A Chinese Teacher's Exploration of Teaching Strategies For Support Class Students: An Action Research in a Western Sydney school

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Declaration

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 Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

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Yanyuan Zhang
March, 2015
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In the past one and half a years, I had a great time in Australia. As a Chinese volunteer teacher, I have been honored to teach Chinese in two of Western Sydney’s public schools. Thanks for the support of Ningbo Education Bureau and NSW Department of Education and Communities for this opportunity. Also, thanks to the teachers and students in the two schools where I taught Chinese. They made me a better Chinese teacher. In particular, my lovely support class students were inspiring. As a student of UWS, I did research about step by step Chinese teaching strategies for support class students. Thanks also to Dr Jinghe Han (Principal Supervisor) and Professor Michael Singh (Associate Supervisor). Their thoughtful input and encouragement made this thesis possible. I must finally thank my parents and friends. I feel so grateful for having them.
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Abstract

This research aims to explore Chinese teaching strategies for support class students. The data of a designed three-cycle action research was collected in a Western Sydney school. Specifically, the teacher-researcher analysed strategies for teaching Chinese vocabulary, listening and speaking, and Chinese culture, and concluded the general principles of Chinese teaching strategies for the support class students.

Chapter 1 Introduction

This research focuses on a Chinese teacher's exploration of teaching strategies for support class students. The first part of the chapter introduces the researcher's personal experience and the reason why she is interested in Chinese teaching strategies for support class students. The second part is Australia's educational background, including the Australian government's Asia Literacy Policy and the development of its special education. It explains the importance of this research from a macroscopic perspective. The third to fifth parts describe the research question, the proposed outcome of the research and the significance of the research. The last part of the chapter presents an outline of the study.
1.1 The teacher-researcher's personal experience

When I was a child, I dreamed of being a Chinese teacher. I was crazy about reading ancient Chinese novels. I spent the whole summer holiday reading *Journey to the West* 《西游记》, one of the Chinese Four Classical Masterpieces. While my parents thought it was too hard for me to understand in Year 4, I was deeply attracted by the fantastic descriptions in the book. With a passion for Chinese, I was an assistant to Chinese class teachers in primary school and high schools. Our Chinese teacher was a charming lady. She had beautiful handwriting. She taught abstract Chinese language and culture to us in an interesting way. Moreover, she thought every student was equal. In her eyes, the students with high or low scores, high IQ or low IQ, were all the same. She devoted more time to students with learning difficulties and explored new ways to make them understand. She believed in the educational philosophy that there is no student who cannot learn, but only poor teachers who cannot teach (没有教不好的学生，只有不会教的老师).

Following my dream of being a Chinese teacher, I studied for a Bachelor of Chinese language and literature at a university in China. During those four years, I studied Chinese language, literature and culture systematically. I also put theory into practice. My only part-time job in University was teaching Chinese to an English family from England. I wrote my teaching plans carefully and adjusted my teaching strategies step by step. In addition, I asked my supervisor for advice frequently. The 6-year-old boy and his mother improved their spoken Chinese quickly. At that moment, I started thinking of teaching Chinese to English speakers in the future.

In June 2012, Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau selected me as a volunteer Chinese teacher. I was required to teach Chinese in a primary school and a high school in the Western Sydney Region. Specifically, the principal of the high school suggested that I teach Chinese to a support class. The eight students in this support class had mild and moderate intellectual disabilities. At the very beginning, I was not confident in myself, due to my limited teaching experience and the students' special intelligence. However, a deep conversation with the principal and several observations of their language class removed my doubts. According to RM High School's curriculum, the Year 7 support class students had to learn a second language
other than English. They had an equal opportunity with mainstream students to contact diverse language and culture. More importantly, two professional and experienced classroom teachers were to assist me to finish the Chinese class.

When I observed their first language class, I was shocked that only three boys were present. They told me all the other students were absent due to medical reasons. Before the class, a boy showed his Chinese name to me and told me that he copied it from the Internet. Although he missed a dot in the first Chinese character "約", this boy left me with a deep impression. Then I corrected his handwriting. While I had a casual chat with them, a plump boy called Jackson spoke a Chinese sentence "wo bu zhi dao" in standard pronunciation. He said he did not know the meaning of the sentence but he had learned it by himself. I guessed he also learned it from the Internet, and I explained to him that the meaning of the sentence was "I don't know." Then he showed a serious expression. When their classroom teacher declared the information about the next Chinese classes and introduced me to them, I could see their excitement and keen eyes. Moreover, some students showed their talent in Chinese learning in my first orientation class. One girl's Chinese pronunciation was accurate and a boy did well in imitating Chinese character writing. In my second Chinese class, the whole class mastered greetings in Chinese "你好（hello）". However, as I attempted to teach them the differences between "你好（hello, the most common greeting）" and "您好（hello, showing respect to others）", they looked quite confused. Their classroom teacher told me that it was better to use special teaching methods, although they looked similar to mainstream students. Accordingly, it was necessary to explore special Chinese teaching strategies for the support students with special intelligence levels and learning abilities.

1.2 Australia's Education Background

China is the world's biggest developing country and the most energetic Asian country of the 21st century. The Australian government has continually emphasised win-win partnerships with China in recent years, while the promotion of Asian Language and cultures has become a significant issue. One of the most influential reports was called Asian Languages and Australia's Economic Future, or The Rudd Report (1994) (Henderson, 2003). “Asia literacy” was called for in this report and was accepted as a national educational policy by the Australian government (Henderson, 2003). This
report suggested Asian languages and cultures be developed in Australia; and Japanese, Chinese, Indonesian and Korean be selected as four priority languages to be learned through school-based programs (Henderson, 2007). Consistent with this policy, a language program called the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) Strategy was put forward and about $220 million was invested by the government from 1995 to 2002 (Bianco, 2005). However, the almost exclusively Chinese society-educated native speaking teachers of Chinese were far less likely to be effective teachers here than their counterparts teaching French, or even Japanese. Thus researchers became concerned about the research of Chinese teaching strategies in Australia.

Meanwhile, special education has been focused upon by the Australian government for several years. Taking NSW as an example, its special education program named "Every Student, Every School" has provided better learning and support for the 90,000 students with disabilities, learning difficulties or behavior support needs in public schools, through a strong focus on professional learning and support for teachers and support staff. The Program of “Every Student, Every School” was supported by the Commonwealth Government. It provided almost $48 million in 2012 and 2013 to build the capabilities of schools to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities. Reading and language classes were part of the Program. All learning and support positions, including existing learning assistance positions, were to be allocated directly to schools. Principals in consultation with their school learning support teams and colleagues had the flexibility to contribute a component of their learning and support teacher allocation to the operation of a local language or reading program where they identified a priority need. Regions would work closely with schools to plan how best to meet the needs of students with additional complex learning and support needs in reading and language, as required. (NSW Department of Education and Communities, 2003)

According to the Commonwealth Disability Standards for Education 2005, all education providers are required to make sure that every student with a disability is able to access and participate in education on the same basis as students without disabilities. This includes a requirement to make or provide adjustments for the students where needed so that they could have the same experience and opportunities as their peers without disabilities (NSW Department of Education and Communities
Thus, support class students were given equal rights with mainstream students to learn a second language. More significantly, Chinese learning can open a new window for them to better understand the world. It is a great opportunity for these special students who are interested in languages to develop their talents. From this perspective, an exploration of Chinese teaching strategies is meaningful. It is a significant foundation for Chinese teaching by special students in Australia.

1.3 Research Questions

The main research question is: What teaching strategies can be developed to teach Support Class Students to learn Chinese?

The contributory research questions are:
(1) What vocabulary teaching strategies can be developed for Support Class Students in Chinese Class?
(2) What listening and speaking teaching strategies can be developed Support Class Students in Chinese Class?
(3) Which Chinese culture teaching strategies are available for Support Class Students in Chinese Class?
(4) Can any general principles be developed for teaching Chinese to Support Class Students?

At the beginning of the research, I intended to focus on the Support Class Students’ Chinese Learning, instead of teacher’s teaching strategies. After several language class observations, I found that these special students’ class behaviors were decided by teachers’ teaching strategies to some degree. Therefore, I adjusted my research target to Chinese teaching strategies for Support Class Students.

Based on the support class students’ performance in the teacher-researcher’s Chinese class, I explored teaching strategies in three parts: vocabulary teaching, listening and speaking teaching, and embedded-culture teaching strategies. Every part includes strategies for introduction, practicing, classroom activity and revision. The reason for choosing these three parts is that: (1) Vocabulary is the basic of language learning and it is easier to learn compared to sentences; (2) Listening and speaking is important in Chinese learning, since it is closely related to making conversations
with native speakers, and (3) Embedded-culture learning helps students to understand China and Chinese culture from a deeper perspective. Moreover, it will excite students’ passion for Chinese learning. Last, the teacher-researcher concludes some general principles of Chinese teaching strategies for Support Class Students.

1.4 Significance of the Research

Firstly, this research responds to the Australian Asia Literacy Policy. As Orton (2008) claims, if not for considerable dropouts, the numbers of students learning Chinese as a foreign language in Australia in 2008 would be likely to satisfy the 2020 goal. Although this study views "Support Class students" as the object, special teaching strategies also contribute to the whole development of Chinese teaching in Australia.

Secondly, Australia's special education always receives world-attention. Second language teaching (Chinese in this text) is a new field. The feasibility and strategies of Chinese teaching for these special students has to be explored in practice. The research process may not only witness the development of teaching strategies, but also capture the features of special students' second language learning. From a long-term consideration, it is a significant foundation for the promotion of second language teaching, especially the Chinese teaching for support classes in Australia.

Thirdly, this research contributes to equal opportunity for support class students to enjoy the same privilege as mainstream students to experience Chinese language and Chinese culture. Some support class students may have learning or behavior problems compared to other students. However, in terms of Chinese learning, they should be given equal chances to develop their language talents, experience different cultures and gain confidence from Chinese classes.

1.5 Research Outcomes

The outcomes of the research is as follows:

(1) Identify vocabulary teaching strategies for Support Class Students in Chinese
class.
(2) Identify strategies of teaching listening and speaking for Support Class Students in Chinese class.
(3) Identify strategies of teaching Chinese Culture for Support Class Students in Chinese class.
(4) Develop general principles for teaching Chinese to Support Class Students.

1.6 Outline of the thesis

Chapter 1 provides the background of the research, which is based on the researcher's personal learning and teaching experience, Australia's Asian policy and its special education situation. The research question, the significance and outcome of the research were put forward as well.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature about Chinese teaching strategies for normal students and language teaching strategies for special students individually. The definition of Support Class Students is also offered. The combination of these two teaching strategies is the focus of this research.

Chapter 3 introduces the methodology of this research, which is action research. The background knowledge of action research is demonstrated at first, and then the research design. The approaches of data collection and analysis are also presented. Since the object of this research is for students and the teacher, the research ethics issues, validity, reliability and generalisation are also discussed. It also presents the key limitations, implications and recommendations for future research in related area.

Chapters 4 to 6 present discussions and findings generated from the data and analyse the data collected from the three-cycle research systematically.

Chapter 7 concludes the research. It summarises the efficient Chinese teaching strategies for support class students, and provides answers to the research questions.
Chapter 2 Literature review

This chapter reviews the current literature on support class students, well-recognised Chinese teaching strategies for mainstream students, and language teaching strategies for students with learning and behavior problems.

2.1 Definition of Support Class students

“Support Class Students” has not settled on a common definition in previous academic literature. In NSW Public School Web page of supporting students, this term is generally defined this way: "Children with special learning needs refers to children with learning difficulties, a behaviour disorder and/or a disability." These children have diverse abilities and learning needs. Parents or caregivers are often the first to notice that their child's development is delayed or that their child is having problems at school.

These students are the targets of special education. There are many disability classifications in education in NSW and each one has an abbreviation, as follows:

Mild intellectual disability - IM,
Moderate intellectual disability - IO,
Severe intellectual disability - IS,
Physical disability - P,
Vision impairment or blindness - V,
Hearing impairment or deafness - H,
Language disorders or delay – L (DISABILITY CRITERIA (school sector), May 2003, NSW Department of Education and Training)

In addition, some students have a diagnosed mental health disorder or emotional disturbance - ED. All the above disabilities are diagnosed by a pediatrician. There are also students in the system that do not have a diagnosed disability, but they may have "additional learning needs" or behavior disorders (BD). Some students may have more than one disability. Some students with a disability may also have a behavior disorder. All students with a disability should have a personalised learning and support plan (previously called an individual education plan).

Sharon (2009) maintains that these students manifest one or more of the following
behaviors:

(1) Poor academic performance. Students perform with considerable problems in one or more academic fields such as spelling, reading, and mathematics. Moreover, these students perform worse or achieve less success than expected.

(2) Attention problems. It is impossible for many students to focus on a task for a long time. After a long-time's attention, the teacher's instruction will be ignored by them.

(3) Hyperactivity. Some overactive students have difficulty in sitting in their own seats and finishing required tasks. Their attention will be distracted by a slight sound or small movement. They move from one position to another, and their focus changes from one task to another all the time.

(4) Memory. It is a huge challenge for these students to remember or recall what have been taught before. Compared with material objects, abstract symbols (such as numbers, letters) are more difficult for them to remember. They may remember what was taught today but forget it tomorrow.

(5) Poor Language ability. Many students have language difficulties that are manifested in a number of ways. As toddlers, these students may have taken longer in learning to talk. Often these language problems can be corrected through speech therapy. Many also have difficulty developing phonological awareness skills. Students may become confused with vocabulary, understanding the concept, using language to adequately express themselves, or producing correct sounds.

(6) Aggressive behavior. This group of students presents as physically or verbally belligerent. They may hit, kick, get into fights, and/or verbally threaten or insult partners. These children easily tend to get upset and handle negative emotions by aggressive behaviors.

(7) Withdrawn behavior. Some students seldom communicate with others. They totally refuse to engage others in talk, while shy students may have only one or two friends at best.

(8) Bizarre behavior. Some students perform unusual or confusing behavior. They may stare at one thing for a long time. On one side, they might display aggressive behaviors. On the other side, they become quite withdrawn at once.

In this research, the participants are a group of Year 7 students with mild and
moderate intellectual disabilities. They have learning and behavior problems. They also have some of the eight features above.

2.2 Scaffolding teaching strategies

Scaffolding has been the most popular language teaching strategy in the last few decades. Pol, Volman and Beishuizen (2010) reviewed the research literature published research about scaffolding from 1998 to 2009. Their review focuses on the functions and features of scaffolding. Guerrero and Villamil propose successful scaffolding characterised by six actions on the part of teacher-researchers as follows:

(1) recruiting the language learners’ attention,
(2) reducing degrees of freedom in the task in order to make it manageable,
(3) keeping direction in terms of the goals,
(4) marking critical features,
(5) controlling frustration, and
(6) modeling solutions

According to Pol, Volman and Beishuizen’s (2010) review, the main functions scaffolding play in language education include reducing learners’ cognitive load and assisting learners to internalise the knowledge. Firstly, scaffolding helps learners to reduce their cognitive load, which allows the learner to perform parts of a task that he or she would otherwise not be able to perform (Pol, Volman and Beishuizen, 2010: 275).

Secondly, scaffolding can help learners to internalise the learning processes so the result of which is that teacher scaffolding is no longer needed, as the learner can provide his or her own support (Pol, Volman and Beishuizen, 2010: 275).

Efficient scaffolding ought to be flexible to adapt to specific teaching situations and periods. Scaffolding is a dynamic intervention, which is tuned to the learner’s ongoing progress. Therefore teachers’ support mainly depends on the characteristics of the situation, like the type of task and the responses from the student. Scaffolding may look different in different situations and it is not a technique that can be applied
One important characteristic of scaffolding is contingency. It is responsive, tailored, adjusted, and differentiated to the students. The teacher’s support needs to be adapted to the current level of the student (Pol, Volman and Beishuizen, 2010: 274-275).

Another characteristic is the “fading or the gradual withdrawal” of the scaffolding. The speed of fading depends upon the learner’s level of development. “A teacher is fading when the level and/or the amount of support is decreased over time” (Pol, Volman and Beishuizen, 2010: 275). Students’ cognitive levels play a significant role in learning, and they take responsibility to understand and grasp knowledge, when teachers fade out gradually.

“Fading of the scaffolding is strongly related to the third common characteristic, namely the transfer of responsibility. Via contingent fading, that is, responsibility for the performance of a task is gradually transferred to the learner. Responsibility is interpreted in this review in a broad sense: it can refer to students’ cognitive or metacognitive activities or to students’ affect. The responsibility for learning is transferred when a student takes increasing learner control” (Pol, Volman and Beishuizen, 2010: p. 275).

Scarino and Liddicoat (2009: 53) propose some scaffolding strategies in Chinese teaching:

(1).Explaining a new concept through a concept map
(2).Making deliberate comparisons with the first language and culture
(3).Focusing on particular words to develop a meta-language
(4).Providing and explicating fruitful examples; asking students to notice particular aspects/features
(5).Highlighting patterns, choices
(6).Elaborating on an initial explanation
(7).Using questions to probe students’ conceptions and prompt them to describe their interpretations and challenge their opinions
(8).Using various ways of representing ideas and concepts (e.g. visuals, diagrams, organizers, highlighting, various media and technologies)
(9).Using feedback that relates to improvement
Using various ways to elicit the students to guess the ideas or concepts (e.g. prompts, gestures) (Scarino and Liddicoat, 2009: 53).

Overall, scaffolding has been a “universal strategy” employed in language teaching to mainstream students.

2.3 Teaching for L1 (English)L2(Chinese) transfer

According to past literatures about this topic, using L1 L2 transfer is another important Chinese teaching strategy for normal students. Specifically, Cummins (2008: 69) identified five strategies of teaching for L1/L2 transfer.

(1).Transfer of metacognitive and metalinguistic strategies
In the process of learning Chinese, metacognitive strategy can be divided into three parts: planning, monitoring and adjustment. Initially, the Chinese teacher and beginning Chinese learners made a schedule for learning Chinese that shared similarities in English. In addition, the plan contained various metalinguistic strategies, such as strategies of visualising, use of graphic organisers, mnemonic devices, and vocabulary acquisition strategies. Specifically, when teachers teach Chinese characters to students, they can take advantage of pictographic features to make them lively and visible. If teachers can link these features to Chinese characters’ written form, it will be easier for the learners. The Chinese character “王国” is a typical example.

(2).Transfer of phonological elements
As English speaking students have no concept of the “four tones”, Chinese language teachers have to continuously emphasise this. They can play Chinese videos to cultivate learners’ phonological awareness. They could ask students whether the pronunciation of some Chinese words is similar to some English words. The answer given by students will help teachers to adjust his/her teaching strategy.

(3).Transfer of conceptual elements
Most Australian students have never been to China. Therefore, it is understandable that they don’t know about concepts related to Chinese customs, Chinese festivals and other knowledge. Chinese teachers have to bring these abstract concepts alive.
For example, when they introduce Chinese traditional festivals, they compare “Spring Festival” with “Christmas Day, or compare “Mid-autumn Festival” with “Thanksgiving Day”. This kind of comparison is effective.

(4). Transfer of pragmatic aspects of L1 and L2
The use of Chinese language in daily life or daily conversation can give students a strong sense of achievement. As a result, they might be willing to continue to learn Chinese and practice what they have learnt consistently. Therefore, Chinese language teachers can organise “role play” games as support for lessons. When they teach the topic of “food”, they invite students to act as customers and waiters and then use Chinese language to order food. In other words, learning the language and using it in real life is an essential transfer.

(5). Transfer of specific linguistic elements
Most Chinese words have several meanings. Thus, it is hard for beginning learners to understand them. Chinese teachers have to explain them in different situations. They are to tell students that one or two core meanings are used frequently but some other meanings can be ignored in this beginning period. For example, “深 (shēn)” refers to “deep”, generally. Students can use it to describe water. However, this Chinese character can also mean “hard to understand”. If the teacher tries to introduce these different meanings to the beginning learners in one lesson, it can make students confused. However, if the teacher could just focus on one specific linguistic meaning (deep), it will making the learning more transferable.

2.4 Language teaching strategies for students with learning and behaviour problems

2.4.1 General principles for teaching language

In the previous literature, the general principles for teaching language to students with learning and behavior problems are concluded by Sharon (2009). These principles are general but directive. Some of them guide ordinary language teaching as well.

Firstly, teaching language to students in purposeful contexts. Whether a teacher is
teaching a student to use causal relationships (form), to categorise fossils (content), or how to use the telephone to request information (use), it is important to teach language in context. Rote practice of sentence structures or rehearsal of word definitions will decrease students’ learning interest, while learning in purposeful contexts will solve this problem. This principle is common in any language teaching area. For support class students, the focus should be the contexts which will be chosen. They prefer simple but funny stories rather than real daily conversation.

Secondly, in most cases, following the sequence of normal language development is available for special students. Although the developmental sequence of language skills for students with learning disabilities is not well recorded, there is some evidence to suggest that these students develop language knowledge and skills in the same sequence as students who are normal achievers, but at a slower rate (Kamhi, 1999; Nelson, 1998; Nippold, 1998; Wiig & Semel, 1984). They may also have more difficulty in one component of language – content, form, or use. Therefore, in planning a language program, the teacher can begin by determining what knowledge and skills students has already acquired in the area of content, form, and use, and then target the subsequent areas in the development process. For instance, if the students are already using past tense ("The boy ate the cake"), one might next focus on past participle ("The boy has eaten the cake"). This principle is also appropriate for Chinese teaching, since Chinese is a structured and systematic language as well.

Thirdly, the teachers need to be sure to give students opportunities to develop both their understanding (comprehension) and their ability to express (production) new knowledge or skill during the teaching. For example, when teaching students to comprehend the past participle, a teacher should label examples of events that have already happened (e.g., “Juan has sharpened his pencil" or "Kim has finished her math assignment). As for teaching Chinese to support class students, this principle is useful as well. For instance, when some experienced Chinese teachers( showed Chinese character "木" (which means wood) to students, they may let students guess the meaning of double "木". It not only activates students imaginations, but develops their understanding of Chinese characters.

Fourthly, using conversations to promote language development is important for students with learning and behaviour problems. Observational research has shown
that teachers, in general, are not as responsive to students with language problems as they are to average- and high-achieving students (Pecyna- Rhyner, Lehr, & Pudlas, 1990). If the teacher could plan opportunities for students to engage in conversation with him/her and other students as they work, think, and play, it would promote their learning use. For example, Chinese teachers can use discussion groups rather than a question-answer format for reviewing a book or current event to make them talk and integrate into the classroom. During the talk, the teacher can make students direct the topics. These conversations need not be long, and in a secondary setting, they can be accomplished as students enter the room.

Fifthly, increasing the waiting time to promote production will ensure students with learning and behavior problems have enough time to think and solve the knowledge they taught before. Although Rowe has put forward the statement "Slowing down may be a way of speeding up" in 1986, it is a key principle of language teaching for special students. Compared with main steam students, they need more time to understand the teacher's instructions and new language knowledge.

Moreover, when presenting a new concept or skill, using effective teaching strategies is significant. Teacher can use a series of strategies in their teaching: use the activities suited to the students' interests and cognitive level; attract the students' attention before engaging in communication activities; use concepts or skills frequently throughout the day in a functional manner; place stress on the target concept or language pattern while speaking; pause between phrases or sentences so that the students have time to process the new concept or language pattern; decrease the rate of presentation when first introducing the concept or language pattern; use familiar, concrete vocabulary and simple sentence patterns when first introducing a new concept or language pattern; present the new concept or language patterns by using more than one input mode (e.g., auditory, visual, kinesthetic), and if possible, pair a specific language pattern with gestures and facial expressions. For example, giving a look of puzzlement or wonder when asking a question can serve as a cue to the students; pair written symbols with oral language. For instance, demonstrating morphological endings such as (plurals) and “ed” (past tense) can be done in writing. The students can then be cued to listen for what they see.

In addition, using structured language programs to provide intensive practice and
feedback is another common principle. Teaching in context is critical for learning and generalisation. However, sometimes by teaching in context, teachers do not provide the students with adequate opportunities to practice a new skill. Students who have learning problems need the practice and feedback provided in many language programs and activities to gain mastery of the skill. Chinese teachers should know which kind of feedback is useful and acceptable for support class students.

Moreover, Beck et al. (2002) point out the significance of systematically planning and instructing for generalisation in language teaching for students with learning and behavior problems. As is the case in teaching other skills, language instruction must incorporate into the instructional sequence a variety of contexts, settings, and people with which students interact if they are to generalise the language skills.

2.4.2 Strategies for teaching content or vocabulary

For students with learning and behavior problems, content and vocabulary learning is a big issue when learning language due to their limited intelligence level. Sharon (2009) summarized previous literature and listed five common strategies for teaching English vocabulary for students with learning and behavior problems.

Initially, emphasise the distinguishing and critical features of the concepts being taught. Teachers teach new concepts and emphasise the features that are important to the meaning. For example, in teaching the concepts of "mountains" and "hills", the distinguishing or critical features to emphasise are "size" and "height". In comparison, the "texture of the land" is not as important, since it is not a feature that usually helps to distinguish between hills and mountains.

Secondly, she highlights the significance of introducing new English vocabulary in a number of ways. When teaching the concept of "precipitation," for instance, the teacher may present pictures of different types of precipitation (e.g., snow, rain, sleet, hail, and mist) and have the students tell about a time when they remember each type of presentation. The class can discuss what is happening to the water in the atmosphere when it is precipitating and what the weather is like when precipitation is present. This strategy could be a useful guide for Chinese teaching.
The third strategy pointed out was categorising a new concept so that students understand how it relates to other concepts. If the concept of "melancholy" is being taught, the students should learn that this is an example of a feeling or emotion. Other feelings are "gladness," "relief" and "hurt". Characteristics of people who are melancholy are "not happy", "quiet", "not talkative", and "somber". These ideas can be depicted in a visual diagram, such as a semantic map, which shows how the different concepts relate to one another. This kind of semantic map is also available in Chinese teaching. The process of categorising is not only a way of learning new Chinese words, but a way of improving support class students' logical induction ability.

Fourth, presenting new vocabulary in simple sentences or phrases is matching the general principle of teaching strategies for students with learning and behavior problems. It is harder to learn a new concept or idea if the teacher is using difficult language to explain what it means. The rule of thumb is to use simple sentences or phrases to introduce new concepts (i.e., four- to seven-word sentences and two- to four-word phrases).

Fifth, games and other activities are a way to reinforce newly introduced concepts. Games and classroom activities let students have fun and have deep impression of new concept. Basically, Chinese class use different kinds of classroom activity to practice new words. With the promotion of technology in school, Chinese teachers can use a Smart Board to organise dynamic games well. For support class students, it may better activate their learning interest, compared with traditional games.

2.4.3 Strategies for teaching forms (the structure of language)

The form or the structure of language is a challenge for students with learning and behavior problems. In Sharon's (2009) book, she mentioned several strategies for teaching the structure of English.

The first essential strategy is introducing new sentences or word forms in a variety of ways. It belongs to a positive Chinese teaching strategy as well. For instance, when
teaching Chinese sentence structure "This is 1, 2, 3 and other numbers", teachers are used to use sound similarities between Chinese and English. Besides, Chinese teachers can play Chinese number songs and show Chinese number gestures to make the content interesting. From this perspective, this principle is interconnected between Chinese teaching strategy and language teaching strategies for students with learning and behavior problems.

The second teaching strategy in this teaching area is using familiar, concrete examples and vocabulary to teach a new structure or form. Sharon (2009) also highlights that using actual objects and events or pictures of them when initially teaching a new structure or form and pair oral communication with written communication. Taking "This is something" as an example as well, Chinese teachers can take advantage of words students have previously learned to take the place "something", such as body parts. Meanwhile, teachers will point the related body parts and give some tips to recall students’ memory. This is also a strategy which has been used in Chinese teaching for mainstream students.

2.4.4 Strategies for teaching language use

The ultimate goal of language learning is using. Thus, three rules has been concluded by Sharon (2009) and other researchers focusing on special education.

The previous researchers all mentioned the term “Role Play”. Using role playing to stimulate different situations in which the targeted pragmatic skills are required is the aim of this strategy. Some teachers use role playing in class so that students will have an idea what it will feel like when they are in a situation that requires them to communicate in a certain way or for a specific purpose. This strategy has been used in Chinese teaching previously, such as using Chinese to greeting teachers or classmates. For support class students, finding the role play game which matches their intellectual level is a long way to go.

Moreover, using pictures or simulations to represent feelings is another common strategy for language teaching for support class students. Some students have difficulty discriminating different nonverbal and verbal communications that accompany various feelings. By using pantomime or pictures, students can determine
what feelings are being expressed and can discuss the cues that helped them determine the feelings. Teachers should encourage students to attend to other students' feelings by using such statements as "You look like you're feeling..." or "I bet you really..." or "I can't tell how you're feeling."

Using conversations is a framework for teaching functional language as well. Conversations about topics that are familiar to the students or about common experiences can serve as ideal situations for building students' pragmatic skills (Hoskins, 1990; Merritt & Culatta, 1998). Teachers can serve as facilitators by assisting students in using the following conversational skills (Hoskins, 1987): Introducing a topic, maintaining a topic, introducing a topic in an elaborated form, extending a topic, changing a topic, requesting clarification, and responding to requests for clarification. The theory about conversation is old but classic. Chinese teachers must tap into the potential of this strategy in new time.

2.4.5 Strategies for teaching culturally and linguistically diverse learners

The previous literature has presented some strategies for teaching students whose second language is English. For those students with learning and behavior students, their mother tongue is not English. Therefore, English teaching strategies are the target of the former research. On the basis of Bos and Reyes (1996); Echevarria and Graves (1998); Gersten and Baker (2000); Sullivan (1992); Towell and Wink (1993), Sharon (2009) summarised several tips of second language (English) teaching for students with learning and behavior problems.

Initially, teachers should use instruction language that is as simple as possible. On one hand, it is easy for students to understand. On the other hand, it save much time to learn or practice.

Secondly, when teachers aim to demonstrate a new concept, they ought to make use of all senses to brainstorm with the whole class. Then the teacher should attempt to repeat important phrases and emphasise key vocabulary. In other words, the vocabulary or sentence teaching builds on the perceptual knowledge of the second language. The teacher provides various materials to introduce new concepts, such as pictures, videos, and music. For support class students, the brainstorming should be
guided by teachers, and teachers are to give them hints throughout the whole process.

Thirdly, increasing wait time is emphasised. This strategy has been previously mentioned in general principles, however, teachers should pay attention that they do not force reluctant students to speak. For some support class students, it is a challenge for them to speak out second language. Thus, listening carefully and trying their best to understand is an acceptable form of engagement. If the wait time is too long, teachers could give the student some encouragement and let him/her listen to other students' answers. The teacher must choose words which won't hurt students' self-respect.

Moreover, learning criteria will be different from main steam students. The correctness of the pronunciation or grammar will not be strict. This means if students are willing to speak Chinese bravely it could be deemed a success. The teacher has to inspire students to keep learning. It is reasonable to bring the students' home languages and cultures into the classroom and curriculum. Since they are support class students, their prior knowledge is limited. Therefore, second language teachers sometimes have to explain both two cultures to them, when the topic is a little abstract. Having a deeper understanding of native culture and Chinese culture are both meaningful for them. Meanwhile, second language teachers have to know about their students' language and culture as much as possible.

The last point is peer group strategies. Using cooperative learning strategies will build support class students' confidence. Some students are good at word recall, while some students are good at handwriting. They may take advantage of their own talents to develop second language level together.

2.5 Research gap in the current literature
As presented in the literature reviewed, the strategies of “scaffolding” and “L1/L2” transfer are mainly explored and applied in Chinese teaching for mainstream students in English-speaking countries. For support class students, the teaching strategy of scaffolding is also necessary to reduce learners’ cognitive load and assist learners to internalise the knowledge. Based on the previous literature, the teacher-researcher should do more research in the two strategies in her teaching practice, since the support class students are different from mainstream students. In addition, the
literature reviewed introduced teaching strategies for students with learning and behavior problems. The general teaching principle for the support class students could be concluded as “to reduce students’ psychological pressure, to respect their personality, and to develop their talents”. Following the principles introduced in the previous literature, the strategies of Chinese teaching for support class students should be explored and adjusted in detailed principles, step by step.

Gaps in the literature arise from the previous research reviewed. In terms of Chinese teaching strategies for mainstream students, "Scaffolding" and "L1/l2 transfer" are two major methods. However, these mainstream teaching strategies view normal students as the target. In other words, special students or support class students are not included in those studies. Thus, those strategies may not be totally suitable for students with learning or behavior problems or support class students, due to support class students' limited intelligence or self-control.

In the field of teaching strategies for students with learning and behavior problems, strategies for language teaching have been in development for several years. According to special students' characteristics and special recognition, researchers have designed general principles for teaching language. Particularly, some strategies for teaching forms (the structure of language), for teaching language use and instructional activities related to oral language are described in previous research literature. These strategies have been tested by practice, however, the strategies of Chinese teaching for students with learning and behavior problems have never been explored.

Although there are some strategies for teaching culturally and linguistically diverse learners, the objectives of the research are special students or support class students whose second language is English. As for English-speaking students with learning and behavior problems, their second language (in this research, referring to Chinese) teaching strategies are not included.

In this study, the researcher aims to explore Chinese teaching strategies for support class students. In this research, the support class students refer to students with mild and moderate learning and behavior problems. The research gap is shown as Figure2.1.
Figure 2.1
Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter firstly presents the overview of the research method in this study and the reason it was decided upon, and then the action research design will be demonstrated. It includes the introduction of action research and the reason for this choice, the 3-cycle research design, data collection, and data analysis. After that, the research principles including research ethics, validity and reliability, triangulation, and generalisation are discussed.

3.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research is employed in this study. A concise definition of qualitative research is given by Van Maanen as "an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world" (Van Maanen, 1979, p. 520). In other words, qualitative researchers are interested in how people interpret the experiences they have in the world, and then attempt to understand the meaning of the world people have constructed.

Four characteristics of all forms of qualitative research are concluded: The focus is on purpose, understanding, and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, the process is inductive; and the product is richly descriptive (Merriam, 2009, p. 14).

(1) Focus on meaning and understanding

Patton (1985) explains:

[Qualitative research] is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and their interactions there. This understanding is an end itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of the setting- what it means for participants to be in the setting- and their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting-and in
the analysis to be able to communicate the faithfully to others who are interested in that setting.... They analysis strives for depth of understanding. (Patton, 1985, p1)

The key concern is understanding the research objectives from the participants' perspectives instead of the researcher's (Merriam, 2009). In this research, the main purpose is exploring useful Chinese teaching strategies for support class students. However, the foundation of teaching strategies is the understanding of the characteristics of support class students, including their literacy level, learning habits, class performance, etc. Chinese teachers need to continually adjust teaching strategies with understanding, going deeper and deeper. Thus, this research is closely related to understanding two significant factors: support class students' learning and Chinese teachers' student-centered strategies.

(2)Researcher as primary instrument
Human instrument is supposed to be ideal means of collecting and analyzing data, because the qualitative research focuses on understanding which is usually subjective. In addition, the researchers are able to expand his or her understanding through deep communication, analyse and process information or data promptly, sort out material, check the accuracy of existing information with participants and explore special or unexpected situations (Merriam, 2009). In this study, the researcher plays double roles: class participants and researcher. As a Chinese class teacher, the researcher has the chance to communicate with support class students and their classroom teacher directly. As a researcher, recording the situations of interviews and real classes becomes the first information resource. The understanding of students' learning will benefit from the two roles’ flexible transformation. Meanwhile, teaching strategies for support class students develops on the basis of research and class practice.

(3)An inductive process
Bits and pieces of information from interviews, observations, or documents are combined and ordered into larger themes as the researcher works from the particular to the general ( Merriam, 2009, pp.15-16). Chinese teaching for support class students is a new exploratory field, and there is a lack of professional theory to adequately support these teaching strategies. Therefore, the researcher has to gather the information and data from real Chinese classes during her teaching of support class students. Besides, the existing theory about general strategies for teaching
support class students will be absorbed and applied in Chinese class. With the teaching experience increasing, the systematic teaching strategies will be inducted gradually.

(4) Rich description
The researcher prefers words and pictures rather than quantitative numbers to express what has been learnt from actual situations (Merriam, 2009). Chinese class is dynamic. Support class students will have different performances situated in different teaching strategies. It is almost impossible to convey students' behaviour and teachers' teaching strategies by numbers. Basically, researchers ought to observe and describe diverse situations in detail to make information dependable. Abundant words or pictures help restore the Chinese class and teaching strategies to the original state.

Upon consideration of these four matching features, qualitative research is an appropriate methodology for this study.

3.2 Research Design
3.2.1 The overview of Action Research

Action research, used in this research, is a methodology which is defined as “a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situation in which the practices are carried out” (Carr, Kemmis, 1986, p.162). It has been widely employed in the education field, including school-based curriculum development, professional development, school improvement programs, and systems planning and policy development.

As Johnson pointed out "The linking of the terms ' action ' and ' research ' highlights the essential features of this method: trying out ideas in practice as a means of increasing knowledge about and/or improving curriculum, teaching and learning” (Johnson, 1993).

There are three elemental requirements for action research. Firstly, from a subjective perspective, the target social object has the space to be developed; secondly, the
project proceeds through a spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting, with each of these sectors being systematically and self-critically implemented and interrelated, andthirdly, the project involves unpredictable factors that affect the development of the practice in every moment. Those factors will widen participation of others affected by the practice and maintain collaborative control or the process. (Carr, Kemmis, 1986)

The most significant character of action research is the cycle. Each cycle consists of four elements, as follows:

(1) Planning;
(2) Acting;
(3) Observing; and
(4) Reflecting

A self-reflective spiral starts from a plan. The initial planning sets a certain objective for the research and put forward general ideas for reaching it. Then, the practitioner puts the plan into action. Meanwhile, researcher observes and records the process of all participants' performance and change. Based on the observation or fact-finding, the practitioner reflects on the original plan and finds the problems to be solved for the next period. A new plan arises on the foundation of retrospective reflection. The action cycle consistently revolves this way. Action is guided by past reflection on which basis the plan was made and prospectively guided towards observation and
future reflection, which will evaluate the problems and effects of the action. (Carr, Kemmis, 1986, p.186) In the self-reflective spiral, participative problem-solving and continuing professional development takes researchers closer to the target, step by step.

The aims of all action research can be concluded in two significant aspects: to improve and to involve. The improvement aspect consists of four elements: firstly, the improvement of a professional practice; secondly, the improvement of the understanding of the practice by its practitioners or personal development; thirdly, the improvement of the situation in which you work; and fourthly, the improvement of society's good order. The aim of involvement has a close connection with aim of improvement. During the whole process, all the factors work together. As the action research develops, it is an ideal condition that a widening circle of those affected by the practice will get involved in the research process. (Carr, Kemmis, 1986; McNiff et al, 1996)

This research satisfies the three basic requirements for action research. Initially, the focus of this research is strategies for teaching Chinese to support class students. For Chinese teaching, this is fresh exploration, since few teachers have attempted to teach Chinese to special students before. Support class students have lacked chances to learn Chinese, thus, their learning performances are unknown. Taking these two factors into consideration, the teaching strategies which link Chinese teachers and special students has a wide space for improvement with action research. Secondly, the development of teaching strategies is a long process, while action research highlights a spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting. They are able to coordinate closely. Based on the support class students' performance, classroom teachers' feedback, and Chinese teachers' own observations, the researcher can develop the teaching strategies in lesson plans and turn them into action. In return, the action inspires a new reflection of past strategies. All the sectors of the teaching practice and strategy adjustment are closely related. The self-reflective spiral of the action research cycle provides a vehicle through which Chinese teachers can identify and explore the contradictions in their lesson plans, real class situations and their own understandings or reflections. Thirdly, with research going on, the teaching strategies will contain more abundant materials, while action research emphasises the expanding participation of others related to research practices. The
students' unpredicted performances, sudden classroom occurrences, the teachers' quick wits and other unknown factors contribute to more and more varied teaching strategies. In this view, this research fits action research's requirement as well.

The objectives of this research decide on the implementation of action research. Firstly, in the professional field, the research objective is searching for appropriate Chinese teaching strategies for support class students. Action research can help to improve teaching strategies through the reflective progress. Secondly, for Chinese teachers personally, gaining a deeper understanding of Chinese teaching strategies for special students is another key point. A spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting provide possibilities for Chinese teachers to improve themselves in practice. Thirdly, the improvement of society's good order is all action research's macroscopic goal. As a special group in society, support class students need more caring, and they ought to have an equal opportunity to learn second language. Naturally, the exploration of Chinese teaching strategies for these special students matches this objective.

3.2.2 Three-Cycle Research Design

As qualitative research, this study focuses on exploring the meaning and understanding of Chinese teaching strategies for support class students. However, the exploration must obtain rich data from the practical classes during the three terms of school. Action research is a well-known research methodology in the education area. Specifically, the spiral action research cycle (including planning, acting, observing and reflecting) is a way to get detailed data, step by step, in classes. Therefore, the plan of this researcher is to combine the qualitative research and the action research with the designed Three-cycle Research Design.

The Chinese teaching strategies for the support class have been changed according to the situation of teaching and the development of the research. As the core characteristic of action research demonstrated, the spiral of the action research cycle is the focus of the research design. In the table that follows (Figure 3.2), the teacher-
researcher divides the whole process of research into three stages (three cycles).

Figure: 3.2: 3-cycle Research Design

| Three-cycle Research Design of Chinese Teaching Strategies for Support Class Students |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| **Research participants**       | **Research Site**               | **Foundation of the teaching strategies** |
| A teacher-researcher, a support class, Two classroom teachers of the support class | A Western Sydney High School | 1. Teacher's pre-knowledge and experience of teaching Chinese in China, 2. Literature about teaching Chinese in English country and teaching support class students, 3. Classroom teacher's suggestions |
| **Research Stage**              | **Time (Year 2014)**           | **Foundation of the teaching strategies** |
| Cycle 1: Discovery              | February - April (Term 1)      | 1. Analysis of term 1 reflection journals, 2. Analysis of last term's lesson plan, 3. Data collected from interviews with students and classroom teachers |
| Cycle 2: Improvement            | April - June (Term 2)          | 1. Analysis of Term 1 and 2 reflection journals, 2. Analysis of last two term's lesson plans, 3. Data collected from interviews with students and classroom teachers |
| Cycle 3: Breakthrough           | July - September (Term 3)      | 1. Analysis of Term 1 and 2 reflection journals, 2. Analysis of last two term's lesson plans, 3. Data collected from interviews with students and classroom teachers |
This volunteer-teacher-researcher, is required to teach Chinese in a Western Sydney High School during years 2014 and 2015. She is required to teach Chinese to a Year 7 class each week. This class is the research object and data will be collected from this class and the two classroom teachers.

In cycle 1 (Term1), I discover the characteristics of this support class students through observation and reflection journals. Their classroom performance, including literacy, engagement, expression, the feedback for teacher's instructions and anything associated with teaching strategy adjustment will be recorded and analysed. In this beginning stage, I will make use of the teaching knowledge I learned from my previous degree to design my teaching strategy. In addition, classroom teacher's advice will be absorbed in the teaching, due to their rich experience of teaching support classes. Also the literature about teaching support classes would assist in the design of a suitable lesson plan for these special students.

On the basis of cycle 1, teaching strategies improved in cycle 2 (Term 2). The foundation of this improvement would result from analysis of the term 1 reflection journals, analysis of the last term's lesson plan, data collected from interviews with students, and classroom teachers. And I will introduce These types of data collection will be specially introduced in next section.

In terms of cycle 3(Term 3), the teaching strategies experience a breakthrough. Although the method of data collection and analysis is the same as Term 2, the teaching strategies can be expected to be more professional. In one respect, the Chinese teachers are better able to turn lesson plans into action, compared with last teaching stage. In another respect, the data collected from term 1 and 2 will be more plentiful and complete, compared with last research cycle.

As shown in the three-cycle research design, the three teaching stages are closely linked. To a great degree, the past stage's reflection decides the following stage's teaching strategies. This three-cycle research design aims to develop this teacher-
researcher’s Chinese teaching strategies for support class students in practice.

3.2.3 Data Collection

This section describes four research tools chosen for this project: observation, reflective journals, interviews and documents. The data gathered with these tools is employed over a three-term cycle and analysed accordingly.

1. Observation
Observation is a means of collecting qualitative data. It involves carefully watching and systematically recording what is seen and heard in a particular setting, which includes *structured observation* and *unstructured or semi structured observation* (Mertler, 2009, p. 107). Considering flexibility and feasibility in class, I employ unstructured observation. As a beginning Chinese teacher, I devote more energy to finishing the teaching process according to the lesson plan, so the attention to observation is limited. In this research, observation focuses on two aspects:

(1) Students' engagement, their feedback about the teacher’s instruction, accomplishment of the practicing, worksheets and any formats which can represent their learning performance.

(2) Encountering special situations, such as students' unexpected questions or special behaviour, teacher’s sudden adjustment of teaching strategies and its effect.

2. Reflective Journal
Teacher journals can provide teacher-researchers with the chance to maintain narrative accounts of their professional reflections on practice (Mertler, 2009, p. 112). Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985, p. 19) describe the reflective journal as one of “those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations.” As a significant participant of the Chinese class, it is a challenge for this teacher-researcher to record the class while teaching, so a reflective journal is necessary. It can help recollection of the details of each class, develop understanding of the support class students' performance in Chinese class, and find the disadvantage and advantage of existing teaching strategies. It also provides the possibility of improvement in the next teaching cycle.
I write reflective journal after each class. Since I'm required to teach Chinese in this support class once a week, I can record reflective journal once a week as well. As mentioned before, action research fits the research objective of "exploring appropriate Chinese teaching strategies for support class students". The reflective journal is an indispensable part of data collection and the major link to the new teaching plan of the action research cycle. Thus, except for observations which reappear classroom situations, "reflection" is another key point. The reflective journal includes: (1).support class students' performance and the relationship with teaching strategies, especially vocabulary teaching strategies, listening and speaking teaching strategies and Chinese culture teaching strategies; (2) the teacher's feeling about this class and why; (3)the analysis of the gap between lesson plan and actual result, and (4).the teacher-researcher's inspiration for strategies' adjustment, based on today's teaching experience.

The reflective journal includes classroom observations, personal teaching feelings, analysis of the gap between lesson plan and real result, inspirations for adjustment of strategies based on real teaching experience.

3. Interview

Interview is defined "a process in which a researcher and participant engage in conversation focused on questions related to a research study" (De Marrais, 2004, p. 55), and is used in this research to collect data.

The form of interview used in this study is the semi-structured interview, which is between the highly structured interview and the unstructured. In this type of interview either all of the questions are more flexibly worded or the interview is a mix of more and less structured questions. This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). In the research, teaching strategy is dynamic and subjective; thus, I employ semi-structured interview. Considering the convenience of data analysis, the whole interview process is recorded by digital recorder.

The group interview was adopted for the students. Since they are year 7 support class
students, they were expected to feel nervous or shy to discuss the topic face to face. However, in group conversation, they may share their opinions more easily. Their real inner voices will be heard. I organised a one-hour group interview discussion at the end of each term. The interview content includes:

1. How they like the Chinese culture or language learning in this term's Chinese class,
2. How they like Chinese teacher's teaching method or strategies and why (the teacher-researcher leads them explain their more or less preferred teaching strategies in detail as far as possible),
3. How they like Chinese culture and language learning.

Two classroom teachers are interviewed at the end of each term. There are two class teachers in this support class and they manage the Chinese class in turns. On one hand, the classroom teachers are familiar with these students through frequent daily contact, and understand the students' learning habits and characters. On the other hand, they witness the whole process of the Chinese class. A Chinese idiom says "the person on the spot is baffled, the onlooker sees clearly (当局者迷，旁观者清)"; the two classroom teachers may offer constructive criticism of this researcher’s teaching. Basically, the interview focuses on these aspects:

1. Comments about the support class students' performance in Chinese class and the links with the Chinese teacher's strategies, particularly in comparison with their other classes;
2. Through their observation, the students' interests, attitudes, feelings about Chinese class and Chinese teaching strategies;
3. Their opinions of the advantage and disadvantage of existing and applied Chinese teaching strategies for these support class students, especially vocabulary teaching strategies, listening and speaking teaching strategies and Chinese culture teaching strategies;
4. Their suggestions about Chinese teaching strategies for support class students in the next term or next teaching cycle;
5. Other opinions or comments about the Chinese class.

4. Documents
Documents, defined as “the umbrella term to refer to a wide range of written, visual, digital, and physical material relevant to the study at hand” (Merriam, 2009, p.139),
are another data source in this research. Public records and personal documents are two common types of documents used in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009, p. 140). Personal documents "refer to any first-person narrative that describes an individual's actions, experiences, and beliefs" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 133). My lesson plan for each Chinese lesson for the support class is treated as a personal document. The lesson plan includes: (1) the topic of the lesson; (2) the language teaching goal, and (3) the lesson outline which describes the teaching strategies, including vocabulary teaching strategies, listening and speaking teaching strategies and Chinese culture teaching strategies.

3.2.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of making sense out of data, and involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read (Merriam, 2009, pp. 176-177). From another perspective, it is the process of answering research questions systematically. In this research, thematic analysis is the fundamental data analysis method.

Thematic analysis, as a foundational method for qualitative analysis, refers to "a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2008). Generally speaking, the process of thematic analysis contains six steps:
(1) familiarising oneself with your data,
(2) generating initial codes,
(3) generating initial themes,
(4) refining themes,
(5) defining and naming themes, and
(6) producing the report (Braun and Clarke, 2008).

In this research, data collected from the reflective journal and lesson plans are analysed accordingly, since they are written by the teacher-researcher, with whom it is more familiar. As for data from interviews, researchers must devote more time to categorising it, an effort based upon several familiarizing readings. The codes and themes of the data will ultimately be generated after repeated reading and highlighting. According to the content being highlighted, the themes of the data are
refined and named with system.

Coding is a significant concept in thematic analysis, and is nothing more than assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects of the data so that specific data can be easily retrieved (Merriam, 2009, p. 173). Open coding, axial coding and selective coding is applied in this research.

Open coding is what one does at the beginning of data analysis, and it is tagging any unit of data that might be relevant to the study (Merriam, 2009, p. 200). All the data collected from observations, reflective journals, interviews and documents will be categorised at first. Teacher's common strategies and special teaching strategies will be distinguished by two different colors. Situated in different teaching strategies, students' feedback and reactions are categorised as: engagement, disengagement and unknown. Open coding will be commonly used in the first and second steps of thematic analysis. Axial coding is the process of relating categories and properties to each other, refining the category scheme (Merriam, 2009, p. 200). It is applied to group the subcategories generated from the open coding and explore the relations among categories with each subgroup (Flick, 2009). Accordingly, students’ engagement/disengagement/unknown feedback is connected with teachers' common strategies/ special strategies. On this basis, the theme of "special Chinese teaching strategies for support class students" would be explored. The fourth step, "refining theme", develops with the combination of four data resources. In selective coding, a core category, propositions, or hypotheses are developed (Merriam, 2009, p. 200). The core category forms in the last two steps of analysis. Specifically, the concept of "special Chinese teaching strategies for support class students" is classified systematically, such as "special teaching strategies for new words", "special teaching strategies for listening and speaking", "special teaching strategies for Chinese culture", and "special teaching strategies for others."

3.3 Ethical Consideration

Research ethics is commonly defined as “how values and moral principles are integrated in the actions and reflections of research” (Stige, Malterud & Midtgarden, 2009, p. 1511). It is a serious issue for this research. This research is undertaken in a Western Sydney high school. Although the objective is to explore and develop
Chinese teaching strategies for support class students, it still has to guarantee that there is no risk for students or the school.

Therefore, when engaging in qualitative research, the following ten items from Patton’s (2002) "Ethical Issues Checklist" are considered:

(1) Explaining purpose of the inquiry and methods to be used
(2) Promises and reciprocity
(3) Risk assessment
(4) Confidentiality
(5) Informed consent
(6) Data access and ownership
(7) Interview mental health
(8) Advice (who will be your counselor on ethical matters)
(9) Data collection boundaries
(10) Ethical versus legal conduct (pp. 408-409)

All teachers and students participating in this research are doing so voluntarily. Before the data collection and analysis starts, all participants (including students' caregivers) receive a sheet, which provides detailed information about this research. They also receive consent forms to agree to take part in this research. They are free to withdraw when they feel uncomfortable or unwilling to continue and any data collected from them will be destroyed.

The privacy of the participants is well protected. There is no naming of schools or participants. Pseudonyms are used for participants in school in the dissemination of research results to ensure confidentiality.

The protection of subjects from harm and the issue of deception ought to be considered as well. (Merriam, 2009) Before each observation and interview, the researcher contacts participants by e-mail or face-to-face, to ensure they are available for data collection. During the interview process, no harsh questions are asked and no private information will be involved. As for data analysis, all the interpretation respects data themselves, and the collected data is not used for other purposes except this research.
3.4 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are two important criteria closely bound to the quality of qualitative research. The qualitative study provides the reader with a depiction in enough detail to show that the author's conclusions “make sense.” Further, it describes people acting in events. (Firestones, 1987, p. 19)

Ratcliff (1983) provides an interesting perspective on assessing validity in every type of research: (1) "data do not speak for themselves; there is always an interpreter, or a translator" (p.149); (2) that "one cannot observe or measure a phenomenon/event without changing it, even in physics where reality is no longer considered to be single-faces", and (3) that numbers, equations, and words "are all abstract, symbolic representations of reality, but no reality itself" (p150). Validity can be categorised into internal validity and external validity (Lee et al., 2010). Internal validity is understood as credibility, highlighting the validity of the research itself. External validity, which can be understood as transferability or generalisability, is concerned with the possibility of applying the research to other situations.

Traditionally, reliability refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated. In other words, if the study is repeated, will it yield the same results? (Merriam, 2009, p. 220). Because what is being studied in the social world is in flux, because the emergent design of a qualitative study precludes a priori controls, because researchers gathering information sometimes are not skilled, qualitative research has different criteria of reliability. For qualitative research, the more essential question is whether the results are consistent with the data collected (Merriam, 2009). If the findings of a study are consistent with the data presented, the study can be considered dependable (Merriam, 2009, p. 222).

In this research, these two essential issues have been fully taken into consideration. Instead of controlling variables and replication in quantitative research, the use of multiple methods will ensure the validity and reliability of this quality research, including (1) triangulation; (2) rich, thick description; (3) member checks (taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking if they are plausible), and (4) audit trail (a detailed account of the
methods, procedures and decision points in carrying out the study)(Baxter and Jack, 2008; Merriam, 2009).

3.5 Triangulation

Triangulation is the principal strategy to shore up the validity and reliability of this research. Denzin (1978) named four types of triangulation: the use of multiple methods, multiple sources of data, multiple investigators, or multiple theories to confirm emerging findings. The first three forms are more common in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009).

With regard to the use of multiple methods of data collection, my research method – Interviews, observations, reflective journals and documents – could coordinate closely. For example, the teaching strategies written in the lesson plan could be compared with the observations recorded in the reflective journals. Moreover, the information from interviews can be checked against observations and reflective journals.

Triangulation using multiple resources of data means comparing and cross-checking data collected through observations at different times or in different places, or interview data collected from people with different perspectives or from follow-up interviews with the same people (Merriam, 2009, p. 216). In this research, classroom observation is employed in each Chinese class. In addition, lesson plans designed ahead of each class and reflective journals recorded after each class provide rich resources for analysing different class situations. Meanwhile, group interviews with students and individual interviews with classroom teachers ensure the various perspectives on the same problem. Although the 3-cycle data are related, each teaching stage is independent. It offers the opportunity of comparing and cross-checking data.

3.6 Generalisation

Generalisation refers to "the applicability of findings to settings and contexts different from the one in which they were obtained, that is, based on the behavior of a wider group of people" (Mills, 2007, p.125). For qualitative research,
generalisation is a major issue, which must be considered.

In this research, since the teacher-researcher only collects data in one support class in a Western Sydney High School, the generalisation of the research is limited. This class’s average learning level may differ from normal classes. In addition, that there is only one little-experienced Chinese teacher constitutes another limitation of this study. In this situation, the design of teaching strategies is subjective. To a certain extent, the development of teaching strategies in three cycles may just fit this object support class.

Mills (2007) pointed out that “action research doesn’t need worry about the generalizability of data, because this research is not seeking to define ultimate truths” (p. 126). This study is a Chinese teacher's exploration of teaching strategies for Support Class Students. The exploration means making every effort to try, to collect data, to reflect. For a Master Degree student, starting teaching strategy exploration with a small class is appropriate. Although the research evidence is limited, it might provide a new approach to assist future researchers to delve more deeply into this topic.

To ensure the utmost generalisation of this study, two strategies are employed. Firstly, rich and thick description is provided. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.125) state "a thick description of the context may assess the similarity between one study and others." In this research, data is collected from students and teachers honestly, which means it exactly records what happens in the classroom and sinterview in detail. It creates possibilities for future research to compare. Secondly, comparisons are made between this class's teaching strategies and studies conducted by other researchers in similar areas (Merriam, 1995).
Chapter 4 Vocabulary teaching strategies—Activating students’ prior knowledge

4.0 Introduction

From Chapter 1 to Chapter 3, the teacher-researcher presented a general introduction to the study, the literature review and research methodology. From Chapter 4 to Chapter 6, the data about Chinese teaching strategies of vocabulary, listening and speaking and Chinese culture for support class students will be analysed. In this chapter, the teacher-researcher focuses on the approaches to activating students’ prior knowledge, to teach Chinese vocabulary to support class students. These will be demonstrated in two main aspects: sound-similarity teaching strategies and visual-image teaching strategies.

4.1 Sound-similarity teaching strategies

Chinese has two writing systems. One is Pinyin and another one is Chinese characters. On the surface, Chinese pinyin is English letters with Chinese tone marks above them. It is a way to represent Chinese characters and express the sounds in the Chinese language using the alphabet. There are some sound similarities between the Chinese and English vocabularies, and between different Chinese vocabularies as well. Therefore, the teacher-researcher explored sound-similarity teaching strategies while teaching Chinese pinyin in her class. Generally speaking, she concluded them in four main features: Transfer of learner-designed body movements to Chinese tonal words, transfer “Australian Pinyin” to Chinese Pinyin, transfer English vocabulary decoding strategies to Chinese vocabulary learning, and transfer previously learnt Chinese vocabulary to newly acquired Chinese vocabulary.

4.1.1 Transfer learner-designed body movements to Chinese tonal words
In the teacher-researcher’s first Chinese class, she used “ma” as an example, aiming to show the changes of the five tones in Chinese Pinyin to the support class students. The picture she used is presented in Figure 4-1:


She showed the picture of Chinese tones, explained the meanings of the word “ma” using different tones, and asked students to recognise differences among the four main tones. The class situation was described as follows:

I told students tones are used to distinguish words from each other in Chinese. In this picture, the word “mā” is pronounced in first tone (high and flat tone), which means “mum”. If it is spoken as “má”, using the second tone (rising tone), it means “flax”. As for third tone (down and up tone) “mǎ”, the meaning becomes “horse”. If it turns to fourth tone (falling tone) “mà”, it refers to “scold”. As I repeated the four tones again, and asked, “Can you hear differences?” all eight students waved their heads and said, “No”, they are same.” As I pronounced the second and third tones for “ma” I asked them the different meanings for the words, they just guessed as well. (Reflective journal, 12/02/2014)

In this class, the teacher-researcher explained the different meanings of word “ma”, using four main tones. However, the students were confused about the four tones,
and did not recognise the differences between them at all. When they were required to distinguish between “mă” and “má”, they just guessed. It indicated that, for support class students, it was challenging to distinguish between the four main tones in Chinese words, if no special teaching strategies were used.

In the same class, the teacher-researcher asked the students to follow her and repeat the four main tones. It was described as follows:

The classroom turned to be filled with “mā, má, mǎ, mà”. So I decided to teach the four main tones one by one and asked them to repeat what I said. It was interesting that they had no problems with first tone and fourth tone. However, when I invited students to pronounce “má” and “mǎ” individually, none of them could pronounce them correctly from start to the end. (Reflective journal, 12/02/2014)

The students were able to pronounce the first and fourth tones without difficulty, yet could not pronounce the second and the third tones correctly. In this case, the teacher-researcher just required them to imitate what she said, which is the traditional way of vocabulary teaching for second language classes. No other teaching strategies were put into practice. As a result, the students did not make progress in the pronunciation of Chinese tonal words throughout the class.

As the teacher-researcher realised her mistakes in the first class about Chinese tonal words, she adjusted her lesson plan for the next one, designing instructions involving body movements and hand gestures using the four tones. They were presented as follows:

1st tone: flat hand moved across the body at shoulder height;
2nd tone: raise your eyebrow every time you say the 2nd tone;
3rd tone: drop your chin on your neck and raise your chin when you say the 3rd tone;
4th tone: stamp your feet when you say the 4th tone. (Lesson plan, 19/02/2014)
In the new lesson plan, each movement and hand gesture represented a specific tone. Specifically, shoulder movement was used for the first tone, eyebrow movement for the second, and then neck and chin movement and foot movements were used for the third and fourth tones. Most of their body parts were involved.

As the teacher-researcher put this new plan into her second class of Chinese tones, the class situation was described as follows:

The students followed my instructions to move the hand horizontally to represent the first tone, while they were pronouncing “mā”. Their hand gestures and pronunciation were both standard. As for the second and third tones “má” and “mǎ”, the students couldn’t stop raising eyebrows or moving chins and necks after I explained my instructions. They laughed at each other’s facial expressions and movements. Meanwhile, they insisted on pronouncing the two tonal words again and again with specific body movements. As I asked them to pronounce the second and third tones, most students raised their hands, showing their willingness. Moreover, after some practice with body movements, they pronounced the second and third tones much better than last class. As to fourth tone “mà”, the students became so excited. As they pronounced it, they stamped foot pretending to be angry. I said, “That angry face is brilliant. Remember, “mà” means “scold” in Chinese”. After that, the students turned to be more devoted to do this movement as they pronounced the fourth tone. (Reflective journal, 19/02/2014).

In the second class of Chinese tones, the students were pleased to follow the teacher-researcher’s instructions to perform the movements and speak out tonal words. In particular, they looked excited about the movements and hand gestures for the second and third tones. They enjoyed moving their eyebrows, necks and chins to cope with the pronunciation of these two challenging tones. Since they were interested in the body movements, they became keen to practice from their hearts. Meanwhile, the frequent practice also resulted great improvement in the two tones. Some tones, such as second and third, were still difficult for them. After practice,
they were still opportunities for progress.

As can be seen in the reflective journal, the students laughed while practicing. The support class students were neither nervous nor shy in the pronunciation of challenging Chinese tonal words. It may contribute to the transfer between students’ prior knowledge and Chinese tonal words. Although the students were unfamiliar with Chinese tones, they felt sufficiently relaxed to perform movements commonly used in everyday life.

The students’ feedback over the fourth tone “mà” was also impressive. While foot stamping, as instructed, they added angry faces as they pronounced this tonal word. Accordingly, the teacher-researcher seized the opportunity to emphasise the meaning of the word. It indicated that, as the support class students enjoyed the tone practice, they had the patience to do it over and over again. Moreover, they also had the enthusiasm to create something new according to their understanding, as verified by their innovative “angry faces” for the tonal word “mà”.

With Chinese classes underway, the teacher-researcher found the support students were not only satisfied with transferring the teacher-designed body movements to Chinese tonal words. The students attempted to design their own body movements for the tones as they learnt new tonal words. In the interview with their classroom teachers, they mentioned this point as follows:

It’s really surprising me that my students started creating some body movements for Chinese tones by themselves. I even took notes for what they designed. I know "stand up and sit down" refers to "third tone", "shuffle from left to right" refers to "first tone", and "a sudden big stride forward" refers to "second tone". As to some other abstract movements, I didn’t get students’ point. But they are all impressive. I can tell that students really enjoy doing those actions as well as doing tone practice. I know you provided some hints as they designed body movements for tones. But they still did much better than my expectation. (Interview with Ms Lal, 18/06/2014)
As the classroom teacher said, the support class students did an excellent job in the design of body movements for Chinese tones. They created new movements such as stand up-sit down, and shuffle to transfer them to Chinese tonal words. Although some learner-designed body movements were too abstract for others to understand, including classroom teachers, the students really enjoyed that tone practice. The support class students’ interest in the transfer between learner-designed body movements to Chinese tonal words was crucial to the improvement of their tone pronunciation. The more tone practice they do, the more progress they will make. Their enthusiasm about body movement design for tones will ensure their interest in the tone practice.

The classroom teacher mentioned that the support class students had better forms of body movement than she expected with the assistance of the teacher-researcher. It demonstrated that the support class students also had the ability to create something new in Chinese class. Sometimes the teacher-researcher’s assistants gave them some ideas when they are in trouble. However, most of the time, the students’ interest in participating always played the most important role. It requires Chinese teachers to create more innovative methods for Chinese teaching to sustain these students’ enthusiasm.

4.1.2 Transferring “Australian Pinyin” to Chinese Pinyin

In addition to tones, Chinese Pinyin is made up of three main parts: vowels, consonants and groups. Since the support class students had never learned Pinyin, the teacher-researcher attempted to take advantage of sound similarities between Chinese Pinyin and “Australian Pinyin” to make it easier. Specifically, “Australian Pinyin” refers to the pronunciations of English words, phonemes or syllables, which the support class students had previously mastered. Transfer through the use of cross-linguistic similarities is an integral part of how people learn languages. The natural
procedure in learning a new language is to establish a relation between new propositions or tasks and what is already known in the existing language in the mind (Ringbom, 2007). For the support class students, “Australian Pinyin” is what they already had in their minds.

At the beginning of the Chinese classes, the teacher-researcher always organised some Chinese Pinyin practice, which was especially connected with “Australian Pinyin”. Taking six vowels of Pinyin with first tone as an example, the teacher-researcher normally presented a form of transfer as follows:

ā: It sounds like the noise you might make when your doctor is examining the inside of your mouth. Open your mouth wide and say: “aah”.

ō: Push your lips forward into a small circle, with your tongue at the bottom of your mouth, leaving a hollow space above it. Say: “o”. Your lips should make the shape they take when you say the English word “law”.

ē: Make a sound as if you have seen something really disgusting: “ergh”. When “e” is used with other vowels it can also be pronounced “ê” which is similar to “e” in the English word “bed”.

ī: Pull your lips slightly back and push your tongue up towards the hard palate without touching it. It is similar to the “ea” sound in the English word “squeak”.

ū: Push your lips forward and make a narrow gap through which your breath can vibrate. Your lips should take the shape they make when you say the word “fool”.

ǖ: It is similar to the umlaut “ü” in German or the French “u”. Say “ee” through tightly pursed lips form the shape they make when you say the “sh” of the English word “fish”. (Lesson plan, 14/04/2014)

As shown in the lesson plan, the teacher-researcher linked every vowel in Chinese Pinyin to a specific English word. The sound of a vowel was very similar to the sound of the syllables or letters in the specific English word, such as “i” for “ea” among “squeak”, “ū” for “sh” among “fish”. Neuner (1992: 158) held the view that:
“it is a general and basic law of any kind of learning that we associate new elements, items and structures with elements, items and structures already stored in our memory.” (p. 2) Since the sound of English words already existed in the support class students’ memories, the teacher-researcher could transfer their prior knowledge to the sounds of Chinese vowels, which were new elements to them.

In the teacher-researcher’s reflective journal, she also mentioned the support class students’ performance in this Pinyin pronunciation practice as follows:

According to my instructions, the students looked at the English word “aah” initially and followed me to pronounce it. Then I told them, “In Chinese Pinyin, vowel “a” sounds like “ahh””. The students spoke “a” in one voice correctly. As for vowel “o”, I also asked them to pronounce English word “bed” at first. Then I told them “in Chinese Pinyin, vowel “e” sounds like English letter “e” in “bed””. After that, the students started speaking out vowel “e” loudly. As to the other four Chinese vowels, I used same way to make the students say them depending on similar pronunciation in English words. To my surprise, the students listened carefully all the time. When I asked them to have a try one by one, most of the students also pronounced related English words initially, and pronounced Chinese vowels straight after. Student J was pretty smart. He spent a couple of seconds to think and spoke out the Chinese vowels directly. I guess he was just reviewing the pronunciation of English words that connect to Chinese vowels in his heart before pronouncing vowels. (Reflective journal, 14/04/2014)

In this Pinyin pronunciation practice, the support class students listened carefully and followed the teacher-researcher’s instructions well. They listened to the teacher’s explanations about sound similarities between Chinese vowels and English words, and followed the teacher in pronouncing the Chinese vowels according to the teacher’s guidance. The students’ patience and attention to the Pinyin pronunciation practice indicated that the method of transfer “Australian Pinyin” to Chinese pinyin was appropriate for these students. They posed no resistance to this sort of transfer. Moreover, most of the students were able to correctly pronounce the Chinese vowels on their own. Before speaking out, it took them some time to recall the English words whose pronunciations had a strong connection with the vowels. It
demonstrated this kind of transfer is helpful for the support class students. As Ausubel said in his 1968 book: “The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learners already know. Ascertain this and teach him accordingly." Relying on their memories of related English words, the support class students linked them to the new Chinese vowels. The prior knowledge about English words and English syllable pronunciations was a crucial factor in this Chinese vowel pronunciation practice.

In the interview with the classroom teachers, they also had positive comments about the transfer between “English Pinyin” and Chinese Pinyin. It is shown as follows:

This kind of transfer is impressive. In this term, I also learned some Chinese words, such as “Zàijiàn” which means goodbye, “Xièxiè” which means thanks. Because I recorded them, according to English sounds: “dzye jen” and “hsair hsair”. Our students benefited from this teaching method as well. You know they did well in Chinese class routine at this moment. I reckon they also used this kind of transfer to memorise greeting words used in our class routine. I found that most students would look at the first page of their notebook as you said "let’s begin Chinese class with routines”. (Interview with Ms Lal, 18/06/2014).

In this interview, the classroom teacher expressed her fondness for the pronunciation transfer between “Australian Pinyin” and Chinese Pinyin. She learnt some new Chinese greeting words, with the assistance of “Australian Pinyin” that she could understand and memorise easily. It indicated that the Chinese beginning learners commonly welcome this kind of bilingual pronunciation transfer. This method is easily understood in Chinese vocabulary learning by beginning learners, including the classroom teachers and support class students. The classroom teacher also noticed the support class students were used to relying on their notes to recall Chinese class routines. In their notes, the students could find “English Pinyin” for those Chinese greeting words in class routine. Although greeting words in class routine were used in every Chinese class, the students still needed to depend on
“English Pinyin” to ensure the correction of their pronunciation. This case demonstrated Rinbom’s opinion: “L1 and other languages known to the learner clearly provide an essential aid, not a troublesome obstacle for learning a new language” (Rinbom, 2007). The pronunciation of English words, or “English Pinyin” is the knowledge of the support class students’ first language. They were quite dependent on “English Pinyin” to learn and review Chinese words.

To help students to memorise “How “Australian Pinyin” is transferred to Chinese Pinyin”, the teacher-researcher always suggested that the students take notes. The classroom teacher appreciated this method in the interview, as follows:

I think it’s a good idea to make students take notes for English words that had sound similarities with Chinese Pinyin. On one hand, it helps students to memorise new words quickly. On the other hand, writing something will calm them down and make them focus on the class all the time.” (Interview with Ms Lal, 18/06/2014)

In this interview, the classroom teacher talked about two advantages of “Australian Pinyin” notes for Chinese words. In addition to the advantage of enhancing the memory retention of Chinese words, she also pointed out its advantage in classroom discipline management. Taking notes of “English Pinyin” for a quantity of Chinese words kept the support class students busy and got them involved in the class from the beginning to the end. From this perspective, the transfer from “English Pinyin” to “Chinese Pinyin” is supposed to be commonly applied in Chinese vocabulary teaching as well.

4.1.3 Transferring English vocabulary decoding strategies to Chinese vocabulary learning

In one interview with the classroom teacher, she talked about the support class students’ literacy level and her understanding of making Chinese vocabulary easy to remember for the support class students, as follows:

“Our Year 7 students” literacy level is around 60% of mainstream
students in the same year. You’d better make Chinese vocabularies as easily remember as possible. In English classes, we usually applied some vocabulary decoding strategies to teach English words. Probably you can do some research about it, and transfer this strategy to Chinese vocabulary learning.” (Interview with Ms Lal, 18/06/2014)

As the classroom teacher said, the method of using common spelling patterns to decode words through blending is commonly used in the support class students’ English classes. Sharon concluded this English vocabulary method in her books as follows:

One salient feature of the English languages is the use of spelling patterns, also referred to as onset-rimes, phonograms, or word families. When using spelling patterns to decode an unknown word, students can segment the words between the onset and the rime and then blend the onset and rime to make the word (Sharon, 2008, p. 259).

Take the word “pan” as an example. The students would pronounce each sound individually (/p/ /a/ /n/), or the onset-rime (/p/ /an/) and then blend them together to make the word “pan”. Inspired by the English vocabulary decoding strategies, the teacher-researcher explored some Chinese vocabulary teaching strategies in her own classes. This kind of transfer normally has three steps. Firstly, finding an English word which is associated with the target Chinese word in pronunciation. For example,

Number four is pronounced as "si" in Chinese Pinyin. The sound is similar to the onset "/s/"of English word snake. Therefore I showed them a picture of snake in my slide and required students to say the animal’s name in English.(Lesson plan, 07/09/2014)

Secondly, the teacher-researcher would make a story or provide a reasonable explanation to link the English word to the target Chinese word. For example,

I showed four snakes in my slide and told students that “Ms Zhang showed you four snakes, and the sound of Chinese word “four” is similar to “/s/” in English word “snake” as well. (Reflective journal, 07/09/2014)
Thirdly, pronouncing the Chinese word correctly and slowly, requiring students to write down related English words and circle the essential parts. For example,

I asked students to circle the onset “/s/” of English word snake. Then they started saying “sì”. After the individual practice, I chose one student to say number four in Chinese. He said English word snake initially. Then he pronounced “sì” correctly. (Reflective journal, 05/07/2014).

According to the three steps, the teacher-researcher taught Chinese vocabularies about family members as follows:

Chinese Pinyin “gēgē” which means big brother, sounds like the rime /ga:/ of hamburger. My story is that "most big brothers love eating hamburgers”. As for “nǎinǎi” which means grandma, it sounds like the onset /na/ of nice. My explanation is that “Our grandmas are very nice.” In terms of “jiē jiě” which means old sister, I showed a picture of jelly. Because “older sisters like eating jelly”, and the pronunciation “jiě” is close to onset /dʒe/ of jelly. My students mastered the words about family members quickly. The pictures such as “lovely older sisters who are eating jelly”, “chubby older brothers who are having big hamburgers”, made them laugh again and again. When I asked them to say the Chinese words one by one, they could speak most of the family member words. Sometimes they couldn’t give me the correct answers immediately. Then I would point at the related pictures, such as older sisters or a big brother, to give them some hints. After that, they always spoke the accurate pronunciation quickly (Reflective journal, 14/09/2014).

As shown in this case, the teacher-researcher made some stories related to the pronunciation of family member vocabulary in Chinese, such as “older sisters like eating jelly”. “How relevant prior cross-linguistic knowledge is primarily depends on the relationships that can be established between the TL (target language) and L 1 (first language)” (Ringbom, 2007, p. 1). The teacher-researcher created related stories as a way to develop relationships between the pronunciations of Chinese words and English words. Moreover, she linked the pronunciations of Chinese words to the onset or rims of specific English words, such as "jiē" for onset /dʒe/ of jelly.
One classroom teacher who used to teach English in the support class shared her ideas about the connection between English vocabulary decoding strategies and Chinese vocabulary learning, as follows:

“Our students know how to divide a word into several parts, and they know it’s a method to quickly learn a new word in my English class. I appreciate that you transferred this method, which they already know, to help their Chinese vocabulary learning. However, you’d better use the simple English words as hints for making the transfer. You know their English literacy level is also a big issue.” (Interview with Ms F, 18/06/2014).

In this interview, the classroom teacher emphasized picking basic or simple English words to make the transfer. Although the support class students knew about dividing one English word properly into onset, rim or some other parts, their limited English literacy level requires Chinese teachers to choose simple English words to make related stories or explanations. As Koda said, “the first language proficiency and literacy can be used to assist literacy development in a second language” (Koda, 2008, p.68). As for the support class students” Chinese vocabulary learning, their limited English (first language) literacy level should be taken into consideration before providing assistance for second language learning. For this reason, the teacher-researcher chose "hamburger" instead of "figure" to help them remember "/ɡәәː/" for the Chinese word "big brother", and selected "jelly" instead of "jealous" as the clue for Chinese word "big sister".

4.1.4 Transferring previously learnt Chinese vocabulary to newly acquired Chinese vocabulary

Due to the support class students’ intelligence level, it seems unrealistic for them to learn many Chinese words in one Chinese lesson. The support class teacher expressed her observation in the interview, as follows:

"According to my observation, I reckon five new Chinese words will
be their bottom line, otherwise, they will feel too stressed. So I think you’d better to use some Chinese words they have learnt, to assist them to learn new words. It will make the new vocabulary teaching easier. (Interview with Ms F, 18/07/2014)

The classroom teacher pointed out the importance of activating students’ prior knowledge. In this context, the students’ prior knowledge refers to existing Chinese vocabulary which they have mastered in the previous classes. To “make the new vocabulary teaching easier” this is one characteristic of successful scaffolding that "helps learners to reduce their cognitive load which allows the learner to perform parts of a task that he or she would otherwise not be able to perform (Pol, Volman and Beishuizen, 2010, P275). To achieve this goal in support class students’ Chinese vocabulary learning, the teacher-researcher explored approaches to transfer previously learnt Chinese vocabulary to newly acquired Chinese vocabulary in her classes.

Initially, she emphasised the mastering of basic but productive vocabulary in Chinese lessons. These vocabularies refer to Chinese numbers, colors, and commonly used adjectives (e.g. big, small, good). For example,

In today’s lesson, I taught them one new word “Sān míng zhì，三明治”, which means “sandwich” in English. To my surprise, one boy recognised “sān” as I showed the slide. He said, “It’s three, the symbol is three lines.” I knew that he thought of the Chinese character “三”， which is made of three horizontal lines. Then I asked, “why does “Sān míng zhi” start with the number three, “sān”, instead of two or one?” One student answered, “Sandwich has three layers, so sandwich starts with “Sān””. (Reflective journal, 26/07/2014)

In this lesson, the boy recognised Chinese number three, without any hints. It indicated that the Chinese number vocabulary teaching is interesting to the students. The student even remembered the Chinese characters for the number three. Numbers are one of the basic but productive vocabulary categories that appear in Chinese
words frequently. The teacher-researcher inspired students to make a story related to the characteristics of newly acquired words, to assist them in transferring already learnt Chinese numbers to new words. Sandwich always has three layers, while the first word of "sandwich" in Chinese is Chinese number "three". The scaffold teaching theory pointed out, “A teacher is fading when the level and/or the amount of support is decreased over time”(Pol, Volman and Beishuizen, 2010, p.275). In this case, the teacher-researcher simply asked “why” to give the students a clue to link “sān” and “Sān míng zhì”, while the conclusion that “sandwich has three layers, so sandwich starts with “Sān” was actually made by the students themselves. The Chinese teacher faded gradually, which made the transfer between previously learnt Chinese vocabulary (“Sān”) and newly acquired vocabulary (“Sān míng zhì”) successful.

Below is another example of transferring basic but productive vocabulary to newly acquired Chinese vocabulary.

As for the new word “lǜ chá 绿茶”, I asked students to focus on the word “lǜ 绿” first and gave them the clue that it’s related to one colour we learnt before. Then I heard them singing “hóng sè”, “lǜ sè” “huáng sè ” quietly. They sang their favorite Chinese color song several times, and I also found that song in my PC, to help them recall the Chinese color word. Finally, one boy got it and told us “It’s green color.” Then I showed the picture of green tea and started teaching the new word “lǜ chá 绿茶”. Later, I repeated the sound and the meaning of the first word “lǜ 绿” and asked them the meaning of “ chá 茶”. They gave me the right answer without hesitation. (Reflective journal, 26/07/2014)

Color is also commonly used in Chinese vocabulary. Therefore, the teacher-researcher aimed to inspire the students to transfer “green” to “green tea” in Chinese. In this situation, the support class students thought of the color song. After recalling the song for a short time, a boy spoke the correct answer, “lǜ 绿” means “green” in Chinese. The teacher-researcher showed considerable patience when the students
were recalling that song. Increasing the waiting time to promote production will ensure students with learning and behavior problems have enough time to think and recall the knowledge previously taught. This is one of the general principles for teaching language to students with learning and behavior problems, which is concluded by Sharon (2009). In this case, the teacher-researcher allowed students to spend time singing that color song to help them remember the Chinese color words they have learnt earlier. Allowing sufficient waiting time for the support class students is the basis of successful transfer from previously learnt Chinese vocabulary to newly acquired Chinese vocabulary.

However, the teacher-researcher also encountered problems transferring some Chinese words which had similar sounds, but different meanings. For example,

“I showed a photo of one well-known Chinese actress, Ziyi Zhang, and asked one student to guess the sound of her family name. His pronunciation was "Zhāng", which is a hundred percent right. Another student raised her hand and said, "Ms Zhang, it’s your name. So s she your family member?" At that moment, I realised the students became confused and thought the two "Zhang’s were the same word. Then I wrote the Chinese characters "张" and "章" separately and explained to them, saying "Although some Chinese words have the same sound, they have totally different meanings. The first Zhang "张" is Ms Zhang’s family name, while the second Zhang "章" is the famous actress Ms Zhang’s family name. In English, we also have words that sound similar but have different meanings. Who can give me an example?" After a couple of minutes, no one answered. I looked at the two classroom teachers, and their nervous facial expressions told me, “the question is too hard for the students”. So I wrote two words “right” and “write” on the white board. After a minute, one student said, ""r-i-g-h-t" means "correct", "w-r-i-t-e" means…". The student just picked up his pen to represent the word “write”. I knocked my head and asked "So do you think the actress Ms Zhang and your Ms Zhang have the same family name?" They said "no" determinedly. (Reflective journal, 19/07/2014)

In this case, even the students became confused about “张” and “章”, the teacher-researcher did not point out their mistake directly. Instead, she wrote the two Chinese
characters individually and required students to give examples of English words which have different meanings, but the same pronunciation. It is a way of using questions to probe students’ conceptions and prompt them to describe their interpretations and challenge their opinions. (Scarino and Liddicoat, 2009, p. 53). However, after a long wait, no one gave the answer. The teacher-researcher realised the question was too challenging for the support class students and so she wrote hints on the white board. Responding to the hints, one student got the point. It indicated that although enough waiting time is significant in Chinese vocabulary teaching, properly providing scaffolding by Chinese teachers is also necessary, if the students have no ideas. Moreover, “The teacher’s support must be adapted to the current level of the student’s performance and should either be at the same or a slightly higher level.” (Pol, Volman and Beishuizen, 2010, pp.274-275). In this case, the teacher’s hints were equal to the students’ learning level. Thus, they could understand the similarity and difference between the English word “write” and “right” with the teacher’s guidance. More importantly, inspired by the relationship between “write” and “right”, they also understood the difference between words “张” and “章”. In conclusion, scaffolding teaching strategies, especially with appropriate questions and hints, play an important role in transferring previously learnt Chinese vocabulary to newly acquired Chinese vocabulary.

4.2 Visual-image teaching strategies

In addition to Pinyin, Chinese characters are another written form in Chinese language. Chinese characters are generally defined as “symbols, constructed and used to convey meanings as well as sounds that indicate meanings.”(Yin, 2002) The pictographic essence of Chinese characters made them visually obvious. Therefore, the teacher-researcher attempted to apply visual-image teaching strategies to teach support class students Chinese characters in her class. She explored and applied these strategies in three main aspects: transferring English symbols to Chinese characters, transferring imagery stories to Chinese characters, and presenting games related to
Chinese characters.

4.2.1 Transferring English symbols to Chinese characters

The support class students knew more about English symbols, in particular the 26 English alphabet letters, than Chinese characters. Bearing in mind their prior knowledge of English upper and lower case letters, the teacher-researcher usually guided them to transfer English symbols to a few complicated Chinese characters. An example of learning the Chinese character “你” is as follows:

I found all the students could pronounce “你好 nǐ hǎo” (“hello”) very well. Then I let them follow me to write one of the two characters. I asked them to vote for the character which they red to learn between the two words. They chose “你”. When I asked them the reason for their vote, most of the students said “first symbol is easier, just two “T”s. I’m confused about their response. So I chose one student to point out the two “T”s. Finally, I got it. In their mind, the left part “亻” seemed to be a capital “T”, while the right part “尔” also has a capital letter “T” in the middle. Accordingly, I emphasised the two “T”s as I wrote the related strokes. In the revision, when I asked them to recognise the character “你” from “你, 好, 我”, 6 out of 8 students pointed out it quickly and correctly. The girl K said, “It’s easy, I just find two big “T”s.” The students who got the right answers looked very delighted when I asked them to give themselves a big tick. (Reflective journal, 05/02/2014)

At the beginning of this case, the teacher-researcher required students to choose the Chinese character they’d like to imitate from the two words "你" and "好". Having them vote for their preferred characters fits the student-centred learning approach, designed to offer students a highly flexible system of learning which requires them to have a high degree of responsibility in managing their learning (Brandes and Ginnis, 1986; Ellington, et al., 1993; Gibbs, 1992b; Guest, 2005; McCombs and Miller, 2007). In this case, the classroom teacher gave the support class students a chance to choose their learning goal of the two Chinese characters, with the intent that it would contribute to students’ learning responsibility and motivation.
Their understanding was fully expressed through their votes and answers. From their perspective, the character “你” included two capital “T”s. In the summarisation of the tenets of student-centered learning, Lea, Stephenson and Troy (2003) mentioned two points: firstly, an interdependence between learner and teacher and secondly, an increased sense of autonomy in the learner. In this case, the teacher-researcher followed these tenets. She did not provide hints or detailed instructions. Instead, she followed students’ double “T” reasoning to explain the strokes.

The pleasing result was reflected in the review section. More than half of students were able to recognise the character “你”, which benefited from their learning approach. Generally speaking, an effective student-centred learning class requires special characteristics and attributes from the tutor: realness or genuineness, acceptance, prizing and trust, empathy and congruence (C. Rogers, 1969). In this case, the teacher researcher accepted, trusted and respected the students’ ways of transferring English letter “T” to Chinese character “你”. She supported the students’ idea through praise, and encouraged them to think independently. In the end, the students’ proud facial expressions confirmed that their transference from English symbols to Chinese characters did work. Here, the student-centred learning approach made a significant contribution.

4.2.2 Transferring imagery stories to Chinese characters

Some Chinese characters are pictographic characters. However, a group of pictographs became progressively more stylised and lost their original pictographic essence. For support class students, it was easier to remember visualised pictures rather than abstract symbols. Therefore, the teacher-researcher helped them create imagery stories to reproduce these Chinese characters’ visual characteristics. For example, Chinese the character “吃” was taught as follows:

At the beginning, I showed a picture of Chinese characters “吃”, which means "to eat". I told them this character is made up with two parts and asked them to imagine what they looked like individually. I thought some students would tell
me the left part "口" seemed to be a mouth. However, one boy raised his hand and said, "It is an ice block". I asked "Do you have other ideas?" The class became quiet. Then I changed my mind and agreed with the boy’s idea. Afterwards, I asked another question, “the left part is an ice block, so what do you think of right parts?” The students shared different ideas, such as "a capital "Z" with a hook", or "a person". However, none the answers were close enough to its meaning. Then I shared my opinion. “丿” is my nose, “丿” is one of my eyes, "乙" is my mouth, connected to my chin. While I was explaining, I showed one side of my face to them. They laughed. I asked one student to write the left side of the characters on the whiteboard and explained it this way. He copied most of my words, but he thought that “丿” was "a wink" instead of "an eye". Then we had a story time for this Chinese character. I asked them to think of a story, based on the explanation for this character. One student said, "When Ms Zhang was eating an ice block, she was moving her nose, mouth and chin." Another added, "Ms Zhang liked her ice block, so she gave us a wink." After discussion, I wrote the "口" slowly on the white board, saying "Ms Zhang was eating an ice block". Then I wrote "丿", saying "She used her nose to smell at first", and wrote "丿", saying "She winked happily after smelling.” and wrote "乙", saying "She used her mouth to taste. Meanwhile, her chin moved." According to my instruction, the students started saying the newest version of "吃" story and wrote the new character three times by themselves. Most of them were able to write it independently after practicing it twice. (Reflective journal, 16/07/2014)

In this case, the teacher-researcher used the Chinese character "吃" to make a story. Initially, the she respected the student’s idea that the left part of the "吃" looked like an ice block rather than her own idea that it looked like a mouth. In 2003, Lea, Stephenson and Troy pointed out the importance of mutual respect in the learner-teacher relationship in student-centered learning; and the reflexive approach to the learning and teaching process on the part of both teacher and learner. Accordingly, the teacher-researcher noticed the silence of the class when they heard one student’s answer. She respected the students” idea and changed her own proposed answer.

However, as the teacher-researcher was aware the students” story about right part of the Chinese character “吃” was too far away from the meaning of the word, she took over the class again and offered them clues. The student-centered learning approach “is not necessarily intended to replace existing methodologies but provide a framework for a variety of teaching methods geared to enhance learning.” (Pulist,
In this case, the teacher-researcher thought more direct hints about the characters were more crucial than the students” random answers. The teacher’s expertise is still a powerful part of the learning equation (K. Brown, 2003). If she simply allowed students to guess a wide range of answers, she might lose control of the class. From this perspective, she temporarily fell back on the traditional teaching approach. After solving the problem of “乞”, the teacher-researcher gave the students more opportunities to make up their own stories about “乞”.

In addition to the student-centred learning approach, another highlight of this Chinese class was the teacher-researcher’s modelling in creating a story about “吃”. One of the six important points of description of scaffolding says it is “the process of offering behavior for imitation.” (Tharp and Gallimore 1988, p. 47) When the teacher-searcher was making the story about “eating an ice block”, she modelled the writing of the Chinese characters stroke after stroke. While students were imitating the teachers” handwriting, they were accepting the teachers” easily-remembered hints as well. The hints, such as “nose to smell”, “wink after smiling”, “move chins and mouth to taste”, presented a visual image to the students. The modelling of strategies for the learning of key ideas is mentioned as a means to scaffold the metacognitive activities of students together with the intention of direction maintenance. (Brophy, 1999). This sort of modelling is vivid and convincing. As shown in the case, after imitating and practicing, most of the students were able to write the characters on their own.

When the classroom teacher talked about the way of transferring imagery stories to Chinese characters, she pointed out the connection between the students’ imaginations and this teaching strategy as follows:

I like the way of making stories to let students learn Chinese characters. Most of my support class students have fantastic imaginations. This method inspired their talent. Meanwhile, you can find that they easily remembered the new Chinese characters, if the story makes sense. Students think they are drawing a picture of the story, while they are
writing characters. Otherwise, they will have a lot of pressure to understand some complicated characters.” (Interview with Ms Lal, 17/09/2014)

As students regarded the writing of Chinese characters as drawing pictures, they didn’t feel stress when learning new words. From the perspective of cognitive load, the imagery story seems less challenging than real symbolised Chinese characters for these students. The learner’s cognitive load is reduced with the aid of scaffolding and this allows the learner to perform parts of a task that he or she would otherwise not be able to perform (Myhill and Warren 2005; Turner et al. 1998; Van Merriënboer et al. 2003). With the help of the teacher-researcher’s scaffolding, such as questioning and modeling, the support class students’ rich imaginations assisted them to finish the transfer from imagery stories to related Chinese characters.

4.2.3 Games related to Chinese characters

For support class students, games and other activities was a way to reinforce newly introduced concepts. Therefore, the teacher-researcher explored with games related to Chinese characters. Chinese character searches, the 60-second dash and Chinese card making were the three main games commonly used in this support class. They are a crucial part of visual-image teaching strategies as well.

4.2.3.1 Chinese character searching game

Bearing in mind that the features of Chinese characters are visually obvious as images, the Chinese characters searching game was frequently used in the teacher-researcher’s Chinese class for support class students. In the beginning, she applied traditional way of teaching them, where the students located the given Chinese words (Chinese characters) on a grid of eight squares in each direction, horizontally and vertically. There is an example:

I gave a worksheet to each student. As they looked at it for one
moment, a boy asked, "Is it the word search?" I asked, "How do you know? Did you play this game before?" "Yes, we have science class. We play word search in the science class." All the students said, "Yes". They couldn’t wait to start looking for five Chinese characters taught in previous classes – hamburger (汉堡包), pizza (披萨), sandwich (三明治), meat pie (肉派) and spaghetti (意面). What they had to do was find the Chinese characters in same order on the same line. One boy finished the task quickly. Afterwards, another two students put up their hands as well. The rest of the students seemed quite worried. Although I repeated that "Please do it by yourself and be patient", some of them insisted on copying other students’ answers. They whole class became noisy. When I tried to check the answers with them, one student said "we have checked the answers already, can we play cards now?" Actually, we still had five minutes left before recess time. However, they appeared to be so tired of this traditional word search game. (Reflective journal, 30/07/2014)

In this lesson, the teacher-researcher underestimated the support class students’ prior knowledge of the word search game. As they said, they had played this sort of game in other classes. Therefore, they didn’t find a challenge or any joy in the process of finishing this game. Some students even ignored the teachers’ instructions not to copy other students’ answers. Further, they became quite noisy after the game. This ordinary word searching game was not only unhelpful for revision, but also failed to hold the students’ attention. An important characteristic of scaffolding is contingency. It is responsive, tailored, adjusted, and differentiated to the students. The teacher’s support needs to be adapted to the current level of the students’ performance (Pol, Volman and Beishuizen, 2010, p.274-275). In this case, the teacher-researcher aimed to employ the traditional word search game to scaffold students to review the newly learnt Chinese characters. However, her underestimation of the students’ learning level and unadjusted scaffolding teaching strategies resulted in an unsatisfactory result.

Compared with the traditional Chinese character search game on a grid, the students showed more passion searching for Chinese characters in real photos taken in real places, such as a Chinese street, or Australian shopping center. For instance, after
learning the Chinese character “吃” which means “to eat, eating”, the teacher-researcher organised one Chinese character search game. The situation was this:

I told them "I will show some photos taken in China. What you should do is to find Chinese characters "吃" as soon as possible. If you get it, put up your hands please." One student asked, "Ms Zhang, did you take these photos by yourself in China?" I told them the truth that I found them online, but they are all real pictures taken in China’s streets. Firstly, I showed them the street views of "小吃店" (snack bar). They pointed out the "吃" from the shop sign over the shop-front. Continually, one student picked out the “吃” from the street views of “有朋小吃” (a snack bar named "Friends"). Also, he insisted on going to the white-board to point out it out to the class. I saw his big smile on his way back to his seat. The last picture is a poster of a famous Chinese chain restaurant "沙县小吃" (Sha Xian Snacks). They found the character "吃" quickly. When I told them it was a popular restaurant in China, they seemed quite curious. One student asked, "What does it sell?" I said, “That’s a really good question” and talked more about steamed dumplings, noodles with soy sauce and other dishes I personally love. After a heated discussion, the class became very active. It was pleasant that when I asked them to pronounce this character, they got it. When I said, "Let’s write this character with fingers", they followed me to do it as well. (Reflective journal, 06/08/2014)

At the beginning of the game, the students showed interest in the photos, indicated by their questions about whether the teacher took the photos. “Attention (capturing the interest of learners; stimulating the curiosity to learn) is one of the four general requirements to be met in order for people to be motivated to learn. (Kelly, 1987). In this case, the photos taken in China attracted the support class students” attentions, and motivated them to join in the new word search game. To sustain attention, a deeper level of curiosity may be activated by creating a problem situation which can be resolved by knowledge-seeking behavior. (Keller, 1987) After answering their questions about the source of the photos, the teacher-researcher required the students to pick out specific Chinese characters. Faced with this new situation, the students actively took part. One student even offered to point out the characters in front of the class. Searching Chinese characters in new photos sustained the students” attention,
and motivated them to recognise Chinese characters.

As the students performed well in picking out correct characters from photos, they became confident enough to ask questions such as "What does 沙县小吃 sell?" Confidence (helping the learners believe/feel that they will succeed and control their success) is one of the four general requirements to be met in order for people to be motivated to learn. (Kelly, 1987). After I admired praised the question about “沙县小吃”, the students were devoted in eager to discussing about the topic about of Chinese snacks. Besides, they correctly pronounced Chinese characters appearing in the photo, and followed the teacher-researcher to in writing them with their fingers.

After creating an expectancy for success, it is important for the learners to actually succeed at challenging tasks that are meaningful (Kelly,1987). These active and outstanding performances by the support class students, which included discussions about Chinese snacks, pronunciation practice, and finger-writing practice, are attributable to their degree of success experienced in the previous word search game. It indicated that the Chinese character search game was too low a level of challenge for them. However, simple word searching is important to build the support class students’ confidence and stimulate them to keep learning.

In the “tea 茶” lesson, the teacher-researcher also put the Chinese character search game to use. After the students’ acquisition of “茶”, the game started as follows:

I showed them couples of photos, which were taken in Australia or in China’s streets. The names of Chinese teahouses or Chinese cafes were displayed in each picture. The point was that every shop name contained one or more than one Chinese character “茶, chá” which means “tea”. In order to help them review this character from the last lesson, I asked them one by one to pick out it. They quickly pointed out “茶”, where the Chinese characters are written in standard Chinese font, but faced with an unfamiliar version of written in grass script (a style of Chinese calligraphy), they became confused and started guessing. At that moment, I chose two characters of the five characters in one photo. These two characters became their options.
Then they voted for the best option by raising their hands. Finally, most of the students voted for the correct answer. They shouted "Yeah!" immediately. I knew they were proud of their word search victory. Also, I emphasised that "When you travel to China, if you happen to find this word "茶" in the logo of some shops you can step into this shop to buy something related to tea, or get some drinks there." The students listened to my explanation quietly and patiently. Basically, it was a sign of their thinking in this class. (Reflective journal, 13/08/2014)

In this game, the students were confused about the "茶" when it was written in grass script instead of regular script. The teacher-researcher noticed the difficulty. “To provide contingent support, that is, one must first determine the student’s current level of competence. Only with such knowledge can the support to be provided be adapted to the student’s level of learning.” (Pol, Volman and Beishuizen, 2010, p. 275) As the teacher-researcher realised the grass script of “茶” was beyond the students’ current level of learning, she decreased the level of the task, and required the students to choose one correct Chinese character from only two. It adapted to their current learning ability as they didn’t know about special scripts of Chinese characters. As a result, they finally decided upon the correct Chinese character.

Changing the question from one of five-choices to a two-choice question also helped them maintain confidence and motivation for the next Chinese characters to be learnt. People who are learning something new generally like to have a fairly low level of challenge combined with frequent feedback that helps them succeed or confirms their success. After mastering the basics, people are ready for a higher level of challenge, including competitions that help them exercise and sharpen their skills. (Keller, 1987) As beginning Chinese character learners, the support class students felt a sense of achievement when they answered the two-choice question correctly. The low level of challenge and the teacher’s positive feedback ensured that they continued focusing on the next section of the Chinese class and engaged in listening to the teacher-researcher’s explanation of the advantages of recognising the Chinese character “茶”.

In conclusion, specific teaching strategies, to build student confidence are key factors
for the Chinese character searching game.

4.2.3.2 The 60-second dash game

The “60-second dash”, is another popular game in Chinese character acquisition. The teacher researcher took advantage of the students’ competitive natures to activate their motivation, requiring them to write one character as many times as possible in one minute. For example,

After teaching Chinese characters from numbers 1 to number 5, I had a game “60 seconds dash” for the class. The characters “五”, representing “5” in Chinese, is the biggest challenge for them. Therefore, the game rule was to “write number 5 in Chinese characters as much as possible in 60 seconds. The student who can write most characters in proper way will be the winner of the game, and the winner can get a beautiful Chinese knot as a reward.” When I said “Chinese knot”, the students started talking excitedly. After declaring the rule, I gave them 3 minutes to practice. Some students asked me to write the characters “五” in correct stroke order again. I found that compared with their previous attitude, they became more patient in copying the characters. As the game began, all the students seemed quite serious and the class couldn’t be quieter. When I said "time’s up", they put the pencils down quickly. Before I asked them to count how many characters they have written, some students have already started reporting their record, such as “15”, and “18”. Student J was the winner with 27 correct characters. I invited him to stand in the front of the classroom to accept the claps from the whole class as he received his reward. At that moment, he laughed proudly and stared at the Chinese knot for a long time. Also, he was pleased to write this characters on white-board again, with a confident smile. I noticed that his stroke orders and character shapes were all right. More importantly, they recalled the characters by themselves, instead of copying what I wrote before. (Reflective journal, 07/05/2014)

As the reflective journal said, the students became excited when they heard the winner’s reward of the game was a beautiful Chinese knot. “To have a continuing desire to learn, the student must have a sense of satisfaction with the process or results as of the learning experience. Satisfaction can result from extrinsic factors,
including opportunities for advancement, certificates, and other material rewards. (Keller, 1987) In this case, the Chinese knot was the extrinsic factor, a material reward which inspired the students to practice and play the “60 seconds dash” game seriously and patiently.

Apart from the material reward of the Chinese knot, the students also valued the opportunity of showing examples of writing “五” in front of the classmates. As described in the reflective journal, the winning student wrote it stroke after stroke with a confident smile. The students” sense of satisfaction can also be an intrinsic factor. “People like the feelings of self-esteem and achievement that result from interacting with other people, having their views heard and respected, and from successfully completing a meaningful activity.” (Keller, 1987) In this case, the support class exercised their strong desires to win, and focused on practicing. The winning student proudly presented his hand writing in public. It proved that the support class students” pursuit of a sense of satisfaction in the game was the same as mainstream students or other people. In the employment of Chinese character teaching strategies, especially in “60 second dash” game or this sort of game, Chinese teachers should stimulate their extrinsic and intrinsic motivations.

In spite of this, the “60 second dash” game did not always work. The difficulty levels of Chinese characters influenced the effectiveness of the game. An example of a failure is as follows:

I found the class could pronounce "喝 hē", which means "to drink or drinking" very well. I decided to raise the difficulty level temporarily and asked the students to learn the Chinese character "喝". As usual, the first thing I asked them to do was copy what I wrote, one stroke after the other. When we had finished half of the strokes, the students appeared impatient. Student K said, "Ms Zhang, this symbol is too hard. I don’t want to copy." Student J, who always shows passion toward Chinese characters in class, also wanted to give up, saying "Can we change another word?" Classroom teachers and I still encouraged them to follow the instructions to copy the characters. At
last, most of the students finished the task of writing this new character three times. However, two students stopped copying after finishing it once. When I suggested playing the game "60 second dashed", their disappointed facial expressions told me their inner voices. When I said "We won’t play that game today, I know it’s a huge challenge for you". They became more relaxed. After class, I asked the classroom teacher "Why didn’t the students take on the challenge today?" She told me, "I believe today’s Chinese character was too hard for kids to learn. They couldn’t remember what it looked like. This character was not as visual as others they learnt before. Once one student showed impatience, the other kids were affected as well." (Reflective journal, 20/08/2014)

In this case, the teacher-researcher overestimated the support class students’ learning level. For them, the Chinese character “喝” was too complicated. They lacked the capability of copying the strokes. While students K and J continually expressed the desire to give up, the teacher-researcher insisted on her own ideas and persisted in encouraging them to finish. According to the student-centered learning approach, having an understanding of who the learners are and what their aspirations and motivations are, facilitating the building of a good relationship and communicating with them is a significant principle. This is essential in helping the learners feel connected, supported and respected by the tutors and peers in their learning (Brandes and Ginnis, 1986; Gibbs, 1992b; McCombs and Whisler, 1997; C. Rogers, 1969). In this case, although most students finished copying the characters, the students didn’t show any enthusiasm. One problem was that the teacher did not respect their opinions and acted contrary to the guideline of student-centered teaching strategy. It can be harmful to the students’ motivation and their desire to learn.

Another problem of this case was related to the lack of appropriate scaffolding strategies. In the initial designing of the lesson plan, she did not anticipate the would not be willing to finish the “60 seconds dash” game for “喝”, and when faced with the students” manifested low confidence, she failed to adjust the instructions of the game or provide any low level scaffolding. “Contingency management/frustration
control concerns the facilitation of student performance as well as keeping students motivated via prevention or mineralization of frustration” (Pol, Volman and Beishuizen, 2010, p. 277). Due to poor contingency management the students were out of control by the end. It demonstrated that, no matter how appealing the classroom game might appear, the philosophies of both “student-centered teaching strategies” and “scaffolding teaching strategies” are still necessary for Chinese character teaching in the support class.

4.2.3.3 Chinese card making

Some Chinese characters are easy to recognise and memorise but some were quite complicated for the support class students. Many are “into” certain words and terms because of their special meaning, such as “I love you”, and “Happy Easter”. In this case, making cards and coloring Chinese characters, instead of simply writing them is another way to help them become familiar with Chinese characters. An example is below.

In order to review the phrase "我愛你 wǒ ài nǐ" which means "I love you", I brought some semi-completed Thank-you cards to the students. I designed a hollow font for these Chinese characters on the cards to make it easier for them to color these words. Also, I left some space for them to write down the names of the people they want to thank. I suggested they draw some pictures to express their thanks to friends or family. Since they didn’t bring color pencils with them, they just drew an outline in my class. Obviously, they were keen to color them. Because I found they all put the cards in their schoolbags after class. Normally they will leave worksheets on the desk if they don’t care about the homework. (Reflective journal, 26/03/2014)

Coloring words and making cards might seem to be a childish activity for mainstream Year 7 students. However, the support class students put the cards in their schoolbags after class, indicating they were pleased to finish this homework and were perhaps fond of colorful visual arts. Relevance (meeting the personal goals/needs to affect a positive attitude) is one of the four general requirements to be
met in order for people to be motivated to learn. (Keller, 1987) Making a Chinese Thank-you card for family members or friends seemed to meet their personal needs in Chinese character learning. Being able to let the people who they care about see their achievement in Chinese class, motivated these support class students.

While these students were unfamiliar with the complicated Chinese characters such as “我爱你”, they were familiar with and interested in the picture coloring game in other classes. The visualised Chinese characters were the same as pictures in the students’ eyes. “One category of strategies to generate relevance is a blend of ends and process elements. People enjoy more about things they already believe in or are interested in.”(Keller, 1986) In one hand, the coloring brought them a sense of familiarity. On the other hand, the content in the card, specifically “我爱你”, let the students experience the beauty of the Chinese characters as well. In conclusion, the Chinese card making game is a good way to teach the support class students meaningful but complicated Chinese vocabulary.

4.3 Discussion

In this chapter, the teacher-researcher focused on introducing Chinese vocabulary teaching strategies from two perspectives: sound-similarity teaching strategies, and visual-image teaching strategies. The sound-similarity teaching strategies involved particular emphasis on the Pinyin or pronunciation of the Chinese vocabulary, while the visual-image teaching strategies were more concerned about the Chinese characters or the writing of the Chinese vocabulary.

The natural procedure in learning a new language is to establish a relation between new propositions or tasks and what is already known in the existing language in the mind (Ringbom, 2007). In terms of Chinese speaking teaching strategies, both the sound-similarity teaching strategies and visual-image teaching strategies emphasises on connecting the support class students’ existing English language knowledge to
the newly-required Chinese language knowledge.

In terms of sound-similarity teaching strategies, the teacher-researcher took full advantage of students’ prior knowledge to achieve the goal of knowledge transfer. Firstly, to make Chinese tones easier for support students to pronounce correctly, the teacher-researcher introduced learner-designed body movements to the class. Initially, she designed body movements, which represented the various Chinese tones. As the class progressed, these students were able to take the initiative and create body movements on their own. From their perspective, the body movements felt like dancing, and they gained considerable pleasure from the process. The body movements may help them to realise the changes of the tones but not help them to acquire the right tones. Rather, it performs a “fun” role for learning engagement. The body movement strategies have not reduced their struggle to learn tones. It is important to recognise that connecting body movements to the learning of Chinese tones made the class more enjoyable for students. It inspired their motivation to learn this particular element of Chinese. Most of the body movements were created by the students and thus belonged to them. This exemplified how student-entered learning approach was commonly used in this teacher researcher’s Chinese classes.

Secondly, sound-similarity between the students’ first language (English) and their second language (Chinese) involved transferring Chinese Pinyin to Australian pronunciation and transferring the decoding strategies of phonemes in English vocabulary learning to Chinese vocabulary learning. The advantage of this method is that learning and memorising new Chinese words parallels their ways of learning English. In this sense, they learned the new language by using their prior knowledge. The disadvantage is that not all the Chinese vocabulary can be learned in this way. The Chinese teacher had to search for special words that would be appropriate for this method. The teacher had to make sure that the pronunciation of the words to be learned by the rules that had been used in their English pronunciation learning. The
teacher had to ensure that the Chinese words being taught were productive and
derivative, commonly used in daily life. This could be a big challenge for the
Chinese teacher. Although she made every effort to have the students think of sound
similarities between the two languages, the support class students’ special literacy
level made it more challenging. Student-centred teaching strategies could not be
wholly applied in support students’ Chinese language learning. The teacher needed
to provide them with a high-level of scaffolding, such as modelling. Only through
this were students able to taste the happiness of achievement. Such delightful
experiences can increase their motivation for their future attempts in Chinese Pinyin
learning.

Thirdly, sound-similarity teaching strategies also involved building their learning of
new words upon those previously learnt. It is a method which required considerable
passion and patience for support class students on the part of the Chinese teacher,
because support class students may take a longer to acquire new knowledge
compared to mainstream students. The teacher had to increase the waiting time for
support class students, when they were connecting their prior knowledge to the new.

In regard to visual-image teaching strategies, the teacher-researcher mainly aimed to
make Chinese characters more easily mastered and memorised by using students’
prior knowledge of visual literacy.

Firstly, some English symbols, particularly the English letters and Chinese characters
are visually similar. This formed the basis upon which students were able to
complete the learning of some Chinese words. However, the visual similarities
between these two languages is of course not precisely comparable. Some English
symbols are only similar to one or two components of some Chinese characters. This
made it hard for them to transfer English symbols to one entire Chinese character in
learning, and so they often had to learn the rest of the components of one character
by rote. From this perspective, a high level of scaffolding by the teacher was still
needed in this type of transfer. The Chinese teacher could guide them to learn the visually similar components of a character by low level of scaffolding such as questioning. After receiving the students’ answers, the teacher reiterated their statement. Based on the effectiveness of transfer to the students, the Chinese teacher led further exploration of the rest of the character’s components. It was a way to engage the students’ ideas in class. This was particularly important for support class students. It made them feel proud and confident about their prior knowledge, which may further stimulate their motivation to learn Chinese characters.

Secondly, the visual-image teaching strategies also involved the transfer from imagery story to Chinese characters, a strategy more commonly used in the teacher-researcher’s Chinese class. The teacher-researcher attempted to use imagery stories to explain the meaning of one Chinese character more easily. Compared with listening to stories made by the teacher-researcher, support class students seemed keener to create various stories themselves. Sometimes their understanding of the Chinese word did not exactly match its original meaning, but to encourage them to keep thinking and focusing on the class, it was still necessary for the Chinese teacher to use positive feedback as much as possible. Most of the students’ ideas did make sense, if the Chinese teacher considered them from the students’ perspective. It required the teacher-researcher to keep asking open-ended questions and affirm the students’ answers even if their story only had a minor connection with the new character. Such teacher comments should both compliment the reasonable parts of the story and offer suggestions to correct imperfections. The Chinese teacher’s feedback should specifically cover details of the learner-made stories and not take the form of abstract comment, in order to stimulate their motivation to continue learning. Moreover, in one Chinese lesson the support class students’ attention span was limited, and such specific, detailed comments shortened the trial and error time for students. It will make students experience the enjoyment of a convincing and imagery story in a short time. In essence, the teacher’s detailed comments about the story constitute another way to highlight the characteristics of the new character. The
students were able to review the new word more naturally.

Last, the teacher-researcher introduced the games related to Chinese characters, including a Chinese character search game, the “60 seconds dash” game and Chinese cards making. Since they are all games based on the visual characteristics of Chinese characters, they can be categorised as visual-image teaching strategies as well. One key common feature of the games is that they all concerned students’ motivation to learn. The traditional word search game, which required students to pick out words in the grid, didn’t work in Chinese class and probably resulted from the teacher’s underestimate of the students’ learning level. Instead, they welcomed the Chinese character search game in real street photos. For the support class students, this form of search game was innovative but not particularly challenging, and they were able to experience the pleasure of success, so they were be motivated to join in the game.

The second game “60 seconds dash” game took advantage of students’ competitive natures. To build their confidence, the teacher must pay attention to controlling the level of difficulty of the new characters in the game. If it the selected character is too easy, the students may be lack of the motivation to join in, yet they might give up if the teacher has chosen characters which were too far beyond their learning level.

Compared with previous games, the Chinese card making game was not particularly beneficial to the memorising of Chinese characters. It primarily aimed to offer more enjoyment to support class students. At least the students were able to show the results of their Chinese character learning to their friends and families. It would meet students’ need for self-esteem, a key factor of stimulating student learning. All in all, if such a game designed for Chinese class matches the support students’ learning level and psychological needs, it is worth using in Chinese character teaching.

4.4 Conclusion
In this chapter, the vocabulary teaching strategies for support class students were presented in two main features: Sound-similarity teaching strategies and visual-image teaching strategies. Initially, the sound-similarity teaching strategies, which included “transferring learner-designed body movements to Chinese tonal words”, “transferring Chinese Pinyin to “Australian Pinyin”, “transferring English vocabulary decoding strategies to Chinese vocabulary learning”, “transferring previously learnt Chinese vocabulary newly acquired Chinese vocabulary”, all focused on Pinyin or pronunciation teaching strategies for vocabulary. All these strategies were based on the support class students” prior knowledge, concern about student-centred teaching strategies, and aiming to activate students” motivation to learn Chinese word pronunciation. Secondly, visual-image teaching strategies, including the transfer from English symbols, imagery stories to Chinese characters and games related to Chinese characters, demonstrated Chinese character teaching strategies. These strategies required high and low level scaffolding and great patience on the part of the Chinese teacher. The ultimate goal of the strategies was meeting the psychological needs of the support class students and build their confidence in the learning of Chinese characters. In next chapter, the Chinese learning and speaking teaching strategies for support class students will be presented through data analysis.
Chapter 5 Teaching Listening and speaking – combining traditional and modern strategies

5.0 Introduction

Chapter 4 analysed the vocabulary teaching strategies for the support class students in the teacher-researcher’s Chinese class. This chapter focuses on the analysis of teaching strategies in listening and speaking for these special students. Specifically, it analyses the traditional and modern strategies used by the teacher-researcher.

5.1 Traditional “leaning by doing” strategies

Traditional “learning by doing” teaching strategies for teaching listening and speaking were used in the support class, specifically role-play activity, movement instruction activity, and guessing activities were developed throughout the three stages of the action research.

5.1.1 Role-play activity

The concept of role-play is not new in second language teaching and learning. In the teacher-researcher’s Chinese class, she organised topic-related role-play activities to let the students apply their newly acquired Chinese language in specific situations. Below is an example of role-play activity, which took place during the topic of ‘Chinese food’.

After reviewing the pronunciation of word “炒饭 chǎo fàn”, which means “fried rice”, I organized one role-play game. I told students that “Ms Zhang welcome you guys to my newly-opened Chinese food court and I offered special Chinese “炒饭 chǎo fàn” today. One student asked, “is it real? Can we have some real fried rice?” Then the students burst into laughter immediately. Another student asked, “Can we speak English?” Then I addressed the rule that ‘please speak
Chinese only, otherwise Ms Zhang can't understand what you are saying.” When I asked, “Who’d like to be my customer?” All the students raised hands and looked at me. (Reflective journal, 13/08/2014)

The teacher-researcher simulated a newly opened Chinese food court to begin the role-play activity. Choosing an appropriate situation and keeping in mind students' needs and interests is always a golden rule for role-play activity (Livingstone, 1983). The teacher-researcher organised this role-play activity after teaching the pronunciation of “炒饭” (fried rice) in Chinese. The students were provided with further opportunities to practice the pronunciation of this newly learnt word in conversations which, took place in the chosen situation. The students could also practice Chinese vocabulary, which included greetings, numbers and other previously-learnt topics when they ordered food. Before beginning, two students asked questions about the possibilities of having real Chinese fried rice and speaking English in the activity, which indicated considerable interest in this role-play activity.

When the teacher asked who would be the first customer, all students put up their hands, showing they were keen to participate in the activity. In conclusion, the students’ highly concentrated attention and interest for this activity helped form a good foundation for the next one.

After explaining the situation and rules of the activity, the teacher-researcher handed out scripts to the students. The content of the script in her lesson plan was as follows:

Please translate Chinese Pinyin into English and fill them on the lines.

Waitress: nǐ hǎo. (________________)
Customer: nǐ hǎo. (______________)
Waitress: nǐ yào chī shén me? (What would you like to eat?)
Customer: chǎo fàn, xiè xiè. (_______)
Waitress: dà chǎo fàn? Xiǎo chǎo fàn? (________?________)?
Customer: xiǎo chǎo fàn. (__________)
Waitress (serving food to the customer): wǔ kuài. (___ dollars.)
Customer (paying the money): xiè xiè. (_____)
Waitress: zài jiàn. (______)
Customer: zài jiàn. (________)

(Lesson plan, 13/08/2014)
This script presented all the Chinese words and sentences which might be needed in the Chinese food court situation. It is recommended to introduce any new vocabulary before the role-play (Sciartilli, 1983). The higher the level of students the more difficult it is to prefigure accurately what language students will need, but well-rounded linguistic preparation is needed at the beginning of the role-play game (Livingstone, 1983). The lesson plan called for the students to translate Chinese into English. Since she didn’t directly show them the bilingual version, it forced the students to recall the Chinese language knowledge, including words, sentences and etiquette. In this script, the students had to make every effort to recall the newly acquired word “hǎo fàn”. Four repetitions would help them to fix the new words in memory. The script also emphasized the revision of greetings and courtesy expressions, such as “nǐ hǎo” which means hello, “xiè xiè” which means thanks, “zàijiàn” which means goodbye. These useful words of courtesy can be designed for use in various situations, the food court being just one example. The classroom teachers also held the view that, ‘the courtesy words should be an important part of the linguistic preparation of the role-play activity.’ In the interview, a classroom teacher said:

For support class students, learning some Chinese greetings and etiquette, to a great degree, is more important than learning other words or sentences. In Australia, such a multi-cultural country, they have many chances to meet people with Chinese or Asian backgrounds in their everyday life. They should learn how to show best manners to them. One day, they may even make friends with them. (Interview with Ms Lal, 10/09/2014)

The role-play activity imitated real life in Australia society. As the classroom teacher expected, the students gained chances to practice Chinese greetings and etiquette in the role-play activity. To an extent, fluent Chinese greetings and expressions of courtesy may also contribute to their personal growth in the future. From this perspective, it is also necessary to take Chinese words and sentences into
consideration as this Chinese teacher makes linguistic preparation for role-play activities in the support class.

The teacher researcher paid particular attention to the students’ learning level as she designed the script. For example, the students were taught “ǐ yào chǐ shén me?” which means “What would you like to eat?” However, she did not require the students to translate. Vygotsky(1978) described learning as occurring in the zone of proximal development:

The distance between the actual development level as described by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86).

In this case, the teacher-researcher showed the English meaning beside the Chinese sentence “nǐ yào chǐ shén me?” She predicted the support class students’ zone of proximal development was sufficient to understand the sentence with the teacher’s English written hints. “Important to promoting development within the students’ zone of proximal development is the teacher’s ability to relinquish control of strategies to the students” (Jonoson, Santamaria, Flectcher, and Bos, 2002). The teacher-researcher did not require the students to translate the sentence by themselves. Meanwhile, “dà” which means big, “xǐōo” which means small and “wū” which means five were designed to be translated in the script and to be spoken by the students in the upcoming role-play activity. The different levels of tasks and different teaching strategies towards the tasks would help the students alleviate their psychological burden and reduce the cognitive level in the role-play activity. It is important to promote the support class students’ zone of proximal development of their Chinese listening and speaking skills.

The third step of role-play activity was a group exercise according to the script. The teacher-researcher first assigned one role to the whole class. Afterwards, she
organized another exercises, separating the boys from the girls.

In ordering fried rice for example:

After checking the answers of translating part, I asked the whole class to take the role of customer, while I would be the waitress. As I finished my line ‘nǐ hǎo’, the students kept quiet. I said, ‘Guys, the waitress greeted you just now. It’s your turn to say hello to her in Chinese now. Please look at your script.’ But, they still dared not say anything. So I had to demonstrate first. Specifically, when I read out the customer’s lines, they repeated what I said. When I said the waitress’s lines, they just listened carefully. With twice practices, the students were able to speak out loudly by themselves. My students and I took turns to say the two roles lines. While I found that they couldn’t pronounce the word ‘xiǎo’ correctly, I demonstrated again and corrected their pronunciation one by one. Finally, they started speaking out loudly together. Afterwards, I assigned girls to be the customer and asked boys to listen. The boys pointed out the error of ‘zài jiàn’ in girls’ conversation. As the boys and girls swapped roles, the girls picked out the boy’s wrong pronunciation of word ‘xi è xi è’. Actually, the pronunciations of two words were both acceptable. Considering the students’ insistence, I corrected the boys’ and girls’ the pronunciations again, until they were satisfied. (Reflective journal, 13/08/2014)

Before the individual performances, the teacher-researcher organized the group exercises and assigned the whole class to the role of customer. “Cooperative learning can be used to complete group projects in content area subjects, and researchers generally consider it to have positive outcomes for students with learning and behavior problems” (Jenkins, Antil, Wayne, and Vadasy, 2003). The teacher-researcher applied cooperative learning, specifically a group exercise in this case. As a result, the support class students who were shy or nervous, and those who were not confident about Chinese pronunciation could participate in the exercise. Since the students worked together in a group, they could hide their anxiety and incorrect pronunciation. After that, the students were divided into boys’ and girls’ groups to practice. Since the groups reduced the scale, it was easier for students themselves,
other students and Chinese teacher to find problems in the conversations. In other words, it will be beneficial for students to correct their pronunciation with classmates and the teacher’s assistance.

The students refused to speak the simple word “nǐ hāo” at the beginning. To help them to overcome psychological stress of speaking out, the teacher-researcher spoke the waitress’s lines as a model and required the students’ to imitate her twice. Modeling is a commonly applied means in scaffolding teaching strategy. It is “he process of offering behavior for imitation”(Tharp and Gallimore 1988, p. 47). “The modeling or presentation of the reasons for why something is worth learning is mentioned as a means to scaffold student affect together with the intentions of recruitment or frustration control.” In this case, the teacher-researcher took advantage of high-level scaffolding, specifically modeling, and released the students’ frustration of speaking Chinese. In this case, the students at last dared to speak. After that, apart from the teacher-researcher’s modeling, the students also mutually shared each other’s pronunciation. This form of strategy for teaching students with learning and behavior problems is called peer teaching or peer tutoring. Research focusing on peer tutoring with special education students has most frequently been used to teach or monitor basic skills such as oral reading, answering reading comprehension questions, and practicing spelling words, math facts, and new sight word vocabulary (Fuchs, Hamlett, et al., 1997; Gerber and Kauffman, 1981; Sxrugs and Richter, 1985). In this case, the teacher-researcher introduced peer tutoring into her Chinese listening and speaking teaching. The support class students were even stricter than the teacher with the pronunciation of their peers. The teacher was satisfied with the students’ pronunciations of “nǐ hāo” and “zài jiàn”, while the boys and girls were still in pursuit of perfection. The demanding criticism from peers usurped the teacher’s responsibility, and unwittingly the students improved their pronunciation. More importantly, the peer tutoring in Chinese speaking did not cause embarrassment when they got straightforward feedback from peers. Therefore, peer tutoring was effective, as it was in other subjects of the support class students.
The fourth step of role-play activity was individual exercises at a basic level of difficulty, a vital component of the activity. Students volunteered to play their favorite roles in given situations. To build their confidence, they were allowed to have the script to assist.

As presented in the teacher-researcher’s reflective journal, in the “newly opened food court”, the students attempted to order “chǎo fàn” (fried rice) as follows:

J was the first volunteer of the individual exercise. I smiled to him and started our Chinese conversation with greeting ‘nǐ hǎo’ as the script written. He also followed the script to respond to me sentence by sentence. He paused at the sentence ‘xiǎo chǎo fàn’ (small fried rice) looking at me anxiously. I turned face to the other students and made a gesture of please. The rest of the class started saying this word at once. I heard both correct and incorrect answers. Without saying anything, I faced to J again and said, “Have a go, J!” in a whisper. He spoke out slowly according to classmates’ answers. I thumbed up to him with a determined look. After that, we finished the rest of the dialogue smoothly. As the performance complicated, I asked the ‘audiences’ to give J a score and gave reasons. Most students gave him seven out of ten, or eight out of ten. They said that J lost points for unnatural expressions and the word ‘xiǎo chǎo fàn’. One girl also pointed out his problem of tones in the word ‘zài jiàn’. At last, we reviewed all the points that students mentioned in the comments section. Particularly, I emphasized that we’d better to smile when we greet with others in Chinese culture. (Reflective journal, 13/08/2014)

In this case, when the student J had the difficulty with the pronunciation of “xiǎo chǎo fàn”, the teacher-researcher did not give direct hints to him. Instead, she motioned to other students to give J some ideas. As a result, the other students gained an opportunity to participate in the activity and present their valuable opinions. The teacher-researcher temporarily gave up the role of authority in the role-play activity. An earlier researcher said that whether taking any part in the role-play or not, the role of the teacher is to be as unobtrusive as possible (Livingstone, 1983). In this case, the teacher-researcher put this guidance into practice. Apart from allowing peer tutoring, her feedback to the students was low profile and positive. Specifically, she encourage
the student to have a try in a low voice, appreciated the student’s answer with eye contact and gave a thumbs-up to the student. These small movements avoided interrupting the students’ performances and involvement in the role-play activity. It ensured that they could make progress in a relaxed atmosphere.

The scoring section was also an important element in the individual exercises. In scoring and commenting on their peers’ performances in the role-play activity, some students mentioned not only student J’s pronunciation mistakes, such as “xiǎo chāo fàn”, they also pointed out the problems with his tones and facial expressions. It indicated that the students took the role of tutor seriously and focused on the class. One important aspect of peer tutoring is preparing the students to serve as peer tutors by teaching them specific instructional and feedback routines to ensure success (Fuchs, Mathes, and Simmons, 1997). In this case, the teacher-researcher did not teach the students specific instructional and feedback routines regarding their peers’ performances, as they simply expressed their true thoughts, such as “unnatural expression”, or “incorrect pronunciation”. According to the peers’ straightforward comments, the class accurately exposed the mistakes together. It indicated that, as the students engaged in the peer tutoring in Chinese class, their feedback or comments could help avoid the teacher’s traditional feedback routines. Sometimes the peer feedback can be more natural and powerful.

The last step of the role-play activity was the application of the learned script to real life practice, which proved to the ‘tough’ part of learning. In this step, the students were not allowed to repeat what the script said. Instead, they were required to use new vocabulary and sentences. Using the same topic of “ordering fried rice” as an example, when the level of learning difficulty increased, only two students took the challenge to join the activity:

Before the conversation, student T told me she wanted to order ‘dà chāo fàn’ which means ‘big size fried rice’ instead of ‘xiǎo chāo fàn’.
However, as our conversation came to the part of deciding the size of fried rice, she became confused again. She looked at the script, just saying ‘chāo fàn’ for three times, but she couldn’t speak out ‘dà’ or ‘xiǎo’. So I repeated ‘dà’ with the interrogative mood, while I raised my voice and opened my two arms. As I said ‘xiǎo’ also with the interrogative mood, I lowered my voice and closed my arms. Then I heard the other students shouted ‘dà’ ‘dà’ ‘dà’. J followed what the classmates said, telling me ‘dà’ with a hesitating look. I switched to English mode and said, ‘Ok, What you need is a big sized fried rice. Isn’t it?’ She nodded and looked relaxed. As J finished ordering, I suggested all the class applauded for her. She smiled like a flower. (Reflective journal, 13/08/2014)

In this case, student T proposed to use “ig fried rice’ to replace ‘small fried rice” while ordering. However, she had difficulty pronouncing the word “dà”, which means big in Chinese. In the guidelines to scaffolding instructions for students with learning and behavior problems, Vaughn (2009) suggested that one should: “Provide teacher assistance during the first student attempts at skill” (Vaughn, 2009, p. 23). The teacher-researcher used offered two types of hints. First, she intentionally spoke louder to indicate “dà”(big), and in contrast, she lowered down her voice to suggest ‘xiǎo’(small). Second, she opened her arms for “dà”(big) and closed them for ‘xiǎo’(small). While the clues assisted the first student who attempted the activity, other students also benefited from it. For instance, as the teacher presented changing voice modulation and hand gestures, the other students shouted “dà” together. All the students were engaged in the activity. From this perspective, the teacher’s scaffolding for the first attempting students was also beneficial for the other students.

When the teacher-researcher saw student J’s hesitation over the pronunciation of “dà”, she switched from the Chinese mode to the English, saying “Ok, What you need is a big sized fried rice. Isn’t it?” As a result, J’s facial expression relaxed, and the teacher’s suggestion of clapping for J’s performance made him smile. One of the guidelines to scaffolding instruction for students with learning and behavior problems is to “Praise the accomplishment of each small step” (Vaughn, 2009). In this case, the teacher-researcher did not praise the student directly at each step.
Sometimes, she gave immediate feedback to the student in the learner’s first language, and sometimes she suggested the students’ clap for their peers. These movements, including praise, aimed to make the students self-affirmed. Affirmations from both teacher and peers would strengthen the students’ self-confidence in listening and speaking practice, especially in the advanced-difficulty-level section of the activity.

5.1.2 Movement instruction activity

Apart from role-play activity, movement instruction activity was also part of the teacher-researcher’s Chinese classes. Physical movements encourage our bodies to manufacture endorphin (the chemical that contributes to ‘runner’s high’) and dopamine, which helps us see patterns and learn faster. (Snell, 1980, cited in Promislow, 1999). To integrate physical movements into Chinese teaching, especially listening and speaking teaching, the teacher-researcher explored movement instruction activity for the support class in respect to the rules of the activity, the effectiveness of the activity, and the control of the difficulty level in the activity.

The basic rules of the movement instruction activity are:

a) Each body part, such as eyes, nose, ears, knees and so on respectively demonstrate a Chinese word,

b) According to the Chinese instruction, the students must quickly touch corresponding body part,

c) Any touched wrong body part or who were unable to quickly follow the instruction were out of the activity,

d) The last person remaining would be the winner.

One lesson topic was “I love you”. The teacher-researcher presented the differences between the traditional method and the rules of the activity in the reflective journal
This lesson's task was learning to say, “I love you” to family members. The key words are “I" and "you". As the students always got confused about the word "wǒ" which means "I" and "nǐ" which means "you" in last lesson. I asked them to look at the white board and follow me to say the words for several times. They could pronounce them very well, but always misrecognized “I” to “you” last time. So some shy students who were afraid of making mistakes kept quiet eventually. That’s why I proposed the game "head and shoulder" today. The rule was that students should touch the head when they hear "wǒ", and they should touch their shoulders when they hear “nǐ”. Also, they should speak out what the teacher said when they touch the corresponding body parts. The one who couldn’t follow the teacher’s instruction would be out of the game. The one who persisted to the last moment would be the winner. (Reflective journal, 09/04/2014)

In this case, the teacher-researcher mentioned the reason for introducing movement instruction activity. The traditional method involved the visual (look at the white board, watch the teacher) and auditory (listen to the teacher and imitate) senses. Even so, when faced with two words with opposite meanings, such as “I” and “you”, the students were confused. It means the traditional method could not help the support class students to distinguish and memorise the meanings of words very well. Thus, they were not confident enough to join in the speaking practice. With movement instruction activity, the students' visual, auditory and kinesthetic abilities all apply. The students were to touch the head demonstrating “wǒ” and the shoulder demonstrating “nǐ”. Although touching was just a small movement, the students had to quickly connect the brain to a physical movement. Indeed, bodily/kinesthetic intelligence is one of the eight multiple intelligences that Harvard’s Howard Gardner (1993) and others have identified as ways people solve problems and learn things. The rule shown in the case proved that the teacher-researcher’s bodily/kinesthetic intelligence used in her class helped the support class students’ Chinese learning.

The teacher-researcher noted the effectiveness of the activity when the students
performed the listening and speaking practice of “wǒ” and “nǐ”:

At the first time, when I said “wǒ” or “nǐ”, the students rushed to point their heads or shoulders. Most of the students could follow my instructions, while only two or three students made mistakes sometimes. As we reached the fourth round, there were still 3 students “survived”. The only problem was that they barely spoke, just focusing on pointing the body parts demonstrating the two words. So at the second time, I declared another rule “The people who didn’t speak out the word as pointing the body part should be out of the game as well”. From then on, I heard students’ voices. At the beginning two rounds, they would look at each other to make sure that they pointed the right body parts. Since they spoke with pointing, they had less time watching each other. At the sixth time, it became impossible to select the winner because five students persisted to the seventh round. They spoke words loudly and correctly, and didn’t get confused with the two words at all. (Reflective journal, 09/04/2014)

The effectiveness of the activity can be found in the number of the rounds of the game. The first time, only three students remained by the fourth round. The sixth time the game was played, there were still five students competing by the seventh round. It indicated that students developed a better understanding of “wǒ” and “nǐ” as the activity continued. They didn’t confuse the two words like the previous lesson, because the movements made them more attentive and more involved in the lesson. They had to activate brains to think of the body parts demonstrating the words. At the same time, they had to point the matching body parts immediately. Kinesthetic actions seem to originate the holistic right side of the brain. Verbal language is left-hemisphere based. (Promislow, 1999). The movement instruction activity involved both hemispheres. It helped support class students to use both sides of their brains in a more integrated way in listening and speaking practice.

Moreover, speaking the words instead of only pointing the body parts, made a further contribution to the effectiveness of the activity. At the beginning, students just followed the teacher’s instructions to point to the body parts. They seldom spoke the words and so there was no speaking practice. As the teacher-researcher required them to say the words while pointing to body parts, they seemed more focused. They
stopped looking at each other, because they had to pay more attention to both
listening and speaking. Their visual, auditory and kinesthetic abilities were fully
activated at that moment, which helped them master the Chinese words more
efficiently. It promoted accurate pronunciation and body movements.

The teacher-researcher added two more rules to the movement instruction activity in
her Chinese classes. These involved opposing movements: stand up-sit down and
clap-no clap. Below is an example of the real situation of applying this advanced
version of the activity, when they were learning “xī huan”(‘like’) and “bù xī huan”
(‘dislike’).

I told students that stand up demonstrated the word ‘xī huan’(‘like’),
while sit down demonstrated the word ‘bù xī huan’(‘dislike’). As
usual, they had to do the matching movements and speak out the
words as soon as possible. Otherwise, they would be out. They looked
seriously and followed my instructions very well. When they realized
the mistakes, they laughed and consciously quit the activity. Since
they made fewer mistakes, I proposed the new rule: clapping to
replace standing up, non-clapping to replace sitting down. Presently,
applause filled the classroom. Students listened to other students’
applause carefully, while they concerned about own movements and
pronunciations. It’s easier for them and me to pick out the people who
did wrongly, just by listening to the sounds. Compared with the stand
up-sit down version, they laughed more and seemed more excited in
this version. At the end of the lesson, some students still said, Can we
play again?’ As a result, they memorized the two words quickly, even
though the two words seemed more difficult than the words that were
previously applied in this activity. (Reflective journal, 30/07/2014)

In this case, the teacher-researcher upgraded the types of movements to add more fun
and challenge to this activity. The students no longer had to point to body parts.
Instead, the movement “stand up” and “sit down” demonstrated two words “xī huan”
(‘like’) and “bù xī huan” (‘dislike’) respectively. Compared with simple finger
pointing, the two new movements imposed a higher requirement for their body
coordination. However, the students were still willing to follow the teacher’s
instructions to complete the movements. When did wrong movements, they quit the activity without complaint. It indicated that the support students enjoyed participating in the advanced-version activity and remained engaged in it.

The teacher-researcher introduced more challenging rules: clap to demonstrate “like”, and no-clap to show “dislike”. To present a new concept or skill for students with learning and behavior problems, Vaughn (2009) wrote: “If possible, present the new concept or language pattern by using more than one input mode (e.g., auditory, visual, kinesthetic) (Vaughn, 2009, p.210). In this case, the sound of the clap was an obvious stimulation of the students’ auditory, while the clapping motion required their kinesthetic input. In addition to the visual sense (identifying mistakes and who should be out of the game), the three different learning schemes increased the students’ focus on the listening and speaking activity. The variety of movements, especially those which activated more of the students’ senses, kept them engaged in Chinese listening and speaking learning.

Controlling the level of difficulty in the movement instruction activity was another issue. The teacher-researcher managed this three different ways: switching the roles of instructors and listeners, changing the team scale (explained below) and adjusting the speed of giving instructions.

The teacher played the role of instructor in the basic version of the activity. The students listened to what the teacher said, thought about the movements demonstrating the Chinese words, and completed the matching movements, such as pointing to the head or clapping. Since the teacher modelled the words or sentences, the students did not need to consider their own pronunciation, which reduced the level of difficulty for the students. Vaughn (2009) spoke to scaffolding for students with learning and behavior problems: “Teach easier skill first, then more difficult skills” (p.23). To make the activity more challenging, the rule of the advanced version called for one student to be selected as the instructor, while the other students
followed his/her instructions. The selected student had to consider the selection and pronunciation of the words, requiring a good command of the Chinese words or sentences and confidence in speaking in front of peers.

Sometimes the selected student could not give clear instructions due to nervousness or insufficient knowledge, at which point the teacher provided assistance, to minimise potentially embarrassing situations:

Student C was firstly selected to be the instructors of saying “xǐ huán” (“like”) and “bù xǐ huán” (“dislike”). When he came to the front, he looked confident with a smiling face. As I say, “Let’s begin”, his face quickly turned to red. After one minute of silence, he said, “I forgot.” and headed for the seat. I stopped him and wrote the Pinyin of the words on the whiteboard. I said, “I forgot to write the two choices for you, I know it’s hard to decide what you want to test us on.” At a glance, he spoke out the word “xǐ huán” immediately. All the class, including Student C, turned to be relaxed. The following student-instructors also looked at the hints on the whiteboard to give them some ideas, when their minds were empty suddenly. So the silent and embarrassing moment never happened in this class again. (Reflective journal, 30/07/2014)

Some support class students were sensitive, and easily became nervous, such as student C. He was prepared to give up and go back to his seat, but the teacher-researcher provided hints in Pinyin. This form of scaffolding decreases the difficulty level for the student-instructor. For it, J spoke out the instructions correctly. The teacher-researcher also attributed the student’s failed try on the tough choices given instead of the student poor memory, nervousness or other reasons. A general principle of teaching language to students with learning and behavior problems is to “use language as an intrinsic motivator” (Vaughn, 2009, p.212). In this case, rather than comforting student C directly by saying “take it easy” or “have a try later”, the teacher-researcher said, “I forgot to write the two choices for you, I know it’s hard to decide what you want to test us on.” It avoided an embarrassing situation. To balance the difficulty level of the activity with students’ self-confidence it is important to provide timely scaffolding and use the art of language to motivate them when they
are in trouble.

In addition to making students the instructors, the team scale is another determinant of the activity’s difficulty level. From easy to difficult, The participants (except the student-instructor) were addressed either as the whole class, in small groups (three or four students) or individually.

In the “like” and “dislike” class, the teacher-researcher presented students’ performances in the three situations:

When I gave the instructions “xǐ huan” (“like”) and “bù xǐ huan” (“dislike”) to the whole class, they did the movements (stand up or sit down) together. Some students who missed the words would look at others quickly and kept up with the pace at once. So I hardly found the students who made obvious mistakes. As for the small group exercise, three or four students voluntarily joined the activity to take one the challenges. Before taking actions, other students were used to looking at one student who was supposed to be the best learner in the group. So the group members couldn’t do the movements in different speed. Sometimes if the “leader” of the group made a wrong movement, the whole group went out. In the case of one-student exercise, only one or two students who had strong confidence would participate in. Since all the other students watched his/her individual performance, they would shout out the answers when the “challenger” was in trouble. But, as I asked the student who used to shout out the correct answers to join in the “individual challenge” in the next time, they always refused. Only Student K took the challenge. As K did wrong movement, I always slowed down my instruction speed to repeat again, to let her think for a while. Meanwhile, the other students also shouted some ideas as J had no idea. (Reflective journal, 06/08/2014)

Initially, when the class performed the activity together, the students looked at each other before doing movements according to the instructions. “Large group instruction is appropriate when the goal of instruction is similar for all students” (Vaughn, 1999, p.86). In this large group activity, the students felt relaxed, since they could get answers from peers if they had no ideas. However, it was difficult for the teacher-researcher to provide assistance to the students since she could not distinguish those
who understood the correct movement or not. This changed when they were divided into small groups. “Small group instruction usually consists of groups of three to five students. Teachers form small groups of students who either at different ability levels or have similar ability levels in a particular curriculum area” (Vaughn, 1999, p.87). The students in the small groups were of different Chinese learning levels and some tended to view the best student as a reference. Although lower learning level students sometimes cheated by looking at higher learning level students, they all gained more confidence and made progress in the process. At last, the “individual challenge” had the highest difficulty level among the three levels in this activity, and only Student K took the challenge. “One-to-one instruction allows the teacher to provide intensive instruction, closely monitoring student progress and modifying and adapting procedure to match the student’s learning patterns”(Vaughn, 1999, p.87). In this case, the teacher-researcher and the other students together assisted K through the tough challenge. In conclusion, the three difficulty levels in different scales of groups ensured that each student had a chance to confidently participate in the activity.

The speed of giving instructions was the last key factor affecting the difficulty level of the activity. The faster the instructor gave the Chinese words or sentences, the more difficult the activity became. The teacher compared the differences between instructions in normal and increased speed:

At the beginning, I said the word “wǒ” (I) and “nǐ” slowly to make sure that they can repeat what I said and point the head (demonstrating “wǒ”) and shoulder (demonstrating “nǐ”) exactly. With the exercise going, over five students could continue the activity one round after one round. So I decided to speed up. As a result, the three of the five students went out of the activity one after another. I heard the students shouted “faster, faster!” In the final round, I almost spoke the two Chinese words without panting. (Reflective journal, 06/08/2014)

At first, the teacher-researcher pronounced “wǒ” and “nǐ” at slow speed to familiarise the students with these Chinese words, so that they would not get
confused when they heard them in the instructions. An easy beginning gave the students confidence to speak the words and follow the teacher’s instructions in the activity. More than five students stayed in the activity round after round. It meant most of the students had acquired a good understanding of the two words in the process. Therefore, the teacher-researcher increased the level of difficulty by speeding up, raising the activity to a higher level. More students were eliminated. With their peers shouting “faster, faster”, the students who were still in the activity were under increased pressure, but “a quick pace also keeps students actively engaged in the lesson. There is very little time for them to do anything other than the lesson at hand” (Vaughn, 1999, p.25). The students paid more attention to get through the speed challenge, and their listening and speaking abilities were enhanced.

5.1.3 Guessing activity

The guessing activity is one in which the participants compete individually or in teams to identify something that is obscurely indicated. (Astuti, 2010, p.11). It is a common activity in mainstream students’ second language learning. There was little available research about its application as a Chinese listening and speaking exercise for support class students, so the teacher-researcher put it into practice in an attempt to discover the advantages and effectiveness of the guessing activity in improving students’ listening and speaking abilities.

After teaching the topic of “colors” during the 2014 Brazil FIFA World Cup, the teacher-researcher organized a class activity called “guessing the national uniform”:

I showed a picture of four national soccer teams’ uniforms. Each uniform is made up of some colors, such as red (hóng sè), yellow (huáng sè), green (lǜ sè), blue (lán sè), etc. I asked students to guess the name of the country that appeared in the picture. In the first round, I gave students a clue, like “This country’s soccer uniform has hóng sè” and chose one students to pick up all the possible countries. Then students had to find the uniforms containing the red color and selected them as possible answers. Also, I invited one volunteer to
have a guess of the country I’m thinking in my mind. If they got the correct answer, I would say “shí” (“yes”) and stopped the activity stopped. Otherwise, in the second round, I would mention another color that the uniform had as well, like “The country’s soccer uniform also has “lán sè”, then students would exclude some other countries and have a guess again. After several rounds’ “description and guessing”, the student who firstly got the correct country would be the winner. (Reflective journal, 18/06/201)

The rules designed by the teacher-researcher presented her original goals of developing students’ listening and speaking abilities through the activity. The original goals or ideal advantages of the guessing activity can be summarised from two aspects. Firstly, the guessing activity aimed to give the students opportunities to practice what they had learnt in their latest lessons. In this case, the students had to recall the meanings of colors in Chinese, such as “hóng sè”, “lán sè”, when the teacher gave them hints containing these words. In this process, the teacher-researcher focused on the students’ listening practices of newly learnt words, as they had just finished the topic of “colors” in Chinese. Richard-Amato said guessing games “can be used to develop or reinforce concept, to add diversion to regular activities, or just to break the ice. However, their most important function is to give students practices in communication.” (Richard-Amato, 1988). This example of “guessing the national uniform” created a large number of opportunities for the students to practice speaking the Chinese color words.

The guessing activity also aims to encourage all the students to engage in the Chinese class. In this example, students with a good grasp of Chinese color words were able to guess the national uniforms containing the colours that teacher spoke. For the students who did not understand the Chinese colours very well, it was still possible to guess the correct country, since they even randomly could choose one country from the four. In previous researches about students with learning and behaviour problems, the first rule for an effective teaching strategy when presenting a new concept or skill is to “[g]ear the activities to the students’ interests and
cognitive level” (Vaughn, 1999, p.210). In this case, the students with higher cognitive levels could get more involved in the activity using their good Chinese knowledge, while those with lower cognitive levels could still participate in the activity using their guessing abilities. Therefore, the students with different cognitive level could be engaged in the guessing activity.

A gap nonetheless continues to exist between the designed goals and teaching realities of using guessing activities in Chinese class. In the “guessing the national uniform” activity as an example, the key problems were observed:

In the first round, I showed four soccer uniforms of four countries: Brasil, Croatia, Mexico and Cameroon. When I started telling them clues, such as “This country’s uniform has three colours, one of them is “huáng sè” (“yellow”). I found that students were still struggling with the pronunciations of the countries’ names. As I saked their ideas of the country that I referred to, they shouted the four countries’ names with nonstandard English. I asked them to repeat the colour I mentioned in Chinese, there’s no response. They got obsessed with the weird country names guessing. So I changed my activity rules immediately. I asked them to use “A, B, C, D” to replace the four countries’ names. Then I said my hints again and asked them to share the Chinese colour words that I used to describe the uniforms. I found that the students started listening carefully to what I was saying. Moreover, they stopped struggling with the countries’ names. Although half of the students still couldn’t match the Chinese words to the meanings at the first time, they tried to pick up the Chinese colours words from my sentence and repeat them from then on. Some of them even raised hands to give me his/her answers and told me the Chinese colour words they heard. With the activity going, the students became more and more skilled with guessing the uniforms that I’m thinking in my mind quickly. Sometimes, when I told the clues, such as “The country’s uniform also had a colour “làn sè”, some of them even shouted “blue” directly. After about 8 times’ tries, the students seemed to be bored. I didn’t raise hands to guess the answers any more. (Reflective journal, 18/06/2014)

At the beginning of the activity, the teacher-researcher prevented the students’ focus on the soccer uniforms’ colours in Chinese. Their attention was absorbed in the
unfamiliar countries’ English names. For students with learning disabilities, “they not only have to allocate more attention to some tasks than nondisabled students do, they also have difficulty selectively attending to the relevant stimuli and attending for sustained period of time” (Hynd, Obrzut, and Browen, 1987; Swanson, 1996). However, the teacher-researcher did not anticipate this issue. The students did not know the countries’ names at all, which made them pay more attention to guessing the countries’ name instead of the Chinese colour. Compared with the Chinese information which was central to the guessing game, the unfamiliar English information more easily drew their attention. The teacher-researcher should have taken the students’ special attention problems into account when she designed the content of the guessing activity.

In this situation, the teacher-researcher made adjustments accordingly. She replaced four countries’ names with four options “A, B, C, D”. Compared with the ordinary English letter options, the Chinese listening exercise seemed to be more challenging. Therefore, the students attention was drawn back to the activity. “Teachers help students with learning disabilities when they gain their attention and direct it to the relevant information. Teacher’s can then check with students to ensure understanding and make further adjustments as needed” (Lerner, 2000). In this case, the support class students began repeating the Chinese colour words that the teacher pronounced, guessing the national uniforms. The classroom teacher re-gained the students’ attention with a teaching plan adjustment during the class.

After several practices, the students were familiar with the Chinese colour words, so that they were able to get the correct answer quickly in subsequent activities. However, after eight practices, the students gradually lost their enthusiasm for the guessing activity. At that point, the teacher-researcher made adjustments to the rules to increase the difficulty level, aiming to re-acquire their attention. Specifically, she invited the students to take over her role and give clues to the other students. The focus of the guessing activity changed from Chinese listening to involve Chinese
Student J voluntarily became the first one to stand at the front of the class. He threw the first clue to the other students. “This country’s soccer uniform has hóng sè (red), hēi sè (black), huáng sè (yellow).” It surprised me a lot, since I intended to ask him to say one Chinese color word at one round while he spoke out all the three colors of the Germany’s uniform at one time. As J finished saying his clue, the student C stood up quickly and gave us the correct answer “A” (Germany). So I proposed all the students to applause for the two boy’s excellent performance. As a reward, Students C got the chance to come to the front. He also tried to follow student J’s way to say all the colors of the country at one time, “This county’s soccer uniform has three colors, hóng sè (red), bái sè (white), and……” I guessed he meant to say another color, but he forgot the pronunciation of this word. So I asked other students to start guessing according to the known clues. While among the four options, Algeria (option B), Russia (Option B), and Korea Public (Option C)’s uniforms all contain white and red. So after excluding the option A quickly, the other students couldn’t wait to get the next clue while Student C looked at me helplessly. I said “Alright, it appears three possibility now. If the answer is option B, you guys think next color should be…. Then I heard one student said “lǜ sè” immediately, and all the students followed him to speak this word out. So I continued, “If the next option is C, which will be the next color?” All the students said “lán sè” in one voice, because “blue” had been mentioned several times before. When I asked, “If the answer is D, the next color should be…” The class became quiet, since they didn’t practice “black” very often in the previous activities. So I asked them to say “hēi sè” for three times and wrote down the hint “hey” on the whiteboard to help them memorize. Eventually, I returned the “stage” to student C. He said the last clue, “The other color of the uniform is hēi sè.” To my happiness, he chose the most unfamiliar color and tried his best to pronounce it. (Reflective journal, 18/06/2014)

At the beginning of this case, student J’s excellent performance gave the teacher-researcher a big surprise. J said the three Chinese color words of the German uniform at one time, while he was only expected to say one color. Addressing the principles of teaching strategies for students with learning and behavior problems, Vaughn (1990) emphasised that teachers should give students opportunities to develop both
their understanding (comprehension) and their ability to express (production) new knowledge or skill in the teaching process. In this case, the teacher-researcher followed this principle. She did not require student J to change in order to follow the previous rule of the activity. In contrast, she praised J’s innovative effort and proposed that the other students applaud him. This approach can build students’ confidence and help them realise their language potential. The kind of positive “showing off” that J did in this activity may encourage him and other students to keep speaking out as many Chinese words as possible in the next activity.

Inspired by student J’s good performance, student C was also keen to pronounce the three Chinese words for one country’s uniform. However, she had the difficulty with the pronunciation of the third Chinese word. It has been said that “much of a special education teacher’s time should be devoted to providing intensive individualized instruction to students identified as having learning disabilities” (Vaughn, 1999, p.77). Many consider this “the hallmark of special education” (Division for Learning Disabilities, 2006). The teacher-researcher provided individualised instruction to Student C. Specifically, as the student was embarrassed, the teacher-researcher temporarily took over the activity and asked the other students to think together about three possibilities for the Chinese words. The teacher relieved student C of excessive stress and at the same time afforded the other students a chance to speak the color words they knew, which included “lǜ sè” and “lán sè”. The teacher-researcher also discovered the class had an overall weakness in speaking the word “hēi sè”. This indicated that the learning level of every student in the support class was unique.

5.2: Modern strategies –Employing Multimedia Technology

Through the three teaching cycles the teacher-researcher developed ideas about using multimedia technology in her Chinese class, which she has named “modern strategies”. She used these strategies in the support class and learned their benefits
and limitations. The three specific strategies used and examined were SMART Board game-based, video material-based, and digital audio-based teaching.

5.2.1 SMART Board game-based teaching strategies

In the recent years, interactive electronic whiteboards have been more and more widely used in primary schools and high schools in Australia. Computer images are displayed on the whiteboards by a digital projector, where they can be seen and manipulated. Using only one finger as a mouse, teachers or students can run applications directly on the boards. SMART Board is currently the most commonly used software being matched with interactive electronic whiteboards. The teacher-researcher took advantage of SMART Board’s templates to design a variety of games for Chinese listening and speaking exercises for the support class.

For example, a SMART Board game was used as a listening activity about the Chinese greeting “How are you?”:

To make the students distinguish three different types of responses to “nǐ hǎo ma?” (“How are you?”), I designed this SMART board listening game. All the cartoon characters appearing in the activities would speak Chinese sentences as finger touched them on interactive white board. I put three cartoon characters: Batman, Superman and Spiderman on the top of game page. No matter who I touched by fingers, the three hero characters just said “nǐ hǎo ma?” in Chinese. As for the bottom of the same game page, I put six cartoon characters from the cartoon TV series Simpsons on there. As the family members of Simpson were touched or clicked by a finger, they would speak Chinese sentences: “wǒ hěn hǎo” (“I’m pretty good.”), “wǒ hái kě yì” (I’m OK.) or “wǒ bù hǎo” (I’m not good) randomly. (Reflective journal, 29/10/2014)

In this interactive whiteboard design, the teacher-researcher attached importance to students’ different learning styles. One important principle of teaching language to students with learning and behavior problems is “[i]f possible, present the new concept or language pattern by using more than one input mode (e.g., auditory, visual, kinesthetic)” (Vaughn, 1999, p.210). In this case the students could use their fingers
like a mouse to run the application the white board, meaning tactile learners can benefit from touching or clicking on the board. The cartoon characters in the game were designed to speak Chinese greetings when the students touched them. Batman, Superman and Spiderman spoke “nǐ hǎo ma?” (“How are you?”) while the Simpson family members were designed to respond in three ways to this question in Chinese. For audio learners, they could receive auditory stimuli by listening to what the cartoon characters said. The teacher-researcher specially selected popular cartoon characters to put into the listening game. The super heroes and the Simpsons were not only eye-catching but also highly interesting, because they could “speak Chinese”, meaning that visual learners could see what was taking place on the board. The SMART Board game was able to accommodate the different learning styles of support class students through various input modes.

In this “How are you?” lesson, the teacher-researcher discovered some of the attractions of interactive whiteboard games for the support class students:

As I turned on the projector, all the students stared at the cartoon characters on the interactive whiteboard calling out their names, such as “Spiderman, Simpson…….”. After I told them the cartoon characters can speak Chinese, they looked more excited and shouted “Miss, show me, show me!” When I presented the example of touching the cartoon characters, most of the students raised hands to ask for a try. During the game, I asked the students to touch one cartoon character who can say “nǐ hǎo ma?” (“How are you?”) and touch another cartoon character who can respond the greeting in Chinese. What they need to do was translating what the second cartoon character said and repeating after him/her. The students who got the correct answer could choose the next student to continue. The selected students always chose the cartoon characters that they loved most and followed him/her to speak that Chinese sentence seriously. Some students preferred to touch the character several times to listen and repeat the Chinese sentences carefully. It was interesting that when the student got the correct answer, it took him/her a long time to choose the next student. Meanwhile, the student who got the correct answer always couldn’t stop having a victory grin. (Reflective journal, 29/10/2014)
At the beginning, the students were attracted by the cartoon characters on the SMART Board and stared at the screen. It has been suggested that for students with learning and behavior problems, the teacher should “Gear the activities to the student interests and cognitive level” (Vaughn, 1999, p.210). In this activity, the support class students called out the cartoon characters’ names and could not wait to ask the teacher to give a demonstration, indicating their great interest in the SMART Board game. After the selected students chose their favorite cartoon character, they tried to repeat the character’s Chinese words. Some of them even pronounced the characters’ Chinese sentences several times until they were confident about their translating.

Another principle of teaching language to students with learning and behavior difficulties is: “Get the students’ attention before engaging in communication activities”. This is also important. In this case, the SMART Board game was appealing to the support class students and as a result they paid close attention to the listening and speaking exercise.

The students who got the correct answers were then to choose the next student to play the game. The winner’s complacent smiles expressed their satisfaction with their performance. For support class students, “the classroom and the school are important social communities, and peer interactions play a significant role in determining the levels of desirable and undesirable behaviors.” (Vaughn, 1999, p.33). In this case, the SMART Board games gave students an opportunity to “show off” in front of their peers, which was a positive peer interaction. Since their peers were their target audience, they were more motivated to do the listening and speaking exercise in the game.

A limitation of interactive whiteboard games was mentioned during interviews with the classroom teachers:
The fact that SMART Boards can only be used by one person at once means that others may be sitting, watching and not directly involved in Chinese classes.”(Interview with Ms Farly, 17/09/2014)

In an interview with the students, most expressed their attraction to the SMART Boards games. One said, “When I don’t get a turn to use it, I feel bored and unhappy”

As mentioned in the interview with the classroom teacher and the student, the students who did not participate in the SMART Board games may have felt disappointed or ignored. Most teaching professionals held the view that “The students with learning and behavior problems call more attention to themselves in the classroom because they have difficulty learning and interacting appropriately” (Vaughn, 1999, p.2). In exploring the idea of employing SMART Board games in support class students’ Chinese classes, the teacher-researcher should design games in which each student can have a turn participating or multiple students can join together. Otherwise, the students would not focus on the listening and speaking exercise for long, feeling the Chinese teacher was not concerned about them.

5.2.2 Video material-based teaching strategies

Video materials offer a unique opportunity to present, teach, and internalise authentic information about linguistic and cultural components of a second language. Since these materials can be edited for presentation, they are also excellent venues for focusing students' attention on specific details and for creating exercise materials based on the video itself. Therefore, the teacher-researcher searched video materials online and used them in her Chinese lessons for the support class students. She combined movie clips related to her lesson topics to induce the students do speaking practice.

Movie video materials were used to help the students say, “I love you” in Chinese:

I played a video containing several classic Chinese and English movies which all have "I love you " scenes. The first half of the video
was made up of cut scenes from English movies, such as Titanic, Pride and Prejudice, Brave Heart. As the actors and actress said, “I love you” in English with beautiful background music, the whole class burst into cheers. Some students shouted, “I watched this movie!” The latter half of the video was made up of cut scenes from Chinese movies, such as A Chinese Odyssey Part One: Pandora's Box, A time to love, King of Comedy, etc. The Chinese actors and actress all said “wǒ ài ni!” in the movie scenes. When I asked, “What did they say in Chinese?” The students said, “I love you” together. I asked them whether they watched these Chinese movies before, they all waved heads. I heard some students saying, “Miss, can we watch again?” So I played the whole video one more time. Before playing it, I asked them to pay attention to the Chinese pronunciation “I love you”. To my happiness, I saw most of them imitating the Chinese actors’ mouth and sound at the Chinese movie parts. Given this situation, I played the video five times. I paused the video at the key sentences “wǒ ài ni!” to ensure that they have enough time to imitate. As a result, all the students imitated this Chinese sentence seriously. At last, I turned off the sound of the video and invited the whole class to dub for the actors with saying “wǒ ài ni!” They got it. Moreover, I successively invited three students who voluntarily joined in the activity to finish dubbing task individually. Although the three students’ pronunciations were not totally correct, they spoke out the full Chinese sentences without any hints. To be noticed, they all looked very excited when they finished the task. (Reflective journal, 11/09/2013)

Initially, the content of the video material that was chosen was of great concern. The first half of the video was English language scenes, while the latter half of the video was Chinese language scenes. At first, the classic English movie scenes attracted the students’ attention because of their familiar scenes and English dialogues. Once the students were focusing in the class, the unfamiliar Chinese movie scenes made them excited again. One of the guidelines for teaching oral language to students with learning and behavior problems is to “Teach language in purposeful contexts” (Vaughn, 1999, p.207). In this case, the purposeful contexts were the movie scenes related to the topic. The contrast between “I love you” scenes in English movies and Chinese movies attracted the students’ interest in learning to speak this phrase, and the words, sounds and pictures working together brought the students greater
enjoyment in practicing speaking this new phrase.

Playing the video again and again, the teacher-researcher increased the difficulty level of the video-based tasks step by step. At the start, the students were required to simply guess the meaning of what Chinese actor/actress said in the movie scenes. Inspired by the familiar English movies, the students got the correct answer at once. Some students asked to watch the video again, indicating that the movie watching activated their interest in learning the new phrase. The students were then required to imitate the Chinese actors’ pronunciation of “wǒ ài nǐ” in the selected scenes. In this case, the actors assumed the teachers’ responsibilities of modeling pronunciation. The students followed the actors in saying the Chinese sentences, meaning the video-based modelling appealed to students, so the repetition did not bore them. On the basis of imitation, the class kept dubbing the movie in Chinese. This was a creative way to make students do speaking exercises. Last, some volunteer students were asked by the teacher to dub for the Chinese movies. They overcome their fears and loudly spoke the new Chinese sentence. When they finished the task, their excitement indicated that the video material-based speaking task gave them a great sense of accomplishment.

“Although the developmental sequence of language skills for students with learning disabilities is not well documented, there is some evidence to suggest that these students develop language and skills in the same sequence as students who are normal achievers, but a slower rate”(Kamhi, 1999; Nelson, 1998; Nippold, 1998; Wiig and Semel, 1984).

In this case, the teacher-researcher had no opportunity to compare the development of Chinese speaking skills between support class students and mainstream students. However, as with mainstream students, those in the support class performed to higher and higher expectations in response to the video materials. The increasing difficulty level of tasks was necessary to maintain the support class students’ interest in listening practice. The principle that “in most cases, follow the sequence of normal
language development” (Vaughn, 1999, p. 208) fits the teaching strategies of listening and speaking for the support class students.

5.2.3 Digital audio-based teaching strategies

Digital audio devices, such as mp3, mp4 have been used for several years by students to record their teachers’ words in class. However, the teacher-researcher used such an electronic recording device to record the words of her students in the Chinese classes.

In her Chinese lesson “Hello, my name is ……” she applied this teaching strategy:

I brought my smart phone to the classroom. As an example, I recorded my self-introduction “nǐ hǎo, wǒ jiào Zhōng lǎo shī” (“Hello, my name is Miss Zhang”) in the voice recorder at first. Then I connected my smart phone to the classroom’s computer using the USB cable and played the audio in class. The class burst into laughter directly. I heard one girl said, “Miss, your voice is different on the recording.” Instantly, I asked the students, “Do you want to record your voice in the smart phone and let us have a listen together?” Four students raised hands, while three students expressed unwillingness. So I asked four volunteer students to get ready and gave them five minutes to practice. During the practice, I told them if they had any problem, they could ask for help. The class was filled with “nǐ hǎo” and “wǒ jiào…” No one asked for help about “nǐ hǎo”, while most of the students asked for the hints of “wǒ jiào…” Two of the four volunteer students also asked me to tell them their Chinese names instead of English names. To my surprise, the three students who didn’t put up hands also kept practicing patiently. I found they focused on practicing, so I extended five minutes to ten minutes. As I said, “Are you ready? Put up your hands!” There were 5 students raising their hands at once. (Reflective journal, 01/10/2014)

Digital audio is just one of the innovative tools available for Chinese classes. The ultimate aim of this modern technology was to make the students open their mouths and practice speaking Chinese as much as possible. This principle for language teaching strategies for students with learning and behavior problems should always be in the teacher’s mind: “Gear the activities to students’ interests and cognitive
level” (Vaughn, 1999, p.210). In this case, the teacher-researcher used the voice recorder in person and initially gave the students a demonstration. As a result, students became interested in the differences between real voices and recorded ones. The teacher-researcher suggested the students have a try as well. Only four students who may have been confident in themselves expressed their willingness by raising their hands. However, all eight students subsequently devoted themselves to practicing the phrases “nǐ hǎo”, and “wǒ jiào”. More importantly, one more student raised a hand after practicing, which indicated that voice recording was an attractive tool for support class students to have them focus on practicing before making real recordings. It encouraged students who were not confident about themselves to continue pronouncing their Chinese.

The teacher-researcher also provided individual assistance to students during the practice period. Some only wanted help to accurately pronounce “Wo jiào”, while others were keen to know the Chinese names. Compared with mainstream classes, the support class was on a smaller scale, and so “one-to-one instruction”(Vaughn, 1999. p.87) was commonly used for these students with learning and behavior problems. “This instructional arrangement allows the teacher to provide intensive instructions, closely monitoring procedures to match the students’ learning patterns” (Vaughn, 1999, p.87). In this case, according to students’ different learning patterns, learning levels and learning needs, the teacher-researcher provided various assistance for them. It demonstrated not only that did the Chinese teacher’s individual assistance and modern technology work together very well, but also that students could benefit from the digital audio-based teaching strategies.

During the recording and feedback session, the students did a good job. The teacher-researcher recorded the first volunteer student’s performance:

Student K became the first one who came to the front to begin recording. He spoke the whole sentence “nǐ hǎo, wǒ jiào K” slowly but clearly. Then I played his audio in class. Other students couldn’t wait to give their comments, “So funny”, “Good, but too slow”, “Can
we listen to it again?” After replaying it, Student K said, “Not too bad, the voice is mine!” I also complimented K, “The pronunciation is accurate. As the first challenger, K is perfect.” (Reflective journal, 01/10/2014)

In this case, the student-generated recording was used as an important source for the listening and speaking activity. After student K’s voice recording was played in class, her classmates, the teacher-researcher and this student herself all provided feedback to her first Chinese self-introduction. A principle of scaffolding instruction for students with learning and behavior problems is: “Make thought process for accomplishing tasks overt by talking to students about what you are thinking when you engage in the task. Have students share what they are thinking when they practice the task” (Vaughn, 1999, p.23). In this case, the students shared their opinions about student K’s recorded pronunciation. The recorder honestly captures what the student said and is therefore a reliable and convincing basis for further discussion. Students who receive positive feedback may feel more confident about their Chinese speaking and can more easily understand mistakes in pronunciation. In conclusion, the recording and feedback session created opportunities for students to share their ideas based on the audio material. The students became involved and made progress together in the listening and speaking activity.

After inviting the five students who expressed a willingness to join in the voice recording, the other three were encouraged by their peers and the teacher to try as well:

As the fifth students accepted comments about her Chinese self-introduction, the class started calling the names of the three students who had not joined the activity. Finally, the student C who had a cheerful personality took the challenge. He finished the recording and listened to peers’ feedback about his recording peacefully. As student M’s best friend, he continued calling M’s name and said, “It’s so easy, M.” Eventually, M took the challenge as well. Only student B who is always an introvert student didn’t have a try. Considering his personality, I didn’t push him any more. (Reflective journal, 01/10/2014)
In this case, the power of peer interaction had an effect. After classmates repeatedly called student C’s name, he participated in the voice recording activity and eventually accepted his peers’ comments. Also, C used his own experience as an example and convinced his best friend K to try. As a teaching strategy for students with learning and behavior problems, “teachers can facilitate peer interaction by pairing students who have good social skills with students who have more difficulty in prosocial skills.” (Vaughn, 1999, p.33) Peer interaction in the form of mutual encouragement was significant in the activity. Some students who were interested in the digital audio-based task, but too shy, did not join in the activity at first, but their peers successfully encouraged them to share their experience of the activity with them. This indicated the effectiveness of peer encouragement in the listening and speaking practice.

The teacher-researcher respected students’ different personalities in using the multi-media technology. Some with introverted personalities may need more time than others to adapt to the new multi-media technology in Chinese class. Specifically, the teacher-researcher did not force the introverted student C to become involved, as he might have responded poorly if pushed. It is important for Chinese teachers to care about their personalities when encouraging the students.

5.3 Discussion

In this chapter, the teacher-researcher focused on analysing listening and speaking teaching strategies that were applied in her Chinese classes for support class students. They were traditional “learning by doing” teaching strategies and modern multimedia-based teaching strategies.

“Cooperative learning can be used to complete group projects in content area subjects, and researchers generally consider it to have positive outcomes for students
with learning and behavior problems” (Jenkins, Antil, Wayne, and Vadasy, 2003). In terms of Chinese listening and speaking teaching strategies, the cooperative learning as a core concept, it is employed in both traditional “learning by doing” teaching strategies and modern multimedia-based teaching strategies for the support class students.

In the “learning by doing” teaching strategies, three main activities (role-play activity, movement-instruction activity, guessing activity) were analysed as typical examples that were demonstrated in the teacher-researcher’s Chinese classes.

First, role-play activity was introduced. The selection of role-play situations was one of the highlights in this activity. In regard to this activity for mainstream students, it was said that “choosing an appropriate situation and keeping in mind students' needs and interests is always a golden rule for role-play activity” (Livingstone, 1983). The teacher-researcher also followed this rule in her Chinese classes for support class students. Appropriate situations such as Chinese food court created opportunities for students to show their capabilities and develop their understandings. The knowledge acquired in previous Chinese classes, such as basic greetings, could be put to use and the newly acquired knowledge, such as Chinese food, could be practiced. Meanwhile, common sense words such as greeting etiquettes could be taught in selected situations as well. For these reasons, an appropriate selection of situation for role-play activity is necessary to maintain students’ interests and attention in Chinese classes.

The teacher-researcher was aware of the importance of a well organised activity, putting them into practice step by step, first by creating an appropriate everyday situation for practicing Chinese, linguistic preparation using a teacher-designed script, group and individual exercises according to the script, and individual exercises without the script. From the teacher-designed script to students’ unscripted creations, from group practice to individual practice, the difficulty levels of the activities were
increased little by little, alleviating the support class students’ psychological burden and reducing their cognitive level in the process. It has been said that “important to promoting development within the students’ zone of proximal development is the teacher’s ability to relinquish control of strategies to the students” (Jonoson Santamaria, Flectcher, and Bos, 2002).

Teacher scaffolding and peer tutoring was another highlight of the role-play activity. The students made comments about their peers’ performances in the activity and helped each other correct their pronunciation, while the teacher provided assistance such as modeling and questioning when the students became confused. Previous research has focused on peer tutoring with special education students in their basic skills “such as oral reading, answering reading comprehension questions, and practicing spelling words, math facts, and new sight word vocabulary” (Fuchs, Hamlett, et al., 1997; Gerber and Kauffman, 1981; Sxruggs and Richter, 1985). In this study, the teacher-researcher first introduced peer tutoring in Chinese listening and speaking teaching for the support class students, and most of the students accepted their peers’ comments and advice. In conclusion, the combination of teacher scaffolding and peer tutoring made a contribution to the support class students’ development in Chinese listening and speaking.

The movement-instruction activity was also a traditional “learning by doing” activity. In the classroom activities for these particular support class students, their visual, auditory and kinesthetic abilities were all made part of the movement-instruction activity. This combination of the senses made the students’ Chinese listening and speaking learning more effective than traditional way (visual and auditory).

In addition, a variety of types of movement kept the students engaged in their Chinese classes from start to finish. As the students adapted to pointing out body parts to demonstrate Chinese words, the teacher researcher introduced changes such as stand up and sit down, clap and non-clap. The changing forms kept the support class students’ attention to listening and speaking Chinese throughout the activity.
The teacher-researcher attached great importance to controlling the difficulty levels of the activities. This took three forms: switching instructors (from teacher to students), changing the group scale (from the whole class, to three or four students, to one student), and the speed of instructions (from slow speed to fast). Appropriately enhancing the stress pushed the support class students to keep thinking and focusing on the listening and speaking exercises in their Chinese lessons.

The guessing activity is another typical traditional listening and speaking strategy that was introduced by the teacher-researcher. The most important function of this activity was to provide the students with opportunities to practice their Chinese in communication. When the teacher-researcher was the instructor, the students listened to the Chinese hints and started guessing. When the students themselves became the instructors, they spoke Chinese sentences they had learnt recently and let their peers guess. Taking turns as instructor and listener helped the students practice both listening and speaking skills in the activity.

In addition, the joy of the guessing activity encouraged students at different learning levels to engage in a Chinese class with a relaxing atmosphere. The students who had a good grasp of Chinese language could make guesses according to the Chinese clues, while those with a “lower-level” of Chinese language skill could choose an answer from four options at random as well. All the support class students were motivated in the activity, and students at different learning levels were able to compete with each other. The teacher carefully guided the peer competition. When students failed after trying to do as well as their peers, she immediately rendered assistance as a way to ensure a positive outcome from the peer competition. Also, it was a way to protect the support class students’ self-esteem and self-confidence.

The gimmicky rule design of guessing activities may sometimes be counterproductive. According to the students’ performance in class, the teacher had
to adjust details of the rules over time to ensure the effectiveness of the activity. As the English guessing options were more interesting than the Chinese hints, the students were more drawn to the English options, and no longer focused on Chinese listening exercise. Teachers must select the content and options of the activity carefully, in case they are beyond the students’ level of ability. When the guessing options distracted students’ attention, the teacher researcher instantly redefined the options and it worked. There will be more complicated situations beyond teachers’ expectations in guessing activities, thus placing higher demands on the Chinese teachers’ class observations.

The teacher-researcher introduced three modern multimedia-based teaching strategies (SMART Board game-based, video-based, and digital audio-based) to take advantage of technology.

The SMART Board game-based teaching strategies brought more fun to the Chinese listening and speaking exercises. Interactive whiteboard games facilitated students’ different learning styles, where tactile learners could benefit from touching or clicking on the board, audio learners could receive auditory stimuli by listening to the cartoon characters speak and visual learners could see what was taking place as the game developed on the board.

The students were highly motivated in their Chinese listening and speaking exercises in the games. They featured fancy and appealing images and sounds, such as cartoon characters and the Chinese sentences they spoke kept students’ enthusiasm for practicing. They didn’t find the exercise as boring as the traditional way. The support class students could also stand at the front the classroom to show their Chinese language skills to their peers. Encouraged by other peers’ good performances, they put more effort into making their individual “show time” as excellent as possible.
However, a limitation of the interactive whiteboard games is that not every student has the opportunity to join in. The peers not participating in the SMART Board games might feel disappointed or ignored when only one student was the main participant in the game. The Chinese teacher needs to search for more interactive whiteboard games which allow multiple students to join in, to ensure that every student is given an opportunity, and which will keep them focused for longer.

Video material-based teaching strategies aim to focus students’ attention on listening to specific details and motivate them speak Chinese as much as possible. Proper selection of video materials is therefore essential to the success of this teaching strategy. As earlier presented, the students readily became involved in the Chinese and English movies. The movie clips contained Chinese sentences to be learnt, while the pictures and sounds were vivid and exciting. The stimulating, informative and entertaining video materials were welcomed by the support class students. Such video materials can easily keep them engaged in Chinese listening and speaking practice.

The difficulty level of the video-based tasks was another critical factor of this teaching strategy. At the most basic level, the students were simply required to carefully watch the videos to identify the Chinese words or sentences to be learnt, and understand their meanings based on the images, sounds and their imaginations. After the teacher had played the same video several times, students always became bored, and so the teacher-researcher had to increase the requirements. Imitating what was said in the video was a low level of difficulty level for the students. When they became familiar with the Chinese sentences or words, they preferred to dub the video in Chinese in groups or even individually. They felt a great sense of accomplishment from an individual show in front of the class. More and more challenging video-based tasks inspired the support class students to conquer their fears through practicing with enthusiasm.
Digital audio-based teaching strategies take advantage of voice recordings to improve students’ Chinese pronunciations. For the support class students, the main attraction of the digital audio was that they had never participated in Chinese recording like a radio announcer. They cherished this rare opportunity to record and present their Chinese pronunciation to their peers and teacher. In the given examples of “Chinese self-introduction”, all the support class students practiced hard.

Another advantage of this teaching strategy was that the digital-audio based comments and advice were more convincing than the traditional method. After listening to the recording in their classes, the students could find their pronunciation mistakes by themselves, and their peers and Chinese teachers were also able to pick out flaws from the audio. Based on the audio evidence, this kind of pronunciation correction was more objective and accurate. Listening for and picking out mistakes helped develop the students’ Chinese listening skills, and those whose pronunciation errors were are pointed out had their Chinese speaking skills enhanced as well.

Support class students more easily became nervous when using electronic devices, such as the voice recorder in smart phone. In the examples, some students who temporarily felt upset finished recording in Chinese with the encouragement of their peers, but others who seemed inherently shy or fearful still did not want to participate. The teacher-researcher did not force those students to take the challenge, Chinese teachers should care about and support class students’ personalities in listening and speaking exercises. Though voice recording was fresh and exciting for most of the students, the teacher still needed to give some who were extremely shy more time to adapt. For such students, quietly speaking in Chinese while remaining in their seats also had value.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, Chinese listening and speaking teaching strategies were analysed
from the aspects of traditional “learning by doing” teaching strategies and modern multimedia-based teaching strategies. In regard to traditional “learning by doing” teaching strategies, they were introduced to role-play activity, movement-instrument activity and guessing activity. These traditional teaching strategies emphasised activating the students’ various senses, mixing peer tutoring and teacher scaffolding to develop the students’ understanding and capabilities. Modern multimedia-based teaching strategies were demonstrated by SMART Board-based game teaching strategies, video material-based teaching strategies and digital audio-based teaching strategies. These modern teaching strategies were concern with maintaining the students’ interest and attention in class, developing higher levels of difficulty in activities, accommodating the students’ different learning styles and personalities and promoting peer interaction. In the following chapter, the teacher-researcher will introduce Chinese culture teaching strategies via data analysis.
Chapter 6 Culture-embedded teaching strategies—From paperwork to real world practice

6.0 Introduction

Chapter 5 focused on analysing the strategies used in teaching listening and speaking for support class students. In this chapter, the focus is moved to data presentation and analysis on culture-embedded teaching strategies. Two approaches were developed and tested by the teacher-researcher through the action research. They are paperwork-oriented teaching strategies and real world-oriented teaching strategies.

6.1 Paperwork-oriented teaching strategies

Through her stages of teaching, the teacher researcher developed two approaches to culture-embedded teaching, the first one being paperwork-oriented. Specifically, she used various types of worksheets for the students to work on to assist their understanding of Chinese culture. Three themes emerged through the analysis. They were paperwork as a mainline of Chinese culture introduction, paperwork as a framework for Chinese and Australian culture comparison, and paperwork as an artistic achievement of Chinese culture acquisition. The data revealed that the Chinese topic-related paperwork played an important role in guiding students to explore culture knowledge.

6.1.1 Paperwork as a mainline of Chinese culture introduction

To introduce knowledge of Chinese culture, such as Chinese traditional festivals, the teacher-researcher was used to using paperwork as the main resource in class. Specifically, she designed a brainstorming worksheet, which contained all the details of a traditional festival. Using the clues on the brainstorming worksheet, she guided the students to explore the festival from various aspects. For example, when she...
taught them about Middle Autumn Festival, she designed a brainstorming task in the worksheet, as follows:

There is a big circle in the middle of the paper, while a couple of small circles are connected to the big circle by lines. In specific, I placed letters “Middle Autumn Festival” and a line in the middle circle of the paper. I planed to ask students to write down Chinese Pinyin for “Middle Autumn Festival” on that line. In the small circles, I listed the key words about the festival: “time:____”, “another English name of the festival:____”, “meaning of the festival:____”, “people who get together:____”, “typical food:____”, “related animal:____”, “the hero of the legend:____”, and “the heroin of the legend____”. In my plan, when I talked about the related knowledge, students were able to note down the answers on the lines accordingly. Besides, a bigger box is connected to the central circle as well. While the letters “your own-designed moon cake” was placed in the box, I also left some space for students to draw their moon cakes in the same box. (Reflective journal, Term 3)

In this part of the teacher-researcher’s reflective journal, she described her design of the brainstorming task in the worksheet. One principle of teaching language to students with learning and behavior problems is “Systematically plan and instruct for generalization” (Vaughn, 1999, p.212). In this case, the design of the worksheet was designed systematically. Firstly, there was a big circle in the middle of the worksheet, and the students were required to write down the Chinese Pinyin for “Middle Autumn Festival” in the circle. Writing the Pinyin for the festival made its name more impressive to the students, as remembering the name of the Chinese festival is a basic but important step in Chinese festival introduction.

Secondly, the small circles that were linked to the big circle were for students to note all details of the festival. The details included the time of the festival, another English name of the festival, the meaning of the festival, typical foods, and related animals, for example. As shown in the worksheet, the students were able to learn about different features of the festival. Moreover, since different key words were matched to different small circles, the brainstorming worksheet made the large quantity of festival information organised and clear.
Thirdly, there was a special-sized box linked to the middle circle of the worksheet. In this box, students could draw their personally designed moon cake. This particular part of the brainstorming worksheet aimed to motivate the students’ creativity and make the whole worksheet more attractive. Meanwhile, as an icon of the Chinese Middle Autumn Festival, the moon cake is also regarded as cultural knowledge which students have to remember. The systematic designs of the worksheet incorporated learning about Chinese festivals into different levels of the teaching goals. Thus, according with the teacher’s plan, the students were able to acquire knowledge of the Chinese festival step by step.

The real effectiveness of the paperwork as a mainline of Chinese culture introduction can be seen in the example of “Middle Autumn Festival introduction”, as follows:

I prepared a video, which contains some key information about the Middle Autumn festival: the legend of the festival, the date of the festival, the typical food of the festival and the meaning of the festival. Before playing the video, I told students to answer the questions in the brainstorm worksheet as much as possible when they watch the video. As expected, students watched the video carefully and wrote down answers in time. As they got the answer, such as typical food, date, some students looked around and smiled confidently. As for difficult points, such as the names of hero and heroin, they said, “Ms., I missed. Can you play again?” Actually, I didn’t pause there. I just asked them to keep watching. When we started checking answers, I emphasized the names of hero and heroin, to make them more impressive for them. Then they noted the correct answers quickly in the two blanket circles. To my surprise, no one asked me where should he/she put the answers throughout the process. They just filled the corresponding circles and asked some questions about word spelling. After playing the video twice, they already finished putting all the answers in the brainstorm worksheets. (Reflective journal, Term 3)

In the above example, the brainstorming worksheet on Middle Autumn Festival was a clue for students to recognise and sort out specific answers from the video. One
principle of language teaching strategies is to “Use structured language programs to provide intensive practice and feedback” (Vaughn, 1999, p.211). In this case, faced with simple questions, such as date or typical foods, they finished filling blanks on the worksheet by themselves. With the benefit of obvious keywords in the worksheet, students could distinguish the questions they had to answer and the teacher did not need to give any further assistance. It greatly developed their self-confidence in the process of Chinese culture learning.

As for difficult questions, such as the names of heroes or heroines, the teacher-researcher did not use structured language to give the students instructions. However, she asked the students to keep watching the video when the students looked worried. It was another way to give intensive feedback to them and give them more time to think independently.

In the section for checking answers, the teacher-researcher emphasised those answers that were missing in the boxes of the worksheet. The brainstorming worksheet made it possible for the teacher to learn the students’ weaknesses in learning the Chinese culture content, since they would leave the boxes or the circles of the worksheets empty if they could not get the answers. Accordingly, the teacher could highlight those empty boxes, and give intensive feedback more specifically and patiently.

The disadvantage of paperwork as a main resource for Chinese culture introduction was found in teaching practice by the teacher-researcher, as in the example of the Chinese Moon Festival:

It just took a half of the class time for students to finish almost all the brainstorm worksheet, except the box of “your own-designed moon cake”. So I asked students to design a moon cake, which is as nice as possible. However, some students quickly drawing a simple circle or a square and told me “It’s my round moon cake. I did it. Can I play now?” Another students had the similar attitude that they just wanted to finish the brainstorm worksheet as quickly as possible. “Ms., I’m
finished. Can I play now?” So I told them, “You should focus on designing your moon cake. We still have a long time left. No rush.” It felt like they didn’t want to listen to my instructions any more. They started chatting with each other. As my plan, I should make a conclusion about the festival according to the key words in brainstorm worksheets. Actually, it was impossible, since all the students were so satisfied with the paperwork they finished. They showed it to others and talked about their own-designed moon cake happily. So the class ended in a noise. (Reflective journal, Term 3)

As shown in the example, the teacher-researcher faced a problem when the students rushed to finish most parts of the brainstorming worksheet, then they quickly finished the task of designing their moon cakes. What’s worse, no matter how the teacher-researcher attempted to persuade them, the students hurriedly drew the moon cake, without thinking. It indicated that they just viewed the worksheet as a task to be finished in the Chinese class. That is why they rushed to draw their moon cake, and did not care what they looked like. As the students held the attitude that the worksheet was a task, it was impossible for them to devote themselves to it completely.

In addition, as the students wanted to bring a conclusion to the Chinese festival based on the brainstorming worksheet, they already lost themselves in the happiness of completing it. In specific, they showed their moon cakes to each other and kept talking happily. The teacher-researcher’s instructions were completely ignored. This situation demonstrated that the students were extremely satisfied with what they had written and drew in their brainstorming worksheets, and they showed off their worksheets to each other. This kind of excessive self-satisfaction resulted in the teacher being unable to finish her plan. In fact, the students did not realise that the brainstorming worksheets were finished with the assistance of the teacher-researcher.

To create a better understanding of the brainstorming paperwork about the Chinese
culture topic, as well as rushing to finish the paperwork, the teacher-researcher attempted to add free speaking at the end of the period. For instance, on the topic of the “Dragon Boat Festival”, the students were required to voluntarily introduce this festival in their own words. The brainstorming paperwork was the clue for their retelling:

I made sure that all the students finished the brainstorm worksheets about Dragon Boat Festival. Then I spent left 20 minutes organizing a free speech for the class. All the students came to the front of the classroom to introduce all the things they know about the festival. As I declared the rule, the first question I heard was that “Ms, can I take my worksheet?” Since I told them “Yes”, 4 students raised their hands. As I asked, “Do you need 5 minutes to prepare?” They said “Yes” together. During the 5 minutes, they kept asking questions to classroom teachers and I, such as “How do you say poet’s name in Chinese?”, “How do you say rice dumpling in Chinese?” They did exactly correctly in their worksheets and they knew which key parts they should mention in the following free speech. But they just worried about the pronunciation about some Chinese words about the festival. So I helped them to accurate them and encouraged them, such as “That’s great!” “It’s better!” They were all devoted themselves in preparing. As the speech began, the first student K was a little nervous. She looked at the worksheet without having any eye contact with others. So I said, “that’s a great introduction. Let’s clap for her. Next student, please don’t forget having eye contact with us.” The following students did better and better. When it was the fourth student J’s turn to do the speech, he even confidently drew the typical food “rice dumpling” on the white board. At the end, some students were still confused about the pronunciation about some Chinese names among the festival story, but they did very well in providing the key information about festival: date, meaning, typical food and special events. So I even didn’t make a conclusion by myself. (Reflective journal, Term 3)

In this case, the teacher-researcher added a free speaking period at the end of the Chinese class. It required students to introduce the Dragon Boat Festival based on the brainstorming worksheet, using their own words. Research on the characteristics of effective teachers of students with cultural and linguistic diversities stated that it was important to “Display a sense of confidence in their ability to be successful with students who are culturally and linguistically diverse” (Vaughn, 1999, p. 220). In this
case, the teacher-researcher set the free speaking period, showing confidence in the ability of the support class students. As a result, they expressed interest in the period at the beginning. Specifically, they asked questions, such as “Can I take my worksheet?” and they expressed great need for the presentation. The students’ good attitudes indicated that they took the free speaking opportunity seriously and wanted to give their best performance.

During their preparation for this speaking period, the students asked a number of questions about the pronunciation of festival words. Accordingly, the teacher-researcher helped with the accuracy of their pronunciations and encouraged them by saying, “That’s great” or “It’s better”. It demonstrated that although the students finished their worksheets, they were still confused about pronunciations. The added free speaking period provided opportunities for students to make progress in the language points. As the students were asking questions from their hearts instead of being pushed by the teacher, they improved quickly.

As the speeches began, the students were nervous at first and afraid to make eye contact with the others. However, they did better with the encouragement of the teacher-researcher. The fourth students were even able to draw typical festival foods on whiteboard. More importantly, they took over the teacher’s responsibility to bring a conclusion for this festival topic, and all key information – dates, people, foods, meanings and events – was included in their speeches. This means that as the students’ initiative were aroused by the activities, such as free speaking, they could exceed the teacher’s expectation. Doing the worksheet is a way to keep them busy in recording content from the teacher or the video, and passively accepting the culture knowledge. In the contrast, the free speaking period allowed the students to take the initiative in speaking about the Chinese festival. Therefore, the free-style speaking matched the paperwork as an introduction to Chinese culture.
6.1.2 Paperwork as a frame of Chinese and Australian culture comparison

In regard to classes comparing Chinese and Australian cultures, the teacher-researcher was used to using paperwork as her framework, to better organize the learning and teaching. Generally speaking, a table was created comparing the two countries’ festivals, sports and other topics. For example, the following table presents the comparisons between China’s Spring Festival and Australia’s Christmas.

Table 6-1 Comparisons between China’s Spring Festival and Australia’s Christmas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>China’s Spring Festival</th>
<th>Australia’s Christmas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decoration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical food</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Reflective journal, Term 1)

As shown in the table, the teacher-researcher took two factors into consideration as she designed the comparison table: the students’ personal experience and the order of questions. In terms of personal experience, since every Aussie student has celebrated Christmas and has rich experiences of this festival, they were expected to fill the specific boxes in their own words. As for China’s Spring Festival, the teacher-researcher could share her personal experiences with the students. “Use conversation to promote language development” is one principle of language teaching strategies for students with learning and behavior problems. In this case, introducing discussion between the students and teacher became a way to develop their understanding of the differences between Chinese and Australian festivals.

In regard to the order of the questions, the teacher-researcher put the simplest question (date of the festival) in the first row to give the students the confidence to continue filling the other boxes. After that, they were required to give answers
regarding decorations, typical foods and activities during festivals. It seemed more complicated to describe to them what they had to do, since there were many answers they could give. The students were able to share any ideas they liked, which made the questions less difficult. The final question relating to the meaning of festivals was more abstract. The students were expected to refine the themes from specific festival experiences that were discussed previously. One principle of language teaching strategies for students with learning and behavior problems is to “Adjust pacing, chunk information, and check for understanding to promote comprehension” (Vaughn, 1999, p.209). Following this principle, the order of the questions progressed from simple to difficult, from specific to abstract. Therefore, the students did not feel much stress in the process of completing the comparison table.

The teacher-researcher considered in designing the table, that when faced with blanket comparisons of Chinese and Australian cultures, the support class students usually had ideas to share. In particular, when they found that the topic was close to their everyday life or they had real experience with it, they were pleased to discuss it in class. The teacher-researcher only needed to help them to form a conclusion based on their oral answers. For instance, in the class of “China’s Spring Festival and Australia’s Christmas comparison”, the students had a heated discussion about the “decorations”:

When I pointed the second row “decoration” and asked them “Do you know any decoration on Christmas or Spring Festival?” Student M couldn’t wait to say, “I know, I know, window paper cutting. We made it.” Other students also followed him to say “Yeah, paper cutting!” “Red paper!” So I wrote down key words “window paper cutting” in the box of “China’s Spring Festival”. I continued asking, “Do you know anything else? Did you see some special decoration in Sydney’s China Town?” At that time, Student K said loudly and proudly “Lantern, Lantern! I saw it last time.” Then I filled her answer in the box as well. When I talked about Christmas decoration, the class became noisy. Some students forgot to raise hand, just sitting on the seat and saying, “Christmas tree”, “Christmas Star”, “Santa”, “Christmas light”… They mentioned all the Christmas stuffs
they know. So it’s easy for me to write down all their answers in the box. I even heard one boy said, “Too many, the box is too small to write.” (Reflective Journal, Term1)

In this case, the comparison tables became a platform for students to show their prior knowledge about Chinese and Australian culture. Therefore, the class atmosphere became extraordinarily active, and since the students used to make window paper cut decorations for Chinese New Year (Spring Festival) in Chinese class, they remembered it immediately. In addition, students who had been to Sydney’s China Town linked Chinese lanterns with the festival. Their quick and impressive answers indicated the students were confident about Chinese culture knowledge that was related to their personal experience. If the questions in the paperwork were appropriate, such as “festival decorations”, it would stimulate the students’ desire to become involved in class discussion. The students also spoke about Christmas decorations, while the teacher-researcher recorded their answers. One student even complained that there was not enough space to put all the answers in the box. It demonstrated that linking students’ personal experiences to the questions in the paperwork was a way to make class atmosphere active. Thus, the students were able to use discussion to promote an understanding of the differences between the Chinese and Australian festivals.

Since the content of the table was graduated from easy to hard, the students may naturally better understand topic in the process. Sometimes they were able to find the two countries’ common cultural points. Taking Christmas and Spring Festival as an example once again, on the basis of the meaning of Christmas, the students understood the meaning of China’s Spring Festival by themselves:

When we finished the boxes of “date”, “decoration”, “typical food” and “activities”, there was only one challenging box left: the meaning of the festival. As I pointed that row, the class was very quiet at first. Then I gave them a hint, “On Christmas, will your whole family get together? Are you happy then? So…what’s the meaning?” Student T firstly said, “It means families get together and have dinner.” Another
Student K added, “It means happy.” Other students also shared some other ideas, such as “having Christmas gifts”, “eating nice food together”. At last, I conclude their answers and filled in the box with “Getting together with family and friends; sharing food, gifts and happiness with them”. I asked them to put up hands if they agreed with my answer. They all raised hand quickly. After that, I pointed the Spring Festival’s box and said, “How about Chinese New Year, or Chinese Spring Festival?” Student K said at once, “Is it Christmas in China?” I was so excited to hear that. So I said “Yes” determinedly. Then other students started saying, “family and friends get together”, “sharing food and gifts.” Finally, Student J read the answer that we wrote in the Aussie box again. I know they got it. So I asked them to fill the box with “the same as Christmas”. They seemed very happy to do that. I heard one students said “Yes, the same, so easy”. (Reflective journal, Term 1)

In this example, the students had finished their comparisons of festival dates, decorations, foods and activities between Christmas and Spring Festival. However, at first, they could not directly give answers about the meaning of Christmas. It became necessary, as Vaughn (1999) suggested as a language teaching strategy for students with learning and behavior problems, to, “increase wait time to promote production” (p.209). In this case, the teacher-researcher asked some questions, such as “Will your whole family get together?” and “Are you happy then?” to inspire the students to link the festival’s meaning to personal experience, such as Christmas gifts and Christmas foods. As the students’ answers become closer to what the teacher-researcher expected, she concluded them using her own words. Eventually, the students agreed upon the answers. In conclusion, in regard of abstract questions such as “festival meaning”, the teacher must be patient, increase wait time and guide the students closer to the most suitable answers, step by step.

The students also at first experienced problems precisely expressing the meaning of Spring Festival. However, the teacher-researcher encouraged the students to speak up with ideas that came to mind. Then they started associating the meaning of Spring Festival with the meaning of Christmas, including family, gifts, and foods. Student J concluded the answer in one sentence, “the same as Christmas”. The teacher-
researcher asked the class to fill the box as with the words given by student J. Considering Christmas’s religious significance, it was not the best answer, but was the most acceptable for the support class students. In other words, pursuing exact answers in the comparison table was not necessary. If students’ could realise that Chinese people, as well as Australians, delighted in getting together to share happiness with families and friends during special festivals, the goal of the culture class had been achieved.

Sometimes culture comparisons relating to etiquette or customs are more abstract. Since support class students did not have rich experiences and were young thinkers, the teacher-researcher tended to list the key points in the tables in advance. The students then needed to listen to the teacher’s explanations and write notes in the specified boxes. Taking “table manners and eating habits of Chinese and Australians” as an example, the teacher-researcher designed the following tables.

Table 6-2 the comparisons between Chinese and Australian table manners and eating habits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The Chinese</th>
<th>The Aussies</th>
<th>notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shape of table</td>
<td>Preferred round table</td>
<td>Long (and high) table</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showing of food</td>
<td>All dishes of food put at once</td>
<td>Food introduced while Eating in different courses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utensils</td>
<td>Chopsticks, spoon</td>
<td>Knife, fork</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food quantity</td>
<td>Food served far more than enough</td>
<td>Food served merely enough</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who will order</td>
<td>Host in charge of the menu and order for every one</td>
<td>Every one orders for themselves</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Term 3, lesson plan)
In this example, the teacher-researcher had already concluded the differences in table manners and eating habits between Chinese and Australian in a few words in the comparison table. It indicated that students were only expected to listen and understand as much as possible and make notes carefully in specific boxes. The advantage of this sort of answer-given table is that students would not have much pressure as they faced abstract culture topics, such as habits, manners or customs. They could relax and listen to their teacher’s explanation, which would help them better absorb the knowledge in which they were interested. What’s more, taking notes while listening may help them to better remember and understand.

In terms of abstract issues, although the students provided answers in the comparison tables, they still had questions in class, for example, about “table manners and eating habits of Chinese and Australians”:

The class seemed to switch on the “questioning and answering” mode. When I said, “Let’s look at first row, shape of table. In China, we prefer to use round tables while Aussie were used to choosing long and high tables in dinner.” Students asked immediately, “What kind of round table? Why round?” So I showed them the pictures of round dinner table I prepared. They stopped questioning. As I told them, “While Aussies like having different courses step by step, Chinese people usually put all dishes at once.” They asked, “How do you put all dishes together? How can you cook so quickly” At that moment, I played a video cut from Chinese TV series and showed them how Chinese family serve food for guests. They laughed and said, “Woo, so many food at once.” “I’m hungry now. So many food together.” In other aspects, such as “utensils”, “food quantity”, I also applied the method of “I introduced items in the comparison tables, students asked questions, and I answered them with pictures and videos”. The atmosphere was really active from start to end. (Reflective journal, Term 3)

As the teacher required the students to focus on different items, such as the “shape of table” and “showing of food”, the students continually asked related questions, such as “What kind of round table?” “How do you put all dishes together?” Obviously,
although all the answers for the comparison table had been clearly been presented through the teacher’s oral explanations, the students still doubted the authenticity. There is an old Chinese saying “What you hear about may be false; what you see is true.” Since the students had not personally attended an authentic Chinese dinner, their curiosity drove them to learn the truth by asking questions. Therefore, the first advantage of the answer-given comparison table was that the students’ curiosity was invoked. They kept focusing on the class and thinking while waiting for answers.

In addition, the teacher-researcher presented pictures and videos on the white board when students had questions about the answers given in the comparison tables. The image materials included a photo of Chinese round tables, video clips of Chinese dinners in TV series, for example. Thus, the students could believe what their Chinese teacher said. For instance, after watching the clip from a Chinese TV series, the student said, “I’m hungry now. So many food together.” At that time, the student understood Chinese people’s habit of preferring to serve all the food at once. For students with learning and behavior problems, an effective language teaching strategy is to present the new concept or language pattern by using more than one input mode. In this case, the visualised materials such as photos and videos, which were accompanied by the teacher’s explanation, gave the students a better understanding of the cultural differences appearing in comparison table.

However, as the teacher-researcher attempted to lead the students to explore the meanings hidden behind the culture activities by taking notes, she found the effect of answer-given comparison tables were not as good as anticipated:

In the “notes” column of comparison tables, I planned to let students write down the deep culture meaning based on the information I showed. So after comparing the shape of dinner tables in China and Australia, I told them “roundness means completeness in China.” The class was really quiet at that time. So I continue explaining, “In other words, it means all people are together.” There was still no one saying anything. So I had to ask them to write down “round table means
I realized the plan was totally wrong, because I found that most of students even didn’t know the spelling of “completeness”. They just copied the word letter by letter. When I explained, “why Chinese people prefer to serve food far more than enough, while Aussies usually serve merely”, I introduced the Chinese philosophy that “May you always get more than you wish for”. As I showed this sentence in the box of “note” column, the class became quiet again. They copied it. But I knew they didn’t get the point. (Reflective journal, Term 3)

In this case, the class atmosphere cooled as the teacher-researcher intended to help the students understand the cultural meaning behind the Chinese table manners and eating habits. The students kept silent about the teacher-researcher’s explanation, such as “For Chinese round table, roundness means completeness”, and “Serving food more than enough means may you get more than you wish for”. It means it was too difficult for students to understand, since they had never lived in a Chinese cultural environment. The teacher-researcher did not consider the students’ prior knowledge when she designed the worksheet, so the “note” column made no sense. Although students did copy as the teacher-researcher required, they actually did not accept nor understand the answers. It indicated that the teacher must have appropriate expectations for students in the design of her paper frameworks of Chinese and Australian culture comparison.

6.1.3 Paperwork as an artistic achievement of Chinese culture acquisition

Chinese art, such as Chinese painting, Chinese Opera and Chinese literature, plays an important role in Chinese culture. Therefore, the teacher-researcher took advantage of existing resources to have the support class students experience it. Specifically, she instructed the students in doing some paperwork that could also be viewed as an artistic endeavor at the same time. When the students did their paperwork their sense was that “it was artwork, not only paperwork”, and sometimes their attitudes changed and they learned some cultural knowledge in the process. For example, when the teacher-researcher asked the students to draw Chinese zodiacs and name
them, the students showed great enthusiasm:

I showed some versions of 12 Chinese zodiacs on the whiteboard at first. It included paper-cutting versions modern art versions, and Chinese ancient painting versions. As the students saw them, they said, “woo”. Then I told them, “It’s your turn to draw your 12 Chinese zodiacs. I will offer you special colored paper to draw them on. You can choose any color you like. This paperwork is your artwork, so please draw seriously. Later, I’ll show your artwork one by one at the front.” It seemed my words worked very well. After picking their favorite color paper, the students were devoted to Chinese zodiac drawing. They asked some interesting questions about animals they didn’t see in real life, such as “Does a dragon have legs?”, “Is a Chinese monkey big or small?”, and “What’s the color of a Chinese pig?” I always answered, “It depends on you. Art is free. You are the artist now.” We didn’t have enough time draw all 12 animals, so each student picked 6 Chinese Zodiac animals they liked to draw and named them. In the presentation section, 8 students showed their drawing and introduced some funny names, such as “Gold Dragon”, “Piggy Yaya”, and “Doggy Pea”. Their drawings were very tricky and hard to recognize. Anyway, to my satisfaction, they didn’t draw cats, pandas or other animals, which didn’t belong in the Chinese Zodiac. Besides, it was interesting that all 8 students drew their own zodiacs.

In this case, the students took the drawing of the Chinese zodiacs seriously. They made every effort to use their imaginations, and they asked questions about Chinese zodiac animals, such as sizes, and colors. Also, they created their own designs for animals and gave them hilarious names from their hearts. In the field of language teaching strategies for students with learning and behavior problems, it is a principle that one should “[u]se language as an intrinsic motivator”. In this case, as the teacher-researcher said “Art is free. You are the artist now”, and the students viewed themselves as artists in doing their creations. In conclusion, the teacher’s inspiring language could encourage students to devote themselves to their artistic paperwork.

The students also picked up some specific cultural knowledge about Chinese zodiacs. Since they had to select six animals to draw that belonged to Chinese zodiac, they
became aware that cat, panda and some other animals were not part of the Chinese zodiac. One principle of teaching content to students with learning and behavior problems is “concepts should be introduced in a number of different ways” (Vaughn, 1999, p. 213). In this case, drawing became a special way to help students acquire specific Chinese culture knowledge in doing artistic paperwork.

A third outcome was that all eight students still remembered drawing their own Chinese zodiac animals. They were always pleased to put personal factors into their artistic creation. As a result, the students could have a deeper recognition of their own Chinese zodiacs in the process. In other words, doing artistic paper work is an approach to deliver the true feeling of joy to students. Therefore, Chinese culture can be truly connected to them in an artistic way, such as drawing own Chinese zodiac.

However, the teacher-researcher sometimes had higher expectations for her support class students. She hoped they could not only design Chinese artwork, but also review some Chinese language knowledge related to the paperwork. Generally speaking, the result was not satisfactory, as in this example:

After introducing the Beijing Opera masks, I told students that we would design our Chinese opera masks today. Student B asked firstly, “Can we use color pencils?” I said, “Yes.” The class burst into “Yeah”. Then I declared another rule, “When you color your masks, please go over the pronunciations of color words in Chinese. The winner will be the person who color the masks and spoke the correct Chinese color words.” Then they shouted, “No”, “Why”, “I forgot” and something like that. I thought they just said and didn’t mean that. However, the fact was that most of the students picked color pencils carefully. Two of them even refused to draw masks and said, “No, I don’t want to say Chinese colors.” No one chose pink, brown, orange and other colors which seems to be hard to say in Chinese. It was interesting that student J just colored his mask in red. I guessed he just remembered “red” in Chinese. In this situation, I had to change my plan I stopped their drawing and told them, “To make our Beijing Opera mask design more colorful, you are allowed to use any color you like. Don’t worry about the Chinese color words.” The class burst
into “Yeah” again. Since then, they had been starting drawing masks freely. Bright Pink, gold, brown, light blue and some other colors came out in their mask design. At last, I invited four volunteer students to do the presentation. They introduced their opera masks happily, such as “My lucky, because red is a lucky color in China.” Then I added, “Red is the color of heart and blood. So the red masks is usually the represent of loyal person in Chinese Opera mask.” Based on students’ presentation of their masks, I did some introduction about special meanings of colors in Chinese Opera mask design. They listened carefully and asked a few questions. In addition, when I talked the meaning of “blue” and “yellow”, some students suddenly spoke out them in Chinese, which surprised me a lot. They even couldn’t wait to raise hands to say that, while they suddenly thought of them in our relaxing discussions.

In the case, the teacher-researcher’s expectations and requirements of the students made a great difference. At first, they were required to draw the opera masks and pronounce the color they used in Chinese. The students became quite nervous and tentative. Some refused to participate in drawing the masks; while some chose only one or two colors whose Chinese pronunciation they were familiar with. It greatly reduced the enjoyment of the Chinese artwork design. It was apparent that students felt too much pressure in speaking the Chinese color words in the following presentation section. The teacher’s basic goal for the students to experience the beauty of Chinese artwork was not achieved.

As the teacher-researcher realised the problem, she adjusted the plan. Students were just required to design their own Chinese opera masks without thinking about language points and once at ease, started coloring their masks. They were glad to pick any color they like, such as bright pink, brown, to make the masks more pretty. The students enjoyed doing paperwork, since they considered it a Chinese artistic achievement. This can be seen in their presentation section. Four volunteer students were happy to introduce their opera masks and share their understanding about the colors. In this relaxed atmosphere, the teacher-researcher cooperated with the students to make the presentation more complete. Specifically, she explained the
cultural meanings of Chinese opera masks of different colors, which made culture-teaching work better. At the same time, the students’ thought of Chinese color words, such as “blue”, “yellow,” without any prompts or hints. This “bonus” also benefited from the relaxed study atmosphere. It indicated the importance of creating a relaxed learning environment for Chinese artistic paperwork teaching and learning.

6.2 Real world oriented teaching strategies

In addition to the paperwork-oriented approach, real world oriented teaching strategies were found, developed and applied in the teacher-researcher’s support class, such as Chinese tea tasting, making Chinese art, and cooking Chinese food. The data analysis shows three featured teaching strategies in the three cycles of action research:

Chinese etiquette practice, Chinese artwork creation practice and Chinese food cooking.

6.2.1 Chinese etiquette practice

Chinese etiquette is the concentrated expression of Chinese culture classes. With this in mind, the teacher-researcher emphasised Chinese etiquette practice in her class. After teaching the topic of Chinese tea, a Chinese tea tasting activity was organised. In addition to reviewing the language points about tea, she instructed the students in the practice of Chinese tea etiquette: Firstly, serving and taking the tea with both hands; secondly, admiring the tea with a smile; thirdly, using words of courtesy such as thanks and please:

As I told the students that it is polite to serve tea or food to others with two hands in China, the students started a heated discussion, such as “Why, why you can’t use one hand?” “All the Chinese do like this?” Luckily, I particularly prepared video and pictures about this point. In the video, there are some scenes of Chinese TV series in which the actors serve food in this way. In the pictures, Chinese teahouse waitresses serve tea with two hands as well. Then all the
students stopped discussing. After that, two students were invited to show the way of tea serving in the front of the classroom. They both did it with two hands. In free practice section, I noticed that students reminded each other to use two hands to serve and receive the tea (Reflective journal, Term 3).

In the case above, the students had a heated discussion about the Chinese cultural rule that it is more polite to serve tea or food with two hands. Since the students had never experienced this cultural behavior in person, it was quite normal for them to become confused about it. Therefore, the teacher had to help them understand it in a convincing and acceptable way. Following the principle that “concepts should be introduced in a number of different ways” (Vaughn, 1999, p. 213), apart from orally describing the manner, the teacher-researcher played tea serving clips from a Chinese TV series, which ended the students’ discussion. This new way, the introduction of video material, made students believe what they would practice were appropriate Chinese manners. The teacher-researcher later invited two students to practice it in front of the class, which gave the others an example. The students practiced freely with their seating partners, and reminded each other to serve and receive the tea with both hands. This alternative method of peer modeling and tutoring helped the students to improve their Chinese etiquette practices as well.

In addition to the teacher’s oral explanation, video material and peer scaffolding, the teacher-researcher also attempted to share her personal experience in class, to get the students more involved in Chinese etiquette practice. The use of chopsticks was also practiced in class. The teacher-researcher instructed the students in the skill of using chopsticks. She also aimed to teach the students Chinese chopstick etiquette:

To make students understand the 5 golden rules of Chinese chopstick manners, I played a video at the beginning. In the video, a little Chinese girl showed all the 5 rude ways of using chopsticks. For example, the little girl bumped into two chopsticks and made noise at first. Then a big forbidden sign appeared in the screen. The students laughed at the Chinese girl, every time when the red sign came out.
They said, “She’s silly!” “That’s funny!” However, in the practice section, I found that half of the students still used their chopsticks to make noise when they were waiting for food. At that moment, I paused the practice and told them my personal story about chopstick using in childhood. I told them how when I was a child, my parents used to scold me for making noise with chopsticks in dinner. Also, in a dinner party, they got angry because I used chopsticks to dig the food and pick up the ingredients I like. As I found they stared at me carefully, I made up more stories of chopstick manners, taking my friends and myself as examples. As a result, they did better in the following practice. Sometimes they did wrong things on purpose and asked me to have a look, saying “Ms, will I be punished by your parents?” (Reflective journal, Term 3)

In this case, the teacher-researcher first showed the video about the golden rules of Chinese chopstick use. The students watched and laughed at the actor’s misbehavior, such as using chopsticks to make noise. They realised the actor’s chopstick use was impolite and said such things as “She’s silly”. However, when it was their turn to do practice, they made the same mistakes. This indicated that the video was not effective enough to regularise their behavior. The students just treated the video as a funny show. Since they had never been exposed to proper chopstick manners, they didn’t keep the golden rules in mind. At that point, the teacher-researcher started telling the students her story and her friends’ story about using chopsticks. The students stared and listened when they were told of the teacher being scolded by her parents because she was digging her food with her chopsticks. This personal experience made the students pay more attention to the five golden rules. When they again attempted to practice their etiquette, they did better. Since the teacher’s personal story was impressive, the students even made mistakes intentionally to joke with the teacher. Generally speaking, “Use game and other activities to reinforce newly introduced concepts” (Vaughn, 1999, p. 214) is commonly applied in teaching language students with learning and behavior problems. However, in this case, sharing teacher’s personal story with the support of students became another method to reinforce newly introduced culture concepts. Inspired by the teacher’s personal experience, the students became quite serious and engaged in their etiquette practice.
Moreover, in Chinese etiquette practice, the teacher-researcher made every effort to invite “special guests” to join with the support class students. To help students realise that the scenes really happened in everyday Chinese life, the teacher-researcher sometimes invited other native Chinese speakers to participate, such as in Chinese tea etiquette practice:

During the practice, my friend Ms He (one native Chinese speaker) suddenly knocked the door and came out in front of the students. At that moment, all the students stopped practicing and looked at her curiously. I introduced her to the class, and told them, “It’s really honored that Ms He came over to our Chinese class. So I will let her try our Chinese tea. You can watch first. After that, it’s your turn to serve her a cup of Chinese tea. Ok, any questions?” The students raised hand, saying: “Ms He, Are you from China?” “Ms, Can you speak Chinese?” As the students got definite reply that Ms He is a native Chinese speaker, they stared at her with excitement. Some students began saying “nǐ hǎo” (“hello”) to her. Then Ms He and I showed the whole Chinese tea tasting process, including greetings, tasting tea, admiring tea, and farewell. The students watched us carefully. As I asked them, “Did you find any interesting points? ” They mentioned various points, such as Chinese greeting words, “using two hands to hold tea cup”, “Ms He admired the tea…” On the basis of what they said, I did some conclusion and taught them to say words: “hǎo chá” (“nice tea”). I told them “This is how Ms He admired the tea before.” They nodded the head. In the following practice, Ms He voluntarily joined in the students’ practice. All the students welcomed her to join their group practice and made tea for her. Also, Ms He gave them some instructions when she found mistakes in their conversations. (Reflective journal, Term 3)

In this case, the “special guest” was the native speaker Ms He. Initially, she was introduced to the class by the teacher-researcher. The students’ could not stop asking Ms He many questions, such as “Are you from China?” and “Can you speak Chinese?” Their curiosity indicated that the special guest was an effective excitement moment for the students, which activated their enthusiasm for the etiquette practice that followed.
Ms He and the teacher-researcher presented a Chinese tea tasting conversation in front of the class. The students found Ms He admiring the tea, using a phrase unknown to them. The teacher-researcher used this opportunity to teach the new phrase “hǎo chá” (nice tea). The special guest provided an example, showing the target conversation. Since the special guest was a native Chinese speaker, she was a perfect example of pronunciation. Therefore, the students focused on what she said. It also motivated the students to learn the sentences used in the conversation.

Ms He then joined in students in tea etiquette practice. She enjoyed the tea as well and corrected students’ mistakes. At that time, the special guest turned out to be another Chinese teacher. Compared with their normal Chinese teacher, she was refreshing to the students, thus, they listened to her suggestions more carefully.

In addition to inviting a native Chinese speaker to join in Chinese etiquette practice, the teacher-researcher also attempted to get classroom teachers involved, as in Chinese chopstick practice:

With practice going, I found that some students could get fried rice with chopsticks expertly while some students lost patience gradually. Some boys said, “Ms, I need spoon, or I can use hands to get rice. I’m starving.” Then I stopped free practice and said, “I’ll invite our two classroom teachers to have a try now. It’s like a competition, we’ll see you did better or your classroom teachers did better.” The class started talking again, “I, I can!” “What’s the rule?” Then I declared the rule that the one who picked up most red beans will be the winner. I found that the boys, who lost patience before, also put up hands to show their interests in the competition. I organized some rounds of competition, the winner changed from the classroom teacher to students over and over. Anyway, all the students took turns to practice using chopsticks in the front of the classroom due to the competition. I could tell that students tried their best to win the classroom teachers. Thanks to that, they improved chopsticks using skills quickly. (Reflective journal, Term 3)

In this case, the classroom teachers played the role of “special guest” in Chinese chopstick practice. Some students seemed to give up trying to use their chopsticks,
since it was a challenge for them. However, as the teacher told them the classroom teachers would compete with them in chopstick use, those students’ interest was activated at once. They raised their hands and shouted to express their willingness to join in the competition. This meant that the students were pleased to compete with teachers in something new on an equal basis. This kind of novelty stimulated the students’ interest in practicing.

In competing with the classroom teachers, especially in front of the class, the students made every effort to win. All them took turns with their chopsticks, as the teachers and students were equals in the competition. In the meantime, the teacher-researcher’s goal of helping students – especially those who failed to use chopsticks correctly – to practice more, was achieved. Compared with competitions among peers, having a competition with teachers was more challenging and exciting.

Apart from previous teaching methods and “special guests” strategies, the teacher-researcher also attached great importance to creating a Chinese-style atmosphere for etiquette practice. A specific example was her Chinese tea tasting class:

I specially picked a red tablecloth with Chinese calligraphy and put it on the table in the front of the classroom. Also, I put two comfy chairs next to the table, to make sure that students enjoy sitting there during the practice. Moreover, I played Chinese folk music and showed the picture of Chinese ancient-style teahouse in white board. To my happiness, every student raised hand to be the first to do the practice in front of the classroom. I heard they said, “I like the tablecloths.” “Ms, where is that teahouse?” “The music is so good. What’s that? ” When it was Student M’s turn, he asked me whether I could play other Chinese music as he did practice. I played another Chinese light music as I was asked. When M did practice, he smiled and seemed really enjoying the practice at the music that was picked by him. The classroom teacher even couldn’t help taking a photo for him at that time.(Reflective journal, Term 3)

In this case, the tea tasting practice was well prepared by the teacher-researcher. She picked a red tablecloth with Chinese calligraphy, comfortable chairs, Chinese folk
music and a picture of an ancient Chinese teahouse. Therefore, the Chinese-style atmosphere was totally created through the teacher’s carefully design. As a result, the students kept asking questions and expressing their love for the Chinese items they had noticed, such as “where’s the teahouse?” and “I like the table cloths”. It indicated that the special atmosphere, which may keep them engaged in the etiquette practice, had been attracting the students’ attention from the very beginning. In particular, student M asked about picking a special Chinese song as the background music of his tea tasting practice. Inspired by the selected music, he looked content and confident in the practice, so the classroom teacher took a photo for him. It means that some special Chinese factors, such as Chinese-style music, made the class atmosphere more unique. As a consequence, the students become more dedicated to their Chinese etiquette practice. They did not merely practice, but also enjoyed the process.

To get students completely involved in Chinese etiquette practice, the teacher-researcher paid attention to every detail of creating an atmosphere as far as possible, as with chopstick practice:

I brought many pairs of chopsticks to the class to let students do the chopstick using practice. When it was time for them to do that, the first thing they concern was choosing the most favorite chopsticks. Then I realized there were some chopsticks with fancy patterns, such as animals, flowers, while some of them were just plain. Students who got the pretty chopsticks shouted “I got panda, yeah”, “I got bamboo!” excitedly, while those who got the ordinary ones had disappointed faces. During the group practice, some girls still kept asking me whether they could get the chopsticks with panda pattern. So after one round of practice, I had to let them change the chopsticks with others to make more students satisfied. (Reflective journal, Term 3)

In this example, the teacher-researcher found that the students cared about their choices of chopsticks. They were eager to get the chopsticks with unique Chinese patterns, such as panda, or bamboo. The students who got the fancy patterns shouted
excitedly, while those who got the ordinary ones looked disappointed. As far as the
teacher-researcher was concerned, the chopsticks were just like the props used in tea
tasting practice. However, the support class students viewed them as the biggest
motivation of the practice. During the practice, the students still kept asking about
their chances of getting the panda pattern chopsticks. In the end, the teacher-
researcher had to ask the students to take turns using chopsticks with different
patterns. If the teacher had earlier taken students’ high levels of interest in the
chopstick patterns into consideration, and done something similar in the tea tasting
practice, perhaps they would have focused more. This serves as a lesson that teachers
should care about every detail in creating a special atmosphere for Chinese etiquette
practice. The details of the class atmosphere determine the success or failure of the
practice.

6.2.2: Chinese artwork creation practice

In addition to Chinese etiquette practice, the teacher-researcher introduced Chinese
art practice. At the beginning, the students showed great interest, which can be seen
in the paper cutting of “double happiness”:

I brought some red paper to the class. As I introduced Chinese paper
cutting on PPT, some students still kept eyes on the red paper. As I
declared that we would have a Chinese traditional paper cutting of
double happiness, the class burst into excited voice
“yeah!”(Reflective journal, Term 3)

In this example, the students first locked their eyes on the red paper, and shouted
“yeah”, as they were told they were to have a lesson in the paper cutting of “double
happiness”. “Get the students’ attention before engaging in communication
activities”(Vaughn, 1999, p.210) is an effective teaching strategy for presenting a
new concept or skill to students with learning and behavior difficulties. In this case,
the students’ natural excitement indicated that they were highly interested in creating
some art, though they had not experienced the practice at all. In conclusion, this form
of Chinese culture class was unique and attractive for the support class students.

Once these art classes were underway, and the students had experience with this form of lesson, their interest and enthusiasm were affected in similar practices, which can be seen in the practice of window paper cutting:

When I declared, “Today we’re going to make one traditional Chinese artwork, called window paper cutting.” Some students started saying, “What is window paper cutting?” “Yeah, we can have paper cutting again.” Meanwhile, some other students looked nervous and kept quiet. I heard one of them said, “Remember last paper cutting? I hate it!” After that, I asked them to eyes on white board and showed them some wonderful paper cutting for window decoration. Also, I told them these window paper cutting are made by excellent Chinese artists. They were deeply absorbed in great works “carp jumps over the dragon gate”, “Three friends of winter”, “12 Chinese zodiacs”, etc. One student said “Yes, let’s cut them!” while one girl said, “No, No, No! That’s impossible”. Then students began talking about the possibilities of making them by themselves. Most of students were not interested in window paper cutting, due to last terrible experience of Chinese “double happiness” paper cutting. (Reflective journal, Term 3)

In this case, the students had two very different attitudes about window paper cutting at the beginning of the Chinese class. Some were excited about the new opportunity for paper cutting practice. For instance, they shouted, “Yeah, we can have paper cutting again.” Apparently, the last paper cutting practice left a good impression on these students. Therefore, their curiosity and enthusiasm for this activity continued. In contrast, other students had a negative attitude toward the window paper cutting practice. Specifically, some said, “Remember last paper cutting? I hate it.” For those students, the last Chinese paper cutting class was a bad memory, and decreased their interest and enthusiasm. As the teacher-researcher presented some excellent window paper cutting on the whiteboard, instead of admiring the art, most of the students focused on talking about the possibility of making it themselves. They associated their chances of success with their last failed try with the Chinese “double happiness”
paper cutting. It demonstrated that most of the support class students were afraid of failure, which held them back from trying new things. For this reason, every chance to try creating new art should be given by the Chinese teacher. Creating good experiences and feelings for the students as much as possible is always a significant issue.

In fact, the support class students’ feelings and experiences in creating art were totally decided by the teacher-researcher’s teaching successful or unsuccessful strategies, one example being a failure in her paper cutting class:

To ensure that every student can follow my paces all the time, I presented the instructions on whiteboard step by step, explained the details orally, and slowly showed them how to cut it. At the first step (fold the paper), all 8 students followed my instructions very well. At the second step (draw cutting patterns), 5 students finished it by their own while other 3 students asked help from classroom teachers and me. I found that the three students were confused about drawing pattern on the left or right side of the paper, drawing big pattern or small pattern, and drawing two patterns with narrow or wide space. Student J told me, “Ms, I want to draw as big as yours, I can’t.” Student C said, “My drawing is too messy, can you give me another paper?” So I told the three students, “You don’t need to draw the same one as me. It’s just an example. No matter how big your pattern is, they are all right.” But two students were still satisfied with their patterns. So at last, I helped them to draw the patterns. As for third step (cut the paper), I heard students’ voices asking for help, “Ms, My paper is broken.”, “Ms, can yo give me another red paper.”, “Ms, I cut the wrong part!”, “Ms, I forgot the first step.” I ran from one student to another and tried my best to solve their problems. The whole class fell into disorder then. To be worse, some students gave up cutting double happiness and started cutting red paper freely. When I asked for reasons, they said, “I can’t cut it as you do, I don’t like it”. At the end of the class, only one student M made the double happiness paper cutting correct with the help of one classroom teacher. (Reflective journal, Term 3)

In this case, the whole class went out of control after they finished the first step (fold the paper) together. The first crisis happened when the students were required to draw cutting patterns. Student J was worried that he could not draw the pattern a big
as the teacher-researcher did. Student C was complaining that his drawing was too messy. Even if the teacher-researcher encouraged and comforted the students again and again that “the size didn’t matter” or “They are all right”, those students still appeared to be unsatisfied. For the students with perfectionist tendencies, they were strict in every detail of their work. Among the support class students, there were some who are obsessive compulsive with perfectionistic tendencies, such as students C and J. That is why they tried to draw the cutting pattern the same as the teacher-researcher. In this respect, Chinese teachers are supposed to give the support class students more freedom to design the pattern, instead of requiring them to copy the teacher. Without a specific example, they may not worry about the size or the place of the artwork that much.

A second crisis appeared that disordered the class when the students started cutting the pattern. A large number of problems arose, such as “my paper is broken”, “I cut the wrong part”, and “I forgot the first step”. Thus, the teacher-researcher was kept busy solving the students’ problems. Unfortunately, there was only one student finished the paper cutting, illuminating the failure of the art class. In regard to the causes, one student said “I can’t cut as you did”, which helps explain it. Generally speaking, one should “use modeling to demonstrate language”(Vaughn, 1999, p.210), a principle of language teaching strategies for students with learning and behavior problems. However, in this case, the teacher-researcher provided an excellent example for the students to follow, which put a huge pressure on them. It contributed to a crisis in their self-confidence.

In contrast, as the teacher-researcher applied appropriate teaching strategies in Chinese art class, the students’ feedback and experience became positive. There was a successful case of window paper cutting in the support class. At first, the teacher-researcher used a tricky cheating method to build students’ confidence about the artwork creation:
I quickly showed some other slides, on which there were some simple window paper cuttings, such as snowflake patterns, sunflower patterns, even English letters “O, V, U”. Students couldn’t help laughing and said, “Ms, They’re too funny. Are they paper cutting for window decoration?” Actually, I found these pictures online and they were “artworks” made by Year 1 students in one Chinese school. But at that moment, I said seriously, “Yes, they are made by Chinese high school students. I believe you can design your window paper cutting as they did.” The class turned to noisy again, “Ms, we can make any paper cutting we like?”, “Ms, it’s too ugly!”, “I can cut a sun, just round!” They seemed so excited about the tasks. (Reflective journal, Term 3)

In this case, the teacher-researcher told a white lie and said high school students in China made the “funny” looking window paper cutting. The students did not know they actually were the artwork of Year 1 students, so they made their comments from their hearts. They thought, “It’s too ugly”, and “They are too funny”. This form of taunt showed that the students gained some confidence to do the window paper cutting practice. They thought they could do it better than the bad-looking window paper cuttings presented in the slides, which was also the intention of the teacher-researcher’s white lie.

The teacher-researcher also inspired the students to make any window paper cutting they liked. As a result, they began to wander in their designs, such as, “I can cut a sun, just round.” The support class students preferred free-style artwork tasks rather than specific ones. It seemed to be easier and more relaxed if they were allowed to cut whatever they liked or were capable of. That is why they became active and excited when they were told to make any window paper cutting they preferred.

In the next practice section, the teacher-researcher continued inspiring the students by giving the students more creative freedom:

When they got the red paper, they started doing own paper cutting immediately. I emphasized again, “They are for our classroom’s window decoration, please make it nice.” However, they obviously
focused on designing and cutting. No one said “yes”. After 5 minutes, the boy who promised to cut “sun”, showed his artwork. It’s exactly just a round. The other students finished their paper cutting one after another. I saw square patterns, diamond patterns, and some strange flowers. Student J said, “The secret is just folding the paper, we can cut anything we like.” Following what J said, I emphasized the meaning of Chinese window paper cutting, “Yes, Chinese window paper cutting just want to express happiness and wishes to others. So you can design any pattern you like, as long as you’re happy with that. Do you agree?” At that time, I heard some students said, “Yes”, while most of the students still kept cutting strange window decorations. (Reflective journal, Term 3)

At the beginning of this case, when the teacher-researcher once more reminded the students to make the window paper cutting nice, no one answered her. It was not because they were not focused on doing paper cutting. On the contrary, the silence illustrated that the students had become involved in their art work. The free-style art creation rule had been working. At the least, the students gained a positive attitude about this practice. Afterward, the students finished their artwork one after another and showed them to their peers and the teacher. Their window paper cuttings were varied, including a sun, square, diamond, and flowers. Although they were simple patterns, the students were obviously proud of what they did. Students J revealed the secret of his art: “The secret is just folding the paper, we can cut anything we like.” As he said, the teacher’s rule of “cutting anything you like” drove the support class students to show their unique ideas as much as possible. Therefore, they were able to proudly present their self-designed and self-made art after the activity, which made a great contribution to their confidence in later Chinese culture practice. As the teacher-researcher asked, “So you can design any pattern you like, as long as you’re happy with that. Do you agree?” Some students said, “yes”, which indicated they were satisfied with the free-style art creation rule. The silent students kept making their window paper cutting, and backed the rule with their actions. From any point of view, the free-style art creation was more than welcomed by the students.

Moreover, the teacher-researcher specially added a “show time” section at the end of
the Chinese paper cutting class, which made the students more proud of their Chinese art work:

Besides, we spent last 15 minutes of the class sticking their paper cuttings to the windows of the classroom. To my surprise, they really cared about the position of their Chinese artworks. Almost all the students fought for most obvious positions for their paper cuttings on the windows. I heard lots of happy “Yeah” voice in that class. They pointed their artworks and told me, “Ms, it’s mine”, “Ms, it’s in the middle, that’s; sun.” They looked very proud of their unique window paper cuttings. (Reflective journal, Term 3)

In this case, the students were concerned about the positions of their paper cuttings. The students who got the prominent positions erupted in cheers. Other students pointed to their art work and introduced them to their peers and teachers. In order to “Use language as an intrinsic motivator”(Vaughn, 1999, p.212), the teacher-researcher developed “show time” as a motivator for the support class students. In this case, they were very proud their art made in the activity. This sort of “show time” did not take too long a time after the activity, but played a key role in building the students’ confidence and sense of accomplishment.

6.2.3 Chinese cooking practice

In addition to Chinese etiquette practice and Chinese artwork creation practice, Chinese cooking practice was also used in the teacher-researcher’s Chinese class. Chinese cuisine absorbs the essence of Chinese culture, therefore, Chinese cooking practice was supposed to help the students to develop a better understanding of Chinese culture and take delight in their studies. In fact, students were quite curious about Chinese cooking, at the beginning of “Coca-Cola chicken wings” class, for example:

This is the last class before school holiday. So I introduced one Chinese traditional cuisine, called “Coca-Cola chicken wing” to make more fun for them. As I expected, the students talked and laughed, as
I showed them the video of this dish. They couldn’t stop saying, “It’s yucky”, “I hate chicken wing!” , “Ms, Can you cook it?”, “Is that real coke?”. I asked them, “Do you want to learn how to cook it?” To my surprise, they all responded me loudly, “Yes”. So After answering some of their questions, I showed them the recipe and asked them to copy it in their notebook. Also, I asked them to try to cook this dish during school holiday following the recipe. I asked them again, “Are you happy to cook the Chinese Coco-cola chicken wing at home?” Their answer was determined, “Yes”. (Reflective journal, Term 2)

At the start of this case, the teacher-researched showed the video of cooking Coca-Cola chicken wings to the students. The students laughed and made some comments about the video, such as “It’s yucky”, and “I hate chicken wings.” The comments were harsh, but also demonstrated that Chinese cooking was a fresh topic for them to learn about. Since some students asked, “Ms, can you cook it?” it also indicated that they were curious about cooking the Chinese dishes. With the class underway, the teacher-researcher tentatively asked them, “Do you want to learn how to cook it?” and “Are you happy to cook Coca-Cola chicken wings at home?” Unexpectedly, the students responded positively and resolutely said “Yes” to the two questions. Gear the activities to students’ interests and cognitive level”(Vaughn, 1999, p. 210) is an effective teaching language strategy for students with learning and behavior problems. In this case, the students’ quick responses showed that they had passion and curiosity for doing Chinese food cooking practice. Thus, this route is a correct entry point for teaching students Chinese culture.

Although the students had already showed great curiosity in cooking Chinese food, the teacher-researcher found that it was always difficult for them to practice cooking at home. For example, they promised to cook the “Coca-Cola chicken wings” at home during the school holiday. However, when they returned to school after the holiday, the teacher-researcher found that no one finished that task:

When I asked students who did try the Chinese Coca-Cola chicken wing to raise their hands, no one did. The class was really quiet. So I had to ask them the reasons, they said, “I forgot.” “I couldn’t cook.” “I have no chicken wing at home” and some other reasons. All in all,
none of the students tried cooking it. (Reflective journal, Term 2)

As shown in the example, no one had practices cooking the Coca-Cola chicken wings at home. The students gave out various reasons for not trying the cooking practice. Therefore, the teacher-researcher’s requirement of doing Chinese cooking practice was totally useless. Although the students accepted the teacher’s instructions initially, they had no ability to finish it as expected.

In the interviews with classroom teachers, one of them expressed her understanding about practice of Chinese cooking at home for support class students:

For support class students, it’s really hard for them to finish assignments at home in all the subjects, even in English class and Math class. This is due to they need teachers to push them to do that. As you can see, they are interested in Chinese cooking, since they are pleased to watch your videos of Chinese cooking and copy your Chinese recipes. Even though, it's probably impossible to require them to do cooking practice at their homes by themselves. If possible, you should prepare everything for them and help them to have a go in cooking classrooms in our school. That will be more realistic. (Interview with Ms Lal, )

As far as the classroom teachers were concerned, it was almost impossible for the support class students to finish every subject’s assignments at home, and Chinese class was no exception. Since support class students usually don’t have good self-discipline, the teacher is supposed to supervise and guide them in finishing their specific activities. Moreover, the classroom teacher suggested the teacher-researcher settle everything down before the cooking practice and make the students do the practice together at school. It may ensure that the support class students could receive sufficient assistance when they faced difficulties during the cooking practice. Compared with doing their cooking practice alone at home, this plan seems to have feasibility.

Therefore, apart from requiring students doing Chinese cooking practice at home, the
teacher-researcher also explored the cooking practice at school with the help of teachers. Specifically, in this year, the school’s International Food Court Day happened to be at lunchtime after Wednesday’s Chinese class. By taking this opportunity, the teacher-researcher and the classroom teachers organised the support class students to cook Chinese fried rice and sold it to raise money for charity. That day’s events were described in teacher-researcher’s reflective journal:

As all the ingredients were washing and cutting properly, all the students gathered around my wok and watched me cooking a small dish as the example. I showed them step by step: pour vegetable oil into wok, cook all the vegetable in pan, throw bacon into the wok, add eggs into wok, toss the cooked rice into the wok, serve. I was glad that they kept asking questions and discussed with each other as they watched. I heard one student asked, “Is the rice already cooked?” Presently, another student rushed to answer the question, “Don’t you see Ms Zhang used rice cooker before?” Also, one student asked, “How much oil?” As I was about to answer, another student already said, “3 spoon, Ms put 3 spoons.” A girl watched my cooking carefully, so she proudly answered other students’ questions, such as “You should beat 3 eggs”, “4 spoon of bacon is needed”, and so on. As I finished cooking, they said, “Can we cook now?” “I remember steps now.” (Reflective journal, Term 2)

In this case, according to the teacher-researcher’s instructions, the students did washing and cutting of ingredients for fried rice. After that, the teacher-researcher personally showed them the process of cooking fried rice, while the students watched and asked questions about the cooking. The students had good interaction with the teacher-researcher during this cooking practice at school. Vaughn (1999) said, “much of a special education teacher’s time should be devoted to providing intensive individualized instruction to students identified as having learning disabilities” (p.77), and the positive interaction, especially the asking and answering while doing demonstration, made the cooking practice work very well.

The students who had been carefully observing the teacher’s cooking demonstration rushed to answer their peers questions, such as “How much oil?”, or “Is the rice
already cooked?” This indirectly proved that the students were focused on watching every detail of the teacher’s cooking demonstration. Meanwhile, watching what the teacher did and retelling it in their own words may develop students’ observation and communication skills.

As well as having interaction with their Chinese teacher, the support class students’ also had the opportunity to work with peers to do the cooking practice at school. They showed and strengthened their team spirit in the process of cooking Chinese fried rice:

I divided them into 2 groups and set some tasks for them individually. The tasks included pouring oils, putting vegetables, eggs, rice and bacon; and food presentation. I made sure that everyone has one or two tasks to do. They paid attention to watch what others did. When it was their turns, they did it carefully. Classroom teachers and I just stood there and watched them taking turns to do it. Although I kept saying, “If you need help, please let me know. Take it easy”, they seemed very organized. Group A served their fried rice first followed by group B. The whole cooking classroom was filled with nice flavor. One student noticed me, “Let’s take a photo!” So we took a group photo with own made fried rice. All the students had beautiful smiles on that photo. (Reflective journal, Term 2)

In this part of the cooking activity, the two groups of students took turns performing the tasks given them by the teacher-researcher. Moreover, as they carried out their own tasks, they patiently watched what their peers were doing. According to the teacher-researcher’s requirement, they did the cooking together as a team. Each one accepted the responsibility of finishing one cooking step, such as pouring oil, putting vegetables and food presentation. Although none of those cooking steps was challenging, the students’ cooperative team spirit was still highly appreciated. They were not only concerned about their own tasks, but also patient with their peers’ steps. At last, a student proposed taking a team photo, and they happily participated. The students asked to take group photo on their own initiative, which indicated that they had very strong sense of belonging to their team at that moment. In other words,
the students were pleased to be team members in the cooking exercise. They gained deep sense of pride from finishing the cooking practice together.

However, there were still some problems in the Chinese cooking class. The biggest issue was that the students just focused on cooking Chinese food only, so the teacher-researcher’s goal of teaching some food-related Chinese words could not be achieved. Here is an example:

Before Chinese fried rice cooking, I aimed to specially teach them Chinese words about this traditional Chinese cuisine: 炒饭 (fried rice), 鸡蛋 (egg), 青豆 (green bean), 玉米 (corn), 培根 (bacon). As I planned, I showed them the pictures of these words one by one and told them we would use all of them to cook fried rice together at lunchtime. As I was teaching them the pronunciations of “fried rice” and “egg”, they were really devoted to following me to speak out over and over. When it came to the third words, they started chatting with each other, “What time is it now?” “Where will we cook it?” “I love fried rice.” So I had to say that if they kept talking they couldn’t participate in fried rice cooking later. In the following 10 minutes, they restarted focusing on listening and speaking the new Chinese words. But I could feel their impatience, since they looked at the clock on the wall every few minutes. In that situation, I quickly went through the 6 words and asked them to do word matching (picture and Chinese words) as the way of reviewing. As a result, they lost most points and only matched the words “fried rice” and “egg” correctly. Actually, when they were doing word matching activity, they still kept asking, “Ms, can we cook fried rice now?” “Where is rice?” and so on. (Reflective journal, Term 2)

In this case, the teacher-researcher planned to teach the students some new Chinese words about the ingredients of the fried rice, such as “鸡蛋” (egg). However, the students were not as keen to learn after the first two words. They lost patience in following the teacher in pronouncing the words. Instead, they started discussing with classmates about the practice of fried rice cooking, such as time and place. This indicated that the students’ curiosity about the cooking practice was much stronger than their desire for learning new Chinese words at that stage. When the students’ attention is not focusing on learning something new, it is always difficult for Chinese teachers to finish teaching tasks as planned. The teacher-researcher said she would
let the students participate in the fried rice cooking at lunchtime, on condition that they stopped chatting, so they pretended to focus on learning new words for 10 minutes. After that, they appeared to be impatient again. They started looked at the clock and asked questions, such as “Can we cook fried rice now?” “Where is the rice?” Apparently, the students had been distracted by the next cooking practice. The teacher-researcher’s “threat”, such as “You can’t join in the cooking practice, if you don’t follow my instruction”, can only work for a while. Generally speaking, this kind of “threat” was useless, since the students did not keep it in their minds. Therefore, it is better for Chinese teacher to understand the students’ excitement about the coming cooking practice from the perspective of students.

As Chinese cooking practices formally began at school, the learning of Chinese language was not as effective as the teacher-researcher expected. It could be seen in the Chinese fried rice cooking practice. After learning words for the Chinese ingredients in the classroom, the teacher-researcher took the students to the school’s kitchen to start the cooking practice. As she organised them to review the Chinese words learnt in the classroom only minutes before, the situation presented itself as follows:

Before that, classroom teachers already bought all the ingredients. To review what we learnt just now, I asked them, “How do you say fried rice in Chinese?” Only student J spoke out “chǎo fàn” firmly. Then other students followed J to say it. When I pointed egg, bacon green bean and corns in turns, most of them forgot. Only two students said “dàn” correctly. They rushed me to begin cooking, “Ms, can I wash the corns?” “Let me cut bacon!” It was obvious that they were absent-minded about Chinese words. So I turned over to arrange tasks for them, including food washing and cutting.(Reflective journal, Term 2)

As shown above, one student was able to remember the pronunciation of “chǎo fàn” (“fried rice”), while the others just followed this student in saying the Chinese word. As for Chinese words such as egg, bacon and green bean, most of the students had forgotten. Although the students just learnt the words a few minutes earlier in the
Chinese class, they had already forgotten them. For this reason, it was impossible for the teacher-researcher to organise an effective revision at that point. As the students started realising they could not give the correct answers through revision, they chose to give up recalling the Chinese words that were taught before. As a result, the learning and revision of Chinese words about the cooking practice turned to be useless.

6.3: Discussion

In this chapter, the teacher-researcher mainly taught Chinese culture from two perspectives: paperwork-oriented teaching strategies and real world-oriented teaching strategies. In regard to teaching and learning Chinese culture, the former method was more concerned about theoretical study, while the latter paid more attention to practical applications.

Research on the characteristics of effective teachers of students with cultural and linguistic diversities stated that it was important to “Display a sense of confidence in their ability to be successful with students who are culturally and linguistically diverse” (Vaughn, 1999, p. 220). In terms of Chinese culture-embedded teaching strategies, both paperwork-oriented teaching strategies and real world-oriented teaching strategies greatly concerned about building students’ confidence in Chinese culture learning and making more fun for them.

The paper-oriented teaching strategies played three different roles in specific topics: paperwork as a mainline for the introduction of Chinese culture, paperwork as a frame for comparing Chinese and Australian culture, and paperwork as an artistic achievement of Chinese culture acquisition.

Firstly, the teacher-researcher always used paperwork as a mainline for the introduction of Chinese culture when she introduced traditional Chinese festivals to
support class students. She designed brainstorming worksheets for Middle Autumn Festival and Dragon Boat Festival, which represent typical examples of this kind of paperwork-oriented Chinese culture teaching strategy.

The biggest advantage of this kind of paperwork is that it makes a huge quantity of culture information more organised, which can save the students from getting lost in an information explosion. Since each Chinese festival can involve many details, such as date, food, events, legend and other related information, the brainstorming worksheet is necessary to make them clear for the students the key words in the specific circles. The second advantage is that the students are able to fill in the circles according to their learning abilities, while the teacher can learn about the students’ weaknesses based on their worksheet answers. The “higher-level” students can choose the more challenging circles, such as “meaning of the festival” to fill in, while the more “basic-level” students can choose the easier circles, such as “date of the festival” to complete. Therefore, every student can gain confidence by finishing some of the circles in the worksheet. Meanwhile, it can help teachers to better focus on helping the students learn about parts of the Chinese festivals which are not easily understood by students themselves. The third advantage is that some special designs of the brainstorming worksheets can make the paperwork more impressive and attractive for the students, and help to learn and remember unique details of the festivals. The general form of the brainstorming work sheet is fixed. It always appears as one big circle (with topic) linked to several smaller circles (with details). However, some details can be adjusted to satisfy the teacher’s requirements. For example, a special shaped and sized circle was designed for the students to draw a moon cake for the Middle Autumn Festival topic.

A disadvantage of the brainstorming worksheet also mentioned by the teacher-researcher is that the students always regarded the worksheet as a task. It resulted in them rushing to finish filling in the circles, and then becoming distracted from the class. The students did not realise they answered the questions in the brainstorming
worksheet with the help of the teacher or the video material. Instead, they enjoyed a sense of achievement in finishing the worksheet by themselves. To avoid this situation as much as possible, the teacher-researcher attempted added a free speech period after filling in the brainstorming worksheet, which worked very well. On the one hand, the free speech period could motivate the students’ language creativity, since they had to introduce the Chinese festival in their own words. The brainstorming worksheet served to provide hints for the student-presenter. On the other hand, during the preparation of their free speech, the students reviewed the Chinese festival, and made learning progress with points, which they hadn’t fully grasped previously.

Secondly, in the class about comparisons of Chinese and Australian culture, the paperwork usually played a framing role. The teacher-researcher always designed a comparison table regarding a specific topic, such as two countries’ festivals, table manners and eating habits. It aimed to guide students to explore the similarities and differences between the two cultures’ various features.

According to different culture topics, the teacher-researcher always had two types of comparison tables. The first type was a broad, blanketing table containing key words. It covered specific and basic topics, such as the comparison between Chinese and Australia festivals. In the design of these culture topics, the teacher-researcher usually took two key factors into consideration: the students’ personal experience and the order of the questions. In terms of the students’ personal experience, the teacher-researcher designed boxes requiring the students to fill in basic information about features in the Australian festival, such as the date of the festival, the decorations, and the various activities. Since the students had rich experiences in Australian culture topics, they were able to share a great number of ideas with others and easily finish filling in the boxes. The design in the comparison table always built the students’ confidence. In addition, the students were sometimes given opportunities to fill in specific boxes about corresponding Chinese culture topics. For
example, since students once did window paper cutting in Chinese class, they could think of “window paper cutting” as they saw the key words “activities of Chinese Spring Festivals” in the comparison table. This sort of design in the comparison table would stimulate the students’ desire to become involved in classroom discussion. At that time, the teacher would become a helper to record and conclude students’ opinions, while the students played the leading role. Regarding the order of the questions, the teacher-researcher designed them from the simple to the difficult, from the specific to the abstract. The gradually increasing levels of difficulty made the students do comparisons of the two countries’ cultural topics step by step. This designed ordering of question met the demands of the students’ psychological development, and conformed with the students’ thought law of development. In this process, the students’ knowledge about the culture topic was solidifying. As a result, students sometimes could draw inferences about other cases from one instance, sometimes even providing answers, which exceeded the teacher’s expectations.

The second types of culture comparison tables were the boxes, which already had answers provided by the teacher-researcher below different key words. These were generally used in the abstract culture topics, such as the comparisons between Chinese and Australian table manners. In the situation, the students kept asking questions about the answers that the teacher offered, since they had never experienced this kind of higher-level Chinese culture in person. Therefore, as the teacher-researcher found in her class, the biggest advantage of this design was that the students’ curiosity could be evoked, and they would get involved and keep thinking in class. To satisfy the students’ curiosity, the teacher-researcher usually combined video materials and her personal experience to explain some culture issues in her class. Since the video was vivid and the teacher’s personal experience appealing, both were necessary for answer-given comparison tables. However, it was still challenging for the support class students to explore the meaning behind some abstract culture topics. Faced with given answers that were hard to understand, it was common for the students to lose patience or give up. This demonstrated that the
teacher-researcher should think about the students’ prior knowledge and intelligence level carefully in the designing of the comparison tables. An appropriate teaching target and expectation for students are the foundation of effective comparison table designs.

Thirdly, paperwork was also viewed as an artwork achievement, as the students were taught Chinese art. In this kind of paperwork-oriented Chinese culture teaching strategy, the Chinese art referred to Chinese artwork that could be easily used in class, such as Beijing Opera mask design, or Chinese paper cutting. In this situation, the teacher-researcher always instilled in the students that “this is artwork, not just paperwork”. With this kind of special feeling, the students took the artistic paperwork more seriously and became more involved with it. As the students were engaged in the paperwork, they could learn more specific cultural knowledge. In particularly, they paid more attention to the cultural knowledge relating to themselves, such as their personal Chinese zodiac symbols. More importantly, they didn’t treat the process as a tough task. Instead, they enjoyed creating the art and had a sense of achievement. However, the teacher-researcher always had higher expectations for the students. Specifically, she expected them to know the culture knowledge, and do required revisions of the words related to the culture topics. It seemed to put pressure on the students. As a result, they seemed quite nervous and timid in doing the paperwork. Obviously, it frustrated the teacher’s original intention of having the students acquire knowledge and enjoy the process at the same time. To solve the problem, the teacher-researcher adjusted her lesson plan so the students were not required to recall the words, and could do the artistic paperwork freely, such as designing their favorite Chinese opera masks. This kind of relaxing atmosphere delighted the students and encouraged their creativity. Moreover, as they relaxed, they automatically and naturally thought of Chinese words related to the topic. This indicated that pushing the students too much could negate any positive influence. In contrast, allowing the students the appropriate amount of freedom in Chinese class made surprising progress.
The teacher-researcher mainly explored three features of real world-oriented teaching strategies: Chinese etiquette practice, Chinese art creation practice and Chinese food cooking practice.

Firstly, Chinese etiquette practice was used in teaching the students traditional etiquette, which they had never experienced before. The teacher-researcher introduced two activities – Chinese tea tasting and Chinese chopstick use – as examples to demonstrate Chinese etiquette.

Since the support students were unfamiliar with Chinese etiquette, it was a big issue for the teacher-researcher to make them believe that what she described was typical Chinese etiquette in everyday life. Therefore, she applied three methods in her class, including orally describing Chinese etiquette, showing videos, and peer scaffolding. In particular, as the teacher-researcher talked about the Chinese etiquette, she attempted to share her personal experiences, such as her story of using chopsticks inappropriately in her childhood. As indicated in the teacher-researcher’s reflective journal, it seemed to be an effective way to keep the students engaged in class and pay attention to the details of different forms of Chinese etiquette. In fact, for the support class students, their Chinese teacher was of paramount importance. As a Chinese, her personal experiences were most convincing and appealing to the students.

In the section of etiquette practice, the teacher-researcher took advantage of “special guests”: native Chinese speakers, and classroom teachers. These special guests performed different roles in class. The native Chinese language speakers provided examples of Chinese etiquette and proper Chinese conversation. They seemed like another Chinese teacher, showing the students accurate movements and pronunciation as the students practiced etiquette in groups. Compared with their real Chinese teacher, the students listened to what the “special guest” said more carefully,
since the “special guest” was novel to them. In regard to the classroom teachers, they usually competed with the students in Chinese etiquette practice. Sometimes the students failed, and sometimes the classroom teachers lost the competition. No matter what the competition results were, the main point was that the students were pleased to compete with them in something new, on an equal basis. This kind of novelty stimulated the students’ interest in practicing Chinese etiquette again and again, and they gradually progressed. Compared with competing with their classmates, having a competition with the classroom teachers was more exciting and challenging for the students.

The teacher-researcher was also concerned about creating a Chinese-style atmosphere for etiquette practice. The Chinese decorations attracted the students’ attention before the formal Chinese etiquette class began. Before the Chinese tea tasting practice the teacher-researcher chose a red tablecloth with Chinese calligraphy, comfortable chairs, Chinese folk music and a picture of an ancient Chinese teahouse. Benefitting from these trappings, the students’ enthusiasm for participating in the practice rose to a high level. Some of the props used for etiquette practice had other attractive points for the students, though the teacher-researcher didn’t at first realise it. When the students used chopsticks etiquette, they cared a great deal about the patterns on the chopsticks. They found the Chinese-style patterns, such as pandas, to be quite special and pretty, and it proved to be one of the biggest motivations for their etiquette practice. This indicated that Chinese teachers should devote time to carefully pick the props for etiquette practice, as they can influence the class atmosphere and the students’ enthusiasm.

Secondly, Chinese art was a topic in one of the teacher-researcher’s Chinese classes. Chinese paper cutting is a typical example, and was presented in the teacher-researcher’s reflective journal. She compared the two situations of Chinese window paper cutting class and “double happiness” Chinese paper cutting class in her reflective journal, and analysed the reasons for the students’ different performances
in these similar art practices.

In the first situation, the Chinese teacher gave specific examples of cutting “double happiness” to the support class students. She demonstrated the procedure step by step, and the students were required to follow her in cutting the same patterns. Although she did not intend to have every student cut as perfectly as she did, some were still keen to copy the size or the place as the teacher did, which resulted them experiencing pressure. To make matters worse, when a student failed in some steps of the paper cutting, they lost confidence in the whole exercise. That class proved to be a disaster in the end. The biggest problem was the teacher ignored the importance of the class being “student-centered”. As the students didn’t have creative freedom, they lost interest and enjoyment.

By comparison, in the Chinese “double happiness” paper cutting class, the teacher-researcher gave the students’ more freedom in the window paper cutting exercise. Specifically, she first showed some simple examples, which raised the students’ confidence for doing that practice. They were then allowed to design any pattern they liked and to cut freely, which made the students more active and excited about the class. The teacher-researcher also added a “show time” for their artwork, which gave them a great sense of accomplishment as well.

Third was the Chinese food cooking class. It was a way to have students delight in learning more about Chinese culture study and develop a spirit of teamwork. The Coca-Cola chicken wing and the Chinese fried rice exercises were described in the teacher-researcher’s reflective journals.

In the Coca-Cola chicken wing class, the teacher-researcher showed a video of how it was prepared. The students displayed great enthusiasm in it at that stage. However, the teacher asked the students to have a try at home, and no one did it. As the classroom teacher said, most of the support class students did not have good self-
discipline, so it was almost impossible to have them do it at home. It indicated that it was necessary to ensure the support class students performed the Chinese food cooking practice at school, with the supervision and help of teacher.

After learning lessons from the failed Coca-Cola chicken wing exercise, the teacher-researcher organised a successful Chinese food cooking class at school. The first part of the success was when the students had good interaction with the teacher-researcher in the process of cooking the food cooking. They asked questions about Chinese cooking and the teacher-researcher answered them while giving the cooking demonstration. The positive interaction between students and teacher gave the cooking exercise a harmonious and relaxed atmosphere. The second successful aspect was when the students worked happily together to cook fried rice. They helped each other, reminded each other and answered each other’s questions. At the end, some students proposed having a group photo on their own initiative. All in all, the team spirit and the sense of belonging to a team were cultivated and enhanced in the cooking practice. For these support class students, that was more meaningful than the language learning.

However, one problem that did appear was that the teacher-researcher expected the students to learn some Chinese language during the course of the cooking practice. The problem could be seen during the fried rice cooking. Specifically, the students couldn’t wait to start cooking practice, and didn’t listen to the teacher’s introductions regarding words about fried rice. They had no patience for learning words or doing revision. Therefore, the lack of effectiveness in learning Chinese words was much worse than the teacher expected. It would have been better for the teacher to understand the students’ excitement about the coming cooking practice from their perspective, that they may not be keen to focus on learning new Chinese words when their attention was completely on the actual cooking.
6.4: Conclusion

In this chapter, Chinese culture teaching strategies were introduced from two perspectives: paperwork-oriented teaching and practice-oriented teaching. The paperwork-oriented teaching strategies were demonstrated in three aspects: paperwork as a mainline for the introduction of Chinese culture, paperwork as a frame of Chinese and Australian culture comparison, and paperwork as an artistic achievement of Chinese culture acquisition. This paperwork was intended to give the students a better understand of Chinese culture. Firstly, the carefully designed paperwork made teacher’s culture introduction more organised. Secondly, the paperwork was usually used alone with oral and video material to make their introduction to the culture more convincing and attractive. Thirdly, in the design of the paperwork, the students’ psychological needs and learning abilities were to be the priority, otherwise, the paperwork would not work as the teacher expected. Practice-oriented teaching strategies were presented in three ways: Chinese etiquette practice, Chinese food cooking and Chinese art exercises. These teaching strategies were supposed to put students at the center of the class. Meanwhile, the balance between freedom for and supervision of the students was always an issue. The balance between the teacher’s expectations and the students’ enjoyment was another highlight as well. In the following chapter, a conclusion of the entirety of the research based on the data, will be presented by the teacher-researcher.
Chapter 7 Conclusion of the study

7.0 Introduction

Chapter 4 to Chapter 6 analysed the data collected from the three-cycle Chinese teaching strategies for the support class students. In this chapter, the focus is moved to two main aspects: to conclude the general principles of Chinese teaching strategies for the support class students, and to summarise the implications of the study to education policy making in Australia.

7.1 General principles of Chinese teaching strategies for the support class students

Based on the data analysis about Chinese teaching strategies of vocabulary, listening and speaking, and culture-embeddedness, the four general principles of Chinese teaching strategies for the support class students can be concluded as follows.

7.1.1 Maintaining the support class students’ motivation in Chinese learning

Initially, sustaining a deep level of curiosity was a means of maintaining the support class students’ motivation for Chinese learning. On the one hand, the contents of the Chinese class should activate the students’ curiosity. For instance, the Chinese food cooking seemed to be an appealing topic for the students, while they felt confused about the topic of Chinese table manners. Since most of the support class students had the experience of eating Chinese food, they felt curious about the cooking methods. However, since most of the Australian support class students had never been to China or lived with Chinese people, the content of Chinese table manners was too abstract and boring for them. On the other hand, the types of class activities should be creative and raise their interest. For example, the students were bored with
normal Chinese characters searching in paper, yet were excited about searching for
Chinese characters in photos taken in China or Chinatown. Although these two kinds
of activities both aimed to help the students to review the newly learnt Chinese
characters, the latter method was more innovative. Therefore, the students
experienced more effective learning from the second activity.

Secondly, helping the support class students to build confidence through success is
one key factor in maintaining their motivation for Chinese learning. On the one hand,
the teacher should provide specific and inspiring feedback to the students. For
example, if a student has difficulty in the pronunciation of one new vocabulary, a
positive comment such as “You did a good job on the first word, so you just need to
use a cutting hand gesture to say the second word with a falling tone” is more useful
than “You did a good job. You can have another go.” The former type of feedback is
more specific, and provides hints to the student. Therefore, the student has
confidence in pronouncing the vocabulary accurately in the next time. On the other
hand, the difficulty level of the learning content should be controlled in the process.
As the students are learning something new, they prefer to have a fairly low level of
challenge combined with frequent feedback that helps them succeed or confirms their
success. After mastering the basics, they are ready for a higher level of challenge,
including competitions that help them exercise and sharpen their skills.

Thirdly, to give the support students have a sense of satisfaction is another
requirement for maintaining their learning motivation in Chinese class. On the one
hand, a sense of satisfaction can result from a material reward. In the Chinese class,
as the students achieved a learning goal or finished a task successfully, the Chinese
teacher always gave the finisher a gift, such as a Chinese knot. Inspired, the students
made a greater effort in practicing and reviewing, helping them progress more
quickly. On the other hand, satisfaction can come from having their views heard and
respected by the others. As the data was analysed, the support class students were
seen to work harder in the competition game than in a normal activity. They pursued
winning a competition, and in doing so, they experienced a sense of accomplishment and enjoyed the moment in the class spotlight.

### 7.1.2 Linking Chinese to the support class students’ prior knowledge

First is taking advantage of the similarities and differences between Chinese and English. Although English and Chinese belong to different language systems, the teacher-researcher also attempted to link and transfer them in her Chinese classes. As presented in the data analysis chapters, it was effective for the students to transfer the pronunciations of Chinese and English vocabulary words, find similarities and differences between an English and Chinese sentence structure, and compare Chinese culture with English culture. It should be noted that the Chinese teacher must know the students’ literacy level and have adequate and suitable lesson plans. Moreover, the Chinese teacher should create more opportunities for the students to transfer to other students by themselves, which will provide a more positive effect.

Secondly, digging into the support class students’ knowledge acquired in other subjects can also make a significant contribution to their Chinese learning. In the data analysis chapters, the teacher-researcher demonstrated the application of class activities that had been employed in their other subjects, such as word guessing, coloring, and singing activities. Since the students knew the rules of those activities, the Chinese teacher could avoid having to explain them. Instead, the Chinese teacher can be more concerned about the contents of those activities. Based on the basic rules of the activities, the details and innovations affected the students’ learning in the Chinese class.

Thirdly, the Chinese teacher should assist that the support class students to link the knowledge acquired in their previous Chinese classes to the newly acquired Chinese knowledge. Due to the support class students’ special intelligence level, it was sometimes challenging for them to acquire much Chinese knowledge in one lesson.
Thus, it is important to help them to retain previously acquired content in their minds, and transfer the old to the new as much as possible. As the data analysis chapters indicated, the students were proud to recall the Chinese knowledge they learnt earlier. The previously learnt Chinese knowledge can also assist them to understand new concepts or new knowledge in new topics.

7.1.3 Combining teacher’s scaffolding with students’ peer tutoring

Firstly, modeling is commonly used in the support class students’ Chinese classes as a means of scaffolding. On the one hand, the teacher’s modeling gave the students examples and assistance. In some class activities, such as role-play, the students were not confident enough to have a try at first. In demonstrating, the teacher’s modeling reduced the students’ reticence and gave them an excellent example. As the students had little or no idea about the pronunciation of a word or sentence, the teacher’s modeling provided a example the students could imitate. This reduced the students’ cognitive load and encouraged them to keep going. On the other hand, the students’ peer modeling was a part of peer tutoring, which got the students involved in the class and helped them develop their abilities together. The data analyses chapters also showed the support class students were pleased to listen to their peers’ comments and corrections. Compared with the teachers’ requirements, the peers requirements of each other were even stricter. In the process of tutoring each other, all students had to engage in the class, otherwise, they had no chance to present their opinions. Thus, all the students made progress in the peer tutoring.

Secondly, when support class students become confused, the Chinese teacher should provide immediate interaction, while peer interaction also plays an important role in Chinese class. In the field of scaffolding teaching strategies, the teacher’s immediate interaction also needs to “adapt the current level of the student’s performance and should either be at the same or a slightly higher level” (Pol, Volman & Beishuizen, 2010, pp. 274-275). For instance, when the Chinese teacher required the students to
find the similarities between Chinese words, and the students became confused, the Chinese teacher could select specific words from the two languages to give the students inspiration rather than continuing to push them to think independently. In addition, the peer interaction also stimulates the students’ potential for Chinese learning. As demonstrated in the data analysis chapters, the students were influenced by their peers’ good performance, and attempted to follow their classmates in practice. This indicates the positive power of the peer interaction.

Thirdly, teacher’s scaffolding focuses on applying appropriate methods to release the support class students’ frustration and decrease their cognitive loads, while the students’ peer tutoring assists them to have a positive learning experience. In the Chinese class, the Chinese teacher should use questioning, modeling or other types of scaffolding methods to make the Chinese vocabulary, sentences and Chinese culture more easily understood by the students. For example, a sentence with three words was a big challenge for some of them. The Chinese teacher had to teach the words one by one, and link one new word to another which the students were familiar with. As a challenge or obstacle is broken into pieces, the learning task will not cause as much frustration and stress to the students. In addition, the students’ peer tutoring, which included peer comments, peer correction, and peer encouragement, helped create a deeper impression of the Chinese content. Whether laughing at or admiring each other, the students were keeping the Chinese language and knowledge in mind. In conclusion, the teacher’s scaffolding and the students’ peer tutoring worked together to increase the students’ zone of proximal development.

7.1.4 Addressing the support class students’ individual characteristics and learning needs

Firstly, the Chinese teacher must care about the support class students’ different
personalities and learning types. Data analysis estimated that too much pushing of students with introverted personalities to present in front of the class would make them nervous, or even give up trying to learn. However, for students who were outgoing, creating more opportunities for them to excel before their classmates and teachers made them confident and happy. On the other side, different support class students have different learning styles as well. Therefore, the Chinese teacher should incorporate more considerations of learning modes into the design of Chinese class activities. For example, tactile learners can benefit from touching or clicking on the Smart Board, audio learners can be stimulated by listening the audio material, and visual learners can become more interested by watching selected movie scenes related to the Chinese topics.

Secondly, according to the support class students’ different literacy levels and learning abilities, the Chinese teacher should give them individual instructions and assistance. The teacher should give the students with a good grasp of Chinese indirect hints and guide them to think independently. In other words, high-level scaffolding is needed for the students with higher literacy levels or learning abilities. For the support class students with a lower literacy level or learning ability, the Chinese teacher should provide them with more obvious hints and build their confidence. For those students who almost give up practicing their Chinese pronunciation, the teacher should patiently provide one-to-one instruction. In an example presented in the data analysis chapter, the Chinese teacher demonstrated the pronunciation of a Chinese word and encouraged the students to follow her.

Thirdly, the Chinese teacher should observe the support class students’ mood and engagement each day, and adjust the teaching plan in a timely manner. Since most of the support class students tend to be emotional and don’t have good self-discipline, their behavior in Chinese classes often depends on their mood that day. Sometimes, the students are devoted to participating in the Chinese class, and can readily achieve the Chinese teacher’s teaching goal. In such a situation, the Chinese teacher can add
a “show off” section as a reward, such as individual presentations. The effectiveness of the “show off” section has been demonstrated in the data analysis. In contrast, sometimes the students can barely focus on the Chinese class. No matter how the teacher encourages them, they are not motivated to join in activity or discussion. At that moment, the teaching plan should be adjusted. As the data analysis shows, easier tasks and the multi-choice questions easily helped change the learning atmosphere.

7.2 Implications for Chinese teaching for the support class students in Australia

From Chapter 4 to Chapter 6, the data about Chinese teaching strategies for the support class students were analysed. The data from the teacher-researcher’s three terms of teaching experience indicated the support class students as having the ability to learn basic Chinese language and Chinese culture. As analysed in the data chapters, if the Chinese teacher follows the four general teaching principles set out in section 7.2, the support class students would be able to participate in the learning activities on vocabulary, listening and speaking and embedded-culture in Chinese classes. Although each support class student has a different intelligence level and learning ability, all can have opportunities to learn something of interest to them in their Chinese classes. Specifically, for students who have good listening and speaking capabilities, the pronunciation of Chinese vocabularies and sentences would be appealing. For students who are more interested in writing and drawing, they can develop their skills in the areas of the Chinese characters and Chinese artistic works. And students who are curious about Asian or Chinese culture can gain better understanding through class activities. Even students who have difficulty in more serious learning can enjoy well-organised Chinese classes through games or video materials. The Chinese phrase “各取所需”, literally means “Each takes what he needs.” Therefore, to meet the support class students’ different needs in Chinese classes, the teacher-researcher’ exploration of Chinese teaching strategies for them is necessary. This study has analysed specific Chinese teaching strategies for vocabulary, listening and speaking, and embedded-culture, and drawn four general
principles for teaching these special students. Although the data were only collected in one support class in Western Sydney, they also provide a foundation for other researchers to build upon in the future.

Moreover, the data analysis presented the support class students’ confusion, engagement and happiness in their Chinese classes during the three terms of learning. From this perspective, the support class students’ behavior was as normal as the mainstream students in a second language class. Different from other subjects, the support class students stand at the same starting line in the field of Chinese learning as mainstream students. Therefore, the Australian educational departments should consider the promotion of Chinese classes for support class students in more schools. The data from the study can offer some assistance for the policy making process.

Australia is a multi-cultural country with many people who have Chinese backgrounds. Therefore, support class students also have many opportunities to contact such people in everyday life. From this aspect, the acquisition of Chinese culture by support class students should also be a matter of interest. This study mentioned some details of Chinese culture teaching, which may be a useful reference for other Chinese teachers in deciding upon their teaching strategies.

### 7.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, the teacher-researcher summarised four general Chinese teaching principles for support class students, based on the data analysis chapters. In addition, the implications of the study in Australia were analysed, especially in regard to the making of policy for second language teaching for support class students.
References


Appendix 1 Timeline for the research

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Appendix 2 Coded data sample

Coding is a core method for data analysis in this research. The following chart presents a sample of coding from a reflective journal.

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<th>Themes</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Special teaching strategies</td>
<td>1.to activate students’ pre-knowledge</td>
<td>1.to guess the pronunciation,</td>
<td>Extract 1: I showed Chinese Pinyin “didi” which means “younger brother” on PPT and let students guess the pronunciation of this word. All the students had a try bravely, although it is not accurate. On the basis of their understanding, I corrected their pronunciation. This method made students memorise this simple word quickly. After times’ one-by-one practice, all 6 students said it properly.</td>
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<td>for word</td>
<td>2.to reduce students’ cognitive load</td>
<td>2.to have a try</td>
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<td>3.One-by-one practice</td>
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<td>To recruit students’ attention with new</td>
<td>1.video attract students’ eyes</td>
<td>Extract 2: Before the new topic, I played a video combining classic movie scenes of “I love you”. Some are Chinese movies, some are English movies. Students are into videos with excited expression and try to imitate Chinese actors’ pronunciation insistently.</td>
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<td>media</td>
<td>2.try to imitate</td>
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<td></td>
<td>To interest students to practice Chinese</td>
<td>1.practical homework</td>
<td>Extract3: I said that today’s homework is saying “I love you to your family member” One student said my parents didn’t know Chinese. I told her to have a go and look at her parents’ reaction. She said “Ok” and pronounced “I love you” in Chinese slowly again. I said “excellent job, please just say to your parents”. She smiled happily.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>in daily life</td>
<td>2.to give positive feedback to students</td>
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Appendix 3: Interview questions

Interview questions for classroom teachers
The draft interview questions for teachers in first interview will be similar to these stated below following:
5  What's your opinion about students' performance in Chinese class, especially comparing with other classes?
6  Through their observation, what's your comment about students’ interest, attitude, feelings about Chinese class and Chinese teaching strategies?
7  Are there any Chinese teaching strategies which are not suitable for support class students? Do you have any suggestions for next term's Chinese classes?
8  In this term, which kinds of Chinese teaching strategies are appropriate and welcomed in support class? Why, If possible, could you take some examples especially vocabulary teaching strategies, listening and speaking teaching strategies and Chinese culture teaching strategies?
The second interview is proposed to include following questions:
1. Do you find any differences between this term's Chinese class and last term's, including teaching strategies and students' performance?
2. As far as you concerned, the change is positive or negative, why?

Interview questions for students
The draft interview questions for students in first interview will be similar to these stated below following:
1. What's your impressive culture topic or language knowledge in this term's Chinese class, why? Is it easy or hard for you?
1. Do you like or dislike Chinese teacher's teaching method or strategies, why?
2. What are your favorite teaching strategies and what are your unsatisfied teaching strategies?
4. Do you have any comments or suggestions for next term's class?
   In the second interview, some questions will be added:
1. Do you find any differences between this term's Chinese class and last term's?
2. Compared with last terms' Chinese class, you prefer this term's teaching strategies or last term's? Why?
Appendix 4 Approval of Human Research Ethics Commit

13 June 2014

Doctor Jinghe Han
Centre for Educational Research

Dear Jinghe,

I wish to formally advise you that the Human Research Ethics Committee has approved your research proposal H10497 “A Mandarin Teacher’s Exploration of Teaching Strategies for Support Class Students: An Action Research in a Western Sydney School”, until 31 December 2014 with the provision of a progress report annually if over 12 months and a final report on completion.

Conditions of Approval

1. A progress report will be due annually on the anniversary of your approval date.

2. A final report will be due at the expiration of your approval period as detailed in the approval letter.

3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee prior to the project continuing. Amendments must be requested using the HREC Amendment Request Form: [http://www.uws.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/491130/HREC_Amendment_Request_Form.pdf](http://www.uws.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/491130/HREC_Amendment_Request_Form.pdf)

4. Any serious or unexpected adverse events on participants must be reported to the Human Ethics Committee as a matter of priority.

5. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the Committee as a matter of priority.

6. Consent forms are to be retained within the archives of the School or Research Institute and made available to the Committee upon request.

Please quote the registration number and title as indicated above in the subject line on all future correspondence related to this project. All correspondence should be sent to the email address humanethics@uws.edu.au.

This protocol covers the following researchers:
Jinghe Han, Michael Singh, Yanyuan Zhang

Yours sincerely

Professor Elizabeth Deane
Presiding Member,
Human Researcher Ethics Committee
Appendix 5 Approval of SERAP

Ms Yanyuan Zhang  
Room J.1.01, Building J  
School of Education  
Kingswood Campus  
Locked Bag 1797  
KINGSWOOD NSW 2747

Dear Ms Zhang

I refer to your application to conduct a research project in NSW government schools entitled *A Mandarin Teacher's Exploration of Teaching Strategies for Support Class Students: An Action Research in a Western Sydney School*. I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved. You may contact principals of the nominated schools to seek their participation. *You should include a copy of this letter with the documents you send to schools.*

This approval will remain valid until 31 December 2014.

The following researchers or research assistants have fulfilled the Working with Children screening requirements to interact with or observe children for the purposes of this research for the period indicated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approval expires</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yanyuan Zhang</td>
<td>24/05/2019</td>
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I draw your attention to the following requirements for all researchers in NSW government schools:

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

When your study is completed please email your report to: serap@det.nsw.edu.au.

You may also be asked to present on the findings of your research.

I wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Susan Harriman  
Leader, Quality Assurance Systems  
14 July 2014