowledge relating to student experiences is substantive engagement in the classroom (Munns & Martin, 2005). The second level of valuing beyond school is value for the professional world (Erik & Jan, 1999). When students value beyond the school, students build connections between knowledge and the wider social community which is consistent with big ‘E’ engagement according to Munns and Martin (2005).

Erik and Jan (1999, p. 206) identify four characteristics of authentic pedagogy:

- construction of knowledge in complete task environments;
- connectedness to students’ personal worlds;
- value of learning activities beyond school; and
- co-operation and communication.
Newmann et al. (1996) argue that the implementation of authentic pedagogy relies on the classroom culture and establishing a decision-making democracy. A significant degree of authenticity is hard to implement in the classroom, however, the shared power relations of teachers at school are more likely to promote quality learning in the sense that it increases authenticity (Erik & Jan, 1999).

Based on authentic pedagogy, the NSW Department of Education and Training (2003) develop a NSW model of authentic pedagogy. There are three dimensions of the NSW model – intellectual quality, quality learning environment and significance. Intellectual quality refers to “producing deep understanding of important, substantive concepts, skills and ideas” (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003, p. 9). Intellectual quality requires students to construct their own knowledge. Student construction of knowledge based on their own experiences is one of the central tenants of constructivism. Students are required to use high-order thinking and to communicate substantively about their learning. High-order thinking is aligned with cognitive engagement (Munns & Martin, 2005).

Quality learning environment is defined as “pedagogy that creates classrooms where students and teachers work productively in an environment clearly focused on learning” (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003, p. 9). Quality learning requires teachers to set high and explicit expectations of students and develop positive rapport with students which is also consistent with constructivism. Significance refers to “pedagogy that helps make learning meaningful and important to students” (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003, p. 9). Significance is helpful when encouraging students to realise the importance of education both in their present and future lives. Significance is important when providing a learning environment that encourages students to work towards big ‘E’ engagement (Munns & Martin, 2005). The NSW Department of Education and Training (2003, p. 9) states that significance
builds clear connection with students’ “prior knowledge and identities, with contexts outside of the classroom and with multiple ways of knowing or cultural perspectives”.

The relationships among the three dimensions of authentic pedagogy are interactive. However, the intellectual quality dimension plays a central role in producing high quality student learning outcomes. Quality teaching requires student-centred teaching approaches where teachers scaffold student learning to enable them to benefit from work of high intellectual quality.

The relationships among constructivist views of teaching and learning, student-centred teaching strategies and quality teaching are explicit. Quality teaching advocates the use of hands-on activities, connectedness and group work and aligns with constructivist theory and student-centred teaching strategies. A quality learning environment, as a dimension of quality teaching, requires student engagement as one of its constituent elements. The NSW Department of Education and Training (2003, p. 13) suggests “most students, most of the time, are seriously engaged in the lesson or assessment activity, rather than going through the motions. Students display sustained interest and attention.” Quality teaching requires students to be emotionally engaged through sustained interest, behaviourally engaged by participating in activities and cognitively engaged by producing work of intellectual quality. Therefore, quality teaching requires that students substantively engage in the classroom. In addition, quality teaching advocates that students realise the significance of engaging in present and future learning, which is required for big ‘E’ engagement. Hence, quality teaching as a model advocating student-centred teaching and learning stimulates student engagement from the classroom to the school level and beyond.

The Quality Teaching Framework shares characteristics and a theoretical framework with Authentic Pedagogy (Newmann et al., 1996) and Productive Pedagogies (The States of Queensland Department of Education, 2001). All three models attempt to
influence classroom and school pedagogy and are based on a constructivist view of teaching and learning (Munns, 2004b).

2.10 Rapport

Rapport means “the relationship that the students have with the teacher and vice versa” (Harmer, 2007). In order to work with students and establish a good learning environment, teachers need to spend some time to develop a positive rapport with students. The indicators of rapport can be a “positive, enjoyable and respectful relationship between teacher and students and between the students themselves” (Harmer, 2007, p. 113). When the teacher is identified as a good leader and a successful professional by students, it is easy for the teacher to build a rapport with students. When the teacher is well-prepared, students have confidence in the teacher. Such confidence is vital in establishing successful teacher and student rapport. In addition, teacher in-depth knowledge of the subject and familiarity with classroom materials contribute to successful student and teacher rapport (Harmer, 2007).

There are teachers who are well-prepared and who are knowledgeable, however, if the interaction between students and teachers does not work, helping students to engage in learning will be compromised. Therefore, interaction with students is an important influence on rapport.

There are four key indicators of successful student and teacher interaction. The first is simply recognising students. Students want their teachers to know who they are, not only their names, but also their characters. Teachers need to know students as individual. The second is listening to students. Student feedback is essential to build rapport. One of the most effective ways to achieve this is to listen to students in a substantive and meaningful way. The third indicator is teacher respect for students. Students are all different with different learning styles and abilities. Teachers need to
respect student individuality. The fourth is to be even-handed when dealing with
students. Teachers need to treat students equally to maintain rapport with all students.

These four indicators show that a teacher cares about students. When employed as a
package they build to promote effective student / teacher rapport. An individual and
caring attitude towards students is essential in developing effective relationships with
students (Zwozdiak-Myers & Capel, 2009).

2.11 Teacher Confidence

It is important for teachers to present themselves with confidence. Teacher confidence
is related to teacher knowledge of the subject matter and to a sense of authority.
Students expect a teacher to have an authority which they exercised with confidence
in a way that pays due respect to students. Students feel secure and reassured with
confident teachers. If a teacher is unsure and apprehensive, students are likely to
undermine their authority.

Teacher confidence is indicated when teachers give clear instructions and
explanations that are not disrupted or detracted from by hesitation. Use of a clear and
effective teacher voice is important when delivering instructions. “A slower, lower
and well-articulated delivery is more authoritative and displays more confidence than
a fast, high-pitched method of speaking” (Zwozdiak-Myers & Capel, 2009, p.121). In
addition to voice, teacher posture, movement and eye contact are ways to convey
teacher confidence.

Teacher confidence and enjoyment in teaching is strongly influenced by their
proposed a strong relationship between teacher enjoyment and confidence in teaching
and effective pedagogy. Teachers who are confident are more likely to engage in
pedagogy that promotes positive and solution-oriented classroom outcomes. Teacher
enjoyment of and confidence in teaching also influences their emotional engagement with students and promotes student motivation and engagement (Martin, 2006). Teacher and student positive rapport promotes student learning as well as helping to develop a good classroom learning environment (Harmer, 2007). Therefore, teacher enjoyment of teaching, pedagogical effectiveness and emotional engagement in teaching closely relate to student motivation and engagement in learning. However, there are other factors, such as gender and level of schooling (primary versus high school) which also influence teacher enjoyment and confidence in teaching.

2.12 Beginning Teacher

Leask and Moorhouse (2005, p. 22) state that beginning teachers pass through three main phases of development. Phase 1 focuses on self-image and classroom management; phase 2 focuses on whole class learning and phase 3 focuses on individual student learning (Leask & Moorhouse, 2005). In phase 1, it is hard for beginning teachers to change their self-image from a learner, who is not responsible for facilitating the learning of others, to a teacher who is responsible for promoting the learning of others (Leask & Moorhouse, 2005). Changing from a passive participant to an active manager with authority takes time and effort. As a beginning teacher becomes more competent in classroom management, the focus of the beginning teacher moves from classroom management and self-image to student learning. In phase 2, the teacher learns how to present lessons more effectively and explains concepts and ideas more effectively so that learning takes place at a whole class level (Leask & Moorhouse, 2005). Assessment helps the teacher to evaluate learning outcomes. Later, as teaching skills and professional knowledge increase, the teacher becomes confident in designing lessons that cater for individual students. Building differentiation into lessons facilitates learning by students with a variety of abilities, different backgrounds and different learning styles to achieve target goals (Leask & Moorhouse, 2005).
Based on the work of Leask and Moorhouse (2005), Allen and Toplis (2009, p. 32) reconceptualised the three stages beginning teachers move through as they emerge as competent teachers. Stage 1 focuses on self-development, Stage 2 focuses on whole-class learning and Stage 3 is about classroom stability and focusing on individual student learning. In Stage 1 the beginning teacher is preoccupied with self-image. They identify themselves as a student more than as a teacher. The beginning teacher wants to be popular with students. They see this as a way of building rapport and they avoid developing “an atmosphere that negatively affects pupils’ emotions” (Allen & Toplis, 2009, p. 32). The most important concern for the beginning teacher is teacher and student relationships. Beginning teachers assume that if they can win student respect then learning and other achievements will follow. However, students will always challenge teacher boundaries and authority as well as teacher willingness to act on misbehaviours.

In Stage 2, with some experience, the beginning teacher begins to develop strategies to work on classroom management. They begin to experience some success in classroom management which may initially be inconsistent and largely unpredictable. However, as discipline is established it enables the teacher to focus on whole-class learning. Allen and Toplis (2009, p. 33) use the phrase “steady improvement in classroom performance” to indicate improving classroom management. In this stage, beginning teachers start to think about their autonomy as a teacher. They think about ways to do things differently and to accommodate broader school expectations. In Stage 3, teachers are less anxious about classroom management. Beginning teachers start to think not only about whole-class learning but about individual student learning. To facilitate their movement to more effective teaching, the assistance of other staff such as tutor or mentor may be necessary. Importantly, critical self-analysis and reflecting on their teaching practice is essential for further development towards becoming a competent teacher. “The purpose of lessons needs to swing towards the needs of pupils, and away from you as a student teacher, with content focused on learning” (Allen & Toplis, 2009, p. 34).
Fuller (1969 in Arends, 2009) and Feiman-Nemser (1893 in Arends, 2009) cite three stages as teachers moved from novice to expert. The first stage is ‘survival’, the second is the ‘teaching situation’ stage and the third focuses on student results and is called the ‘mastery’ stage Arends (2009). All three stages parallel those of other researchers as described above. The ‘survival’ stage is about classroom control and interpersonal relationships. The ‘teaching situation’ stage is about the teaching situation itself, such as teaching strategies, teaching resources and catering for student numbers and gender. The ‘mastery’ stage is when teaching becomes efficient and effective and addresses the fundamentals of knowledge. Teachers reach higher-levels of interactions with students and address student social and emotional needs. They emphasis fairness and negotiate a balance between teaching and student needs. It is during the ‘mastery’ stage that teachers move to sharing responsibility for student learning.

All three models of developmental stages for beginning teachers (Leask & Moorhouse, 2005; Allen & Toplis, 2009; Fuller & Feiman-Nemser in Arends. 2009) have implications for this study. Although, there are some differences among the three models, the main ideas embedded in the three models are very similar. All three models indicate that learning to teach is a developmental process. Beginning teachers move from a “simple and concrete” stage to a more “complex and abstract” stage (Arends, 2009, p.32). Beginning teachers develop knowledge and skills and acquire expertise that they build on to become expert teachers. The type of expert they become is dependent on the view of teaching and learning they acquire as a result of their experiences. These models described can be used as a diagnosis tool for analysing teacher development. They provide a basis for the beginning teacher to accept anxiety and the concerns they may have about their early teaching practice. They can help a beginning teacher cope with a sense of inadequacy and help them cope with the normality of their development as a teacher. Importantly, the beginning teacher can use the information embedded in these models to plan learning.
experiences for themselves and purposefully move towards a more mature and professional level – to become more expert.

2.13 Action Research

Reflection is the dominant way to enhance context-specific and personal theories of second language (L2) teachers (McDonough, 2006). Education can promote reflection by involving teachers in action research. Much research has been done on ‘good’ classroom practices rather than investigating the learning process of L2 teachers. It is important to know “how teachers generate knowledge about teaching, how they develop teaching skills, how they link theory and practice, and how their previous experiences inform their belief systems” (Freeman & Richards in McDonough, 2006, p. 33). Action research provides opportunities for teachers to observe, evaluate, and reflect systematically on their classroom practices. It helps teachers to promote understandings and self-awareness and to make changes in their teaching if necessary. Action research helps teachers to realise the importance of learning how to find the answers to problems and develop personal theories about L2 learning. It can also help teachers to cope with the relationships among students, teachers, and researchers. It contributes to the profession and effectiveness of teaching practices (McDonough, 2006).

Teachers sometimes experience teaching problems they want to solve. Action research can be used to help them make decisions about what teachers and students can do to improve the teaching and learning in classrooms:

Action research is the name given to a series of procedures teachers can engage in, perhaps because they wish to improve aspects of their teaching, or alternatively, because they wish to evaluate the success and / or appropriateness of certain activities and procedures (Harmer, 2007, p. 414).
There is a substantial difference between research and inquiry. Research is to build or test some assumption. The aim is to “abstract a theory from classroom practice” (Harmer, 2007, p. 414). Inquiry is to “solve immediate problems, or answer urgent personally-relevant questions” (Maley in Harmer, 2007, p. 414). This study intends to find out why things happen in a particular Mandarin class and what happens when more engaging teaching strategies are used.

Although definitions of action research are much debated, they tend to share certain features. Burns (1999, p. 30) stated:

1. Action research is contextual, small-scale and localized – it identifies and investigates problems within specific situations.
2. It is evaluative and reflective as it aims to bring about change and improvement in practice.
3. It is participatory as it provides for collaborative investigation by teams of colleagues, practitioners and researchers.
4. Changes in practice are based on the collection of information or data which provides the impetus for change.

One of the main features of action research is the action research cycle as outlined in Figure 2.4. This action research cycle (Coughlan & Coghlan, 2002, p. 233) is typical of most action research cycles used by practicing teachers to investigate and improve their practice.

![Action Research Cycle](image)
Action research starts with a problem and a plan to investigate it. For example, a teacher may want to know how to engage students in learning a second language. The teacher may want to find out which teaching resources and teaching strategies are most useful in engaging students in an L2 class. Action research can also be used to find out which kind of activities can promote student engagement in learning.

When problems are identified, a number of questions are raised and answered during teaching processes. Formulating these questions can impact on how data is gathered. Having collected data, the teacher can analyse it and reflect on the findings and decide what to do next.

Action research may be described as a process involving clear and linear steps, but the reality is that “action research is a dynamic process of moving back and forth across these steps as the data acquired continually reshape practice decisions, additional questions and the gathering of additional data” (Parsons & Brown, 2002, p. 159). An action research model for approaching professional practice is stated below:

Step 1: a question, a problem
Step 2: problem relevance, problem significance
Step 3: definitions
Step 4: review of related literature
Step 5: developing hypotheses
Step 6: outcome measures
Step 7: methods-creating a design
Step 8: data collection
Step 9: data analysis

2.14 Conclusion

Chapter 2 provided the theoretical underpinnings that contextualise engagement and motivation and the relationship between them. It introduced the MeE Framework (Munns & Martin, 2005) and focused the research reported by this study on small ‘e’ engagement in the classroom as opposed to other forms of student engagement. This chapter discussed the relationship between teacher engagement and student engagement, which is the main focus of this study. Theory about small ‘e’ engagement was distilled from the MeE Framework which provided a theoretical basis for the researcher to explore the interactive relationship between teacher engagement and student engagement. Chapter 2 outlined the REAL Framework (Woodward & Munns, 2003) as a way of collecting data on student engagement. It was argued that the REAL Framework could be used to acquire student feedback about the ability of lessons to engage students.

This chapter described different teaching approaches and strategies in terms of their consistency with student-centred learning as underpinned by constructivist views of teaching and learning and their consistency with student engagement as described by the MeE Framework. It described the Quality Teaching Framework and its relationship to teaching in NSW DET schools and student engagement. The importance of student rapport was discussed along with teacher confidence to identify some of the skills a teacher would need to develop to engage students. The beginning teacher literature was examined as a way of informing this study about the limitations of a beginning teacher being able to engaging students. This chapter concluded with an outline of action research as the method of enquiry.
used to collect and analyse data. Chapter 3 describes the theoretical basis of the methodology, including data sources, data collection and data analysis.
Chapter 3
Methodology
A teacher-as-researcher study

3.1 Introduction

The research reported by this study is about student and teacher engagement. This study is about a teacher from China learning how to become a more engaging teacher while teaching Australian school students Mandarin as their second language. The study addresses engagement in two different ways. The first is in terms of teacher engagement with learning how to be a better teacher while the second is student engagement with learning in response. When preparing and delivering lessons, the teacher-researcher developed different teaching strategies and materials to purposefully engage in the process of interesting and engaging students. The study also explored student engagement as a way of monitoring and providing feedback to the teacher-researcher about her engagement as she promoted student engagement.

The MeE Framework (Munns & Martin, 2005) provided a basis for conceptualising engagement. It connects motivation, classroom engagement and school engagement. This study focused on classroom engagement. Teacher and student engagement were the focus of this study with student engagement as an important indicator of the success of teacher engagement. Student engagement was assessed using the REAL Framework (Munns & Woodward, 2006) as a guide for determining its cognitive, affective and operational dimensions. The MeE Framework (Munns & Martin, 2005) was used as the conceptual framework for student engagement and also contributed to the exploration of teacher engagement. To explore her engagement and student engagement, the teacher-researcher constructed a reflective journal informed by a number of data sources to find ways to improve her teaching and her ability to engage students in learning Mandarin.
Twenty-eight Year 8 students were invited to participate in this study. The school is one of the participating schools in a Chinese language promotion project which is being implemented in the Western Sydney Region of NSW. The NSW Department of Education and Training in Western Sydney Region selected and placed volunteers for teaching Mandarin in schools participating in this project. The Region where the school is located is in an economically disadvantaged area of NSW. Students mainly come from a low socioeconomic backgrounds. Students in this study were of non-Chinese backgrounds. The VTR mainly taught in this high school but also taught and observed in a number of primary schools. The high school students are the main participants in this study.

3.2 Research design

The study took place over two terms for a total of 15 weeks in the first half of 2009. The research design was conceptualised using two timeframes. The first, divided the 15 weeks into blocks of time from one lesson to the next, while the second, viewed the study as a block of 15 weeks.

The first timeframe, from one lesson to the next, had an action research component. The time between lessons was either one or two weeks. Over the 15 weeks, 13 lessons were taught. A lesson was prepared and feedback from a number of sources was used to improve the lesson before it was taught (see Figure 3.1). For example, before each lesson was taught, the classroom teacher in the high school, a colleague VTR and the research supervisor commented on the lesson plan. Their comments were reflected upon and the lesson plan revised to take into account the suggestions made.
At the end of the lesson, students were asked questions selected from the REAL Framework (Munns & Woodward, 2006) as a part of the normal teaching process. After the lesson, the classroom teacher, the colleague VTR and the research supervisor commented on the delivery of the lesson. Their comments and suggestions on the lesson plan and the delivery of each lesson were recorded as field notes. The comments and suggestions made were reflected upon and informed both the development and delivery of the next lesson (see Figure 3.2). In this way it was anticipated that each lesson would be better than the previous one.
Figure 3.2  Elaboration of the weekly timeframe research design showing data sources

The second timeframe was a block of 15 weeks over both Terms One and Two 2009. It analysed the researcher’s views of student views about learning Mandarin at the beginning of Term 1 and then at the end of Term 2. Through the reflective journal, the VTR reflected on the interaction between herself and the ongoing process. The VTR compared her views from the beginning of Term 1 with those at the end of Term 2 (See Figure 3.3).
The research detailed in Figure 3.3 shows that the teacher-researcher held initial views that changed over 15 weeks through a process of teacher-researcher reflections recorded in a reflective journal. The teacher-researcher reflective journal was informed by data gathered from a number of sources. These data were recorded as field notes which were used by the teacher-researcher to inform her reflections about her engagement with learning about becoming a better teacher. Towards the end of the reflective process data from formal interviews were also used to inform the reflective journal. Figure 3.4 details the data sources used to inform the teacher-researcher reflective journal over the total research timeframe of 15 weeks.
The relationships between teacher engagement and student engagement were complex because although they can be conceptualised as occurring in two timeframes, each timeframe interacted with the other. The teacher-researcher was engaged in learning while trying to engage students in their classroom learning. When preparing and delivering a lesson, the teacher-researcher developed different teaching strategies and materials to purposefully engage in the process of interesting, motivating and engaging students. Student engagement was a way of monitoring and providing feedback to the teacher-researcher about her engagement as she promoted student engagement.
The research design used twelve sources of data to answer the research questions (see Figures 3.5 and 3.6). The main data source for teacher engagement was the reflective journal. The main data source for student engagement was student interviews. The whole class also provided data from questions asked at the end of each lesson. These questions were selected from the REAL Framework (Munns & Woodward, 2006). The four teachers who assisted with Mandarin teaching also provided data in the form of informal suggestions on various aspects of classroom teaching as well as providing interview data towards the end of the research. There was an action research component to the research design as the reflective journal was used to inform the next iteration of lessons and subsequent research.

3.3 Theoretical basis of the research methodology

3.3.1 Relativism

Interviews, observations and discussions were used to provide a broad range of data. These data sources were triangulated with one another to reinforce and substantiate research findings. The data sources were divided into two main groups. The first group were gathered on a weekly basis to inform teaching from one week to the next and consisted of discussions, observations and student answers to classroom questions. The second group were substantive interviews with students at the end of the teaching program, discussions, observations and reflections. Consequently, a range of data sources were required for different purposes throughout the research.

The use of multiple data sources was a feature of this study and was one reason for the relativist position taken. The relativist theoretical perspective was outlined by Thayer-Bacon (2003). This study employed a pragmatic perspective which accepts that different social circumstances may provide different outcomes depending on context. This study assumed that:
... knowers as socially embedded and embodied inquirers who are limited in their knowing by their environment, which includes their experiences with the world around them and each other, and their human capacities. Because people are social beings formed in relationships, those relationships will cause people to be formed in certain ways and not others and will limit the possibilities of knowing (Thayer-Bacon, 2003, p.435).

This study cannot lead to an independent truth. Data were collected from a small class sample in one school over two terms. Consequently, the research findings are confined to a specific classroom context at a particular time. The ‘truth’ of the findings applies only to that particular set of circumstances (Thayer-Bacon, 2003). Data were triangulated to look for possible alternative pathways through the data. It was recognised that a different class in a different school over a longer timeframe may yield different research findings and therefore a different ‘truth’. Consequently, although the research findings may not be generalised, the research method can be. In addition, other researchers may find the research findings generalisable to their context if it was sufficiently similar to the one described by this research.

3.3.2 Teacher-as-researcher

Teacher-as-researcher has developed as a theoretical methodology to improve teaching proficiency and professionalism. It achieves this goal through the recognition of teacher self-worth and self-dignity. As professionals, teachers do not just follow prescriptions and undertake routine tasks. They draw on their expertise and professional knowledge to create and produce new ideas which go beyond the conventional ideas of teaching (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004).

Lankshear and Knobel (2004) argue that there are two goals of teacher-researchers. One is to enhance the sense of self-identity and professionalism of teachers. The other is to improve teaching practice in the classroom. Barry and King (1999, p. 660) state that “the combination of a teacher with a researcher is probably the best arrangement,
blending the classroom expertise and research expertise toward the betterment of classroom practice”. This research covered both these focus areas. This study is about a teacher learning through research to be a different teacher in a different social and cultural context and how this impacted her identity and self-worth while she learnt to improve her teaching practice by engaging students in the classroom. Consequently, teacher-as-researcher is a useful framework in which to place this study.

The teacher-as-researcher methodology was used to promote better teaching and learning in the classroom. When teachers have problems with their teaching, they consult the literature and try to find solutions. Solutions tend to be more robust when they are based on evidence. Research is able to provide this evidence. With guidance from research, teachers are better able to develop and implement interventions in the classroom. In this way, teacher-researchers can use better teaching strategies and resources to improve their teaching skills. In addition to individual professional enhancement, there is also the potential to enhance the professional learning of others and develop teaching practices based on creative, systematic and logical evidence (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004).

A teacher-as-researcher culture helps teachers to be more aware of how they can contribute to educational research. It enables teachers to see themselves as ‘learners’ rather than “functionaries who follow prescriptions without question” (Kincheloe, 2003, pp. 18-19 in Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p. 6). Teachers are seen as “knowledge workers who reflect on their professional needs and current understandings”. They learn to take responsibility for “research of their own professional practice” (Kincheloe, 2003, pp. 18-19 in Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p. 6).

A teacher-as-researcher methodology uses methods of inquiry to collect data that is contextualised. As such, data collected takes into account the socioeconomic status of the school and its community. Consequently, this study is contextualised within and is about real-life contexts. The emphasis is on interpretation, meaning-making and
acknowledges the role of the teacher-researcher in the research process (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p. 69).

A teacher-researcher gathers information on “events, processes, issues and activities within real-life contexts by interviewing eye-witnesses” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p. 69). Data are valid, but different people have different interpretations which result in different findings. Therefore, equally valid interpretations of the data construct different versions of reality. This is entirely consistent with the relativist perspective outlined in section 3.3.1 and is another argument to justify the use of the teacher-as-researcher methodology as an appropriate methodology for this study. The teacher-researcher has a direct influence on the research design, findings and interpretations of a study. The values, beliefs and knowledge about a topic directly impact on what kinds of data are collected and how they are reported (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004).

3.4 Methodological Approach and Methods

The research reported by this study used a teacher-as-researcher methodology as a framework in which to collect data. The study also recognised a relativist perspective for research. Both these perspectives are consistent with formal and informal data collection. Data were collected in the form of observations, informal discussions and interviews. The forms these methods of data collection took are outlined in the following sections along with justifications of why they were used.

3.4.1 Observations

Observation is a means of data that involves “carefully watching and systematically recording what you see and hear going on in a particular setting” (Schmuck, 1997 in Mertler 2009, p. 107). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p. 396) state that the distinctive advantage of observation is that it offers teacher-researchers the opportunity to gather ‘live’ data from naturally occurring social situations. Therefore,
a teacher-researcher can ‘look directly at what is taking place in situ rather than relying on second-hand accounts’ (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 396). In addition, “observations enable the researcher to see something that students might not be able to report on themselves” (Schmuck, 1997 in Mertler 2009, p. 107). Compared with other mediated methods, observation as an immediate awareness has the potential to yield more valid data.

A disadvantage of observation as a method of data collection is the time gap between the actual observation and recording it. Another problem with observation as a method of data collection is that it takes a long time and different observations are made in different lessons. A representative set of observations can only occur after a number of observation periods. Minimal observation periods are likely to result in non-representative data and present difficulties with interpretation. Perhaps the greatest issue associated with observation is that the teacher-researcher’s presence might change student behaviour: “There is a great potential for students to behave differently or to say different things if they know that they are being watched carefully” (Schmuck, 1997 in Mertler 2009, p. 107).

Observations can focus on many areas during a lesson. Observation can be factual, such as the number of books in the classroom. They can be events, for example, the amount of off-task conversation. In addition, observation can focus on behaviours or qualities, such as the friendliness of the teacher (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 396).

Therefore, the difficulties with observations as a data source are that they can be very diverse, take a long time and lack a consistent focus. However, observations help the teacher-researcher to gather first hand evidence about the classroom and provide authentic data. The observations of classrooms made by this study were recorded as field notes.

3.4.2 Informal Discussions
Informal discussions help teachers and students to communicate with each other and exchange ideas. They improve mutual understandings and clarify misunderstandings. Informal discussions between teachers and students enable them to talk about specific information and build a deeper rapport (Niehoff & Moorman, 1993). Informal discussions can also generate evidence relevant to research. Informal discussions exist as a consequence of the need to clarify. They are authentic data sources.

Although not a formal method of data collection, informal discussions are often used to validate more formal data. For the purposes of this study informal discussions were recorded as field notes or recollections within my reflective journal. Although not well represented in the methodological literature, informal discussions are authentic and provide ‘living’ data in the context of a teacher-as-researcher methodology.

Examples of informal discussions that were used as data sources for this study were discussions about each lesson plan with teachers before each lesson. At the end of each lesson two or three questions, selected from the REAL Framework (Munns & Woodward, 2006), were asked so that students could provide feedback about the lesson. After the lesson, lesson delivery was discussed with each teacher. Consequently, the informal discussions with students and teachers became an important data source and recorded in the form of field notes.

3.4.2.1 Field Notes

Field notes are descriptions of what researchers see and hear in the field (Bernard, 2002). Field notes were used to keep a record of observations, feedback from informal discussions and comments on lessons from teachers and students. The purpose of field notes was to record a whole range of information in one easily accessible place (Bernard, 2002). Field notes were generally made when the information was ‘fresh’ in the researcher’s mind:
There are no rules as to how research diaries or field notes should be compiled, the prime consideration is finding a format and style that fits with the needs of the research project, and which is found to be workable and useful by the researcher (Newbury, 2001, p. 4).

Field notes functioned in two ways in this study: one was as ‘thick description’ and the other as a record to stimulate teacher-researcher thinking and reflection. The thick descriptions were helpful in generating “accurate explanation and interpretation of events rather than relying on the researcher’s own inferences” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 405). Elements of thick description involve recording:

- Speech acts; non-verbal communication; descriptions in low-inference vocabulary; careful and frequent recording of the time and timing of events; the observer’s comments that are placed into categories; detailed contextual data (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 405).

Field notes were helpful to stimulate thoughts and reflect on the ‘thick descriptions’ (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 407). Reflections were recorded in the reflective journal. The advantage of the field notes was that recorded observations helped generate ‘thick descriptions’ and provided data for this study. It was helpful to think about the descriptions and process them as reflections in the reflective journal. A major distinction between field notes as a data source and the reflective journal as a data source was that field note entries were restricted to statements of fact with little or no interpretation or reflection. Interpretations and reflections were confined to the reflective journal.

There are a number of ways to collect field notes: “Field notes can be written in both situ and away from the situation. They contain the results of observations” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 181). Field notes can be recorded at different levels, namely as key words, detailed observations and descriptions of events.
Field notes were made after conversations with the teacher in the primary school where the VTR worked, the classroom teacher in the high school, the research supervisor and a colleague teacher-researcher. Their comments and suggestions on lesson plans and the delivery of lessons were also recorded as field notes. This initial information was used to think about and reflect upon and so provide the direction and preparation for the lessons delivered in the following teaching cycle.

3.4.3 Interviews

Interviews were also used to collect data for this study. “An interview is literally an inter view, an inter change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest” (Kvale, 1996, p. 2). The strength of using interviews to collect data is that “an interview is a useful way to get large amounts of data quickly” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.108). According to Creswell (2009, p. 179), an interview is useful when participants can not be directly observed. Interviews also allow the teacher-researcher control over the line of questioning. However, interviews also have limitations: “Interviews involve personal interaction; cooperation is essential. Interviewees may be unwilling or may be uncomfortable sharing all that the interviewer hopes to explore, or they may be unaware of recurring patterns in their lives” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 110). There are other disadvantages of interviews. Interviews have to be transcribed and according to Sandelowski (1994), transcriptions lack non-linguistic features, such as facial expressions and body language. These non-linguistic features may be crucial “because they directly influence the nature and direction of analysis” (Sandelowski, 1994, p. 311).

The teacher-researcher drove the process of conducting the interviews in this study. Consequently, “the research interview is not a conversation between equal partners, because the researcher defines and controls the situation” (Kvale, 1996, p. 6). The interviewer was also the researcher in this study. Marshall and Rossman (1999, p.110)
state that “interviewers should have superb listening skills and be skilful at personal interaction, question framing, and gentle probing for elaboration”.

The interview used themes as a basis for each question in the interview schedule. It was essential for these themes to act as a stimulus for a dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee. These themes did not direct the interviewee to provide pre-determined answers but provided a stimulus for the interviewee to express their opinion. That is to say, this study interview was:

Focused on certain themes in the interviewee’s life world. It is neither strictly structured with standardized questions, not entirely “non-directive,” but is focused on certain themes. The interviewer leads the subject toward certain themes, but not to certain opinions about these themes (Kvale, 1996, p. 34).

Interviews in this study took place in a specific context: “The interview takes place in an interpersonal context, and the meaning of the interview statements depends on this context. With the collapse of the universal systems of knowledge, the local, manifold, and changing language contexts come into prominence” (Kvale, 1996, p. 44). The interview context has been discussed because, in addition to effecting data collection, it may effect interpretations of data (Kvale, 1996). The researcher recorded and transcribed the specific questions raised by the interviewer and the interviewee’s specific answers.

According to Mertler (2009) there are different types of interviews, such as structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, open-ended interviews and informal interviews. This research used semi-structured interviews. The purpose of these semi-structured interviews was to gather detailed information about teacher engagement and student engagement in lessons. A set of interview questions were developed to address the research question. Therefore, each question served as an entry to a dialogue. The outcome of the dialogue was the gathering of evidence to help answer the research question. Consequently, the purpose of each interview
question was more important than the actual question itself. Each question in the interview schedule was supplemented by subsidiary questions or probes to achieve the overall purpose of asking the question. The interview schedule was restricted to six focus questions (see Appendix 5) to explore the main research questions posed by this study. The semi-structured interviews facilitated the emergence of different views, ideas and concepts and at the same time allowed for the research question to be explored.

Interview analysis followed the procedure recommended by Coble, Selin and Erickson (2003, pp. 7-8):

1. Hand coding the data.
2. Sorting the data into related categories.
3. Analysing categories to identify recurring patterns and themes.
4. Clustering and specifying the range of participant fears, solo hiking experiences, and coping mechanisms.
5. Making contrasts and comparisons.
6. Subsuming particulars into generals when appropriate to do so.
7. Ensuring conceptual coherence.

Interviews were processed in two steps. The first was to transcribe them and the second was to compare the interview data for similarities and differences and begin the process of exploring them for recurring themes (Coble, Selin & Erickson, 2003).

3.5 Data Collection

Data were collected using observations, informal discussions, interviews and as a reflective journal. Observations and informal discussions were recorded as field notes.

3.5.1 Overview of Multiple Data Sources
There were twelve data sources used in this study which were outlined in Figure 3.5. All sources of data were used to help the volunteer teacher-researcher to engage in teaching Mandarin. The purpose of this study was to investigate how a teacher could purposely engage in teaching Mandarin while engaging students in the learning process. Different data sources were used to help the researcher engage in the process of improving her teaching. All the data sources that were used were part of an action research process. Some of the data sources were generated in a different timeframe than others.

There were informal discussions between the VTR and the principal research supervisor throughout the period of data collection. These were recorded as field notes. There was also a formal interview between the VTR and the principal research supervisor at the end of the data collection period. The classroom teacher in the primary school participated in informal discussions which were recorded as field notes. An interview was also conducted at the end of the data collection period.

Figure 3.5  The relationship among the multiple data sources
Informal discussions with the classroom teacher in the high school were also recorded as field notes and an interview was undertaken at the end of the data collection period as well. Additional informal discussions were also held with a fellow VTR throughout the period of data collection and were recorded as field notes. There was also a formal interview conducted at the end of the data collection period.

The whole class answered twelve questions selected from the REAL Framework (Munns & Woodward, 2006). The answers to these questions were recorded as field notes. The whole class was observed throughout the study and these classroom observations were recorded as field notes. Six selected students from the three sub-groups (‘usually exhibiting positive behaviour’, ‘sometimes exhibiting positive behaviour’ and ‘less exhibiting positive behaviour’) were interviewed at the end of the data collection period.

Throughout the whole research period the VTR constructed a reflective journal. Data from the VTR, as reflections and interpretations, became a key source of evidence driving both the lesson cycle and overall research components. The other 11 data sources acted as contributory data sources for the lesson cycle and overall study.

3.5.2 Lesson Cycle Data Collection

The context for this study was a Year 8 Mandarin class taught by the VTR (see Figure 3.6). In Term 1 2009, the class was taught four lessons by the VTR and four lessons by both the VTR and a colleague VTR. In Term 2 2009, the VTR team taught with the research supervisor and the colleague VTR for three lessons. An additional two lessons were then taught by the VTR and the colleague VTR. Altogether, thirteen lessons were taught over fifteen weeks. Field notes and the reflective journal were the main form of data collection for the lesson cycle. The teacher-researcher also taught primary students Mandarin using a simplified version of the lessons taught in the high school. However, the thirteen lessons taught in the high school were the main data sources for the research reported by this study while the lessons taught in the primary
school were a source of indirect data collected through lesson feedback from the primary school teacher.

Figure 3.6 Lesson cycle data sources

3.5.2.1 Field Notes

Field notes were the records of data collected from teachers and students. A lesson plan was written for each lesson before it was taught (see Appendix 6 for a sample). Comments on each lesson plan were made by the research supervisor, the classroom teacher in the high school and the colleague VTR. As a result of these comments the lesson plan was revised by incorporating the suggestions made. Two or three questions from the REAL Framework (Munns & Woodward, 2006) were used to gather feedback from students about the lesson towards the end of each class. Throughout the lesson, student feedback was continually monitored through observations which were then recorded straight after the lesson as field notes. After the lesson, comments on the delivery of the lesson were collected from the classroom teacher in the high school, the research supervisor and the colleague VTR. This feedback was recorded as field notes.
Towards the end of each lesson, the VTR randomly chose three or four students (for whom parents/carers had granted permission) from the whole class to answer two or three questions. Each question was selected from the REAL Framework (Munns & Woodward, 2006). This was a part of the normal teaching process. The questions were asked in a way which functioned as part of the lesson closure. Questions from the REAL Framework were used to help students self-assess their engagement in the lesson and also assess whether the lesson was engaging or not. Evidence from student self-assessment of their engagement in the lesson was an indicator of the ability of the teacher-researcher to engage students in the lesson and provided evidence for the teacher-researcher to reflect on her ability to engage students.

The REAL Framework (Munns & Woodward, 2006) consists of sixty questions covering the affective, cognitive and operative dimensions of student engagement. For the purpose of this study, the sixty questions were reduced to twelve by selecting only those relevant to this study. Table 3.1 details the questions selected showing their relationship to the affective, cognitive and operative dimensions of student engagement.
### Table 3.1 The questions chosen from the REAL Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of the REAL Framework</th>
<th>Affective</th>
<th>Cognitive</th>
<th>Operative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What were the fun bits in your learning?</td>
<td>1. Name two things to make you think harder?</td>
<td>1. What new thing can you do now?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Why were the fun bits fun?</td>
<td>2. What strategies did you use to learn something important?</td>
<td>2. What would you change about today’s work to help you improve?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How do you feel when you solved a problem?</td>
<td>3. Why do you think doing it differently will help with your learning?</td>
<td>3. How can we change this lesson / unit / strategy / skill next time we do this?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. When and where else could you use this information?</td>
<td>4. Think of a way to use … since we practiced it in class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. List three ways the skills you have learnt can be used elsewhere?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were two reasons for selecting twelve questions from the original sixty. First, the focus of this study was engagement not self-assessment. All sixty questions in the original instrument were contextualised by self-assessment. Second, some questions were used to assess the lesson. For example, one question asked was, what would you change about today’s work to help you improve? This question provided an opportunity for students to assess the lesson. In other words, it allowed students to talk about their engagement in the lesson.

The principal research supervisor not only guided the conduct of the study, but also team taught the Year 8 class with the teacher-researcher. During Term 1 2009, the principal research supervisor only had one role, which was to guide the study. However, in Term 2 2009, the principal research supervisor undertook an additional
role as my colleague classroom teacher. Figure 3.5 shows the relationship between the Volunteer Teacher Researcher (VTR) and other data sources – sources of information needed to help the VTR engage with providing students with a more engaging learning environment.

When selecting a lesson topic, the VTR discussed various options with the principal research supervisor. He offered suggestions on which kind of topic might be interesting for students, especially the twenty boys in the class of which some were difficult to engage. He stimulated the teacher-researcher to think about what would provide more engaging lessons. After a learning context (topic) was chosen that would be engaging for students, the teacher-researcher wrote a lesson plan. In the lesson plan, the teacher-researcher organised different kinds of activities in which students could participate. The principal research supervisor commented on these activities and the timeframes necessary to complete them. His comments were about teaching strategies, teaching materials and the lesson outcomes.

The teacher-researcher was encouraged to think about the teaching, developing a rapport with students and controlling the pace of the lesson. After teaching, the principle supervisor commented on the delivery of the lesson. He provided feedback on teaching strategies, teaching materials, volume of voice, pace of teaching and rapport with students. His feedback and comments on the lesson plans and delivery of lessons helped the teacher-researcher to focus on the changes which were needed to improve the next lesson.

The reason for the principal research supervisor having a role as a classroom teacher was because as a beginning teacher, the teacher-researcher had difficulties with classroom management, student behaviour and the Australian classroom context. Sometimes there were misunderstandings between the VTR and students because of different educational cultures. This occurred despite the classroom teacher helping the VTR to deal with student behaviour problems. Together the classroom teacher and the
VTR survived each lesson but there was a lot of room for improvement. Mere survival was not enough when the desired outcome was to become an engaging classroom practitioner. Hence, the principal supervisor gave additional support as a colleague teacher.

The researcher used a modified version of action research as a methodology for conducting the research (Coughlan, & Coghlan, 2002). The overall aim of the research was to engage with becoming a better teacher – to learn from one lesson so the researcher could improve the next lesson. This was modified action research – action research with a short timeframe and a narrow focus upon which to improve for the next lesson. The assistance of the classroom teacher did not make this easy to achieve. Her busy teaching schedule did not provide enough feedback on my teaching in time to help reflect and think deeply in time to plan and prepare for the next lesson. The principal research supervisor assisted the VTR to improve her ability to engage Australian students. At times he played the role of a classroom teacher. Therefore, he functioned as my research supervisor, mentor, classroom observer and team teacher.

We team taught some classes. He commented on the teaching plan, observed the lessons and offered suggestions on teaching for the VTR from both inside and outside the classroom.

The classroom teacher in the high school commented on the lesson plans and delivery of lessons. The teacher-researcher handed over the lesson plans to the classroom teacher in the high school before each lesson. The classroom teacher commented on the activities, teaching strategies and the teaching materials. She observed my lessons provided feedback and also helped the VTR to control students, especially those students who were difficult to engage in learning. The reason for using evidence from the classroom teacher is because she had first-hand knowledge of the VTR’s teaching as well as the history and potential of each student for their engagement in classroom learning.
The classroom teachers in the primary schools taught the VTR about teaching more generally. What the teacher-researcher learnt in teaching the primary classes was able to be transferred, in a general way, to the high school context. The primary teachers taught the VTR how to simplify lesson plans and how to build rapport with students. The classroom teachers in the primary schools commented on the lesson plans, the delivery of lessons and offered suggestions about how to teach in a more engaging way.

A colleague Volunteer Teacher Researcher taught with the researcher in the Year 8 class. Lesson plans were prepared together which provided an opportunity to discuss the learning context (topic) to be taught and organise a variety of teaching resources. During the lesson, each helped the other to explain the language and give instructions, distributed handouts and deal with behaviour problems. After each lesson teaching strategies were discussed to determine which were the most engaging for students to learn Mandarin. The colleague VTR also helped the teacher-researcher to keep an eye on student reactions during teaching and acted as a source of feedback on the teacher-researcher’s teaching.

3.5.3 Lesson Cycle Reflective Journal

Central to the lesson cycle of the data collection, the VTR reflected on the comments about teaching plans, delivery of lessons, teaching strategies and teaching materials to identify those that could be best incorporate into the next lesson. This initial information was used to inform the direction and preparation of the lessons delivered the following week. The teacher-researcher also had to reflect carefully on behavioural, emotional and cognitive perspectives as they surfaced in the melting pot of the VTR reflective journal. Between each lesson, the VTR also reflected on the information from the contributing data sources and tried to incorporate what was learnt into the next lesson.
Reflective journal entries became a data source for a further round of reflection about teacher-researcher learning and were used to engage the VTR to become a better teacher. Reflections about engagement and VTR learning were directed by the same three dimensions as student engagement, namely, the affective, the cognitive and the operative. A summary of all data sources used in the lesson cycle is provided in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 The function of lesson cycle data sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The role of each lesson cycle data source</th>
<th>Before class</th>
<th>In class</th>
<th>After class</th>
<th>Data collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The VTR</strong></td>
<td>Collect comments on lesson plans and reflect on the comments.</td>
<td>Ask students questions from The REAL Framework and reflect on the answers.</td>
<td>Collect feedback on the delivery of each lesson from teachers and reflect on them.</td>
<td>Reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supervisor, classroom teacher and colleague VTR</strong></td>
<td>Comments on lesson plans which were recorded as field notes.</td>
<td>Team taught with the VTR.</td>
<td>Comments on lesson delivery which were recorded as field notes.</td>
<td>Field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year 8 students</strong></td>
<td>Answers to questions which were recorded as field notes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Field notes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Field notes from the classroom teacher in the high school, the colleague VTR and supervisor and students played a major role as data sources. However, the most important data source was the reflective journal of the VTR.

3.5.2 Overall Data Sources
There were two main sources of data used to collect evidence about the engagement of the teacher-researcher and Year 8 students over the total research period. There were the interviews of the four teachers, six students, the colleague VTR and the principal research supervisor (see Figure 3.7). These data were collected as interviews at the end of the study.

![Figure 3.7 The term-long data sources](image)

Interviews from four teachers and six students were important data for this study. This is because the teachers and students had constant contact with the teacher-researcher throughout the study and were best placed to provide information about student engagement over the total study period. However, as already noted the major data source was the reflective journal of the VTR. At the end of the teaching period, the VTR reflected on the thirteen lessons as a whole to analyse teacher-research engagement and student engagement. Specifically, the teacher-researcher learning how to become a more engaging teacher and student learning in response to a more engaging classroom environment.

3.5.2.1 Interviews
At the end of the study period, Term 2 2009, the teacher-researcher formally interviewed six students. Throughout the study, students were a key source of evidence the teacher-researcher used to assess her ability to engage students in classroom activities. All Year 8 students were members of the population to be interviewed because they attended the class in which Mandarin was taught. The students were divided into three groups, according to their behaviour in the classroom. These three groups were students who:

- usually exhibited positive behaviour;
- sometimes exhibited positive behaviour; and
- exhibited less positive behaviour.

Usually exhibiting positive behaviour, sometime exhibiting positive behaviour and exhibiting less positive behaviour paralleled less negative behaviour, sometime negative behaviour and usually negative behaviour. The purpose of grouping students was to provide a way of ensuring that data could be collected from students over a range of student engagement and motivation levels. The criteria used to divide students into the three groups were based on their observable classroom behaviour as outlined in Table 3.3.
Table 3.3  Indicators of student behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive indicators of student behaviour</th>
<th>Negative indicators of student behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Interested in lessons.</td>
<td>1. Often absent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Thinks about questions.</td>
<td>2. Talks out loud and interrupts teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Projects positive feelings in lessons.</td>
<td>3. Inappropriate verbalisations, such as ask inappropriate questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Follows instructions.</td>
<td>5. Class inactivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Takes notes.</td>
<td>6. Noncompliance, such as destroying worksheets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Asks questions and answer questions.</td>
<td>7. Off-task behaviour such as listening to music or using a mobile phone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Offers suggestions during lessons.</td>
<td>8. Refuses to do academic work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Is respectful of teachers</td>
<td>10. Mucking around and being naughty.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were a total of twenty eight students in the Year 8 Mandarin class which included twenty boys and eight girls. A colleague VTR (VTR team teaching with me) and the teacher-researcher team taught the 28 students for the first half of 2009. After reading Edwards and Watts (2004) and Marsh (2008) about classroom observations of student behaviour, both the VTR and colleague VTR independently constructed a list of indicators for positive and negative student behaviours which were observed in the Year 8 Mandarin classroom which was the site for this study. Both lists were compared and found to be similar. For example, among other criteria both lists mentioned ‘mucking around’ as a negative indicator of student behaviour. However, one list did not mention students being ‘naughty’. Therefore, after consensus discussion this criterion became ‘mucking around and being naughty’.
After additional discussion, six criteria were developed as positive indicators and five were developed as negative indicators of student behaviour. References (XXXX) suggest that five or six criteria are not enough to ensure students will be distributed across the three groups stated above. Barry and King (1999) cite additional student behaviours which were used as a basis for expanding each list of positive and negative behaviours to the ten shown in Table 3.3.

The Year 8 students were divided into the three groups according to their initial behaviour using the criteria shown in Table 3.3. Students were rated from one to three for each of the 10 positive and 10 negative behaviours. One meant usually exhibiting positive behaviour, two meant sometimes exhibiting positive behaviour and three meant exhibiting less positive behaviour. A ‘positive behaviour score’ was derived for each student by adding the individual scores for each of the ten positive behaviours. The higher the ‘positive behaviour score’ the more positive the student behaviour. A ‘negative behaviour score’ was developed in a similar way. The higher the ‘negative behaviour score’ the more negative the student behaviour. Consequently, each student was allocated a ‘positive behaviour score’ and a ‘negative behaviour score’.

The colleague VTR and the VTR rated each student independently. When this was completed for all 28 students they were ranked in order of their ‘positive behaviour score’ and ‘negative behaviour score’ from highest to lowest. This process was carried out independently by both the colleague VTR and the VTR. Each ranked list was then divided into the three behaviour groups. From the positive behaviour list, a score of 24 to 30 indicated students usually exhibited positive classroom behaviours. A score of 17 to 23 indicated students exhibited positive classroom behaviours sometimes and a score of 10 to 16 indicated students exhibited less positive classroom behaviours. From the negative behaviour list, a score of 24 to 30 indicated students usually exhibited negative classroom behaviours. A score of 17 to 23 indicated students exhibited negative classroom behaviours sometimes and a score of 10 to 16 indicated students exhibited less negative classroom behaviour.
Both the teacher-researcher and the colleague VTR identified eleven students in the ‘usually positive behaviour’ category from the positive behaviours list. Five of the eleven students were common to both lists and two of them were girls. In the ‘sometime positive behaviour’ category the teacher-researcher identified thirteen students while the colleague VTR identified eight students. Five students were common to both lists and two of them were girls. In the ‘less positive behaviours’ category the teacher-researcher identified four students while the colleague VTR identified nine students. Three students were common to both these lists but none of them were girls. The same process was followed for the negative behaviours list.

To enhance the credibility of the student selection process, students who would be chosen for an interview would have to appear in a positive behaviour list category as well as the corresponding category from the negative behaviour list. For example, to be selected for an interview, a student would have to appear in the ‘usually exhibiting positive behaviour’ category from the positive behaviour list and the ‘less negative behaviour’ category of the negative behaviour list. In addition, this would have to be the case for the independently generated lists of the teacher-researcher and the colleague VTR. There was one student who appeared in both the teacher-researcher’s and the VTR’s ‘usually exhibiting positive behaviour’ category who was also in the ‘less negative behaviour’ category. Therefore, this student would be ideal to be interviewed at the end of the study as representative of the ‘usually positive behaviour’ category of students.

Students in the other categories were selected in a similar way. When there was no student who met both the teacher-researcher and VTR requirements for a particular category, the next ranked student was selected for interview. The selection of students for interview would depend on receiving the necessary permission of parents / carers.
There were twenty boys and eight girls in the Year 8 Mandarin class. When students were selected to be interviewed, gender was considered so that overall there would be proportional gender representation with two students to be selected from each of the three categories of students. This would give a total of six students to be interviewed.

Table 3.4 Student behaviour indicator scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Student Behaviour Indicator Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive behaviour scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td>10-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague VTR</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The return of the consent forms by students was a significant influence in deciding who could be interviewed. Once students were allocated to the different categories, students meeting all the criteria were selected to be interviewed. However, few students returned the consent forms. Consequently, the students who were interviewed were those who came closest to fitting the selection criteria and who had been given permission to be interviewed by their parents / carers. The research design meant that two students should be selected for interview from the ‘usually positive behaviour’ category, two from the ‘sometime positive behaviour’ category and two from the ‘less positive behaviour’ category. However, even some students who returned the permission notes from their parents / guardians decided not to be interviewed.

Eventually, four students, two boys and two girls were interviewed. A boy (pseudonym Henry) and a girl (pseudonym Dian) representing students from the
‘usually positive behaviour’ category were interviewed. A girl (Rebecca) from the ‘sometimes positive behaviour’ category was interviewed and a boy (Daniel) from the ‘less positive behaviour’ category was interviewed. The VTR taught these four students in both Year 7 and Year 8. Consequently, the VTR knew all four students well and may have accounted for their willingness to be interviewed. Students were interviewed during the second half of the lunch break in the library. The interview room was quiet. There were big transparent windows so that the librarian could see what was happening in the interview room. There were other ethical issues the VTR had consider which are elaborated on in section 3.7.

3.5.2.2 Overall Reflective Journal

The overall purpose of the reflective journal was to act as a site where the VTR recorded evidence based on her thinking and reflections. The reflective journal functioned as a data source in its own right, but it also functioned as part of a process of bringing together and distilling diverse sources of evidence into coherent thoughts. In this way it served as a vital source of data.

Mills (2007) states that a student and teacher journal is kept to provide “valuable information about the workings of a classroom”. Using a student journal enables a teacher-researcher to “gain a sense of student daily thoughts, perceptions and experiences in the classroom” (Mertler, 2009, p. 112). Teacher journals can “similarly provide teacher-researchers with the opportunity to maintain narrative accounts of their professional reflections on practice” (Mertler, 2009, p. 112). The teacher-researcher used a teacher journal as a main data source. Teacher reflections are part of an “ongoing attempt by teachers to systematically reflect on their practice by constructing a narrative that honours the unique and powerful voice of the teacher’s language” (Mills, 2007, p. 70). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993, pp. 26-27 in Mills, 2007, p. 70) explained that a reflective journal might incorporate the following:
• Journals are records of classroom life in which teachers write observations, and reflect on their teaching over time.
• Journals are a collection of descriptions, analyses, and interpretations.
• Journals capture the essence of what is happening with students in classroom and what this means for future teaching episodes.
• Journals provide teachers with a way to revisit analyse and evaluate their experiences over time.
• Journals provide windows on what goes on in school through teachers’ eyes.

The reflective journal used by this study was constructed throughout the data collection period of two terms. The reflective journal was written as the VTR interacted with the ongoing processes of teaching, research and reflection on data from multiple sources. The overall reflective journal was used to ‘measure’ the progress the VTR achieved from the beginning of the study to its end. The overall reflective journal provided cumulative evidence for the analysis of the changes and improvements the VTR made in terms of the selection of teaching strategies, teaching proficiency and the ability to engage students in learning Mandarin and so engaging herself in the process of learning to be a more engaging teacher.

3.6 Validity and reliability

No research or research process in perfect. All research has to be purposefully assessed in terms of whether it investigates and measures what it sets out to do and then how reliable the data gathered is. Threats to the validity and reliability of research need to be explored, evaluated and taken into account before the research is defined, while it is carried out and when the findings are reported.

3.6.1 Validity

The teacher-researcher used validity strategies to “assess the accuracy of the findings as well as convince readers of that accuracy” (Creswell, 2009, p.191). Consequently, validity is viewed as a test of whether the data collected is an accurate gauge of what is being measured (Mills, 2007). When this was operationalised in this study it meant maximising the measurement of what was being explored or investigated while minimising influences that detract from an accurate exploration or investigation (Cohen et al., 2007). Strategies used to increase the validity of this study are shown below.

- “Triangulate different data sources of information by examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes” (Creswell, 2009, p.191). Twelve data sources of evidence, including data from teachers and students were triangulated to generate themes during the data analysis.

- “Use member checking to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings” (Creswell, 2009, p.191). Interview transcripts were returned to interviewees to check for accuracy.

- “Use rich, thick description to convey the findings.” (Creswell, 2009, p.191) The central component of thick description was “the interpretation of what is being observed or witnessed” (Ponterotto, 2006, p. 542). Perspectives from four teachers and 28 students on teacher engagement were shared, cross checked and triangulated to yield more realistic results. Throughout the research the teacher-researcher’s reflective diary was used to record detailed descriptions as well as interpret and reflect on information relevant to this study.

- “Clarify the bias the research brings to the study.” (Creswell, 2009, p.192) “Perhaps the most practical way of achieving greater validity is to minimize the amount of bias as much as possible.”(Cohen et al., 2007, p.150). Cohen et al. (2007) stated that the characteristics of the interview, the characteristics of the respondent and the substantive content of the questions may result in bias.
These inherent biases have been recognised and stated throughout this study and reduced where possible.

Particular issue of bias that have been considered included:
- the attitudes, opinions and expectations of the interviewer;
- a tendency for the interviewer to see the respondent in his or her own image;
- a tendency for the interviewer to seek answers that support preconceived notions;
- misperceptions on the part of the interviewer of what the respondent in saying; and
- misunderstandings on the part of the respondent of what is being asked (Cohen et al., 2007, p.150).

This teacher-researcher used different ways to minimise the possibility of bias. The research divided the 28 students into three groups: ‘usually positive behaviour’; ‘sometime positive behaviour’ and ‘less positive behaviour’ students. Two students from each group were to be selected to be interviewed. When interviews were undertaken, gender, student behaviour and ethnical protocols were considered. The criteria for the selection of students were based on their observable classroom behaviour independently. The VTR and the colleague VTR developed independent criteria which were then brought together as one set through a process of negotiated mutual agreement. In this way the interview data collected from students was representative of the range of student classroom behaviour and would be more likely to reflect classroom motivation and engagement. Having interview participants with a range of classroom behaviours would increase the validity of the data collected.

3.6.2 Reliability

Reliability means “dependability” (Mills, 2007, p. 94) and indicates that “the researcher’s approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects” (Creswell, 2009, p.190). According to Mills (2007, p. 98) “reliability is a measure of
the consistency with which our data measure what we are attempting to measure over
time”. Consequently, high reliability implies minimum error variance. There were
several reliability procedures available for use across this study:

- Check transcripts to make sure that they do not contain obvious
  mistakes made during transcription.
- Make sure that there is not a drift of codes, a shift in the meaning of
  the codes during the process of coding.
- Cross-check codes developed by different researchers by comparing
  results that are independently derived (Creswell, 2009, p.190).

This research attempted to minimise error so that reliability would be enhanced. The
teacher-researcher checked the interview transcripts and made them available to
interviewees for member checking to ensure their accuracy. In addition, the researcher
checked coding processes throughout to ensure the original code meaning were
maintained. The research supervisor went through the data analysis process as well as
checking everything independently. Where there was disagreement, discussion took
place until consensus was reached.

Data collected from interviews was reliable because the questions were asked in way
that interviewees understood them and had the experience or background to be able to
answer them. The six interview questions were the same for the four teachers and for
the six students. The follow-up questions or probes were based on the conversations
between the researcher and the respondents. Interviews, as a way of data collection,
were used systematically and consistently which enhanced their reliability in
measuring student and teacher engagement. The consistent process of selecting
students to be interviewed also enhanced the reliability of the study.

To maximise the reliability of this study, the VTR ensured that the 12 data sources
were collected in a consistent way using the same techniques. Before each lesson, the
teacher-researcher collected feedback and comments about the lesson plans from the
classroom teacher, the colleague VTR and principal research supervisor. During the lesson, the teacher-researcher asked students questions selected from the REAL Framework (Woodward & Munns, 2003) and recorded the responses as field notes. After each lesson, the teacher-researcher asked for comments on the delivery of the lessons. The teacher-researcher engaged in systematic reflection after each lesson so that what was learnt from one lesson could be incorporate into the next lesson to improve student engagement. This consistency in the data collection process improved the reliability of this research.

3.7 Ethics

Ethical practice increases the quality of research. Gibbs (2007, p. 101) states that “the key to ethics in research is to minimise the harm or cost and maximise the benefit”. There was no risk of harm in the research reported in this study. The study did not lead to commercial benefit for the investigator. Students participated in normal classroom learning activities. Therefore, the benefits outweighed any risk to participants and did not compromise learning. There was a supervisory panel from the Centre of Education Research to monitor the conduct and progress of the study. There were fortnightly supervisor panel meetings and research training tutorials. There were meetings with the principal supervisor every week. There was continuous feedback from participants throughout the study.

This research was beneficial for participants and the wider community. It provided a possibility for students to improve their engagement in learning Mandarin as a second language which was consistent with National Statement for Engaging Young Australians with Asia in Australian Schools (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2006). The feedback from participants informed the preparation and delivery of a sequence of Mandarin lessons which made them more engaging and beneficial for both current and future students. There were benefits for teachers involved in this project because they gained insights into strategies that could be used
to engage students and reduce student disengagement in similar contexts. The study also helped teachers when preparing their lessons to use more engaging teaching strategies and resources. The colleague VTR learnt about student engagement and assisted in preparing more engaging lessons for her classes. This study also provided a way of engaging Australian students in learning Mandarin as a second language. It also provided a basis upon which future teachers, including cohorts of VTRs from China, to meet the challenges of teaching Mandarin in a different cultural context.

Kvale (1996, pp. 110-120) addresses ethical guidelines for “informed consent, confidentiality, consequences, the role of the researcher and ethical issues at the start of a study”. Kvale (1996, p. 112) states that informed consent entails “informing the research subjects of the overall purpose of the investigation and the main features of the design, as well as of any possible risks and benefits from participation in the research project.” In addition, he suggests that informed consent involves the voluntary participation of participants.

Participation in this study was voluntary. Consent from students under 18 was given by their parents / carers. Both students and carers were provided with information sheets that detailed the project and their role in the study. Both students and carers were asked to return a consent form. Participants were advised that they could withdraw at anytime. There was no consequence for none participation. At the end of this study, there was no foreseeable future relationship between student participants and the researcher. There was at all times a normal professional teacher / student relationship. Students did not perceive they were part of a research project. The teachers and colleague VTR were also in a normal colleague relationship that did not change during the study.

There was no consequence for non-participation. As data was gathered through normal classroom practices, there was no impairment to the teacher-student relationship or student learning. The collection of research data through normal
classroom practices meant that evidence was collected in synergy with teaching and therefore not distinguishable by students. The student interviews were conducted in a way so that students perceived it as part of normal teacher/student discussions.

Cohen et al. (2007) and Mills (2007) mention anonymity and confidentiality as ethical guidelines. They state that the principal of ensuring anonymity is “not using the names of the participants or any other personal means of identification” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 64). In addition, Cohen et al. (2007) stated that researchers should protect the rights of participants through ensuring confidentiality. This means that “although the researchers know who had provided the information or are able to identify participants from the information given, they will in no way make the connection know publicly and the boundaries surrounding the shared secret should be protected” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 65).

In this study participants and their schools were given pseudonyms to protect their privacy. Conversations with classroom teachers were recorded as hard-copy notes. Emails with other participants were kept on computer file. Paper information has been stored in a locked cabinet. Computer files including emails all require a password for access. The research supervisors have the right to use this evidence in accordance with ethical guidelines.

### 3.8 Generalisability of the research

Mills (2007, p. 98) defines generalisability as follows:

Generalisability refers to the applicability of research findings to settings and contexts different from the one in which they were obtained. In its strictest sense, however, generalisability is not directly applicable to teacher action research because of its highly contextualised nature.
This study has a component of action research. According to Barry and King (1999, p. 659), “an intention of action research is to do something only within the confines of that classroom and mostly the results are not intended for applying to other classrooms or settings. Therefore, the issue of generalisability beyond the study classroom does not apply”. Mills (2007, p. 97) states that “the power of action research is not in its generalisability. It is in the relevance of the findings to the researcher or the audience of the research.”

It is up to the reader to make a judgement about the generalisability of the research reported by this study to their own context. This research is not experimental. The findings are characterised by a specific context. The findings are therefore not automatically transferable to other educational contexts. This is especially the case since there is a cultural component of each lesson. Although the methodology can be generalised, the specific nature and background of participants will significantly influence the findings.

3.9 Data Analysis

There are 12 data sources as shown in section 3.5. Data were collected in the form of observations, informal discussions, interviews and a reflective journal. Observations of the whole class and informal discussions with the students and teachers were recorded as field notes.

Interviews, observation and informal discussions of both teachers and students were analysed using recurring themes. This was because the emergence of patterns in the interview transcripts and field notes were obvious and sufficient. Content analysis was used to analyse lesson cycle and overall teacher-researcher reflections as a means of systematising data analysis.

3.9.1 Content Analysis
Content analysis is “a technique that enables researchers to study human behaviour in an indirect way, through an analysis of their communications” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009, p. 472). There are a variety of types of communications that can be analysed for their content. They include textbooks, essays, newspapers, pictures and songs. In addition, the contents of a communication can take a number of forms. These include beliefs, attitudes, values and ideas which are revealed in their communications (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). To analyse these messages, a researcher needs to develop “appropriate categories, ratings, or scores that the researcher can use for subsequent comparison in order to illuminate what he or she is investigating” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009, p. 472).

Content analysis as a method is used in conjunction with historical and ethnographic research. It is used as a means of providing systematising and quantifying data (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). There are some advantages of using content analysis. “A major advantage of content analysis is that it is unobtrusive. A researcher can ‘observe’ without being observed, since the contents being analysed are not influenced by the researcher’s presence” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009, p. 483). It is extremely useful as “a means of analysing interview and observational data”. It enables the researcher to delve into records and documents to obtain insights into social life of an earlier time without the limitation of time and space. The logistics of content analysis is relatively simple and economical. As the data are sustainable, it provides the possibility for other researchers to replicate a study.

However, there are some disadvantages of using content analysis as a methodology. “A major disadvantage of content analysis is that it is usually limited to recorded information. The other main disadvantage is in establishing validity” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009, p. 483). The validity of categories is a question in content analysis. In historical research, records are frequently analysed using content analysis. However, the records that can be analysed are only those that have survived or a record of what
someone thought was important to write down. But different generation have different opinions of what is importance. In other words, something important in the past might be considered trivial nowadays. In addition, researchers are likely to consider that the interpretations distilled from a particular content analysis indicate the causes of a phenomenon rather than being a reflection of it (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009).

According to Cohen et al. (2007, pp.476-483), there are eleven steps involved in the total process of content analysis:

1. Define the research questions to be addressed by the content analysis.
2. Define the population from which units of text are to be sampled.
3. Define the samples to be included.
4. Define the context of the generation of the document.
5. Define the units of analysis.
6. Decide the codes to be used in the analysis.
7. Construct the categories for analysis.
8. Conduct the coding and categorising of the data.
9. Conduct the data analysis.
10. Summarising.
11. Making speculative inferences.

The teacher-researcher reflective journal was organised around pre-determined questions. Five questions were used as an organisational tool for Term 1 with an additional two questions added for Term 2 taking the total number of questions for Term 2 to seven. These questions provided a scaffold around which the teacher-research could reflect while drawing on all data sources. In the first round of analysis the reflections for each question were summarised and the main ideas from each lesson, one to lesson 13, were recorded. The key points from each summary were then extracted as the preliminary analysis. The result of this first round of
analysis was a list of key points for each question from lesson 1 to lesson 13 (see Appendix 7).

The second round of analysis involved taking the key points identified for each question irrespective of which week from which they were derived and grouping them into categories. This second round of analysis resulted in sets of categories of responses. Each set was based on one of the seven questions used to organise the reflective journal. Each set of categories could then be further analysed for patterns or emerging themes. The third round of analysis was similar to the second, however, each of the seven questions was analysed for changes that took place over time from lesson 1 to lesson 13 or from the beginning of the study to the end of the study.

3.10 Overarching Use of the MeE Framework to Focus the Data Analysis

The MeE Framework was used to help structure and organise the findings from the data analysis. This section will show how the MeE Framework was used to contextualise engagement.

From the literature review on engagement, Munns & Martin (2005) divided engagement into small ‘e’ engagement and big ‘E’ engagement. Small ‘e’ engagement focused on classroom engagement which was the focus of the study. Big ‘E’ engagement was not substantially addressed by this study. Munns and Martin (2005) divided small ‘e’ engagement into three dimensions, behavioural, emotional and cognitive engagement. However, they did not cite specific indicators of each of these three dimensions. Consequently, additional research was required to establish specific indicators of these three dimensions of engagement.

Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris (2004), and Jimerson, Campos and Greif, (2003) argued that student engagement was a multidimensional construct that united behavioural, emotional and cognitive dimensions in a meaningful way. They defined
behavioural engagement in three ways. The first was in terms of student conduct, the second was in terms of participating in the learning processes and the third involved taking part in school-related extracurricular activities (Fredricks et al., 2004, p. 62; Finn & Rock, 1997). Emotional engagement incorporated affective reaction in the classroom, attitudes and values and student–teacher relationships. Cognitive engagement included being strategic or self-regulating and using learning strategies as well as other indicators. The detailed indicators of the three dimensions of engagement are outlined in the Table 3.5.
Table 3.5 Indicators of three dimensions of engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavioural engagement</th>
<th>Student conduct</th>
<th>Positive behaviour</th>
<th>Completing homework, complying with school rules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Negative behaviour</td>
<td>Absences, tardiness, fighting, getting into trouble and interfering with the work of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in the learning process</td>
<td>Positive behaviour</td>
<td>Effort, persistence, concentration, attention, asking questions and contributing to class discussions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-related extracurricular activities</td>
<td>Participation in sport, drama, debating and school governance</td>
<td>Big ‘E’ Engagement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional engagement</th>
<th>Affective reaction in classroom</th>
<th>Interest, boredom, happiness, sadness, and anxiety</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes and values</td>
<td>Liking or disliking school, the teacher or school work; feeling happy or sad in school; or being bored or interested in school work. Emotions also included interest in and valuing schooling, which also overlapped greatly with motivational research.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-teacher relationships</td>
<td>Get along with teachers. Orientation toward work transferable skills and attitudes (sticking to tasks and maintaining an interest in things that take a long time).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive engagement</th>
<th>Being strategic or self-regulating</th>
<th>Strategic students use meta-cognitive strategies to plan, monitor, and evaluate their cognition.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use learning strategies</td>
<td>Rehearsing, summarising and elaborating to aid memory, organise and understand material</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other indicators</td>
<td>Self-monitoring, exchanging ideas, giving directions, justifying an answer; using learning strategies and control strategies, evidence of persistence; relating the task to prior knowledge, requesting clarification and using analogies as measures of cognitive engagement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5 was used to identify indicators of the three dimensions of engagement for the four student interviews. Each indicator was colour coded to identify each of the three types of engagement. For example, indicators of behavioural engagement were coloured yellow, indicators of emotional engagement were coloured orange and indicators of cognitive engagement were coloured pink.
3.11 Conclusion

This chapter outlined and justified the methodology used for this study. The chapter outline included the research design, the theoretical basis of the research methodology, the methodological approach, data collection, validity and reliability, ethics, generalisability, data analysis and the theory identified for analysing student engagement. The research design used a teacher-as-researcher theoretical basis and incorporated an action research component. Observations, informal discussions, field notes and interviews were used to collect data. The main data source was the teacher-researcher reflective journal which was analysed using content analysis. The MeE Framework (Munns & Martin, 2005) was used to analyse student interviews for the three dimensions of engagement.

Action research and teacher-as-researcher combined as the methodological basis for the study. Multiple data sources provided the evidence base for the study with a variety of methods used to collect data. Data were analysed using content analysis and recurring themes. Chapter 4 will analyse the teacher-researcher reflective journal using content analysis.
Chapter 4
Analysis of the teacher-researcher reflective journal:
Student and Teacher Engagement

4.1 Introduction

Chapters 4 and 5 outline the data analysis. Chapter 4 reports the analysis of the reflective journal which is the most informative of the data sources. Chapter 5 reports the analysis of the interviews and field notes which function to triangulate the reflective journal analysis. “Qualitative data analysis involves organising, accounting for and explaining the data; in short, making sense of data in terms of the participants’ definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 461). The reflective journal was analysed using content analysis to identify key points (Cohen et al., 2007). The key points that emerged were then organised into their emergent, recurring themes (Erikson, 1986; Coble, Selin & Erickson, 2003).

Data analysis followed a grounded approach with coding occurring after all data were collected. The main purpose of the reflective journal was to generate and think through ideas. A full description of the codes generated throughout the coding process is listed in Appendix 7. In the final stages of the analysis, an iterative process was used to generate categories and connect them with theory. Different theoretical perspectives were drawn on during the data analysis. The MeE Framework of Munns and Martin (2005) generated theoretical categories for emotional, behavioural and cognitive dimensions of engagement. These theoretical dimensions were used to categorise the emergent themes.

4.2 Reflective journal analysis
The reflective journal was the main data source because it functioned as a melting pot where observations, student and teacher informal discussions and teacher-researcher thinking came together to inform lesson preparation, delivery and evaluation. The reflective journal was organised around pre-determined questions which formed the basis for journal entries after each lesson. The first question was: What was good about the lesson? All the data collected after a lesson was brought together to answer this question. This pattern was followed for each question after each lesson. There were five questions used to organise the reflective journal in Term 1 with two additional questions added in Term 2. Consequently, the reflective journal ended up as a collection of 13 separate entries (one for each lesson). Each entry was organised by a series of questions, five for Term 1 and seven for Term 2. The content analysis used to analyse the reflective journal followed the process outlined by Cohen et al., (2007) where summaries were made of entries which were then used to identify key points that emerged from the data (Cohen et. al., 2007). An example of this process is shown in Table 4.1 which shows the analysis for lessons 1 to 4.

Table 4.1 Reflective journal analysis for question 1, weeks 1 to 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Key points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1      | - curiosity promotes motivation and engagement  
        - student participation motivates  
        - participation and discussion promotes engagement; Competition is motivating | Students were engaged by:  
        - curiosity  
        - participation and discussion |
| 2      | - real life resources are engaging  
        - everyday life examples help students engage | Students can be engaged by:  
        - real life resources  
        - everyday life examples |
| 3      | - using resources is engaging  
        - humour is engaging  
        - lesson plans need to incorporate flexibility  
        - the teacher should think deeply about student difference  
        - the teacher should be aware of the different | Student can be motivated by:  
        - resources  
        - humour  
        - flexibility  
        - thinking about student difference  
        - thinking about student difference |


The key points that emerged from the reflective journal were further analysed in two ways. The first was to extract and group similar key points as they emerged from the data, irrespective of when they occurred and then look for patterns and trends (Cohen et al., 2007). For example, emerging key points related to student engagement were grouped together while key points about student motivation were grouped together across all thirteen lessons. This would produce, for example, an overall key point called engagement and an overall key point called motivation. Within the key point for engagement there would be a number of ways to engage students while within the key point for motivation would be a number of ways to motivate students.

The second way the data were further analysed was to examine the thirteen lessons and look for patterns and trends that changed over the whole delivery time. For example, were the key points for the early lessons different to these of latter lessons? Consequently, the reflective journal was analysed in each of these two different ways. As key points are discussed, they are illustrated using quotations taken directly from the reflective journal entries.

The analysis of the first question from the reflective journal (What was good about the lesson) identified five key points. That is, a good lesson:

- engaged students;
• motivated students;
• was where the teacher provided clear demonstrations, using student background to teach and reminded students of the purpose of Mandarin lessons;
• was where the teacher reflected on the interrelationships of the dimensions of engagement; and
• was where the teacher was encouraged to maintain enthusiasm for teaching from student feedback.

Each of these five key points subsumed a number of different exemplars. For example, the first key point was that a good lesson engaged students. Thirteen ways were identified to engage students. Ways to engage students were distinguished from ways to motivate students which were distinguished from ways the teacher provided clear demonstrations and so on.

The analysis of each question is reported separately, key point by key point. The first of the five key points emerging from question one, engagement, is reported in terms of the thirteen ways found to engage students. Each way to engage students is discussed in terms of the evidence found in the reflective journal using quotations from the reflective journal as illustrations.

Key Point 1: A good lesson engaged students

Thirteen ways were identified to engage students. The first way was to use real life resources and examples. Real life resources and examples were relevant to students which also allowed students to use their background knowledge to understand what the teacher was talking about. When Chinese and Australian foods were taught, McDonalds was used as an example:
I asked them a lot of questions such as what they ate for breakfast. Do you like McDonalds? Was there anyone who has tried Chinese food? These questions helped them understand what I was going to talk about. These questions also involved their daily life experiences which made things easier for them to understand (17/02/2009).

Using real life resources and examples was engaging because students connected Mandarin learning with their daily life which was consistent with ‘knowledge’, discourses of power (Munns & Martin, 2005). According to the Fair Go Project (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 78), knowledge means the understanding of meaning and connection to students, especially the “frequent and serious conversations to show how learning has real life and immediate application”. Having connectedness between learning and student everyday life experiences satisfied the requirements of NSW quality teaching, because students realised the significance of learning Mandarin. In addition, applying student background knowledge or prior information to stimulate further learning was a way to scaffold student learning according to constructivist theory (Wertsch, 1997). Wertsch (1997) argued that the background and culture of the learner helped to shape the knowledge that the learner creates, discovers and attains in the learning process.

Australians have a strong sense of humour. When I first came to Australia, I was unable to understand the Australian sense of humour. After several months, I adapted to Australian humour and I joked with students. I told a joke about muffins when I used food as a context for teaching Mandarin. Consequently, sharing jokes was identified as the second way to engage students to learn Mandarin. The extract below illustrates this:

When I arrived in Australia, my teacher was very hospitable and invited us to eat some Australian food. When she introduced muffins, we were quite surprised. In Chinese, muffins sound like ma fen (马粪). ma (马) sounds like a horse in Chinese while fen (粪) sounds like ‘dumpings’. The word muffins sounds like the dumpings of a horse (horse manure).
She told us muffins were yum, but we Chinese were reluctant to eat them as horse ‘dumpings’ were used as fertiliser rather than food (19/02/2009).

Students were encouraged to share the joke with their parents and friends. The use of humour, in the form of a joke, was valuable from two perspectives. The first was the joke itself – it was enjoyable. The other was that the Australian students realised their Mandarin teacher was starting to learn from them and engage with their Australian sense of humour. The teacher and students were learning from each other and negotiating a learning environment they both enjoyed (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006). In addition, sharing jokes was helpful to build the relationship between the teacher and students.

A lesson was engaging when it promoted classroom discussion. When one boy and one girl competed with each other using chopsticks, the audience was asked to discuss why the girl won the game. An extract from the reflective journal shows that:

Students compared the different styles of using chopsticks. The girl who was the winner held the middle of chopsticks while the boy held the top. Some of the audience demonstrated the best position to hold a pair of chopsticks. When I invited the next group, they held the chopsticks in the middle. They learnt this skill from their classmates (05/02/2009).

The teacher asked the students to work out the reason why the girl won the competition. The students had a discussion and shared their ideas. They learnt from each other which is consistent with ‘voice’ as a discourse of power. Voice means ‘we share’ as defined by the Fair Go Project (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006). Voice is when “classroom talk becomes more like a series of conversations between students, their teacher and each other”, according to Fair Go Project (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 78). Student discussion allowed students to share their knowledge and understandings and provided an opportunity to stimulate student learning. Importantly, it was a student-centred teaching approach that was engaging. Duffy and Jonassen (1992) state that learners with different skills
should collaborate in tasks and discussions to arrive at shared understandings of the truth. The role of the teacher is to scaffold learning by providing guidelines and creating an environment for learners to arrive at their own conclusions (Rhodes & Bellamy, 1999).

The fourth way to engage students was to promote classroom movement. Students in primary school had short attention spans. If students in primary classes moved around, it helped to promote engagement in learning. “I spent 10 minutes teaching colours with them sitting on the floor. Then they moved to sit at their desks for a colouring-in activity. Then they moved back to sit on the floor to learn something else” (25/02/2009). Classroom movement helps to engaged students behaviourally according to Munns and Martin (2005).

The fifth way was when a lesson included hands-on activity. In the kite-making lesson, students revised colours and numbers which they had learnt previously. They then learnt how to say different words for the materials used to make kites. When they asked for materials for kite-making, they had to say words in Chinese. Otherwise, they did not get the materials. My research supervisor helped me to plan this lesson. I was worried whether students would ask for materials in Chinese or not, since there were some students who were frequently off-task. Students did a good job. This is illustrated by the extract:

We taught Mandarin through kite-making activities. I prepared a variety of resources from which students could choose, such as scissors, paper, glue and string. When students asked for materials for kite-making, they had to speak in Mandarin. For example, when the students wanted glue, they had to say wo yao jiao shui (我要胶水). To my surprise, they learnt Mandarin very fast and willingly in this context. When students feel the need to learn, they can use every effort to learn.

Two of the students who did not finish making kites wanted to take the kite home and finish it. It is a good sign. I thought they valued the kite-making lesson (06/05/2009).
Hands-on activity engaged students in ‘doing’ things which is also consistent with Munns and Martin’s (2005) behavioural engagement. The hands-on activity lessons incorporated operative engaging pedagogy by students actively participating in experiences while working towards their becoming more effective learners. Students are involved in learning experiences by hands-on activity that are helping them to become more competent and empowered learners (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006). In addition, learning by doing is consistent with constructivism. Described as a form of human cognition, constructivism is related to pedagogic approaches that promote learning from hands-on activities (Skamp, 2004).

The sixth way to engage students was to use a Chinese and Australian cultural context. The incorporation of cultural perspectives promoted student interest and engagement in the class. When ‘animals’ was used as a teaching context for Year 8 the meaning of the word ‘horse’ was used as a specific example as it appears in Chinese culture:

On Melbourne Cup Day, I was in a primary school. Some teachers dressed up and all the staff celebrated the event. I read the newspaper and I knew that even Kevin Rudd made a bet on horse number seven. I realised that the Melbourne Cup is important in Australia.

When I taught students animals, I wrote a Chinese character on the board and let students guess what the animal was. I said this animal runs very fast. Students said leopard. At last, I gave a clue that it was related to the Melbourne Cup. Students knew the answer. When I taught about a horse, I deepened the meaning of a horse using Chinese concepts. A white horse in Chinese means Mr. Right (25/03/2009).

I then talked about another story in Chinese culture to reinforce students learning the Mandarin character and word for horse:

When a Chinese person opens a new business, we usually give a craftwork of a horse as a gift. This means the business will be prosperous and successful. The Chinese idiom ma dao cheng gong (马到成功) means ‘horse’ and symbolises success and prosperity (25/03/2009).
Students saw the different meanings of ‘horse’ in the different cultural contexts. This was new and interesting for them and these differences promoted student thinking and learning. Using the cultural contexts of the Melbourne Cup and opening a new business acted as a ‘hook’ to teach the Mandarin character and word for ‘horse’. It linked Australian and Chinese cultures and engaged students both emotionally, through interest, and cognitively, by promoting student thinking and learning. In addition, teaching the Chinese character for horse using the Melbourne Cup applied “student local knowledge and experiences” and contributed to “everyone’s knowledge and learning”. This is in-line with the Fair Go Project (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 78) requirement for discourses of power – knowledge. Students used their prior knowledge to build new knowledge which is consistent with constructivist theory (Wertsch, 1997). Vygotsky (1978) suggests that the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is the difference between what a learner can learn without help and what they can learn with help. In this example, the learning context provided a scaffold for students to learn more than they would have without it.

The seventh way to promote engagement was through student and teacher interaction. When the research supervisor observed one of my lessons he noticed that students were absolutely engaged in learning Mandarin twice. The first was when the roll was marked; the second was when the meaning of the Mandarin word ‘horse’ was explained. In Chinese classes there is a traditional greeting ceremony that takes place at the beginning of each lesson. This occurs in every class from kindergarten to the end of high school.

At the beginning of each lesson, the teacher takes the initiative to say shang ke (上课) which means class begins. Everyone stands up. The teacher bows to the students saying tong xue men hao (同学们好) which means ‘hello to students’. All the students reply lao shihao (老师好) as they bow to the teacher. When students and teachers finish bowing to each other and greeting each other, the teacher will say qing zuo (请坐) which means ‘sit down please’ (02/04/2009).
This is the routine greeting between teachers and students in China and became the greeting at the beginning of each Mandarin class for this study. When I first started teaching in Australia, I found that students and teachers did not bow to each other. The Chinese greeting ceremony was new to Australian students. Importantly, it helped to set up a Chinese context for students to learn Mandarin. After the ceremony, I marked the roll. When I marked the roll, students were expected to speak Mandarin in reply to my saying dao (到) which means I am here or mei lai (没来) which means absent. My research supervisor encouraged me to speak more Chinese when I marked the roll and to expand this learning time in the classroom. It was because marking the roll occurred at the beginning of each lesson when teachers and students were interacting in a reverent, formal and respectful way. Students were focused and attentive. Since marking the roll occurred at the beginning of every lesson, there was the opportunity for repetition to reinforce learning. An extract from the reflective journal states:

When I marked the roll, I practiced Mandarin with students as revision. When students spoke Chinese to me, I would reply hao (好) in Chinese which means ‘good’ in English. One student did a better job and I taught them hen hao (很好) which means ‘very good’ in English (02/04/2009).

Marking the roll was engaging from three perspectives: The first was because it was new and provided an opportunity for students to experience Chinese traditional customs. The exotic influence interested students which is consistent with student emotional engagement. Another reason was because it provided for classroom movement which engaged students behaviourally. Thirdly, students were expected to speak in Mandarin and this reinforced their language learning which is in line with cognitive engagement as outlined by Munns and Martin (2005).

A lesson was engaging when the teacher shared stories with students. This was the eighth way to make lessons engaging. I taught students how to say ‘good’ and ‘very good’ in Mandarin and students asked me how to say excellent in Mandarin. I taught
them that excellent in Mandarin is tai bang le (太棒了). Then I shared a story about an Australian speaking the word ‘excellent’ in Mandarin:

When a Ningbo Education Delegation arrived in Australia, DET Western Sydney Region held a celebration at the Sydney Opera House. The DET Western Sydney Regional Director, who had learnt Mandarin for many years as a second language, gave a welcoming speech in Mandarin. He said ni men tai ben le (你们太笨了). tai ben le (太笨了) means too stupid. ni men tai ben le (你们太笨了) means you are too stupid. We Chinese were shocked to hear this. But later we understood that he intended to say ni men tai bang le (你们太棒了) which means you are excellent. The pronunciation of ben and bang is quite similar, but the meaning makes a huge difference (02/04/2009).

Sharing stories like this one is interesting and students become emotionally engaged in their learning (Munns & Martin, 2005). Sharing stories can incorporate high levels of affective engagement. By sharing stories, both the teacher and students are involved in conversations that “negotiate learning situations to bring about mutually stimulating and enjoyable emotions associated with classroom work” (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 12).

Reinforcement of Mandarin in activities is good for students and helps them to retain what they have learnt. This is the ninth way to make lessons engaging. My colleague VTR and research supervisor team-taught with me and helped develop the kite-making idea into a three lesson sequence. In these three lessons, numbers, colours and materials for kite-making were reinforced. In addition, new words were added as students learnt more Mandarin:

Revision was very helpful for students to build their language skills. I asked one boy his opinion of the three lessons on making kites. He said he was more involved in them than before. … Importantly, revision in those three lessons helped him to remember the Mandarin he had been taught before. Revision helped him improve (12/05/2009).
Revision is helpful for students. It helps them to memorise and is part of student cognitive engagement (Munns & Martin, 2005). However, if revision is only in the form of repetition, students will not be engaged for long. Therefore, developing activities for students to be involved behaviourally and emotionally is helpful in maintaining cognitive engagement. In the context of discourses of power, ability means “feelings of being able to achieve and a spiral of high expectations and aspirations” (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 78). Revision of Mandarin helped students to feel that they were capable of learning Mandarin. Revising Mandarin through activities not only allows students to “demonstrate what they know and can do but also challenges them to learn more” (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 78).

The next way to engage students was to use popular teenage topics as learning contexts. Students are interested in popular music. In their spare time, they spend a lot of time learning a variety of songs. The audio and visual ‘movie video’ was very engaging for students. Music as an example of:

Popular music is relevant to student daily life. I introduced some of China’s most popular stars and their songs. I prepared a PPT for them to learn Mandarin, including the names of stars, their music styles and sentence structure such as I like (wo xi huan, 我喜欢), my favourite song is (wo zui xi huan de ge shi, 我最喜欢的歌是). They learnt some language and enjoyed some music. I showed them rap, pop and rock and roll music. They enjoyed the ‘music video’. One boy told me it was a pretty good lesson. I felt happy and got a sense of achievement (03/06/2009).

When I showed students Chinese popular music, they were very interested in it. They told me that the lessons changed their views about Chinese music. Music is engaging emotionally as well as a large part of most students’ daily life. When “learning has real life and immediate application” it is engaging because students can relate their learning of music to their daily life. This is in-line with the knowledge component of discourses of power according to Fair Go Project (NSW Department of Education and
Students were able to compare Australian and Chinese music. They changed their previous views of Chinese music, therefore necessarily, engaging in higher order thinking, which is consistent with cognitive engagement (Munns & Martin, 2005).

Student positive feedback about the Chinese music lesson encouraged me to teach more about Chinese popular music. In the following lesson, I downloaded some Chinese popular Kung Fu music with a rap rhythm. My previous observations outside the classroom indicated that students were interested in Chinese Kung Fu stars, such as Bruce Lee (李小龙), Jacky Chan (成龙) and Jet Li (李连杰). The combination of Kung Fu and popular music provided an opportunity for students not only to enjoy Chinese popular music but also learn Chinese traditional culture. An extract from my reflective journal states that:

Jay Zhou, a popular Chinese star, sings a lot of songs closely related to Kung Fu. This style of Chinese singing is appealing for students, especially boys. They love music and Kung Fu. Huo Yuanjia (霍元甲) and nunchakus (双节棍) are rap songs which are featured in Kungfu martial arts. In the music video, Jet Li (李连杰) played the role of Huo Yuanjia (霍元甲) and demonstrated Chinese Kung Fu techniques (17/06/2009).

Teenage popular cultures were engaging for students emotionally, because they like music especially teenage popular music. High affective engaging pedagogy was used in the music lesson. In addition, a negotiated learning context was established because both students and the teacher enjoyed the music (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006). Chinese popular music and Kung Fu music changed students’ views about Chinese music. This learning context helped students “make constructive connections with their own real world” (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 78). When students feel a sense of belonging and ownership over their learning it means the lesson is the ‘place’ for them. This is an example of discourses of power – place (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 78). Building
connections with student Mandarin learning and student daily life helped students to apply knowledge learnt at school to real-life contexts. This promoted feelings of educational ‘significance’ according to the NSW quality teaching model (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003).

When I showed the music video, I used my Chinese language software computer. Students were interested in this video and audio resource as well as the fact that the computer could change English letters into Chinese characters. Technology was the eleventh way found to engage students. The use of technology was engaging:

When I used my Chinese language software computer, students were curious about it. I let them type Chinese on my computer. They thought the computer was magic. Perhaps next time I can show them the Chinese software and how to change ‘pinyin’ into Chinese characters (Hanzi) (17/06/2009).

Audio and visual things are engaging emotionally according to Munns and Martin (2005). Beeland (2002) argues that technology can be used to create an engaging learning environment especially when it is used in innovative ways. Importantly, the use of multi-media technology through the “enhanced use of visuals” can provide opportunities for the teacher to meet the needs of a “range of learning styles” (Beeland, 2002, p. 2). This is because visuals promote student ability to organise and process information. In addition, visuals can also be used to challenge students to think at levels that require higher order thinking skills which is cognitively engaging (Munns & Martin, 2005).

The twelfth way to engage students was when the lesson provided students with choice. A variety of choices provided opportunity for students to discuss and to stimulate their thinking. For example:

When we provided the materials for making kites, my research supervisor suggested that I provide a variety of materials for students to choose
from. … I prepared different coloured paper, plastic bags, glue and sticky tape. He asked students to choose what they wanted instead of explaining what the advantage and disadvantage of different materials were. He then asked the students what the advantages and disadvantages of different materials were. The students thought for a while and then explained the advantages and disadvantages of the different materials themselves (28/04/2009).

Providing choice and discussing these choices stimulated student thinking and learning which is consistent with cognitive engagement (Munns & Martin, 2005). Making choices is also consistent with ‘voice’ and promotes an “environment of discussion and reflection about learning with students and teachers playing reciprocal and meaningful roles”, as one of the discourses of power (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 78). Involving students in more decision-making processes is a student-centred learning strategy (Graham, 2002).

Learning step by step was engaging for students and was the thirteenth way to engage students. When I taught colours, I taught four colours and then organised for the students to undertake various activities. Then I taught another four colours followed by more activities. In this way, students learnt the Mandarin for many different colours step by step. Teaching step by step helped students to understand the content and think them through. This is also consistent with student learning patterns (Graham, 2002). When students learn something new and then try to master it, the process is aided if new knowledge builds on current knowledge or existing learning. When learning about colours step by step, students felt that they were able to learn without being overloaded. This is one of the discourses of power – ‘ability’ (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006). Learning step by step allowed students to feel able to “demonstrate what they know and can do but also challenge them to learn more” (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 78).

In summary, a lesson engaged students when it used real life resources and examples, shared jokes, promoted classroom discussion, classroom movement, hands-on
activities, used Chinese or Australian cultural contexts, classroom interaction, stories, reinforcement of language, popular teenage topics, various resources and technology, different choices and promoted learning step by step.

Key Point 2: a good lesson motivated students

A good lesson motivated students was identified as the second key point that emerged from an analysis of the first question. There were three ways identified to motivate students to learn Mandarin.

The first way was to use peer pressure to motivate students to learn Mandarin. For example:

One boy said he can use chopsticks. I invited him to show the class how to use chopsticks. The boy demonstrated how to use chopsticks. While he was practising using chopsticks, the others were watching carefully. I thought he was probably the leader of the class. If he can use chopsticks, other students would think that using chopsticks was not that hard. (05/02/2009).

Peer pressure motivates students to learn and can drive student work effectively, according to Martin (2003). Peer pressure is an extrinsic motivation which comes from the outside according to Ryan and Deci (2000).

The second way to motivate students was to promote student curiosity. When students were going to be taught how to use chopsticks they were presented with a wooden box and asked to guess what was inside the box that contained the chopsticks. Guessing what was in the box aroused their curiosity. An extract from the reflective journal states:

Instead of teaching them how to use chopsticks immediately, I used a red box and let them guess what was inside. They were interested in guessing.
The one who got the right answer was rewarded by being allowed to open the box. Guessing applied student cognitive intelligence to learning. When they were rewarded by opening the box, they felt special in the class. Everyone wanted to participate in the game (05/02/2009).

Guessing applied student’s intelligence to learn and also triggered student cognition to think. According to Martin (2003), motivation is defined as students’ energy and drive to learn, work effectively and achieve to their potential. Guessing motivated students and drove students to learn.

Using cultural differences to motivate students to learn Mandarin and gain student attention was another way to motive students. This is illustrated by an excerpt from my reflective journal when I was team teaching with my colleague VTR and research supervisor:

My colleague VTR taught Chinese numbers using hand gestures. My research supervisor asked students whether Australians have hand gestures to count numbers. Students said no. My research supervisor asked them how about aboriginals. Students did not know the answer. My research supervisor explained that aboriginals count from one to three and after that there is no formal numbering system. If the number of people exceed three they are called a mob. That is why in aboriginal languages the term mob is used frequently (28/04/2009).

My research supervisor compared Chinese and Australian counting systems. He asked students questions about the Australian counting system, students were curious about the answer. Cultural differences motivated students to learn Mandarin. Students showed me that they were willing to learn new things. If the teacher can teach in an interesting way, they will be engaged in the lesson.

In summary, the second key point was that a lesson motivated students when it promoted student peer pressure, curiosity and cultural differences.
Key Point 3: where the teacher provided clear demonstrations, using student background to teach and reminded students of the purpose of Mandarin lessons.

There are a number of things that a teacher needs to be aware of to teach effectively. They include teaching strategies, teaching resources, student and teacher interaction and so on. The following section lists and explains each of them.

A lesson was good when the teacher used clear demonstrations. When paper-cutting skills were taught, “the procedures demonstrated were how to fold a paper, how to draw on the paper and how to use a pair of scissors to cut it correctly” (19/03/2009). Clear teacher instructions and demonstrations helped students learn.

Teacher knowledge of student expertise and facilitating the use of that expertise was the second way the teacher promoted student learning. For example:

When I wrote a tongue twister on the white board, some of students were practicing it by themselves. Some of them had a strong sense of Chinese pin yin (拼音) and their pronunciations were good. I encouraged them to have a go and pronounce it. I realized that pin yin (拼音) was very easy for students to pick up and they have a strong sense of being able to use pin yin (拼音) (02/04/2009).

Knowing student background and expertise is helpful for the teacher to develop a lesson that uses student-centred teaching strategies. Using student-centred teaching strategies is based on a view of learning where the background of both the facilitator and the learner interact to shape meaning (Graham, 2002). Importantly, students can build new knowledge based on their previous knowledge. This is one of the basic requirements of a constructivist view of teaching and learning. Student expertise can be used to encourage students to further their learning. Bruner (1993) also argues that knowledge is constructed by learners on the basis that they relate new knowledge to their past experiences or existing cognitive structures.
The third way the teacher could promote student learning was to remind students of the purpose of the lessons by having specific expectations and making them explicit:

Before we started this lesson, my research supervisor asked students what was the purpose of the lesson. Students said to learn the Chinese language. I found that it was very good to remind students, especially when some of them were inattentive. Reminding them of the purpose of the lesson helped them to focus on the lesson. When we started to make kites, my research supervisor also reminded these students what the purpose of this lesson was. It was to learn Mandarin. They were making kites to make it more interesting (06/05/2009).

Reminding students of the purpose of a lesson helps them focus and establishes a goal to achieve. Explicit expectations of what students are to learn is helpful in establishing a quality learning environment according to the quality teaching model (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003).

In summary, the third key point was that a lesson was good when the teacher provided clear demonstrations, knew students expertise and used that expertise to establish explicit expectations to be achieved.

Key Point 4: a good lesson was when the teacher could see that the theory guiding the research was working to improve classroom outcomes.

A lesson was good when the teacher-researcher could see that the theory guiding the study was working to improve her teaching practice and classroom outcomes. This was identified as the fourth key point.

The ROSETE project trained teachers using a research project embedded in school classroom practice rather than through tutorials and lectures. When the teacher-researcher was conscious of applying learning theory to guide teaching practise, it helped her to reflect on both the research study and her teaching practice.
This was a point made many times in the reflective journal. A typical extract is given below:

I think cognitive engagement, behavioural engagement and affective engagement are closely related to each other. When students are cognitively engaged, they do not have time to muck around which means they are also behaviourally engaged. When they cooperate with me and are fully engaged in the class, they feel good. I think the three dimensions of engagement are interrelated with each other. I also think student engagement encourages teacher engagement (02/04/2009).

A lesson was good when the teacher reflected on the interrelationship of the three dimensions of engagement. The teacher could see that theory did work when it was applied. In addition, the teacher could see that student engagement was helping student learning outcomes which also fed through and helped to engage the teacher to improve her lessons. In order to become an engaged teacher, the teacher was required to be engaged in “reflective teacher practices” (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 78). Teacher reflection on theory and practice helped the teacher to be an engaged teacher.

In summary, the fourth key point was that a lesson was good when the teacher used research to guide her teaching practice.

Key Point 5: a good lesson was where the teacher was encouraged to maintain enthusiasm for teaching from student feedback.

The fifth key point was that a lesson was good when the teacher was encouraged by greater student participation in lessons and their positive feedback on the lesson. An extract from the reflective journal is shown below:

When I revised numbers, one boy volunteered to count from one to ten in Mandarin. At the end of the lesson, I asked what he thought of the lesson. He said he had a lot of fun in class, especially when he flew kites outside.
Students commented on my lesson positively and they participated in the lesson willingly. I felt very happy and very proud of myself. When they were cognitively and emotionally engaged in the lesson, there was no need to worry about their behavioural engagement. I was encouraged to teach more Mandarin in an interesting way. I began to think that how I taught was as important as what I taught (12/05/2009).

When the teacher was encouraged to teach better and try new things in the lesson, it encouraged her to devote more time and energy to lesson preparation and teaching in general. A facilitator participates in a dialogue with learners, which helps the learners to take ownership with the learning process (Rhodes & Bellamy, 1999). Student positive feedback and encouragement helped the teacher to engage herself in learning how to be an engaging teacher. According to Fair Go Project (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 78), taking up the challenge of ‘e’ngaging and ‘E’ngaging students, “teachers and students all have to be in it together”. Becoming an engaged teacher meant the teacher became passionate about engaging in the process of teaching.

In summary, student positive feedback encouraged the teacher to try new things and plan better lessons which engaged her emotionally, behaviourally and cognitively (Munns & Martin, 2005). A good lesson not only engages and motivates students, but helps the teacher become aware of student needs. It also helps the teacher identify where the lesson can be improved and what the teacher has learnt.

Two ways were used to analyse question one of the reflective journal. The first was identifying the key points that emerged across all thirteen lesson cycles. The second was identifying what changed from the beginning of the study to the end of the study. It was found that an emphasis on student engagement was maintained throughout all 13 lessons. The teacher-researcher always focused on student engagement. However, in the early lessons an emphasis on student motivation was also found. Students were often off-task and the teacher tried to motivate them so they behaved better in class. In the next group of lessons, the teacher not only focused on engagement and motivation,
but became conscious of what she needed to be aware of during the lesson. The teacher began to focus on providing a better classroom learning environment to improve lesson outcomes. Towards the end of the research period the teacher-researcher began to focus more on her learning and on the progress she was making as a facilitator of student learning.

In summary, the teacher tried to engage students through the entire research period. However, the emphasis changed from student motivation and control of student behaviour, through improving the classroom learning environment to focusing on her learning to become a better teacher. In other words, a good lesson was initially identified as one that engaged and motivated students in order to manage their behaviour to one that engaged students by developing a quality learning environment and promoted teacher learning. This means that towards the end of the study a good lesson was more complex. The complexity moved from focusing on just student engagement and motivation to both student engagement and teacher learning.

The second question was: What could have been improved? The key points from an analysis of this question were grouped into two areas. They were that the lesson could have been improved:

- by more interaction between students and teachers; and
- by increased teacher confidence in teaching the lesson.

Key point 1: the lesson could have been improved by more interaction between students and teachers

A number of ways were identified to enhance student and teacher interaction.

The first way identified was to incorporate real life situations that promoted interactions between Chinese and Australian contexts. The real life situation would
help students see that learning Mandarin would help them to communicate with other people. For example:

I could have set up a real life situation. For example, we are going to eat in a Chinese restaurant. This makes the class relevant to students. The purpose of learning Mandarin is for communication (05/02/2009).

Real life situations such as going to a Chinese restaurant would help students to relate learning Mandarin to their actual life. Such real life situations and experiences would bring language learning ‘alive’ and make it ‘real’ for students. Therefore, teaching in context and relating teaching to students’ real world is essential (Rodgers, 2002). In addition, building connections between student learning and students’ personal worlds is consistent with the quality teaching model (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003).

When students learnt how to use chopsticks, I could have involved more students and undertaken a variety of activities. This is the second way to enhance student and teacher interaction. I could have organized well-structured activities where each student could have learnt to use chopsticks effectively. For example:

Chopsticks games should have involve most of the students instead of most of them being the audiences. I could have used group work with four students in each group. Two could have competed with each other while the other two kept records. Then students swap roles. Then find the winner of the group. Let the winners of each group compete with each other to find out the champion chopsticks user in the whole class (05/02/2009).

Group work as a teaching strategy can engage more students to participate in activities. Well-structured group work promotes students participation and learning which is consistent with the MeE Framework (Munns & Martin, 2005). Group work, as a learning strategy, is also aligned with student-centred learning because it requires students to make choices and negotiate with others while promoting decision-making
skills (Rodgers, 2002). Collaboration or group work enables learners with different expertise and backgrounds to share their knowledge and discuss problems so they arrive at shared understandings of what is learnt in class (Skamp, 2004).

When I delivered each lesson, I should have used what I knew about each student’s background. This was the third way to enhance teacher and student interaction. The following extract from the reflective journal illustrates this point:

Some of my students have a Chinese background. The next time I teach them I should ask who already knows something about what I am going to teach. If they know something, I should invite them to talk about it and help make it relevant for other students (05/02/2009).

Knowing each student’s background is beneficial for teachers implementing student-centred teaching strategies. It provides an opportunity for the teacher to communicate with students and build rapport. Rodgers (2002) argues that acknowledging student ability and life experience contributes to student learning.

The fourth way to improve my lesson was to have provided a variety of interesting topics and changed the teaching strategies to provide more interaction. An extract from my reflective journal is provided below:

I supposed they would be engaged in learning about food, but to my surprise they were just indifferent to what I was going to teach. When I taught them for half an hour about food, it seemed that they had had enough of it. At that time, I changed my teaching plan and let them draw their favourite food and write Chinese pinyin in their notebooks. They needed help with this and I was able to interact with them as they worked. They liked this activity and they were more engaged than just listening and revising (17/02/2009).

Teaching one subject for half an hour was too long without any other form of interaction. I needed to mix up different teaching activities and teaching strategies to keep their interest. The variety in itself would have been engaging for students. As a
teacher, it is important to keep a balance between structure and flexibility. Flexibility enables a teacher to respond to student needs as they emerge in the classroom. However, there still needs to be enough structure to provide a basis and clear direction for student learning. Importantly, learning experiences should be open enough for students to discover, enjoy, interact and arrive at their own, socially verified version of the truth (Skamp, 2004).

Providing students with clear instruction and interacting with them to ensure they understand what is required before they commence a task is the fifth way to improve a lesson. When students know what they are required to do, they are more engaged. This does not mean the teacher has to tell them step-by-step what to do. However, it does require that students know what the outcome of a task is and that they have an idea of how to achieve it:

> When I handed out worksheets, I did not give any verbal instructions before hand, because the instructions were written in the worksheet. I told them to read the instructions, but to my surprise they did not read them and were confused about what they had to do. Then, I had to explain what I wanted them to do. But by then they were not interested and it took me longer to get them working than if I had given them clear instructions before hand (19/02/2009).

Teacher instructions are necessary for students to understand what they are required to do in the lesson. This is more effective if students interact with the teacher rather rely on written instructions. The teacher needs to direct the lesson and be in control. Minimising student frustrations is necessary to avoid students becoming off-task. It is important to scaffold student learning by providing a clear outline of the outcome of the task without telling them precisely how they should achieve that outcome (Skamp, 2004).

Having a back-up plan and having that back-up plan as well thought through as the original plan was the next way to improve lessons. For example:
I prepared many colourful PPT as a major resource for teaching. But the technology did not work. I used my back-up plan which was to use the print-offs of all the PPTs. The pictures were so small that the students sitting at the back could not see them clearly. Next time, I will use overheads as an alternative (25/03/2009).

In the normal process of teaching, unexpected things happened frequently. A teacher needs to have back-up plans to make sure unexpected problems can be overcome. A back-up plan should be effective rather than second-rate for the sake of being seen to have a back-up plan. If there is a need to use a back-up plan it should achieve the same outcome as the original plan. Student learning should be central to all teaching.

The seventh way to improve lessons through teacher / student interactions is to speed up the teaching so that it is snappy and decreases the time for students to look for alternative things to do. When I organised the kite-making lesson, I need to speed up the pace of teaching and be stricter to avoid students finding time to misbehave. An extract from the reflective journal illustrates this:

We gave too much time to making kites. I needed to speed up my teaching. Dealing with misbehaving students can be avoided if the lesson is snappy. ... I should have said that is enough questions. If you have more questions than ask them as I come around the class. If you let students keep asking questions they will ask silly questions rather than work things out for themselves. ... The students and teacher should interact with each other on a one-on-one basis when necessary. When students are silly, I need to be tough. If I am too sweet, students will take advantage of me. At the beginning, I should have set up rules for the students to follow. If we have rules at the beginning, they will know what to expect. As time goes on, you can focus more on teaching language instead of using too much time for classroom management (06/05/2009).

The lesson could also be improved if the teacher is more strict with students and sets up rules at the beginning of the lesson and pays more attention to settling the majority of students down to work. Interactions with individual students or small groups can
then be used to answer specific questions. Classroom rules are useful in establishing expectations of student behaviour. They indicate standards of behaviour and minimise classroom management issues. According to Leask and Moorhouse (2005, p. 22), beginning teachers are expected to pass through a stage where they: “focus on self-image and classroom management”. It is hard for beginning teachers to change their self-image from a learner, who is not use to being in charged, to a teacher who now becomes ‘the person in charge’ (Capel, Leask & Turner, 2005). The change of role from being passive to being active, managing and authoritative takes time for the beginning teacher to accommodate.

In summary, improving teacher and student interactions in the classroom was identified as the first key point for the second question. Teacher and student interactions could have been improved if the teacher used real life contexts, organized well-structured activities with greater student participation, knew and used student background information, provided a variety of interesting topics, gave clear instructions, had an effective back-up plan, increased the speed of teaching and decreased student misbehaviour.

Key Point 2: the lesson could have been improved by when the teacher increased her teacher confidence

The second key point identified, as a way of improving a lesson, was for the teacher to increase her teaching confidence. Two ways were identified to increase teacher confidence.

The first way was to make an effort to be conscious of my confidence level. In the middle of Term 1, 2009 was when I first became aware that I was becoming less and less confident to teach Year 8 students. Below is an extract from the reflective journal which demonstrates this:
Students were very noisy and I could not get used to the high volume of noise. I felt upset and uncomfortable after teaching my lesson. … But my classroom teacher and my colleague VTR thought my lesson was good. I began to dislike the naughty boys who always talked and disturbed the other students. After this lesson, I realised that my feelings and my emotional engagement in the class and towards the students were changing. I felt nervous and I was reluctant to teach in the high school (19/03/2009).

Teacher confidence influenced how I taught and how I view my students. Importantly, teacher confidence influenced my engagement as a teacher. I am aware that I am an emotional person. My personality is part of who I am which impacts on my teaching. Leask and Moorhouse (2005, p. 8) argue that “teaching is a very personal activity … there are differences between teachers which relate to personality, styles and philosophy”. Green and Leask (2009, p.10) echoed this view by saying that “teaching is a deeply personal profession”. If I can not be engaged emotionally, it is hard for me to engage myself behaviourally and cognitively. As a professional teacher, I know I need to put my emotions aside, especially the negative ones. However, this is not always practical. It is hard to be someone you are not. At times of stress you will always tend to revert to your ‘true’ self. As a beginning teacher, stress is often your company. Therefore, for me, a very powerful tool to help me engage myself as a teacher is to be consciously aware of my confidence in the classroom.

The second way to improve my teacher confidence was to purposefully greet the students at the beginning of each lesson. This not only helped build rapport; it initiated teacher and student interaction in a very positive way. At the beginning of my teaching in Australia I was critical of the Chinese concept of ‘greeting’ between teachers and students. An extract from my reflective journal talks about this:

When I met students in the corridor, I said hello and they said hello to me. At that time, I felt confident and more comfortable than usual. In China, students should say hello to teachers first and then the teachers reply. When students in China do not say hello to teachers first, usually the teacher will pretend that they do not see the students. I also followed this
pattern in Australia, but I saw some primary teachers greet students first. I then changed my view. It was not important who the first person to greet was. What was important was that students and teachers greeted each other. In my next class I took the initiative to greet my students. I found it increased my confidence and built rapport with students both inside and outside the classroom. It made me feel good and it became far easier for me to teach (28/04/2009).

As a person, Chinese culture and Chinese traditions are part of my self-identity. They are a huge part of who I am and cannot be ignored when I am teaching in Australia. From my observations of Australian students and teacher rapport, I learnt that teachers sometimes take the initiative to greet with students. According to Leask and Moorhouse (2005, p. 25), “the early weeks that teachers, new to a school, spend with their classes is crucial to setting up the working relationship, as is the way new teachers conduct themselves in the corridors and playground”. Therefore, as a beginning teacher, I needed to take the initiative to greet with students and actively start to establish my rapport with them. I needed to be in control of purposefully building my self confidence.

In summary, the second key point identified as a way a lesson could be improved was to increase teacher confidence. This was achieved by consciously being aware of my confidence levels and taking the initiative to build rapport with students using a simple greeting ceremony at the beginning of each lesson.

When question 2 was analysed in terms of changes in improving lessons from the beginning of the study period to the end of the study period, it was found that an emphasis on lesson structure and teaching strategies was maintained throughout the 13 lessons. However, at the beginning of the study, the teacher paid more attention to lesson content and teaching strategies. As time went on, the emphasis shifted from teaching strategies to teacher confidence and improving student learning. Towards the end of study period the VTR began to feel that her confidence was improving and that this helped increase her engagement with teaching which helped build rapport with
students and decrease student management issues. Consequently, a spiralling cycle of positive reinforcement was established that improved student and teacher interactions.

The third question framing the reflective journal entries was: What could the VTR do better next time? The key points from an analysis of this question fell into two groups:

- improve classroom management and use more student-centred teaching strategies; and
- decrease negative attitudes towards student learning while becoming more positive towards students themselves.

**Key Point 1: the teacher will improve classroom management and use more student-centred teaching strategies**

There are a number of ways to improve classroom management and use student-centred teaching strategies. The first way was that the teacher should adjust her teaching plans to suit the range of different students. One way of doing this was to use student-centred teaching strategies. Since each student is different, the teaching strategies used should accommodate the differences:

When I taught colours in this way, primary students like it, but high school students were indifferent to it. When I asked them to have a competition, only 4 students were willing to participate. I found that the teaching strategies that worked well in primary schools were different to those that worked well in high schools. I then started to learn more about teacher-centred teaching strategies (25/02/2009).

Students in the primary school and in the high school are different. Different teaching strategies should be used to cater for different age groups. According to Marsh (2008, p. 209), “catering for individual differences is a major concern for all teachers”. Using student-centred teaching strategies requires the teacher to think about students and their needs and interests.
The second way I could do better next time would be to manage the class as a whole by insisting that all students are quiet while I am talking. However, while speaking to the whole class, ensure that those few students who need more attention feel I am speaking specifically to them. This speeds up the pace of the lesson, accomplishes more than one thing at a time because it imposes a classroom discipline that is simultaneously general and specific for some students. The pace of the lesson can also be increased by giving students a time limit in which to finish their work. These issues were discussed in the reflective journal:

When I give instructions, I should wait until all students are quiet. When I talk to the whole class, I should address the whole class rather than just a few students. But, I should do this somehow that makes them think I am talking just to them. I spend too much time waiting for them finish talking and start to work. Next time, I will also give them a time limit for them to finish work. In that way, they have pressure to work and have no time to muck around (25/03/2009).

Classroom management is necessary for classroom control. According to Leask and Moorhouse (2005), the first stage a teacher goes through in becoming a teacher is focusing on self-image and classroom management. They argue that it is only when the novice teacher has gained some confidence in classroom management that they are able to move to the second stage. The second stage is when the novice teacher begins to focus on whole class learning. In addition, classroom management is closely connected with who is in control of the classroom. Classroom control is addressed through Munns and Martin’s (2005) discourses of power. The power discourses influence the way teachers teach and how students view themselves as learners (Munns & Martin, 2005).

In summary, the teacher can improve classroom management by giving clearer instructions when students are quiet, adjusting teaching plans to suit the needs of different students, insisting that students are quiet while the teacher is talking,
addressing the whole class instead of just a few students, increasing the pace of teaching and imposing time limitations.

Key Point 2: decrease negative attitudes towards student learning while becoming more positive towards students themselves

The second key point was that the teacher thought the majority of students were not interested in learning. However, the teacher changed her mind as she began to understand and relate to students as individuals. This happened in two ways at the same time. I was constantly told that students in high schools did not want to learn. The problems I had with classroom management also caused me to believe this. I thought students did not want to be in my class and that they were not interested in learning Mandarin. This negativity coloured my views not just about the class but about teaching. Consequently, I felt sad and unhappy about both my teaching and about being a teacher. I realised my negativity impeded my teaching and my engagement with becoming a teacher. An extract from the reflective journal shows this:

I was told that students in the high school did not want to learn. Their bad behaviour was also because of my teaching. Gradually, I developed a negative view of teaching my Year 8 students. This was a bad cycle I was in. If I felt negative about students learning, I was not engaged in teaching and felt I did not want to be a teacher. Students easily lost their attention and became less engaged in the classroom. Then, the more they paid less attention, the more negative the view I held about them (28/04/2009).

Student lack of engagement in Mandarin lessons made me feel sad and less confident to teach in the high school. Martin (2006, p. 83) states that “teachers’ perceptions of students’ mastery orientation was the strongest correlation of teachers’ enjoyment of teaching. Furthermore, teachers’ perceptions of students’ persistence and students’ planning were the strongest correlates of teachers’ confidence in teaching”. Therefore, as students became less engaged in lessons it caused me to become upset and less
confident to teach. Teacher negativity then impeded teacher performance which increased teacher negativity. Teacher negativity decreased teacher engagement with teaching. Consequently, the relationship between student engagement and teacher engagement was seen to be highly interactive and dependent.

I realised there was a strong relationship between my views of student learning and my views about my teaching. Negativity about student learning impeded both student learning and my own learning. Therefore, I realised the importance of changing my views about my teaching from negative to positive. This is where I had to start. I could not control student views but I could control my own. If I changed my views, it could eventually lead to more positive views being held by students. I asked for help from an experienced teacher. With the guidance of my research supervisor, I changed negative views about students and student learning to more positive views. The negative cycle was broken and a positive one started.

I learnt more about Australian teenage popular culture and became more confident in establishing authority in the classroom. For example:

When my research supervisor helped me with the kite-making lessons, they learnt more Mandarin than in my normal lessons and he did not know any Mandarin. But kids behaved well and they were engaged significantly in the lesson. He thought the students wanted to learn and they were good students. His positive view had a positive influence on student learning and my teaching (28/04/2009).

Positive teacher attitudes are essential for teacher engagement and for student engagement. In the teaching process, the interrelationship between teacher and student engagement is obvious and powerful. Martin (2006, p. 83) argues that “teachers’ enjoyment and confidence are most correlated with the presence of adaptive dimensions in their students’ academic lives”.
In summary, when question three was analysed, it showed that a teacher is in control of their attitudes towards students and their learning. It showed that the teacher could do better by changing negative views to more positive views about students. This, in turn, provided a pathway for students to engage with learning which then fed into teacher learning and a more positive outcome for both teacher and students.

When analysed in terms of the changes from the beginning of the study to the end of the study, it was found that the emphasis on what could be done better changed from classroom management to the interactions between the teacher and students. In the early lessons, the VTR focused on improving her teaching strategies in an attempt to better manage the classroom environment. In the middle lessons, the VTR changed her views about teaching and learning from negative to positive in order to break what had become a negative cycle of feedback. She reflected on the interactive relationships between teacher and student engagement and realised one could either impede or empower the other. During later lessons, the VTR focused more on how to improve her teaching.

The fourth question was: What had the VTR learnt? The key points from an analysis of this question were grouped into three areas. They were what the teacher learnt about:

- student-centred teaching strategies;
- student and teacher interaction; and
- the benefit of being a teacher-researcher.

Key Point 1: the VTR learnt about choosing student-centred teaching strategies

There are different ways for the teacher to choose appropriate teaching strategies. One way is to base the selection of teaching strategies on a view of teaching and learning as a whole so that the process is consistent and where one component informs the
other. Constructivism is a well respected perspective on teaching and learning not just in Australia but across the world (Skamp, 2004). However, not only is constructivism totally new to me, since I was educated in exam-oriented education system, it is difficult for me to accommodate in terms of how I view the relationship between teaching and learning. It seems to threaten fundamental views about control and authority. Nevertheless, I had learnt enough to know I needed to learn more in order to accommodate Australian teaching contexts. Consequently, I encouraged myself to learn how to use student-centred teaching strategies. An extract from the reflective journal shows how I started to learn about scaffolding:

I found that I needed to play a role in scaffolding. I had to help students to learn. I had to provide a variety of materials for students to choose from. I had to have discussions with students but they had to find out the solutions by themselves. I had to guide them to keep them on the right track. But, I should put the responsibility on to the students. I had to learn to see the student as the centre of their learning (28/04/2009).

Involving students in decision-making processes, such as choosing materials, is essential if a teacher is to implement student-centred learning strategies. The teacher has to be prepared to give up some aspects of control but at the same time be in control of the overall learning process. Being in control of the learning process is different to being in control of learning. Rodgers (2002, p.1) defines student-centred learning as “putting more responsibility on the learners for their own learning”.

In Term 1, 2009, I chose a different topic or learning context for each lesson. But in Term 2, 2009, I learnt how to program a lesson from my principal research supervisor so that it became part of a sequence of lessons. This was the second thing I learnt about student-centred learning. I learnt that each lesson is connected to and informs others. I began to see learning as a continuum with each lesson informing the next while it built on the one that preceded it. My principal research supervisor taught me how to develop a kite-making lesson into a three lesson sequence so that I could use
kite-making as a context for teaching more than I had originally intended. An excerpt from the reflective diary is shown below:

I should develop my lessons as ‘chunks’ with each ‘chunk’ connected to the one before it and the one after it. This has to be done so that students can see how each part fits. … As the lessons went on, I added more rigour and more content about the Mandarin language and the students just did it (28/04/2009).

I learnt that in New South Wales, there was no unified textbook for a Mandarin teacher to teach in the classroom. This is very different to education in China. In Australia the teacher is required to create their own teaching resources and cover the syllabus. The syllabus determines what should be taught and not the textbook. As a teacher, I needed to develop my lesson plans based on the syllabus. When I developed my lesson plan, the content had to be related and interrelated so that students can consolidate their learning as they move through the lesson sequence. Lessons should be programmed so that they “demonstrate links between and within subjects and key learning areas” (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003, p. 15).

The third thing I learnt about student-centred learning strategies is that they are not easy to develop and implement. I learnt that implementing student-centred teaching strategies requires more effort, creativity, energy and expertise than following the prescriptions of a Chinese exam-oriented education system. As a teacher, I learnt to consider student enjoyment:

When I teach something, I should take their happiness or enjoyment into consideration. As a teacher, my role is not to transmit knowledge, but to engage students in learning in a substantive way. In this way teaching is sustainable. I have learnt that teaching is just like any ecosystem. The teacher provides an environment where energy, the energy of learning can be recycled, the content is connected and the skills are transferrable so that learning becomes sustainable (25/02/2009).
Student happiness and enjoyment is important. Student emotional engagement is important, particularly in my lessons because this is how I teach best. As I was being educated in China, my emotional engagement was not given enough attention. Sometimes I felt sad when I was taught by some teachers, but I forced myself to learn as much as I could because I realised the importance of education. This kind of hidden emotional trauma was so deeply embedded in my mind that, subliminally, it was causing me to marginalise the trauma my students were experiencing. If students are not engaged in learning, it needs to be recognised and dealt with. It is traumatic for students to have to constantly turn up for classes day after day when they do not see the relevance of them. From my own life experiences, I know that emotional engagement is important and yet it is the least recognised form of engaged learning. As a teacher I want to incorporate more emotional engagement in my lessons. This is not only because it is consistent with my personality but because it is a lost component of engaged learning if it is neglected.

In summary, the first key point about what was learnt about becoming a good teacher was that choosing student-centred teaching strategies was important. Student-centred teaching and learning enables sustainable education because it promotes student enjoyment of learning, student capacity to make choices and requires that lessons are programmed for sequential conceptual development. By their very nature, student-centred learning strategies promote better classroom learning environments.

Key Point 2: The VTR learnt about the importance of student and teacher interaction

Perhaps one of the most important things that I as a beginning teacher learnt was that student self-discipline is far more powerful than any discipline a teacher can impose. This is partially because Year 8 students are in an oppositional psychological period (Martin, 2005). Some of them enjoy offending teachers. As a teacher, I need to develop and use student-centred communicative skills to encourage students to
behave well and learn well and at the same time let them know that the overall management of the class is my responsibility. An extract from the reflective diary discusses this:

Self-discipline is very powerful for students. As a teacher, my job is to guide students to the realisation that their learning should be at the centre of the class. However, this does not mean that they are the centre of the class. It does mean that I, as the teacher, have to learn how to communicate with students so that they understand the difference. When they make a decision, they should take the responsibility for that decision and it is my job to see that they do (28/04/2009).

Student self-discipline demands a lot of teacher student interaction. The teacher needs to explain expectations to students and communicate with them and guide them to achieve these expectations. Control, as a form of discourses of power, indicates that “students get chances to think about, discuss and look after their own behaviour” (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 78).

The simple act of a teacher smiling at students can be a very useful way to encourage student participation. I learnt that smiling was an unbelievably powerful way to for a teacher to interact with students. This point was made in the reflective diary:

When I taught the class, I smiled often and for a long time. When I smiled at students, they seemed more willing to try and pronounce words in Mandarin (02/04/2009).

Teacher encouragement, in the form of smiling, promoted student learning because they felt more comfortable to participate in learning activities. A teacher smiling in the context of teaching is a teacher disposition and plays an important role in teaching as a professional activity. Thompson, Ransdell and Rousseau (2005) assert that teacher dispositions are significantly related to student success. In addition, positive teacher feedback encourages students to discover new knowledge and serves to build self-esteem (Van Der Stuyf, 2002).
In summary, the second key point outlining what was learnt, in becoming a better teacher, was that teacher and student interactions were important. Communicating effectively with students and guiding them towards a self-disciplined and responsible attitude to learning was essential. Smiling was a powerful encouragement for student participation in learning.

Key Point 3: The VTR learnt about the benefit of being a teacher-researcher

One of the great benefits of being a teacher-researcher is to see the relationship between educational theory and classroom practice. Consequently, I reflected on the gap between the MeE Framework as it applies to student engagement and its application to teacher engagement. The study helped the teacher-researcher to understand the relationship between student and teacher engagement. An excerpt that illustrates this is shown below:

In the literature about the MeE Framework, I learnt that ‘in task’ means that students are engaged behaviourally, emotionally and cognitively at the same time at high levels. In practice, for some less engaged students, being ‘on task’ is very hard, let alone being ‘in task’. I thought that in my class there were two levels of engagement. For some higher achievers, to engage them substantively was my priority. While for some less engaged kids, who did not want to study, to be ‘on task’ which means engage them procedurally was my first priority. If these less engaged kids were ‘off task’, they learnt nothing. Therefore, my strategy for engaging less engaged students was to change them from being ‘off task’ to being ‘on task’ and then get them to engage ‘in task’. Being able to work through this process engaged me as a teacher. I was able to see the relationship between student engagement and teacher engagement (17/03/2009).

The study helped me to apply educational theory to guide my teaching practice. In addition, the practice of teaching stimulated me to think about theory and link it to teaching in the classroom. Lankshear and Knobel (2004) argue that there are two goals of teacher-researchers. One is to enhance the sense of self-identity and
professionalism of teachers. The other is to improve teaching practice in the classroom.

In summary, the teacher learnt how to relate educational theory, developed from research, to classroom practice and extend theory to related contexts such as from student engagement to teacher engagement.

When analysed in terms of what changed from the beginning of the study to the end of the study, it was found that an emphasis on understanding the relationship between student and teacher interaction was maintained throughout most of the 13 lessons. Teacher learning changed from a focus on learning how to deal with student behaviour problems, by learning classroom management techniques, to using theory to inform classroom practice and understand student behaviour. An emphasis on imposed discipline was replaced with the promotion of student self-discipline. Towards the end of the study it was realised that learning how to teach as a teacher-researcher had distinct and identifiable advantages. The teacher-researcher perspective helped understand the relationship between student and teacher engagement and how theory related to classroom practice.

The fifth question was: What is something I have learnt from this lesson that I will incorporate into the next lesson? The key points, from an analysis of this question, were grouped into three areas:

- teaching strategies;
- my understanding of my personality which influences my teaching; and
- teacher and student interactions.

Key point 1: The VTR will incorporate more appropriate teaching strategies into the next lesson.
One thing learnt from one lesson cycle to be incorporated in following lesson cycles was the selection of appropriate teaching strategies. In the Year 8 class, there were 20 boys and 8 girls. When teaching strategies were selected, gender became an issue to be considered. An extract is shown below:

Boys and girls have different interests. When I created activities to engage boys, I should have also take girls interests into consideration. In future I will use computers and provide games that are suitable for them as well. I will also offer a variety of activities to engage all students. Computer activities can be selected which are attractive to students, girls and boys (19/02/2009).

Boys and girls are different in many ways. As a teacher, I have to be aware of gender issues in the classroom. When I choose a teaching strategy, I need to balance the needs of both genders. Keddie (2005 in Marsh, 2008) stated that girls tend to achieve high scores on verbal activities while boys are better at reasoning and spatial skills. Gurian and Stevens (2004 in Marsh, 2008) supported this view with evidence that there are structural and functional differences inside the brains of boys and girls. They go on to say that those differences affect human learning and are similar across cultures.

The second thing I learnt about teaching strategies is that, in Australia, students participate in group work. In China I was educated to be an independent learner. Teachers in China did not provide any opportunity for students undertake any form of group work. From kindergarten to high school, group work opportunities are provided so that students can develop communicative skills and share ideas and learn to cooperate with each other. Consequently, group work was used frequently as a teaching strategy. An excerpt shows that group work was selected as a specific teaching strategy:

When organising the competition, students were divided into groups according to their ability. I tried to make the groups as similar as possible
so that each group had a chance of winning. This is fair for students and increases the chance that they can enjoy the game (25/02/2009).

Group work helps students develop social skills, such as sharing ideas, discussing with each other and developing leadership. Group work as a learning strategy is aligned with student-centred learning, since it offers students different choices and facilitates the development of negotiation and decision-making skills (Rodgers, 2002).

I learnt that Australian students are more talkative in class. They like to take the initiative and ask the teacher questions. In China, the classroom tends to be quiet. The third thing I learnt is that I need to leave time for student questions and discussion. An extract from my reflective journal illustrates this:

In class, I had to leave time for students to ask questions. … Student questions are very important in class. Their questions also help engage me more. It provides feedback and I appreciate it because it shows they are following the lesson. Their feedback helps me understand more about their level of understanding and where more work has to be done (02/04/2009).

Student questions were indicators of student learning. Student feedback contributes to better learning and better teaching. Student questions are an indicator of the construction of student knowledge. In addition, student questions show that they are using their brains to think. This is consistent with cognitive engagement (Munns & Martin, 2005).

When different topics were organised with different activities, the activities served to engage students and arouse their interest. However, the main purpose of Mandarin lessons was for students to learn Mandarin. This is shown by the following excerpt from the reflective journal:

Finding an interesting topic was good because it would engage both the students and me. I have learnt that selecting an engaging topic is the first
task. I then integrate the language I want to teach into the topic. The focus is always the language but the choice of topic is also important (03/06/2009).

The priority of the lesson was to teach students Mandarin. However, the activities provided a basis for students to learn in an interesting way. Student learning played a central role in teaching process. According to the NSW Department of Education and Training (2003, p. 8), “intellectual quality is central to pedagogy that produces high quality student learning outcomes”. This means the teacher needs to have a deep understanding of the content they are teaching.

This section indicated that there were a number of teaching strategies that would be incorporate into the next lesson. They included specific strategies that considered gender, incorporated group work, used student questions to promote learning and activities that promoted student intellectual engagement.

Key Point 2: The VTR developed an understanding of her personality which influenced her teaching

Teaching in a positive way encourages student learning. Teaching does not occur in a vacuum. To be an engaging teacher a teacher has to allow themselves, within limits, to amerce themselves in their teaching. As an emotional person, my personality influences my teaching. This point is illustrated by the excerpt from the reflective journal:

My feelings are a very important part of my teaching. I may not always show them but that does not mean they are not there and they do not influence my teaching. When I feel good, I can make full use of my ability. I am a sensitive and emotional person so when I feel good, it is easy for me to engage myself in teaching. My research supervisor told me that when I inject myself into the task of teaching it is infectious and that everyone in the class wants to learn. As a teacher, I have a responsibility to teach students to the best of my ability (02/04/2009).
My personality and my personal views have influenced my teaching and my views of teaching. Leask and Moorhouse (2005, p. 8) argue that “teaching is a very personal activity … there are differences between teachers which related to personality, styles and philosophy”. Green and Leask (2009, p.10) echoed this by saying that “teaching is a deeply personal profession”. My engagement in teaching and wanting to be a teacher is largely based on my views about students and student learning changing from negative to positive. A teacher’s emotional engagement and enjoyment of teaching strongly influences student engagement in the learning process (Martin, 2006).

Key Point 3: The VTR will incorporate teacher and student interactions into the next lesson

The third key point is about incorporating communication between students and teachers into subsequent lessons. This includes using student questions and feedback, building rapport with students and learning more about the sometimes difficult years of teenage adolescence. This is illustrated by the excerpt:

When I have difficulties, I find it is best to talk with students and let them know why I want to do things in a certain way. Teachers and students have to communicate. As a teacher, I have to invite students to solve problems and then help them to find solutions. It is their responsibility to find solutions and my responsibility to guide them in this process. Discussions with students about this process can help build a positive learning environment and student rapport (12/05/2009).

Communication between teachers and students is essential for teacher and student mutual understanding. Importantly, student and teacher communication helps to build rapport. “Rapport means, in essence, the relationship that the students have with the teacher and vice versa” (Harmer, 2007, p. 113). Rapport depends on the way teachers
interact with students. Communicating with students is a good way to exchange information and ideas and build a positive relationship.

In summary, the VTR learnt to incorporate a variety of teaching strategies in the next lessons to make them more engaging. She learnt about the importance of her personality and the impact it has on teaching as well as the importance of building rapport with students through student and teacher interactions.

When analysing what changed from the beginning of the study to the end of the study, in terms of what should be incorporated into following lessons, it was found that an emphasis on teaching strategies was maintained throughout all 13 lessons. However, the middle lessons focused on the teacher learning how her personality influenced the classroom environment and student / teacher interactions. By the end of the 13 lesson sequence the focus shifted back to the selection of effective teaching strategies. From the evidence, the VTR felt more comfortable about student engagement as time went on. By the end of the study, the VTR concentrated on how to improve her teaching effectiveness.

The sixth question used to organise the reflective journal was: What is something that needs to be researched to find out more about? This question was used to help organise the reflective journal in Term 2 of the study. When exploring answers to this question the VTR realised there were gaps in her knowledge and understanding of both the theoretical and practical issues that impacted on her classroom teaching. Therefore, the importance of researching educational theory emerged as the key point since it helped guide teaching practice. The theoretical areas explored were:

- Constructivism and scaffolding student learning.
- Providing positive feedback to students rather than punishing them.
- School programs for Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL).
- Using popular teenager culture to establish rapport.
Constructivism emerged as an influential perspective on Australian teaching as illustrated by the excerpt:

I need to learn more about constructivism and the role of ‘scaffolding’. I need to learn how to encourage students to self-discipline. I need to find out how to put the responsibility for learning on students and I need to explore student-centred learning in detail. Is it an excuse for reduced teacher responsibility? (28/04/2009).

In summary, the teacher needed to research constructivism as a view of teaching and learning and how ‘scaffolding’ could be used to promote student learning. The teacher also realised the importance of learning how to provide students with positive feedback instead of using punitive measures which dominated classroom management practices in China. The teacher found she wanted to learn about Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) which was a program being used in the school in which she was a VTR as a way of managing student behaviour problems and promoting classroom learning. The teacher felt she needed also needed to learn how to use both Chinese and Australian popular teenager culture to engage students in learning Mandarin.

The seventh question was: What was the level of teacher engagement and student engagement in the lesson? This question was also used to help organise the reflective journal in Term 2 of the study. The question prompted the VTR to assess the level of student engagement and teacher engagement present in each lesson and the interactive relationship between them. Responses to this question covered the following areas:

- Students were fully engaged in the kite-making lessons, the VTR was engaged in these lessons and even the supervising classroom teacher was engaged.
- When students valued a lesson they enjoyed the lesson. When this happened the VTR enjoyed the lesson and was engaged as well.
• Student engagement made me as the teacher feel happy and boosted my engagement in teaching.

• Popular student culture was engaging for both students and the teacher.

• Programmed lesson sequences were engaging for both the teacher and students.

The kite-making lessons were engaging for everyone:

I was fully engaged in the lessons. I enjoyed them very much. … When I prepared the lessons, I thought they were very good. They made me think hard about how to make a kite and how to get students to make them.

Students had to think hard about choosing their materials and about how to say the correct words in Mandarin. To make a decision, students had to discuss their ideas with their team mates and then reach a consensus. … They thought this lesson was full of fun, and they were emotionally engaged. I enjoy this lesson. Even the classroom teacher was engaged in the lesson (28/04/2009).

The lessons in Term 2 were engaging for both students and the teacher-researcher. When the students were engaged in the lesson, the teacher became motivated to prepare better lessons. When the teacher delivered better lessons, the students participated well and teacher / student interactions increased.

Overall, I wrote my reflective journal in response to seven questions that served to organise journal entries. The journal was analysed question by question. However, the analysis of each question was reported in two ways. The first was as key points that emerged throughout the length of the study. The second was in terms of changes in emphasis from the beginning of the study to the end of the study. Overall, the evidence indicates that at the beginning of the study I was not a confident teacher and that I was preoccupied with classroom management issues. When students became less engaged in lessons I felt sad and began to be less engaged in teaching and my job
as a teacher. I found that reduced teacher engagement had an impact on student engagement and they became less engage in learning.

I then realised that I was essentially in control of this situation and made the decision to change my attitude. I decided to fully engage with becoming a more engaged teacher. I team taught with my supervising teacher and colleague VTR for a series of three lessons. I learnt how to program a lesson sequence, how to select appropriate teaching strategies and how to prepare teaching resources. I became more positive about student learning and confident in my own teaching ability. In addition, I began to research how to teach. This helped me to reflect on theory and link theory to teaching practice. Theory, particularly learning theory using a constructivist perspective on teaching and learning, helped me to better engage students and engage myself as a teacher. It enabled me to think about the relationship between student engagement and teacher engagement. This relationship is explored more fully in Chapter 5 where student and teacher interviews were used to gain additional insights.

4.3 Conclusion

Chapter 4 analysed the reflective journal using content analysis to identify key points that emerged from the data. The reflective journal analysis showed that student-centred teaching strategies, the use of a diverse range of teaching resources, teacher personality and student / teacher rapport were used to engage students to learn Mandarin as a second language. The ROSETE project, as a research-based teacher education program, enabled the VTR to reflect on her teaching practice and apply theory to guide her teaching practice. The perspective of teacher-as-researcher helped the VTR to improve her teaching proficiency by recognising that a beginning teacher moves through a series of developmental stages in the process of becoming a teacher. Chapter 5 outlines the analysis of the student and teacher interviews and field notes.
Chapter 5
Interview and Field Notes Analysis:
Teacher / Student Engagement

5.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the data analysis of student and teacher interviews and field notes. The findings from this analysis will be triangulated with findings from the reflective journal analysis. The field notes included entries of teacher-researcher observations and teacher and student informal discussions. Teacher interview transcripts were analysed using content analysis to identify themes (Cohen et al., 2007). Student interview transcripts were analysed for recurring themes (Erickson, 1986; Coble, Selin & Erickson, 2003) within predetermined categories based on the MeE Framework of Munns and Martin (2005). The predetermined categories were the emotional, behavioural and cognitive dimensions of engagement (Munns & Martin, 2005). These three theoretical dimensions were used to position the emergent themes as outlined in section 3.10. Field notes were analysed by thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) for recurring themes (Erickson, 1986; Coble, Selin & Erickson, 2003).

5.2 Interviews

Interviews were used to collect data from four students, the colleague VTR, research supervisor, the classroom teacher in the primary school and the classroom teacher in the high school. The students were categorised into three groups based on their normal classroom behaviour, as outlined in Section 3.5.2.1. These three groups were students who:

- usually exhibited positive behaviour;
- sometimes exhibited positive behaviour; and
- exhibited less positive behaviour.
Two boys and two girls distributed across these three groups were interviewed. The interview questions for student and teacher participants were based on the same questions (see Table 5.1).

### Table 5.1 Student and Teacher Interview Questions

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Question</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>What were the engaging parts in my lessons?</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Why were the engaging parts engaging in my lessons?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Which kinds of teaching resources and teaching strategies were engaging in my lessons?</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Did you think aspects of Chinese and Australian cultural differences were engaging in the lessons?</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Compared with teaching in Term 1, what kind of progress has the VTR achieved in Term 2, 2009?</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Can you make suggestions about how the lessons might be made more engaging?</td>
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The analysis of student interviews will be presented first followed by the analysis of the teacher interviews.

#### 5.2.1 Student Interview Analysis

Four students answered the six interview questions. The responses were analysed within the pre-determined behavioural, emotional and cognitive dimensions of student engagement. Henry and Dian represented the usually exhibited positive behaviour students; Rebecca represented the sometime exhibited positive behaviour students and Daniel represented the exhibited less positive behaviour students.

An overview of the responses for each of the three categories of students is provided before reporting the analysis of responses question by question in the pre-determined
categories of student engagement. Henry and Dian’s responses ranged across all three dimensions of engagement. They talked about participation and involvement in the classroom which aligned with the behavioural dimension. They also talked about their interest in and whether they liked a lesson which is consistent with the emotional engagement dimension and they commented on what they learnt which is in line with the cognitive dimension of engagement. Rebecca used words such as ‘like’, ‘fun’ and ‘good’ repeatedly throughout the interview which indicated a strong connection with the emotional dimension of engagement. However, she also made comments such as, “we said it before we got it” and “repeat and learnt” which indicates both behavioural and cognitive engagement. She, like Henry and Dian, was engaged across all three dimensions of engagement but emotional engagement seemed to dominate. If the lesson was interesting, she participated well. However, if the lesson was not, she became distracted. The responses from Daniel were very short and simple. He used “I don’t know” many times. His comments were consistent with emotional engagement although there were comments that indicated he was behaviourally engaged on occasions.

The detailed interview analysis is reported in terms of the three pre-determined categories of student engagement, question by question. The three categories of students are considered to be representative of the class as a whole and therefore the responses from the four students are analysed together rather than person by person.

Question 1  What were the engaging parts in my lessons?

Students provided a variety of responses. Henry said he was interested in music, Kung Fu, chopsticks and kite-making: “I like the Kung Fu music one” (Henry, p. 1). This is consistent with the observation that students took their iPods, MP3 players and mobile phones to school to listen to music and socialise after class. Their real life interest in and use of technology encouraged me to use them in class when appropriate. Students
were fascinated by Chinese Kung Fu stars, such as Bruce Lee (李小龙), Jacky Chan (成龙) and Jet Li (李连杰). I taught one lesson about Chinese Kung Fu music. Huo Yuan Jia (霍元甲) was a well known Fung Fu fighter from the Qing Dynasty who saved Chinese countryman and ‘fought for the glory of China’. Many movies are based on his life story and segments of them are great as stimulus material in Mandarin classes. Jay Zhou (周杰伦), a popular singer in China, wrote a song about Huo Yuan Jia (霍元甲) with a rap rhythm in 2006. In the music video, Jet Li (李连杰) played the role of Huo Yuan Jia (霍元甲) and demonstrated Chinese Kung Fu. It was a combination of this type of music and action that engaged Henry.

The audiovisual of rap music and Kung Fu was engaging for students because it incorporated both Chinese traditional martial arts and popular rap music. Importantly, Chinese Kung Fu and popular music connected with the daily life interests of many students. Dian and Rebecca said they like lessons that included music, because music was their hobby and they listened to music at home. My lessons incorporated their interest and hobby in language teaching. The music ‘interest’ of students was one of their real life ‘likes’ and so connected with their affective or emotional engagement (Munns & Martin, 2005). Students saw the connection of the teaching strategy with their everyday life. This ‘connection’ was subconsciously extended to the Mandarin lessons and assisted students to engage with the language. This is consistent with the findings of the reflective journal and emphasises the fact that classroom experiences should be an extension of a student’s reality rather than being separated from it.

Both Henry and Dian were interested in the lesson that used chopsticks as a stimulus for learning Mandarin. Using chopsticks was a hands-on activity. Another feature of the lesson was that a competition was organised to see which student was the best at picking up a pebbles using chopsticks. The competition stimulated student interest in learning how to use chopsticks and at the same time speak in Mandarin. Competing with each other using chopsticks was an interesting hands-on activity which incorporated student language learning and aligned with emotional and behavioural
engagement according to Munns and Martin (2005). Skamp (2004) argued that hands-on activities promote students learning and consistent with the reflective journal finding that hands-on activities engaged students behaviourally.

Rebecca and Dian talked about their engagement in a paper-cutting lesson: “I liked the paper-cutting” (Dian, p. 1). Paper-cutting was a hands-on activity and was particularly engaging for girls. This indicated that hands-on activities involving ‘doing’ things were engaging for students and was also consistent with Munns and Martin (2005) behavioural dimension of engagement. However, during the interview Rebecca revealed that she made origami at home. She went on to say that other students in the class had now started to learn origami. This is powerful evidence that confirms that when activities involve ‘doing’ things that students are familiar with it not only helps classroom engagement but legitimises learning.

Daniel used words such as ‘like’, ‘interesting’ and ‘fun’ when he spoke about the engaging parts of Mandarin lessons. This indicated his emotional engagement. He said, “I liked kite-making because it was fun working with my friends and flying it … Because I like building stuff.” He said he likes building stuff, because he was good at it. He built ‘stuff’ at home. This example was additional evidence that everyday life activities engage students as well as identifying group work as engaging. In this example, students were engaged because they could work with their friends. Daniel also used the words ‘working’, ‘flying’ and ‘building’ to indicate that he was engaged behaviourally. The engaging parts of a lesson for Daniel were when they engaged him behaviourally and emotionnally at the same time. Dian was also interested in kite-making and indicates that although boys and girls can have different interests they liked ‘doing’ things. This strengthens Munns and Martin’s (2005) view that student engagement consists of a number of related dimensions that include emotional and behavioural components.
In summary, students, irrespective of the category they represent, share a similar view that everyday life experiences make a lesson engaging. It is argued that students associate the ‘real’ experience with their language learning so they perceive learning Mandarin as ‘real’. Students, regardless of their gender, also liked hands-on activities. Hands-on activities involve students ‘doing’ things and engage them behaviourally. Additionally, if hands-on activities are contextualised by interesting topics, students are engaged emotionally. The use of contemporary technological resources and group work also engaged students.

Question 2 Why were the engaging parts engaging in my lessons?

Students provided a variety of reasons for why a particular lesson was engaging. Henry and Dian said they liked the music lessons because, “everyone likes music … We listen to it all the time” (Henry, p. 2). Rebecca also liked music lessons because she listened to music everyday. It may be that music is simply inherently interesting for people. It really does not matter. What matters is that, for whatever reason, music is part of student’s everyday lives and therefore Mandarin lessons that connect with aspects of everyday life connect with students and emotionally engage them. The Fair Go Project (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006) asserts that student knowledge is meaningful when it promotes understanding and ‘connects’ with students. Consequently, if learning Mandarin is to be meaningful for students it has to promote understanding and be perceived as part of student’s real life world. It has to promote an understanding of Chinese culture and demonstrate connection to reality. In this particular case music served both purposes, even though somewhat indirectly. Music is culturally embedded and is integrated as apart of the lives of students.

In addition, using audiovisual technology as a teaching resource was engaging for similar reasons. However, in contemporary society technology has taken on a new dimension. It is now a common denominator in communication, and a significant identifier of the sub-culture of young people. It is becoming a distinguishing feature
of the way a specific group, a social clique; connect with each other (Pendergast & Bahr, 2005; Carrington, 2006). Acknowledging this and using it as part of teaching can only benefit the teaching-learning continuum as a sub-text of connection. According to Beeland (2002) technology used in a creative way can help develop an engaging learning environment. Technology used in innovative ways leads to improved learning and teaching and is consistent with the findings of the reflective journal.

Henry and Dian were also engaged when learning how to use chopsticks. Henry thought it was fun. Dian talked about the teaching strategies and teaching resources used, “You showed us in front of the class. Everyone did it … We played a game after that with pebbles … The game was interesting” (Dian, p. 2). Rebecca said it was ‘just fun’. Learning how to use chopsticks by participating in games was engaging for students because they were involved. When they learnt how to use chopsticks, students moved to a higher level of learning. Competing requires confidence and skill. It requires students to assimilate new knowledge with the skills they already have to hone new ones. To be successful in competitions requires insight. Competitors have to ‘see’ some aspect of the task differently to others. They have to actively ‘seek out’ this difference. In this way games engage students. Competitions are a useful teaching strategy because they engage students emotionally, behaviourally and cognitively (Munns & Martin, 2005). Students are involved in learning experiences by hands-on activity that are helping them to become more competent and empowered learners (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006). In addition, learning by doing is consistent with constructivism. Described as a form of human cognition, constructivism is related to pedagogic approaches that promote learning from hands-on activities (Skamp, 2004).

Henry gave another reason why learning how to use chopsticks was engaging for him, “You can use it for eating as well” (Henry, p. 2). He talked about a recent experience at a Chinese restaurant where he was the only member of his family that ate using
chopsticks. It made him feel ‘special’. What he experienced promoted an interest in the subject generally. The lesson was in the past, but the restaurant experience promoted future engagement. It is not just the ‘here and now’ engagement that is important. Although engagement in the classroom is the focus of this study, overall cumulative engagement is important as well. Henry alluded to ‘big E’ engagement. However, in this instance the ‘big E’ related to Mandarin lessons as a whole rather than school as a whole.

Dian said she was also engaged by the pet lesson. I asked Henry whether he was engaged by this lesson. Henry did not remember the lesson on pets. I asked him whether it was because he was absent. He said, “I am not sure, because I usually come” (Henry, p. 2). I asked him why he attended Mandarin lessons. He said he liked them because “there was always something to do … that was fun” (Henry, p. 2). He was engaged behaviourally (something to do) and emotionally (liked and fun).

By explaining why he liked Mandarin lessons, Henry was comparing Mandarin lessons with other lessons. “Normally in school we normally don’t do things. … In school we just listen and write. In Chinese, we make kites, make project, listen to music, learn about it learn about China” (Henry, p. 2). Dian agreed with Henry and detailed why she liked Mandarin lessons, “I like when we do games, because all of our classes we never like do games. It is very different. I like doing that” (Dian, p. 2). It suggested that learning something new and different was engaging for students. The combination of studying a new language and a new culture in a different way may have been engaging in itself. It may have represented a more ‘exotic’ classroom experience which is consistent with the findings from the reflective journal. The evidence indicates that students were engaged across all three dimensions of engagement. However, it is acknowledged that student engagement is a two way process and that although Mandarin lessons did present opportunities for student engagement in all three dimensions, the interests and background of students is important.
Daniel said he liked the kite-making lessons most because he had fun working with his friends and flying the kites outside. Group work, as a teaching strategy, was engaging for him. He said this was because the students knew each other and they helped each other. Collaboration or group work enables learners with different expertise and backgrounds to share their knowledge and discuss problems so they arrive at shared understandings of what is learnt in class (Skamp, 2004). Peer support can be engaging for students because it promotes achievement in a way that does not single participants out who may otherwise not do so well. Peer support is just that, a form of support. Daniel was emotionally engaged because he was having ‘fun’ and behaviourally engaged because he was ‘making’ and ‘flying’.

However, Daniel in particular, but also Rebecca and to a lesser extent the other two students were not as engaged cognitively as they were behaviourally and emotionally. However, although not as explicitly mentioned as much as the other dimensions of engagement, cognition is always present. Kite-making requires geometric and physical science knowledge that is drawn on subliminally. In addition, students had to use their knowledge of Mandarin throughout the activities which is also cognitive. So, although students did not talk about aspects of their Mandarin lessons that engaged them cognitively, it was always present.

Topics that relate to a student’s daily life and activities that are hands-on engage students emotionally and behaviourally. Real life topics engage students because they are able to use their prior knowledge of and familiarity with the learning context to help them feel comfortable. Further, if students have had an experience with a learning context then there is an increased chance that they also have an existing prior interest. Learning a new language in association with learning about a new culture engaged students because it was new and different. There was an exotic influence that engaged students emotionally. Teaching strategies such as group work and games were engaging because, in addition to being hands-on, they used a variety of teaching
resources such as chopsticks, pebbles and technology. Technology was especially engaging if it was used in an innovative and creative way because it connected with existing student subcultures and communication systems.

In summary, students used words such as ‘like’, ‘interesting’, ‘good’ and ‘fun’ to describe engaging lessons. When they started to talk about engaging lessons they started at an emotional level and then moved to include behavioural and cognitive components when they gave examples. There may be a number of reasons why there was an initial emphasis on the emotional level. Emotional engagement is easy to recognise and talk about. Cognitive engagement is harder to identify and less readily talked about by students. Cognition is often used subliminally and so not overtly recognised. Another reason is that students are often seen as emotional. Their emotions are there for everyone to see. Young students are more emotional because of their stage in development as people (Pendergast & Bahr, 2005; Carrington, 2006). Moreover, as a novice teacher I may have presented a learning environment that promoted emotional engagement I lacked confidence. As a beginning teacher-researcher my understanding of engagement was limited. Later research helped me to deepen and reinforce my knowledge of engagement and so helped me purposefully integrate all the dimensions of engagement into lessons. Consequently, it may be a reflection of the teaching process that caused students to emphasise emotional engagement at the expense of the other dimensions. It may also be a testament to the interactive relationship between all three dimensions and that all dimensions are usually present at any one time but that different interactions highlight one over another.

Question 3 Which kinds of teaching resources and teaching strategies were engaging in lessons?
Dian said that the most engaging learning resources were audiovisuals and worksheets. When teaching Chinese characters, a special worksheet, called tian zi ge (田字格), was used to help students to write Chinese characters. These especially designed worksheets made writing Chinese characters much easier for students. They promoted behavioural engagement. Henry thought the PowerPoint presentations and the audiovisuals were great. Rebecca said the music audiovisuals, PowerPoint presentations and flashcards were the most useful for her. Daniel agreed that music was the most engaging teaching strategy. These teaching resources had a number of features in common. They were all colourful, vivid and visually interesting. According to Munns and Martin (2005) these features are emotionally engaging. The purpose of all the resources cited by students was to promote student learning and understanding of the content being taught. Consequently, they also promoted cognitive engagement. Overall, the learning resources engaged students across all three dimensions.

Henry said the best teaching strategy was revision because “revision helps a lot” (Henry, p. 3). Rebecca shared a similar view except that for her repetition or rote-learning was a good strategy: “How you make us repeat it” (Rebecca, p. 3). Munns and Martin (2005) cite rote-learning and repetition as cognitively engaging teaching strategies. Rebecca also commented on how they had to say the name of the resources they needed before they were given them in the kite-making lessons: “You make us say it before we get it” (Rebecca, p. 3). In this example students were also engaged cognitively because they had to think and recall before they could move on. The MeE Framework (2005) cites examples of cognitive learning strategies as rehearsing, summarising and elaborating to aid memory and organise and understand materials. The fact that the students cited examples of teaching strategies that engaged them cognitively suggests that beneath the emotional and behavioural engagement there was a desire to learn Mandarin. As indicated by Munns and Martin (2005), all three dimensions integrate to support each other in the overall process of student engagement.
The citing of rote-learning as an engaging teaching strategy was surprising. Rote-learning is the dominant teaching strategy in China from kindergarten to university. It was virtually the only teaching strategy used throughout my entire education. This teaching strategy was not engaging for me. This is why I was surprised that it was thought to be a helpful teaching strategy for learning Mandarin. Perhaps it was because rote-learning complemented the other teaching strategies such as games, discussions, debates, drama, using technology, group work and hands-on activities. As one of a variety of teaching strategies, rote-learning obviously has a legitimate place.

Henry’s comment on teaching strategies was by comparison with those used in other subjects:

What you do is very good, because sometime in the other classes, you just listen to it but you don’t learn much. Sometimes I don’t listen to them. When we do things, we learn something out of it. It is good (Henry, p. 3).

Strategies which helped Henry learn were engaging for him. Henry was a relatively easily engaged learner as suggested by his usually positive behaviour in the classroom. Daniel’s response to this question was, “I don’t know coz I muck around a lot” (Daniel, p. 3). He simply reiterated that he liked making things.

In summary, students cited a number of engaging teaching resources, namely music audiovisuals, worksheets, PowerPoint presentations and flashcards which engaged them emotionally, behaviourally and cognitively. Students cited teaching strategies such as rote-learning, revision and repetition rather than the more innovative and creative teaching strategies that are usually associated with promoting student learning. This indicated that students were interested in learning Mandarin and valued strategies that helped them retain and reinforce what they had learnt. The teaching
strategies cited by students aligned more with cognitive engagement than with the other dimensions of student engagement.

Question 4 Did you think aspects of Chinese and Australian cultural differences were engaging in the lessons?

Dian said the Australian examples used helped students to understand Mandarin: “When you teach us something about Chinese, you give us other examples like what we have in Australia. We understand it more then” (Dian, p. 4). Examples help students to ‘understand’ Chinese culture. This provides a learning context and increases understanding of the language. Using student background knowledge to teach something new is a student-centred teaching strategy. Students understand the Mandarin language more when they can relate it to their own local or Australian cultural knowledge. Henry said he liked learning about Chinese traditional culture: “It is very hard sometimes to learn Chinese, because you just don’t understand it. But it is good that we do it. I really like the Chinese culture part, back in the traditional days” (Henry, p. 4). Clearly, learning the Chinese language and culture together are mutually supportive with one providing a context for the other.

Dian said, “it is interesting about the different types of singers, you know, the way they sing” (Dian, p. 4). Rebecca said that she liked learning about Chinese culture because it is different. Daniel added that cultural differences were interesting. He said, “I only try Australian food. So I want to learn more about Chinese food because I like food” (Daniel, p. 4). Learning about cultural differences was engaging for students and helped them to learn Mandarin. This may be because of an exotic influence and it may be because of genuine interest.

In summary, using Chinese and Australian cultural differences and similarities was helpful in interesting students in learning Mandarin. It also contributed to a more ‘holistic’ understanding of the language and its context. The exotic influence engaged
students emotionally and cognitively. Using student local knowledge to teach helped students to connect Mandarin learning with their personal experiences and is advocated as a student-centred teaching strategy. It provides a scaffold for students to learn Mandarin based on their background and experiences.

Question 5 Compared with teaching in Term 1, what kind of progress has the teacher made in Term 2, 2009?

Dian said that the lessons had improved because the teaching resources were better. She said, “like in Term 1, you did not show us videos. It was only on the board – everything. But this term you are showing us videos and that helps a lot” (Dian, p. 5). Daniel agreed that “in Term 1; we just get use to the class. In Term 2; it was more fun with the videos” (Daniel, p. 5). Visual images promote student ability to organise and process information (Pendergast & Bahr, 2005; Carrington, 2006). In addition, visuals can also challenge students to think at levels that require higher order thinking skills (Munns & Martin, 2005) which is a cognitive engagement strategy.

Another improvement identified was the use of revision: “This term we are doing more revision. That’s good because it teaches us it again. We remember it better” (Dian, p. 5). Revision promoted student learning because it reinforced previous work. Daniel also said that group work helped him enjoy Mandarin classes more. He could not offer an explanation of how group work helped. He simply said it did.

Another improvement was increased teacher confidence. In Term 2 students noticed that, compared with Term 1, I spoke a lot more and explained things more fully using examples:

In Term 1, you did not talk much. Like when you talk now we understand it more, especially when you give us examples. That is helpful a lot, because we understand the whole thing more properly. … Because in
Term 1 you are sort of quiet. This term you have been talking more and explaining in a better way” (Dian, p. 5).

In Term 2 teacher confidence improved. This resulted in more detailed explanations and increased teacher / student communication. Increased communication promoted student understanding and engagement. Rebecca confirmed the increase in teacher confidence but added: “we learnt more like you talked more … especially the instructions” (Rebecca, p. 5). Importantly, teacher self-confidence promoted student learning. This indicates that teaching is an interactive process that impacts student learning (Skamp, 2004).

In summary, students commented that the teaching from Term 1 to Term 2 improved. They cited the selection and use of resources, group work and revision as reasons for the improved teaching. Importantly, they also said that teacher confidence in the classroom helped them to learn better. Increased teacher confidence enabled the teacher to explain aspects of the lesson better and promoted greater student understanding. Increased student understanding increased student cognitive engagement (Munns & Martin, 2005) and assisted the development of teacher and student rapport. This, in turn, enhanced the classroom learning environment (Harmer, 2007). Therefore, increased teacher confidence increases teacher enjoyment of teaching, pedagogical effectiveness and the emotional engagement of both the teacher and students.

Question 6 Can you make suggestions about how the lessons might be made more engaging?

Henry and Dian suggested using more games and providing more stories about Chinese history and famous places would help improve the learning of Mandarin. Rebecca also said: “may be more fun in it, more games” (Rebecca, p. 6). Daniel said he did not know. Henry suggested there needed to be more time for students to copy
words down into their books. What Henry was really saying was that the Chinese words, in both Chinese pin yin (拼音) and as Chinese characters (Hanzi) were hard for students to write and therefore required more time.

In summary, the students did not comment very much about how Mandarin lessons might be made more engaging. They indicated that more games and stories would be more fun and that providing more time for writing in Mandarin would be useful.

Overall, students representing the three levels of student engagement provided a variety of responses to these six interview questions. Responses were consistent with those from Chapter 4. All three dimensions of student engagement were evident. However, especially at the beginning of the Mandarin program students seemed to be more emotionally and behaviourally engaged rather than cognitively engaged. However, as time went on, cognitive engagement became more important. It can be argued that cognitive engagement was always present but that at different times and in different ways, it was masked. This indicates that students were interested in learning Mandarin and that the variety of teaching strategies and resources used, although they helped engage students, were not the sole driving force behind student engagement. Student engagement resulted from the interaction of all three dimensions of engagement as indicated by Munns and Martin (2005). In the next section the teacher interview analysis is reported.

5.2.2 Teacher Interview Analysis

The four teachers interviewed were the classroom teacher in the high school (Joelle), the classroom teacher in the primary school (Linda), the research supervisor (John) and the colleague VTR (Lee). The teacher interviews were analysed as a whole, question by question with responses from all participants used collectively as evidence for the findings. Erickson’s (1986) and Coble, Selin & Erickson’s (2003) recurring themes were used to analyse the data.
Question 1 What were the engaging parts of the Mandarin lessons?

Five themes emerged from the analysis of the data:

- teaching resources and teaching strategies were engaging;
- reasons why the teaching resources and teaching strategies were engaging;
- ways in which lessons were made engaging;
- activities as a basis for engagement; and
- culture as a basis for engagement.

Theme 1 teaching resources and teaching strategies were engaging

Each of the four teachers interviewed indicated that the teaching resources and teaching strategies were engaging. Lee said: “coloured pictures, music, videos and PowerPoint presentations were attractive for students” (Lee, p. 1). The teaching resources were interesting because they appealed to student’s visual and auditory senses. They engaged students emotionally (Munns & Martin, 2005).

Linda commented on the selection of teaching strategies: “I liked how you created games that they (children) could all be involved in” (Linda, p. 1) and how the games engaged students. Joelle agreed that student involvement by ‘doing’ was important: “I think you can pick any topic, as long as students are involved and actually doing something you will get their attention” (Joelle, p. 1). Students ‘doing’ things and being involved are consistent with behavioural engagement (Munns & Martin, 2005).

Theme 2 reasons why the teaching resources and teaching strategies were engaging

The four teachers provided a variety of reasons to explain why the teaching resources and teaching strategies were engaging. Joelle used the chopsticks lesson as an
example, stating: “the chopsticks lessons were good because students could actually learn how to pick things up with chopsticks, they did something” (Joelle, p. 1). John agreed with Joelle, stating: “when you asked students to do things themselves that was the most engaging part of the lesson” (John, p. 1). Students ‘doing’ things especially when they are actively involved promotes behavioural engagement (Munns & Martin, 2005). Hands-on activities are consistent with student-centred learning and constructivism (Skamp, 2004).

Lee said that the lessons involving Chinese music not only interested students but changed their concept of Chinese music. She said, “after the lesson, they think Chinese music can be different but can also be the same as Australian music. … The lesson changed their ideas of Chinese music” (Lee, p. 1). John further explained:

What was engaging them is the idea of cognitive dissonance. That is, what they think something should be is actually quite different from reality. You gave them an experience that was totally different from what they expected and they had to think about it. They had to change their view (John, p. 1).

The music lesson was interesting for students not only because they enjoyed it but because they had to think about it. They had to evaluate the Chinese music in terms of their expectations. The students were engaged both emotionally and cognitively. There was also the ‘exotic’ influence. Something very different, very interesting, not really understood, yet appealing.

Theme 3 ways in which lessons were made engaging

Two teachers explained how the lessons were made engaging. Linda indicated that asking for feedback from classroom teachers was a good strategy to make lessons better. She said, “I like the way you always ask for suggestions. It is the only way to learn, especially when you are learning on the job like you are” (Linda, p. 1). Asking
for feedback and suggestions was a mechanism for improving teaching. It was helpful in finding out how to make lessons better. One of the actual ways to make lessons better was to diversify and vary the teaching strategies. As John explained:

> Changing how you teach in any one lesson is engaging in itself. … You spend a bit time doing this and a bit time doing something else. Mix things up a bit. Don’t use the same strategy for any length of time. That lesson format is engaging (John, p. 1).

Using a variety of teaching strategies in any one lesson was one way to make lessons more engaging. This strategy will also increase the chance that any one student will find something in a lesson that they are interested in. It also increases the diversity of dimensions of engagement present in a lesson.

Theme 4 activities as a basis for engagement

Two teachers commented on the ability of activities to engage students with language learning. Joelle said the kite-making lesson was good because: “they were making things and they could go outside. They were talking to you in Chinese as well. Everybody was totally occupied” (Joelle, p. 1). Students were behaviourally engaged because they were doing things and were cognitively engaged because they had to think about how to speak in Chinese. Linda strengthened the argument that learning language through activities was engaging for children. She said: “they wanted to play the game again and again. They absolutely loved it. The practice was really helpful for them to retain the language which was excellent” (Linda, p. 1).

Mandarin language lessons provided opportunities for students to make kites, go outside to fly kites, debate, have discussions and play games. By ‘doing’ things and being involved in activities students were engaged in learning Mandarin. Active learning and enjoying the process seems to be a recipe for integrating behavioural, emotional and cognitive engagement as suggested by Munns and Martin (2005).
Theme 5     culture as a basis for engagement

Linda talked about learning language using cultural examples:

It is interesting for them to find out that different cultures do things differently. For us, it comes as no surprise but for young children it is a window into a new world. It is an ‘Alice in Wonderland’ and they are part of it” (Linda, p. 1).

The use of cultural differences to engaged students was a constant theme throughout the interviews. John said that culture provided a ‘hook’ to grab students and introduce them to interesting learning contexts:

Culture is the manifestation of human identity. It’s what makes each of us different. We all identify with it, we all connect with culture wether our own or someone else’s. The secret to teaching success in any subject area is not in using culture but in choosing which aspect of culture to use as a ‘hook’ so students feel they must know more. All the stories that any teacher has ever told are about culture. The magic is in selecting the best story (John, p. 1).

Learning Mandarin is ideally suited to using culture as a ‘hook’ to engage students. Language is culturally embedded. Some researchers argue that language is culture (Tsui & Tollefson, 2007; Watkins, 1996). Consequently, culture provides a context for engaging students in learning Mandarin across all three dimensions of student engagement.

In summary, the analysis of teacher responses provided evidence that the Mandarin lessons were engaging. The teaching resources and teaching strategies used were cited as engaging for students. Reasons were provided that indicated why they were engaging. The use of activities and cultural contexts were identified as engaging for a wide variety of students. Activities and cultural contexts engaged students
emotionally, behaviourally and cognitively because they are basic to human existence and therefore students were able to connect with them in a variety of ways.

Question 2 Why were the engaging parts of the lesson engaging?

When interviewed, teachers provided a variety of reasons why the engaging parts of lessons were engaging. Three themes emerged from the responses. The engaging parts of lessons related to:

- teaching strategies and resources;
- the teacher; and
- catering for different student needs.

Theme 1 teaching strategies and resources

Two teachers provided reasons for teaching strategies and resources being the engaging parts of lessons. Joelle commented that choosing interesting topics such as kite flying captured students’ imagination. Interesting topics engaged students emotionally. John indicated that using different teaching strategies in one lesson was engaging for students: “Variety in itself can be engaging. … Change is engaging” (John, p. 2). Using a range of teaching strategies in one lesson was engaging because students experienced it as different. Lee talked about the teaching resources that used ‘sound and pictures’ to attract student attention and engage them emotionally.

Theme 2 the teacher

Two teachers gave reasons for the engaging parts of lessons being related to the teacher. Joelle said:
You teach so that students can do things themselves. You provide the opportunity for hands-on activities and students can do them the way they want to. They do not have to rely on the teacher to show them how to do it (Joelle, p. 2).

Providing activities that do not have a predetermined outcome allows students some control over their learning. Such activities must provide the task stated in a way that students totally understand. Students have to know exactly what they have to do to complete the task. However, each student can work their own way through the task in a way that incorporates their understandings and ways of doing things. It also promotes tolerance and understanding of other perspectives and is consistent with a constructivist view of teaching and learning (Skamp, 2005). John had a similar view. He said, “Students respond not only to the activities they are provided with, but to how teachers guide them to complete the task” (John, p. 2).

In the teaching process, there is an interactive relationship between students and teachers. Students respond not only the content of a lesson, but to the teacher as well. These two responses indicated that the nature of the teacher influences student engagement.

Theme 3 catering for different student needs

Two teachers said that student engagement was the result of satisfying different student needs:

Different students learn better in different ways. Some students like music and some like colouring-in and pictures. The lesson goes faster if you use different activities and resources as well. The more differences the more chance they will be interested (Lee, p. 2).

Students are all individuals. Different students have different interests, different learning styles and different backgrounds. If teachers want to teach well they have to learn about each student so they can teach them as individuals. Teachers have to learn
to operate at the ‘whole class’ level and at the ‘individual’ level at the same time so they can incorporate student different interests and meet the needs of each individual student.

Students also have different abilities and expertise. Group work enables students with different abilities to work together and draw on each other’s expertise so they can help each other. In this way each student supports the other to achieve. Group work is one way to promote student confidence. Joelle made the point that learning is a psychological process. If students feel good, if they are happy and confident they are more likely to learn:

They were happy to get out of their seats as well which they want to do. One more thing is because they like to work in little groups so that was good. They love to sit in a little group with their friends and work on something. They feel more comfortable so that was good (Joelle, p. 2).

Students being able to ‘get out of their seats’ and ‘work on something’ because they ‘like to work in little groups’ engages students behaviourally, emotionally and cognitively according to Munns and Martin (2005). Consequently, Mandarin lessons were catering for different student needs so they were engaged in all three dimensions of student engagement.

In summary, the appropriate selection of teaching strategies and teaching resources were the engaging parts of the Mandarin lessons. Teaching and learning was recognised as an interactive process where teacher personality and teaching style engaged students. Lessons that met the different needs of students by catering for a diversity of students also engaged students.

Question 3 Which kinds of teaching resources and teaching strategies were engaging in Mandarin class?
All four teachers talked about teaching resources and teaching strategies. When teachers talked about teaching resources they said why the resources were engaging and illustrated their responses with examples. However, responses were a repetition of those for question 1. Consequently, this section focuses on teaching strategies with six themes being identified:

- using a student’s name;
- using games;
- varying teaching strategies;
- using rote-learning and revision;
- learning in context; and
- learning through culture.

Theme 1: using a student’s name

Using a student’s name is a good way to build rapport with students. It indicates to students that the teacher knows who they are. This is often interpreted by students as the teacher cares about them. If a student is misbehaving, the use of their name is often all that is required to bring their behaviour under control. The use of student names can be a classroom management strategy but for a beginning teacher it also becomes a teaching strategy:

A lot of time you just talked to them, you used their name and they liked that. The game you played to learn their name was good too. You know them by name now which is a good strategy you can use all the time (Joelle, p. 3).

John also said that learning students’ names was a useful teaching strategy because in a Mandarin language class you can:

… take it further and give them all Chinese name. Convert their name into a Chinese name and get them to say it and write it. They will feel really special and learn some Mandarin at the same time. It will help with pronunciation (John, p. 3).
Theme 2  

using games

Games as a teaching strategy can be engaging for students (Cordova & Lepper, 1996; Ricci, Salas, & Cannon-Bowers, 1996). Joelle commented that games were an engaging teaching strategy: “you showed something on the board and then said they were going to play a game. As soon as you said that they smiled and waited. They were interested” (Joelle, p. 3). Lee suggested: “a game would be a good way of getting them to learn about colours” (Lee, p. 3). Student interest in learning is increased by using games (Cordova & Lepper, 1996; Ricci, Salas, & Cannon-Bowers, 1996) which can engage them emotionally and behaviourally (Munns & Martin, 2005).

Theme 3  

varying teaching strategies

The strategy of varying a lesson, of changing from one teaching strategy to another is engaging:

Changing how you teach in any one lesson is engaging in itself. … You spend a bit time doing this and a bit time doing something else. Mix things up a bit. Don’t use the same strategy for any length of time. … The strategy of varying what you are doing is engaging (John, pp. 1 & 3).

Talking and writing involves students in ‘doing’ which engages them behaviourally. Rote-learning and revising involves students in ‘remembering’ which engages them cognitively. Playing games and listening to music is ‘interesting’ which engages students emotionally. Varying the teaching strategies used in any one lesson increases the combination of experiences available for students. This increases the chance that any one student can be engaged by all three dimensions of engagement. As a beginning teacher, it is difficult to create activities that engage students across all three dimensions of engagement. However, in providing a variety of teaching resources and teaching strategies it is far more achievable.
Theme 4  using rote-learning and revision

Two teachers talked about rote-learning and revision as engaging teaching strategies. Joelle spoke about the importance of revision as a teaching strategy: “revising the last lesson at the beginning is a good strategy” (Joelle, p. 3). Revision was helpful for students to recap the Mandarin they had covered in the previous lesson because they had another chance to master what they were expected to know. Joelle used her own teaching experience to elaborate why she thought rote-learning was important. She said:

Rote-learning is good, especially with a foreign language. I have taught language – Hindi. I would get students to repeat all the new words they learn. It is a foreign language and they are just not used to it. The pronunciation comes after a lot of practice. It is a good idea for them to say it again and again (Joelle, p. 3).

Joelle highlighted the importance of revision and rote-learning as teaching strategies especially when teaching a foreign language because revision helps students to experience success. Therefore, they continue to engage with the language. John further explained why rote-learning was a useful teaching strategy:

Some of strategies used in China can also be used here in Australia, such as rote-learning … It is often frowned upon because we tend to use it too much. But as long as it is mix in with other strategies, as long as the strategies work together, it is OK. I think rote-learning can help in learning a new language (John, p. 3).

John thought that mixing up rote-learning with other teaching strategies made rote-learning as engaging as more innovative teaching strategies. Rote-learning was useful because it helped students retain and remember what they had just covered in class. However, he indicated that rote-learning should not dominate. It should complement other teaching strategies.
Using a variety of teaching strategies provides an opportunity for students to engage in learning from multiple dimensions in ways that would be difficult for a single teaching strategy to achieve. Revision and rote-learning promote emotional and cognitive engagement. However, when I was being educated in China, the dominant teaching strategy was rote-learning and went hand-in-glove with an exam-oriented education system. As a teacher in Australia I did not think rote-learning would engage students. However, the evidence indicates differently. The differences between the two cultures could be the reason why rote-learning is more engaging in Australia compared with China. In China, rote-learning would not engage anyone emotionally, only cognitively and then by remote control rather than purposefully. In Australia because it is used in conjunction with other teaching strategies it takes on a different identity and engages students emotionally as well as cognitively.

Theme 5 learning in context

John talked about why teaching a language in context is particularly engaging:

Students can relate to it and it becomes real. When they go to a Chinese restaurant, they can hear Mandarin and perhaps understand some things people say. It makes them feel special. It provides a connection with the language lessons at school. As a teacher, you can then connect these experiences to Chinese culture. As soon as you do this you can take the lesson anywhere (John, p. 3).

Creating a context enabled students to relate language to real life experiences. When students feel special they engage emotionally. John also said: “you can select any context, such as kite-making, Chinese music and so on, and then introduce students to the Mandarin words associated with the context” (John, p. 3). The point John made was that when you teach contextually you can teach anything and more easily engage students in the process (Skamp, 2005).
Some of the evidence for this section has been presented as parts of previous sections. However, it is important to say that all teachers said teaching Mandarin using Chinese cultural contexts was engaging. Linda stated this simply by saying, “The idea of teaching Chinese culture while teaching them Mandarin is a good idea” (Linda, p. 3). Contextualising Mandarin within Chinese culture provided an opportunity for students to identify cultural similarities and differences and therefore make connections with their own culture. Culture provides an anchor from which students can think. It stimulates cognitive engagement, they learn the language and they learn about Chinese culture.

In summary, a variety of teaching strategies were identified that engaged students in learning Mandarin. Games; rote-learning and repetition; revision; embedding language in culture; teaching contextually and using a variety of different teaching strategies in a lesson were all engaging for students. The idea of incorporating the Mandarin language in real-life contexts or within Chinese culture was thought to be particularly engaging for students.

Question 4 Did you think aspects of Chinese and Australian cultural differences were engaging?

All four teachers talked about the engaging aspects of Chinese and Australian culture in terms of their similarities and differences. Three themes emerged:

- cultural similarities and differences;
- the exotic nature of cultural difference; and
- the impact of a Chinese teacher learning Australian culture.

Theme 1 cultural similarities and differences
Joelle commented on cultural similarities and differences generally: “I think it is a good thing to compare Chinese and Australian things, so they can see what’s the same and differences” (Joelle, p. 4). Cultural differences were expected to arouse student interest and encourage them to think about these differences and therefore engage students emotionally and cognitively. Cultural similarities were expected to make it easier for students to relate new content to what they already knew.

Linda talked about cultural differences using food as an example: “food is one of the cultural differences … You taught about different food and how you eat it. Everything involved cultural differences. How some of them reacted was very funny” (Linda, p. 4). Food was taught by comparing Chinese foods and ways of eating with Australian foods and how Australians eat. McDonalds was used as one example to introduce the idea of cultural similarities. Muffins were used to talk about cultural differences. Students were interested in identifying the cultural similarities and differences. The reason these examples were chosen was because both McDonalds and muffins are part of each student’s everyday life in Australia. Students were familiar with these examples and they could relate what they were learning to their prior knowledge.

Theme 2 the exotic nature of cultural difference

One of the reasons why culture was engaging for students was because it was seen as ‘exotic’ by students: “Students who attend our class want to learn more about China” (Lee, p. 4). Students were interested in learning about China. Therefore, teaching Chinese culture was a student-centred approach because it satisfied the student need to know more about China. In addition, “you used something they do not know to attract them – Chinese music, Kung Fu and chopsticks” (Lee, p. 4). Teaching students something new and different that interests them because they do not fully understand it, because there is strangeness and wonder about it is ‘exotic’.
Lee and John shared a similar view that cultural similarities and differences were engaging simply because students knew very little about them. They wondered about them. Lee cited the example of sport: “You brought Chinese traditional sports together with Australian sports. Students didn’t know what to expect. They didn’t know how similar or different they would be” (Lee, p. 4). John further explained:

When you brought Chinese and Australian sports together in the same lesson, they saw they are different. They didn’t really know what to expect but they were keen to learn about the differences and sometimes experiencing a different perspective is engaging in itself (John, p. 4).

Comparisons between Chinese and Australian sports were engaging because, culturally, Australians are interested in sport. In addition, identifying and comparing similarities and differences between them were engaging because the Chinese sports were ‘exotic’. Exotic influences are consistent with emotional and cognitive engagement (Munns & Martin, 2005).

Theme 3    the impact of a Chinese teacher learning Australian culture

Both John and Lee commented that students became interested when they noticed the Chinese Mandarin teacher was learning some Australian culture. Lee commented: “You showed them you are not an outsider because you know about Australian sports. Students will feel more close to you. You taught something they didn’t think you know about” (Lee, p. 4). The teacher was not only learning, as were the students, she was a Chinese learning about Australia while they were Australians learning about China and the students acknowledged and respected this. John agreed with Lee and said: “they identified with you and this helps with rapport. They respect you; they think you are making an effort to be part of who they are” (John, p. 4). John takes this point further:
Students begin to think that as a Chinese teacher you are becoming familiar with Australian culture. Students know you are learning about Australia as a person. In class they engage from both these perspectives. They are engaged by learning about China and Chinese culture and by learning about you and the fact that you are learning about them – about Australia. So, the two reinforce each other. Teaching from two cultural perspectives has got a lot going for it (John, p. 4).

In teaching, the teacher/student relationship is important, interactive and powerful. Student interest in the teacher and the personality of the teacher interact and can either be a huge benefit or not.

In summary, Chinese and Australian cultural similarities and differences were engaging for students. The thought of the unknown, the idea of strangeness and knowledge discovery is an exotic influence that engages students. A student identifying with a teacher who is learning about their world while they are trying to learn about the teacher’s contributed to student/teacher respect and rapport. This is a complex dimension of rapport and one that can work effectively to engage students emotionally.

Question 5 Compared with teaching in Term 1, what kind of progress has the teacher made in Term 2?

All four teachers described the progress the volunteer teacher-researcher made in teaching from Term 1 to Term 2. Four themes emerged from an analysis of their responses:

- confidence;
- personality in the classroom;
- attitude towards student behaviour; and
- reasons for teacher attitude change.
Theme 1  confidence

Linda commented on the increase in teaching confidence: “You became a lot more confident in your teaching” (Linda, p. 5). She said this was because: “At the beginning, you were a bit unsure what to teach to children. After our discussion you came up with so many wonderful ideas and it just went on from there” (Linda, p. 5). Throughout learning how to become a teacher discussions with classroom teachers, who assisted with teaching Mandarin, were very helpful. The discussions stimulated thinking and helped solve problems as they arose. This helped the teacher engage with the process of learning how to become a better teacher.

Joelle agreed with Linda about increased teacher confidence:

You gained more confidence. You spoke to the children very freely and used their names. You began to start the lesson in a cheerful and confident way. … When you first came, you were a bit shy, probably not familiar with Australian students. As you got to know them, you became friendlier. That showed me your confidence. The way you teach your lessons; you are not shy any more (Joelle, p. 5).

Using student names helped build teacher / student rapport. Increased student and teacher rapport helped develop more confidence to teach and interact with students.

Theme 2  personality in the classroom

Both Joelle and Linda talked about the changes in the personality I expressed in the classroom. “You are more open and friendlier with students now. You are more like – smiling” (Joelle, p. 5). The image a teacher presents in the class is vital to subsequent interactions with students. A friendly, smiling teacher is far more engaging for students than one who is not. Linda made the additional point that when students see a teacher smiling they respond in the same way. A lot of classroom engagement is
emotional, perhaps far more than I had realised and certainly more than I experienced in my own education in China.

Theme 3 attitude towards student behaviour

Lee described my more positive attitude in Term 2 compared with my attitude in Term 1: “Your attitudes towards student’s behaviour are more positive compared with last term … Last term when students are naughty, you got upset. But this term you think more positively about what to do” (Lee, p. 5). Student behaviour is never going to be perfect. As a beginning teacher I used to worry about student misbehaviour. However, I then took the initiative to change my attitude about student misbehaviour. I asked for suggestions from experienced teachers and began to actively build my relationship with students. I also learnt to modify my expectations of Australian students compared with my experiences in China. Chinese students are expected to be absolutely quiet and obey the instructions of teachers in the classroom.

Confucian culture has a huge influence on Chinese classroom behaviour. Teachers are the masters of knowledge and are in the privileged position of transmitting this knowledge to students who are also privileged to receive it. Consequently, students are expected to show their respect for being privileged in receiving this knowledge by respecting their teachers and showing obedience and displaying good manners. Respect for the teacher is a ‘given’. It does not have to be earned. Australian students present themselves in the classroom from a different philosophical perspective. Everyone has to earn respect, including teachers. As time passed I began to adjust to and accommodate the Australian teaching and learning context. I stopped judging in terms of what I thought was better and what was not. I just accepted that the cultural contexts were different. One was not better than the other. They were just different. I learnt to deal with the classroom as I experienced it rather than as I wanted it to be.
John agreed with Lee that my attitude towards student behaviour had become more positive:

Earlier you were very worried about behavioural management. When we talked about teaching, you talked a lot about how you coped with naughty students and how you managed the classroom. Now you never mention classroom management or naughty kids. Your attitude has changed. Now you are not preoccupied with classroom management. You talk affectionately about students including those who muck up (John, p. 5).

As a teacher I learnt to accommodate the Australian classroom environment and began to see the advantages of students who were forthright in class. I began to see them as individuals rather than as a mass collective. Each student had their own personality that they brought to class. They were people with likes and dislikes. I had to get to know them and respect their individuality. A constructivist view of teaching and learning recognises this (Skamp, 2005). I was the one who had to change. I began to use my research to guide my teaching, especially how to engage students by engaging myself in teaching. My own emotional engagement led to increased cognitive engagement and stimulated me to conduct more research on teacher engagement. My research began to guide my teaching practice and my teaching practice reinforced the need to explore teacher engagement as a way of promoting student engagement.

Theme 4 reasons for teacher attitude change

Two teachers explained why they thought the teacher-researcher’s attitude towards student behaviour had changed: “Students really want to learn because you concentrated more on how to change yourself not the students” (Lee, p. 5). My research supervisor observed one of my lessons in Term 1 and team taught with me for three lessons in Term 2. This was the turning point of my teaching practice. The encouragement and guidance from my research supervisor changed my feelings towards student behaviour from negative to positive. The guidance from my research
supervisor made me think about the issues in the classroom and made me concentrate more on how I engaged students by engaging myself in teaching:

Your own view about your teaching became important. There could be a number of reasons for this. Now you feel more comfortable when the kids are talking. Your expectations of student behaviour have changed. As time went on you learnt how to develop a relationship with students. They are not really all that naughty. Classroom management is always an issue even for an experienced teacher. You learnt to change your perspective and now you feel far more comfortable about classroom management. Your own satisfaction with your teaching is one of the reasons you have become more engaging (John, p. 5).

John indicated that my changed view of student behaviour was a reflection of my changed expectations. I was also expected to develop strategies to deal with classroom management. I did not know this at the beginning of my teaching. I just expected the students to behave. My satisfaction with my teaching is also because I realised that I actually had to do something. I either had to change the students or myself. I chose to change myself which then had an effect on modifying student behaviour. Essentially, both the teacher and students changed.

My personality, satisfaction with teaching and views about myself as a teacher became important as I began to drive the teaching process. Engaging with my personal learning is consistent with Munns and Martin’s (2005) ‘discourses of power’. Discourses of power refer to knowledge, ability, control, place and voice. In this case the power discourse is across all five dimensions. I know what has to be done, I have the ability to do it, I am in control and I have listened to others and formed opinions that are now directing my actions in my work (Munns & Marin, 2005).

In summary, compared with Term 1, the teacher became more confident in her teaching by changing negative attitudes about student behaviour. This was achieved through seeking advice from experienced teachers, accommodating the Australian teaching / learning context, building rapport with students and engaging in learning
how to become a better teacher. This process required me, as the teacher, to engage with all three dimensions of engagement.

Question 6 Can you make suggestions about how lessons might be made more engaging?

Six themes emerged from the analysis of interviews about how lessons could be made more engaging:

- time for student note taking;
- classroom management;
- trying new things;
- positive student feedback;
- student questions and feedback; and
- amount of language teaching.

Theme 1 time for students note taking

Joelle talked about students taking notes in class: “they see the lesson more seriously and they need to write things down so they have a record they might read later” (Joelle, p. 6). Joelle also said that students taking notes provided an opportunity for the teacher to move around and check student work: “everyone is writing and you get a chance to walk around and check what they are doing to see they are on task” (Joelle, p. 6). Joelle saw students writing during class as a way of monitoring their work as well as a record of the lesson. Teacher movement in the classroom is important. It provides students with time to collect their thoughts about the lesson as well as providing the teacher with the opportunity to monitor student progress.

Theme 2 classroom management
Joelle said classroom management should be firm:

You need to be more firm. You have to vary things more. There are times when you can be friendly but there are times when you just have to be firm. It is good they know you can be firm with them and you expect them to do some serious work. If it gets a bit noisy you can get them back on task (Joelle, p. 6).

In Australian the teaching context is very different compared with China. Joelle said: “if the lesson is quiet, there is something wrong. In Australia, you want them to talk a little bit, have fun and enjoy the lesson … If you make them sit quietly, it is punishing them” (Joelle, p. 6). Joelle suggested that there needs to be a balance, saying “enjoy the lesson but not overdo it” (Joelle, p. 6). I need to keep a balance between being friendly and being strict. In China, students are always quiet. Ideal students are those who sit nicely and listen attentively by folding arms or taking notes. In Australia, students are who they are wether in the classroom or outside it. This means the student is always a person. Therefore, because the behaviour of people varies from time to time, the teacher has to be prepared to modify interactions as needs arise. This is very different compared with China.

Theme 3 trying new things

Linda encouraged me to try new things: “I encourage you try different things. It is important for your teaching career as well and it makes you a better teacher” (Linda, p. 6). Trying new things is not only an important strategy for developing better lessons it also helps to expand my repertoire as a teacher. Trying new things is not so much about engaging students rather it is about engaging me as the teacher. John made the same suggestion:

Have a go, if you stuff it up it doesn’t matter. Students are very forgiving. Besides, you need to learn. You need to experiment. This is the only way
you will learn and develop as a teacher. As a beginning teacher, you actually have a responsibility to try new things (John, p. 6).

John went on to make the point that as a teacher-researcher, the research part was to find out about new and different things and the teacher part was to try it in the classroom, particularly if it promoted student learning.

**Theme 4 positive student feedback**

Linda encouraged continued communication with children and to provide them with positive feedback: “I think you communicate very well with children. You have great positive feedback … You always encourage them and they like to hear they do a good job” (Linda, p. 6). Giving students positive feedback encourages them and students like to hear compliments. It builds rapport and promotes emotional engagement.

**Theme 5 student questions and feedback**

Linda not only encouraged me to provide positive feedback to children but encouraged me to ask for feedback so that I could adapt my teaching to meet their needs: “keep asking questions. You should always ask for feedback. It is important to find out what children expect” (Linda, p. 6). Asking for feedback was important but listening to children’s questions was equally important:

> Sometimes you might plan something and the children go in a different direction. Sometimes it is good to go with that, because it works in that direction. So, listen to children’s questions and be prepared to modify or change your plan (Linda, p. 6).

Student and teacher communication is not only in one direction. Communication occurs in multiple directions. However, it is often up to the teacher to initiate and purposefully seek their opinion (Skamp, 2005).
Theme 6  amount of language teaching

Lee suggested that more Mandarin language should be incorporated in lessons: “you should add more language parts to the class” (Lee, p. 6). John and Lee shared similar view:

When you develop rapport with students or engage students at the beginning, you will start with interesting or fun activities. But as time goes on, the balance will change. Sometimes they want to learn the rigour of the language. As the lesson goes on, more rigour can be added. More language should be added. You need to keep a balance (John, p. 6).

John suggested that the balance of engagement dimensions is not always the same. When a new topic is started it is important to engage students from the outset (Bybee, 1997; Marek, 2008). For many students this is achieved more readily by tapping their emotional or behavioural engagement. When students are engaged the balance of their engagement can then be moved towards more cognitive engagement. Nevertheless, substantive engagement refers to a combination of emotional, behavioural and cognitive engagement and a balance of all three is necessary (Munns & Marin, 2005). Multi-dimensional engagement of students at high levels is hard to achieve as a beginning teacher. This is especially the case when a teacher has to develop rapport with students by learning about their interests and background as well as thinking through providing engaging learning contexts.

In summary, four teachers answered six interview questions to explore student and teacher engagement throughout this study. Their responses were analysed for recurring themes (Erickson, 1986; Coble, Selin & Erickson, 2003). The teachers identified parts of lessons that were engaging and provided reasons for their being engaging. The teachers also indicated which teaching resources and teaching strategies were engaging and why cultural similarities and differences were engaging for students. They commented on the progress in my teaching from the beginning of
the study until its end and made suggestions for my further improvement as a teacher. In the next section, teacher-researcher observations and discussions are analysed.

5.3 Field notes

Filed notes included observations of students and informal discussions with teachers and students. In the original study design it was planned to record random, informal student observations and discussions. However, this aspect of the data collection was often incorporated directly into the reflective journal. Consequently, field note observations and discussions were limited more than originally intended. This is a consequence of the time between lesson iterations being only one or two weeks. Consequently, it became more efficient to incorporate informal observations into the reflective journal directly. Nevertheless, some observations and discussions were recorded as field notes and are analysed in this section along with some that were recorded directly in the reflective journal.

Field notes, including classroom observations, teacher discussions and student discussions, were analysed by thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). “Thematic analysis is a process for encoding qualitative information” (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 4). Thematic analysis is used to identify themes or patterns:

The use of thematic analysis involves three distinct stages: Stage 1, deciding on sampling and design issues; Stage 2, developing themes and a code; and Stage 3, validating and using the code. Within the second stage, there are three different ways to develop a thematic code: (a) theory driven, (b) prior data or prior research driven and (c) inductive (i.e., from the raw data) or data driven (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 4).

This analysis used an inductive process to develop thematic coding for classroom observations, teacher discussions and student discussions. The process used was that outlined by Erickson (1986) and refined by Coble, Selin and Erickson (2003).
5.3.1 Observations

Observations of student behaviour in the classroom were used to gain additional data about student interests and student engagement. Student behaviour and interaction provided an opportunity for the teacher to think about student reactions to a lesson and reflect on them so that improvements could be made in the following lesson. Observations themselves were limited and did not provide new data. However, they were used to clarify and reinforce data from other sources.

The observations analysed in this section are a combination of those written as field notes as well as those extracted from the reflective journal. Field notes should be purposeful as a result of the researcher making a conscious decision to observe something or someone and then make notes in the field. The reality is this sometimes does not happen. Usually field notes are recorded after the event, when either the significance of the event is realised or there is time to actually record observations.

Because a research design is an ‘ideal to be followed’ it does not guarantee the design will be followed. In the case with some field note observations, written entries may have ‘skipped’ the field note step with data being directly recorded as reflections in the reflective journal. Consequently, some of what should have been field notes appears in the reflective journal and will have already been analysed there. This is the lived reality of a ‘relativist’ view of research and a methodology of ‘teacher-as-researcher’ which employed ‘action research’ in a reduced ‘timeframe’. Consequently, such transgressions from the original design will need to be accommodated, especially if it is authentic. The analysis of the observations is presented as the actual findings accompanied by discussion.

While teaching, I observed that Australian students liked to talk and share their experiences in class. Compared with Chinese students, Australian students are more talkative and open. They are individuals and express their individuality as a real
person in the class. In my Mandarin lessons, I tried to accommodate their personality and invite students to discuss their experiences as they related to my lessons. By incorporating their life experience and relating the lesson to students’ daily life, my Mandarin lessons became more interesting for students. This is consistent with emotional engagement in the MeE Framework (Munns & Martin, 2005). In addition, when students related my Mandarin lessons to their everyday life, students increased their self-motivation to learn. This is consistent with intrinsic motivation theory as outlined by Munns and Martin (2005).

When students suggested that lessons should contain more activities, I thought they were lazy. They lacked self-discipline themselves and the desire to use their brain to memorise things like vocabulary. However, using my observations as a basis, I began to think in a different way. Students in Australia are very interested in art. They like drawing and designing. They like to actively use their hands. When I taught in the primary school, I observed that students participated in hands-on activities and games. Their participation and involvement captured their interest and helped them to concentrate on the learning tasks. They enjoyed the lesson. I then started to develop more activities that required student activity and hands-on participation.

This required a great deal of creative effort but the lessons were more engaging. In China, teachers use textbooks, worksheets and exams to teach without many, if any, activities and very little student involvement. As a student, I learnt how to concentrate on tasks and discipline myself to learn without active involvement. Culturally, the importance of academic results sustained my desire to learn. Consequently, it is hard for me to think of activities, which involve student participation, to teach students Mandarin. This was especially the case when I first came to Australia. Chinese students are required to listen to teachers and sit quietly in class. When I used the same teaching strategy in Australia, it did not work. Students did not relate to my teaching. So, I talked to them and discussed their lack of interest with them. They suggested that I provide more classroom activities and involve them. My concern was
that student participation in activities took a lot of time and so was a waste of their learning time.

My priority was to teach students authentic Mandarin and Chinese culture and use time effectively so they could learn as much as possible in the time available. However, their lack of engagement helped me understand that students are real people and only apply themselves to tasks when they are interested. They are honest and loyal to themselves. If they are not interested in a lesson, they will not pretend to be engaged or sit quietly. As a teacher, I learnt to respect this honesty and cater to their interests and learning style. I started to organise lessons that involved kite-making, paper-cutting and using Chinese popular music.

By developing interesting activities and involving students in Mandarin lessons, they gradually became interested in learning Mandarin. Learning outcomes increased, with student participation and the classroom environment was far more positive than when students just sat there and listened to me. Observations that students have different learning styles and interact in different ways in the classroom showed that teachers need to take these differences into account and develop lessons that cater for difference.

One of the first things I observed was that Australian students enjoy humour. They enjoy joking with each other in and out of class. Humour is part of most students’ everyday life. Consequently, I began to use humour in class. I hoped students would begin to think that Mandarin lessons were part of their life. I began to share jokes with them. Sharing jokes with students tapped into their emotional engagement (Munns & Martin, 2005).

I also observed that students in both primary and high school were tolerant of different ethnicities and different cultures. They appreciated and engaged with cultural differences. In one primary school, ‘Tolerance Day’ was organised for
students. Its purpose was to engage students with difference and diversity and so promote tolerance of difference. All the teachers and students dressed up and wore traditional clothes. Students ate different food and enjoyed different music from different cultures. In the high school, a Multi-cultural Day was organised to achieve similar outcomes. I participated in Multi-cultural Day and prepared authentic Chinese food for students to enjoy.

I introduced this idea in the classroom by teaching about the Chinese wedding ceremony. I asked students to think about the implications of cross-cultural marriage. Most students viewed cross-cultural marriage positively. They thought about enjoying different types of food and music and learning about different religions and cultural experiences. Their responses were surprising. They drew on their experiences as Australians who have incorporated such experiences into their everyday life. This is different to the Chinese experience where many people do not eat food from a different country. Some researchers say that different food and music is a superficial representation of diversity (Jackson & Meadows, 1991; Hall, 1992; Featherstone, 1995; Dutro, Kazemi, Balf & Yih-Sheue, 2008). It may be, but it is a real demonstration of an acceptance and use of difference that is not common in Chinese culture. I learnt that it is just not what students learn at school that enables them to tolerate difference. Australia is a country where people come form many different parts of the world. Australia has become a culture of difference and diversity. I have learnt to be more active in incorporating difference and diversity into lessons to met student expectations.

Year 8 students like group work. From my observations, I have found that Australian students are encouraged to work in groups with their classmates. They share ideas and help each other. Students were open and tolerant to different views and values. I have also observed that primary school teachers cooperate with each other and share the workload. My observations of both students and teachers have shown me that working in groups has many outcomes apart from those which promote classroom
learning. They actually impact culture and the way people interact with each other. Consequently, I have learnt that a knowledge and use of student interest and background can be used to help teach Mandarin more effectively.

I have found that Australian students have the freedom to talk with their teachers and teachers regard students as individuals and respect their individual differences. Confucius education culture distinguishes sharply between Chinese students and teachers. Teachers have more knowledge than students and teachers have total authority over students. Chinese students should be obedient and follow the teacher. Australian students, although not equal to teachers, can negotiate with teachers to achieve benefits that are useful to both students and teachers. Teacher status in the classroom is different in China compared with Australia. This is one reason why Australian students behave differently in the classroom. It is also a reason why I have had to learn how to engage differently with how to become a more engaging teacher.

Some of Year 7 students chose to continue to learn Mandarin again in Year 8 in 2009. I found that Year 8 students were harder to engage than Year 7 students. They were the same students but they had changed. Although I have made this observation, I am still thinking about why this is the case.

In summary, my observations were about student behaviour, student interest and about students as people. My observations helped me to reflect on my teaching and improve my communication with students. In analysing the observations, I found that I learnt about Australian students, Australian culture and people generally. My observations have helped me understand that student and teacher engagement is a reflection of more than just the classroom. It reflects a way of thinking and a way of life that I need to understand in greater depth if I am to learn to be a better teacher.

5.3.2 Teacher and Student Discussions
Discussions with students and teachers provided immediate and spontaneous feedback and comment on lesson preparation and delivery. Discussions, as a form of external feedback and dialogue, have advantages. Laurillard (2002) argues that discussion as a dialogue increases the likelihood that teachers and students understand each other. It also provides an opportunity for students to play an active role in constructing meaning from feedback messages. According to Laurillard (2002, p. 210), feedback as a dialogue means that the “student not only receives initial feedback information, but also has the opportunity to engage the teacher in discussion about that feedback”. Therefore, teacher-student dialogue is essential if feedback is to be effective. The research reported by this study used teacher and student feedback to help her reflect on her teaching practice and improve her teaching proficiency. In addition, discussions with teachers and students helped build rapport and promote mutual communication.

5.3.2.1 Teacher Discussions
The classroom teacher in the high school and the classroom teacher in the primary school assisted with Mandarin lessons. They commented on lesson plans and lesson delivery and their suggestions were recorded directly into the reflective journal. The colleague VTR and research supervisor team taught with me for three lessons. Their suggestions were also entered directly into my reflective journal. This was done to incorporate new ideas into following lessons so I could improve my ability to engage students in learning Mandarin and to engage myself in learning how to improve my teaching. Consequently, the findings from an analysis of teacher discussions did not produce any new findings although a number of already identified findings were reinforced. These findings are discussed in this section if they provide a new perspective on what has already been identified. However, findings that are a repeat of what has already been discussed are simply listed at the end. In this section, the analysis of teacher discussions is reported as a discussion of the themes identify using thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) as outlined by Erickson (1986) and refined by Coble, Selin and Erickson (2003).
The first theme identified suggested that I need to involve all students in activities. I did this by choosing something everyone was interested in. By involving and interesting all students, I obtained and maintained student interest and participation. Interesting students is a way of engaging them emotionally while getting them to participate is consistent with behavioural engagement (Munns & Marin, 2005).

The second theme identified suggested that I should use knowledge of student background to select activities that would interest them. Some students were already familiar with using chopsticks so were not overly engaged by learning how to use chopsticks. Active participation and interesting activities engage students behaviourally and emotionally. Both teachers who observed my lessons and students who participated in them did not think that using chopsticks engaged students cognitively. However, by learning how to hold a pair of chopsticks, students applied cognitive strategies so the chopsticks were parallel to pick things up. In this example student cognitive engagement was present. Students had to realise that the chopsticks had to be parallel so they could be effectively manipulated to pick things up. In this example the development of skills over-shadowed cognitive development. However, students explained the chopsticks needed to be parallel to pick up small objects to students who had not worked this out. Although this example of cognition did not relate directly to learning Mandarin, at the time, it was helpful in developing student interest in learning Mandarin and assisted with student / teacher rapport.

Using a variety of activities and teaching strategies was the third theme identified. By using different teaching activities, such as colouring-in, completing worksheets and group work, students actively participated in class. They enjoyed the diversity of activities and were engaged in learning Mandarin. When students participated in paper-cutting activities they cut four dimensions of the Chinese character ‘春’ (chun) which means spring. Paper-cutting is a traditional Chinese art. The paper-cutting activity was interesting (emotional engagement) for students because it involved
activity (behavioural engagement) and learning about Chinese culture (emotional and cognitive engagement). The activity also required students to learn some Mandarin (cognitive engagement). All three dimensions of engagement were involved.

Another hands-on, minds-on activity that was cited by teachers as being ‘good’ was the Chinese greeting ceremony. The ceremony was conducted at the start of each lesson. It was new and different and engaged students emotionally. Rewarding students who answered their name in Chinese was part of taking the role at the beginning of the lesson and so was incorporated into the ceremony. Students were motivated to speak Mandarin and every day something new was added to the ceremony. It became an important part of each lesson. It became a way of teaching Mandarin.

The next theme was that student instructions should be clear and detailed and that the teacher should ask for student feedback to ensure instructions are fully understood. Teacher instructions are important to help students understand what they are required to do. Clear teacher instructions are also important in promoting classroom control.

Teacher voice was identified as the next theme. Teachers had different opinions about how voice should be used in the classroom. One teacher explained, “When the teacher is in control and you want to get a child’s attention, you should lower your voice. It is much more powerful” (Linda, June, 2009). However, another teacher said, “You should raise your voice and yell at students who misbehave” (Joelle, June, 2009). When students are naughty, I do not yell at them. As a person, I am not the kind to yell at students. I prefer to lower my voice and communicate with students. However, there were some strategies I needed to learn. I need to learn to wait until students were quiet before I give them instructions. When I talk to the whole class, I need to address the whole class rather than speak to just a few students. I need to use a PowerPoint or overhead transparency to show students Mandarin words. This saves time and ensures
continuous student attention. When using a PowerPoint or transparency I also need to make sure the technology works before the lesson starts.

The next theme identified was that teachers need to ‘multi-task’ in the classroom. They need to consider student happiness and welfare as well as teaching their subject. Both Joelle and Linda indicated that students should not be put under too much pressure. In China’s exam-oriented education system teachers apply a lot of pressure to students to maximise their achievement in exams. The academic success of children is associated with the family’s dreams of glory. In addition, China has 1.3 billion people so the competition among individuals, to not only do well but to survive, is great. For people to compete they must work hard and learn to cope with the pressures of study and then work. Society, schools and family all contribute to the pressure of learning in China. People become a victim of their own success. The more you achieve, the more you are expected to achieve. The hidden traumas experienced in my childhood associated with academic achievement continued to play a role in my life. This is why emotional engagement in Mandarin classes is important to me. I really want students to be interested in and enjoy learning in Mandarin lessons.

Other themes identified but discussed previously include group work, spending time disciplining students, movement around the classroom, increasing the variety of teaching strategies and resources, teacher and student interactions, revision, using audiovisual material as a stimulus and using technology in an innovative and creative way.

In summary, teacher discussions covered teaching strategies, teaching resources, classroom management and teacher / student interactions. Occasionally, different teachers had different opinions but generally all teachers reinforced the views of each other. Teaching in Australia required the volunteer teacher researcher to accommodate an Australian classroom context. However, this can only be achieved while maintaining self identity. Eventually, the ‘self’ may change but not consciously
and not in a short period of time. Indeed, some Chinese ‘concepts’ and ways of ‘doing’ and ‘seeing’ things are embedded and may never change.

5.3.2.2 Students Responses to Questions from the REAL Framework

This study selected twelve questions from the sixty that composed the REAL Framework (Munns & Woodward, 2006) covering affective, cognitive and operative dimensions of engagement as detailed in section 3.5.2.1. Students were asked two or three questions from the REAL Framework towards the end of each lesson to provide feedback on their engagement in the lesson. Responses are reported on a question by question basis.

Table 5.2 The questions chosen from the REAL Framework

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<th>Dimensions of the REAL Framework</th>
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<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
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<td>1 What were the fun bits in your learning?</td>
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<td>2 Why were the fun bits fun?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 How do you feel when you solved a problem?</td>
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Question 1  What were the fun bits in your learning?

Students provided actual and concrete examples of specific things which were fun, such as using chopsticks, colouring-in activities, games and music. These activities were interesting and fun and so aligned with the affective or emotional dimension of the MeE Framework (Munns & Martin, 2005) although alignment with other dimensions was also achieved.

Question 2  Why were the fun bits fun?

Most of the student did not provide reasons to explain why the fun bits were fun. Only one student commented that “it is interesting to listen to different forms of music. It is awesome” (June, 2009). The word ‘interest’ was an indicator of affective or emotional engagement.

Question 3  How do you feel when you solved a problem?

Students said they felt happy and proud of themselves when they solved a problem. ‘Happiness and pride’ are associated with affective or emotional engagement according to Munns and Martin (2005) and indicate that students gained genuine satisfaction from the lesson.

Question 4  Name two things to make you think harder?

Most students did not provide an answer to this question. The only answer was how to work out how to tie strings together when making kites. One of the reasons for this could be because I did not incorporate a great deal of cognitive engagement in lessons. As time went on I realised this was a problem in some lessons. Students wanted to learn Mandarin in a simple, non-challenging, easy and fun way. As a beginning teacher I was learning how to engage students, develop rapport and keep them
interested in Mandarin lessons. However, I also realised that there was a demand from some students for more demanding work. Some students wanted the interesting and ‘easy life’ while others wanted to learn.

Year 8 students are at a difficult stage in their development. Some want to learn Mandarin and get on with their academic life. They want cognitive engagement. Lack of cognitive engagement may have lead to some behavioural problems in class, particularly in the earlier lessons. It is difficult for a beginning teacher to work out and then achieve the balance which is appropriate for a particular group of students in a particular class. This is the tension between engaging students and teaching the rigor of the language. In the very early lessons, I thought the content was simple and easy, however, some students said it was hard. This is why I reduced the difficulty of the work but later realised it was too easy. As a beginning teacher, I do not have the experience to make the right decisions all the time. Eventually, I worked out that the teachers who advised me were correct. I have to actively seek feedback from students to help me zero in on an appropriate balance. I concluded that Year 8 students respond well when the lesson is simple and engaging to begin with but then actually prefer it when more demanding work is incorporated. Once students are engaged emotionally and behaviourally they then want to be and expect to be more cognitively engaged.

Question 5 What strategies did you use to learn something important?

Students cited a variety of strategies they used to learn. These included: listening, memorising, researching, using their brain, having fun, participating in activities, drawing and taking books home to read to their parents. These learning strategies traversed all three dimensions of engagement. Memorising, using the brain and researching are predominantly cognitive while having fun is emotionally engaging. Participating in activities and drawing are behaviourally engaging. Taking books home and reading them to parents probably covers all three dimensions of
engagement and demonstrates that student learning can be promoted by connections with family.

Question 6 Why do you think doing it differently will help you with your learning?

Students provided a variety of reasons to explain why ‘doing it differently’ helped with learning. They said it helped develop art skills, it made the lesson easier and it was fun. However, most of their responses were superficial and did not really provide reasons. They had difficulty in explaining why ‘doing things differently’ helped with learning. They just said it did.

Question 7 When and where else could you use this information?

Students provided some specific examples of when and where they could use the information they had learnt in class. These included working on the internet and in the library when they were studying Mandarin, when they visit China, when they eat Chinese food at home, when they visit Chinese people and when they chat with friends on the internet. Most students qualified their responses with a ‘Chinese’ context. The reality of their responses is questionable. Students either saw that their future would include a ‘Chinese’ connection or they were responding with what they thought were appropriate answers. Essentially, they did not view Mandarin language learning as part of their everyday life. It was separate. The content of Mandarin lessons was only going to be used when there was a specific Chinese context.

Question 8 What new thing can you do now?

Students offered concrete examples of specific things they had learnt and could do now that they could not do before. They said they could use chopsticks and speak some Mandarin words. They gave other examples that involved using the Mandarin language in a ‘Chinese’ context such as writing Chinese characters. Their responses
did not include any transfer of what was learnt in Mandarin classes to other aspects of their lives.

Question 9  What would you change about today’s work to help you improve?

One student said he would like to play sport and have fun rather than just talk about sport in class. Others said they did not know. Students seemed to find this a difficult question to relate to. They really did not know how to respond. The indications were that students preferred to change things to something that interested them. However, overall, they did not provide considered responses to this question.

Question 10  How could we change this lesson / unit / strategy / skill next time we do this?

Three students said they did not know. This question required students to think about their lessons differently and they chose not to do that. This was a hard question for them to answer.

Question 11  Think of a way to use … since we practiced it in class.

Students gave a variety of responses to this question. However, again their responses were contextualised by a Chinese connection. They said they could earn money in China. They said they could use what was learnt in class in a future Chinese lesson or they could tell their parents about it at home. Responses to this question reinforced the idea that students thought the content of Mandarin lessons could only be used in a Chinese context. The only exception to this was the response of one student who had a Chinese background. It is important to note that students made a connection between Mandarin lessons and their parents and home. This connection should have been explored in more depth but its significance was not recognised at the time data were collected.
Question 12 List three ways the skills you have learnt can be used elsewhere?

Most students responded to this question in a similar way to the previous question. However, one additional comment made was that they could talk to Chinese people when they went in Chinatown. This additional comment was consistent with those of the previous question and was contextualised by a specific Chinese connection.

In summary, responses to the twelve REAL Framework questions indicated that student engagement was predominately emotional and behavioural. One important finding was that students did not seem to view the content of Mandarin lessons as part of their everyday lives. Student responses to the twelve questions are summarised question by question in Table 4.3.

Table 5.3 Student responses to twelve questions from the REAL Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of the REAL Framework</th>
<th>Affective</th>
<th>Cognitive</th>
<th>Operative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 What were the fun bits in your learning?</td>
<td>4 Name two things to make you think harder?</td>
<td>8 What new thing can you do now?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Using chopsticks</td>
<td>• Tie strings to make kites</td>
<td>• Using chopsticks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Activities and game</td>
<td>• I do not know</td>
<td>• Speaking Mandarin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Music</td>
<td>5 What strategies did you use to learn something important?</td>
<td>9 What would you change about today’s work to help you improve?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Why were the fun bits fun?</td>
<td>• Memorise</td>
<td>• Playing sports</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interesting</td>
<td>• Have fun</td>
<td>• Having fun</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 How do you feel when you solved a problem?</td>
<td>• Games</td>
<td>10 How can we change this lesson / unit / strategy / skill next time we do this?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Happy and proud</td>
<td>• Telling to parents</td>
<td>• I do not know</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Why do you think doing it differently will help with your learning?</td>
<td>11 Think of a way to use … since we practiced it in class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In summary, this study focused on student classroom engagement or small ‘e’ engagement as defined by Munns and Martin, (2005). However, although the study did restrict data collection and discussion to classroom engagement this is an artificial construct and that there will be implications beyond the classroom. These implications are not necessarily restricted to big ‘E’ or school level engagement, but related to engagement beyond the classroom and beyond school to the everyday lives of students. When students in this study learn about Chinese language and culture, they relate it to going to Chinatown or eating in a Chinese restaurant. Students do not live their lives and think just within the confines of the classroom or even school. Students live their lives and therefore contextualise their learning beyond the classroom and school to their real lives. Consequently, if Chinese language learning is to be interesting and truly engaging for students it has to make connections with their real lives. Student responses to the REAL Framework indicate that classroom engagement is the first step. Engagement at the school level, although important, serves to engage students in a particular way or to an extent. The MeE Framework (Munns & Martin, 2005) presents student engagement as nested within school life rather than as part of ‘real life’. Student engagement, even at the classroom level, may be a reflection of a student’s ‘whole of life’ context. Meaningful student classroom and even school engagement may have a critical direct connection to life beyond school.

5.4 Conclusion
It was found that student-centred teaching strategies such as group work, hands-on and minds-on activities and using student background knowledge to scaffold student learning engaged students in learning Mandarin. Using learning contexts or topics that were familiar with student everyday life experiences was shown to be important in connecting classroom learning with the real world of students. It was found that when students were able to see that what they were studying in class was worthwhile, that what was being learnt was not just confined to school and then stopped at the school gate when they were on their way home, they engaged with learning. It was found that it was important to remind students that learning Mandarin was relevant to their everyday life. Students had to be convinced that learning Mandarin would be helpful for them in their future lives.

It was found that rote-learning had a legitimate place in a contemporary classroom when it was used with a diverse range of student-centred teaching strategies. Although rote-learning may not encourage higher order thinking and promote understandings, it was found to enhance student learning when used strategically with teaching strategies that more clearly achieved these outcomes. This was found to particularly be the case with language learning.

Audiovisual teaching resources were also found to promote student engagement with learning. Technology was found to be popular with students and closely related to their everyday lives. Students were found to respond extremely positively to technology when it was used in any form during class. This was because technology and using the latest in technological developments was found to be an important component of teenage life. It was found that using technology engaged students emotionally, behaviourally and cognitively.

It was shown that the elements that composed the dimensions of the MeE Framework had greatest impact when they made direct connection with student real life
experiences. Connection and connectedness with the real life world of the student was found to promote more authentic engagement. When these connections were not apparent to students then learning was not authentic and any engagement in learning was transient. The MeE Framework was shown to be a useful theoretical framework to integrate the sociological and psychological components of engagement. It integrated the three dimensions of emotional, behavioural and cognitive engagement. However, authentic student engagement required a direct connection to a more universal reality of student lives. This included the classroom teacher who was found to play a key role in facilitating the connection and integration of classroom experiences with the world of the student.
Chapter 6
The Consolidated Findings of the Research:
The relationship between student and Teacher Engagement

6.1 Introduction

The main research question for this study is: How does a teacher of Mandarin engage with learning how to successfully interest and engage students to learn Mandarin? Essentially, the study is about teacher engagement to promote student engagement in learning Mandarin. The first subsidiary research question is: How does a teacher engage students in learning Mandarin? This question is essentially about the teacher learning to engage students. The second subsidiary research question is: How does a teacher improve his or her teaching proficiency as a language teacher? This question is essentially about the teacher learning to improve their teaching ability. This chapter will report the key findings from the overall data analysis and discuss them in terms of the research questions. The discussion will be informed by the literature to generate theory about the relationship between student and teacher engagement.

6.2 Summary of Reflective Journal Findings

The reflective journal showed that student-centred teaching and learning approaches and the use of a diverse range of teaching resources, which were consistent with constructivism, were used to engage students to learn Mandarin as a second language. Student learning was enhanced when the teacher took into account background information about students, particularly their interests, to implement teaching programs. Student background information combined with personal characteristics of the teacher, such as personality, to enhance the learning environment.

The teacher-as-researcher model of teacher education provided opportunities for the teacher-researcher to reflect on teaching practice and apply theory to improve
teaching proficiency. Applications of theoretical research findings enabled the teacher-researcher to engage with her own learning and subsequently improve student learning by engaging them. There was a natural synergy between the teacher-as-researcher model and development as a beginning teacher. Views about teaching and learning were open to different ideas as they were being reshaped as a beginning teacher. The key finding was that research was being accessed as views about teaching and learning were being informed. Consequently, theoretical perspectives were more willingly investigated and transferred to the classroom context. The purpose of teacher engagement with learning became self-improvement as a teacher.

6.3 Summary of Interview and Field Notes Findings

The interview and field note findings reinforced those of the reflective journal. Student-centred teaching strategies such as hands-on activities, group work and using student background information to engage students were consistent with constructivist views of teaching and learning. The interview and field not analysis highlighted the importance of technology as a way to engage students. Not only was technology found to be effective in its own right, it was found to connect with students at their level of interest. Young learners are constantly exposed to and therefore identify with the latest in technological developments. The world of technology is their world. When teachers incorporate aspects of a student’s world into classroom practices, it helps students identify with not only how learning material is being presented but what is presented as well.

The power of using technology is not just in its usefulness as a medium of instruction but in its connection with students. The audiovisual teaching resources were found to be effective in their own right as communicative devices. However, they were also found to be effective because they brought the outside world of the student into the classroom. This is a central feature of constructivist views of teaching and learning –
new connecting with existing. For learning to occur new or different information has to connect with or be made sense of in the existing mind of the learner. This study found that when the learning environment was modified to accommodate the world of the student it promoted student engagement. Once this central idea of constructivist teaching was incorporated into the myriad of classroom practices, the learning environment, as a whole, became more effective.

6.4 Synthesis of the Overall Research Findings and Student Engagement

The research findings show there were three main ways to engage students in learning Mandarin. They were the careful selection of student-centred teaching strategies, the development and use of a diverse range of teaching resources and investing time and effort in getting to know students and integrating their background knowledge into teaching. The selection of student-centred teaching strategies and the use of diverse resources while taking into consideration student background knowledge were consistent with student-centred approaches to teaching and learning. The purpose of using student-centred approaches is that it provides a basis upon which students can base further learning (Van Der Stuyf, 2002). In addition, student-centred approaches were found to be consistent with a constructivist view of teaching and learning. Essentially, the research findings indicated that student engagement was promoted by implementing a constructivist theoretical perspective on teaching and learning. This is not to say that other perspectives may not have promoted student engagement but that a constructivist perspective did.

Throughout this study, the teacher-researcher learnt to develop and deliver quality and engaging lessons by selecting appropriate teaching strategies and resources while taking into account student background knowledge. The study findings showed that engaging teaching strategies share a number of features or characteristics which included:
• use of real life examples;
• include hands-on and minds-on activities and / or games;
• incorporate revision;
• involve group work;
• provide clear instructions and demonstrations;
• use humour;
• use explicit expectations;
• provide for greater student participation;
• use a series of related lessons rather than separate lessons;
• use student questions to direct learning;
• promote student curiosity;
• teach from a cultural context; and
• use a variety of teaching strategies.

These features are all consistent with student-centred teaching strategies and follow a constructivist view of teaching and learning. Using real life examples provided an opportunity to apply student background knowledge and stimulate further student learning which is consistent with constructivism (Wertsch, 1997). Learning from minds-on and hands-on activities helped students to become competent and empowered learners while revising previous work not only enabled students to “demonstrate what they know and can do but also challenges them to learn more” (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 78). Group work engaged students to participate in activities and is consistent with student-centred learning because it required students to make choices and negotiate with others (Skamp, 2004). Teacher instructions and demonstrations can scaffold student learning by providing examples with which they can connect (Skamp, 2004). A constructivist view of teaching and learning provided a scaffold that supported a variety of student-centred teaching strategies that, between them engaged students emotionally, behaviourally and cognitively.
The development and use of effective teaching resources assisted in the delivery of quality lessons. The type of resources that were found to be useful included a mixture of technologically based and more traditional resources. However, it was found that technology and resources that employed technology were particularly useful in engaging students. The resources that were found to engage students were:

- technology;
- audio stimulus material;
- visual stimulus material;
- music;
- PowerPoint slides;
- flashcards;
- worksheets; and
- coloured pictures.

The use of these resources in teaching and learning is also consistent with student-centred teaching strategies and follows a constructivist view of teaching and learning. Graham (2002) outlines guidelines for the preparation of teaching materials that assist in the implementation of student-centred learning as part of a constructivist approach to teaching. The materials should “have variety, be attractively presented, account for different learning styles, attitudes and needs of students” (Graham, 2002, p. 3). These features of teaching resources were also found to contribute to the development of good lessons. Technology provided opportunities to meet the needs of students with various learning styles through the use of multiple media (Beeland, 2002). Audio and visual media were attractive which engaged students emotionally. Furthermore, Beeland (2002) argues that audios and visuals promote student ability to organise and process information and challenge students to think at higher levels which is in line with cognitive engagement (Munns & Martin, 2005).
Student engagement was promoted when time and effort was invested in getting to know students in addition to learning about their background. A variety of ways were used to ‘get to know’ students and incorporate their interests in lessons. Many of these ways related to just talking to students as people and establishing a working rapport with them. This is often a function of interacting personalities but in this study it essentially involved recognition of students as people. This was achieved by:

- choosing popular teenage topics;
- using student expertise to teach Mandarin;
- relating to students as individuals;
- incorporating student interest;
- incorporating cultural differences; and
- incorporating futuristic perspectives.

‘Getting to know’ students is also consistent with a student-centred approach to teaching and follows a constructivist view of teaching and learning. Wertsch (1997) argues that the culture and background of learners helps shape the knowledge the learners create, discover and attain during the learning process. Munns and Martin (2005) state that using student background knowledge to teach students, promote student participation and stimulate student thinking are consistent with the multidimensional construct of engagement, which includes emotional, behavioural and cognitive engagement. Applying student background knowledge or prior information to stimulate further learning is a way to scaffold student learning (Wertsch, 1997). Scaffolding is an effective teaching strategy in line with constructivist views of learning. The purpose of scaffolding is to provide experiences upon which the student can build further learning. Munns and Martin (2005) advocate that scaffolding builds connections with student knowledge and stimulates their thinking and challenges them to reach higher levels of substantive engagement in learning. Van Der Stuyf (2002) argues that learners do not passively listen to information and remember facts. Instead, they use their prior knowledge to inform

Using student background knowledge was shown by this study to be an effective way to engage students. Essentially, many of the characteristics of good lessons, as stated above, function to scaffold student learning. Using real life examples, integrating revision of previous lessons, using a series of related rather than separate single lessons; using student questions to direct learning and teaching from a cultural context all function in a variety of ways as scaffolds to promote learning.

Munns and Martin (2005) argue that scaffolding processes such as connecting learning with or basing learning experiences on every day life experiences is consistent with ‘knowledge’ discourses of power. In this context, understanding or ascribing meaning to knowledge by making connections with students is providing them with control over their learning. This is especially true if students become aware that their “local knowledge and experiences are used and valued” (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 78). Therefore, using student questions to scaffold new learning and positioning this learning within the scope of student background knowledge is a way to engage them in substantive learning.

Making connections between learning and student everyday life experiences is consistent with the Quality Teaching Framework used in NSW DET schools (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003). When learning Mandarin is connected with every day life experiences, students are able to realise the ‘significance’ or importance of learning Mandarin. Significance “draws clear connections with students’ prior knowledge and identities, with contexts outside of the classroom and with multiple ways of knowing or cultural perspectives” (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003, p. 9). There is a consistency between the education perspectives informing student learning. The Quality Teaching Framework (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003) and theory underpinning discourses of
power (Munns & Martin, 2005) are consistent with a constructivist view of teaching and learning and enable teacher-researchers like myself to see that engaging students in a classroom can be guided by theory. When thinking about how to engage learners in the classroom it becomes apparent that the small ‘e’ component of the MeE Framework can be operationalised in terms of implementing a constructivist view of classroom teaching and interaction.

This study has also shown that hands-on activities engage students in ‘doing’ learning. This is consistent with behavioural engagement as outlined by Munns and Martin (2005): “I think it can be any topic, as long as students are involved in actually doing things (Joelle)”. Hands-on lessons incorporate operative engaging pedagogies whereby students actively participate in learning experiences while working towards becoming more effective learners. Hands-on experiences help students to become more competent and empowered learners (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006). This is because when students ‘do’, they know that what they have done is theirs. They have ownership, and therefore power over what they are doing. Not only is learning by doing consistent with discourses of power, it is consistent with constructivist theory. According to Erik and Jan (1999, p. 204) “knowledge is created by doing”. Skamp (2004) describes constructivism as a form of human cognition related to pedagogic approaches that promote learning particularly when hands-on activities are used.

Making choices and discussions which culminate with students making choices stimulates their thinking and learning. This is an example of student cognitive engagement (Munns & Martin, 2005). Making choices is part of what Munns and Martin (2005) call ‘voice’ and promotes an “environment of discussion and reflection about learning with students and teachers playing reciprocal and meaningful roles”, within discourses of power (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 78). Group work, as a teaching strategy, engages students and is one way to empower student ‘voice’. Well-structured group work promotes student participation in
discussions which provides an avenue for student ‘voice’ and power (Munns & Martin, 2005). Group work is a learning strategy aligned with student ‘voice’ and power. Group work provides the opportunity for students to exercise choice. It requires and develops negotiation and decision-making skills (Graham, 2002). It enables learners with different expertise and backgrounds to share their knowledge and discuss problems so they arrive at shared understandings of what is learnt in class.

Using cultural differences and similarities as a hook to link the learning of Mandarin with an understanding of Chinese culture engages students both emotionally and cognitively. This is because students use their local or experimental knowledge to contribute to “everyone’s knowledge and learning” (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 78). This is also consistent with discourses of power and knowledge. According to the NSW Department of Education and Training (2003, p.15), cultural knowledge should be required in lessons so that “tasks incorporate the cultural knowledge of diverse social groupings”. Consequently, students build connections between different cultural perspectives, including their own. This enables them to appreciate the ‘significance’ of what they are learning (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003). In addition, students use their prior knowledge of their own culture to facilitate acquisition of new knowledge (Wertsch, 1997) and so construct new understandings.

In summary, selecting appropriate teaching strategies and using well designed resources and combining them with knowledge of student background and experiences is one way of implementing a student-centred approach to teaching and learning. This is consistent with constructivism and the Quality Teaching Model used in NSW DET schools. The MeE Framework is one way to engage students in learning Mandarin. Consequently, the teacher can engage students in classroom learning by selecting appropriate teaching strategies, creating and using effective resources while developing lessons that take into account student background. The MeE Framework proved useful in this analysis. Classroom student engagement was shown to be
consistent with constructivist views of teaching and learning. Essentially, the small ‘e’, student classroom engagement was achieved by following a constructivist teaching perspective. Research findings showed that using teenage topics and incorporating student interests were emotionally engaging. Group work and hands-on activities engaged students behaviourally. Revision and scaffolding students to think at higher levels engaged them cognitively. At the beginning of teaching, the teacher-researcher focused on emotional engagement in teaching Mandarin. As time went on, the teacher-researcher became more confident and competent to move from emotional engagement to cognitive engagement. The balance of the three dimensions of engagement was demonstrated by the study findings.

6.5 Teacher Engagement

The research findings showed there were three main ways the teacher-researcher improved her teaching of Mandarin. One of these was increased teaching confidence. Another was her ability to undertake research and apply the research findings to improve classroom practice. The third was her ability to communicate with students to build rapport. Increased teaching effectiveness enabled this teacher-researcher to feel more comfortable with herself as a teacher and so relate more positively to her role as a professional teacher and researcher.

Throughout this study, the teacher-researcher went through different stages of development as a beginning teacher. Initially she worried about classroom management then moved to thinking about student engagement and then finally to focusing on her engagement to improve her professional practice. This shift paralleled her developing confidence and expertise as a teacher of Mandarin. Leask and Moorhouse (2005) observe that beginning teachers pass through three phases of development as a beginning teacher. Phase 1 centred on self-image and classroom management. Phase 2 emphasised whole class learning and finally in phase 3 the beginning teacher focused on individual student learning. Allen and Toplis (2009)
build on the work of Leask and Moorhouse (2005) to conceptualise these phases as self-development, whole-class learning and finally as individual student learning.

Beginning teachers might be thought to move through three stages. In Stage 1, beginning teachers are concerned with their survival and they worry about themselves and classroom control. The focus is the teacher. The beginning teacher wants to be popular with students, therefore, the beginning teacher avoids “an atmosphere that negatively affects pupils’ emotions” (Allen and Toplis, 2009, p. 32). Due to the insufficient self-confidence and inexperienced teaching practice, the teacher-researcher mainly focused on student emotional engagement to interest students at the beginning. In Stage 2, beginning teachers feel more adequate or competent and move their attention to teaching. They learn about teaching strategies and teaching resources. They are concerned with the class as a whole. As they move through this second stage they modify their practice and take into account the class size and consider gender issues. All the while, the beginning teacher is building in self-confidence.

Martin (2006) suggests there is a strong relationship between teacher confidence in teaching and effective pedagogy. Teachers who enjoy their teaching and are confident in the classroom are more likely to become emotionally engaged in the overall teaching process. They are more likely to try to improve their pedagogy. They are therefore more likely to consider student motivation and engagement (Martin, 2006). Therefore, teacher emotional engagement in teaching and the subsequent pedagogical effectiveness enhance student motivation and engagement in learning Mandarin.

In Stage 3, beginning teachers are more able to successfully cope with classroom management and to teach students fundamental content. In this third stage teachers start to respond to the social and emotional needs of students. They begin to balance what they think, as teachers, with student needs. It is only when beginning teachers focus on individual student learning that they enter the third stage. Importantly, it is
during the third stage that beginning teachers become concerned with student learning as opposed to teaching. With increased teaching confidence and improvement of teaching pedagogy, the teacher-researcher shifted the focus from teacher emotional engagement to cognitive engagement. The teacher-researcher began to think at a higher level and implement student-centred approaches so she could engage individual students. Therefore, the teacher-researcher went through Stages 1 and 2 and entered Stage 3 as a beginning teacher due to her substantive engagement in improving her teaching proficiency.

When beginning teachers feel comfortable with classroom management and have gained confidence in their ability to teach, they move from the first to the second stage. They begin to emphasise whole class learning. This has implications for pedagogy and subsequent student engagement in learning. Teaching success feeds the teachers’ continued exploration and development as a teacher, the beginning teacher becomes even more emotionally engaged. This cycle of engagement, improvement and experimentation becomes a feature of a beginning teacher’s evolution. Teacher learning accumulates and moves to greater exploration of more individualised student learning. Student-centred teaching strategies are explored and implemented.

The ROSETE project enabled the teacher to be a researcher. Lankshear and Knobel (2004) argue that there are two goals of teacher-researchers. One is to enhance the sense of self-identity and professionalism of teachers. The other is to improve teaching practice in the classroom. Barry and King (1999, p. 660) state that “the combination of a teacher with a researcher is probably the best arrangement, blending the classroom expertise and research expertise toward the betterment of classroom practice”. The teacher-as-researcher model was used to promote better teaching and learning in the classroom. When I, as a beginning teacher, had problems with student engagement I consulted the literature and tried to find solutions. The research on student-centred teaching approaches and the Quality Teaching Model are both consistent with constructivism. It was this theoretical perspective that helped me to
provide more engaging lessons and therefore engage students. I engaged students by improving my teaching proficiency. In addition to individual professional enhancement, there is also the potential to enhance the professional learning of others by developing teaching practices based on creative, systematic and logical evidence (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004).

Wertsch (1997) argues that student and teacher rapport helped the teacher to know more about student background and characteristics which provided an opportunity for the teacher to implement student-centred teaching and learning strategies. Rhodes and Bellamy (1999) state that student-centred perspectives indicate the learning process is an interactive interplay between the teacher as a facilitator of learning and the learner. It requires a view of learning where background of both the facilitator and the learner interact to shape meaning. Consequently, it is essential for the teacher to develop a strong rapport with students in the classroom.

Harmer (2007) argues that teacher / student positive rapport helps student learning as well as developing a good learning environment in the classroom. The indicators of rapport can be a “positive, enjoyable and respectful relationship between teacher and students and between the students themselves” (Harmer, 2007, p. 113). Developing rapport with students is consistent with the Quality Teaching Model in NSW DET schools. According to the Department of Education and Training (2003), student and teacher positive rapport contributes to a quality learning environment. Students and teachers play reciprocal and meaningful roles that enable the students to have a ‘voice’ in the learning process according to discourses of power (Department of Education and Training, 2006).

As student / teacher rapport develops and the teacher begins to know the students, their background becomes important for teaching. The evidence from this research shows that increased teaching confidence promotes the development of student / teacher rapport which, in turn fuels both student and teacher engagement in the
classroom. This manifests, for the teacher, in exploring and implementing more student-centred teaching strategies. Teacher engagement and its associated improvements in teaching practice encourage further research. This research, when combined with other influences such as the Quality Teaching Framework and a constructivist teaching and learning perspective directs a cycle of teacher engagement that facilitates student engagement.

The implementation of student-centred teaching strategies, effective use of resources and knowledge of student background showed that a beginning teacher can build teaching confidence and moved from Stage 1 to Stage 2, as a beginning teacher, by focusing on student learning (Arends, 2009). Increased student / teacher rapport helped the teacher to build teaching confidence and shift the focus from student engagement to teacher engagement and so improved teaching proficiency and effectiveness.

In summary, increased student / teacher rapport helped the teacher-researcher to build confidence to teach and shift the focus from classroom management to student learning. By researching, student-centred teaching approaches and the Quality Teaching Model the teacher-researcher was able to scaffold student learning of Mandarin. The evidence shows that increased teacher confidence, implementing a teacher-as-researcher model of teacher education and recognising the significance of student / teacher rapport helped the teacher-researcher improve her teaching proficiency. Increased teacher proficiency precipitated increased teacher engagement in learning how to become a better teacher and engage students more effectively in classroom learning. Consequently, this study has provided evidence that teacher engagement is intimately connected with student engagement and has implications for extending the conceptualisation of the MeE Framework.

6.6 The relationship between student engagement and teacher engagement
The relationships between student engagement and teacher engagement are complex. The MeE Framework (Munns & Martin, 2005) provided a theoretical basis for the teacher-researcher to guide teaching practice and engage students in the classroom. It also helped the teacher-researcher realise that becoming a teacher-researcher would not only be her future career but her passion in life. To engage students in learning Mandarin, the teacher-researcher undertook research to look for solutions. From the research, she learnt the importance of building a rapport with students and using student background knowledge. The teacher-researcher incorporated student interests and her growing knowledge of adolescent characteristics into her teaching. Student substantive engagement with learning Mandarin encouraged her to become fully engaged in learning how to use student-centred teaching strategies. Munns and Martin (2005) applied the MeE Framework to view student engagement at both the classroom level and the school level in the low socioeconomic areas. In this study, the MeE Framework was used to position student classroom engagement as small ‘e’ engagement. The focus then shifted from student engagement to teacher engagement because teacher engagement was identified as being essential for effective student engagement. Consequently, the conceptualisation of the MeE Framework has been extended to incorporate teacher engagement in the classroom as a significant influence on student classroom engagement.

Teacher learning through research helped the teacher-researcher to clarify her view of the MeE Framework. Small ‘e’ engagement has been consciously unpacked through her emotional, behavioural and cognitive engagement with it. The teacher-researcher used the three dimensions of emotional, behavioural and cognitive engagement to view student learning in the classroom. To engage students across these three dimensions, the teacher-researcher employed student-centred teaching strategies. She used a range of student-centred teaching strategies, such as incorporating student background knowledge, hands-on and minds-on intellectual activities, group work, student discussion and the use of ‘exotic’ ideas embedded in culture. The research
helped the teacher-researcher to understand these concepts and apply them to her teaching practice.

Student-centred teaching approaches contextualised by constructivism were fed back into and used in conjunction with the MeE Framework. In addition, teacher personality, background and confidence were also fed back into how the MeE Framework was used. The teacher-researcher used student-centred teaching approaches in her knowledge practice of teaching as a way of implementing the MeE Framework. The background knowledge of the teacher-researcher, in her capacities as teacher and as researcher, combined with the background knowledge of students helped the teacher-researcher to shape her understanding of the MeE Framework. These factors also helped the teacher-researcher to personalise the implementation of the MeE Framework using student-centred teaching approach.

As a beginning teacher who came from a different educational culture, I struggled with my teaching many times, especially in the beginning. Leask and Moorhouse (2005) state that beginning teachers pass through three phases of development (see section 6.2). Importantly, the Australian educational context was new to me. I was educated by teacher-centred teaching strategies. Therefore, it was hard for me to engage students by implementing student-centred teaching strategies. It is habitual for me to adopt teacher-centred teaching strategies in teaching Mandarin. By learning about the importance of student / teacher rapport I learnt that knowledge of student background and their interests was an essential component of learning how to become an engaged teacher.

Research helped me to reflect on my teaching and use student-centred teaching approach to engage students in learning Mandarin. Student substantive engagement in learning Mandarin encouraged me to build my confidence and teach using student-centred teaching approaches. Student-centred teaching approaches are consistent with the Quality Teaching Framework and its theoretical basis of
constructivism (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003). I have also come to realise that, for this study, the Quality Teaching Framework and a working knowledge of constructivist theory were important. However, they were not essential. What was essential was working from a theoretical perspective. Researching and using theory, any relevant theory, to inform my practice was what was important.

My learning journey to teach and research has been complex. With help from supervisors, I gradually accommodated the Australian research context. Research techniques contributed to my academic knowledge of the MeE Framework. With the help from my mentor teacher, I gradually came to understand Australian educational concepts which encouraged me to learn how to use student-centred teaching strategies. Building rapport with students provided an opportunity for me to communicate with students and interact with them. My knowledge of student background knowledge and intellectual characteristics gave me insight into how to incorporate student interests into my teaching. Gradually, with student and teacher feedback about my teaching practice, I came to understand how to implement student-centred teaching strategies. The successful implementation of student-centred teaching strategies helped me to engage students. At the beginning, my ability to engage students was mainly confined to emotional engagement which is consistent with the first stage as a beginning teacher. Then, as my relationship with students was established, I became more confident to focus on student learning by engaging their behavioural and cognitive dimensions.

6.6 Conclusion

This study used the MeE Framework to position student engagement as classroom or small ‘e’ engagement. The findings showed that students can be engaged cognitively, behaviourally and affectively in learning Mandarin using student-centred teaching strategies, the appropriate development and use of resources and by the strategic use of student background knowledge when designing lessons. The study also showed
that when these strategies are implemented within a theoretical context such as the Quality Teaching Framework using a constructivist perspective on teaching and learning, students become engaged in a way that promotes a positive classroom environment. This positive classroom environment then feeds back to promote teacher engagement with learning how to increase teaching proficiency.

The study also showed that teacher engagement, although stimulated by student engagement is promoted as the teacher gains in teaching confidence, researches their teaching practice and applies the research findings while increasing their communication with students and establishing an engaged working rapport with them. This, in turn, feeds back and promotes student engagement and the cycle becomes self-perpetuating.

Consequently, this study has demonstrated a synergistic relationship between student and teacher engagement where one supports and perpetuates the other. Students are engaged when knowledge of student background helps to implement appropriate teaching strategies and resources. Teachers are engaged through increased teaching confidence, the use of a teacher-as-researcher model of learning and increased communication and rapport with students. The interrelationship between student and teacher engagement is strengthened by a common theoretical perspective. In Chapter 7, the implications of these findings, limitations of the study and suggestions for further research will be addressed.
Chapter 7

Conclusion:

Implications of the Study

7.1 Introduction

This study used the MeE Framework to theoretically position student engagement as small ‘e’ or classroom engagement as a component of overall student engagement. Munns and Martin (2005) developed the MeE Framework to show the theoretical relationship between student motivation and engagement. The Framework showed that when students were engaged in the classroom this promoted engagement at the broader school level.

Munns and Martin (2005) argue that small ‘e’ engagement is a multidimensional construct. Their conceptualisation focused on the relationship between the dimensions of student engagement identified as emotional, behavioural and cognitive engagement. This study used the REAL Framework (Munns & Woodward, 2006) to assess student engagement across these three dimensions. However, as the study unfolded the focus shifted from student engagement to include teacher engagement. Teacher engagement was identified as a significant factor that influenced student engagement. It was also shown that student engagement influenced teacher engagement and that the interdependence of each on the other has significant theoretical implications.

The MeE Framework describes the internal relationships between motivation and engagement. Within these internal relationships there are implied connections with external influences at the individual and relational levels. However, these external influences are not developed as part of the Framework. The purpose of the MeE Framework is not to show connections with closely related influences such as the school, the community in which the school is situated and so on. The Framework focuses on the relationship between motivation and engagement only. When a
component of the MeE Framework, such as classroom engagement, is examined as it was for this study it was found that other factors present within the classroom itself have a significant impact on student engagement. It was found that teacher engagement had a significant influence on student engagement.

7.2 Student Engagement

The MeE Framework (Munns & Martin, 2005) describes the relationship between motivation and engagement from both psychological and sociological perspectives. There are two levels of engagement, small ‘e’ engagement and big ‘E’ engagement. This study focused on small ‘e’ engagement. The MeE Framework was used to position student engagement as it occurs when student behavioural, emotional and cognitive engagement come together at the same time at high levels. However, when student engagement is scrutinised in isolation from external factors, the interconnectedness of these external factors begins to show just how important and influential they are. Effectively, it becomes problematic to consider student engagement in isolation from external influences particularly when these influences operate within the classroom. Consequently, it becomes difficult to isolate the influence of the classroom teacher from student engagement.

Small ‘e’ engagement, as it is outlined by the MeE Framework, focuses on student engagement as being dominated by internal mechanisms. Although there is scope for these relationships to include external influences, the overall emphasis suggests that internal influences dominate. Consequently, it can be argued that the psychological perspective tends to dominate the sociological domain. There seems to be an emphasis on what is happening within the student themselves. This becomes even more apparent when small ‘e’ engagement is examined in isolation from big ‘E’ engagement.
The external relational influences that impact small ‘e’ engagement demonstrate their apparent absence from the model. They are not in fact absent but they do seem to be de-emphasised. Within the small ‘e’ engagement component external contexts are implied by terms such as ‘pedagogical relationships’, ‘learning experiences’ and ‘discourses’. However, the relationship appears linear. Subsequent development of the model flows from these initial relationships. This study has demonstrated the significance of the teacher, in the form of teacher engagement, as an important and continuing influence on student engagement that interacts continuously and powerfully.

Munns and Martin (2005) developed the MeE Framework and purposefully brought sociological and psychological perspectives together. They state that individuals are “supported and encouraged” through their relationships with “teachers, peers, curriculum and pedagogy” (Munns & Martin, 2005, p. 5). Although it is recognised that learning can only occur within the student themselves, the language used emphasises the individual student. It does not encourage recognition that the relational contexts, such as the teacher in the classroom, can have a huge influence on student learning identity and engagement.

Sociologists hold that student engagement is focused on the relationships among students, schools and community. Hence, a sociologist would think of engagement in more relational terms. Munn’s sociological view of engagement builds on and compliments Martin’s Student Motivation and Engagement Wheel (Munns and Martin, 2005). It connects with classroom pedagogy and discourses as well as the wider school, education and social environments. However, only some of these relational elements are present in the small ‘e’ engagement component of the model. The wider school, education and social environments seem to have been de-emphasised and moved to the broader or big ‘E’ component of the model. Small ‘e’ engagement is more than the individual; rather, it is “social relationships involving reciprocity and mutual understanding” (Munns et al., 2005, p. 27). In this way, a
teaching and learning relationship strongly involves teachers and students in order to create a highly productive learning environment. Importantly, it connects classroom engagement with wider dimensions of power.

Although the small ‘e’ engagement component of the MeE Framework does take into account a sociological perspective, it does so in a linear way that does not emphasise the sociological dimension of classroom interactions. It does not overtly include the social setting of the student or include the teacher. Teachers influence student engagement fundamentally. Teachers use student-centred teaching approaches and professional expertise to engage students in learning. Teachers reflect their teaching practice and use research to improve their ability to engage students in learning. This study has provided evidence that it is necessary to contextualise the internal relationships of small ‘e’ engagement to emphasise relational influences such as the teacher.

7.3 Teacher Engagement

Martin (2006) suggests there is a strong relationship between teacher enjoyment and confidence in teaching and effective pedagogy. Teachers who enjoy their teaching and are confident in the classroom are more likely to become emotionally engaged in the overall teaching process. This means they are more likely to use effective pedagogy and engage students in learning. Student positive feedback on Mandarin lessons encouraged the teacher-researcher to develop more engaging teaching resources and use them to implement effective student-centred pedagogy. This engaged the teacher-researcher behaviourally which, in turn, continued to engage students in the classroom. The teacher-researcher thought deeply about everything she did. She engaged cognitively to improve her teaching proficiency and enhanced her ability to engage students. The teacher-researcher identified the same dimensions of engagement when engaged in teaching as Munns and Martin (2005) identified as the dimensions of student engagement.
As the teacher-researcher moved through the three stages of a beginning teacher the emphasis moved from focusing on the teacher in terms of classroom management and emphasising content, through whole class learning and student-centred teaching approaches to emphasising the individual as the focus of learning. To engage individual students in learning, the teacher-researcher communicated with students who provided feedback on each lesson. With a positive rapport established with students, the teacher-researcher accommodated student differences in teaching and catered to different student interests and learning styles. These improvements in teaching expertise enhanced her ability to engage students in learning. The teacher’s substantive engagement in learning how to teach more effectively promoted classroom student engagement.

Teacher engagement paralleled the process outlined by Munns and Martin (2005) in the small ‘e’ component of the MeE Framework. Importantly, teacher engagement demonstrated interdependence with student engagement. Teacher engagement, like student engagement, was shown to have both psychological and sociological perspectives. The sociological or relational perspectives of teacher engagement were shown to be a central component. In this study the interdependence of student engagement was shown to be crucial to teacher engagement. Without student engagement there may have been minimal teacher engagement.

7.4 The Relationship between Student and Teacher Engagement

This study found there is an interactive relationship between student and teacher engagement. When students were engaged in learning it encouraged the teacher to think more about how to engage students. Teacher engagement with learning how to teach better increased. Student engagement promoted teacher engagement which increased student learning and promoted a cycle of student and teacher engagement with learning. Indicators of teacher engagement were the development of a diverse
range of effective teaching resources, researching and implementing student-centred teaching strategies, taking time to learn about student interests and increase student / teacher rapport. Another indicator of teacher engagement was the passion for teaching that grows with success.

Student and teacher engagement was shown to be an interactive process. It is part of the relational context described in Figure 2.2, as a component of the MeE Framework. The MeE Framework, as described in Figure 2.2, details its motivational and engagement components. However, it only mentions as influences the individual and relational contexts on student motivation and engagement. It indicates there are ‘relational influences’ on small ‘e’ engagement but does not detail these influences. This study has shown that teacher engagement is one of these influences. The interactive nature of this relationship suggests that the arrow between student and teacher engagement is two way. In addition, this study indicated some of the detail of the teacher component of the relational influences on small ‘e’ engagement.

Munns and Martin (2005) argue that the strength gained from embedding the two levels of engagement (classroom and whole school) in each other relies on the ‘power of classroom messages’ which operate ‘within discourses of power’. This study has shown that classroom messages were as powerful for the teacher as they were for the student. There seemed to be a direct connection between the teacher and the student in terms of these messages. Munns and Martin (2005) argue that classroom messages are underpinned by Bernstein’s (1996) classroom message systems such as curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation. This study has affirmed these underpinnings. It has provided strong evidence that pedagogy is particularly important. It also found that pedagogy or how teaching takes place can be as important as the curriculum or what is taught. It also provided evidence that evaluation is on-going and can be integrated with curriculum and pedagogy. This study provided evidence that the classroom message systems can be viewed as an integrated whole while at the same time each is able to be identified within that whole.
Munns and Martin (2005) also argue that discourses of power refer to knowledge, ability, control, place and voice. The power discourses influence the way teachers teach and how students view themselves as learners (Munns & Martin, 2005 p. 3). An example of the power discourse would be whose voice has more power in the teaching space. In this study, it was clear that curriculum ‘knowledge’ was vested almost entirely with the teacher-researcher. However, the situation with ‘control’ and ‘voice’ is less clear. It would be tempting to say that the teacher had power over both ‘control’ and ‘voice’. However, the reality is this was not the case. Early in the study it was obvious that students were exerting some ‘control’ over classroom events. They had a ‘voice’ and that ‘voice’ was being exercised. It can be argued that by listening to student ‘voice’ the teacher was in ‘control’. There is not enough data available from this study to argue these points. What can be argued is that there was an interaction between student and teacher ‘control’ and ‘voice’ and that towards the end of the study that interaction resulted in increased engagement in learning for both the teacher and students.

Consequently, this study showed that classroom messages did operate through discourses of power. It showed that there was an interrelationship between the teacher and students and that the discourses of power were just that, a discourse. At times the discourse may have been dominated by the teacher and at other times by students. In the end, it did not really matter because a working relationship was established that resulted in mutual respect and understanding. The discourses and power relationships were different at different times for each of the elements. Collectively, they shaped the classroom messages of curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation which were shown to be integrated and interdependent.

This has implications for the ‘relational influences’ that contextualise small ‘e’ engagement. Teacher engagement is a component of relational influence. However, the nature of that relationship requires further discussion. It requires further discussion
in terms of what the relationships are, how they interact with each other and how they interact with student engagement. In addition, they require further discussion about how they are represented in diagrammatic form. A diagrammatic representation would have to effectively indicate the two way nature of the interaction.

### 7.5 Implications for Theory

Munns and Martin (2005) argue that student engagement is when behavioural, emotional and cognitive components combine at the same time at high levels. The MeE Framework explores student engagement detailing these relationships. However, it does not detail the ‘relational influences’ that include the teacher. This study extends the theory contextualising student engagement by providing detail about the teacher component of the relational influences on student engagement. It should be stressed that the relational influences indicated in the MeE Framework would include a raft of other relational influences. This study examined one component of these relational influences – teacher influences. More specifically, it details the influence of teacher engagement with learning how to become a better teacher in the context of a beginning teacher. It therefore has to be acknowledged that there will be additional teacher relational influences but they are not the focus of this study. The teacher relational influences indicated by this study are shown in Figure 7.1.
### Teacher engagement

Teachers engage students in classroom pedagogical relationships, learning experiences and discourses that emphasise emotional, behavioural and cognitive engagement using:

- student-centred teaching strategies;
- a diverse range of teaching resources; and
- student background information.

These relationships, experiences and discourses are conveyed through the ‘power of classroom messages’ in the form of:

- curriculum;
- pedagogy; and
- evaluation.

They are operationalised or realised:

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<th>‘within discourses of power’</th>
<th>through adaptations and relationships</th>
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<td>knowledge</td>
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<td>ability</td>
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Figure 7.1 Teacher engagement as a component of the relational influences on student engagement.

Teachers engage students in classroom pedagogical relationships, learning experiences and discourses that emphasise their emotional, behavioural and cognitive engagement. These relationships, experiences and discourses were as important for the teacher as they were for students. Student-centred teaching strategies, a diverse range of teaching resources and student background information were used to develop these relationships. The findings from this study show that the teacher increased her ability to engage students by improving her ability to research and select appropriate...
strategies and resources. Knowing and applying student background information helped in the research and implementation processes. Throughout there was an interactive relationship between student and teacher engagement, teaching and learning experiences and discourses with one providing feedback for the other in a self-fuelling and self-perpetuating cycle of interaction.

These relationships, learning experiences and discourses are conveyed through the ‘power of classroom messages’ in the form of curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation. The curriculum is determined by the NSW Board of Studies and the NSW Department of Education and Training. Teachers are guided by curriculum requirements. However, the pedagogy employed and the nature of the learning experiences used to meet these outcomes is not determined centrally. Teachers have a great deal of autonomy in the classroom to teach what and how they think is best, provided the curriculum outcomes are met. Teachers are able to influence the curriculum and select pedagogy to suit the needs, interest and background of students. In this way different student learning styles can be accommodated to more professionally achieve curriculum outcomes. Consequentially, classrooms are able to accommodate teacher learning as much as they promote student learning. Teachers and students can interact, within the requirements of the curriculum, to tailor a mutually engaging classroom environment.

This study has demonstrated that pedagogy was an extremely important component of classroom interactions. Pedagogy was used to build teacher / student rapport. Pedagogy acted as a glue to unite all aspects of the classroom environment and integrate evaluation. Pedagogy was researched to guide overall teaching practice and to improve teaching proficiency. Pedagogy was shown to be a very powerful way to provide classroom messages, not just for students but for the teacher as well.

Evaluation of both student achievement and teacher proficiency was not a primary source of data for this study. Nevertheless, evaluation strategies were constantly
integrated into the very fabric of all classroom activities and experiences. Discourses occurred in order to evaluate student learning and teacher progress in learning how to engage students. Evaluation was a classroom constant. Evaluation, in the form of student feedback, was used to adjust curriculum and pedagogy and promote student and teacher learning.

Teacher engagement was operationalised ‘within discourses of power’. The knowledge discourse was almost entirely vested in the teacher because the curriculum content was very different compared with student past experiences. However, although this presented some limitations for classroom activities, it did provide the advantage of an ‘exotic’ influence. Curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation were influence significantly by teacher specialist knowledge. Knowledge was a power discourse. Ability was manifest as a particularly difficult power discourse to analyse. This was because the teacher was a beginning teacher. This discourse fluctuated throughout the study. However, as the ability of the teacher to provide an engaging classroom environment increased, the ability of the students to learn Mandarin also increased. Ability was a fluctuating, interactive discourse that varied in its ‘power’ to influence the classroom environment. Nevertheless, this study demonstrated that teacher ability was a discourse through which curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation operated.

Control of classroom behaviour was negotiated between the teacher and students. Data collection, in this specific area, was limited. Control of the classroom environment operated in tandem with ‘voice’. The nature of the interaction is difficult to determine in the context of this study. At times student voice dominated and at other times the teacher’s voice was dominant. The fact that a mutually respectful classroom environment resulted suggests that the ‘power’ was in the nature of the discourse rather than the discourse as such. Although there is always an element of ‘control’ and the power of ‘voice’ in any interaction, the findings for this study were inconclusive. There are indicators that these relationships existed and that they were
complex but that is as far as these two areas of discourse can be discussed. This study found that Mandarin classes were a site or 'place' for both student and teacher learning. However, Mandarin classes, as a site for learning, gained power as they connected with their real world of both the teacher and students. This study showed that place was a powerful discourse, a discourse that increased in power through connection with broader contexts.

Teacher engagement was significantly operationalised or facilitated by the adaptations made by both the teacher and students as their relationship developed. The teacher and the students were able to accommodate the development of their ongoing relationship. As teacher / student rapport developed, teacher confidence, teacher reflection, teacher research and overall communication also became important. Establishing teacher / student rapport was an essential step that enhanced teacher confidence. Teacher / student rapport encouraged the teacher to research classroom practice and promoted teacher reflection. Teacher / student rapport provided a platform for the teacher and students to communicate with each other and build a positive teacher and student relationship.

This study demonstrated the interactive nature of teacher and student engagement with learning. Engagement with learning was operationalised by the development of teacher / student rapport which increased teacher confidence, teacher reflection, teacher research and overall student / teacher communication. The adaptations and relationships that developed operated within power discourses between the teacher and students and provided a way to enable classroom messages to be interpreted by both the teacher and students. Classroom messages were transmitted through the curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation processes. Classroom messages were a vehicle through which student-centred teaching strategies and a diverse range of resources could be developed and implemented using knowledge of student interests and background information to engage them in learning.
7.6 Implications for China

China has started to reform its exam-oriented education system. The Chinese education system has been described using the analogy of fast food. It is able to meet immediate needs but lacks nutrition for the future. Furthermore, it lacks individuality for both students and teachers and therefore takes on a bureaucratic identity which, like all bureaucracies is cumbersome and gains efficiency at the expense of tailored purposeful solutions to problems. Consequently, the whole only progresses as fast as those in control are able to conceptualise and manage change. However, if the present exam-oriented education system is rejected what replaces it will become alien and disconnected from its entire cultural context. Millions of students and teachers will receive no nutrition and die from hunger. The Chinese system is in need of educational reform. The question becomes, what form will that reform take and how will it be implemented?

This study has provided three insights as China moves forward with educational reform. The first is that the present system of rote-learning can be mixed with student-centred teaching strategies, such as group work and hands-on activities. This study has demonstrated that there is a place for rote-learning. It has shown that rote-learning can increase the efficiency of more student-centred and individually tailored learning strategies. This is not a new concept (Watkins, 1996) but in a Chinese context it helps legitimise a conservative and therefore difficult to reform aspect of the education system and provides a basis from which to move forward. The question becomes how to move forward and that is the second insight provided by this study.

This study has highlighted the stages a beginning teacher moves through as they increase their teaching proficiency. It has also indicated that beginning teachers can be targeted as a conduit through which to channel change. It is always difficult to reform a system from the outside or by reforming practitioners who have built their
world around how they have learnt to view it. A world that provides meaning and
direction and more importantly legitimises what they do and in the case of teachers
how they teach. For experienced teachers, how they teach will be difficult to change
because it fits within their views on teaching and learning. For Chinese teachers the
current education system has propelled the country to the brink of emerging as the
world’s next superpower. The rigour of an exam-oriented education system
disciplined by rote-learning and based on culturally embedded Confucian philosophy
has been legitimised and seen to be successful. Therefore, it will be difficult to
convince teachers that such a system is problematic. They will not be willing to
embrace change especially when they do not see the need for it.

This study has shown that beginning teachers, can be encouraged to think through and
inform their teaching and increase their teaching proficiency in a way that promotes
student engagement and increased learning. This study has demonstrated that
providing a learning environment for beginning teachers that encourages them to
engage students can facilitate change in their views of teaching and learning. In this
study a Chinese teacher with views on teaching and learning consistent with those of
most Chinese teachers learnt to change her views. Targeting beginning teachers and
providing them with a mentoring system that encourages and facilitates change may
be a useful way forward for China.

The third insight this study provided was that a teacher-as-researcher perspective on
teacher education, particularly beginning teacher education, provided an essential
ingredient for change. The teacher-as-researcher model was fundamental in providing
an enabling learning environment that resulted in changed views about teaching and
learning. The teacher-as-researcher model enabled the teacher-researcher to improve
her teaching proficiency. The teacher-researcher was empowered to research her own
practice and guided by mentors improved her teaching practice and facilitated
increased student engagement and learning. Consequently, this study has provided
insights that could be considered in the reform of the Chinese education system. The
first is to reorient teaching and learning using rote-learning as a legitimate core teaching strategy in combination with more student-centred teaching strategies. The second is to direct system change using beginning teachers as a conduit for change and the third is to implement a program of teacher education where teachers are required to research their own practice.

7.7 Implications for Australia

China has an exam-oriented education system. Teachers implement a totally teacher-centred approach to teaching and learning which is almost entirely dominated by rote-learning. This was my experience as a student and my view of how to teach when I started to teach in Australia. The course I undertook in Australia, run by the NSW Department of Education and Training, taught me not to teach in this way because it was not an effective way to promote student learning. I had no intension of teaching this way yet, when I actually started to teach this is exactly the way I taught. I taught from a teacher-centred perspective. It was very difficult for me to wash away twenty years of classroom experience and replace it with how I had been told to teach. I started to teach Mandarin the way I was taught. I taught from a teacher centred perspective with rote-learning as my main teaching strategy.

The complexity of the Chinese characters, different tones of Chinese pronunciation and the intricacies of Chinese culture and history required a lot of rote-learning. Essentially, the non-systematic nature of the Mandarin language meant that almost every word had to be learnt off-by-heart as there is no easy way to learn Mandarin vocabulary. There is no system to be understood. There seemed to be a synergy between learning Mandarin and rote-learning. This study found that students were actually engaged by rote-learning. Consequently, rote-learning became a learning strategy of choice for students. However, although rote-learning was welcomed by students, it was used in the context of a diverse range of mainstream student-centred teaching strategies. It was one in a number of interacting teaching strategies. The
overall effect was student-centred. Rote-learning was found to meet the needs of students.

Although rote-learning is traditionally regarded as a teacher-centred teaching strategy and was rejected as a teaching strategy for this reason, it was found to meet the needs of Australian students as they learnt Mandarin. This study found that rote-learning used in conjunction with student-centred teaching strategies promoted learning. This is consistent with a constructivist view of teaching and learning. Rote-learning functioned to scaffold student learning. It functioned as part of an overall strategy to engage students. Importantly, rote-learning served as a scaffold upon which to build teacher learning. Employing a student-centred perspective of teaching and learning means using whatever strategies students indicate are required to promote their learning. Therefore, teaching languages in Australia, particularly Mandarin, will benefit from an interaction of different teaching strategies, including rote-learning. In this context, rote-learning can be a useful addition to a Mandarin language teacher’s repertoire of effective interactive and student-centred teaching strategies.

7.8 Implications for future research.

The ROSETE Project is an internationally cooperative partnership between Australia and China designed to train teachers using research as the main medium for learning. The Australian partners benefit by having the Chinese language Mandarin taught by native Chinese teachers while the Chinese partners benefit when the Chinese teachers return to China to teach in schools and universities. Their expertise will have been enhanced by improved English language, teaching and research skills. These skills are embedded in different ways of seeing the world. The teachers who return to China will be more open to change and better able to facilitate change.

I am one of those Chinese teachers and when I go back to China, I want to continue my learning. I want to continue to use a teacher-as-researcher model to guide my
teaching and improve my teaching practice. I am not of the opinion that this will be easy. However, I have learnt that it is important not only for me but for China and learning in China. Teachers across the globe can use research to guide their teaching practice, especially if they are beginning teachers. Therefore, the implications for research will be outlined in two parts. The first will include implications for research generally while the second will relate more specifically to China and the research context in China. Although dividing the implications for future research into two parts, it is recognised that there will be considerable overlap between the two.

The MeE Framework is an important development in educational research because it reinforces the idea that learning occurs within the learner and therefore acknowledges the importance of the individual psychological perspective. It also acknowledges that the social context for learning is important. It highlights the fact that an individual is embedded in a social context and that social context is an integral and inseparable part of the individual. It is the individual. Consequently, the very nature of the MeE Framework lends itself to extension. It functions as a beginning for continued research and development. The relational influences on student engagement have started to be researched in this study. However, they need to be researched in far greater breadth and depth. This is the first implication for future research, to more fully develop the ‘relational influences’ as they appear in the MeE Framework.

The teacher-as-researcher model of teacher education has appeared in the literature periodically. However, it has not gained a foothold in mainstream teacher education. This study has shown that this method of teacher education is effective. It has also shown that combining in-class experience with research, one informing and fuelling the other, has been an effective way to promote teacher change. These areas of teacher education need to be formally explored further. They need to be researched as a means of facilitating change in teacher culture. This study implies that when cultural change is desired by those who are ‘influential’ at the system level, that bringing together senior educators as mentors for beginning teachers where all are involved in
researching teaching practice, can bring about change. Researching the teacher-as-researcher model of teacher education will increase the potential to improve professional practice.

Perhaps the most important thing learnt from this study is that schools and schooling are all about the student. Schools are part of a contemporary community and society. The student is embedded in the community and society, however, the student is the unit through which the community and therefore society gain benefit. If the student does not benefit, there is no benefit for the community and society as a whole. Consequently, the student has to feel that, as Munns (2004b, p. 3) said “school is for me”. Students have to want to be part of the school system. They have to want to go to school and know that what they are investing in is worthwhile for them. Students have to be able to see the relevance of going to school and the relevance, for them, of the learning they participate in. This is the purpose or the job of the teacher – to promote student learning and situate it in what is relevant for them. This is an area this study has shown is in need of further research. The attitude of teachers and the school to the relevance of school experience for students and for society.

For China the implications for research are far more widespread and at the same time specific. The Chinese education system is in need of reform. Yet, its own system of bureaucracy is its biggest impediment to reform. One of the areas in need of further researched is how will the products of the ROSETE project, the Chinese research-trained teachers influence educational reform in China. How will we fulfil our obligations to education, to our community and to ourselves when we return to China? Will the Chinese component of the ‘partnership’ facilitate our continued growth as teachers and researchers? Will we as individuals continue to be nourished from the experiences in Australia or will the ‘fast food’ analogy continue to operate? Will we find ways to build more student-centred classroom practices into our teaching and influence the teaching practices of others? Will we influence the nature of
teaching resources, their development and use in Chinese classrooms? These areas of teaching and learning are all fertile ground for future research in China.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for Chinese education is the development of a culture of critical reflection and evidence-based practice in the classroom. This is all part of the reform process referred to above. However, at present a view of school teaching and learning that involves research would be a very alien concept. Yet, as has been demonstrated by this study, it is a very effective strategy to implement. What needs to be investigated is ways of introducing evidence-based practice, critical reflection and classroom research in a way that is seen to be ‘part of teaching’ rather than as research which is then applied to teaching. This was my experience with research. It was a part of my teaching. It was not something that influenced or impacted my teaching from a different and distant context. Research was teaching. How to achieve this, on what some would view as a clean slate, is the challenge for China.

At a less ‘big picture’ and more pragmatic level, what needs to be researched in China are straightforward things like: the effectiveness of group work and cooperative learning; student-centred learning; continuous assessment; outcome-based learning; the use of a diverse range of interesting and engaging resources and so on in Chinese classrooms. This in itself will be difficult given the individualistic, exam-oriented and exam dependent system and worldview that dominates Chinese education. This is not to say that the ‘inherent importance of education’ that permeates Chinese culture should be undermined. The real challenge is to maintain student, community and social connection with the role of education in society while at the same time moving the emphasis to enhancing critical reflection and learning effectiveness.

7.9 Conclusion

The MeE Framework (Munns & Martin, 2005) shows the interactive relationship between motivation and engagement at individual, relational and joint levels. It details
the nature of the relationships from within the motivation and engagement components of the Framework. However, the Framework does not detail the nature of the individual and relational influences on motivation and engagement. This study used the MeE Framework to investigate small ‘e’ student engagement. Student engagement was investigated from within the classroom. Student engagement was examined in terms of its behavioural, emotional and cognitive dimensions. As the study progressed, the focus moved to teacher engagement and its influence on student engagement. This fitted with Munns and Martin’s (2005) view, as depicted by the MeE Framework, that teacher engagement was a relational influence on student engagement.

This study showed that the teacher, or more specifically teacher engagement, was a significant influence on student engagement. It showed that the interaction between teacher and student engagement was interdependent. This finding challenges the conceptualisation of the teacher as being ‘external’ to student engagement. It suggests that sociological constructs have a determining influence on student engagement. Although relational influences are recognised by the MeE Framework, this study suggests that the strength of the student / teacher relationship can be more than an influence and therefore should be viewed as interdependent. The interactive and interdependent nature of the two should be more clearly recognised.

Figure 7.2 attempts to show the interdependence of teacher and student engagement. Although shown as a relational influence, teacher engagement is outlined with a broken-line boarder. This indicates that it is not ‘conceptually’ separated from student engagement. Teacher engagement is depicted as one component of relational influences. Teacher engagement is the only relational influence detailed in Figure 7.2 because it was the only one examined by this study. However, it is acknowledged that other relational influences exist.
Teacher engagement as a relational influence on student engagement.

Teacher engagement directly influenced student engagement and was, in turn, directly influenced by student engagement. This study found that without the feedback from student engagement, teacher engagement may not have occurred. This study did not demonstrate that student engagement may not have occurred without teacher engagement because it was not a focus of the study. This aspect of the model will require further investigation.
It was also demonstrated that classroom messages were as powerful for the teacher as they were for students. There was a direct connection between the teacher and students in terms of curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation. This reinforced the interaction between teacher and student engagement. Power discourses operated between the teacher and students and increased engagement in learning for both. Both the teacher and students adapted to each other as their relationships developed. As teacher / student rapport improved, teacher confidence, teacher reflection, teacher research and overall communication also became important.

The implications for research on, as well as that influencing the MeE Framework have been detailed above. In addition, the main finding of this study for Australian language education is that rote-learning can be effectively utilised as a component of student-centred teaching strategies to enhance language learning. Building on the existing pedagogical basis of rote-learning, it was also suggested that Chinese education could move towards more student-centred teaching by combining rote-learning with a diverse range of more mainstream student-centred teaching strategies. It was also suggested that changing the culture of the Chinese education system as it moves away from an exam-determined pedagogical perspective to a more student-centred view of teaching and learning might be achieved by targeting teacher education and encouraging beginning teachers to improve their teaching practice using the teacher-as-researcher model. Above all, this study has demonstrated the transformational ability of research-based teacher education to inform teacher education pedagogy.
REFERENCES


Munns, G., McFadden, M., & Koletti, J. (2002). The messy space: Research into student engagement and the social relations of pedagogy. Paper presented at
Australian Association for Research in Education, Annual Conference, Melbourne.


APPENDIX 1  THE REAL FRAMEWORK

THE REAL Framework (Munns & Woodward, 2006)

Unidimensional – recalling basic feelings, thoughts, actions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affective</th>
<th>Cognitive</th>
<th>Operative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /> What were the fun bits in your learning?</td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /> Write a memo to someone about the most important thing you learned today/yesterday</td>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image" /> What new thing can you do now?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Image" /> What surprised you about your learning?</td>
<td><img src="image5.png" alt="Image" /> What is your best hard work?</td>
<td><img src="image6.png" alt="Image" /> List your strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image7.png" alt="Image" /> How does working with others make you feel?</td>
<td><img src="image8.png" alt="Image" /> What cooperation helped your learning?</td>
<td><img src="image9.png" alt="Image" /> Who helped you the most?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image10.png" alt="Image" /> How do you feel now when it gets tricky?</td>
<td><img src="image11.png" alt="Image" /> What was the tricky part?</td>
<td><img src="image12.png" alt="Image" /> What is your biggest improvement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image13.png" alt="Image" /> What would make you feel better about today’s work?</td>
<td><img src="image14.png" alt="Image" /> Name two things to make you think harder?</td>
<td><img src="image15.png" alt="Image" /> What would you change about today’s work to help you improve?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Multidimensional – developing feelings, thought and actions about learning processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affective</th>
<th>Cognitive</th>
<th>Operative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image16.png" alt="Image" /> Why were the fun bits fun?</td>
<td><img src="image17.png" alt="Image" /> What strategies did you use to learn something important?</td>
<td><img src="image18.png" alt="Image" /> What goals did you set for yourself in this activity/task/project?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image19.png" alt="Image" /> Why were you surprised about your learning today?</td>
<td><img src="image20.png" alt="Image" /> How did you know that you had learnt something?</td>
<td><img src="image21.png" alt="Image" /> How well did you achieve them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image22.png" alt="Image" /> Why does cooperative learning make you feel great?</td>
<td><img src="image23.png" alt="Image" /> What did you learn about working in groups while doing this work?</td>
<td><img src="image24.png" alt="Image" /> What is the evidence of your achievement about today’s learning?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How do you feel when you solve a problem?

How could changes to today’s work make you feel better?

Write two questions you could not answer. Explain

Why do you think doing it differently will help with your learning?

What is the most valuable advice you could give to students who are involved in similar projects in the future?

How could we change this (lesson/unit/strategy/skill) next time we do this?

What would you change if you were to do a similar task to improve your learning?

Thinking about achievement

Looking for evidence

Working with other people

Overcoming barriers

Reframing the task

Relational- relating feelings, thought and actions to other areas/processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affective</th>
<th>Cognitive</th>
<th>Operative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do you feel when you achieve your goals?</td>
<td>Connect this knowledge to something you already know or can do</td>
<td>Think of a way to use ……… since we practiced it in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What other feelings do you have about this work?</td>
<td>How do these processes/content relate to something else you know</td>
<td>Reflect on the strategy we used and why we used it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can you ensure your group has positive feelings about your work together</td>
<td>Who do you know who would find this learning (content) or strategy (process) helpful?</td>
<td>How could you become more involved in team work next time that would be different that this time??</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What problems do you have to solve about how you feel when it gets</td>
<td>Find three sources where this new knowledge</td>
<td>List five places you could use the skills you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conceptual- translating into concepts feelings, thought and actions about learning processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affective</th>
<th>Cognitive</th>
<th>Operative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Think" /> Think about the many feelings you have about your work. Use colours and/or drawing to represent three of these feelings.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Explain" /> Explain how your thinking was different today from yesterday and from what it could be tomorrow.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Why" /> Why is what you have learnt critical for you as a person?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="How can you" /> How can you generate some specific feelings about your work e.g. empathy, curiosity</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Why is it important" /> Why is it important for you to know/understand/be able to do this?</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="List three ways" /> List three ways the skills you have learnt can be used elsewhere?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Survey" /> Survey the members of your group about how they felt during this task and align them with your own feelings.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Reflect on a" /> Reflect on a conversation you had with someone else that triggered your thinking about…….</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="How you would" /> How you would help someone else to learn something you discovered today?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="What did you find" /> What did you find to be the most difficult part in discussing your feelings about this task? What did you do to overcome this?</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="How could you" /> How could you broaden your thinking through and learn more about what you did today/during a task/lesson/unit?</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="What did you find" /> What did you find out about you problem solving skills and strategies while doing this activity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="What other positive" /> What other positive feelings would you like to generate in future sessions?</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Represent how you" /> Represent how you think, (drawing, matrix, mind map etc.)</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="What advice would" /> What advice would you give me before we continue this lesson?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thinking about achievement

Looking for evidence

Working with other people

Overcoming barriers

Reframing the task
APPENDIX 2 A SUMMARY OF TRAINING TO DATE

1. Regular meeting with principal supervisor, Kevin Watson once a week.
2. Discussing with supervisor panel and other VTR members fortnightly.
3. Attending training methodology conducted by DET once a week from 28 July to 27 October, 2008.
4. Completing Postgraduate Essentials online Higher Degree Research orientation program.
5. Participating workshop on exploring new search engines, online databases conducted by Liaison Miluse.
6. Presenting at the Conference in the College of Arts Research in the University of Western Sydney on 11 October, 2008.
7. Presentation supposed to be made in the Confirmation of Candidature on 27 January, 2009.
8. Participating workshop on performing research: embodying the learning journey. It is conducted by Thubten Choky on 22nd Jan. 2009.
9. Attending workshop on qualitative research design conducted by Dr Brenda Dobia on 22nd Jan. 2009.
10. Attending workshop at Centre of Educational Research meeting room (Bankstown campus) on the human ethics application process including major issues related to research ethics and the role of human research ethics committee. It is conducted by Professor Christine Halse on Monday on 9 February, 2009, from 1pm to 3pm.
11. Attending workshop at KW-V.108 (Kingswood campus building V) on how to fill in the NEAF online. It is conducted by A/Professor Wayne Sawyer, on 13 February, 2009, from 9 to 11am.
12. Presenting at the IER NSW Institute for Education Research Postgraduate Research Conference 2009. It is held at Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences University of Technology Sydney on 22 May, 2009.
13. Presenting at Conference in the College of Arts Research in the University of Western Sydney (Bankstown campus) on 3 November, 2009.
## APPENDIX 3  TIMETABLE OF ACHIEVEMENT 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>July 08</th>
<th>Aug. 08</th>
<th>Sep. 08</th>
<th>Oct. 08</th>
<th>Nov. 08</th>
<th>Dec. 08</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Find a topic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-cultural influence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrow down to learning environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research on MeE framework:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective diary</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 4  TIMETABLE OF ACHIEVEMENT 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jan. 09</th>
<th>Feb. 09</th>
<th>March 09</th>
<th>April 09</th>
<th>May 09</th>
<th>June 09</th>
<th>July 09</th>
<th>Aug. 09</th>
<th>Sep. 09</th>
<th>Oct. 09</th>
<th>Nov. 09</th>
<th>Dec. 09</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revise proposal</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare and submit ethics applications</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain secure file of records</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collect data</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyse data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research findings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finish the research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 5  INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1: what were the engaging parts in the VTR Mandarin class?
2. Why were the engaging parts of the lesson engaging?
3. Which kinds of teaching resources and teaching strategies were engaging in the VTR Mandarin class?
4. Did you think aspects of Chinese and Australian cultural differences were engaging in the lessons?
5. Compared with teaching in term 1, what kind of progress has the VTR achieved in term 2, 2009?
6. Can you make suggestions about how the lessons might be made more engaging?
APPENDIX 6 LESSON PLAN SAMPLE

Objectives

a. students learn to make a kite and learn the materials they are using to make a kite. When they asking for materials, they have to use Chinese, otherwise they can not get the materials they are asking for. In this way, students are pushed to practice Chinese as much as they can. They can also know the differences and similarities between Chinese and Australian kites. It is hands-on and minds-on activity which will be very engaging for students. They do this activity through groups.

b. for me: I develop three lessons which are interrelated to kites. I change the Easter context to kite context. This context will offer me more opportunity to engage students from three dimensions. I can understand better about Constructivist. The role of a teacher is scaffolding. I help students to learn and I push them to speak Chinese. I talk to students and discuss with them what they want to do in the next lesson. They are the insiders of the class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedures</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Students are doing…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction: Marking the roll and greeting in Chinese.</td>
<td>5 mins</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Revision: Colours and Numbers</td>
<td>10 mins</td>
<td>Poster cards</td>
<td>Revision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan B origami</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
<td>Paper, string, glue, scissor, sticks.</td>
<td>Making a kite meanwhile using Chinese to ask for materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Flying a kite</td>
<td>10 mins</td>
<td></td>
<td>Flying a kite on the playground</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluation and extension

Previously, I would like to use Easter as a hook to interest students. Asking students what they eat and what they do in Easter Festival, Kevin suggested that Easter was gone and students will not be interested in what happened in the past. We searched on the internet and tried to find some Chinese festivals in May. But we do not find the desirable thing. Then Kevin came up with a new idea.

Flying a kite is hands on and minds on activity. In addition, it is the best season to fly a kite. We will compare Chinese kites with Australian kites to arouse students’ interests.

Making a kite is difficult and the first go would not be as successful as we hope. Kevin suggested that we can divide this lesson into chunks. In each lesson, we teach a little bit and then we can use in the next lesson. Every lesson is related to each other and students can see what we are going to do next. In the first lesson, we have a go at making a kite dividing students into groups. Then for the next lesson, students are required to search for better plans to make a good kite. My question is if the students forget to search for better plans and they do nothing, what I can do in the next lesson. Kevin said as a teacher, we should put the responsibility to students. You should tell students that it is their job to search for better plans. But as a teacher you would also anticipate that some of students will do the job and some will not. When you organize the groups, you should divide some responsible students with some slackers. In that case, when the next lesson comes, there are some plans for that group to do.

In each lesson, you teach something and they learn it well. Then for the next lesson, you teach more and increase the difficulty level for students. Teachers help students to build up their vocabulary and their knowledge. When making the kite, the first time you anticipate and accept that some kites will not function well. Then we make room for students to improve their skills and improve their understanding. Students are constructing their knowledge and they can see their own improvement. In this way, it is student-cantered teaching strategy.

In retrospect
## APPENDIX 7 REFLECTIVE JOURNAL ANALYSIS

### Question 1  What was good about the lesson?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Summaries</th>
<th>Key points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1. Curiosity promotes motivation and engagement.</td>
<td>Student were engaged by 1. Curiosity. 2. Participation and discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Participation and discussion promotes engagement; Competition is motivating.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1. Real life resources are engaging.</td>
<td>Students can be engaged by: 1. Real life resources. 2. Everyday life examples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Everyday life examples helps students engage.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1. Resources are engaging.</td>
<td>Student can be motivated by: 1. Resources. 2. Humour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Humour is engaging.</td>
<td>Teacher need to be aware of: 3. Flexibility. 4. Thinking about student difference. 5. Knowing students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. There is flexibility in one lesson.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Thinking more deeply about student difference.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Knowing the students different interests.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1. A variety of teaching resources and activities are engaging.</td>
<td>Student can be engaged by: 1. Teaching resources and activities. 2. Classroom discussion and movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Classroom discussion and movement are engaging.</td>
<td>3. Competition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Teach step by step to suit for student different learning styles.</td>
<td>Teacher need to be aware of: 4. Tiered teaching. 5. Instructions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Classroom competition is engaging.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Clear instructions are important.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1. Teaching resources and classroom discussions are engaging.</td>
<td>Student can be engaged by: 1. Resources and discussions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|   | 1. Tiered teaching and teacher demonstration are engaging.  
2. Hands-on activities related to Chinese culture are engaging. | Teacher need to be aware of:  
1. Tiered teaching and teacher demonstration.  
Student can be engaged by:  
2. Activities related to culture. |
|---|---|---|
| 7 | 1. Setting up a Chinese context is engaging; teacher encouragement is important.  
2. Cultural perspectives are engaging.  
3. Teacher moved around and helped student individually. | Student can be engaged by:  
2. Cultural perspectives.  
Teacher need to be aware of:  
3. Help individual student. |
| 8 | 1. Teaching Mandarin in a Chinese context is engaging for students.  
2. Classroom interaction is engaging.  
3. I should share stories about Australian learning Mandarin with students which would be engaging.  
4. Tiered teaching promotes learning.  
5. Student questions are important indicators of their learning.  
6. Cultural differences are engaging.  
7. Learning Mandarin in a context is engaging.  
8. I should teach some language according to their reaction which would arouse their curiosity.  
9. The interrelationship between three dimensions of engagement.  
10. Students are good at pinyin.  
11. Competition is engaging. | Student can be engaged by:  
1. Chinese context.  
2. Classroom interaction.  
3. Cultural differences.  
4. Competition.  
Teacher is aware of:  
1. Tiered teaching promotes learning.  
2. Student questions promote learning.  
3. Interrelationship of three dimensions of engagement.  
4. Student expertise.  
5. Chinese context promotes learning.  
Teacher could have done:  
1. Sharing stories with students.  
2. Teaching some language according to their reaction. |
| 9 | 1. The teacher team taught with the research supervisor and the colleague VTR which was engaging for both students and teachers.  
2. The teacher rethinks about her teaching and compares her previous teaching with team teaching. The teacher finds out that activities | Student can be engaged by:  
1. Team teach.  
2. Activities incorporated with language.  
3. Reinforcement of the language.  
4. Cultural differences  
5. Different choices. |
incorporating with languages engaging for students.
3. Reinforcement is engaging.
4. Cultural differences are engaging which arouse student curiosity to learn new things.
5. Different choices make student think, discuss with each other which are engaging.
4. The research supervisor makes students understand his difficulties and worries as a teacher. Students are responsible for their behaviour. Students are willing to self-discipline rather than being forced to obey rules.
5. The research supervisor asked student opinion and feedback instead of assuming which is engaging for students, because they need to be responsible for their decision. He puts responsibility back to students.
6. The research supervisor reinforces students to speak Mandarin in the classroom.
7. Teacher and student discussion is engaging.

| 10 | Students are engaged in kite-making.  
    | Discussion is engaging for students.  
    | Learning language in a context is engaging.  
    | Students love kite making.  
    | Remind students the purpose of the lesson is to learn Mandarin language. |

Teacher is aware of:  
1. how to team teach efficiently.  
2. Teachers communicating with students are good for students to understand the difficulties and worries as a teacher.  
3. Asking for student feedback instead of assuming.  
4. Putting responsibility back to students.  
5. Reinforcing students to speak Mandarin in the classroom.  
6. Teacher and student discussion is engaging.

| 11 | Greater participation in the activity in the last period which is the most difficult time for students to learn.  
    | Set up a Chinese context for students. Teacher encouragement is good.  
    | Humour is engaging. Engaging student who is the less positive  

Students can be engaged by:  
1. Outdoor activities.  
2. Humour.  
3. Chinese context.  
4. Teacher encouragement.  
5. Revision.  
behaviour make me feel a sense of achievement as a teacher.
4. Outdoor activities are engaging. Student positive feedback and reaction encourage the teacher.
5. Revision helps students to learn. Programmed lessons were engaging. Outdoor activity is engaging.
6. Incorporating language in the activity is engaging. Curiosity can engage students.

| 12 | 1. Daily life topic is engaging. Various resources are engaging.
|    | 2. Student positive feedback encourages the teacher.
|    | 3. Students are engaging by talking their favourite singers.
|    | 4. Using PBL to manage classroom is workable.
|    | Student can be engaged by:
|    | 1. Daily life topic.
|    | 2. Various resources.
|    | 3. Student discussion about interesting topic.
|    | Teacher
|    | 1. Encouraged by student positive feedback.
|    | 2. Doing research on classroom management.

| 13 | 1. Interesting topic is engaging.
|    | 2. Chinese Kung fu raps are engaging.
|    | 3. Technology is engaging.
|    | 4. Teacher changes her view of technology.
|    | Students can be engaged by:
|    | 1. Interesting topic.
|    | 2. Fung fu rap.
|    | 3. Technology.
|    | Teacher need to
|    | 1. Improving her view of technology.

**Question 2  What could have been improved?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Summaries</th>
<th>Key points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1      | 1. Have context relevant to real life.
|        | 2. Activities well-structured; greater student participation.
|        | 3. Use knowledge of student background. | Lessons can be improved by:
|        | 1. Setting up real life context.
|        | 2. Well-structured activities and greater participation.
|        | 3. Knowing student background |
| 2 | 1. One topic is taught for too long.  
2. Topics which interest students are engaging.  
3. Changing strategies is more engaging.  
4. Organization of time. | 1. Variety of topics  
2. Interesting topics.  
4. Organization |
|---|---|---|
| 3 | 1. Instructions need to be clear.  
2. Student reaction influence teaching confidence. | 1. Giving clear instructions.  
2. Lack of teaching confidence. |
| 4 | 1. Losing competition hurts student feelings  
2. Grouping students to different ability groups. | 1. Organizing groups work instead of competition according to student different ability.  
2. Taking student happiness into consideration. |
| 5 | 1. Using technology to engage students.  
2. Organize safer games. | 1. Using technology to engage students.  
2. Organizing safer games. |
| 6 | 1. Organization of time.  
2. The teacher is upset and uncomfortable to teach because of their misbehaviour.  
3. The classroom teacher suggested the teacher to raise voice, but the teacher found that it was not workable.  
4. The teacher was willing to solve the problem and want to build a rapport with students. | 1. Organization.  
2. The teacher was upset to teach the naughty boys and she wanted to build a rapport with students. |
| 7 | 1. The technology did not work and I used my backup pictures, but the pictures were so small. Students can not see them clearly. | 1. The backup plan should be as good as the original plan. |
| 8 | 1. I changed my teaching plan according to student need.  
2. My thinking about changing plans.  
3. Changing teaching plans demanded teacher ability. | 1. I changed my teaching plans according to student interest, but I also doubt whether I should change them or not. |
| 9 | 1. I should print off all the detailed materials for students to follow, instead of assuming that they know how to make a kite.  
2. When I greeted students after class, I felt more comfortable to teach them in the class when we built a rapport after class.  
3. I doubt who should be the first person to greet, the teacher or the student? | 1. Printing off the detailed materials for students to follow instead of assuming.  
2. Building a rapport after class made me feel comfortable in the class.  
3. I doubt the Chinese concept of greeting between teachers and students. |
1. I need to speed up. 2. I should be snappy to stop student misbehaviour. 3. I need to be tough and set up rules at the beginning.

1. Organization of time. 2. I changed my plan but I was unsure and hesitated about my change, I should be persistent and confident to change my plan.

1. I should pay more attention to students who sitting at the back of the class.

1. Organization of time.

Question 3  What I will do better next time?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Summaries</th>
<th>Key points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1. Use syllabus. 2. Greater student participation.</td>
<td>1. Using Syllabus. 2. Greater participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1. Activities help engage students.</td>
<td>1. More activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1. Technology and interesting resources are engaging. 2. Give clear instructions. 3. Teacher confidence influence students.</td>
<td>1. Technology and resources. 2. Clear instructions. 3. Improving teacher confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1. Teaching differently according to student ability.</td>
<td>1. Adjusting teaching plans to different students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1. Forming a good habit for students while I am teaching they need to be quiet. 2. I doubt whether students want to learn, whether they value Chinese lessons, why they want to do hands-on activities, is it because students are slackers?</td>
<td>1. Forming good habit for students. 2. My negative comment on student learning Mandarin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1. I need to balance my mood and make myself feel happy about my job.</td>
<td>1. I need psychological help to balance my mood and make myself feel happy about my job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1. Giving instructions when students are quiet. 2. Addressing the whole class instead of a few students. 3. Speeding up to teach and giving time limitations to students.</td>
<td>1. Giving instructions when students are quiet. 2. Addressing the whole class instead of a few students. 3. Speeding up to teach and giving time limitations to students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 4  What have I learnt?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Summaries</th>
<th>Key points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1. Communicate with students to build a rapport.</td>
<td>1. Build rapport with students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Learn about student background.</td>
<td>2. Learn about student background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1. Know student background and build a rapport help to engage students.</td>
<td>1. Student background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Build a rapport.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1. Technology is engaging.</td>
<td>1. Technology is engaging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Take into student happiness into consideration.</td>
<td>2. Student happiness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1. Activities such as listening, exercises were engaging.</td>
<td>1. Activities were engaging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. My thinking about two levels of engagement in my classroom.</td>
<td>2. The gap between theories of MeE and practice in the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1. Keep the lesson easy, simple and let students relax and enjoy the class.</td>
<td>1. Easy, simple activities make student engaging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Leave time for students to clean the room.</td>
<td>2. Leave time for students to clean the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1. Backup plan should be as good as the</td>
<td>1. Backup plan should be as the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Original Plan</td>
<td>Modified Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1. Expanding the learning time. 2. Student questions are important for them to learn. 3. Students are willing to participate when I am smiling. 4. Getting rewards from competition is engaging for students. 5. When they are fully engaged in learning, there is no need to worry about their behavioural problems.</td>
<td>1. Expanding the learning time. 2. Student questions are important. 3. My smiling influences student participation. 4. Competition is engaging. 5. When they are fully engaged in learning, there is no need to worry about their behavioural problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1. I should communicate with student about my difficulties as a teacher. 2. Putting responsibility back to students. 3. Developing the lessons into a program and take students need to the program. 4. Asking student feedback about instructions. 5. I discover that students are improving their oral Chinese and I need to teach the rigor of the language more. 6. Let students make the decision to be well disciplined and put responsibility back to them</td>
<td>1. Communication between students and teachers are important. 2. Putting responsibility back to students. 3. Developing lessons into a program. 4. Asking student feedback about instructions. 5. Teach the rigor of the language because students are improving. 6. Student self-discipline and decision making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1. Comment on student homework.</td>
<td>1. Comment on student homework and show teacher serious about student learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1. Communication between teachers and students is important to build a rapport. 2. Student positive feedback encouraged me to engage in my teaching job. 3. The research made the teacher as researcher more aware of the interrelationship between students and the teacher.</td>
<td>1. Classroom communication is important. 2. Student positive feedback is encouraging for the teacher. 3. The research helped the teacher to reflect on student and teacher engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1. Interesting topic is engaging for students.</td>
<td>1. Popular topic is engaging for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1. Technology is engaging for students. 2. Popular culture is engaging for students.</td>
<td>1. Technology is engaging for students. 2. Popular culture is engaging for students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Question 5
What is something I have learnt from this lesson that I will incorporate into the next lesson?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Summaries</th>
<th>Key points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1      | 1. Student-centred teaching strategy.  
         2. Teacher needs to be critical about both positive and negative of mother country. | 1. Student-centred teaching strategy.  
         2. Be critical. |
| 2      | 1. Technology is engaging. 2. Gender issue. 3. Prepare backup plans. | 1. Technology. 2. Gender issue. 3. Backup plan. |
| 3      | 1. Gender issue. 2. Technology is engaging. 3. Activities are engaging. 4. Resources. 5. Activities. 6. Games. | 1. Take gender issue into account. 2. Technology. 3. Activities. 4. Resources. 5. Activities. 6. Games. |
| 4      | 1. Organize group work according to student ability. 2. Classroom movement is engaging. 3. Modify the lesson plans to suit to different students. | 1. Group work. 2. Classroom movement. 3. Modifying the lesson plans to different students. |
| 5      | 1. Technology, activities and worksheets are good for teaching. | 1. Technology, activities and worksheets are good for teaching. |
| 6      | 1. Keeping the lessons simple and easy. 2. More hand-on activities. 3. Teaching the importance of learning Chinese. | 1. Keeping the lessons simple and easy. 2. More hand-on activities. 3. Teaching the importance of learning Chinese. |
| 8      | 1. Progressive teaching. 2. Student questions and feedback are important. 3. Revision is good. 4. Expanding the learning time. 5. Teacher feeling influenced student participation in the classroom. 6. Teacher personality. 7. Comparing with the classroom teacher negative views towards students with my research supervisor positive views to students learning. | 1. Progressive teaching. 2. Student questions and feedback. 3. Revision. 4. Expanding the learning time. 5. Teacher feeling influenced student participation in the classroom. 6. Teacher personality. 7. Comparing between different views of
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Summaries</th>
<th>Key points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nothing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1. How to give positive suggestions and comments instead of punishing them?</td>
<td>1. How to give positive suggestions and comments instead of punishing them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>PBL. Some world renowned Chinese and Australian singers.</td>
<td>PBL. Some world renowned Chinese and Australian singers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Nothing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 6 Something I need to do research.**

**Question 7 How about my engagement and student engagement in the lesson?**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Summaries</th>
<th>Key points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Students and teachers are engaged in the lesson.</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Students and teachers are engaged in the lesson.</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Students and teachers are engaged in the lesson.</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Students and teachers are engaged in the lesson.</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Students and teachers are engaged in the lesson.</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 8  ETHICS APPROVAL

Email on behalf of the UWS Human Research Ethics Committee

Dear Kevin and Wu Ting

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

TITLE: Teacher engagement in teaching students in a second language (L2) class

Student: Ting Wu

The Protocol Number for this project is H6843. 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 2009. If you require an extension of approval beyond this period, please ensure that you notify the Human Ethics Officer (humanethics@uws.edu.au) prior to this date.

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

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

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

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

Dr Janette Perz,
Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee

Kay Buckley
Human Ethics Officer
University of Western Sydney
Locked Bag 1797, Penrith Sth DC NSW 1797
Tel: 02 47 360 883
Project Title: Teacher engagement in teaching students in a second language (L2) class

When completing this form please refer to the “Guidelines for Approving Applications from External Agencies to Conduct Research in NSW Government Schools”, https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/research/guidelines.pdf including the appendices on quality research. Responses should provide all of the requested details as concisely as possible. Please note the maximum length for each section. All requested documentation must be pasted into the relevant sections of this document.

1 Educational benefit
1.1 Please explain the benefits of your research project to NSW government schools and students.

This research will explore ways of engaging students in learning Mandarin as a second language. It will provide insights about student engagement for teachers who want to teach Mandarin as a second language. The feedback from students and teachers will inform the preparation and delivery of Mandarin lessons which will benefit current and future students. This is consistent with DETs policy on ‘Reaching Higher’ and ‘Supporting Enhanced Learning’. To engage students in learning Mandarin, it has to connect with the student world. Lessons need to engage students from their interest perspectives. The research context and the pedagogy developed is nested within the ‘middle-years’ with continuity across primary and secondary schooling. Professional learning will use expertise from teacher education (UWS).

(10 lines max)

1.2 Detail the steps you will take to contribute to the realisation of the benefits outlined in 1.1 above.

For example, the dissemination/communication of results, provision of advice or information etc.
I will teach students Mandarin so they can ‘Reach Higher’ and so potentially increase their contribution to a globalising world. I will work with teachers so they are aware of the pedagogy I am using and the methods of engaging students. I will make my lessons available to teachers and schools so they can benefit from my work. A copy of my thesis will be made available to DET.
1.3 Briefly outline how your research project will contribute to the field of educational research.
Clearly indicate how the project will contribute to knowledge and practice in education.

This research uses an existing theoretical framework, the MeE framework (Martin & Munns, 2005) to position student engagement in terms of student motivation and engagement and employs the REAL framework (Munns & Woodward, 2006) to collect data in a systematic way. Consequently, this research consolidates the MeE and REAL frameworks as innovations in combining psychological and sociological theoretical perspectives. Additionally, the MeE framework was developed from the literature on disadvantaged students. Its application to research on second language learning strengthens its theoretical underpinnings.

Although traditional models of ‘apprentice’ types of teacher education can suffer from the inherent disadvantage of perpetuating problematic practices, the research-based model of teacher education actively informs practice with theory and so actively reduces this tendency.

(10 lines max)

1.4 For both a) and b) below, please indicate both
• the specific strategic goals and/or strategies that your research relates to AND how your project will contribute to them.

b) Current DET Goals and Strategies
The DET corporate plan with goals and strategies can be found at (https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/strat_direction/index.htm)

This research will:
• investigate innovative and more flexible ways of using learning environments to provide engaging learning experiences for students in the Middle Years by providing lessons that are tailored to students’ needs and specific interests that will improve their interest in learning Mandarin; and
• work with teacher education institutions to investigate and develop professional learning linked to teaching and learning in the Middle Years by using the expertise of staff at UWS to inform the development and implementation of engaging pedagogy and content.
(5 lines max)

c) The National Goals for Schooling
The National Goals for Schooling, also known as the “Adelaide Declaration” can be found at (http://www.mceetya.edu.au/mceetya )

Students will:
• attain high standards of knowledge, skills and understandings through a comprehensive and balanced curriculum in languages other than English,
specifically Mandarin; and
• have the capacity for, and skills in, communicating ideas and information and collaborating with others using the Chinese language Mandarin.
(5 lines max)
2 Minimisation of Risk or Harm

2.1 List below all activities, equipment, measuring devices, procedures and questions to be used in this research project that are not in everyday use in schools.
(Note: Documentation demonstrating equipment and equipment safety should be included in section 5.5 below.)

Also comment on any potential that the research itself has to cause emotional distress to participants or to identify issues which carry ‘duty of care’ responsibilities e.g. indications that a child is at risk of harm, involved in criminal activity etc.

No activities, equipment, measuring devices, procedures or questions will be used in this research project that are not in everyday use in schools.
(6 lines max)

2.2 Describe the procedures that will be put in place to manage any issues arising from items mentioned in 2.1 above and to deal with any outcomes including duty of care responsibilities, should they occur.

Where appropriate, include the strategies that will be adopted to ensure that adequate counselling support is available and that participants are aware of the availability of such support.

N/A
(6 lines max)
3 Level of Disruption
Please indicate the types of activities that Departmental staff, students and parents will participate in as part of the research, estimate the amount of time participation might take and indicate the numbers of participants involved. There are separate tables below for a) research participants, b) administrative support and c) overall totals for the project.
(Use one line for each activity and add extra rows as needed).

a) Research participants in each school
(Separate by school if different activities occur in each)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of activity (eg survey, interview, video observation)</th>
<th>Participants in each school (number + type) (eg 50 yr 3 students, 2 teachers))</th>
<th>Amount of time activity will take (eg 30 mins)</th>
<th>When activity will take place (eg in class time, Term 2 2008)</th>
<th>Classes (number + year levels) (eg 5 (yr 3)).</th>
<th>Participation strategy (eg whole class/ students withdrawn from class)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>6 yr 8 students</td>
<td>30 minutes per student</td>
<td>In the second half of recess or lunch time, term 2, 2009</td>
<td>6 (yr 8)</td>
<td>Students will be divided into three groups. Two students from each group will be randomly selected.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please use the box below to provide any additional information about the administration of your research project relating to a) above (if relevant).

Information sheets and permission slips will be distributed to each student in the class and the returned permission slips will need to be collected.

(4 lines max)
b) Administrative and other support expected from each school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrative activity or other type of support required</th>
<th>Personnel to be involved</th>
<th>Amount of time administrative activity will take</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(eg administer and collect 60 consent forms, distribute 30 survey forms)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No administration required.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please use the box below to provide any additional information about the administration of your research project relating to b) above (if relevant).

N/A

(4 lines max)

c) Totals for the entire research project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of activity (eg Survey completion, Administering consent forms)</th>
<th>Total Participants (number, type) (eg 200 yr 3 students, 5 teachers)</th>
<th>Schools involved (number and type) (eg 2 primary, 3 high schools)</th>
<th>Study data collection times (eg Phase 1 term 2 2006. Phase 2 term 4 2006)</th>
<th>Total hours (Activity times by numbers involved)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>6 yr 8 students</td>
<td>1 high school</td>
<td>Term 2, 2009.</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL (combined activities)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please use the box below to provide any additional information about the administration of your research project relating to c) above (if relevant).

N/A

(4 lines max)
4 Research design

4.1 Describe the context and background to your research and how your research project links to it.

Describe in particular how this research will build on what is already known, citing related research where relevant.

There are four motivational theories that appear in the literature. They are:

- self-efficacy theory (personal assessment of ability to perform a task – I can do this);
- attribution theory (personal explanation of why an outcome occurred – I am too short to be a basketball player);
- self-worth theory (personal attempts to maintain self worth – I am OK because people like me); and
- achievement goal theory (the desire to achieve a particular goal – if I study hard enough I will do well (Seifert, 2004).

However, Seifert (2004) suggests that although these theories appear to be separate, they are theoretically interconnected. Seifert (2004) argues that motivation, specifically student motivation, is essentially derived from beliefs and emotions.

This research will use the MeE framework (Martin & Munns, 2005) to position student engagement in terms of student motivation and engagement while they are learning Mandarin. The MeE framework mainly describes the relationship between motivation and engagement from both psychological and sociological perspectives. Munns and Martin (2005) divide engagement into small ‘e’ engagement (classroom engagement) and big ‘E’ Engagement (engagement in the school more broadly). This research focuses on small ‘e’ engagement.

Small ‘e’ engagement is a multi-dimensional construct where cognition, behaviour and emotion come together. Small ‘e’ engagement is divided into substantive engagement and procedural engagement. Substantive engagement is when students are ‘in task’ meaning students are strongly engaged in the tasks they have been set. Procedural engagement is when students are ‘on task’ which is when they are simply obeying the wishes and instructions of teachers. Big ‘E’ engagement differentiates itself from small ‘e’ engagement because of its wider relationship with schools and education generally. Big ‘E’ engagement is in operation when students have a sense that school is a place for them and that education is worthwhile as a resource they can use both now and as future needs determine (Munns & Martin, 2005, p. 3). Schools offer students “a sense of belonging and achieving”. Students realize education is a “resource that they could profitably deploy in their present and future lives” (Munns, 2004b, p. 2).

The MeE framework is the “joint effect of the individual and relational levels within the psychological and sociological frames” (Munns & Martin, 2005 p. 5). Small ‘e’
engagement is more than individual; rather, it is “social relationships involving reciprocity and mutual understanding” (Munns et al., 2005, p. 27). Big ‘E’ Engagement is positive social outcomes as well as a whole-school focus that encourages students to “feel valued, supported and catered for involvement, emotional and cognitive levels” (Munns & Martin, 2005, p. 6). Schools working on policies and practices help students to feel supported. The final goal is to help students to feel that “school is for me”. Strategies include “a positive school ethos”, “curricula choices” and “peer support” (Munns & Martin, 2005, p. 6).

The REAL framework (Munns & Woodward, 2006) consists of 60 questions covering the affective, cognitive and operative dimensions of student engagement. Each of these dimensions is broken into five areas, namely thinking about achievement, looking for evidence, working with other people, overcoming barriers and reframing the task. The relationship between the three dimensions and five areas is outlined using unidimensional, multidimensional, relational and conceptual themes. The resulting 60 questions that make up the REAL framework were reduced to 13 by selecting only those relevant to the study.

(1 page max)

4.2 What are the goals of your research?
Research goals should be focused, feasible and clearly stated.

This research is about the ability of a Chinese volunteer teacher-researcher (VTR) to engage students in learning Mandarin as a second language. A volunteer teacher-researcher will use cultural differences between China and Australia to engage students. Different teaching strategies and teaching materials will be developed and used to improve teaching proficiency as a language teacher.

(5 lines max)

4.3 State your research question(s) / specific research focus.
This should relate to the goals of your research as described above.

How does a Mandarin teacher engage with learning how to successfully engage, interest and motivate students in learning Mandarin?
The secondary questions are:
How does a teacher engage students in learning Mandarin as a second language?
How does a teacher improve their teaching proficiency as a language teacher?

(10 lines max)
4.4 State any research hypotheses. (Quantitative methods)
Your hypotheses should be testable using the methodology and instruments provided below and able to provide answers to your research questions

N/A
(5 lines max)

4.5 Stakeholder Consultation
Please identify research project stakeholders and describe any consultation with these groups that has or will occur in the design, conduct and reporting of the results of this project.

N/A
(5 lines max)

Methodology/Approach
4.6 Briefly describe the methodology (ie the overall strategy) you will use to answer each of your research questions/address your research focus.
Include a brief justification for the selection of (each of) the methods you propose to use in relation to your research question/focus.

The VTR will engage in a process of improving her ability to engage and motivate students in learning Mandarin. This will be achieved by evaluating each lesson delivered so that the next lesson taught incorporates improvements distilled from what was learnt from the previous lesson. The evaluation of each lesson will be based on information (data) collected from a number of sources before the lesson is delivered, during lesson delivery and after the lesson has been delivered as well as at the end of the teaching term. Each lesson plan will be commented on by the classroom teacher, a colleague teacher-researcher and the research supervisor. These comments will be used to revise the lesson plan and increase the potential for student engagement and motivation. During each lesson students will be asked questions selected from the REAL framework (Woodward & Munns, 2003) to indicate student engagement during the lesson. After the lesson the classroom teacher and colleague teacher-researcher will comment on the lesson and be asked to make suggestions for improvements. Suggestions for improvements will focus
on teaching strategies and teaching resources. The research will follow an action research model. However, summative data (student interviews at the end of the teaching period) will also be used.

(15 lines max)

4.7  How will you test each of your research hypotheses? (Quantitative methods only)

N/A
(10 lines max)

Methods
4.8  Provide details of the method(s) you will use to collect your data or information. Please include administrative details.
This research is about the ability of a Chinese volunteer teacher-researcher (VTR) to engage students in the classroom. The VTR will teach twelve lessons over a ten week term. Two lessons will be taught every two weeks. In between each lesson the VTR will listen to the feedback from six sources and reflect on the feedback that is a normal part of self-reflective practice. The six sources of feedback will be from the classroom teacher in the high school where the lessons will be taught, the classroom teacher in a primary school where the VTR also teaches, a colleague VTR, student comments on their classroom engagement as a result of normal classroom interactions, the research supervisor and student interviews conducted at the end of the teaching period. Towards the end of each lesson, participating students (those who return permission notes) will respond to three questions about their engagement in the lesson as part of the lesson closure. In between the fortnightly lessons the feedback collected will be analysed to see how the next lesson can be structured and taught to make it more engaging. Lesson preparation will be based on this analysis. The VTR will write a reflection on each lesson plan and the delivery of each lesson. Data from the volunteer teacher-researcher will play a central role as a data source.

Interview data will be collected from six purposively selected students. These students will be divided into three groups: mostly engaged students, sometimes engaged students and disengaged students. The whole class will provide data from a series of questions selected from the REAL framework (Woodward & Munns, 2003). Classroom teachers in a high school and in primary school will provide data in the form of informal suggestions on various aspects of classroom teaching. A colleague teacher research will also supply similar information. The supervisor will comment on the teaching plans and teaching strategies of the VTR. The data and feedback for each lesson will be analysed for recurring themes (Coble, Selin & Erickson, 2003) and used to inform the preparation and delivery of subsequent lessons. In this way, there will be an action research component to the research design as findings will be used to inform the next iteration of lessons and subsequent research.

There are seven data sources. The volunteer teacher-researcher will write a reflective diary to analysis student engagement after each lesson. The volunteer teacher-researcher will collect data from the five other sources. Different opinions on student engagement will help the volunteer teacher-researcher to adopt appropriate teaching strategies and materials to engage students. Through this process and using these methods the volunteer teacher researcher can engage in teaching Mandarin to engage students in their classroom learning.

(1 page max)
4.9 Please describe the piloting process for research instruments or, for standardised instruments, provide validity and reliability data (Quantitative instruments only)

N/A
(10 lines max)

4.10 Date by which data collection will be completed…June………(month)……2009……….(.year)

4.11 Selection of Participants

Please provide the following information along with a brief justification of each in relation to project goals:

a) Describe the characteristics of the participants.

If your study identifies subgroup(s) of participants please describe the characteristics of the subgroup(s) as well.

Students will be divided into three sub-groups: mostly engaged, sometime engaged and disengaged students. This will ensure views on engaging strategies, activities and resources are obtained from the full range of student participants. The six students selected to be interviewed from each sub-group will be chosen at random from volunteers to ensure unbiased data.

(5 lines max)

b) How will participants with these characteristics be identified?

Include a description of the information resource(s) or of sample frame from which they will be identified.

Student will be identified according to their classroom behaviour, cooperation with teachers and their overall ability to engage in learning Mandarin. A checklist will be used to allocate each student by consensus from among the researcher, classroom teacher and colleague VTR.

(5 lines max)

c) What criteria will you use to select the schools you invite to take part in the research?

Plumpton High School and Plumpton Public School are the schools the VTR is teaching in from 2008 to 2009. The VTR knows the classroom teachers and students and the students in the high school class are those the VTR is trying to engage in learning Mandarin.

(3 lines max)
d) Describe the selection process to be used to recruit each participant group.

The VTR, supervising teacher and colleague VTR will meet to discuss each volunteering student. A checklist will be used to classify each student as mostly engaged, sometimes engaged and disengaged students. A list will be made of those students volunteering to be interviewed in each of the three sub-groups. Two students will be randomly selected from each group to be interviewed. (5 lines max)

e) State, and justify, the total numbers of each type of participant to be involved in each part of the research project.

All volunteering students in the Mandarin class will participate in the research to ensure a representative view of student classroom engagement. This is particularly important given the diversity of students in the class. There are 6 participants who will be interviewed, two from each sub-group of students. This is to ensure in-depth information across the full range of participants. There is only one participant from the other data sources. Each of these participants would provide this information as part of the normal teaching/supervising process. (5 lines max)

4.12 Identify the limitations of your research in relation to the kinds of conclusions you intend to draw.

The purpose of this statement is to ensure that researchers avoid drawing over-generalised or unsubstantiated conclusions from limited data.

The findings will be characterised by the Australian context. The findings are not transferable to other cultural contexts. This is especially the case since there is a cultural component in each lesson. Although the methodology can be generalised, the specific nature and background of participants will significantly influence the findings and therefore it is not reliable to generalise beyond the specific teaching context. (5 lines max)

4.13 Outline the steps you will take to analyse your data.
Include:
What information will you seek in your data
How this information will be identified, analysed and reported
(Where applicable, describe the analyses that will be performed to answer each research question.)

Information will be sought from each data source on the VTR’s ability to engage students in learning Mandarin. Specifically, the information will be on the classroom environment, teaching strategies, activities and resources to engage students in learning Mandarin. The interview data will provide reasons why the above are engaging or less engaging and will help provide an understanding of why students were engaged or not. The data will be analysed using the dimensions of the REAL framework (Woodward & Munns, 2003) which is based on a system of student self-assessment of classroom engagement. A recurring themes analysis (Coble, Selin & Erickson, 2003) will be used to identify the main issues impacting on classroom engagement. The findings will be reported as a thesis which will be made available to participants.

4.14 Outline the steps you will take to ensure confidentiality of information provided and to protect anonymity of participants and schools in relation to
a) data collection and storage
b) publication/reporting of results

If applicable, also describe and justify any limitations to confidentiality and anonymity or provide reasons why it will not be offered.

Interviews will be conducted in a counsellor’s office. It is quiet and private so that students will feel comfortable in talking about their classroom experiences. Data will be locked in a secure cabinet and will be destroyed after a five year storage period. No student will be identified in any way in the findings or any publication that results from this research. Pseudonyms will be used at all times.

(6 lines max)
### 4.15 Timeline for the research - indicate key milestones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>When?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student interviews completed</td>
<td>June, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All data collected from all sources</td>
<td>June, 2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 Documentation

5.1 Procedure for documents only available in hard copy
All required documentation should be included in the relevant spaces in this section wherever possible.

However, if electronic versions of any required documents are not available, as in the case of copyrighted questionnaires or safety documentation for example, please record the names and descriptions for those documents here.

N/A

Hard copies of the above instruments (and any other documents only available in hard copy) should be forwarded along with the hard copy of your application.

5.2 Research Instruments
Copy research instruments into the space below.

Copy research instruments here
Three instruments will be used to collect data. Each is an interview schedule but with different degrees of formality. The semi-structured interview schedule to obtain data from students at the end of the teaching period is shown below. The guide for a dialogue between teachers, colleague VTR and research supervisor is also shown below. The series of questions that students will be asked at the end of each lesson is based on the 13 selected questions from the REAL framework (Woodward & Munns, 2003). These 13 questions are stated below.

Each instrument will be designed to provide data about the ability of teaching resources, teaching strategies, activities and overall classroom environment to engage students. Students will also be asked their view of the use of cultural issues as an effective means of engaging students in learning Mandarin. The instruments are designed so that participants can make suggestions to improve lesson engagement.

The VTR field notes will also be used as a descriptive instrument for data collection.

Semi-structured interview schedule used as a basis for dialogue between the VTR and teachers, colleague VTR and students.

Question 1:
What were the engaging parts in Wu Ting’s Mandarin class?

Purpose:
The purpose of this question is to find out what parts of the lesson were engaging for students. The colleague VTR may have to be asked additional questions to find out which parts of the lesson were engaging and to give specific examples. This may necessitate additional questions being asked to achieve the purpose of the question.

Question 2:
Why were the engaging parts of the lesson engaging?

Purpose:
The purpose of this question is to find out why the engaging parts of the lesson were engaging. Some specific reasons and examples will be required to answer the question fully.

Question 3:
Which kinds of teaching resources and teaching strategies were engaging in Wu Ting’s Mandarin class?

Purpose 3:
The purpose of this question is to find out which kinds of teaching resources and teaching strategies were engaging. The answer to the question will require a clear delineation between teaching resources and teaching strategies. Examples will be required for a complete answer to the question. This may necessitate additional questions being asked to achieve the purpose of the question.

Question 4:
Did you think aspects of Chinese and Australian cultural differences were engaging in the lessons?

Purpose 4:
The purpose of this question is to find out whether using cultural differences was effective or not as a means of interesting students in learning Mandarin. Examples will be required for a complete answer to the question. This may necessitate additional questions being asked to achieve the purpose of the question.

Question 5:
Can you make suggestions about how the lessons might be made more engaging?

Purpose 5:
The purpose of this question is to find out ways to improve student engagement. Examples will be required for a complete answer to the question. This may necessitate
additional questions being asked to achieve the purpose of the question.

Thirteen questions selected from the REAL Framework (Woodward & Munns, 2003).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affective</th>
<th>Cognitive</th>
<th>Operative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1, what were the fun bits in your learning?</td>
<td>1, name two things to make you think harder?</td>
<td>1, what new thing can you do now?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2, why were the fun bits fun?</td>
<td>2, what strategies did you use to learn something important?</td>
<td>2, what would you change about today’s work to help you improve?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3, how do you feel when you solved a problem?</td>
<td>3, why do you think doing it differently will help with your learning?</td>
<td>3, how could we change this lesson/unit stratégie/skill next time we do this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4, when and where else could you use this information?</td>
<td>4, think of a way to use …since we practiced it in class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6, list three ways the skills you have learnt can be used elsewhere?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3 Letter to Principals
An electronic version of the letter(s) to principals should be copied into the space below. It should be on organisation letterhead if possible. Hard copies of the letter(s) submitted in Step 2 of the application process must be printed on appropriate letterhead.
Participant Information Sheet (General)

An information sheet, which is tailored in format and language appropriate for the category of participant - adult, child, young adult, should be developed.

**Note:** If not all of the text in the row is visible please ‘click your cursor’ anywhere on the page to expand the row. To view guidance what is required in each section ‘hover your cursor’ over the bold text. Further instructions are on the last page of this form.

**Project Title:** Teacher engagement in teaching students in a second language (L2) class

---

**Who is carrying out the study?**

Wu Ting, is a student studying for a Master of Education (Honors) at UWS.

---

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Wu Ting. Dr Kevin Watson is my supervisor.

---

**What is the study about?**

The purpose of the study is to investigate the ability of a Chinese volunteer teacher-researcher (VTR) to engage students in the classroom. This study will use different kinds of teaching strategies and resources to set up an engaging learning environment. This study will ask students and teachers for feedback about the lessons in order to improve the proficiency of the Mandarin teacher.

---

**What does the study involve?**

Data will be collected through six sources, namely the classroom teacher at Plumpton High School, the classroom teacher at Plumpton Public School, a colleague VTR, students selected from the whole class to answer questions at the end of each lesson, students selected for in-depth interviews and my reflective journal. Student will be interviewed in term 2, 2009. They will be interviewed in the second half of lunch time so they have enough time to eat lunch. The interview will take approximately 20 minutes.

---

**How much time will the study take?**

It should take no longer than two terms.

---

**Will the study benefit me?**

Yes. This research will provide a possibility for students to improve their engagement in learning Mandarin as a second language. The feedback from participants will inform the preparation and delivery of Mandarin lessons which may be more engaging and beneficial for students.

There are indirect benefits for teachers who have a discussion about engagement in learning Mandarin and reduce disengagement in similar contexts. Teachers can access information from my research and use this information in preparing their lessons.

Peers will know more about engagement and develop more engaging classes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Will the study involve any discomfort for me?</td>
<td>No. There is no risks of harm for anyone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is this study being paid for?</td>
<td>It is anticipated that there will be no commercial benefit for the investigators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?</td>
<td>All aspects of the study, including results, will be confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants. The findings of the study will be disseminated as a thesis and as publications. All participants will be anonymous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can I withdraw from the study?</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can I tell other people about the study?</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What if I require further information?</td>
<td>When you have read this information, WuTing 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 WuTing, a student studying for a Master of Education (Honors) at UWS, mobile number 0406552627.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What if I have a complaint?</td>
<td>This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is [enter approval number]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 0083 Fax 02-4736 0013 or email humanethics@uwss.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 will be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.
HOW TO FILL IN AN INTERACTIVE PDF FORM

1. If necessary, select either the Hand tool or the Select tool.

2. (Optional) To make form fields easier to identify, click the Highlight Fields button on the document message bar. Form fields appear with a colored background (light blue by default), and all required form fields are outlined in another color (red by default).

3. Click in the first form field you want to fill in, either to select that option or to place a cursor in the field so you can start typing.

4. After making a selection or entering text, do any of the following:
   - To accept the form field change and go to the next or previous field - Press Tab or Shift+Tab
   - To select the previous radio button in a group of radio buttons - Press the Up or Left arrow key
   - To select the next radio button - Press the Down or Right arrow key
   - To reject the form field change and deselect the current form field - Press Esc
   - To accept your typing and deselect the field in a single-line text box - Press Enter (Windows) or Return (Mac OS)
   - To turn the check box on or off - Press Enter or Return
   - To create a paragraph return in the same form field - Press Enter or Return
   - To accept the change and deselect the current form field in all cases - Press Enter

To change the text formatting:
For bold, italics etc, go to ‘View’ in the top menu and then go to ‘Toolbars’ and select the ‘Properties toolbar’. When you click into a text box, the ‘Properties toolbar’ will then be visible so that you can edit the font Type, Size, Underline, Style (Bold, Italic, Strike-through) and Colour. For Paragraphs you can edit the Alignment, Indents and Spacing.
5.4 Information sheets and consent forms
All information sheets and consent forms should be copied in the relevant spaces below. They should be on organisation letterhead if possible. Hard copies of these forms(s) submitted in Step 2 of the application process must be printed on appropriate letterhead.

Please note: Separate information sheets and consent forms need to be produced for each type of participant and need to include all relevant information, as indicated in the guidelines. A sample information sheet and consent form for parents/caregivers is provided in the Guidelines for your reference.

5.4.1 Information sheet(s)
Please copy all of your information sheet(s), (one for each type of participant) into the space below.

Copy all information sheet(s) into this space
Participant Information Sheet (General)

An information sheet, which is tailored in format and language appropriate for the category of participant - adult, child, young adult, should be developed.

Note: If not all of the text in the row is visible please ‘click your cursor’ anywhere on the page to expand the row. To view guidance on what is required in each section ‘hover your cursor’ over the bold text. Further instructions are on the last page of this form.

Project Title: Teacher engagement in teaching students in a second language (L2) class

Who is carrying out the study?

Wu Ting, is a student studying for a Master of Education (Honors) at UWS.

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Wu Ting. Dr Kevin Watson is my supervisor.

What is the study about?

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What does the study involve?

Data will be collected through six sources, namely the classroom teacher at Plumpton High School, the classroom teacher at Plumpton Public School, a colleague VTR, students selected from the whole class to answer questions at the end of each lesson, students selected for in-depth interviews and my reflective journal. Student will be interviewed in term 2, 2000. They will be interviewed in the second half of lunch time so they have enough time to eat lunch. The interview will take approximately 20 minutes.

How much time will the study take?

It should take no longer than two terms.

Will the study benefit me?

Yes. This research will provide a possibility for students to improve their engagement in learning Mandarin as a second language. The feedback from participants will inform the preparation and delivery of Mandarin lessons which may be more engaging and beneficial for students.

There are indirect benefits for teachers who have a discussion about engagement in learning Mandarin and reduce disengagement in similar contexts. Teachers can access information from my research and use this information in preparing their lessons.

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It is anticipated that there will be no commercial benefit for the investigators.

Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?
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Can I withdraw from the study?
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When you have read this information, Wu Ting 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 Wu Ting, a student studying for a Master of Education (Honors) at UWS, mobile number 0406552627.

What if I have a complaint?
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If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.
5.4.2 Consent forms(s)

Separate consent forms should be provided, appropriately addressed to each type of participant, and using appropriate language and content for its intended recipient.

Please copy all of your consent form(s) into the space below.
Participant Consent Form
This is a project specific consent form. It restricts the use of the data collected to the named project by the named investigators.

**Note:** If not all of the text in the row is visible please ‘click your cursor’ anywhere on the page to expand the row. To view guidance on what is required in each section ‘hover your cursor’ over the bold text.

**Project Title:** Teacher engagement in teaching students in a second language (L2) class

I, ______________________, consent to participate in the research project titled [insert title].

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 [insert specific activities] [if applicable] [list all components of involvement, e.g. audio/video taping to ensure participants can indicate their willingness to participate in all or some of the research]

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signed:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.5 Documentation demonstrating safety of equipment or proposed activities if applicable.

If applicable, please copy the documents (and pictures), identified in section 2.1 Minimisation of Risk or Harm above, into this space.

See instructions in section 5.1 above for dealing with documents only available in hard copy.

Copy pictures, documents into this space.

N/A

6 Applications for Variations/Extensions to Approved Projects ONLY

Please supply a list in the space below of any additional schools you plan to approach (ordered by region).