A Bilingual Second Language Teacher Teaching Bilingually:

a Self-study

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Master of Education (Honours)

University of Western Sydney

5th February 2010
Declaration

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 Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

....................

ZHANG Minmin

5th February 2010
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For a recent undergraduate with no teaching experience, the language teaching methodology training course was extremely helpful, enabling me to adapt quickly to
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List of Abbreviations

BA: Bachelor of Arts
BOS: Board of Studies
CLI: Centre for Learning Innovation
DET: Department of Education and Training
L1: First language
L2: Second language
MED (Hons): Master of Education (Honours)
MOU: Memorandum of Understanding
NMEB: Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau
NSW: New South Wales
ROSETE: Research-Oriented School-Engaged Teacher Education
SERAP: State Education Research Approval Process
VTR: Volunteer Teacher Researcher
WSR: Western Sydney Region
Abstract

I was engaged as a Volunteer Teacher-Researcher (VTR) of Mandarin in New South Wales Department of Education and Training (NSW DET) schools as part of a partnership between the NSW DET (Western Sydney Region), Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau (NMEB) and the Centre for Educational Research, the University of Western Sydney (UWS). As a bilingual teacher with no previous educational background teaching Mandarin bilingually in NSW, I was concerned to document and analyse my experiences through a self-study research method and to investigate my professional learning as a beginning second language (L2) teacher.

Self-study is a burgeoning area of teacher education and teacher research. My research question is the following: What is it like to be a bilingual teacher teaching a second language (L2) in a first language (L1) environment, but where this L1 is my L2? Sources of data collected for this study included: programming and planning notes, documents from methodology training courses, reflection journals, classroom observations, students’ written feedback and test results, and interviews with teachers. I also drew on memories of my prior learning experiences as a school- and tertiary-level learner of English in Zhejiang Province, China. Content analysis was adopted to analyse the evidence in this study. The theoretical interpretation draws on the work of Loughran (2004 & 2005) and Hamilton (1998) in self-study, as well as comparisons and contrasts with current trends in L2 education and beginning teaching research, such as the work of Watzke (2007), Marland (2007) and Arends (2004).

Key categories of analysis, including identity, experiencing a mentoring relationship, language class size, classroom management and impacts of pre-existing knowledge, emerged as significant evidence from the analysis of my data. In general my development trend was consistent with previous research in the literature about
beginning teaching. The process of becoming a teacher-researcher through self-study was professional, beneficial and meaningful.
Author’s publications


Chapter 1

A Self-study of a Beginning Second Language Teacher’s Professional Learning: An Introduction to the Research Project

This research is a self-study of a Volunteer Teacher Researcher’s (VTR’s) teaching experiences in Western Sydney Region (WSR) Department of Education and Training (DET) schools in New South Wales (NSW). In this chapter, the research background is presented: brief information about myself, the researcher, and the Ningbo/Western Sydney project—the focus of my research. In addition, the rationale for this research, its purposes, as well as its significance are provided. At the end, this chapter outlines the structure and organisation of the whole thesis.

1.1 Research Background

The author of this thesis is one of the seven VTRs of Mandarin in the WSR of NSW, and also a research candidate in the Master of Education (Honours) at the Centre for Educational Research (UWS). The teaching/learning/research program of which I am a participant is a partnership between UWS, the NSW DET and NMEB. It is an international cooperation program conducted under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed in March 2007 between the WSR of the NSW DET and the NMEB to build a partnership in research-based teacher education. In this MOU, the NMEB promises that, over 5 years, they will select up to 10 student teachers per year as VTRs to work in WSR NSWDET schools, and to research this experience through their enrolment in the Master of Education (Honours) at UWS. This thesis is the documentation and analysis of this VTR’s teaching and professional learning experiences from the perspective of a recent graduate with no previous teacher education.
This program, as part of a partnership between UWS, the NSW DET and NMEB, is the fruit of international cooperation between these parties. Zhao and Singh (2008, p. 8) state that “the principal aim of [the] program is to strengthen and enhance the cooperative relationship between Australian and Chinese educators in general, and between the UWS, the WSR of the NSWDET and the NMEB in particular”. Although each partner holds different aims, they share one common goal—helping to build a good educational relationship between Australia and China. Knowledge of the Chinese language (hereafter referred to as ‘Mandarin’ in accordance with the Australian custom) is particularly important in terms of economic benefits for Australia. The WSR (NSW DET) expects to expand and promote Mandarin and Chinese culture in its schools to better prepare students to meet the challenges of the future in a globalised world in which China is now a key player.

UWS hopes to contribute to both of these aspects by developing the research capabilities of the VTRs and by producing theses and collaborative research publications jointly authored by the research candidates and their supervisor/s (Zhao & Singh, 2008). As for NMEB — which shoulders the responsibility of selecting up to 10 research candidates for the MED (Hons) program per year — they wish to train these VTRs to be bilingual teachers, as well as leaders in education when they return to China. These teachers will enjoy knowledge of second language (L2) teaching, and also have life experience in Australia — an English-speaking country. Both more English language and aspects of Anglo-Australian culture are acquired by the VTRs during this 18 month period. As VTRs we are expected to return to China to become English teachers after successfully completing this voluntary Mandarin teaching program as well as obtaining the Masters degree from UWS (Zhao & Singh, 2008). This program has a formal name — the ROSETE program, which is short form for “Research Oriented School Engaged Teacher Education”. ROSETE is a program of professional, research-based learning focusing on developing teacher-researchers. So the position of VTR was the basis of the research reported in this thesis.
Zhao and Singh (2008, p. 2) agree that it is of crucial importance for teacher-researchers to have the “knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be effective intercultural teachers” in a globalised world. Moreover:

it is found that participation in international programs significantly influences teachers’ pedagogical practices, expands the range of their instructional approaches, makes them more culturally sensitive, and impacts their interpersonal relations in schools, their professional growth, and social status (Zhao & Singh, 2008, p. 3).

I actually feel very fortunate to be recruited as one of the pioneers of the first group. For my part, the best aspect of joining this program is that I have the opportunity to teach L2 (Mandarin) in an L1 (English) classroom environment. I believe this must improve my language skills and my teaching practices, as well as enable me to immerse myself in a Western culture in general and in a Western school culture in particular. Consider the following statement:

The Visiting Teacher Researchers recruited into this program are Bachelors graduates from universities in Ningbo interested in the field of English language and Western cultural studies. Through this program they enhance their English language proficiency (in speaking, reading, writing and listening) and their cross-cultural understanding through immersion in research-based teaching processes. They develop an understanding of the Western educational culture through their work as Visiting teachers in schools in Western Sydney Region. Through the contextualised learning of the English language and Western (Australian) culture these Volunteer Teacher Researchers have few problems with the transference of their skills as the process of immersion enhances capacity to engage in real world research. (Zhao & Singh, 2008, p. 11)
However, not everything for me at the time of my arrival in Australia was positive. What worried me was that, although I am quite familiar with the subject I am going to teach, because I am a native speaker of Mandarin, teaching Mandarin to non-background speakers is more than knowing the language. For example, I did not know what Australian students were like. I also needed to master certain practical teaching skills, and be aware of the reasons for certain practices (Zhao & Singh, 2008). Even with such initial concerns, all the excitement and encouragement from others made me fairly confident about this special journey of learning and teaching in Australia. Other questions I had were:

1. What actually do we need to do to be better prepared to be a bilingual teacher?
2. What is the teaching situation like?
3. What problems will we meet and how would we overcome them?

No-one exactly knows the answers to these questions until he or she takes the opportunity to experience a real world journey, and then engage in careful evidence-driven considerations and critical reflections. I aimed to investigate my teaching experiences as a bilingual teacher in this foreign country. This “Volunteer Teacher Researcher” (VTR) position provided the focus for my study. The questions listed above are worth answering, not only for my own professional learning, but also to give others insights into the particular complexities of my situation. This thesis is a self-study of my teaching experiences in this program. It examines my development as a bilingual teacher in a nation that is very different from my own. The focus of this research is on what it is like to be a bilingual teacher teaching a second language (L2) in a first language (L1) classroom environment, where the L1 is my L2 (See Table 1.1).
Table 1.1 My teaching context

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<td>L1</td>
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<td>Language of instruction</td>
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<td>L2</td>
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1.1.1 A Second Language Teacher

Facilitating foreign language teaching in schools has received much attention in Australia, due to Australia’s multiculturalism (Henderson, 2008; Wesley, 2009). Nowadays, with its fast economic development, China has become Australia’s largest trading partner. Thus, knowledge of Mandarin is particularly important in terms of economic benefits for Australia. According to the MOU, the VTRs work in schools for 10 class periods per week. In my case, I worked two days each week in two or three different schools each week, mainly in primary schools.

As a second language teacher teaching non-Chinese background students, this self-study research project is aimed at helping me better understand teaching in general and second language teaching in particular. This study is aimed at helping me better understand the complexities of teaching Mandarin in Australia and to better prepare me to teach English when I go back to China. As a VTR I am expected to return to China to be an English teacher after successfully completing this program. Consequently, this research is of importance to me in terms of my self-realisation of being a teacher and of my professional learning through consistent reflection on, and analysis of primary evidence of my teaching practice. More specifically, rather than being a second language teacher only, I am also a researcher and thus, significantly, a teacher-researcher in the study reported in this thesis.
1.1.2 A Second Language Learner

As a second language learner, I had experiences of learning my L2 (English) for nearly 10 years from my junior high school years. Zhejiang Province and NSW implement different policies in second language teaching. Being influenced by the learning environment in Zhejiang Province, I gained certain beliefs about education and L2 learning. These beliefs are based on my own learning experiences in the process of second language acquisition. This initially led to conflicts about educational concepts when trying to deal with L2 teaching practice in NSW DET schools. For instance, what role does rote memorisation play in L2 learning? Is it more effective than group discussion? Do we need textbooks? To take the latter question as an example: my prior learning experiences told me that we should have textbooks, while the practice in Australia is not to do so. It is contradictions such as these that triggered my desire to embark on self-study research to investigate what it is like to be a bilingual L2 teacher through reflecting on my practice. Further discussion of my personal experiences and beliefs about learning L2 is detailed in Chapter 4.

1.2 Discussion of the Ningbo/Western Sydney Project’s Policy Context

What factors contributed to the implementation of the Ningbo/Western Sydney project? Who would get benefits from it? In an attempt to respond to these questions, it was worthwhile to have a look at Australian’s “Asia literacy” policy within its schools. Michael Wesley (2009, p. 5) indicates that “Most of the world is multilingual, and investing more in learning other languages and cultures. A monolingual Australia will fall further and further behind”. Henderson (2008, p. 190) makes the following statement in conclusion to her review of Rudd’s report on Asia literacy:
For Australia to remain competitive regionally and globally depends not on capital, resources and technology as before, but on whether future generations are educated and sufficiently skilled for Asian engagement.

The Australian Government’s Department of Education, Science and Training (2006) states that knowledge and understanding of Asia will help Australia enhance itself to be “good neighbours and responsible global citizens” (AGDEST, 2006, p. 4); a “Harmonious Australia” (AGDEST, 2006, p. 5); a “Creative Australia” and a “Prosperous Australia” (AGDEST, 2006, p. 6). An Asian-engaged young Australia is optimally expected to “Understand ‘Asia’”, to “Develop informed attitudes and values”, to “Know about contemporary and traditional Asia”, to “Connect Australia and Asia”, and to “Communicate” (AGDEST, 2006, pp. 8-9). A great part of Asia literacy is the understanding and learning of Asian languages. But how to implement Asia-literate policy within schools to facilitate the learning and teaching of Asian languages? Given that Mandarin, Indonesian, Korean and Japanese were given the priority among Asian languages in Australia (Bianco, 2005), it was essential for policymakers to pay attention to the development of those languages. In saying that, it is not a short-term goal to engage Australian schools by introducing Asian languages and cultural studies (Bianco, 2005). Instead, it requires time and money (Bianco, 2005; Wesley, 2009). Bianco (2005) also points out the importance of studying Asian cultures. Within an environment where people hold positive attitudes toward Asia, Australia will continue its engagement with Asian countries into the near future (Bianco, 2005).

Wesley (2009, p. 10) listed five key principles on which Australian strategies for Asian language education must be built:

1. Implement a Comprehensive, Nation-wide, Long-term Strategy
2. Teach Asian Languages and Cultures at All Levels of Education
3. Build Gradually with Quality
4. Build and Maintain Student Demand for Asian Language Education
5. Build an Adequate Supply of World-Class Asian Language Teachers and Resources

The last principle might be the driving force that made it possible for me to teach Mandarin in Australian schools as a volunteer. In terms of the job I was doing, I was a teacher and a resource as well. In such a context, NSW DET (WSR) needed qualified people who have a good command of both English and Chinese to support teaching Mandarin in its schools and to expand this program across schools, and even regions. On the other hand, NMEB also wanted to train its teachers to be more bilingual and culturally-aware. Thus, the ROSETE program started.

1.3 Rationale for this Self-study Research

Since the first day I arrived in Australia in late June 2008, I experienced so many different things. Although I was fortunate to be selected to teach Mandarin in Australia, due to the lack of a background in education and training suitable for this context, I really wondered whether I was qualified enough to be an L2 teacher in this country. Australia is very different from my own country—culturally, politically and educationally. Consequently, I decided to focus on my professional learning from being a recent graduate to becoming a bilingual teacher-researcher, on the basis of my teaching practice and reflections about working in NSW DET schools. When beginning my work as a VTR, I found my views about L2 teaching and learning changing as my inquiry progressed. At the same time, certain new issues emerged from questioning myself about being a bilingual teacher. My first impressions were not consistent with later responses; I changed as I learned. Living in such challenging circumstances, I believed it was worth doing this self-study research project.

As a burgeoning area in teacher education and teacher research, self-study has quickly developed throughout the last 20 years:
When the Self-Study Special Interest Group (or SIG) of the American Educational Research Association was formed in 1992, few members anticipated that it would grow as rapidly as it did. Currently it is one of the largest SIGs, boasting over 200 members, each concerned in one way or another with self-study. The origins of self-study in teacher education go deep into the transformation that has taken place in teacher education research over the past quarter century. (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 13)

Researchers articulate the great value of self-study in teacher education (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998; Loughran, 2005). It is argued that adopting self-study research methods provides a profound way to gain new and practical knowledge in teacher education (Loughran, 2005). It is important to recognise that “the value of self-study depends on the researcher/teacher providing convincing evidence that they know what they claim to know” (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998, p. 240).

1.4 Research Purpose

Drawing on my own experience both as a second language teacher and learner, this thesis presents my analysis of the evidence of my growth and change, towards a deepened understanding of education. The purpose for this research project can be explained from two perspectives. First, in a broad sense, as a VTR teaching Mandarin and researching in NSW DET schools, I wished to analyse the primary evidence of certain issues related to Mandarin teaching in these schools through a rigorous process of self-study research. My hope was that I could give deep insights into this unique situation. Second, in a narrow sense, it is likely that I will be engaged in education after returning to China, so this study, which records and analyses my teaching practice, will be an important reference when teaching L2 in China.
1.5 Significance of This Research

It is clear that the research reported in this thesis is different from many other self-studies; these are often undertaken by experienced teacher educators. As a beginning teacher-researcher, I wished to improve my teaching practice. First, in the journal *Studying Teacher Education: A journal of self-study of teacher education practices*, there is relatively limited literature which presents actual self-study research, as opposed to justifying and explaining it. At the time of conducting the literature review, this journal had five volumes in total from 2005 to 2009, among which there were only eight articles which were actual cases reporting researchers’ self-study (Senese, 2005; Pinnegar et al., 2005; Kroll, 2005; Samaras et al., 2006; Thomas & Monroe 2006; Hoban et al., 2007; Fayne, 2007; Hopper & Sanford, 2008). Second, most self-study research is located in teacher education and most of those researchers who have been engaged in self-study are teacher educators, rather than those who work in schools and thus have tight relationships and interactions with school students. There is some self-study research conducted by student teachers in the journal *Studying Teacher Education: A journal of self-study of teacher education practices*, but it is a field dominated by teacher educators, rather than teachers. It is this gap which the research reported here addresses.

In this thesis, my contribution to this research field arises from my particular context—an L2 teacher teaching in a country (Australia) that is very different from my own (China), both culturally and educationally. How would I address the problems emerging during this period? What else is significant about this study is that the issues related to teaching Mandarin in NSW schools that I identify in my thesis, deserve careful consideration and rethinking. Also, my study represents a contribution to a larger project, involving six other VTRs. Because it involves not only myself, my research will give others suggestions when faced with similar issues, as well as giving insights into a unique context. That is why my research is of significance, and that is where its validity must be tested.
1.6 The Thesis and its Organisation

Chapter 1 has presented an overview of the thesis, as well as its rationale, purposes and significance. Now I outline the structure of this study, the aim of which is to investigate my professional learning. It is developed through nine chapters.

Chapter 2 begins with a review of the literature on self-study research in teacher education, by drawing principally on the work of Loughran (2005) and Hamilton (1998). This chapter provides answers to the questions “What is self-study?” and “How might it be conducted?” These were the key questions that had to be answered before embarking on this research. I argue that self-study research is an effective method for analysing a teacher’s reflections on teaching. An increasing number of teacher educators have been involved in self-study in the hope of improving their own teaching practice as well as deepening their knowledge and understanding of education. This chapter also examines the literature on second language teaching. It presents a broad account of how a second language should be taught effectively. The conflicts raised in this literature are analysed in the ensuing evidentiary chapters. I also address the literature on beginning teaching, primarily as a way of triangulating my self-study.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used in this study. A brief introduction to self-study research is presented at the beginning of this chapter. It also explains and justifies how the data were collected and analysed during each time period for this self-study. This chapter establishes a rigorous and reliable approach for the research methods adopted in this thesis, including the issues of reliability and validity.

Chapter 4 analyses primary evidence of my own learning experiences as a second language learner. It forms an autobiographical account of my learning of English in China, as this had a strong impact on the way in which I initially taught Mandarin in Australia.
Chapters 5 to 8 are the main evidentiary chapters of this thesis. They focus on analysing my Mandarin teaching practice in schools and analysing term by term evidence of what it is like to be an L2 teacher in this context. This is then followed by detailed analysis and comparison of the issues that emerge from each term in the schools (Chapter 9). This chapter documents my growth, improvement, change and differences as the inquiry proceeded.

Chapter 9, as the conclusion to this thesis, states the key findings, implications and limitations of this study, makes recommendations for Mandarin teaching in NSW schools and offers suggestions for further self-study research in this teaching area.

To sum up, as discussed so far, this thesis can be represented as in Figure 1.1.
What is it like to be a bilingual teacher teaching L2 (Mandarin) in an L1 (English) classroom environment BUT where the L1 is my L2?

to be examined within the literature of

- Self-study
- L2 teaching methodology
- Beginning teaching

with data being collected through

- Autobiographical writing
- Reflection journals
- My own beliefs about second language learning
- Document material
- Interviews/surveys with colleagues, teachers, students and parents
- Class observations by me and observations of my class by others
- Test-based assessment and students’ work samples
- Emails between a language methodology lecturer and me

Figure 1.1 Research design for self-study
Chapter 2

Self-study, Second Language Teaching and Beginning Teaching:

A Review of the Recent Literature

This research project, through the methodology of self-study, traces my professional development and growth as an L2 teacher teaching Mandarin in an L1 environment, where this L1 is my L2. It investigates my improvement as a novice teacher within this research process. Thus, reviews of the recent literature on self-study research, second language teaching and beginning teaching are most relevant. In other words, there are three main sources of literature for this study: the literature on self-study as a mode of research; the literature on second language teaching methodology; and the literature on beginning teaching. The first set of literature has served to guide and help structure the conduct and reporting of this research. The second set of literature effectively presents the principles against which I “measure” my growth as an L2 teacher. The role of the third set of literature is to triangulate against my data collection through reflection journals.

2.1 Self-Study

In this section, definitions and development of self-study in teacher education are first reviewed, followed by an account of the guidelines for self-study research and discussion of the issues concerning validity.

2.1.1 Definitions of Self-study

Hamilton and Pinnegar define self-study as:

the study of one’s self, one’s actions, one’s ideas, as well as the ‘not self’. It is autobiographical, historical, cultural, and political and it draws on one’s
Self-study involves a thoughtful look at texts read, experience had, people known, and ideas considered (1998, p. 236).

Self-study is the study of a real self in a certain context, from different perspectives, using various ways of collecting and analysing evidence. Like other terms that are debated in research, self-study can be defined in many ways. However, no matter how it is defined, it constantly aims to examine the professional development of oneself, and the many issues related to one’s teaching practice.

2.1.2 The Development of Self-study in Teacher Education

Research in teacher education has shifted its focus throughout the past half century (see Figure 2.1). The diagram below shows key changes and developments in research in teacher education, as well as corresponding changes in research methods. The use of the arrows to depict the four trends is intended to represent the ongoing development of each trend rather than one replacing another (Clarke & Erickson, 2004, p. 59).

Figure 2.1: Trends in research that have influenced self-study research in education

Clarke and Erickson (2004, p. 50) argue that “because the field of self-study is still developing it is difficult to articulate its boundaries, not to mention more specific issues like preferred methods, underlying theoretical frameworks and perspectives on learning”. Self-study is mushrooming in teacher education research. However, at first
glance some of it seems to disobey many of the rules for doing quality research—an issue that is dealt with in the following section.

### 2.1.3 Guidelines for Self-study Research

Although self-study does not enjoy a long history of development, there is much literature concerned with the question of how to carry it out. Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) suggest fourteen guidelines for quality autobiographical forms of self-study research:

1. Autobiographical self-studies should ring true and enable connection.
2. Self-studies should promote insight and interpretation.
3. Autobiographical self-study research must engage history forthrightly and the author must take an honest stand.
4. Biographical and autobiographical self-studies in teacher education are about the problems and issues that make someone an educator.
5. Authentic voice is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the scholarly standing of a biographical self-study.
6. The autobiographical self-study researcher has an ineluctable obligation to seek to improve the learning situation not only for the self but for the other.
7. Powerful autobiographical self-studies portray character development and include dramatic action: Something genuine is at stake in the story.
8. Quality autobiographical self-studies attend carefully to persons in context or setting.
9. Quality autobiographical self-studies offer fresh perspectives on established truths.
10. Self-studies that rely on correspondence should provide the reader with an inside look at participants’ thinking and feeling.
11. To be scholarship, edited conversation or correspondence must not only have coherence and structure, but that coherence and structure should provide argumentation and convincing evidence.
12. Self-studies that rely on correspondence bring with them the necessity to select, frame, arrange, and footnote the correspondence in ways that demonstrate wholeness.
13. Interpretations made of self-study data should not only reveal but also interrogate the relationships, contradictions, and limits of the views presented.
14. Effective correspondence self-studies contain complication or tension.  
   (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, pp. 16-20)
The above statements give us “permission” to conduct self-study research as a form of quality research. They respond to the issue of validity in research, but also highlight the importance of depth-as-truth, as well as the importance of researching the significance of events, rather than their frequency.

2.1.4 Validity of Self-study Research

Is there a value to self-study? Does it count as research? Teacher educators who recognise themselves to be teacher-researchers:

believe that research on teaching practice by teachers holds invaluable promise for developing new understandings and producing new knowledge about teaching and learning. Formalizing such study of practice through self-study is imperative. . . . The value of self-study depends on the researcher/teacher providing convincing evidence that they know what they claim to know. . . . self-study undertaken with rigor . . . will lead to both reconstruction and reconceptualisation of teacher education (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998, pp. 243-244).

There are two significant points to note here. One is that conducting self-study research is essential and effective for teacher educators to gain new understandings about their teaching practices. The other point is that self-study research should be done within a rigorous process, as with other forms of research.

Validity is a key issue in any research. The significance of self-study research is that researchers gain new, personal and better understandings of teaching and education. Munby (1995) argues that “all other debates about the validity of self-study research should be subservient to debates on the educational appropriateness of the professional practice that is the object of the self-study” (p. 7).

Apart from these guidelines, Feldman (2003) also suggests four ways to enhance validity in self-study research:
1. Provide clear and detailed description of how we collect data and make explicit what counts as data in our work. That is, either within the text itself or as an appendix provide the details of the research methods used.

2. Provide clear and detailed descriptions of how we constructed the representation from our data. It is not always obvious how an artistic representation of research has arisen from the data. It would add to the validity of the representation if readers had some knowledge or insight into the way the researcher transformed data into an artistic representation.

3. Extend triangulation beyond multiple sources of data to include explorations of multiple ways to represent the same self-study. Because one data set can lead to a variety of representations it is important to show why one has been chosen over the others. A danger is the construction of straw men. However, multiple representations that support and challenge one another can add to our reasons to believe and trust the self-study.

4. Provide evidence of the value of the changes in our ways of being teacher educators. As I have discussed, self-study is a moral and political activity. If a self-study were to result in a change in the researcher’s way of being a teacher or teacher educator, then there should be some evidence of its value (Feldman, 2003, pp. 27-28).

I have addressed issues 1, 2 and 4 above by providing readers with detailed information about how data were collected and how data were transformed by means of analysis, to indicate any changes in my ways of teaching Mandarin. The multiple representations of data suggested in 3 above were not possible for me within the required timeframe. However, I have made use of the literature on beginning teachers/teaching as a way to triangulate my findings. Focusing on my identity as a beginning teacher thus forms a part of this study. This is discussed after consideration of effective second language teaching.

2.2 Effective L2 Teaching

How to teach a second language or more exactly, how to use worthwhile methods in second language teaching, is a significant topic. As a VTR, it was my responsibility to use good practice in teaching my own class. The literature gave me a benchmark against which to investigate my professional learning as an L2 teacher. My initial attempt was to generalise about what is effective L2 teaching methodology. However,
the literature responded in a way that was slightly different. Instead of saying that one method is superior to others, most research provide descriptions of effective L2 teaching and learning environments (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Brown, 2006 & 2009).

In a broad sense, it has been acknowledged that there is no one ‘correct way’ of teaching languages, as different teaching contexts must be taken into account (NSW DET, n.d.). In a narrow sense, each class has its own characteristics, and there is little possibility of developing an all-round method “which is capable of teaching anybody anything” (Nunan 1991, p. 248). In the literature, four approaches are frequently quoted, namely: the grammar translation method, the direct method, the audiolingual method and more recently the communicative approach, but there is relatively little emphasis on one certain method or guaranteed approach (Brown, 2006 & 2009). In my methodology training course, these four L2 teaching methods were characterised respectively as follows (NSW DET, n.d., Section 1):

*Grammar translation method:*

- focusing on reading and writing skills;
- highly teacher-centred;
- emphasising the accuracy of grammar rules;
- rote learning; memorising and translating.

*The direct method:*

- being immersed in the target language;
- focusing on oral skills;
- learning the language with the use of visual aids and gestures.

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1 This material from NSWDET is unpublished and undated, with no page numbers on it. Instead, section numbers are marked at the bottom. Thus, in terms of reference to this material, page numbers are replaced by section numbers.
The audiolingual method:

- lessons are taught largely in the target language;
- focusing on manipulating rather than communicating;
- lots of repetitions, drills and practice through taped dialogues;
- least opportunities for error making.

The communicative approach:

- emphasises the development of communication skills
- maximises purposeful use of the target language
- is based on the belief that language is learned through use
- encourages the active participation of learners in the language learning process
- recognises that student interaction and cooperation are essential in the language learning process.

The last method of teaching a second language is the most recently-proposed approach, which was also most advocated by my Language methodology lecturer during the training course. However, they are neither ‘either-or’ choices nor ‘good versus bad’. Liu and Shi (2007) review these four L2 teaching methods and conclude that:

Each of the different methods has contributed new elements and has attempted to deal with some issues of language learning. However, they derived in different historical contexts, stressed different social and educational needs and have different theoretical considerations. Therefore, in teaching practice, in order to apply these methods effectively and efficiently, practitioners should take these questions in mind: who the learners are, what their current level of language proficiency is, what sort of communicative needs they have, and the circumstances in which they will be using English in the future, and so on. In a word, no single method could guarantee successful results. (p. 71)

In other words, language teachers need to be aware of the strengths and weakness of different approaches, and to adapt them into their own teaching practice. Language
teachers have to ‘choose’ those teaching methods that are most appropriate to their current teaching context, and can change these over time as teachers accumulate more knowledge and experience of teaching a second language. I do not intend to compare the pros and cons of these four teaching methods; instead, I read them from the perspective of a novice language teacher’s classroom—would I use them? I made my own decisions and investigated whether my choices would change over time. Efforts are made to understand my own practice and choices among these four teaching methods alongside my investigation of self-development through self-study.

Brown’s (2006) dissertation offers an extensive profile of students’ and teachers’ perceptions of effective foreign language teaching, in which he explores some disparities of belief between students and teachers. The finding from this study is of importance to beginning L2 teachers: Novice language teachers are prone to apply what they learned in their training courses in their classrooms, until they actually have a better understanding of their own teaching practice (Brown, 2006).

My context made an interesting classroom problem represented in Table 2.1. How do the teachers and learners come together in this situation?

Table 2.1 My unique teaching context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target language</td>
<td>L2</td>
<td>L1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language of instruction</td>
<td>L1</td>
<td>L2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When I started teaching Mandarin, my previous knowledge as a second language learner helped me through the very beginning stages of teaching, as I did not have any teaching experience or education training. So at the same time, I was learning second language teaching methodology through a training course organised by NSW DET. There were practical differences between what I learned in the course and what
I actually experienced in my teaching situation, as well as conceptual conflicts between my own L2 learning experience in China and L2 teaching trends in Australia. Although there is no exact recipe for my unique teaching situation (as listed in Table 2.1), a general answer to the question of “what is effective L2 teaching” could be addressed by reviewing the principles of effective L2 teaching proposed by Richards and Rodgers (2001). These principles are:

1. Engage all learners in the lesson.
2. Make learners, and not the teacher, the focus of the lesson.
3. Provide maximum opportunities for student participation.
4. Develop learner responsibility.
5. Be tolerant of mistakes.
6. Develop learners’ confidence.
7. Teach learning strategies.
8. Respond to learners’ difficulties and build on them.
9. Use a maximum amount of student-to-student activities.
10. Promote cooperation among learners.
11. Practice both accuracy and fluency.
12. Address learners’ needs and interests (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 251).

Likewise, in the Ningbo Languages Methodology Program, I was introduced to what effective language learning experiences are (NSW DET, n.d., Section 3):

1. Purposeful in that they engage learners in authentic tasks.
2. Integrated in that they enable learners to make links across the curriculum.
3. Holistic in that they involve learners in speaking, listening, reading and writing a variety of texts.
4. Learner-centred in that they focus on the needs and interests of the learner and cater for individual learning styles.
5. Outcomes oriented in that they support learners in achieving the goals of language learning.
6. Interactive in that they require students to work cooperatively with teachers and with other learners.
7. Reflective in that they provide opportunities for learners to come to understandings about how language works and how they learn.
These two sets of ‘effectiveness’ criteria are from the perspectives of teacher and student respectively. Although there are some differences between them, a summary could be drawn, that effective L2 teaching is characterised as follows:

1. being learner-centred;
2. being task-based and outcomes-oriented;
3. promoting cooperation and interaction among students;
4. individualising students’ needs, interests and learning difficulties;
5. holistic.

This set of literature serves to measure my growth as a beginning L2 teacher. Whether I would achieve such a goal or not is addressed in the final chapter by tracing my development through one year’s teaching. Now we turn to the literature on beginning teaching.

2.3 Beginning Teaching

Beijaard et al. (2004) show that teachers’ professional identity has recently emerged as a separate research area. The professional identity that beginning teachers adopt during their first years of teaching is of great importance, and can exert a huge influence both on teachers’ professional learning and, more significantly, on students’ learning outcomes, including their subject knowledge, socialisation and values. Thus, perceiving one’s professional identity as a teacher and learning to teach well are the two main tasks for beginning teachers. Arends (2004, p. 30) describes the following “stages of development and concerns” for beginning teachers as:

1. survival
2. teaching situation
3. pupil concerns and mastery
Similarly, Leask and Moorhouse (2005, p. 22) identify three stages that one might go through during the early months or years of teaching:

1. Phase 1: focus on self-image and class management
2. Phase 2: focus on whole class learning
3. Phase 3: focus on individual pupil’s learning

Both accounts of these stages are relevant to my professional development. As described by Arends (2004) and Leask and Moorhouse (2005), the first years of teaching are always a period when beginning teachers seek personal survival. What they are very concerned about at this stage are issues such as classroom control, teacher-student relationships and collegial relationships. It was on this stage that I particularly focused during my self-study research because that was “where I was”. Consequently, some of my problems encountered in teaching are not unique; instead, they are common issues for beginning teachers. Hence, when I analysed the themes in my reflective journal (discussed below), the research literature acted as a form of triangulation for these themes. However, due to my own particular teaching context, some problems identified in the beginning teaching literature did not necessarily address my concerns. There are no simple recipes for the issues emerging from my particular context of teaching practice as a volunteer second language teacher working in a first language environment, where this L1 is my L2.

Research in this area shows that teachers’ perception of identity are greatly influenced by many factors (Beijaard et al., 2004; Flores & Day, 2006). In general, two aspects are key, namely internal factors and external factors. “Internal factors” here refers to personal knowledge about being a teacher or teaching. A beginning teacher’s previous experience is one of the most popular factors considered in this research. That is to say, beginning teachers’ personal experiences, such as the way that they were taught by their own teachers, their motivation for being a teacher or any other personal factors contributing to being what they are, are of importance. Thus, the beliefs that I brought to the task of L2 teaching—and which influenced my
professional development—were both important for me and reflected in the lives of other beginning teachers.

The “external factors” refer to workplace conditions, such as school culture, workload, mentor relationships and salary. Feiman-Nemser (2003, p. 27) argues that “whether the early years of teaching are a time of constructive learning or a period of coping, adjustment, and survival depends largely on the working conditions and culture of teaching that new teachers encounter”.

Research indicates that beginning teachers’ perception of their professional identity plays a vital role in their teaching practice, and is therefore related to students’ learning and their school’s development. Helping novice teachers to better prepare and develop as a teacher is a key issue in education. Darling-Hammond (2003) states that effective teachers constitute a valuable human resource for schools. Considered from different perspectives, the ways of helping beginning teachers professionally develop and understand their identity vary in teacher education programs and in mentoring relationships in schools.

Establishing a good mentor relationship between new teachers and experienced teachers is important because it is effective in helping beginning teachers’ professional development (e.g. Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Walkington, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2003). It is essential for school leaders to recognise their own role in this situation. To a large extent, how they arrange the school learning culture affects the way that beginning teachers perceive their identity in the first years of teaching. I also experienced the mentor program in one of my schools. Whether it was effective or not in helping me to better understand my teaching role and identity is a dimension addressed later in the research reported in this thesis.

What has been covered above is related to beginning teachers’ identity. Now the discussion turns to a consideration of learning to teach. It is suggested that “there is no easy prescription or simple recipes for teaching effectively” (Arends, 2007, p. 22).
My understanding is that although we have been informed by guidelines about teaching and good strategies by experienced teachers, we have to take our own teaching context into account. Arends (2007, p. 22) makes a similar statement:

> Instead, teaching and learning are very situational. What works with one group of students in one setting will not necessarily work with another group someplace else. Similarly, strategies and approaches used by expert, experienced teachers cannot necessarily be emulated by a novice teacher. Teachers must take explanations and principles and apply them within the capacity of their own abilities and skills and within the contextual confines of particular groups of students, classrooms, and communities.

As a beginning teacher, eager to learn some practical teaching skills, it is hard to extract “short-cuts” from the literature, although there are some general guidelines and principles to follow. Among those teaching skills which teacher educators are concerned about for beginning teachers, planning is one of those which is most interesting to me. Arends (2007) argues that planning is a very important process during teaching. The importance of planning lies not only in allowing teachers to have control over what to teach, but also in helping to run the class smoothly.

One suggestion is that teachers should set goals for their own behaviours when planning, not just for students’ learning. When it comes to daily planning, my approach, with the help of my supervisor, was to set two goals at the very beginning of a lesson plan sheet. “Normally, daily plans outline what content is to be taught, motivational techniques to be used, specific steps and activities for students, needed materials, and evaluation processes” (Arends, 2007, p. 118). Due to my teaching context, I was only doing daily planning, as I only had to teach two days a week as a volunteer teacher. I followed Arends’ “this lesson format includes a clear statement of objectives and a sequence of learning activities for the lesson, beginning with a way to get students started and ending with some type of closure and assignment” (Arends, 2007, p. 118).
The literature on beginning teaching indicates that it is difficult for beginning teachers to learn planning skills from experienced teachers (Arends, 2007). One reason is that every teacher has his/her own way of thinking about planning, which means they approach their planning differently. Another reason might be that others’ planning process itself cannot be directly observed (Arends, 2007).

If planning is a ‘soft skill’ that beginning teachers should master to improve their teaching, working with colleagues at school is a ‘hard skill’. But it is necessary for beginning teachers to develop these skills with external help. This assumes that competent teachers would like to help. As for me, a Volunteer Teacher Researcher, it was dramatically important for me to cooperate with the classroom teachers, because they supported my language teaching and students’ learning. They helped to maximise my strengths. They were valuable resources for investigating my progression and development as well as improving my teaching skills.

Some of my initial questions and concerns were related to my identity as a teacher. I positioned myself not only as a new teacher, whose identity has a place in the recent research, but also, more specifically, as an L2 teacher working in an L1 environment, the circumstance of which differs from “local” new teachers. This thesis reports on my self-study research, which investigated my identity as a beginning teacher. In doing so, I provide a new perspective to this field. The choice and rationale for the methods adopted in this research are explained in detail in the following chapter.
Chapter 3

Research Strategy—Self and “Not-Self”

3.1 The Characteristics of Self-study Research

Self-study, as its name suggests, is the study of one’s self. It has become popular in teacher education as teacher educators research their own practice (Loughran, 2005; Loughran & Northfield, 1998; Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998). Self-study, it is said, points to a simple truth: “to study a practice is simultaneously to study self: a study of self-in-relation to other” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 14).

This Masters thesis is a documentation of my experience teaching L2 in NSW DET schools during 2008-2009. It aims at investigating my professional progress and improvement in teaching and my deepening understanding about education—areas in which I had no previous professional background. Indeed, I am enrolled in a degree where I was learning to teach through school-engaged practice, which I was also researching. Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) point out that the methods educational researchers might use are largely based on what research question or problem needs to be explored in the research. Here I use self-study research to investigate being an L2 teacher in an L1 classroom. I have assumed that self-study would provide a useful way for gaining new and practical knowledge about teaching and education (Loughran, 2004). Self-study is a research methodology that allowed me to investigate my professional development as a bilingual teacher of L2 using a number of evidentiary sources in various ways. Although self-study is the study of one’s self, it never holds that only looking at one’s self is enough:

we argue that if self-study is to lead to genuine reframing of a situation so that learning and understanding through reflection might be enhanced, then the self in self-study cannot be solely individual. The experience of an
individual is the focus of the study but the individual need not be, and should not be, the sole participant in the process. (Loughran & Northfield, 1998, p. 7)

According to Hamilton, Smith and Worthington (2008, p. 21), self-study has come to acquire the following characteristics:

1. self-initiated and focused;
2. improvement-aimed;
3. interactive;
4. including multiple, mainly qualitative, methods;
5. defining validity as a process based on trustworthiness.

My research is self-initiated and self-focused, aimed at investigating my progress and improvement in teaching and my deepening understanding about teaching, learning, research and education. These aspects fit the first two features of self-study noted above. Because of the importance of involving the “not self” in self-study, “interactions with our colleagues near and far, with our students, with the educational literature, and with our own previous work … to confirm or challenge our developing understandings” (LaBoskey, cited in Loughran 2005, p. 6) make their appearance in my study. This interactive aspect of self-study was of crucial importance because it involves reflection (Hamilton et al., 2008). Hamilton et al. (2008) further explain that there are two levels of reflection: the narrative of the experience and the deeper reflection on that experience beyond the surface story. This reminds me of the different voices in my situation. In this research, in the first instance I was a novice volunteer bilingual teacher, teaching Mandarin to non-Chinese background students in NSW DET schools. As the researcher trying to articulate something about this context, I was well placed to focus on these issues in this case. Meanwhile, I was also a learner, learning about a new world of education in a new country. Being a teacher, researcher and learner at the same time, I positioned myself to maximise the strength of my role in each of these identities. Thus, there were at least three “selves”: learner, teacher, and researcher. The
“learner” read about and studied teaching; the “teacher” planned, implemented, wrote about and reflected on teaching through journal writing; the “researcher” generated or collected the primary evidence, including reflections, analysed these and wrote this thesis to report on them publicly. Since self-study emphasises the involvement of others, data were collected through various sources, which fits well the fourth element—“including multiple, mainly qualitative, methods”; and thus enhances the validity and trustworthiness listed in the fifth—“defining validity as a process based on trustworthiness” (Hamilton et al., 2008). Then the last one, about the validity and trustworthiness of self-study is included in the following sections. Taken together, these characteristics “demonstrate an expectation that the learning from self-study will not only be informative to the individual conducting the research but also meaningful, useful and trustworthy for those drawing on such findings for their own practice” (Loughran, 2005, p. 6).

3.2 Debates around the Methodology of Self-study Research

Self-study as a research methodology in teacher education has always been controversial. Some of these debates include: its relationship with action research; when self-study becomes research, and how to judge the validity of self-study. Aubusson and Gregson (2008, p. 197) suggest that within action research, two forms can be delineated:

1) traditional action research (in teaching), which is characterized by identification of a problem a priori, followed by development and testing of practices to solve the problem.
2) emancipatory action research, which also deals with practice and problems but seeks to understand the complex social contexts, nature constraints, and restraints that operate in the social setting.

According to the above statement, the self-study reported in this thesis was not a traditional action research project, as it did not start from a problem. Moreover,
Hamilton et al. (2008) and Aubusson and Gregson (2008) suggest that self-study research should aim to investigate the deepening professional understanding of teaching practice by examining one’s personal values and professional work. In contrast, action research focuses on problem solving and the action then to be taken. This is a key difference.

In my case, the ‘self’ has been placed in such a circumstance where I am a learner, an L2 teacher working in an L1 environment, and a researcher, aiming to investigate my professional growth, by hearing different voices speaking.

As for the issue of validity in self-study research, the proposition has been put that “research is an argument. Arguments are tools, and the validity of a tool depends on showing that it does the job intended and that the job itself is worth doing in the first place” (Munby, 1995, p. 2). In terms of credibility and validity, I was not doing research that could be generalised in a positivist sense, since it was a self-study of my own teaching experiences. However, I have attempted to explain the context fully enough, so readers can draw for themselves the implications that are relevant for their own context. No-one else has done the same research in this particular context. With respect to the processes of data collection and analysis, I have detailed everything that is relevant. I present my evidence of changes or improvement in teaching practice, together with the deepening insights I gained into education. Loughran and Northfield (1998) argue that although the concepts of reliability and validity in self-study are often questioned in terms of subjectivity and bias, it is the reader who assesses such issues. I have worked to make a contribution to teacher education about L2 teaching and issues related to Mandarin teaching. I conducted interviews with teachers in schools, and with the Language methodology lecturer of DET, who read the data, to learn about, and reflect on, my ideas. I also reflected on the beginning teacher literature to extend data triangulation.
3.3 Key Issues Considered in My Self-study Research

Loughran and Northfield (1998) cite an example of teaching experience as a case of self-study to point out that others, such as colleagues, teachers and students, play an important role in one’s self-study research. They suggest that we should not consider everything involved in the self-study as too personal; instead, we should share our thinking and reflection with others. Ten statements are given to researchers to gain a better understanding of the nature of self-study, and the ways in which it is vital to make connection with others:

1. Self-study defines the focus of study (i.e. the context and nature of a person’s activity), not the way the study is carried out
2. Even though the term ‘self-study’ suggests an individual approach, we believe that effective self-study requires a commitment to checking data and interpretations with others
3. It is very difficult for individuals to change their interpretations (frames of reference) when their own experience is being examined
4. Colleagues are likely to frame an experience in ways not thought of by the person carrying out the self-study
5. Valuable learning occurs when self-study is a shared task
6. Self-confidence is important
7. Self-study outcomes demand immediate action, and thus the focus of study is constantly changing
8. There are differences between self-study and reflection on practice
9. Dilemmas, tensions and disappointments tend to dominate data gathering in self-study
10. The audience is critical in shaping self-study reports

(Loughran & Northfield, 1998, pp. 11-15)

Table 3.1 summarises some key issues I considered as I engaged in self-study research.

Table 3.1 Key issues of self-study research

| Aim: To represent my deepening understanding of education, and show how I change as my inquiry goes on. |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 1. The involvement of others—“not self” | 3. Credibility and validity |
| 2. Improvement-based | 4. Benchmarks of growth |
Table 3.1 represents my self-study as investigating my deepening understanding of education, throughout which, working towards ‘truth’ was given first priority. During the process of data collection and analysis, there were four guidelines that I had to bear in mind.

1. **The involvement of others**

As mentioned above, this self-study also involves others’ perspectives on me. I invited relevant parties, like classroom teachers, my mentor in the school and research supervisors to discuss my data collection, their views of my situation, my teaching, and my reflections.

2. **Improvement-orientation**

Why was self-study my chosen research methodology? As indicated in Chapter 1, it was my aim to develop myself as a beginning teacher of L2, as well as to deepen my understandings about teaching. I was faced with various problems in this process. The questions were “How do I address them and how do I overcome them to improve myself?” These were the key issues in my study.

3. **Credibility and validity**

The issues of validity in self-study are discussed in detail below.

4. **Benchmarks of growth**

How to ‘measure’ or investigate my professional growth was a question that had to be answered in undertaking this self-study. In my circumstances, I chose a range of data: my reflections recorded in a journal at many different times; students’ work
samples and test results; others’ observations of me and observations of others by me, as well as triangulating these against the literature on beginning teachers.

Self-study research can vary from person to person. Each teacher-researcher can adopt his/her own methods as appropriate and useful to collecting the data s/he needs. Hamilton and Pinnegar (1998, p. 240) state that “Self-study research is a research methodology in which researchers and practitioners use whatever methods will provide the needed evidence and context for understanding their practice”. I chose those methods which I believed would provide the needed evidence for me to analyse and inform my professional learning. Thus, the choice of methods for this research can be divided into two parts, some being from the self and others from the “not-self”, which are tightly connected, in order to present a comprehensive understanding of myself and my experience.

3.4 Methods of Data Collection

Since self-study research was adopted as the methodology for the work reported in this thesis, there were many ways to collect or generate evidence. Choices of procedures and techniques for data collection depended on whether they would provide the needed information for me to investigate my development as an L2 teacher with no previous teaching experience.

In the process of both coming to understand their own practices and instantiate that understanding for the readers (or audience), the self-study researcher begins to push boundaries of what counts as data, how to collect data, how to report data, and what counts as research. (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998, p. 240)

In this self-study, the data sets and their collection are listed in Table 3.2, which gives a clear idea about how data were collected from various sources. The reporting of this data in this thesis is in the traditional thesis form, but at times the different selves that are speaking are explicitly acknowledged.
Table 3.2 Sources of data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Data</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autobiographical writing about my experience of learning English and my own beliefs about second language learning and teaching (Chapter 4)</td>
<td>1. Reflection journals on my teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Formal (oral) feedback by others of my teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Conversations by email with the Languages methodology lecturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Written feedback from a sample of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Programming and planning notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Class observations of other’s teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Test-based assessment and students’ work samples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Document material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Literature on beginning teaching as a method of data triangulation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4.1 Data from Self

3.4.1.1 Autobiographical Writing

My autobiographical writing is about my learning of English and how this influenced my own beliefs about second language learning. In this thesis I share my stories about teaching Mandarin in Australia, together with my English learning experience in China. As a second language learner, I had gained certain beliefs about second language learning from my prior learning experiences. How did these influence me when I was teaching a second language in Australia? My autobiographical writing was also an important source when analysing my data in terms of pre-existing knowledge. This evidence is included in the next chapter, which describes my learning experiences.

3.4.1.2 Programming and Planning Notes

Lesson planning is an essential part of a teacher’s work, so I kept planning notes from Term 4, 2008 through to Term 2, 2009. I wrote down ‘must-dos’ for a lesson as a way of constructing a formal lesson plan in terms of goals, introduction, material required, learning activities, alternative plans, conclusion, evaluation and reflections after the lesson.
3.4.1.3 Reflection Journal on My Teaching

Yang (2008, p. 1567) in his inquiry into his experiences of teaching Chinese in the USA, suggests that the “autobiographical quality of the narrative approach offers an opportunity for greater insight into the exploration of the author’s experience with different cultures and language teaching”. This is similar to telling my story of being a bilingual educator through 18 months’ work in NSW public schools (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). From the perspective of ‘self’, I collected data in my reflection journals about my teaching practice. Loughran and Northfield (1998) discuss the difference between ‘reflection on practice’ and ‘self-study’, arguing that:

Reflection is a personal process of thinking, refining, reframing and developing actions. Self-study takes these processes and makes them public … Self-study can be considered as an extension of reflection on practice, with aspirations that go beyond professional development and move to wider communication and consideration of ideas, i.e. the generation and communication of new knowledge and understanding (p. 15).

Reflection is however an important method in self-study, especially for a beginning teacher:

With a focus on professional decision-making under the reflective orientation student teachers go beyond a consideration of the technical teaching skills to consider the moral, ethical and cultural issues involved in teaching and learning in a particular social context. Student teacher reflection means examining one’s own interpretations, looking at one’s own perspectives from another perspective, and turning a self-critical eye onto one’s own authority as interpreter and author. It is recognised that the questions, issues and concerns that student teachers choose to research are qualitatively different from those not in the privileged position of classroom teaching. Student teachers are best placed to know their practice and encouraged to develop ways of improving their practice. (Zhao & Singh, 2008, p. 3)

As I was engaged in self-study in which I wanted to investigate my progress in teaching Mandarin, keeping my reflections in a journal was of vital importance for
me as a teacher-researcher. Otherwise it would have been impossible to analyse the problems and opportunities emerging from my teaching, not to mention working to improve it. In my journal, I wrote down what happened in my class, what problems I encountered and my considerations in regard to them. When conducting this self-study, I kept my reflections in my journal as a key source of primary data. My reflections have been analysed to highlight two key categories of evidence: themes and critical episodes.

3.4.2 Data from “Not-self”

3.4.2.1 Conversation with the Languages Methodology Lecturer

Conversations by email with the Languages methodology lecturer aimed at discussing issues related to my L2 teaching. I obtained her views on issues arising from my L2 teaching practice. The email responses took approximately 30 minutes of her time. The questions I posed were:

1. I presently have very large class sizes—about 90 students. How do I adapt what you have taught me to this many students?
2. I find kindergarten students a particular challenge. Do you have advice for me on teaching L2 to kindergarten students?
3. What, in your view, would be a good measure of whether I was improving as an L2 teacher? How would you see me measuring this growth?

3.4.2.2 Students’ Written Feedback and Test-based Assessment

It was vital for me to analyse students’ responses to and comments on my teaching. Test-based assessment and student work samples provided a direct source of evidence to analyse and to reflect on how successful I was in teaching Mandarin
(Smith, 1998). The students’ involvement took three forms, which were all part of their normal learning experiences:

1. providing me with written feedback on the Mandarin classes in which they were engaged. Students were asked to do this once at the conclusion of each term in which I taught them;
2. making anonymous use of material gained from testing the class on their knowledge of Mandarin;
3. making anonymous use of samples of the students’ work completed in class.

In terms of the first point above, students were asked to give me feedback about my teaching by answering the following questions:

1. What have you enjoyed about learning Mandarin through the year?
2. How do you think you are progressing with Mandarin? What is your biggest improvement? How do you know?
3. What do you know well and what can you do well in Mandarin?
4. How does Minmin’s teaching help you learn and make you be able to do it in Mandarin?
5. What has helped you the most in your learning of Mandarin?
6. What advice would you give me about improving the lessons?
7. What is the most valuable advice you could give someone learning Mandarin?
8. Think of a way to use … (something in Mandarin that you’ve learned) since we practised it in class. For example: food; pets; family members, etc.

3.4.2.3 Formal (oral) Feedback by Others about My Teaching

I invited classroom teachers to observe my lessons and to give me oral feedback on my teaching. They were asked to be involved in a conversation which was designed to give me feedback about my teaching. The focus questions were:
1) What did you think of my teaching during that lesson?
2) Do you think I am improving over the long term?
3) What should I focus on in the next lesson?
4) What suggestions do you have for my long-term improvement?

These conversations took no longer than thirty minutes and were audio-taped with permission of the teachers.

3.4.2.4 Material from the Language Training Course

Documents and materials I collected from the NSW DET training program on Languages teaching methodology were quite an important source of evidence for this study, because they were the L2 teaching strategies I learned in Australia. It was vital to explore whether these were applicable or not in my own teaching situation. If not, how would I adjust them to fit better?

3.4.2.5 Class Observations of Other Teachers

I used various opportunities to observe two experienced teachers’ Mandarin teaching strategies. Their views on second language teaching gave me a better idea of my own teaching practice. I conducted two semi-structured interviews with them. The conversations took no longer than thirty minutes and were audio-taped with their permission. The focus questions were:

1) I noticed when X happened, you did Y. Can you tell me why you did that?
2) Do you think it would be useful for me to also do Y in my class?
3) What approaches do you have in general to L2 teaching? Why have you adopted these?
All the interview questions were changed slightly during the course of the conversations, and follow-up questions were asked, to probe the interviewees’ different responses. Against this data set, I extended my triangulation by reviewing the literature on beginning teaching/teachers.

I started with a plan of my research at the beginning stages. However, as expected, the process went differently when I collected data from those sources listed in Table 3.2, particularly information from the sources of “not-self”. The biggest change happened when I tried to conduct 13 interviews with 13 classroom teachers at one school during Term 2, 2009. At that time, the teachers were busy with students’ half-yearly reports, and had a very tight work schedule. The principal of this school was very supportive, but she still indicated that 13 face-to-face interviews meant much to the school. Then she suggested I interview representative teachers from each stage, in total four teachers (from kindergarten, Stage 1, Stage 2 and Stage 3 respectively). Then I could see how much evidence I could collect and then organise some more interviews if warranted. After discussions with my research supervisors, I decided to do a focus-group interview, which happened at the end of Term 2, 2009. Table 3.3 presents what I actually did for my data collection from the “not self”.

I knew my participants through working together with them during my teaching. The classroom teachers were those who were observing my teaching. Their feedback helped me to review my teaching. “Teachers observed” were two Chinese language teachers at one school where I was involved as a Volunteer Teacher Researcher. They provided a source of reflection about my own teaching and gave me insights into Languages teaching methodology in NSW. In addition, the Languages methodology lecturer I interviewed through email was a DET officer who was assigned to the Ningbo volunteer teachers program. Students indirectly provided feedback on my teaching through evidence of their own individual learning of Mandarin. Stage 3 students who were asked to answer a short series of questions on their learning of Mandarin were identified with the aid of my supervising teachers.
Table 3.3 Overview of research participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of activity</th>
<th>Participants in each school</th>
<th>Amount of time activity took</th>
<th>When activity took place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Audio-taped semi-structured interview (focus group)</td>
<td>3 focus groups (4 teachers from K-2, 3 teachers from Stage 2, 2 teachers from Stage 3); 9 teachers in total</td>
<td>50 minutes in total</td>
<td>At school’s scripture time, Term 2, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio-taped semi-structured interview (individually)</td>
<td>2 Chinese language teachers at a high school</td>
<td>30 minutes each</td>
<td>After my observation of their classes; Term 2 and Term 3, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written feedback on learning Mandarin</td>
<td>91 Stage 3 students</td>
<td>10 minutes in class</td>
<td>In Mandarin lessons Term 3, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal classroom tests</td>
<td>91 Stage 3 students</td>
<td>50 minutes for test</td>
<td>In two Mandarin lessons Term 3 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured interview through email</td>
<td>1 DET Languages curriculum officer</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>In Term 2 2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5 Methods of Data Analysis

Generally speaking, the data analysis drew on the procedures suggested by Loughran (2005) and Hamilton (1998) for self-study research, as well as comparison and contrast procedures currently used in effective L2 education. The analysis was based on my particular context. Considering that journal writing was the main evidentiary source for my data collection, content analysis was applied. In effect this is “the process of summarizing and reporting written data—the main contents of data and their messages” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 475).

Obviously, not everything I recorded has been presented in this thesis. What is included focuses on issues that really deserved my observation or consideration; issues that forced me to change, and issues that helped me improve the teacher-student relationship through my own teaching. Hence, as well as themes,
critical episodes form the basis of evidentiary analysis. What I am interested in is the process of professional self-development as a bilingual teacher, including the troubles I met before any success, how these now make sense to me, and how I gradually overcame various challenges. As a self-study researcher, I have presented an analysis that aims to let readers know more about similar issues existing in their lives and experiences through reading my teaching practice.

3.6 Conclusion

To sum up, as Loughran (2005, p. 6) argues, self-study research is not a “recipe” or “procedure”, rather it is a methodology. I adopted this methodology to examine my own professional development in teaching and understanding education. Being improvement-aimed, through interaction with others, self-study employs multiple sources of evidence. This provided readers “with opportunities to gain different and thus more comprehensive, perspectives on the educational progress under investigation” (Loughran, 2005, p. 6). The research for this thesis proceeded as illustrated in Figure 3.1.

The next chapter focuses on my own learning experiences as an L2 learner. It is autobiographical writing about my learning stories and their influences on me with respect to certain beliefs about L2 teaching and learning.
A self-study of my experience as a bilingual teacher of L2 in terms of the question:

What is it like to be a bilingual teacher teaching L2 (Mandarin) in an L1 (English) classroom environment BUT where the L1 is my L2?

to be examined within the literature of

- the nature of Self-study
- effective L2 teaching
- beginning teacher identity and stage development theory

with data being collected through

- Autobiographical writing about my experience of learning English as forming my initial beliefs about education;
- Programming and planning notes;
- Reflection journals on my teaching;
- Observations of others’ teaching;
- Conversations by email with my Languages methodology lecturer;
- Formal (oral) feedback by others on my teaching;
- Students’ written feedback and test-based assessment;
- Documents from L2 Methodology training course.

Figure 3.1 Revised research design for my self-study
Chapter 4

A Second Language Learner

My research is a self-study of my teaching experience as a volunteer Mandarin teacher in NSW DET schools during 2008-2009. It is worth telling a little about myself before analysing the evidence gained in the field. I was a new graduate when I was recruited to this program. I flew to Australia to start teaching Mandarin in schools soon after getting my Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree, having specialised in English Literature, at Ningbo Institute of Technology, Zhejiang University, China.

I started learning English when I was 13 years old, in Grade 1 in my junior high school. At that time, learning English was at a fast-growing stage in Chinese schools, particularly in developed coastal cities where it was compulsory to take English as a main course in junior high schools. When first learning a foreign language, as a beginner, I had no idea how to properly acquire it nor why we had to learn it. So the role that my English teacher played was of great importance in fostering a good attitude and habit towards learning a foreign language. I actually had little knowledge of what English was, and the only thing I knew was that it was a school subject just like Chinese or Mathematics. Thus, my English teacher was a crucial person on whom I entirely relied. The way in which my first English teacher taught me exerted a great influence on my linguistic understanding. Fortunately, she was excellent in pronunciation, explaining grammar points and encouraging her students to keep going. Our class had about 55 students. Although we started together, our learning outcomes were quite different. Perhaps there was some intrinsic reason that was related to one’s capacity for language acquisition, but I firmly believe that it was one’s attitude and diligence that really counted, because memorising new words and phrases, as well as reciting texts and passages, was greatly emphasised in our
beginning stage of learning English. It was a quite new and interesting experience to me.

I still remember the first English class. When the teacher came into the classroom, she said “Good morning, class”, and nearly at the same time, all my classmates stood up and answered “Good morning teacher”, except me, not knowing what to say. Just at that moment, I firmly made a decision that I would spare no effort to learn English, in order to keep in touch with my classmates. Because they could understand what our teacher was saying, but I could not, which really made me nervous and invigorative. This was the exact thought that flashed through my mind at that moment. Later I found later that “Good morning teacher” was the only sentence my classmates were able to say in the first class. It was experiences like this that contributed most to my future learning. Then I started my journey of second language acquisition.

My first English teacher, Ms Chen, was nice but strict with our learning. She had a very good accent, which I think is extremely important for beginners to follow for the right pronunciation. Although we had tapes with textbook readings, it was her English that we heard most of the time. This point later proved to be important when I was at university. Some of my classmates had a very poor accent, and that was from their English teachers when they had begun learning. Anyway, we started learning English from 26 alphabetic letters, phonetic symbols, words and phrases, to sentences. The whole learning process was conducted in a very systematic way, so it was quite easy for me to follow the teacher step by step and to feel I was making progress. Ms Chen always told us that English was a new subject to everybody, and that language acquisition only required working hard, which is highly valued in Chinese education.

Consequently, my English lessons during my junior school were always like this. The teacher came into the classroom with textbook and a tape player; she asked us to
open the textbook at page X, then we would listen to the tape, and the teacher stopped it whenever she would explain some language points in detail; we were required to take many notes and to underline all the key words and phrases. We rarely had games or any ‘entertainment’ for learning English, such as using English movies or interesting English stories. We only had textbooks, exercise books and a tape player. Besides this, we were also asked to read English aloud almost every morning before the first class, because it was said that people had the best memory in the morning, which was essential to language acquisition. In addition to this, we had to recite all the texts and our teacher would check the results. Dictation was another very frequently-used method. If someone failed, they needed to stay in the staff room at lunch time or after school, until they got the word spelt correctly. At the beginning, there were only simple dialogues in the text, but later, they became short-to-long articles.

To sum up, during that period, I experienced a very strict but systematic way of teaching. We were required to listen to tapes, to recite texts, to memorise word-spelling, to understand points of grammar, and to complete many written exercises to reinforce our knowledge. Teachers focused on reading, writing and listening skills, rather than speaking or communicating skills. Consequently, we developed our non-oral skills better. Part of the reason for this might be that all the tests at that time did not include a speaking section, which meant that students only needed to master writing skills to get a decent mark. When I was in my last year of the junior school, a new term, “dumb English”, was created to describe the disadvantages of learning English in China. This implied that most students had the ability to write and read in English, but it was much more difficult for them to speak or actually talk to people in English.

Everything went smoothly with my study of English. My deepest appreciation goes to my first English teacher, Ms Chen, whose enlightenment about English learning was essential to my future development in English. I particularly owe her for her
standard pronunciation, which enabled me to have a better sense of the language. Learning a second language was no different from other subjects for students. However, I still believe that as a beginner, this three-year learning experience benefited me much, and helped me establish a solid foundation of English knowledge. I extended these skills in my high school.

Then came my student life in senior high school, during which time I made many good friends and developed my study habits. My high school, with a long history of over 100 years, was the top school in our city, and enjoyed a high reputation for its excellent education quality, especially for its teaching methods; viz., being student-centred, and keen to fully develop students’ potential. I cherished the chance of being there very much. However, my English study was actually not what I had expected. In my high school, my English teacher was male, and he was really precise on points of grammar. He was quite strict with us. He always said to us that language learning was not difficult, as long as we treated it with diligence and confidence, which reflected what I thought before. To be frank, my English class in the high school was not so interesting and attractive, because our teacher, at all times, emphasised points of grammar and workbook exercises. We seldom had a chance to speak English in our class. What a pity! Thus, most of my classmates found it difficult to improve their speaking skills. Also, there were nearly sixty students in my class, so it was impossible for the teacher to pay attention to every student’s needs. For the teacher, it was really a major challenge to deal with so many students and to cater to everyone’s various levels.

The articles in our textbook became longer and longer; grammar points became more and more complicated; our English lessons became boring. Usually in high schools, students had considerable pressure from the national examination for college (university) entrance. Thus everything we did in class was score-oriented, and we focused on test preparation most of the time. We were introduced to other learning material, so we had a kind of extension during the first two years, but what we
needed to do with it was to recite in written form. My learning experiences in the high school continued from that of junior school. The teaching strategy was quite similar. Apart from learning more new words and some points of grammar, there was no great achievement for me during these three years. Generally speaking, girls did better than boys in language acquisition. I assumed that it was because boys did not work as hard as girls, because boys did not like recitation or dictation. They preferred something more challenging and interesting for them. Most of our classmates lacked the ability to speak or to talk. For me, learning English was a matter of time, because I had a good foundation on which all the new information was built. If I missed something sometimes, and if that happened several times, then there would be a weakness in my knowledge chain, the result of which was that I would lag behind.

Then I began my wonderful learning experiences at the Ningbo Institute of Technology, Zhejiang University. My major was English, because I was quite interested in language acquisition, and had a solid foundation. Since I was enrolled in English, almost every subject I undertook was related to English, such as ‘comprehensive English’, ‘listening’, ‘writing’ and ‘oral English’, and then later ‘translation’ and ‘English literature’. Learning a language was not an interesting thing to do, even if one had enthusiasm towards it. However, language learning required much practice in boring reading or writing. The biggest difference between my university and secondary school in English learning was the class size. I was lucky to have only thirty students in one class, so that we could take turns at practising in class. Meanwhile, at this time I began to know some real English, like English movies, novels and songs. I was really fascinated with their ‘authentic’ accent and idiomatic ways of expression. These things actually motivated me a great deal, because I was interested in them. Consequently, apart from regular textbook learning, I also extended myself to other material that attracted me. All our teachers also tried different methods, so that we had the chance to meet various ways of learning English. We put on English drama and plays, English song competitions, English debates, English speech contests, English poetry recitations and translation
activities. These were fun. During these four years, I found it easy to deal with all the written tests, but oral classes were not simple, since we had to talk to native speakers and to fully express ourselves.

On the summer holiday of 2007, when I was in my third year, I, together with other students from Zhejiang University, joined in an exchange program with the University of Ottawa, Canada. We spent one month there, mainly for study and sightseeing. This special learning experience was rewarding. I learned many fresh things—we were asked to complete several tasks in groups, such as interviews, surveys, panel discussions and debates. During that time, I realised for the first time that I was not only learning English, but also I was able to use it in real life situations. My confidence improved dramatically and that benefited me greatly, through having the chance to practise my oral English. I still remember one day after class, our reading teacher at that time stopped me and asked whether the paper I had presented in class was my own, because it seemed so natural, fluent and idiomatic. It had taken me several days to prepare. What I wrote about was not unusual in terms of the strategies taught in our college. However, she believed that it was excellent, which really made me happy and confident.

My learning experience and the way I was taught influenced my views on language learning. Since I had learned English for 10 years, I had certain beliefs about second language learning. These were:

1. practice and recitation are very important at the beginning stage.
2. a strict teacher with a good accent, teaching in a systematic way, is helpful, because s/he is much easier for students to follow.
3. after learning all the basic knowledge of a language, making it more interesting by introducing cultural elements is welcome.
4. Teaching materials should never be from textbooks only. Although we need textbooks as a guide to examinations, other things like magazines, newspapers and movies have their place in motivating students.

5. With regard to speaking skills, I believed that there was a long way to go before teachers could teach students to speak the language. Large classes might be another reason, because teachers actually did not have time to ask all the students to practise speaking in class. However, this skill is what we badly need now. Language is for communication.

When discussing such issues, I think that Chinese national conditions at present should be firstly taken into account. By considering younger students’ study experience, and comparing it with mine, it is obvious that the revolution in this field plays an important role in improving the quality of English education. I began learning English in junior school, while my younger brother started in his Grade 3 in primary school, and the textbooks they are using now are quite practical, with the latest information about the world.

Joining in the Ningbo/Western Sydney program has been good for me. For one thing, it offered me the chance to study abroad, and also I am fond of teaching. I wish to pursue a life that will make a certain contribution to our nation. Teaching Mandarin in Australian schools, as well as introducing China’s splendid culture and history, has been a colourful experience. I really hope that not only Australia, but also the whole world, will hold a good opinion of China’s rejuvenation and development.

After I came to Australia, I started teaching Mandarin in schools here. However, when I tried out my beliefs about second language acquisition, some did not work and some worked well. As a result, I became interested in my own teaching experience as a second language teacher teaching bilingually in a first language environment. With no previous teaching experience, I wondered about how I would be qualified to teach, and how I would improve in this field by overcoming difficulties through time. As a candidate for a research Masters degree, undertaking research related to my own teaching practice here was not easy. As a Mandarin
teacher, contributing to teaching and disseminating Chinese culture was my second task.

As far as I am concerned, after fulfilling these two tasks in Australia, I can now go back to China for the career I have longed for. Due to my own personality, I prefer to teach English in primary schools or universities. I would also like to do further research, in the hope that my findings will play a role in promoting the quality of Chinese education. In this sense, this thesis, as a research project that records my teaching experience as an L2 teacher will be a key reference and stimulus for my future work as a teacher, researcher and learning professional.
Chapter 5

The Learning Challenges of a Beginning Teacher:

Term 3, 2008

The thesis is a self-study of my teaching experiences as a VTR in WSR schools. It analyses the evidence of my growth as an L2 teacher who had no previous teaching experience. The research focus is on what it is like to be a bilingual teacher teaching L2 in an L1 classroom environment, but where this L1 is my L2. Following the review of literature and methodological considerations, this chapter presents an analysis of evidence of my teaching practices through my first term of teaching, which is analysed in terms of the factors and issues that emerged from all the data collected. This chapter then proceeds with a description of the research setting; a discussion of how data were collected and then the analysis of evidence collected from programming and planning notes, reflection journals (including class observation), and documents from my language methodology training course. In terms of the evidence from my reflection journal, the basis of analysis is: a) themes and b) crucial episodes.

5.1 Research Setting

In Term 3, 2008, from 21 July-26 September, I worked as a volunteer Mandarin teacher in School 梅 (Méi; plum blossom) on every Tuesday, in School 兰 (Lán; orchid) on Wednesday mornings and in School 竹 (Zhú, bamboo) on Wednesday afternoons.

梅兰竹菊 (Méi Lán Zhú Jú): Plum blossom, orchid, bamboo, and chrysanthemum are known as the Four Gentlemen in Chinese classic literature. They are used as pseudonyms for the schools reported in this thesis.
School 梅 was a primary school with more than 300 pupils, and most of its students were of non-Chinese background. In this school, I was the only teacher who taught Mandarin, working with all the students from K-6, as well as with a support class. There were actually five teaching sessions each day, with the support class of 30 minutes beginning at 10:00 am. The Kindergarten class went for 40 minutes starting from 10:30 am, and then Years 1-2 (Stage 1), Years 3-4 (Stage 2), Years 5-6 (Stage 3) each for 45 minutes in the afternoon. Except for the support class, in which I had only 6 boys, the other classes were all large: kindergarten had around 40 pupils; the other sessions each had about 90 students (i.e., usually 4 classes together in the one room, a hall). This presented a 'unique' L2 teaching environment, in which I was teaching Mandarin with a microphone and a data projector. The students were sitting on the floor in the hall without pens or paper, just listening and speaking. The classroom teachers were there to support me when their class was in the Mandarin session. They controlled the class, helped students with group work and gave me feedback on my teaching.

School 兰 was a local high school, and most of the students were graduates from the primary schools 竹 and 菊 (Jú; chrysanthemum). I taught in School 菊 in later terms (see Chapter 6). It offered compulsory Mandarin language to Year 7 and there were two Mandarin language teachers in this school. One worked as a permanent teacher in this high school, and the other teacher was a part-time teacher, who also worked in the two feeder primary schools (School 竹 and School 菊). In School 兰, my main job was class observation of the Mandarin classes. Sometimes I also had the opportunity to teach students to read new vocabulary or to help them carry out a dialogue in Mandarin. However, for most of the time I was observing.

In School 竹, a local primary school, at the very beginning I had a flexible timetable, because the school had not yet organised classes for me to teach. Later in the term, I
had a fixed Year 4/5 class in the afternoon. Although the part-time teacher mentioned in the previous paragraph worked on the same day at this school, she did not teach this Year 4/5 class.

5.2 How Data Were Collected

As discussed in the methodology chapter, I planned eight sources of data to investigate myself as a beginning L2 teacher. However, for various reasons, I was not able to obtain data from all these sources during the course of this term. Table 5.1 summarises my data collection methods during Term 3, 2008.

Table 5.1 Overview of methods of data collection in Term 3, 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods of data collection from Chapter 3</th>
<th>How collected in Term 3, 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Documents from L2 Methodology training course</td>
<td>Discussion included below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programming and planning notes</td>
<td>I taught 26 lessons, using the DVD program <em>ShuōShuōXiàoXiào</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection journals on my teaching, including my class observations</td>
<td>I kept a journal for 17 dates; major themes are discussed below.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations of others’ teaching</td>
<td>Included in reflection journals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the following sections, the analysis is based on these different sources of data.

5.3 Documents from the L2 Methodology Course

As a beginning teacher, especially in the unfamiliar teaching context of Australian schools, I needed someone to light the way for me, to help me know more about L2 teaching methodology. The language methodology training course in which I was involved gave me the chance to develop theoretically as a competent L2 teacher. The data discussed here are the documents provided as part of this L2 methodology training course. On each Monday between 28 July and 27 October, I participated in
the Languages methodology training sessions conducted by the NSW DET with the whole VTR group. During this time, I received written material on the effective teaching of a second language, more specifically Mandarin. Whether they proved applicable or not to my own teaching situation is discussed further, later in this thesis. The main topics were: second language acquisition theories; introduction to the Chinese Syllabus; practical teaching strategies and resources for teaching Mandarin.

5.3.1 Languages Teaching Methodology

As part of this course, we covered material on: the learner, multiple intelligences, learning theory, language development and a historical overview of methods and approaches to languages teaching and learning. The key message here was that due to differences among learners, teachers need to adopt various strategies in class to cater for them. One important message with respect to language learning was that psycholinguists and sociolinguists are in two different camps. The former “link … language teaching to predictable, universal stages in learning and focus … on variations in language development that can be ascribed to individual differences” (NSW DET, n.d., Section 1). The latter “link … language teaching to context/culture/use and focus … attention on language purposes” (NSW DET, n.d., Section 1). Methods of teaching covered in the course included: the grammar translation method, the direct method, the audiolingual method and the communicative approach. The communicative approach was particularly emphasised. Its features are that it is: holistic, interactive, outcome-oriented, activity-based and learner-centred (NSW DET, n.d., Section 3). The communicative approach emphasises interaction, conversation and purposeful use of the target language. The communicative approach emphasises students’ use of the second language, on the premise that language is learned through use. The starting point is what the learner needs or wishes to do with language or wishes to express through language (NSW DET, n.d., Section 3). Communicative approaches are generally regarded as much more learner-centred
than other methods in language teaching, like the grammar translation method, the
direct method and the audiolingual method.

5.3.2 Practical Classroom Strategies

In our class, some Australian teachers of Mandarin gave their perspectives on
teaching. Amongst their advice was:

1. the importance of games
2. the importance of student choice
3. to use Mandarin as much as possible, together with gestures and body languages
to help students understand what the teacher is talking about.

Suggestions for listening and responding included dictogloss, aural cloze and
sequencing, while those for speaking included role plays and games. Two things
occurred very strongly to me from this teaching:

1. encouraging students to use the target language as much as possible (in
accordance with one principle of Communicative Language Teaching)
2. language teaching in Australia at this stage seemed quite different from my own
learning experience in China. As referred to in Chapter 4, where I presented my
memories of my own learning experiences as an L2 learner in China, there were
key conflicts, such as teacher-centredness (China) versus student-centredness
(Australia) and focusing on reading and writing skills (China) versus
emphasising communicative (oral) skills (Australia).
5.3.3 Resources for Teaching Mandarin in NSW

During this language methodology training course, I was introduced to a range of teaching materials to assist Mandarin learning in NSW schools:

1. *The Chinese Mandatory and Elective Courses K-10 Syllabus* (NSWBOS, 2003);
2. *Zou ba!* Chinese 7-10 online course;
3. *China Album*, an interactive CD-ROM designed for Years 7-10;
4. *Tai Hao Le!*, an interactive CD-ROM designed for K-6 Chinese learning;
5. *K-2 Chinese Science and Technology*, a resource designed to teach Science and Technology through Chinese, suitable for both background and non-background speakers in the early years of schooling.
6. *ShuōShuōXiàoXiào* DVD program designed for Stage 2 and Stage 3.

5.4 Programming and Planning Notes

As one source of data collection throughout a whole year, my programming and planning notes served as an:

- expression of curriculum intention;
- expression of my growth as an L2 teacher.

In this section, a brief discussion of curriculum intention is firstly presented through Tanner and Tanner’s (1975) classic work, followed by two examples of my lesson planning notes—at the beginning of Term 3, 2008. Given that I was a Volunteer Teacher-Researcher whose role was to promote Mandarin teaching and learning, rather than being a qualified language teacher, I did not program my teaching as teachers did in schools, although I had guidelines and ideas about programming.
5.4.1 Curriculum as Expression of Curriculum Intention

It has long been recognised that it is difficult to give a definition of curriculum. Tanner and Tanner (1975, p. 43) reviewed different definitions of curriculum by different curriculum writers over the years, namely: “(1) the cumulative tradition of organized knowledge, (2) modes of thoughts, (3) race experience, (4) guided experience, (5) a plan for learning, (6) educational ends or outcomes, and (7) a production system”. They then proposed what has become a classic definition of curriculum, namely: “the planned and guided learning experiences and intended learning outcomes, formulated through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experience, under the auspices of the school, for the learner’s continuous and willful growth in personal-social competence” (Tanner & Tanner, 1975, p. 45). Later definitions of curriculum have not altered substantially (Goodlad & Su, 1992).

My programming and planning notes try to express curriculum intention, covering both curriculum and pedagogy in classroom practice. ShuōShuōXiàoXiào was the main teaching resource, including its videos and printed resources, such as students’ and teachers’ booklets and flashcards that were related to each of its units. At the very beginning, I was introduced to this program as a guide to teaching Mandarin. ShuōShuōXiàoXiào is a 40 part series for teaching Mandarin to beginners. This popular series was produced by the Centre for Learning Innovation (CLI), in the NSW Department of Education, and is designed for beginners at Stage 2 and Stage 3 (Channel NSW, n.d.).

However, later on, instead of using this program for all the stages in a unit’s sequence, I preferred to use it selectively. It is not suitable for all students, and not all its content is suitable for teaching. I learned this gradually from my teaching practice, and also from my observation. Some parts of this program are even a little outdated. I thus added new material to meet students’ needs better.
5.4.2 Expression of My Growth as an L2 Teacher

This section presents some examples of my planning notes at the very beginning of my teaching—Term 3, 2008. In my first term, I took ShuōShuōXiàoXiào as my sole teaching resource, which meant that what I planned to teach followed its sequence, so I did not write planning notes to any great extent.

I began with Theme 1 “Getting to know you” as I started my teaching in Term 3, 2008. Students were introduced to basic greeting words in Mandarin, together with the numbers 1 to 10. They also learned how to ask and answer someone’s name, age and address. Thus, during this term, I focused on Theme 1 in this DVD program, and the way I taught was mostly as follows:

- students watched a part of the video;
- I displayed a PowerPoint about new words and sentence structure;
- I asked students to repeat these;
- I had them practise in pairs.

Although suggested lesson plans, teaching strategies and student activities and worksheets were contained in the program, they were designed for normal-sized classes, not for my teaching situation, where there were 90 students in most of my classes. My journal recorded my first three lesson planning notes:

Plan for Lesson 1 (5/8/2008)
My plan was to use ShuōShuōXiàoXiào to teach students how to ask someone’s name and to introduce their own names.
Plan for lesson 2 (12/8/2008)
I prepared a picture presentation about my hometown—Hangzhou. The main task was to learn to ask someone where he/she lived and to answer it. If we had time left, we would move on to numbers.

Plan for lesson 3 (19/8/2008)
As it was the time of the Beijing Olympic Games, I prepared a music video of the song Beijing Welcomes You for the last few minutes of a lesson. The topic today was numbers from 1 to 10 in Mandarin.

Because of the reasons I listed above, my planning notes at this stage were really rough. Perhaps they could not be strictly called planning notes. As my research proceeded, I understood the importance of lesson planning. It took me time to capture what I needed to record in planning notes. In any case, learning to plan and to write planning notes, as a crucial part of learning to teach, was a continuous process. Further discussion of the progression marked by these notes is included as one separate section across all 4 terms of my teaching in Chapter 8 below (see 8.3).

5.5 Reflections about My Mandarin Teaching

My journal reflections were the main source of data throughout the whole research process. I have kept the original wording when I quote from it in this thesis, so some spelling mistakes, grammatical confusions, and inappropriate vocabulary might be witnessed in my journal excerpts. However, these also serve as a measure of my improvement in English acquisition. A pseudonym has been given where a certain person’s real name was mentioned in my journal. Evidence from my journal reflections throughout the year was analysed in three steps: identification of an issue; definition, and descriptions with evidentiary quotations. Further discussion related to the research literature is included in the final discussion chapter.
5.5.1 Coding

During this period, I made 17 journal entries about my teaching and learning. The unit of analysis is the dated entry, and I moved from dated entry→summary statements→codes→categories. Table 5.2 is an example of how I turned journal entries into summary statements. After summarising all my reflective journal entries about my teaching into summary statements, I then put all the statements together and coded them. Table 5.3 presents a selection of my summary statements and related codes throughout the term.

Table 5.2 Examples of the coding process in Term 3, 2008 (1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflections on 5/8/2008</th>
<th>Summary statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is my second visit to School 梅, also my first time for teaching there. I’ve no idea about what I should do today, but it seems that the school did not well organized yet.</td>
<td>Feeling lost at school; School not organised yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I roughly spent half an hour watching the Shuo Shuo Xiao Xiao Program with the group of special boys, and teach them a short dialogue in Mandarin: what is your name and my name is…. Frankly speaking, I am really sympathetic with these kids, and I am quite happy with them.</td>
<td>Sympathetic to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school pay much attention to these boys, which I think is wonderful service for disable students.</td>
<td>Impressed by service to disabled students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then, I go to the kindergarten classroom and teach kids two simple terms: please and thank you in Mandarin. After lunch, students of year 3-6 just gather in the assembly hall and watch the same part of the DVD respectively, but for me actually, I watched the same DVD for three times and teach the same sentence again and again.</td>
<td>Large numbers of students to teach; Lots of repetition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due to the large number of students, I am not able to set several games, and it is not really so interesting.</td>
<td>Constrained in what I can teach; I am bored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I even felt nothing more to say.</td>
<td>I run out of things to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The reality went so far away from my previous thinking of teaching Chinese.</td>
<td>Teaching is not what I expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And exactly at this moment, I feel for the first time that it is not easy to be a teacher.</td>
<td>Teaching is hard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.3 Examples of dated statements and codes in Term 3, 2008 (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary statements (5/8/2008)</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feeling lost at school</td>
<td>Reactions to environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School not organised yet</td>
<td>Teaching problems: school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathetic to students</td>
<td>Reactions to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impressed by service to disabled students</td>
<td>Reactions to curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large numbers of students to teach</td>
<td>Teaching problems: numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lots of repetition</td>
<td>Teaching constraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constrained in what I can teach</td>
<td>Teaching constraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am bored</td>
<td>Reactions to my teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I run out of things to do</td>
<td>Inexperience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching is not what I expected</td>
<td>Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching is hard</td>
<td>Reactions to the job</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After I coded these summary statements, I then generated several classificatory categories. There were five main categories:

1. Identity;
2. Relationship with others;
3. School environment;
4. Teaching constraints;
5. Operating in the classroom.

There were other, minor categories, which each had only a few sentences in my journal reflections and are not worth analysing in detail. Detailed codes are available in Appendix 16. In addition, crucial episodes which changed my thinking about teaching form another set of data. In the following section, the analysis of my journal reflections focuses on the main themes and crucial episodes.
5.5.2 Discussion of Key Categories

As a beginning teacher, teaching a second language in a first language environment, I found that most of the time I was learning to adapt to this new environment and my new role as a beginning L2 teacher. The key themes which emerged from my journal reflections during this term were: identity; relationship with others; school environment; teaching constraints and operating in the classroom.

5.5.2.1 Identity

Who am I in the school? What do I think about my roles in the school? Being placed in a new school environment for the first time, as an L2 teacher in an L1 circumstance, my situation was not comfortable. Although most of the teachers in the school were very friendly and ready to help, I still felt a little uncomfortable when seated among them. No matter what they were doing I felt on the fringe—tiny and invisible:

Again in School ½. To be frank, I am a little stressed by being there … The day spent in School ½ seems longer. I just felt a little isolated in that staff room … If they continued to do nothing, I preferred to quit the program, because it really made me unhappy. If they did not need me, why was I here? Ridiculous! …

It was the first time that I felt so helpless. And the feeling that I could not find my identity and position in the school was so terrible! (6/8/2008)

The teachers in School ½ were always in a hurry. They seldom talked to me except to say, “How are you?” The lack of communication made me quite uncomfortable. Being a newcomer in this foreign country, I was experiencing lack of confidence about being among native teachers. This led to my doubting myself, my ability and
my identity as an L2 teacher. In the literature on beginning teaching, Arends (2009, p. 31) lists three stages of teachers’ development. These are:

1. survival stage
2. teaching situation
3. student results and mastery stage

The first year of teaching is a stage of personal survival, which means that “they (beginning teachers) wonder and worry about their interpersonal adequacy and whether or not their students and their supervisors are going to like them. Also, they are very concerned about classroom control and worry about things getting out of hand” (Arends, 2009, p. 31). Likewise, Capel et al. (2005) describe three phases of development of a teacher: from self to class, then to pupil. The first phase, “self”, indicates concerns about oneself, including “self-image, class management, how do I come across …” (Capel et al., 2005, p. 30). However, from my self-study, concern about my identity and my new role as a teacher appears at a stage earlier than these. It is about the person who is coming to the role. Questions about myself becoming an L2 teacher came as a separate stage, prior to concerns about teaching constraints such as class management. The other thing about the issue of identity is that, for me, it actually emerged as a theme at the very beginning of my teaching, and it fell away as my inquiry went on. I assumed that it was because I later felt much better at school, and as I started teaching Mandarin, other concerns dominated. This reflects the findings and arguments of Arends (2009) and Capel et al. (2005).

However, at this early stage, identity was a major issue. Maybe it was all about cultural difference? Perhaps I needed to learn to understand ‘their’ way of thinking. The relationship with other teachers at the schools was more crucial for me at this beginning stage. Arends (2009, p. 499) argues that “establishing good working relationships with colleagues is an important challenge for a beginning teacher. Being successful in this endeavour requires an understanding of important norms governing collegiality and specific actions that can be taken.” This suggests that as a
beginning teacher, the first step to establishing relationships with other teachers at school is to understand the tacit rules. But how could I do that without cultural understanding? So for me, an additional task was to learn about school culture and about the culture of teaching in Australia.

According to Arends (2009, pp. 499-500), possible actions to establish collegial relationships are:

1. Observing other teachers
2. Discussing educational issues with colleagues
3. Working in small groups and at meetings

I experienced the first and the second of these during this term. Apart from a small misunderstanding between myself and another teacher, I managed well. That experience told me that other teachers’ attitudes, whether friendly and supportive or the opposite, would exert a great influence on my perception of my identity as I came to this new role. In any case, clarifying everyone’s roles seemed to be necessary at this stage. Clarifying my role in the school was a subject that continually preoccupied me. On occasions I asked the teachers who were responsible for me to give me a clear idea about my role in the school. My identity was perhaps too dependent upon others’ attitude towards me. In some senses, this was positive because a perceived small change in the external environment (i.e. others’ attitudes towards me) could mean a significant shift in my sense of teacher identity. The following excerpt from my journal shows such a change:

Before she began her class, she formally introduced me to the class, and ask them to address me Miss Zhang, while sometimes she herself would call me 章老师 (“Zhang Teacher”). She also said that, from now on, there would be three teachers in this school to promote Chinese language. So nice, isn’t it? At that moment, I have got a sense of being understood and respected. I was so happy. (13/8/2008)
On the other hand, this is evidence of the fragility of the identity of the new teacher, as argued by Flores and Day (2006). In my case this was exacerbated by not having been trained as a teacher. My teacher identity had not even had the chance to form itself through a course of initial teacher education, and was developing this identity through this project. The literature on stages of development for beginning teachers (e.g. Arends, 2009; Capel et al., 2005) presumes previous teacher education. My experience added another layer of complexity to it. Other teachers appeared not to understand how important their attitude was for me. School was the place where I had a better situation, because I shared a little room separate from the staff room, where I could create my own sense of belonging. Consequently, most of the time I preferred to stay in that little room, rather than in the staff room. I tried to avoid meeting other teachers. I knew that it was inappropriate, but it seemed to me a good solution as it released me from having to face them, but prevented any two-way communication.

5.5.2.2 Relationship with Students

Dealing with relationships with teachers and students is, of course, part of any new teacher’s early school experience. However, because I only taught each student one day a week—another way in which my situation differed from the usual beginning full-time teacher experience—I actually knew nothing about my students’ lives. At one level, I was their volunteer Mandarin teacher, and they were my students—I was the person who provided knowledge of this language and helped my students learn. However, meeting them one day a week—usually 90 at a time—I was unable even to remember their names, which is an essential part of a teacher’s ‘must-do’s. Full-time beginning teachers have (much) smaller classes, see their students every day and have had initial teacher education. None of this applied to me and so, again, on the question of relationships, especially with students, my situation was at another layer of complexity.
Gradually though, I became a little more familiar with my students, I tried to build up our relationship so that they could be more motivated to learn Mandarin:

I gave them weekly homework to do, i.e. write Chinese characters from 1 to 5 in their student workbook. And I told them that I would give them a special Chinese stamp if they did the homework. One teacher commented that I was more confident in teaching, and I knew well how to build up relationship to students. That was good, wasn’t it? (19/8/08)

I did not realise until the teacher told me that this kind of little reward for students’ efforts was a good way to establish our relationship. Though aware of the debate around extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Woolfolk, 1998; Arends, 2004), I found that in my context the provision of small token rewards, especially for younger students, worked in encouraging them to participate more fully.

5.5.2.3 School Environment

This section analyses the school environment from two perspectives: school administration and school culture. The former refers to the school’s organisation, which of course varies from school to school. By the latter I mean something as vague as ‘atmosphere’—including the willingness of people to work together, and relationships with students. I experienced differences between those schools in which I participated as a volunteer Mandarin teacher. My journal recorded my reflection on this:

I like to teach in School 梅, because everything is well organised, and teachers and students there are really friendly. I could exactly know my position and role in the school. Today, I got a staff package:
1. One set of A4 classroom display flashcards, bright yellow. This is to supplement Theme 1, Programs 1-4
2. One audio CD covering Theme 1 to 4, Programs 1-20
3. Teacher’s notes-contained in a booklet, covering Theme 1 “Getting to know you” (Programs 1-4) and Theme 2 “My family” (Programs 5 to 8)
4. Flashcards of numbers 1 to 20, with pinyin, characters and English translation.
5. Flashcards of vocabulary for Theme 1 “Getting to know you”.
6. Teacher copy of student workbook for Theme 1 and 2
7. School Mandarin Policy
8. My timetable (19/8/2008)

These resources were actually not complicated, but were of considerable help in my fitting into the school. The package worked well in giving me a clear idea about my role and position in the school. In other schools, I had no idea about what I should do. Perhaps it was because we were the first, pioneering group, and schools need time to organise and to be familiar with my position. No-one could imagine how important this sense of being a teacher in the school was for me. School 梅 expected me to expose the children to as much spoken language as possible and to assist them to acquire as much vocabulary as possible.

Another issue was school culture. Arends argues that “school culture greatly influences what goes on in schools and determines expectations and roles for beginning teachers” (2009, p. 488). Being involved in normal school practice gave me an opportunity to learn about a school culture which was very different from my own in China. Through this experience, I learned about the services provided for students with disabilities, the various learning activities within schools and the need to cater for students of different learning levels. All of these experiences gave me fresh ideas and prompted me to think about differences in education between China and Australia. Schools where I taught Mandarin were quite relaxed and they made their students the focus of lessons, rather than the teacher. Students could have fun when learning and they always obtained individual attention. I was also impressed by various learning resources in these schools. All these differences initially led to my feelings of being unfamiliar—“being at sea”, as a beginning language teacher working in a new and different educational culture. That is why school environments
can have strong impact on new teachers’ sense of being a teacher at their beginning stage.

5.5.2.4 Teaching Constraints

There were three constraints on my teaching, namely: inexperience, dealing with young children and having to teach classes with very large numbers of students.

1. Inexperience

*Inexperience: Lack of confidence*

“I am not sure what I was talking about was right or wrong. How about my language of instruction? What did they think of my English?” This kind of uncertainty preoccupied me. Understanding students’ English, to me, was important to my authority as a teacher. Sometimes I could not ‘catch’ exactly what they were talking about nor make quick responses, especially to the teenagers at School 兰. In Mandarin class, during discussion time, I was often asked various questions. From my point of view, if I said “Pardon” several times, it was a source of embarrassment. As a qualified teacher, the skill of coping with these questions, even when one does not understand and does not know, is essential. Thus, understanding students’ first language and acquiring better use of English for myself were fundamental steps in establishing a closer teacher-student relationship.

*Inexperience: Over-preparation/under-preparation*

I always prepared too much for most lessons, no matter how much I sought to reduce this. However, the opposite situation occurred with little children—I would usually run out of things to do.
Inexperience: Managing games

Although I learned that the use of games is very important in language teaching, I was still not good at using these. One reason might have been the large number of students, but another was that I knew little about using games in language acquisition, although I understood their importance. Games were never used when I learned English in China.

Inexperience: Lots of repetition

In my lesson, I always asked students to “Read after me”, “Please repeat after me”, or “Let’s read it together three times”. I spent most of the time speaking, although I realised that it was not always appropriate and that much of this was repetition. My previous learning of English in China was actually based on repetition, or what was called memorisation. However, in the language methodology training course, I received the message that the communicative teaching approach was more meaningful and useful than other methods for learners, and that it is the “best practice” in L2 teaching. This created a conflict between my pre-existing knowledge and what I learned in the methodology training program. There was also a tension between what I was taught I should do in the training course and what actually happened in my own practice.

2. Dealing with Kindergarten children

How to effectively teach very young children was a key concern this term. Sometimes, I realised that “I am always looking forward to having class with Year 3-6 in the afternoon, because I could be aware that they were learning something, thinking about something, and asking something they are interested in” (16/9/2008). I assumed the reason for this was that younger students could not concentrate for a long time if the teacher kept on one task. I assumed that they would become bored if the lesson was not to their taste. In my reflective journal, I recorded “Kindergarten
students are able to focus on me for less time, and their learning is very slow, however, comparatively speaking, their pronunciation is better than older students (12/8/2008).” Another reflection recorded the following:

In K class, sometimes I will feel a little difficult to deal with these students, because I am not able to effectively ask them to do what I want them to do. Maybe they are slow-thinking, or they are at the very beginning stage of learning new things. Having fun in class is the most important theme for them. (16/9/2008)

How to teach young children seemed to be a key problem for me. They were not like students of Stage 3, who were active and seemed to learn quickly. At the beginning, I tried my best to have different activities and encouraged them as much as possible. However, having around 40 kindergarten students in a 40-minute period was a difficult task. There was another tension: what engaged children, versus what worked in learning Mandarin. Often the latter approach was seen as boredom in class, particularly for little children. Thus, consolidation of these two issues was sought both in my reflections and my practice.

3. Large numbers of students

This was the biggest issue emerging from my teaching practice at School 梅. I never expected that I would have classes with about 90 students sitting on the floor. When I told people in China and Australia about this situation, they all expressed surprise at this arrangement. When I was taking the language methodology training course, I was told that a class with more than 30 students was against normal practice, and against Departmental policy—because students would learn nothing in that environment. School 梅 at the beginning prepared large classes for me to teach, the reasons for which I assumed were ‘language exposure’ and ‘equity’. As I was a volunteer Mandarin teacher, and Mandarin was not compulsory in School 梅, what the school really expected me to do was to expose the children to Mandarin as much
as possible. They did not focus on how much children could learn. Introduction to Mandarin and some Chinese culture were what the school expected. The idea of ‘equity’, that everyone in the school should have access to learning Mandarin may have been another factor that contributed to the large classes.

After lunch, students of year 3-6 just gather in the assembly hall and watch the same part of the DVD respectively, but for me actually, I watched the same DVD for three times and teach the same sentence again and again. Due to the large number of students, I am not able to set several games, and it is really not so interesting. I even felt nothing more to say. The reality went so far away from my previous thinking of teaching Chinese. And exactly at this moment, I feel for the first time that it is not easy to be a teacher. (5/8/2008)

Year 1 & 2 students show less interest in learning Chinese. Actually I also want to have more interesting activities, but it is really difficult for me to deal with so many students in such a short period. (12/8/2008)

Having a large class of 90 students always made me focus on the most active students I did not even have a clear view of those students sitting in the corner or at the back of the room. That was difficult. I was not sure whether the students had the same feeling as me, but I believe that a responsible teacher should pay attention to every individual in the class. However, it was a dilemma, because the school desired that all students be exposed to Mandarin, no matter how much they might learn. They were quite supportive of my teaching, but would not change the arrangement:

For my part, due to the large number of students in my class, together with the limited class period, it is not easy for me to let students be engaged in such activities. It is a dilemma. I am not willing to give them a tedious lesson, but the reality makes it more possible, at least not interesting. I also want to have fun in class. Anyway, the most important thing I’ve learned today is that language teaching should be always linking to practical usage. (15/9/2008)

Then we talked about my class size, because when I told people that I was teaching in a class with about 80 students, they were all shocked, and thought it was unbelievable. In our training courses, we were also told from the perspective of language acquisition, that small class was better. To be frank,
for me it is OK to teach a big class, but sometimes I will feel a little sorry because a few students are always looking down, keeping silent and paying no intention to me. However, there is not other options at the moment! (16/9/2008)

So why did I accept this situation? The following reasons contributed to this. First, it was because of my own learning experience in China. When I started learning English, there were about sixty students in my class. Thus, large numbers of students were not a very serious problem to me, because that was my learning environment. Second, it was hard for me to say ‘No’ to a school which had a passion for the subject and a very caring and supportive learning environment. Third, I believed that as a ‘foreign’ Volunteer Teacher Researcher, I had to agree to the school’s requirements. It was part of my apprenticeship in educational differences. Fourth, due to my inexperience, I could not predict what problems might be caused by large class sizes, so I accepted it as a beginning teacher.

Since I could not change the situation, the question of how I could effectively teach such a huge group was paramount. My teaching situation had this unique feature, so it required me to take a deeper look at my own circumstances, to adopt suitable teaching methods and to investigate whether they were applicable or not.

5.5.2.5 Operating in the Classroom

In my reflective journals, what I recorded most were those teaching experiences that happened in the classroom. Generally speaking, there were four areas related to this:

1. What I am learning about my students

What I learned was that students love games and music. They were greatly motivated by little rewards I gave them for their efforts. Most of them picked up the language quickly and they had very appropriate accents. I quickly learned about the huge
ability gap between younger children and older students of Stage 2 and 3. This required me to teach differently. I started to consider what is appropriate at what age and the huge gaps in understanding between different ages. Muñoz (2007) argues that learners’ age-related differences have to be taken into account when considering practical teaching methods, because young children and older learners do adopt different learning styles, due to their cognitive development. It is not really about age difference (for example, a Year 6 student is probably 5 years older than a kindergarten child). Rather, it is more about the life experiences and deeper cognitive thinking that an older child has developed during that five years, that helps them learn better and more quickly than younger children.

2. What I am learning about myself

I enjoyed the time with students, and I was greatly encouraged by students’ good behaviour and performance. Sometimes the teaching was demanding, but I was a teacher who wanted to improve and fully develop professionally.

3. What I do well

My strengths lay in being very patient and always responding very positively towards students’ efforts. I praised my students as often as possible, and gave them little gifts. I also believe that my personality made me popular among students. I tried to be friendly and easygoing and I genuinely loved working with students. I believe that it was for these reasons students liked me.

4. What I need to improve

Being a beginning teacher always means learning to improve. Throughout this term, I realised where I needed to improve by the adoption of various games as part of my pedagogy. In addition, how to adapt what I learned in the language methodology
classes to my own teaching situation with large numbers of students was another consideration, as discussed above. I also needed advice on how to engage young children. Finally, having more communication with other teachers at school, especially the classroom teachers with whom I worked, was what I needed to do for the next stage of my teaching development. This not only gave me valuable evidence about my teaching, it also gave me a stronger sense of identity as a teacher.

5.5.3 Discussion of Crucial Episodes

The analysis of my reflections in my journal was largely based on their frequency. However, in turning to discuss crucial episodes, I targeted those issues which, although appearing only once, were of significance to me or brought about change. The “self” in my self-study has three different voices: the “learner” reads about and studies teaching; the “teacher” plans, implements, writes about and reflects on teaching; the “researcher” reads the reflections, analyses them and reports them. Thus, some episodes are critical to the teacher and some are critical to the researcher reading the reference afterwards. What is more, the person who now is analysing, writing and reporting data is the researcher, not the teacher (the one who wrote the reflective journals on her teaching), which means that the researcher needs to step forward to look back at what happened to the teacher and to rethink the issues beyond those initial thoughts.

5.5.3.1 The Engagement of Young Children

I recorded a breakthrough incident in my teaching, which happened in one of my lessons with kindergarten students:

When having class with kindergarten students, I found it is hard to ask them to do what I want, even read after me. Their reaction gave me a message that they were not interested in what I was talking about, at least during that
period. Suddenly, a boy said to me: “why not watching the DVD program? Because it is funny!” then I asked them whether they would like to watch it. They all smiled to me and loudly said “yes”. That’s it! It was Monkey King that attracted them so much, rather than my language teaching. Actually, I planned to let them watch this DVD, but something was wrong with the DVD player. I could not forward it to the parts that I exactly wanted. Anyway, I think that they are only kindergarten students, and I should not require so much from them. Having fun may be a better choice. (19/8/2008)

The reason that this story is important for me was that, for the first time, I realised that students of this Stage were so different from those of Stages 2 and 3. Until then I always pushed them to learn the same thing as older students did. This episode told me that this was useless, because little children were not capable of doing that. I should not spend most of the time speaking in class; instead, students should have something to do apart from just listening. Otherwise they would be bored. How I could make my lessons attractive to these kindergarten children became a continuing preoccupation for me. It made me change my teaching strategy for children of this age, and it also made me start to reconsider the proper use of that DVD program ShuòShuòXiàoXiào. While they liked the show on the DVD program, the language points were too difficult for them.

5.5.3.2 Believing in Myself as a Good Teacher

For the researcher, this is really an important episode. What factors can make a teacher feel positive and confident?

Specially, they made a DVD [video] this afternoon as a gift to Smith (pseudonym) to tell him how well the Chinese program was going on with students. They said they want to keep me in their school next term. The DVD was about two boys meeting in the oval with one knocking down the other. The conversation started from “sorry”, “it doesn’t matter”, went through “what is your name”, “my name is…”, “where do you live”, “I live in…”, “how old are you”, “I am …years old”, and ended with “nice to meet you”. Although we made the finalized DVD after many rehearsals, I was so proud of their performance. I believed that most of students enjoyed my class, as
well as speaking Mandarin. And in my class, I am always trying to encourage them to feel free to speak Mandarin, even if there are many mistakes. It is my responsibility to create such a learning environment. (9/9/2008)

To some extent, students’ performance is one direct way to measure a teacher’s success in teaching. In my case, students did well in Mandarin, which actually went beyond my expectations for them. This made me think that although I had just started teaching, I had achieved something as a teacher. I learned from this DVD-making process. Students’ knowledge of Mandarin, whether their accents or the ability to carry out conversations, was showing that I had successfully taught them something. This sense of achievement about being a teacher gave me much confidence and the encouragement to keep going.
Chapter 6

Learning to Teach, Mentoring and Reflecting on Learning from China:

Term 4, 2008

As presented in the previous chapter, the thesis aims to report on and analyse my professional learning as an L2 teacher with no previous teaching experience. This analysis of the growth and change I have undergone has extended and deepened my understanding of education. The research focus is on what it is like to be a bilingual teacher teaching L2 in an L1 classroom environment, but where this L1 is my L2. The analysis of evidence emerging from my first term of teaching, showed that identity, relationships with teachers and students, school environment, teaching constraints and operating in the classroom were the main themes. This chapter continues to explore my second term of teaching practices in Term 2, 2008. Apart from discussing similarities with evidence in the previous term, this chapter aims to analyse differences and changes emerging during this term of teaching practice. Likewise, it goes through research settings, how data were collected, and evidence from programming and planning notes, my reflective journals. However, during this term, we finished our methodology training course, so it was not relevant. Instead, small samples of written feedback from teachers and students were provided, so there will be a discussion on these sources of data. Themes and crucial episodes will form the basis of discussion in my reflective journals.

6.1 Research Setting

In Term 4, 2008, I worked as a volunteer Mandarin teacher at School 梅 on Tuesdays and at School 菊 on Wednesdays. At School 梅, my teaching situation was almost the same as in the previous term. I taught Kindergarten to Year 6 students
on one day, and I still had large classes. School菊 is a primary school with no Chinese background students. At School菊, I usually spent some time in the morning observing classes, while in the afternoon, I worked with another Chinese teacher teaching Mandarin to two Stage 3 classes. I observed her lessons most of the time.

6.2 How Data Were Collected

Table 6.1 presents my methods of data collection, used in the second term of my teaching — Term 4, 2008.

Table 6.1 How data were collected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods of data collection (from Chapter 3)</th>
<th>How collected in Term 4, 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programming and planning notes</td>
<td>Using the DVD ShuòShuòXiàoXiào</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection journals on my teaching</td>
<td>I kept a journal for 18 dates. Major themes are discussed below.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations of others’ teaching</td>
<td>Included in reflection journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal (oral) feedback by others of my teaching.</td>
<td>Written feedback provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written feedback from a sample of students</td>
<td>Small sample available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3 Programming and Planning Notes

During this term, I continued to use ShuòShuòXiàoXiào, but with more flexibility for different Stages. The topics studied during this term were ‘family members’ and ‘pets’. ‘Family members’ were father, mother, big brother(s), big sister(s), little brother(s) and little sister(s). ‘Pet’ names were dog, cat, fish, bird and rabbit.
6.4 Journal Reflections

6.4.1 Coding

The coding process was the same as I used in the previous term. I converted the reflections I had entered into my journal into summary statements (1), and then converted summary statements into codes (2). Tables 6.2 & 6.3 provide examples.

Table 6.2 An example of the coding process (1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflection (28/10/2008)</th>
<th>Summary statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am usually unable to finish all the tasks that I have planned for each session.</td>
<td>Always prepared too much for a lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The reason I think is students’ responses are far away behind from my expectation.</td>
<td>Students’ responses were not what I expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>which means that they need more time to review, to emphasise and to reinforce what they have learned, rather than to meet new things, because most of them told me that they had forgotten.</td>
<td>Students need more time to review, instead of continually learning new things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was afraid of teaching kindergarten kids during last few weeks, because slow response or even no response had failed me to go on with anything.</td>
<td>Being afraid of teaching kindergarten students, because of slow responses or no responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going into the hall, and sitting on the floor, they only would like to watch the monkey man for fun!!</td>
<td>Young students were only interested in that Monkey program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So this week, I purposely designed a message-passing game to see whether they would be more engaged or not. The answer is yes!</td>
<td>Purposely tried a message-passing game and it engaged students well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It showed that they enjoyed cute, lovely and colourful pictures,</td>
<td>Kids love cute and colourful pictures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and this game is an effective way to enable every student to have a chance to say something!</td>
<td>The game enabled every student to have a chance to practise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.3 An example of the coding process (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary statements (28/10/2008)</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always prepared too much for a lesson</td>
<td>Teaching problem: too much lesson preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ responses were not what I expected</td>
<td>Reactions to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students need more time to review, instead of continually learning new things.</td>
<td>Students’ reactions to my teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being afraid of teaching kindergarten kids</td>
<td>Teaching problem: little kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young students were only interested in that Monkey program.</td>
<td>Teaching problem: little kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposely tried a message-passing game and it engaged students well</td>
<td>Teaching tips: games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kids love cute and colourful pictures.</td>
<td>Teaching tips: cute and colourful pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The game enabled every student to have a chance to practise.</td>
<td>Teaching tips: games</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.4.2 Discussion of Key Categories

6.4.2.1 Comparisons of Major Themes with Those of the Previous Term

As discussed in the previous chapter, identity, relationship with teachers and students, school environment, teaching constraints and operating in the classroom were the major themes emerging from my analysis of evidence from my first term of teaching. During Term 4, concerns about my identity as a beginning L2 teacher had fallen away, with only a few reflections, which were not nearly so dominant as they had been in Term 3, 2008. My journal recorded:

We attended the opening ceremony of Australia Chinese Books Exhibition in Sydney today, which was held by Hanban Sydney office and Confucious Institute. It was great, coz I felt huge enthusiasm on learning Chinese language and culture in Australia. As a volunteer teacher here, I was really happy to see such a favourable situation here. It is really a great honour to teach Mandarin in Australia as a volunteer. Personally, I would try my best to fulfil my task. (3/11/2008)
Chinese culture and Mandarin teaching are strongly advocated in Australia, which provides strong social support for my identity as a Mandarin teacher. Due to its popularity and local enthusiasm for the Chinese language, I felt very proud to be one of the Mandarin teachers. From the perspective of being placed at schools, I recorded:

No other staff know what I am going to do today in this school, except the principal, so it always happens that if the principal is away, I could not get exact answer from other staff to the question what I am going to do. Sometimes it is not a good situation, because it makes me feel that I am not paid enough attention, or even respect. Anyway, it sounds like I am unimportant! (5/11/2008)

It happened sometimes that I had different experiences between schools. One school did not organise my timetable in advance, so at the very beginning I had no idea what I should do at this school; I just waited to be asked to teach at short notice. At the other school, I clearly knew my position and role, as well as my teaching schedule, which helped to give me a sense of identity. In addition, apart from the school’s organisation, my image about using English as a second language—in other words my language proficiency—was another factor that impacted on my identity:

Having been here for five months, I still feel that I am afraid of talking with native people. It is better to talk with our supervisors, because we know each other. However, if it is a new person, I would be a little nervous, because I always tried to speak their English, perfect, idiomatic and fluent English. This sense even makes worse. I should learn to express myself freely. (1/12/2008)

Later on, concerns about my identity as a beginning L2 teacher disappeared, and my inquiry began to focus on other issues emerging from my teaching practice. My experience suggested that time is needed to find a good solution to identity problems. In particular, the more time I spent communicating with other teachers, the better I felt about myself and my role. Likewise, I reflected relatively little on the relationships between teachers and students, or the school environment during this
term. However, teaching constraints still remained a dominant theme during this period, as demonstrated by the analysis of the following sub-themes.

6.4.2.2 Teaching Constraints

1. Teaching little children

The situation was quite similar to the previous term. I reflected often on working with young children (K-2 students):

I realised today that I always hope my students could learn more in my class, but actually, being faced with such a situation, I think enjoying learning and having fun in Mandarin do count for little kids. (20/10/2008)

I was afraid of teaching kindergarten kids during last few weeks, because slow response or even no response had failed me to go on with anything. Going into the hall, and sitting on the floor, they only would like to watch the monkey man for fun!!! (28/10/2008)

As recorded in my journal, there were certain times when I was so stressed that I really did not want to teach those young children, because they were not interested in what I talked about, and they did not understand well. My expectations were unrealistic:

Kindergarten kids are good at saying names of the immediate family members now, but new language points need to be emphasized again and again. Otherwise kids would feel hard and boring to follow up. However, how to make new points more accessible to little kids requires much consideration, especially in my situation, in which I have a large class size with kids sitting on the floor without taking pens or notebooks with them. I just heard that one student said “it is hard”. The issue with kindergarten kids need my careful thinking. I know that the classroom teachers would help me push them to repeat the new words in class, but how could they really learn something if they are just forced to learn without being interested in it? (11/11/2008)
When I taught kindergarten students to ask, “Who are in your family”. They were stuck on saying the question in Mandarin “Nǐ jiā yǒu shénme rén (你家有什么人)”. I spent three lessons teaching them and reviewing this question, but most of them were still not able to say it individually. At that time, I assumed that if I had a longer period and a smaller class size, I could teach better, and the students would learn more and faster. However, I did not realise that the problem actually lay in the content that I taught them, which I know now was beyond their cognitive abilities. Even if more lessons were given, they still would not work it out, because of their age.

2. Teaching in large classes

I did not discuss the issue of class size in my journal as often as I did in the previous term. Apart from finding it difficult to teach large groups, I started to think about its disadvantages for students’ learning, not only from the perspective of my teaching. My journal recorded my reactions as follows:

It always happened that some kids pick up quickly and some are slow-learners. As a teacher, I really want to meet every student’s demand due to their different abilities or levels. However, sometimes it disappointed me or even frustrated me when it failed to achieve such a goal. And my situation now is far away from that! (11/11/2008)

Being faced with the situation of 90 kids, it is impossible for me to care about everyone, because there’s always a large part of the students who never pay attention to me. Although I am quite happy with those quick learners’ performance, I still feel sorry and a little frustrated for the other part of the class. Have I ignored them? Actually I think I did. I am afraid of hurting them if I ask them to answer the question they might not know. I do not think it is a good way. (18/11/2008)

During this term, I began to obtain others’ opinions about teaching large groups. I had many opportunities to talk to other teachers, and their responses were quite
similar. They seriously held the idea that a language class with more than 30 students disobeyed usual Australian practice. This allowed me to rethink my situation. I was a little stressed when I learned their views about teaching large groups, because I felt that I was in the middle. It was a dilemma for me.

So what could I do? A little frustrated! Considering my own situation, which means that a lot of kids come to the hall without a pen or a worksheet, sitting on the floor. I could not hardly do any writing or reading practice, and I could focus on those who are very active and keen on learning Chinese. How about those silent ones? I would feel guilty about them. (14/11/2008)

3. Behaviour management

Compared with the previous term, students’ behaviour was one of my key concerns. When I first started teaching, I focused much on my own performance, worrying about my own teaching skills, because I was new to this role. I was not confident enough about myself. Consequently, I paid little attention to students’ learning or their behaviour. However, after ‘surviving’ my first term of teaching, I found that I moved the focus from myself to students. That behaviour management became an issue was a sign of this change. One example from my journal illustrates this point:

Also I knew the school would have such an assembly, so kids might be too excited to calm down to have my class. I had such experience before … the class with classroom teachers had excellent behaviour, while the other class with the casual teacher showed really bad behaviour. (11/11/2008)

At this stage, my concern about behaviour was quite general, not about specific classroom control skills, because in large classes, classroom teachers were very strict about their students’ behaviour problems. I did not have to solve these problems by myself most of the time, and also it was impossible for me to focus on this issue too much in such large classes.
There were other issues similar to those that had presented themselves in the previous term, such as the problem of lesson preparation, the use of little rewards, and continuous learning about the use of games. However, my reflections about these issues were quite few and so are not worth analysing in detail. New themes emerging from my second term of teaching are analysed in the following sections.

6.4.2.3 Differences in Culture and Education between China and Australia

The more time I was immersed in this new environment, the more differences I noticed from my own culture and education. During this term, I had various experiences in both teaching and observation, from which I encountered many differences. This analysis is based on my own reading of those differences.

1. Cultural differences

Yolanda (pseudonym) always said that if I would like to share a whole class, just tell her, and that it’s OK, because we are partners. I always said yes without telling her an exact answer that whether I would like to team-teach or not. I am not unwilling to tell, and I just want to be asked to teach. Maybe people here don’t like to offer something. If you need, just go and tell. Maybe I need to be used to this kind of culture. (21/10/2008)

Yolanda (pseudonym) asked me whether I would like to teach for about 20 mins in her class. Of course yes, just as what I always answered before. She said that sometimes the head teacher in School 兰 would ask her whether she gave me the chance to teach or not. Yolanda (pseudonym) told me that she did not know how to answer, because every time she asked me whether I would like to teach or not, she got no response. (29/10/2008)

Similar conversations happened several times between the Mandarin teacher and myself. Actually my answer was always that it was “up to her”, because I did not have a strong idea about whether I should teach or not. Perhaps people here expect a clear attitude and they do not want to push others to do something that they might not
be happy with. However, in my culture, I learned that people needed to be modest and mild, rather than directly telling others what you want to do before they ask. I would prefer to ‘be ordered’. Wierzbicka (2006, p. 22) discusses the concept of “cultural scripts”, by which she demonstrates that cultural differences can be seen through the way people speak. She suggests that Anglo cultural scripts need to be aware of and understood by all speakers of English, particularly for people whose mother language is not English but who are living within Anglo culture (Wierzbicka, 2006). Wierzbicka also uses an example of “orders and requests” to explain one of the Anglo cultural scripts, which says that Anglo culture emphasises people’s “autonomy” and “freedom” to do things, but Middle Eastern speakers would consider “orders and requests in such terms is profoundly ethnocentric” (Wierzbicka, 2006, p. 57). This was just like my case. This Mandarin teacher has been in Australia for many years, so she might have acquired much more understanding of such cultural scripts than I did. As a learner and L2 user of English, I do need to be aware of cultural scripts.

2. Educational differences

There are so many differences in education between China and Australia. As I am doing self-study research, I focus on my own learning and reading of those differences. I recorded in my reflection journal the following:

I observed a class of stage 1 in which kids were doing a formal test. It was so different from the test in China. Different test-paper designs, different test tasks, different classroom settings for test, and different kids’ attitudes. So many differences between China and Australia, and it is hard to tell which one is better, as my experience is limited. However I firmly hold the view that the education concepts here emphasise individuality and creativity. (5/11/2008)

The emphasis on individuality and creativity was something I noticed. Students were encouraged to develop their skills within their own abilities. Teachers helped each
student to achieve a goal. That there are more teachers and fewer students in Australia than in China makes it more possible here to give such individual attention. Likewise, the atmosphere here allows each student to positively believe that s/he is unique and special, and can do well:

I’ve got a great opportunity to experience kindergarten kids’ orientation program. It was so different from China. What the school did was that, before these kids started their school life next year, they would come to the school with their parents to experience the school life. Today I helped with these things. The staff well prepared kids’ information bags, very neatly designed ones. When students were taken to their classroom, four or five teachers would be there. Teachers observed students’ responses to the classroom teacher’s questions and took notes on the sheets. Then students would be asked different questions, such as colours, shapes and numbers etc., and then they wrote down results on the sheets for each student. Teachers told me that it would help group these new students into classes and it would be much easier for teachers to learn students’ ability. (26/11/2008)

I did not have a chance to be involved in an orientation program when I was a kindergarten child, and that was different from China. I was really impressed by this orientation program. I realised the importance of individual attention in students’ learning. It is very good to have small class sizes and sufficient teachers.

6.4.2.4 Mentor Program

During this term, a mentor program organised by the NSW DET was introduced in my schools. The aim was to help us, the VTRs, work more effectively. This was the first time I heard the concept “mentor”. In its “Guide to Mentoring”, the DET states that:

Mentoring is a sustained, dynamic relationship that allows effective practitioners to share their professional and personal expertise and experiences. This reflection with colleagues benefits both parties. The aim of mentoring is to accelerate the learning process for colleagues while not depriving them of their independence or responsibility. It is especially
relevant in periods of career transition. (NSW DET Professional Learning and Leadership Development Unit, 2006, p. 1)

It continues to define “what do mentors do”, such as “creating a suitable environment for learning and growth; establishing a climate that supports new ways of thinking and acting … providing relevant feedback …” etc. (NSW DET Professional Learning and Leadership Development Unit, 2006, p. 2). To apply this mentoring program to our situation at schools, we were also advised by DET about strategies to establish relationships with our mentors. My journal recorded the following reflection:

By reading those relevant material, I understand that such a program in schools aims to help new teachers to get through their beginning time, and it benefits both parties. We would establish such kind of relationship with one teacher we recommend in our schools, which I think is terrific, because we badly need such help and support to better adapt ourselves to the new environment. There should be always a person to whom we could naturally turn for help. (30/10/2008)

My reactions to this program involved me in considering whether it could help me better achieve my teacher identity at school. From my experience, mentoring was really useful for helping a beginning teacher to better fit into the new teaching environment. As an L2 teacher working in an L1 environment (where this L1 is my L2), I believed that if there was a certain person that I could turn to in the school for help when needed, it would be very handy, especially mentally, because sometimes I did need relief from the pressure. The acknowledgement I gained from the school was a great consolation.

I was mentored from this term, at one of my schools. The selection of the mentor was our choice, rather than pre-organised by DET. So I was able to know colleagues at schools first and then to invite someone to be my mentor. Since I had a mentor at one school, I was in a more comfortable teaching situation, because when I met with certain problems, no matter whether it was a teaching issue, or matters about
technical support, I could gain help. My mentor always listened to me, provided her advice, organised classes and other teachers, while solving other problems.

### 6.4.2.5 Learning to Teach

This section presents an analysis of my learning in terms of specific teaching skills. In the analysis of evidence from the previous term, what I learned about teaching specifically was included in a larger theme, *operating in the classroom*. During Term 4, 2008, I preferred to categorise *learning to teach* as a separate theme, which could be analysed from two perspectives: from the methodology training course and from my own teaching practice. As indicated in Chapter 5, I learned theories of second language acquisition, the NSW Quality Teaching model, and the communicative language teaching model. Although this 14-week course had finished, its impact continued to help me better understand my teaching. However, only through one’s own practice can one really learn how to teach. The following analysis focuses on evidence of my learning through my own teaching practice.

1. Games

As discussed in the previous chapter, although I was aware of the importance of using games in language teaching, I seldom did, due to my unique teaching situation. But I tried harder this term, even though I still had large classes to teach:

So this week, I purposely designed a message-passing game to see whether they would be more engaged or not. The answer is yes! It showed that they enjoyed cute, lovely and colourful pictures, and this game is an effective way to enable every student to have a chance to say something! (28/10/2008)

During this term, I gave more opportunities to students to have games in my class, and they all worked well, especially competitive game. Students engaged much better than in the normal routine, compared with some classes without games.
For me, although I knew that students enjoyed games, my concern was whether they actually learned some Mandarin and how much, as well as whether they could learn more if I focused more emphatically on language skills.

2. Adjusting expectations

My expectations of students’ learning always changed. Sometimes I put too high an expectation on them, which meant that I pushed students to learn new things beyond their ability, only because I took it for granted that they were able to do that. Sometimes I expected little from them, as the following scenario in my journal reveals:

I ask them to think about all the things that we have learned in Mandarin. They impressed me so much that they remembered so well all the things that we have covered from the very beginning. One of the students is able to say 999 in Mandarin, which was dramatically beyond of my expectation. It was great! (18/11/2008)

At that time, as a teacher, no matter how high an expectation I put on my students, I never considered that students should deserve different expectations from me due to their different capabilities. I always expected them to achieve the same goal which I set for them. It was obviously not appropriate when I now reread my journals.

3. Boys better than girls

It was interesting that after two terms of teaching at one school, I noticed that boys in my class did better than girls, in terms of their pronunciation, memory and participation in class. I was not the only person that thought so. When I talked with some classroom teachers, they all commented that boys performed better than girls, especially Stage 2 and Stage 3 students. They also wondered why. In my journal I reflected on this issue:
I just found that boys in my class are much better than girls, their accents and manners. They have enthusiasm to perform and they are more active than girls. Kids love competition, especially boys! They absolutely enjoy the sense of competition. (2/12/2008)

Perhaps it was the sense of competition that pushed boys in this class to follow me well and focus on learning new words much more than girls. They were keen on memorising new words—as many as they could—and they liked to show and tell people how well they did in Mandarin. Consequently, according to boys’ performance in class, they accumulated more knowledge and established more solid foundation than girls, which allowed them to keep going further.

6.4.3 Discussion of Crucial Episodes

The process of journal coding might omit something important that did not show up much in the codes. Again, crucial episodes filled up this gap, which referred to some issues although appearing only once but bringing about change. These instances of crucial episodes were selected by their impact on me, rather than frequency of their occurrence.

6.4.3.1 Use of Appropriate Teaching Resources

The following episode was concerned with using *ShuōShuōXiàoXiào* with young children:

I realized that the *shuoshuoxiaoxiao* dvd program is too difficult for kindergarten kids to follow. Before that, I always push them to memorize just as what I have done with other Stages, without thinking that this might be too hard for them. Here emerges a problem, how to evaluate the teaching material? Or how to effectively use appropriate materials to support teaching? Material adaption or adjustments? (25/11/2008)
After this, I started to think about whether I would keep using the *ShuōShuōXiàoXiào* program, because I noticed that although they loved watching the DVD, the DVD itself was designed for Stage 2 and Stage 3, and was too difficult for kindergarten children. When I reread my reflective journals afterward, I thought how silly I was to ask kindergarten children to learn the same knowledge as those in Stage 3. I should change my teaching strategies with young children, as my practice actually told me that I was on the wrong track. Why did I know this? Students’ responses to my teaching in class were the best sign. When we were learning simple words and having interactive games, they were engaged and responded well. However, when it came to a long sentence which was composed of several new words we had learned, few of them were listening to me, repeating after me or responding. After this happened several times, I was able to tell that what I was teaching them was too difficult for their age. As a result, I decided to stop pushing them to learn the same content as other Stages. I only used that DVD program to introduce a few simple words to the younger children.

6.4.3.2 The Role of Repetition

During this term, I had an opportunity to come to a support class and to spend half an hour with six boys teaching them Mandarin. In order to engage them and to make my lessons interesting, I let them watch the *ShuōShuōXiàoXiào* DVD program and they learned several words in Mandarin. It worked quite well, and the boys were extremely fond of watching it. My journal recorded two incidents:

(Class Z) is always the top class, in which there about 10 kids who are excellent. I assume that it is Z’s efforts, which means that she does 10 minutes Mandarin every morning in her class, that contribute most to their success. It is quite obvious that there is a huge gap between her class and other classes. (18/11/2008)
When I came into the classroom, they all said “你好” to me, and one boy said “你好” and “小朋友好”, which really surprised me, because I never taught them that. Even if I teach them, I think that they would all forget. Actually, the DVD program starts with saying “小朋友好” every time, so I assumed that the boy got the idea from repetitive listening to it, although he might not know the meaning. When watching the DVD, he could figure out what happened and guessed the meaning of those Mandarin words. Most of the time he was right. It makes me feel that I might underestimate their ability. And all the boys could remember the names of that panda and the monkey king! While another boy always keeps repeating those Mandarin words from the DVD program and keeps asking me their meanings. (2/12/2008)

When I wrote in the first episode that “she does 10 minutes Mandarin every morning”, I meant that she played the CD which contained what I had taught during the week and had students repeat the vocabulary. This turned on a “light” for me, namely that language learning needed practice and repetition.

The second episode opened up two ideas for me. One was that the children were capable of reproducing words independently. Just like the boy described above, he learned the word by listening to it several times. Thus, repeating words again and again is one way to acquire a new language at the beginning stage. Webb’s (2007) research investigated the effects of repetition on vocabulary for EFL learners (English as a Foreign Language). One of the main findings is that “learners who encounter an unknown word more times in informative contexts are able to demonstrate significantly larger gains in vocabulary knowledge” (Webb, 2007, p. 64). Although different, it is safe to say that children are able to acquire a foreign language through informative repetition. The other message I obtained from this incident was that the students were thinking actively. As a teacher, I should not have had lower expectations of this support class; I now see this as wrong. All students have their particular way of learning and are able to achieve certain goals if the teaching is appropriate.
6.4.3.3 Teaching-Learning Relationships

There are three different voices in my self-study, namely a learner, a teacher, and a researcher. The preceding two sections are largely the voice of a teacher. But some episodes were important for me as a researcher. My reflections recorded my thinking one day after I had a very good lesson in which the students’ performance was beyond my expectation:

All their wonderful performance extremely urged me to take more responsibility of their Mandarin learning. I am their Mandarin teacher, so I should maximize strength with which students would achieve their goals. Some of them really have that potential to do that. (18/11/2008)

As their teacher, I realised my responsibility to help students fully develop their potential for learning. I never experienced such a response prior to this. An old Chinese saying depicts the teaching-learning relationship as 30 % teaching plus 70 % learning (三分教，七分学; Sān fēn jiāo, qī fēn xué), which indicates the importance of the students’ learning efforts in achieving their academic goals. I was not sure whether my journal indicated that the teacher should take responsibility for learning, but it reflected the early days of my language methodology training course, when we were asked a question about who should take the responsibility for learning, teacher or student? The answer was the teacher, which was opposite to Chinese beliefs. When I was a student, although I needed the teachers’ help, we all believed that it was the students themselves that should be responsible for their own learning outcomes. The role that a teacher played was to open the door of knowledge and lead students in the right direction. Students were expected to find ways ‘out’ through their own efforts. However, my language methodology training course and my observation of others’ teaching all conveyed the message that the teacher should take more responsibility for students’ learning. This meant that teachers needed to cater to different students’ needs, interests or problems in learning, and act like a helper and
facilitator of students’ learning. This parallels the idea in Australian schools that pedagogy is more student-centred, while in China it is more teacher-centred.

6.5 Written Feedback from Students

At the end of this term, I obtained a small amount of student feedback from two classes—one from Stage 2 and the other from Stage 3. I asked students to:

- tell me how they liked/enjoyed the classes;
- use one word to describe Mandarin classes;
- give me suggestions for teaching for 2009.

Table 6.4 presents a summary of students’ responses to my Mandarin teaching in terms of those three questions, in order of frequency. Students numbers for each responses are in Parentheses.

Table 6.4 Summary of students’ feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Prefer something else (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Interesting but hard to understand (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. It’s good to learn another language. (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Video shows are scary. (ShuōShuōXiàoXiào) (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Love the video shows. (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Use one word to describe Mandarin classes</td>
<td>1. Good/great/OK/excellent (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Interesting (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Exciting/extraordinary/wonderful/Enthusiastic (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Boring (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Hard (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. A lot of encouragement (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Origami (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Animals/sport/colours/foods (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Ancient China; Chinese culture, history (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Know more about my hometown (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition, students gave some other comments related to my teaching:

1. Like the song “Beijing Welcomes You” very much
2. Enjoyed the tongue twister quite a lot
3. It is a very hard thing to teach Mandarin across a whole school of 350 kids or so.
4. Wish to be able to sit on chairs; don’t want to sit down for so long.
5. Do not say things again and again.

Generally speaking, to the first question, many of them commented that they enjoyed learning Mandarin, although sometimes it was hard to understand. A considerable number of students preferred learning something else, like arts or sports, which surprised me, because I had believed that learning another language was fun, particularly without any pressure. However, some students were still not interested in it. Meanwhile, there were two responses to the ShuòShuōXiàoXiào program: ‘scary’ versus ‘enjoyable’. This also reflected that students had different interests, and that using one kind of visual material was not sufficient for all students’ learning.

As for their responses to my second question, students responded well. Most of them described my teaching positively, but still some of them considered that my teaching of Mandarin was boring and learning Mandarin was hard. Only one student commented that I encouraged them greatly in my lessons. As a teacher, I wish to engage everyone in the class all the time, and for everyone to love my lessons. Then I would know that I was a successful teacher. However, taking the teaching context into consideration, it was really difficult, even impossible, to have every student in the 90+ classes engaged throughout the whole lesson. Part of the reason was my inexperience, but different students’ varying interests, learning styles and intelligences also contributed to this situation.
When it came to the third question, about suggestions for next year’s teaching, having more games and songs were the top priority. The second most popular suggestion was to 折纸 (zhé zhǐ), as the art of Chinese paper folding was very famous. Their preference for music and songs actually surprised me to some extent. During my own learning experience, I seldom had music or songs as a learning tool. Compared with methods of teaching English in China, there was much more enthusiasm for music in the Australian schools. As indicated in Table 6.5, the song “Beijing Welcomes You” was loved by students, even those who were not interested in Mandarin. But what did the classroom teachers think of my teaching?

6.6 Written Feedback from Teachers

At the beginning of this term, I asked classroom teachers to give me written feedback on my teaching. I sought their advice and comments as they observed my lessons. These were important for me to investigate my professional development and growth as an L2 teacher. I made an observation sheet for teachers to comment on my teaching, and there were five elements: confidence in teaching; students’ engagement; use of classroom English; areas of strength; and suggestions for improvement. Each is analysed in detail in the following sections.

6.6.1 Confidence in Teaching

Table 6.5 Teachers’ feedback on my confidence in teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Teachers’ comments</th>
<th>Key analytical points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>Has shown improvement since beginning</td>
<td>Improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Addressing children and using equipment/video</td>
<td>Address students; equipment use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confident and enthusiastic</td>
<td>Confidence and enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Continued to grow all the time  
Using microphone helpful = clear voice  
Confident, pleasant in her interaction with this large group  

Stage 2  
(Year 3 and Year 4)  
Has grown in confidence with each week  
It is great to see her learning students’ names.  

Stage 3  
(Year 5 and Year 6)  
Confidence had grown steadily over her time  
Is now able to lead each session  
Microphone has been a big help.  

The first area was my confidence in teaching. The general point that classroom teachers made was that I had grown in confidence over time. The more time I spent with students at the school, the more familiar I was with the teaching situation. Learning students’ names and addressing them individually seemed quite important for teachers. I understood its importance. When I was a student, I always felt special and valued when being addressed by a new teacher. However, it was difficult for me to learn students’ names, because there were about 90 students in a 45-minute session.

6.6.2 Students’ Engagement

Table 6.6 Teachers’ feedback on students’ engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Teachers’ comments</th>
<th>Key analytical points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>Excited when they understood the word for ‘Australia’</td>
<td>Making connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engaged well with the video</td>
<td>Video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is a group who are confident in the delivering of Mandarin in front of the grade—excellent role models!</td>
<td>Setting models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use of mike helped today</td>
<td>Equipment use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students loved the games</td>
<td>Games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Keen to be involved</td>
<td>Involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>Hard with large number—sometimes restless</td>
<td>Large numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engaged well with the video and the word for Australia</td>
<td>Video; making connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engaged well when the children picked someone to say the family member in Mandarin</td>
<td>Involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children are interested and keen to repeat phrases in Mandarin. Sometimes inclined to shout out answers. Perhaps asking individuals to take turns to model may rectify this. (Minmin did this later and it worked well!)</td>
<td>Individual participation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 2</th>
<th>Students followed the instructions for entering in Mandarin.</th>
<th>Classroom rules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students responded well to the revision component.</td>
<td>Revisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students seem generally quite willing to volunteer answers.</td>
<td>Volunteer answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very good at standing up when asked in Mandarin</td>
<td>Classroom rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Settled and involved especially with video</td>
<td>Video</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Less involved when the whole group is asked group questions and they need to answer as a group</th>
<th>Individual participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engaged well with the video</td>
<td>Video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Many students volunteering to answer questions.</td>
<td>Volunteer answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Stage 3 though, it is dominated by a smallish group of very confident children.</td>
<td>Different learning levels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 6.6, teachers from kindergarten to Year 6 all commented that students engaged well with the videos in ShuōShuōXiàoXiào. I also learnt that students engaged much better when their attention was captured by some visual images. But my concern was that students focused too much on the content and plot, rather than on the language. The second main point was that instead of having groups answer my questions, individual responses might be better for student engagement. Also, students were quite willing to volunteer answers and they understood my classroom routines. Students who responded to my questions were always the confident ones, and thus I was able to learn their names individually. For those quiet students, I felt I could not do anything. The interesting thing was that teachers
realised the problems of large groups—such as a small group of confident students dominating the class, and classroom management with younger students.

6.6.3 Use of Classroom English

Table 6.7 Teachers’ feedback on use of classroom English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Teachers’ comments</th>
<th>Key analytical points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kindergarten</td>
<td>Uses some words that kindergarten wouldn’t understand, e.g., ‘dialogue’. We sometimes have to translate/rephrase.</td>
<td>Rephrase some difficult words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Words like ‘dialogue’ and ‘context’ are difficult for kinders to understand.</td>
<td>Difficult words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Year 1 and Year 2)</td>
<td>First dialogue—replace with…</td>
<td>Difficult words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Perspective’—too difficult for Years 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>Difficult words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Repeat after me—good to use it more</td>
<td>More repetition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improving all the time</td>
<td>Improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tries to explain further when necessary</td>
<td>Clearer explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>This has also improved.</td>
<td>Improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Year 3 and Year 4)</td>
<td>It was always very good, but also is acquiring some of our ‘vernacular’.</td>
<td>Vernacular acquisition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td>Minmin is developing a good classroom vocabulary.</td>
<td>Vernacular acquisition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Year 5 and Year 6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for my use of classroom language, K-2 teachers commented that I used some difficult words for students at that Stage and that they were not able to understand terms, such as ‘dialogue’, ‘context’ and ‘perspective’. I never thought about this issue previously. I took it for granted that students understood my English. After that I realised that I needed different approaches to teaching young children, because they were actually at their very beginning stage of learning new things, even in English, let alone in Mandarin. The first step was to establish easier vocabulary for young children. In addition, teachers noticed that I was acquiring some of their classroom
language and used it quite well. I was surprised by this comment. Probably I used it unconsciously in the class, but when I had opportunities to observe, I did pay attention to their classroom vocabulary, such as how to praise students and how to stop rude behaviour. Classroom teachers also suggested that I use more repetition when teaching new words.

### 6.6.4 Areas of Strength

**Table 6.8 Teachers’ feedback on strength in teaching**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Teachers’ comments</th>
<th>Key analytical points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>Enthusiasm for teaching Mandarin</td>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good reinforcement of children’s answers</td>
<td>Positive reinforcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Well prepared lessons</td>
<td>Good preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responds to our suggestions</td>
<td>Make changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Smile when reinforcing—always positive</td>
<td>Positive reinforcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pronunciation of course!!! Has a good ear and quickly hears mis-pronunciation</td>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Year 1 and Year 2)</td>
<td>Praises children—positive comments</td>
<td>Positive reinforcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourages students to recognise others’ efforts</td>
<td>Encouragement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uses DVD for visuals, and pauses to explain etc; use of white board</td>
<td>Equipment use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minmin has made an effort to remember children’s names—to get individual responses.</td>
<td>Address children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minmin responds very positively to each child’s attempts with the language—makes them feel valued</td>
<td>Positive reinforcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourages children to have a try</td>
<td>Encouragement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>Very positive and pleasant reinforcement of children’s responses.</td>
<td>Positive responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Year 3 and Year 4)</td>
<td>Always tries to engage the children, despite the large numbers</td>
<td>Efforts for engagement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the teachers’ feedback, my strength in teaching mainly lies in the following areas: always giving positive reinforcement to students; being enthusiastic about teaching; using various equipment; encouraging students and good lesson preparation. I learned in the language methodology training course that I should always respond positively to students’ efforts. I followed this guideline, applying it in my teaching and received good feedback. I was fond of teaching and enjoyed the time spent with children; thus, I showed enthusiasm. Besides, I always encouraged my students to try, which was important for them. My access to and use of good equipment was another advantage.

6.6.5 Suggestions for Improvement

Table 6.9 Teachers’ suggestions for my improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Teachers’ comments</th>
<th>Key analytical points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>For kindergarten slow down delivering of questions</td>
<td>Slower pace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kindergarten—out the front—rather than each other—after a couple of examples, group can practice altogether</td>
<td>Group practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“What is the Mandarin word for …” or “Tell me the Mandarin word for …”, rather than “Tell me what is …”</td>
<td>Rephrase questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Could have some visuals e.g. Number cards, family member so children can play games</td>
<td>Games</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introducing more games into my Mandarin lessons was the biggest advice from classroom teachers, although I had a fairly large group to teach. There were no excuses for not having language games. For young children, slowing down my pace of teaching them new words and adjusting my method of delivering questions established a better learning environment. Clearer instructions, group practice, more revision and repetition were expected. Since I had large classes, certain skills suitable for both teaching and managing a class in this context were required, as I aimed to develop as a teacher. As teachers considered that many students still remained at the
very beginning level in this new language, emphasis on revision, rather than on learning new things, was essential for students.
Chapter 7

Teaching and Learning in Small Classes:

Term 1, 2009

After analysing my teaching experiences during the first two terms of my teaching practice, in the previous chapters, this chapter continues to analyse evidence, from my third term of teaching practice in Term 1, 2009. It covers the research settings, how data were collected, and analyses evidence from my journal reflections, which was the only source of data collected during that term. The major themes and crucial episodes that form the basis of this analysis of my journal reflections were being a teacher, students’ learning and teaching constraints.

7.1 Research Setting

In Term 1, 2009, from 27 January to 9 April, I worked as a volunteer Mandarin teacher at School 梅 on Tuesdays and at School 兰 and School 竹 on Wednesdays. At School 梅, my teaching situation remained almost the same as in the previous term. I taught Kindergarten to Year 6 students on one day, and I still had large classes. However, after discussion with the school, the biggest change that happened to my teaching situation at the end of the term was that every class would have Mandarin lessons fortnightly. This meant that I taught half the school one week and then the other half the following week. Class sizes went back to their normal size, so I no longer had large classes.

My role in School 兰 and School 竹 on Wednesdays was similar to that of my first term. In the morning, I worked with the only Mandarin teacher in School 兰, and I observed her lessons for two periods as well as helping students in class. In the
afternoon, I taught Stage 1 classes in School for a few weeks and then moved to routinely teaching two Year 5 classes.

### 7.2 How Data Were Collected

Table 7.1 presents the sources of data collected during that term.

#### Table 7.1 Overview of methods of data collection in Term 1, 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods of data collection from Chapter 3</th>
<th>How data was collected in Term 1, 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programming and planning notes</td>
<td>Provided in Term 1, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection journals on my teaching</td>
<td>I kept a journal for 19 dates. Major themes are discussed below.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations of others’ teaching</td>
<td>Included in reflection journals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in Table 7.1, data generated by myself was the only source of evidence collected during that term. It is important to gain data from other sources for self-study research, but there were a number of constraints on doing so during this term. The main reason was that my ethics application was still in the process of being approved, so I was not allowed to collect data from schools directly.

### 7.3 Programming and Planning Notes

During this term, I started my teaching by introducing the Chinese New Year, because the new term commenced during Chinese New Year. Due to the students having Mandarin lessons fortnightly, it was easier for me to plan. The general topic was “Birthday”, so I taught students how to say a date; ask about and answer a question about one’s birthday; the song “Happy Birthday”; the characters of 年 (year), 月 (month), 日 (day), and 生日 (birthday), as well as the Chinese zodiac.
7.4 Journal Reflections

7.4.1 Coding

The coding process was the same data analysis procedure as I used in the previous term. I converted my reflective journal entries into summary statements, and then I converted summary statements into codes (See Tables 7.2 & 7.3).

Table 7.2 An example of the coding process (1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflection (27/1/2009)</th>
<th>Summary statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The new term has started again. Ann sent me an email several days ago, saying that I would be warmly welcome to take part in their staff development day, when there is no children coming to the school.</td>
<td>Invited to participate in School Development Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I went to the school today, with a little nervousness, but also with excitement, because I felt that I have been treated as a teacher, part of the school.</td>
<td>Being a little nervous but excited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I am a teacher, to a large extent, and I should feel so, however, having been teaching Mandarin at schools for two terms, I haven’t gain the self-realisation as a TEACHER!</td>
<td>Haven’t gained a sense of being a real teacher after half a year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I assumed that the main reason was diffidence, because I lack of teaching experience, and the language of instruction is my second language.</td>
<td>Reasons for not considering myself as a teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anyway, when the principal formally welcome me back to the school the same as other teachers, I felt a sense of respect, and I am actually a teacher at this school!</td>
<td>Welcome back by the school and felt respected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I told myself not to be afraid of communicating with other teachers, and they were very friendly. So the first step was to open my mouth to speak, before they spoke to me. For instance, try to say hello and how are you when meeting them; spend more time at the staff room rather than in my own room.</td>
<td>Encouraged myself to communicate with teachers; Tried to talk to them before they talked to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Today was all about children protection policy and teacher-parent relationship, as well as an introduction to a sound editing software.</td>
<td>Being introduced to updated child-protection policy and some software</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My mentor mentioned that this software could be used for extension for those quick learners in Mandarin, and that I could make some sound files to help them better develop their Mandarin skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor’s suggestion for the use of that sound-editing software</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7.3 An example of the coding process (2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary statements (27/1/2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invited to participate School Development Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a little nervous but excited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt being part of the school and being a teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haven’t gained a sense of being a real teacher after half a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for not considering myself as a teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome back by the school and felt respected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraged myself to communicate with teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tried to talk to them before they talked to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being introduced to updated child-protection policy and some software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor’s suggestion for the use of that sound-editing software</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.4.2 Discussion of Key Categories

After I gathered all the codes together, I identified three main categories which emerged from this term’s data, namely: being a teacher, students’ learning and teaching constraints. These were quite different from the themes identified in the previous term. There were a few sentences of reflection that fell into some categories discussed last term, but the ‘biggest’ themes were as listed above.
7.4.2.1 Being a Teacher

At the beginning of the term, questions or concerns about myself being a teacher at these schools always occupied me. It was similar to the category that I called identity in Chapter 5, but it was also different from, and broader than, that.

1. Self-image as a teacher

Yes, I am a teacher, to a large extent, and I should feel so, however, having been teaching Mandarin at schools for two terms, I haven’t gain the self-realisation as a TEACHER! I assumed that the main reason was diffidence, because I lack of teaching experience, and the language of instruction is my second language. (27/1/2009)

I had not seen myself as a ‘real teacher’ in these schools. That partly contributed to my feeling of separateness from other teachers, because I thought we had very different roles and positions:

No class in the morning … I wandered in the primary school and had nothing to do, as my lessons were due to afternoon. I did not like to sit in the staff room with myself only. So I even “hided” myself in the library, reading some children’s books … I felt that I was not part of this school, just as a visitor, so I could not find my “place”. (11/2/2009)

I still felt separate among other teachers, although they were friendly. Few people knew me, knew my role and knew what I was doing at school, which made me feel terrible … I was not afraid of meeting them, just feeling uncomfortable when having nothing in common to say while being seated among them. Maybe, I did not see myself as a teacher. (4/3/2009)

Through this half year’s experience, I understood that it was me who needed to take one step forward to communicate with other teachers in the schools. The same applied to the situation when I felt uncomfortable among them in the staff room, when they were talking or laughing. I started to say, “How are you?” to teachers before they asked me, which made me feel that I was part of the team. I also believed
that the more familiar we were with each other, the better my self-perception as a teacher.

2. Reactions to schools’ environment

Apart from my self-realisation of being a teacher, the schools’ organisation also impacted on my feelings as a teacher. One sentence in my journal read, “I went to the school today, with a little nervousness, but also with excitement, because I felt that I have been treated as a teacher, part of the school” (27/1/2009). With more interaction with teachers, I found it easier to deal with the school settings:

Anyway, when the principal formally welcome me back to the school the same as other teachers in staff meeting, I felt a sense of respect, and I am actually a teacher at this school! … Today was all about children protection policy and teacher-parent relationship, as well as an introduction to a sound editing software. (27/1/2009)

3. Teaching goal

The word “goal” appeared for the first time in my journal. It happened when one of my new classes was out of control. I asked myself about why I came here to teach and what my goal was. It was the purpose or mission of VTRs to introduce the Chinese language and to make students interested in it. My assumption was that we were expected to expand Chinese programs within schools and within the region. However, another incident happened:

I was so disappointed that students could not continue their learning of Mandarin in high schools. Then what was I teaching for? No motivation! … Was it a waste of time for students learning Mandarin if there was no continuation? One question flashed in my mind: what’s my aim to be here to teach Mandarin? (10/3/2009)
Although Chinese has been highly supported in Australian society, principals have the choice of what language should be taught in their schools. School 梅 was involved in this Mandarin program, but its connecting high schools did not offer Chinese; instead, they selected Japanese. Thus, after graduation, Year 6 students probably stopped learning Mandarin; not surprisingly, I thought my efforts might be a waste of time. The other school community I went to was excellent with respect to students’ continuation of learning Mandarin. If I considered my aim of teaching being to expand Mandarin teaching and learning in this region, then I would be disappointed with the above situation. However, from a different point of view, as my mentor suggested, if students were engaged in learning Mandarin and were making progress, I, as the teacher, had succeeded in other ways.

7.4.2.2 Students’ Learning

From my reflective journal this term, I recorded much more than in previous terms about students’ learning behaviours or habits. It seemed that I had moved to caring about students’ learning outcomes, rather than worrying about myself only. In particular, I noticed students were becoming more engaged than previously. My reflections on students’ learning can be analysed from two perspectives: students’ engagement and my efforts to extend student learning.

1. Students’ engagement

There were a large number of reflections concerning student engagement:

Students were quite engaged today, keeping repeating those expressions again and again between partners. Perhaps, when it came to something students were really interested in, they would be engaged. (4/2/2009)
When I observed Chinese lessons, I found that students would be particularly engaged if the content was really attractive to them. The lessons on Chinese New Year were an example. With regard to my own teaching, I mentally divided students into three groups according to their engagement in class, namely:

- a group who listened to me and gave responses to my questions;
- a group who sat quietly with no talking and no responses. I was not sure whether this group were listening or not;
- a group who paid no attention to me; instead, they whispered and chatted with friends.

The second group was the largest number. One reflection at the time stated that:

But the problem was that always those familiar faces could answer my questions, and the rest of the class were just sitting on the floor, not learning, even trying. The worse thing was that this “the rest of the class” was the majority. (3/3/2009)

This mental exercise actually had the effect of focusing my concern on the whole group’s learning, rather than on one group of students (or on myself). I began to pay far closer attention to students’ reactions in class. One of my teaching problems during previous terms was that I pushed students to learn and aimed to complete my lesson exactly as I had planned. The following quotation describes a very common situation, where my students’ responses in class were far from what I had expected when planning:

I taught them how to say “what’s the date of your birthday” and how to answer it. I found they need repetition and practice in class many times, otherwise they are not able to say the whole sentence. It was a little hard for stage 2. But after trying as many times as we can, it worked. A larger number of students can ask and answer about one’s birthday with their previous knowledge about telling the dates. (10/3/2009)
I learned to read students’ responses far more quickly and to make instant changes in class. Finishing was not my goal, but students’ understanding was. Without making too trite a cliché, I was moving from focusing on teaching to focusing on learning.

Again, the issue of boys’ and girls’ learning emerged during this term, which was similar to what I found last term—boys made quicker progress, showed better understanding and had better performance in my class. They were willing to show their abilities as much as possible, and their accent was really good. I often wondered why the girls had not participated as boys did.

2. My efforts to extend students’ learning:

A significant change in my teaching this term was that I started to realise students’ different learning abilities and tried to pay attention to individual students’ learning, although my class size was still very large at the time. At the beginning of the term, my mentor suggested that ‘Audacity’—sound-editing software—could be used for extension work for those quick learners in Mandarin. I made some sound files to help students better develop their Mandarin skills, as well as to enable the teachers to review and reinforce students’ knowledge when I was not teaching in the schools.

Another event was that one school invited me to prepare students to perform something in Mandarin in their assembly. The song “Two Tigers”, or a children’s rhyme, was quite suitable for students of Stage 1. They were able to read and memorise the words, and then sing to the music. My reflection was that “It was a very good opportunity to share with parents, and to let them know what their children did in Mandarin at school and to tell them they were learning and enjoying” (24/2/2009).
Over this half-year’s teaching, I learned that some of my students had made remarkable progress in Mandarin. However, due to my teaching situation, my focus was always on the majority of students. Those top students could have learned more in class but had been unable to. So one day I decided:

From this week, I planned to have extra material for extension for those students who were really interested in developing their knowledge in writing and reading Mandarin. The school Mandarin policy emphasised the speaking skill only! I should meet their expectation, should I? (24/2/2009)

The result was that there were four or five students from each class coming to ask for those materials, with which I was quite happy. Then I felt less guilty when delivering my lessons targeting other students. I used to put too much pressure on myself as a volunteer L2 teacher—I thought that I alone was responsible for their learning. However, through three terms of teaching, with deepening understanding about teaching and my professional practice, it is safe to say that classroom teachers would definitely make a difference if they were able to spend some time in Mandarin with students when I was away. Z’s class was a good example (see 6.4.3.2).

7.3.2.3 Teaching Constraints

*Teaching constraints* was a recurring category that emerged during the past three terms. However, these constraints covered different aspects of my teaching practice during different terms, which meant that I myself was changing. It was interesting that I rarely talked about problems in teaching large groups in my reflective journals during this term, but it does not mean that there were no problems. Instead, it seemed that I was used to this teaching situation. Dealing with young children was also a problem for me all the time, but the analysis that follows is based on the issues which were common for all Stages but particularly for little children like kindergarten and Stage 1 students.
1. Behaviour management

Students’ behaviour problems were not the major concern they were during previous terms. This term, after trying small groups in different schools, this management skill became very essential for me as a teacher. I did not realise this issue when teaching in large class sizes, as classroom teachers did it for me. Thus I did not have to consider it due to my teaching situation, and because I focused on myself when teaching. However, it became a problem when I tried to deliver a good lesson in a normal-sized class:

… Because it was the first time for these little children to have Mandarin time, they were too excited to be under the control, chatting with friends, no response to what I was talking about, not listening to me. I stood in front of them, seeing myself as a clown. I felt hard to move on. The classroom teachers were not so helpful today. (11/2/2009)


My concerns:

1. how to deal with those naughty students
2. when I was listening to someone’s answer, I usually paid all my attention to him or her. The rest of the class got fussy sometimes. What should I do?
3. it happened that some classroom teachers talked too much when some of my colleagues were teaching at other schools, while some even said too little toward behavior management. What was that? A dilemma? Today I badly needed help from the supervising teacher, but she seldom spoke. Perhaps she did not want to interfere my teaching. Negotiation with this issue was urgent! (24/3/2009)

… casual teacher was not able to control the class. In a mass! Not so good as last week. (25/3/2009)

the class with casual teacher was always not so good as when they had their own supervising teacher. It was harder to deal with some behavior problems
without the help of the classroom teacher, because I did not know what proper words should I say to them in terms of their misbehaviour. Right at those moments, I really needed help from classroom teachers … (31/3/2009)

These unsuccessful lessons really made me think about this issue. What I was concerned about was that, instead of looking for help from classroom teachers, I should learn and master certain skills of behaviour control, so that I could control the class by myself. This is essential for a qualified teacher (Arends, 2004; Stoughton, 2007; Martin, 2004).

2. Time

Time was a new concern in my reflections in which I recorded my thoughts about the duration of Mandarin classes.

I only had half an hour with these little children, but it took them 5 minutes to settle down. Teaching these students for just 20 minutes or so seemed easy for me to pass the time till over, but it won’t be a good lesson. Although I want to deliver a good lesson, I had rather limited time. (4/3/2009)

Obviously, what I planned for this lesson was too much. The reality was that they were only able to learn a little within 30 minutes. (24/3/2009)

Having a lesson for less than half an hour was difficult for me to organise in terms of a comprehensive lesson in which students could demonstrate good understanding, especially the young children.

7.3.3 Discussion of a Crucial Episode

7.3.3.1 The Biggest Change—Teaching in Small Classes

At the end of this term, the school finally changed the organisation of my large classes. I used to think it would be much easier for a teacher in smaller classes. However, the reality of my first lesson in a normal-sized class was far from my
expectations. The interesting thing was that I started to worry about teaching normal-sized classes, although it was me who asked for this change: “How was the teaching situation in small classes at this school? Can I get used to this change? These days I was always worrying about this issue, because I found that I was not confident enough to teach small classes after being placed within large groups” (24/3/2009). Anyway, this was a new start for me, a change for the better. The following quotation recorded my first lesson in a ‘small’ class:

It was the first trial class that I had for small groups. I planned and prepared, but it turned out to be a disaster, frankly speaking. Students of Stage 1 always sit on the floor in their classes. When I came into the classroom, I just felt crowded. I did not know why. Maybe the previous hall gave me much space around, and I was used to that. The blackboard was full of writings, their own learning stuff. A little awkward! After I started my lesson, I noticed that there were actually three groups of students: one group was listening to me and giving me responses to my questions; another group was sitting quietly, no talking and no responding. I was not sure whether they were listening or not. The last group was those naughty kids, not listening, not paying attention, just keeping whispering and chatting with buddies sitting beside. The second group had the largest number (24/3/2009).

I used the word “disaster” to describe my teaching situation in that lesson. Children’s misbehaviours were easily observed by me in such a small class. My pre-existing knowledge that students should be quiet and well-disciplined in class made me more annoyed. Getting into a new classroom environment, being much closer with students, and having a shorter period, all of these contributed to my sense of ‘failure’. However, for my part, after telling myself many times not to push little children to learn too much during a lesson, both my planning notes and my teaching indicated that I had failed again.
7.3.3.2 Students’ Development in Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing Skills

My reflective journal recorded one other significant incident that happened in my teaching. At that time we were playing a competition game class by class. I prepared many questions around all the things that we had learned in Mandarin. I wrote them on small pieces of paper and asked students from different classes to take turns to choose one note. They had to read the question first, and then answer by themselves or ask their friends for help. Here is the relevant excerpt from my journal:

... The second finding from the game during these two weeks was that students have developed their speaking and listening skills further than reading skills. As they picked one note of question, if it was written in Pinyin, few of them was able to read it. However, if I read the question to them, many of them could understand it and then respond to the question. I never realised this problem before. (17/2/2009)

It was the first time I realised this issue. Students’ responses allowed me to think about how I taught them for over a half-year. I learned that my students were better in speaking and listening skills than in reading and writing in Mandarin. Due to my large class size, I seldom gave students chances to read something by themselves, let alone emphasise writing skills. What I always did was to ask them to repeat after me and to respond to questions in Mandarin, with more focus on speaking and listening skills. Consequently, my students did not develop a balance of these four skills, but the good thing was that I actually met the school’s expectation of me—focusing on oral language. Hinkel (2006) reviews recent developments in second language teaching, highlighting the teaching of L2 speaking, listening, reading and writing skills, and suggests that “In an age of globalization, pragmatic objectives of language learning place an increased value on integrated and dynamic multiskill instructional models with a focus on meaningful communication and the development of learners’ communicative competence” (Hinkel, 2006, p. 113). I learned from the language methodology training course and the NSW Departmental Syllabus that there are four
skills in language teaching, and that students need to develop all four. I did not apply this guideline to my teaching practice. From my understanding, Pinyin—the Chinese alphabetic spelling—is not the ‘real Chinese’, so I think it is difficult for my students, at their beginning level of learning Mandarin, to read and write Hanzi (pictographic characters). I however, never considered this when delivering my lessons. This episode turned on a light for me, which gave me the idea that I should keep a balance of those four skills.
Chapter 8

Concerns of Students’ Learning with Data from “Not Self”:
Term 2 and Term 3, 2009

8.1 Research Setting

In Term 2 (from 28 April to 10 July) and Term 3, 2009 (from 28 July to 9 October), I worked as a volunteer Mandarin teacher in School 梅 on every Tuesday, in School 兰 on Wednesday mornings and in School 竹 on Wednesday afternoons. This period (Terms 2 & 3, 2009) was my last term of data collection in my research plan. However, the reality was that data from students, which included their work samples and test papers, were collected in Term 3, 2009. Other sources of data, such as programming and planning notes, my reflections, and interviews with teachers were all obtained in Term 2, 2009. This chapter thus contains the analysis of evidence from these two Terms.

In School 梅, from late Term 3, a new Chinese volunteer also came to this school. Thus, we each ‘had’ half of the school, and the children returned to weekly Mandarin lessons. Before the new volunteer came, my teaching situation remained the same as it was in the previous Term. After her participation, I taught four classes of Stage 3 and two classes of Stage 1, with each session half an hour. In School 兰 and School 竹 on Wednesdays, my routine was the same as the previous Term: in the mornings, I observed Chinese lessons and helped teach the class; in the afternoons, I had two classes of Year 5 to teach, with each class lasting one hour.
8.2 How Data Were Collected

Table 8.1 summarises my data collection methods during Term 2 and Term 3, 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods of data collection from Chapter 3</th>
<th>How collected in Terms 2 &amp; 3, 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programming and planning notes</td>
<td>Detailed description is provided below.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection journals on my teaching: teaching Mandarin</td>
<td>I kept a journal for 14 dates. Major themes are discussed below.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations of others’ teaching</td>
<td>Included in reflection journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations—including by email—with Languages methodology lecturer</td>
<td>Carried out by email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal (oral) feedback by others of my teaching</td>
<td>Through semi-structured focus group interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written feedback from a sample of students</td>
<td>Stage 3 students providing written feedback (Term 3, 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ test-based assessment</td>
<td>Stage 3 students providing assessed work (Term 3, 2009)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the following sections, the analysis is based on the different sources of data that I actually collected during these two Terms, namely:

- Programming and planning notes;
- Reflective entries about my teaching and class observations, which were included in my journals;
- Conversations by email with L2 methodology lecturer;
- Teacher interviews;
- Written feedback from students;
- Student assessment.

8.3 Programming and Planning Notes

During Term 2, 2009, in School 梅, based on students’ previous knowledge of the Chinese zodiac and birthdays, the major tasks continued to build on students’ ability
to ask and answer questions about one’s zodiac and respond to someone’s birthday party. A new topic, introduced later during the Term was food and drink: hamburger, ice cream, potato chips, cake and cola, based on the teaching content suggested in *ShuòShuòXiàoXiào*. As noted in Chapter 5, programming and planning notes in this thesis serve as an:

- expression of curriculum intention;
- expression of my growth as an L2 teacher.

Table 8.2 presents the first of these.

**Table 8.2 A summary of topics taught through one year**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of data</th>
<th>Term 3, 2008</th>
<th>Term 4, 2008</th>
<th>Term 1, 2009</th>
<th>Terms 2 &amp; 3 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programming and planning notes</td>
<td>Greetings; numbers; name/age/address</td>
<td>Family members; Pets</td>
<td>Chinese New Year; dates; birthday; zodiac</td>
<td>Birthday party; food and drink</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given that *ShuòShuòXiàoXiào* was the teaching resource that I relied on when I planned my lessons, it actually reduced my workload in planning because the program provided both what to teach (teaching content) and how to teach (teaching strategies and supporting material). As listed in Table 8.2, the topics I taught through the year were greetings, numbers, asking about and answering names, age, address, family members, pets, Chinese New Year, dates, birthday parties, Chinese zodiac and food and drink. These topics and units were all related to students’ daily life, being situations in which they were interested.

With respect to the second ‘expression’, the way in which I planned lessons is some indication of my professional development and improvement as a second language teacher. As a point of comparison, I once again provide the very first three planning
notes here to indicate changes between these notes and those for my last three lessons.

Plan for Lesson 1 (5/8/2008)

My plan was to use ShuōShuōXiàoXiào to teach students how to ask someone’s name and to introduce their own names.

Plan for lesson 2 (12/8/2008)

I prepared a picture presentation about my hometown Hangzhou. The main task was to learn to ask someone where he/she lived and to answer it. If we had time left, we would move on to numbers.

Plan for lesson 3 (19/8/2008)

As it was the time of Beijing Olympic Games, I prepared a music video of the song *Beijing Welcomes You* for the last few minutes of a lesson. The topic today was numbers from 1 to 10 in Mandarin.

Table 8.3 presents my last three planning notes during Term 2, 2009, the first column of which is exactly what I listed in my planning notes in the format given by my supervisor.

From the comparisons of my planning notes at the beginning and at the end, it was not difficult to see changes in my process of planning. Although my teaching situation was quite different at those two periods, my planning skills improved. I changed the way of using ShuōShuōXiàoXiào, and introduced more games in class. These changes and differences also contributed to my successful transfer from teaching large groups to normal-sized classes. It is hard to make comparisons across
different classes at different times. However, some things are noticeable. First, I moved to consider lesson planning more consciously as an important process in teaching and chose to set different goals and to adopt different approaches to teaching for students of different stages. Second, my planning notes were not only a guideline to what to teach in class, but also included space for immediate reflection and then suggestions and extension for following lessons. Third, my focus moved from whole groups’ responses to individual student learning. These changes may be tiny for others, but they were significant breakthroughs for me, and I see them as a measure of my professional growth.

**Table 8.3 Last three lesson planning notes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lessons Planning</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Procedures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/6/2009 (Stage 1)</td>
<td>Learn five food names in Mandarin</td>
<td>Review animal signs (by the game Messy Map or Match Game)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/6/2009 (Stage 3)</td>
<td>Learn five food names in Mandarin</td>
<td>Review Chinese zodiac. Ask some questions related to culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/6/2009 (Year 5 at another school; they take notes in class.)</td>
<td>Learn to say 6 family members; be able to introduce their own family members.</td>
<td>Pay individual attention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. students</td>
<td>Control the whole class, not only the behaviour issues, but also let kids follow me, be interested...</td>
<td>Introduce five food names</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| b. for me | Language of instruction; try to engage every student. Let every student have a chance to speak. | Q:你属什么？
A:我属（）。
| | Review finger numbers and the tongue twister. (competition/guessing game) | Introduce self-introduction in Mandarin (Match Game) |
| | | Review 6 family members. (Use flashcards & write on whiteboard) |
| a. | b. | c. |
d. plan B or after c | Choose one of these and stand up to say it. Everyone needs to participate. | Everyone needs to say one of them. If we have time, learn “我要吃/喝（）。” | 我家有（）、（）和（）。Learn to introduce their own family members.

f. Close | Look at their booklet for practice and conclusion. | Tell students my plans for the following 3 weeks, as we aim to write a letter as long as we can in Mandarin due Week 10.

**Evaluation and extension** | Games for next lesson: ‘Bingo’/‘Pass the parcel’ | Tell students my plans for the following 3 weeks, as we aim to write a letter as long as we can in Mandarin due Week 10.

**In retrospect** | Included in my reflective journals | Included in my reflective journals | Included in my reflective journals

---

### 8.4 Journal Reflections

#### 8.4.1 Coding

My analysis of reflective journals ended in Term 2, 2009. During that period, I kept a journal of fourteen dates. The coding process was the same as I used in the previous Term. The unit of analysis was the dated entry. I summarised my reflective journals into statements, and then converted summary statements into codes. Tables 8.4 & 8.5 illustrate this process.

**Table 8.4 An example of the Coding Process (1)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflection (29/4/2009)</th>
<th>Summary statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I well planned the lesson, because for these two year 5 classes, I had my own plan. I want to develop their reading and writing skills as well. Taking notes was a very good habit.</td>
<td>Asked students to take notes to develop their writing skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In one class, I always felt that students were not listening to me, or they were not interesting in my teaching. I could tell that feeling when I asked a question but nobody responded.</td>
<td>No responses to my questions in one class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How about that? What should I do at that moment? Keep trying or change another topic to make myself less embarrassed.</td>
<td>Asking myself how to solve this problem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I preferred the second one. Or I changed my way of asking that question, so that students could get it gradually.

I chose to rephrase my questions.

One student kept calling out answers or his ideas or thoughts without raising his hand. I really disliked this kind of behaviour, particular when there were other students waiting to be called to volunteer their answers.

I was unhappy with some students’ calling out in class.

But he asked me after class that “Miss, was I good at “ni jiao shenme mingzi”, which meant “What is your name?” I said yes because he actually was. Then he was quite happy and repeated that sentence in Mandarin again and again. Maybe just a few simple words of recognition from a teacher would encourage students a lot.

My praise to a boy encouraged him a lot.

Table 8.5 An example of coding process (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary statements (29/4/2009)</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asked students to take notes to develop their writing skills</td>
<td>Teaching practice: note-taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No responses to my questions in one class</td>
<td>Students’ engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking myself how to solve this problem</td>
<td>Reactions to students’ engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I chose to rephrase my questions.</td>
<td>Reactions to students’ engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was unhappy with some students’ calling out in class.</td>
<td>Behaviour management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My praise to a boy encouraged him a lot.</td>
<td>Students’ responses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After this stage in the analytical process, I gathered all the codes together, and categorised them into two major themes that emerged during this period, namely: students’ engagement and concerns about students’ language acquisition. I am not saying that these two themes covered everything. There were some other small categories which were only reflected in a few sentences; they were judged not worth discussing in detail. For example, some teaching constraints like behaviour management, time, teaching pace and technical issues were only reflected once or twice in my journal entries. My confidence in my ability to control and deal with
these problems had increased. This did not mean that teaching problems went away but rather, that some other themes dominated. Crucial episodes again formed a separate discussion.

8.4.2 Discussion of Key Categories

8.4.2.1 Students’ Learning

During Term 2 and Term 3, 2009, there were a large number of journal entries concerning students’ engagement in my Mandarin lessons, among which different learning styles and levels, and students’ achievement versus my expectations were two major sub-themes. I had normal-sized classes throughout all this period, so I was able to pay close attention to individuals in the class and to observe how students were actually progressing. I learned that most students could be engaged, even those whom I had previously thought were not interested in learning Mandarin, no matter how I taught them. However, from teaching practice over these two terms, I realised that most students would engage when the lesson was to their taste: for instance, the lesson on using chopsticks, the lesson using videos, and the lesson on the topic of “birthday”. Increasingly, the following two sub-themes had a considerable impact on my teaching.

1. Different learning styles and levels

I would not have the chance to find out what this issue meant to me unless I was able to pay close attention to students’ learning. One day it happened that a boy from a Chinese background asked me for more things to do in class, because he thought that my teaching was too simple. I quite understood that, but what I taught in class was actually not easy for non-background students. There were different learning levels in a class, and it was hard to cater to all. When I planned lessons, or designed activities, I seldom thought thoroughly about this issue. When I read the students’
writing task at the end of Term 2, 2009, I found that the top students were able to start introducing themselves to their family members and pets, and to discuss likes and dislikes, but many other students only knew very basic sentences, with no additional information. Then I reflected that “when I was teaching, did I notice it and then have different activities to cater all levels? Probably not. But I did pay extra attention to who needed more help” (8/7/2009).

My journal also recorded that:

One student who handed in an excellent introduction was an example. I did not ever notice her in class, because she was seated at the back, and did not come out in class. However, from her work, I could tell that she had very good knowledge of what I have taught. And that was just her way of learning. Being silent in class did not equal not learning, and being active did not always mean learning well. (8/7/2009)

From reviewing that writing task, in which I asked students to introduce themselves in Pinyin, I realised that students had different learning styles. At School 竹, I asked students to take notes in class, which I believed helped those quiet ones who seldom participated in class activities. Take the girl just mentioned for example. The interesting thing was that after I praised her work in class, she seemed to be more willing and comfortable to stand out and participate in activities. Perhaps a sense of achievement worked.

Learners of different types rely on different teaching methods. Thus, it is quite important for language teachers to identify students’ learning types and then to create or adopt various methods to cater for all (Nunan, 1991).
2. Students’ achievement vs my expectation

After one year’s teaching, some students’ performance was actually beyond my previous expectations of them. When I started teaching, I held the idea that students here in Australia did not like to study, so they would not achieve well in Mandarin. However, later on, more and more incidents indicated that many students did excellently:

When I asked students to do a matching game on board, I found that I actually underestimated their ability in recognising Chinese characters. Probably, their notes helped them. Both of these two Year 5 classes did well in the match game, which showed their good understanding of what they learned with the help with their notes. (29/4/2009)

Another thing was that one girl came to me happily and told me that she had a short conversation with a waitress when she went to Chinatown in a restaurant. How excellent it was! (10/6/2009)

As a teacher, I was proud of her, but also myself. The aim of learning a language was to use it for communication. With regard to the students recognising characters (Hanzi), it gave me much more confidence about introducing Chinese characters in later lessons.

8.4.2.2 Concerns of Students’ Language Acquisition

One of the major changes I experienced during this period was that I started to consider more issues related to students’ language acquisition. Instead of simply doing it, I asked “why” and “how” questions by reading some research literature on these topics, among which the application of games and young children’s learning ability, were the most important.
1. Application of games

Little children really love games. They paid no attention to my words of teaching, but when I said “we gonna play a game”, they all seemed to wake up and to be very excited and looking forward to it. (12/5/2009)

When the second round of the game was ready to start, he raised his hand and told me he would like to join us. I should have been forgotten him. I learned that games really had its magic power for students’ engagement. (20/5/2009)

Since I have had normal-sized classes, the key issue was for me to learn the application of games to language teaching. I used to have large groups, so this problem was not very urgent for me at that time, but now, in small classes I had no excuse for not using games in my teaching, in particular for teaching young children. I had been told that games were essential in language teaching. From my teaching practice, I finally realised how much children loved games. I had thought it would make my lessons more attractive, but I was not sure whether it could push students to learn better, and more, in Mandarin. This was the tension between what worked well for students’ engagement and what worked well for Mandarin learning. The implications of this point are considered in Chapter 9.

2. Young children’s learning ability

Some issues emerging from teaching Kindergarten and Stage 1 children were quite different from those for teaching Stage 3 students. Young children’s ability to understand and learn was something that I, a novice teacher with no relevant background, had to address. My journal recorded one day:

We played a game of rearranging numbers from 1-10 in a Year 1 class. Some students were just standing there and had no idea of those numbers which I had reviewed several times, and my first thought was that they did not have good memories and had little practice. However, I did not realise it until the classroom teacher joked that they would be better in Mandarin than in
English at knowing these numbers, as some of them in kindergarten were still struggling with numbers in English, let alone in Mandarin. (5/5/2009)

I had never thought of this; I always took it for granted that they understood numbers in English, at least from 1-10. Sometimes kindergarten children had no idea what I was talking about. The above evidentiary excerpt was just one of the many occasions that happened during my teaching of the young children. Consequently, I believed that understanding these children’s cognitive level was of importance for both teaching and learning. Now as a researcher, taking one step back to analyse the issue, I would like to find out why such problems were always encountered by this ‘teacher’ (my teacher-self). Muñoz (2007) argues that learners’ age differences must be considered when adopting certain teaching approaches. Apart from the differences in cognitive development, younger children and older learners have differential “aptitudes”, “learning styles and strategies”, and “affective, personality, and social factors” in terms of their L2 learning (Muñoz, 2007, pp. 230-236). Thus, different age groups require different teaching methods and activities that are appropriate to their age level. Muñoz (2007) gives examples of such differences: for instance, younger children prefer simple tasks, physical movement and repetition, but older learners like to take more complicated and meaningful tasks that need logical thinking and analysis.

8.4.3 Discussion of Crucial Episodes

8.4.3.1 Realisation of Differences in Teaching Large Classes and Small Classes

Since I have been teaching small groups for the whole Term, I realised for the first time some problems with my previous teaching of large groups:

Now every student in a class had opportunities to practise, to speak and to get quick help from me. Before, I thought large groups were just overwhelming for a beginning teacher to teach, and I did not consider it from the perspective of students’ learning. However, from today’s practice, I finally made it clear
that differences between teaching large groups and small groups might not exist among those quick learners. For those who had quick response and good learning ability, they could manage it no matter it was a large class or not. The difference was there for those who needed more help in learning, those who were slow in accepting new things. (9/6/2009)

However, those who needed much help were the majority of the class. In large classes, they were easily ignored by me, because the top students always occupied my attention. Consequently, I realised some problems in my class: a group of students found it difficult to go on with learning this language, and then finally gave up, because language is acquired by accumulation of small units. Language learning is a gradual process, so if one missed one part of it, it was probable that h/she would lag behind without enough help. In small groups, students could easily get my help, and I was able to pay individual attention, which I thought could give students a sense of achievement and a belief that they could learn and use this language. This kind of motivation would keep them going.

8.4.3.2 My Extended Engagement as a Teacher

What else I was involved in at School included meeting with parents (23/6/2009) and having a say in the scope and sequence of the Mandarin program (1/9/2009). I was pleased that the Principal organised a morning tea for us to meet with some of the students’ parents. This gave me an opportunity to learn about what children brought home about Mandarin, and what parents expected me to teach. Four parents came to have a conversation with me, the Principal and my mentor, while some others provided written comments on their children’s Mandarin learning. Generally speaking, they were supportive of the Mandarin program, and their children talked positively about it at home. One parent commented that Australia was an Asia-Pacific nation, so they needed much more knowledge about Asian languages, particularly Mandarin. Another point that all parents made was that having Mandarin lessons half an hour every second week was not enough for children. Language
learning required more time. Another parent said, who herself was an L2 teacher (French and German), that when children had no pressure to learn, compared with Chinese students’ learning English, they needed much more time. Children loved learning about another country, so cultural aspects were another essential part that I needed to share. This comment was based on what I did at this school, focusing on language, rather than culture. Since the parents gave me this advice, I decided to introduce more cultural elements.

As for programming, three teachers from each Stage, the Principal, the new volunteer, and I, as well as a languages consultant from the NSW Department of Education and Training worked out together a scope and sequence for a Mandarin program within the school. This experience enabled me to feel like a ‘real language teacher’ at school. We discussed interesting topics, learning units and suitable teaching materials for each year. The scope and sequence that we finished is included as Appendix 20.

8.5 Conversations by Email with an L2 Methodology Lecturer

I conducted an email interview with the Languages methodology lecturer. My aim was to obtain her views on aspects of language teaching and ideas for beginning teacher’s improvement.

*Question 1: I previously had very large class sizes at one school—about 80 to 90 students during a 45 minute period. In what ways do you think it is possible to adapt what you have taught me to the large numbers?*

Her view on teaching methods in large groups was that it was hard to cater for the full range of learners in big classes, and that the aim of language teaching was to make students communicate in the target language and feel comfortable in
completing tasks. She suggested the use of written work, group activities and games, together with using technology if accessible.

**Question 2:** What do you think is the biggest difference between teaching small groups and large classes? What do you think is the biggest difference for students between being taught in a small group and in a fairly large class?

The biggest difference is that you cannot cater for individual needs, learning styles, interests etc. and so it is difficult for you as the teacher to prepare lessons and materials that will keep everyone motivated and engaged in the learning of the language. Some students do really well when they have constant encouragement and feedback—this would be extremely difficult in a large group. Students are less likely to take risks when they are in a larger group. (23/7/2009)

Her view was that in large groups, it was dramatically difficult for me as a teacher to pay individual attention to students and to learn how they have been progressing. Those students who could not get enough attention and continuous support and encouragement might not persist. The point that students were less likely to ‘have a go’ in a larger group was also reflected in my classroom teachers’ interviews, in which a Stage 3 teacher said that her children were much more willing to participate in just their own class. In my reflective journals, I recorded my thinking about this difference after I started teaching in normal-sized classes. My opinion was that the difference existed for those students who needed more attention and help in the process of learning, and that quick learners could manage in both situations.

**Question 3:** I found kindergarten students a particular challenge. Do you have any advice for me on teaching L2 to little kids? (At the very beginning, when I used the DVD program, I always pushed them to learn the same thing as other Stages did. I did not realise at that time that it was too difficult for kindergarten children.)

The languages methodology lecturer suggested that for young children, teachers try the following:
- Use oral work only
- Use songs and rhymes
- Have loads of interesting and colourful resources such as puppets to interact with you and with them so you can model the language, make use of real objects that appeal to their age group
- Use your body to help them understand what you are saying
- Do physical activities in the target language
- Use technology for simple things
- For reading and writing have them copy what you have written on a page and include plenty of illustrations
- Have rewards for good work. (23/7/2009)

**Question 4:** What, in your view, would be a good measure of whether I was improving as an L2 teacher? How would you see me measuring this growth?

In responding to this question, she advised that there were two main ways to approach this: self-reflection and peer observation. According to her, self-reflection is one method to use to watch the reaction of the students, including their interests, motivation, enthusiasm, behaviour. Apart from that, students’ assessment tasks and their understanding of what I have taught also need to be used. The other method is to ask one of my peers to observe my teaching and to rate me on criteria such as the Quality Teaching model\(^3\) and to observe the response that the students have to me in class.

\(^3\) The NSW Quality Teaching model provides a framework to focus attention on, and provide consistent messages about, pedagogy in public schools. The NSW QT model identifies three dimensions of pedagogy that have been linked to improved student outcomes:

- Pedagogy that is fundamentally based on promoting high levels of intellectual quality.
- Pedagogy that is soundly based on promoting a quality learning environment.
- Pedagogy that develops and makes explicit to students the significance of their work.
I carried out self-reflection throughout the year, in which I wrote about student engagement, interests and teaching constraints. This kept me thinking about my teaching and its improvement. In terms of the second suggestion, I did have classroom teachers observe my teaching and give me written feedback, though not based on the Quality Teaching model.

8.6 Teacher Interviews

8.6.1 Focus Group with Classroom Teachers

Three interviews with three focus groups of classroom teachers were conducted during Term 2, 2009. One reason for focus groups, instead of individual interviews, was that at that time, classroom teachers were busy with students’ semi-annual reports, and it was difficult for me to organise thirteen individual interviews within my tight schedule. There were thirteen classes in total that I was teaching. The principal suggested three focus groups, namely: teachers from Kindergarten to Year 2 (Early Stage 1 & Stage 1, hereafter referred to as ES1), Year 3 & Year 4 (Stage 2, hereafter referred to as S2) and Year 5 and Year 6 (Stage 3, hereafter referred to as S3) respectively. A factor supporting this structure was that classes of the same Stage presented similar teaching and learning issues, which was reflected in my journals. There were four teachers of ES1, three teachers of S2 and two teachers of S3. The focus groups occurred when the different Stages had their scripture lessons. The following section presents a summary of teachers’ responses to my interview questions. I made an audio tape file for each interview; however, I did not transcribe the interviews verbatim, but listened to the WAV files and transcribed relevant excerpts.

Table 8.6 Summary of interviews responses with classroom teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>ES1</th>
<th>S2</th>
<th>S3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key points</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1: Comment the lesson just delivered</td>
<td>1. good engagement; 2. interesting topics; 3 too much information in a lesson.</td>
<td>1. good engagement; 2. good preparation especially working with colleagues.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: Are there any particular lessons that you remembered working really well or the opposite—lessons that students didn’t engage well?</td>
<td>1. music; 2. simple repetition</td>
<td>1. interesting topics; 2. a slower pace; 3. cultural aspects</td>
<td>1. cultural aspects 2. my own made teaching material 3. need a focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: Could you please give some more tips on teaching little children? (for ES1 only)</td>
<td>1. a little &amp; often 2. more movement 3. group responses 4. reflect &amp; change</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4: Compared with being taught large groups, do you think being involved in small groups makes a difference for students’ learning?</td>
<td>1. Better, even doing it fortnightly. 2. more chances for students to have a go</td>
<td>1. enable me to pay individual attention 2. Students can get more help from me.</td>
<td>1. It’s the same for quick learners, but slow learners cannot make it in both. 2. In general it’s better. 3. More trying to participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5: Have I been improving over the whole year? If yes in what ways?</td>
<td>1. individualise children 2. good reinforcement 3. behaviour control skills 4. different material to help children learn</td>
<td>1. communicate with children 2. lesson planning 3. little reward</td>
<td>1. confident in teaching big kids 2. be able to discipline children more comfortably 3. behaviour management skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6: As a teacher, how did you know that you’ve been improving your teaching skills? How did you measure your own growth?</td>
<td>1. from what kids are doing 2. impossible to engage all the children all the time</td>
<td>1. from kids’ responses 2. self-reflection 3. talk to colleagues</td>
<td>1. confidence from self by involving more classes and from outside recognition 2. ability to control a lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7: what suggestions do you have for my long-term improvement</td>
<td>Keep my enthusiasm in teaching</td>
<td>Set up my own classroom rules in terms of behaviour control.</td>
<td>1. Catering for different learning styles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.6.2 Face to Face Interviews with Two Mandarin Teachers

In School 兰. I had opportunities to observe two Mandarin teachers at different times. Interviews with these two teachers aimed to investigate their views on teaching Mandarin in Australia and their approaches to teaching it. In this thesis one teacher is named Teacher Yellow, and the other Teacher Red. Teacher Yellow had been working in schools for almost eight years, with much of her time in secondary schools. Teacher Red did not have much teaching experience in Australia, and most of her students were in primary schools in different areas. The conversation with Teacher Yellow was audio-taped, and the interview with Teacher Red was not, since she did not approve me to record it. So we had a slow conversation in both Mandarin and English, during which I took notes of her key points. Interview questions delivered to these two Mandarin teachers were slightly different, due to their different teaching contexts. A summary of their responses to my interview questions follows.

Teacher Yellow said that her general teaching methods were the direct approach and communicative skills, which meant that she used real items and practical situations to encourage students to speak in the target language. Sentence patterns were introduced through a question and answer procedure, with little emphasis on grammar teaching. She focused on adjusting her teaching expectations and requirements to students of different learning levels, rather than pushing them to achieve the same goal. She used a famous Chinese saying to explain her point: “五指有长短，能力各不同” (Wǔzhī yǒu chángduǎn, nénglì gè bùtóng). It means that five fingers are different; some are short and some are longer, which implies that people have different capabilities. She encouraged them to focus on speaking skills and
listening. Reading and writing are just part of her learning journey. In responding to my question about how to measure a teacher’s professional growth, she suggested three ways:
1. from one’s ways of dealing a lesson: choosing material, lesson planning, skills of classroom control;
2. observing students’ reactions and responses;
3. by test results, which was her last choice, because she did not think it worked well.

Teacher Red said that her approach to L2 teaching was through: (1) modelling; (2) instruction; and (3) students’ independent writing. Being new to teaching Kindergarten this year, she said that it was a problem for her as well. She suggested songs and rhymes which were adored by these young children. The problem is that it is very demanding on teachers to prepare those activities, so she was seeking other ways of achieving her desired learning outcomes. There were no apparent differences between boys’ and girls’ learning, as they are all beginners. In her opinion the reason for this was that language is performance (also see in Ortega, 2007). Maybe at this beginning stage, children’s sense of performing captures more than their cognitive interests. She focused on speaking and listening skills more than writing and reading skills. It is hard to implement all that is mentioned in the syllabus. The reasons are that it is very practical to develop speaking and listening skills, but it is difficult for beginners to write and read in Mandarin, while some students were capable of learning characters (Hanzi). She generally focused more on speaking and listening skills. She suggested a teacher could see his/her professional improvement through:
1. students’ engagement;
2. formal and informal assessment of students’ learning;
3. feedback from students and parents.

Apart from the evidence above, I also obtained from these interviews some other ideas about L2 teaching in this context—for instance, Australian games in Chinese language, suitable resource material, students’ interest in culture and different
learning styles. Many of their responses to my teaching were captured in my journal. However, given their advice on getting student feedback it is necessary to ask what did the students think about my teaching of Mandarin? How did they make progress through one year’s learning?

8.7 Written Feedback from Students and Student Assessment (N = 91)

This research is a self-study of my one year teaching experience, which aimed at investigating my professional development as a beginning L2 teacher. I understood the importance of others’ involvement in this process. In the following section, data from students are analysed. I collected students’ written feedback and their test papers in Term 3, 2009. My target group were Stage 3 students, as they were capable of understanding my questions and of giving reasonable responses. In total, there were 91 students (N = 91) who provided written feedback and test results. For ethical reasons none of them are individually identified. What I aimed to investigate was the whole groups’ learning, rather than individual outcomes. Written feedback and half of the test paper were finished in one thirty-minute session, when I was present. The other half of the test was done the following week, supervised by their classroom teachers. Students were required to answer questions individually, with no communication or notes.

The following section presents an analysis of students’ responses to eight questions about my Mandarin teaching and their learning progress. The test results are given in the next section.

8.7.1 Students’ Written Feedback

*Question 1: What have you enjoyed about learning Mandarin throughout the year?*
The majority of students held a similar idea, namely that it was fun and interesting to learn a new and different language, as well as to know its culture. This was the comment students made most often. Some of them gave examples of what they particularly enjoyed, such as learning food names, animal signs, and numbers. Only one person said that s/he did not like learning Mandarin, because it was boring.

**Question 2: How do you think you are progressing with Mandarin? What is your biggest improvement? How do you know?**

Students provided various examples in response to this question, as each student had made progress in different areas. No matter in which specific way that they were making progress, be it food names or family members, the key point was that almost everyone said that they have improved in certain ways. One frequent comment was that students realised they spoke more and more words in Mandarin. What surprised me was students’ confidence in knowing and, even writing, Chinese characters (Hanzi), because for me that was only a small portion of my teaching. I had reckoned it was too hard for them, so I did not introduce characters very much. Now I learned that students were really fond of it. The most interesting feedback appeared when one student said that his/her biggest improvement happened after moving from the hall to a classroom. Then h/she felt that h/she was able to learn more.

**Question 3: What do you know well and what can you do well in Mandarin?**

The most frequent answers were numbers, pets and family members.

**Question 4: How does my teaching help you learn?**

In responding to this question, students focused on the following three aspects, in order of frequency:
- I always ask students to repeat words over and over so that they can eventually get it, which helped them a lot in memorising words.
- my voice was very clear and loud; my language was easy to understand and to follow; my explanations were clear.
- lessons were delivered slowly.

*Question 5: What has helped you the most in your learning of Mandarin?*

A large number of students commented that note-taking was an effective way to remember what they had learned. My continuous revision week after week also worked well to help students memorise new words.

*Question 6: What advice would you give me about improving the lessons?*

Generally speaking, there were two major suggestions. One asked for more games and activities in class. The other one pointed out that rushing made it harder to remember, and that I should take the time for more revision. Comparatively, I did much more revision in large group teaching than during normal-sized class teaching. My assumption was that since I had small groups, I tried to make up for what they had lost in the large class, so I always wanted to teach more. By reading students’ answers, I realised again they shared different learning styles. For example, some asked for more written work, while others suggested more physical things, like using chopsticks and paper folding.

*Question 7: What is the most valuable advice you could give someone learning Mandarin?*

It was quite interesting to see the phrase “Never give up”, which was popular in student feedback. Many of the students suggested “Keep trying and practising”, and they all agreed that learning Mandarin required effort.
Question 8: Think of a way to use … (some skill in Mandarin that you’ve learned) since we practised them in class. For example: food; pets; family members etc.

Many students were confused by this question, and did not answer it. Some considered that they could say family names and pets in Mandarin and teach their parents. This was the most popular response. Others thought about having conversations in Chinatown, like ordering food in a Chinese restaurant. One student dreamed that one day when s/he goes to China, s/he could be a translator.

8.7.2 Students’ Assessment Task

Based on what I had taught in Mandarin throughout one and a half year’s teaching, I prepared a test paper. There were in total five parts in written form, with a separate oral test. The following section presents an analysis of each part of this assessment using students’ results.

Section 1: Vocabulary Matching
Part 1: Family members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bābā</td>
<td>older sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dì dì</td>
<td>big brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>māmā</td>
<td>father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jī jīé</td>
<td>little sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gē gē</td>
<td>mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>méiméi</td>
<td>little brother</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 2: Animals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>māo</td>
<td>ox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gǒu</td>
<td>rabbit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yú</td>
<td>tiger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>niǎo</td>
<td>cat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tù zi</td>
<td>dog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>niú</td>
<td>fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hǔ</td>
<td>bird</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Part 3: Food and drink

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kě lè</td>
<td>chips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shū piàn</td>
<td>cake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dāng báo</td>
<td>ice cream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bīng qǐ lin</td>
<td>hamburger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hàn bāo bāo</td>
<td>cola</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Part 4: Fruit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>xī guā</td>
<td>apple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xiāng jiāo</td>
<td>kiwi fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chéng zi</td>
<td>watermelon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pú táo</td>
<td>orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mǐ hú táo</td>
<td>grape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>píng guǒ</td>
<td>banana</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.7 A summary of students' scores in Section 1

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class A</th>
<th>Class B</th>
<th>Class C</th>
<th>Class D</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18</td>
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</table>
The average score of these four classes was 16.39 (out of 24), ranging from the highest possible 24, to the lowest, 4. Students’ knowledge of family members, pets and food was much better than that of fruits.

Section 2: Multiple choice

1. How to say hello in Chinese? Please circle it.

你好 nǐhǎo  谢谢 xièxiè  再见 zàijiàn
A 你好 B 谢谢 C 再见
2. How to say *teacher* in Chinese? Please circle it.

A 你       B 对不起       C 老师

3. What does 谢谢 mean? Please circle it.

A Thank you       B like       C Goodbye

4. What is the question word in Chinese? Please circle it.

A 好       B 吗       C 不

5. What does 你 mean? Please circle it.

A I/me       B you       C he/she/it

6. What does 我 mean? Please circle it.

A I/me       B you       C he/she/it

7. What does *tā* mean? Please circle it.

A I/me       B you       C he/she/it

8. What does this sentence—”你 喜欢 …… 吗？” mean? Please circle it.

A Good morning.       B Do you like …?       C I do not like…

9. What is the word for *welcome* in Chinese? Please circle it.
There were thirteen questions in total in this Section 2, most of which were based on vocabulary and sentence meanings. Questions 10 and 13 were about cultural understanding, and Question 11 was a Mathematics problem in Mandarin. Generally speaking, most of the students did fairly well, with the average score being 7.77 (out of 13) in these four classes. The scores ranged from 0 to 13. Table 8.8 presents students’ results for this section.
Table 8.8 A summary of students’ scores in Section 2

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<th>Class D</th>
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<tbody>
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Average 7.08  Average 8.38  Average 8.43  Average 7.17

Section 3: Character writing

1. Fill the blank with Chinese numbers
   
   \((\quad) + 二 = 十\)

   \((九 - 四 = (\quad))\)

   \((七 - (\quad) = 四))\)

2. Please write four Chinese characters that you’ve learned in the following boxes and write the English translation in the bottom box as well.
In this section, the scores varied from 0 to 7 as well, with the average score being 3.82 (out of 7). Table 8.9 shows students’ results.

Table 8.9 A summary of students’ scores in Section 3

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</table>
Section 4: Questions

Běijīng huānyíng nǐ

1. 北京欢迎你. What does this sentence mean in English?

2. Spring festival is also called ___________________________.

3. Is the time of Spring festival according to the traditional Chinese calendar (lunar calendar) or the modern calendar (solar calendar)?

4. Ni de bàba jiào shénme míngzi?
   ① What is the meaning of this question in English?:
   _______________________________________________________

   ② Please answer it in a full sentence in Mandarin with Pinyin.
   _______________________________________________________

5. What is the Chinese pronunciation system called? ________________

6. What does hànzì mean? ________________

7. Is hànzì the Chinese pronunciation system or writing system?
   _______________________________________________________

   _______________________________________________________

9. Nǐ shǔ shénme?
   ① Please answer it in Mandarin with Pinyin:
   ② Translate your answer into English: _______________________
   _______________________________________________________

10. What’s the meaning of xīnniánhǎo?
There were in total twelve questions asked in this section. Half of these questions were related to cultural elements. Students did not do well in this section, particularly on those questions affecting points of language. The average score was 2.47 out of 12, ranging from 0 to the highest of 9. This may have been because the students were asked to write in Mandarin, rather than to choose an answer, which made it difficult for them, as they seldom had the chance to practise writing in class. Table 8.10 summarises students’ scores in this section.
Table 8.10 A summary of students’ scores in Section 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class A</th>
<th>Class B</th>
<th>Class C</th>
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<tr>
<td>Average 3</td>
<td>Average 3.19</td>
<td>Average 2.38</td>
<td>Average 1.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section 5: Reading comprehension

A Year 8 student, Lucy, is introducing one of her new teachers to you in Mandarin. Please read carefully and then answer the following questions in English. English meanings for underlined new words are given in parentheses.
Lucy says:

她叫王霞。她是我的中文老师。她住在堪培拉 (Canberra)。她今年 (this year)二十三岁。她属兔。她家有爸爸、妈妈、两个弟弟、三个姐姐和她。她家有四只 (a measure word)鸟和八条 (a measure word)鱼。她的英文名字叫Sharon。

她喜欢吃蛋糕和薯片。她不会用筷子。她的一个 (a measure word)弟弟叫王刚，今年十八岁。他不喜欢吃香蕉。她的一个姐姐叫王敏，今年三十岁，住在中国。王霞老师喜欢澳大利亚。她还喜欢吃苹果，喝可乐。她很好，我很喜欢她。

1. What’s the name of Lucy’s new teacher?

2. Is Lucy’s new teacher male or female? How do you know?

3. What subject does this teacher teach? Please write down the indicative word in hànzì.

4. In which city does this teacher live?

5. How old is this teacher?
6. What’s the animal sign of this teacher in the Chinese zodiac?

7. How many people in total are in this teacher’s family?

8. What pets does this teacher have in the family?

9. Can this teacher use chopsticks?

10. What’s the name of this teacher’s younger brother?

11. Is Wáng Mǐn an older sister of this teacher or a younger sister?

12. What certain fruit does Wáng Gāng dislike?

13. In which country does Wáng Mǐn live?

14. Which certain country does this teacher like?

15. Does this teacher like kiwi fruit or is this not mentioned in the passage?

16. Does Lucy like her new teacher?

In this section, more than half of the students left all the questions blank. They gave up answering questions after seeing such a long passage in Chinese characters (Hanzi). They lacked confidence to continue reading it. However, the most important reason was that this reading section was actually too difficult for students at their beginning level; this judgement was supported by a language consultant’s comments on this test paper. Even though Pinyin was provided to help students to read and
understand, this long passage contained much information that was beyond the reading ability of the majority of students. Besides, students in my lessons had had few opportunities to develop their reading skills. That could explain students’ low average score of 2.21. Nevertheless, the highest score for this section was 13 out of 16. Table 8.11 is a summary of students’ scores in this section.
### Table 8.11 A summary of students’ scores in Section 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Class A</th>
<th>Class B</th>
<th>Class C</th>
<th>Class D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After presenting students’ scores in all sections of the test, Table 8.12 summarises the test results in terms of average scores, total scores and individual top scores.

The overall average score was 32.64 out of 72. Figure 8.1 presents the score distribution among students (N = 91). It was interesting that only two students gained an extremely low score, and that only two students’ scores were above 60 (total score = 72). Most students were in the area of 30 ~ 39, which is nearest to the average
score. According to this bell-shaped graph, the results were close to normal distribution.

Table 8.12 A summary of test results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sections</th>
<th>1 vocabulary matching</th>
<th>2 multiple choices</th>
<th>3 character writing</th>
<th>4 question answering</th>
<th>5 reading comprehension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class A</td>
<td>15.04</td>
<td>7.08</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class B</td>
<td>14.90</td>
<td>8.38</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>4.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class C</td>
<td>20.33</td>
<td>8.43</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class D</td>
<td>15.29</td>
<td>7.17</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>16.39</td>
<td>7.77</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>2.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total score</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top score</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8.1 Score distribution

With regard to students’ learning outcomes in each section, Figure 8.2 indicates percentage in terms of accuracy among all 91 students for each section. For example, the average score in Section 1 was 16.39, with the total score 24, so the accuracy was
68%. When I prepared this test paper, my initial idea was that it moved from easy parts to difficult ones, which is reflected in the students’ final results, as the accuracy percentage went down section by section. Students showed better skills in vocabulary matching, multiple choice, and character writing, but it seemed difficult for them to write answers in Pinyin or to read a passage in Mandarin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sections</th>
<th>Accuracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary matching</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple choices</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character writing</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question answering</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading comprehension</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8.2 Accuracy percentage distributions

Section 6: Oral test

Apart from written assessment, students were also required to have a speaking test. Given that my focus was on whole group learning, rather than individual outcomes, and that it was time-consuming to do the speaking test one by one within the schedule, I tested students’ speaking skills class by class. The test was conducted as follows: after I read a sentence or question, students were asked to respond by putting their hands up; then I picked a student at random to volunteer an answer; without any comment from me, students were asked again whether they agreed or
disagreed with the answer by raising their hand. I counted hands roughly into four categories: none, a few, half, and almost everyone. All my questions were delivered in Mandarin. In case no-one could respond to the question, students were asked to tell the meaning of my question. This choice was rated as “Understand”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1: 你好！ Respond</th>
<th>Understand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>a few</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q2: 你叫什么名字？ Respond</th>
<th>Understand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>a few</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q3: 你住在哪里？ Respond</th>
<th>Understand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>a few</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q4: 你几岁？ Respond</th>
<th>Understand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>a few</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q5: 你家有什么人？ Respond</th>
<th>Understand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>a few</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q6: 你的妈妈叫什么名字？ Respond</th>
<th>Understand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>a few</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q7: 你有姐姐吗？ Respond</th>
<th>Understand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>a few</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q8: 你家有什么动物？ Respond</th>
<th>Understand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|                               | 160


None  a few  half  almost everyone

Q9: 你有狗吗？ Respond Understand
None  a few  half  almost everyone

Q10: 你喜欢鸟吗？ Respond Understand
None  a few  half  almost everyone

Q11: 你属什么？ Respond Understand
None  a few  half  almost everyone

Q12: 你的生日是几月几日？ Respond Understand
None  a few  half  almost everyone

Q13: 祝你生日快乐！ Respond Understand
None  a few  half  almost everyone

Q14: 你要吃什么？ Respond Understand
None  a few  half  almost everyone

Q15: 你喜欢喝可乐吗？ Respond Understand
None  a few  half  almost everyone

Q16: 这是什么？ Respond Understand
None  a few  half  almost everyone

Q17: 谢谢同学们！ Respond Understand
The results of students’ responses in the oral test are graphed in Figure 8.3. In Questions 1 to 5, almost everyone responded correctly. From Question 6 on, fewer and fewer students were able to respond to my questions. With Question 11, none could either respond or understand. Students’ knowledge of the first half of the test was better than the latter half. Interestingly, the first 10 questions were taught at the very beginning in large groups, when I focused more on repetition and less on games. I taught from Question 11 in normal-sized classes and this was the most recent teaching. I expected that students should have had better memory of newly-learned questions, but it was interesting to find out that they did not do as well. The last question was a Chinese classroom greeting that we practised every lesson. That was why students responded so well to this question. Here the tension between what engages students in class and what works well in learning Mandarin becomes evident.

![Students' responses in oral test](image)

**Figure 8.3 Students’ responses in oral test**
Chapter 9
Discussion

Chapters 5 to 8 of this thesis identified, defined and analysed key issues from all sources of data that were generated out of my teaching of Mandarin as a Volunteer Teacher-Researcher in Western Sydney Region DET schools. Material from the language methodology training course was analysed first. At the very beginning, this course developed my first concepts of second language teaching. Programming and planning notes, themes and crucial episodes from reflection journals, which included observation of others’ teaching, were analysed term by term. Content analysis was adopted as a method of data coding. Three focus group interviews with classroom teachers, two individual interviews with two Chinese language teachers, together with one email interview with a language methodology lecturer were conducted in Term 2, 2009 (Chapter 8). Information from students, namely, written feedback and test-based assessment, was collected in Term 3, 2009 (Chapter 8). The data obtained from external sources were used to triangulate data from myself.

I initially started the project reported in this thesis with the research question: what is it like to be a bilingual teacher teaching a second language (L2) in a first language (L1) environment, but where this L1 is my L2? Now I revisit my research question and make an effort to answer it by presenting the major issues encountered in the process of my learning to teach and becoming a teacher. In the hope of highlighting my professional learning, my change and improvement throughout the time, this chapter compares and analyses the major issues that were identified in Chapters 5 to 8. These include: identity, relationships within schools, teaching constraints, classroom management, and students’ learning and engagement. The discussion of these key categories relating to my professional development as a novice second language teacher is undertaken in the light of the literature relating to beginning teaching, and second language teaching methodology.
9.1 My first Concern—Identity

As discussed in Chapter 5, my identity as an L2 teacher came to me as the first concern. The importance of identity has been a focus in educational research, especially as it relates to teachers (Beijaard et al., 2004, Feiman-Nemser, 2003, Darling-Hammond, 2003). After reviewing the importance of teachers’ identity to teaching efficacy, Flores & Day (2006) report “ways in which the professional identities of 14 new teachers were shaped and reshaped in their first 2 years of teaching” (p. 221). Their conclusions were that teachers’ “personal biography” (p. 230) was an influential factor; that pre-service teacher education programs played a “relatively weak” role (p. 230), and that the influence of teaching contexts, whether positive or negative, “played a key role in (re)shaping teachers’ understanding of teaching, in facilitating or hindering their professional learning and development, and in (re)constructing their professional identities” (p. 230). Flores and Day’s (2006) findings also corroborate others’ work on new teachers’ identities, which argue that the key factors are “teaching context”, “teaching experience”, and “the biography of the teacher” (e.g. Beijaard et al. 2000).

Feelings of being invisible and isolated ranked high in my reflective journals at the very beginning, when I stepped into my first term of teaching. I was concerned about being in schools; about staying with local teachers and about communicating with colleagues, which, to a large extent, resulted in negative responses toward teaching and being a teacher. My assumptions were that as I came to the job without any pre-service training program in an environment that was different from my own, it doubled the difficulties of perceiving my identity as a teacher in schools. Factors such as different school cultures, English as my second language, and lack of previous teaching experience were all influential.

Similar to what has been reported in literature, my personality and understandings about teaching and being a teacher played a role in my perceptions of professional
identity. However, evidence from my data leaned much more towards external factors—school settings or teaching context, and this accords with Feiman-Nemser’s (2003, p. 27) argument that “whether the early years of teaching [are to be seen] as a time of constructive learning or a period of coping, adjustment, and survival depends largely on the working conditions and culture of teaching that new teachers encounter”. As I had different experiences in different schools, I was able to tell how teaching contexts—such as school culture, school organisation, and relationship with teachers—impacted on me, a novice teacher. The biggest differences were that I had a mentor in School 梅, and that I taught all the classes in this school. Not surprisingly, as reported by Flores and Day (2006), it was easier for me to establish the sense of being a teacher and to perceive who I was in those schools which were supportive and well-organised. The influence of the mentor program is discussed in the following section.

9.2 Mentor Program for Beginning Teachers

As a major theme explored in Chapter 6, my experience of the mentor program in one school resonated with the literature, which advocates the necessity and importance of a mentoring relationship between veteran colleagues and beginning teachers, in helping new teachers work effectively in their induction years of teaching (e.g. Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Walkington, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2003). An early study by Lang (1999) that focused on beginning teachers’ survival stage, analysed what assisted this survival, among which “support from tutor teacher” (p. 4) was of importance.

For my part, I experienced a mentoring relationship with a supervising teacher in School 梅 in Term 4, 2008. This school-based assistance was specifically tailored to the Volunteer Teacher Research program by DET, because VTRs were not officially qualified teachers. We were offered the first term of teaching to become familiar
with our colleagues in different schools, and then we mutually chose one teacher as our mentor in the second term. I also had several meetings with my mentor, the Principal and DET officers across this time, discussing issues relating to the Mandarin program in schools. This relationship was useful to supporting Mandarin teaching in schools, and it helped me as a beginning teacher. This was particularly salient, especially when compared with being in another school without a mentor, where few teachers knew me and understood what I was doing in their schools. Having a mentor in school meant that I would be ‘taken care of’ by somebody, which reassured me in certain ways, enhanced my teaching confidence and improved my teaching practice. I did not seek emotional support from my mentor. What she provided was largely the knowledge I asked for. This is reflected in Feiman-Nemser’s (2003) study. Practical advice and help were exactly what I needed, such as with solving pedagogical problems; providing feedback on my teaching; organising my teaching context; introducing available resource materials; and giving me information in advance so that I could prepare. Thus, I believe that a formal mentoring relationship in schools for beginning teachers, helps them work more effectively and to have a more positive impact on students’ learning.

9.3 Language Class Size

One of the noteworthy features of my teaching situation was that I experienced teaching in both large classes (about 90 children) and normal-sized classes (less than 30 children). There is no universal agreement on what is a ‘small’ class, but having about 90 children in a second language classroom is definitely large. Research on the relationship between class size and pupils’ learning largely advocates smaller classes, as these promote more individual attention, encourage students to participate actively, and make it more possible for the teacher to cater to different needs and abilities (Blatchford et al., 2007). Ready and Lee’s (2006/2007) multimethod study also shows statistical advantages in smaller classes for pupils’ learning outcomes in
reading and Mathematics. This preference was clearly evidenced in my reflective journals, focus group interviews with classroom teachers, and the email conversation with a Language methodology lecturer.

At the very beginning of teaching, I was placed in a teaching context in which all classes in the same Stage had my Mandarin lesson at the same time, with students sitting in a hall in rows facing me. I did the talking in class with a microphone. Despite the student age difference, this situation is similar to that described in Meng’s (2009) research, which studied strategies to encourage college students in China to speak English in large classes through group work. Meng (2009) states that in large classes, students passively receive information through being lectured to. It is the common situation in Chinese schools, with classes having 50 to 60 students. This is how I was taught and how I learned English, so my school experience allowed me to take over such a large group at the beginning, without much concern about teaching approaches or students’ learning at that time. My compliant attitude as a beginning Volunteer Teacher-Researcher also assisted this to happen.

From my perspective now, working in such large classes is unsatisfactory, in terms of instruction and activity organisation, and in terms of students’ low level of response. I could not remember all students’ names. Responses such as “it was too hard for me to organise group work or games in such a large class”, “I felt sorry for those quiet ones sitting in the corner”, and “there were always these four or five students who were willing and able to answer my questions” were frequently recorded in my reflective journal. Classroom teachers also commented that even if I tried to pick different students to volunteer their answers, there were always students who would miss out and never have a turn. However, my realisation of these concerns about teaching in large classes took a while to happen. My previous language learning experiences played a key role in my initial response to this problem. Later on, after my classes were divided into normal-sized numbers, my focus shifted too. Previously I took it for granted that teaching large classes was
difficult for the teacher due to pedagogical concerns, but after a taste of small groups, I realised the impact from the perspective of students’ learning, which is supported by the literature (Blatchford et al., 2007; Ready & Lee, 2006/2007). Evidence from my reflections and interviews with classroom teachers demonstrated that in small classes, students were able to gain immediate help when needed, to obtain individual attention from me, and were more willing to attempt tasks in their familiar class climate. Even subtle changes in their emotions, or their progress, or problems could be observed by me, and then students could get help to enhance their learning.

As discussed above, I have no intention of comparing effects between large and small classes on pupils’ learning outcomes, or to blame school organisation, as there were a group of students who did very well in large classes. My intention was to identify my problems, to present my reactions, and to show my change in regard to this issue—from worrying about “how I can teach large classes” to a concern about “how students can benefit in small classes”. In any case, developing teaching skills in different contexts is something that teachers should be aware of and learn, if the teaching situation cannot be changed for the better.

9.4 Classroom Management

The issue of classroom management is among the top problems that concern beginning teachers (Martin, 2004; Barnes, 2006). There is usually a gap or discrepancy between what pre-service teachers learned in their training course and what is actually happening in terms of classroom control (Stoughton, 2007). In this study, my situation was unique. I was a Volunteer Teacher-Researcher teaching Mandarin in schools, with classroom teachers being present and supporting my teaching, particularly for controlling student behaviour. Most of my research sites were primary schools, where classroom management was easier than with secondary school students.
In the second and third term of my teaching, classroom control became one of my teaching constraints. My teaching situation was generally good. What I mentioned in my reflective journals about classroom management was related to children’s behaviour, particularly chatting with friends; not responding to my questions, and not actively participating in tasks. These might be small matters for some other teachers, and they were small for me too, compared to other issues. However, when I took a step back to think it through as a researcher, what was noticeable about these reflections was the conflict between the beginning teacher’s prior learning experiences and her present teaching situation. Being educated in the Chinese school system for about 20 years, my ‘teacher-self’ did not think that students could be allowed to talk in class, or that students could refuse to undertake the task set by the teacher. The realisation of these disparities made me revisit my reactions to children’s behaviour in class, and eventually I managed. The issue of classroom management became weaker and weaker during later terms of my teaching. This change was noticed by my classroom teachers, who witnessed my increasing confidence and improved teaching skills.

This study obviously does not aim to give ‘tips’ on class control; rather, it indicates the impact of pre-existing knowledge on the development of a beginning teacher, as well as that of the issue of overly large class sizes. The next section is informed by Marland’s (2007) research and explains how previous learning experiences can influence beginning teachers’ development.

9.5 Impacts of Pre-existing Knowledge

The following discussion about beginning teachers’ pre-existing knowledge is informed by Marland’s (2007) research. Issues such as the application of games in language teaching, boys’ versus girls’ language acquisition, and teaching young children a second language were, to a great extent, affected by knowledge I gained
prior to my teaching practice: in particular, my prior language learning experiences. As a researcher revisiting those issues raised by my ‘teacher-self’ now, the impact of previous learning experiences appears noticeable. However, as the teacher who wrote these reflections about teaching problems at the time of their happening, I was not necessarily aware of them. According to Marland (2007), pre-existing knowledge is gained over a long period of time. It is “durable and powerful”, “anachronistic”, “personal and highly subjective”, “naive, unsophisticated and incomplete”, and “implicit” (Marland, 2007, pp. 27-29). It influences one’s thinking about teaching, serves as a filtering device and blocks professional development. As a result, Marland (2007) suggests that teachers be aware of their pre-existing knowledge about teaching and “revise, extend and rebuild them where necessary” (Marland, 2007, p. 35). A significant method proposed by Marland (2007) is to make pre-existing knowledge into practical knowledge through “reflection” (p. 107). This was exactly what I have been doing through the research reported in this thesis.

Chapter 4, where I recalled my own student experience as a second language learner, helped me to reconsider the beliefs I hold about language teaching and learning. I believed that a foreign language could be best acquired by: a desirable accent in the language teacher, vocabulary memorisation, lots of drills and practice both in speaking and writing, and some entertainment such as movie watching, singing or cultural experiences. A student’s confidence could be enhanced through the teacher’s praise. Meaningful tasks such as doing a survey and conducting an interview are good ways for adult students to use the target language, ways through which they can improve. In general, I also believed that girls were more talented at language acquisition than boys.

Given that I started learning English in secondary school, it was impossible for me to have knowledge of language learning in kindergarten. If I had such an experience, if I were able to remember what had worked well for the teacher, I might possibly have been less concerned about working with young children. Obviously, some of my
beliefs were outdated, and some were still appropriate. Many of them became problematic when I started teaching, and as my inquiry progressed, the analysis of evidence revealed why this was so. For example, in many of my classes, boys did better than girls, which was also commented on by classroom teachers. I unconsciously adopted my own English teachers’ approaches at the very beginning, such as teacher-centredness, lack of games, and much repetition. Eventually, as I accumulated my knowledge of both educational theory and practice through analysing my reflections on my teaching, I forged a new teacher identity, with less and less impact from my pre-existing knowledge, which meant that I developed my own teaching ‘self’ that suited my actual teaching contexts.

9.6 My Improvement in Terms of the Literature on Beginning Teachers’ Development

In the literature on beginning teaching, there is a “stage development” theory with respect to beginning teachers’ professional development (Arends, 2004; Leask & Moorhouse, 2005). It argues that beginning teachers start teaching mostly concerned about the ‘self’, then move to concerns about their teaching skills, and then to worrying about attention to individual students’ learning. The first years of teaching have often been described as a stage of survival (Arends, 2004; Watzke, 2007; Lang, 1999). However, the specific development of beginning languages teachers is not an area that has been well researched (Farell, 2006; Watzke, 2007; Barnes, 2006).

As a recent undergraduate with no previous teaching experience at the time of commencing my journey of professional learning in Australia, I was not an officially qualified beginning teacher. However, in terms of the job that I have been doing, it is still worthwhile to reflect on the beginning teaching literature as a proxy. This section draws mainly on the research by Watzke (2007) to discuss my development as a novice second language (L2) teacher through my first year’s teaching experience.
Table 9.1 is a summary of key themes that emerged from the analysis of my journal reflections during the year.

**Table 9.1 A summary of key categories from my reflection journals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>From reflection journals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Term 3, 2008</td>
<td>1. Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Relationship with teachers and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. School environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Teaching constraints: inexperience/teaching little children/large number of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Operating in the class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term 4, 2008</td>
<td>1. Teaching constraints: teaching little children/large number of students/behaviour management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Differences in culture and education between China and Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Mentor program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Learning to teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term 1, 2009</td>
<td>1. Being a teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Students’ learning: engagement/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My efforts to extend students’ learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Teaching constraints: behaviour management/time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term 2 and Term 3, 2009</td>
<td>1. Students’ learning: Different learning styles and levels/students’ achievement vs my expectation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Concerns of students’ language acquisition: application of games/young children’s learning ability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As discussed in previous sections, questioning who I am—the issue of identity—ranked top on my list. This concern about the self was very salient, compared with other issues. It was demonstrated in my data that poor perception of my identity did have negative effects on my teaching performance. More than ‘local’ beginning teachers, I suspected, my sense of teaching and being a teacher was doubly challenged by my own background—teaching L2 in an L1 environment, but where this L1 is my L2—and my lack of previous training or teaching experience. Being confident to use a second language to teach, and also negotiating a new culture, were my first tasks when I started my teaching of Mandarin in schools. Later issues like
classroom management, class size and the impact of pre-existing knowledge had not surfaced then.

Some literature uses the concept of “reality shock” (Farrell, 2006; Lang, 1999; Watzke, 2007; Weinstein, 1988), but I actually did not have such a feeling during my first year of teaching. The reason can possibly be explained by Weinstein’s (1988) research, in which he analysed pre-service teachers’ expectations about the first year of teaching through the construct of “unrealistic optimism” (Weinstein, 1988, P. 38). According to Weinstein, beginning teachers experienced “reality shock” because of their “unrealistic optimism” about their future teaching situation, particularly when their training program was in process. ‘Reality shock’ was absent in my case. Despite tensions or conflicts between my pre-existing knowledge and my teaching reality, to some extent, my own previous learning experiences—such as large class sizes—meant that I did not have unrealistic expectations.

There was a clear shift, as seen in Table 9.1, where I moved from concerns about the self in the first term to concerns about students’ learning near the end of the fourth term. Although some major categories remained the same, sub-themes were different, and changed over time. This did not necessarily mean that other issues disappeared during certain periods of time; instead, some issues became momentarily more salient than others. In other words, my development was an ongoing movement, with overlapping concerns. In general however, my professional improvement and change were noticeable, and resonated well with research in this area (Barnes, 2006; Farrell, 2006; Arends, 2004; Leask & Moorhouse, 2005).

It would seem that most “research on teaching has been conducted by researchers interested in teaching rather than by teachers interested in research” (Reynolds, 1992, p. 2). My self-study made an effort to fill this gap by exploring a beginning language teachers’ development from the perspective of being both a reflective teacher and a researcher. The voices of both the teacher and the researcher can be heard in my
thesis. While I did emphasise pedagogical concerns about how to teach, I also emphasised how as a beginning teacher I addressed and eventually overcame them. Lang (1999) raises a question about the length of the ‘survival’ stage, providing several answers from seven participants. My understanding is that I felt teaching getting ‘easier’ by the fifth term—Term 3, 2009—after one year’s teaching. I became more skillful in planning, preparing materials and classroom management and control. The most important sign of progress was that I started to enjoy teaching and interacting with children, rather than merely ‘surviving’ until the next school holiday.

Although I received language methodology training alongside my first term of teaching, the question of how pedagogical concerns altered when I developed myself as a beginning language teacher, arose. Flores and Day (2006) argue that beginning teachers prefer more traditional methods, although they understand the value of student–centredness. Watzke (2007) specifically provides a developmental theory of beginning language teachers’ practices based on pedagogical content knowledge. Watzke (2007) states that the well-known three-stage theory is “concerns-based” (p. 66), and that there is another, parallel pattern concerning beginning teachers’ development, which is the development of pedagogical content knowledge. This research yields four analytical categories “representing change in beginning foreign language teacher pedagogical content knowledge across two years” (Watzke, 2007, p. 69), namely:

- prior knowledge that frames instructional decisions (experience as a learner → experience as a teacher);
- attitudes toward teacher control in the classroom (techniques and instructional content facilitating control → techniques and instructional content relinquishing control);
- instructional goals for daily lessons (knowledge about the language → task performance and communication);
- consideration for responding to student affect (general instructional and academic considerations → language-oriented outcomes as primary consideration) (adapted from Watzke, 2007, p. 69).
In the position of a beginning L2 teacher working in an L1 classroom environment, my self-study corroborated Wetzke’s (2007) research findings. I started teaching with my experience as a language learner, and moved to be more teacher-centred in my own context as I accumulated both knowledge of L2 teaching methodology and experience. I initially used a very teacher-centred approach, with much repetition and memorised role plays. It should be noted that a major reason was the large number of students. Later I turned to paying attention to students’ engagement, and to adjusting what to teach, and became more tolerant of students’ behaviour. However, with regard to the third and fourth core categories, my data do not reveal a great deal. I focused on oral and communication skills, as that was the schools’ expectation. Further, Mandarin was not a compulsory subject, so neither students nor I suffered pressure from academic results. The emergence to setting language tasks did happen in my second year of teaching, but was not included in this study. In addition, Wetzke’s (2007) later stages might take a long time to happen, so might have appeared if I had continued to trace my development.

Drawing on the ideas of concern-based development theory (Arends, 2004), I would now like to discuss the possibility and potential of applying the four frequently-categorised L2 teaching approaches within the context of beginning teachers’ development. These four major methods are the grammar translation method, the direct method, the audio-lingual method, and the communicative approach (NSW DET, n.d., Section 1; also see 2.2). It is generally recognised that there is no guaranteed correct way of teaching languages (NSW DET, n.d., Section 1). Teaching another language requires careful consideration of using appropriate methods in the real teaching context. Table 9.2 presents my conclusions with respect to beginning language teachers’ suitable methods at different concern periods. It is not about the compatibility of the methods.
Table 9.2 Possibility and potential of L2 teaching approaches within the context of beginning teachers’ development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developmental Stages</th>
<th>L2 teaching approaches</th>
<th>Concern for self (e.g. self-adequacy, receiving good evaluation from administrators, and acceptance)</th>
<th>Concern for the teaching tasks (e.g. student discipline, large number of students, material)</th>
<th>Concern for impact (e.g. focus on students’ individual learning and growth, different needs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammar translation method</td>
<td>Possible</td>
<td>Possible</td>
<td>Possible but may not be preferred</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct method</td>
<td>Possible</td>
<td>Possible</td>
<td>Possible but may not be preferred</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio-lingual method</td>
<td>Less possible</td>
<td>Possible</td>
<td>Possible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Communicative approach</td>
<td>Less possible</td>
<td>Less possible</td>
<td>Possible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To briefly explain Table 9.2, I would like to use the first column as an example. When I was at the stage of being concerned about myself, such as my identity, my self-image as a teacher, or worrying about my relationship with colleagues, it was less possible for me to adopt the audio-lingual method or the communicative approach. The first two teaching methods were much more likely to happen. As indicated in the literature, discussion of “the worldwide applicability of any particular method” has declined recently; instead, researchers focus much more on exploring effective L2 teaching (Hinkel, 2006, p. 110; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Language teachers need to make their decisions about appropriate teaching methods that work effectively in their own context.

The overall discussion has presented my major issues in the light of beginning teaching literature and L2 teaching methodology. Programming and planning notes were first analysed, followed by evidence of my concerns about identity, mentor program, large class size, classroom management, and the impacts of pre-existing knowledge. The suitability of certain L2 teaching methods was explored within the
concern-based theory of beginning teachers’ development. Self-reflections on the research process, its implications and limitations are provided in the next section.

9.7 Conclusion

What is it like to be a bilingual teacher teaching a second language (L2) in a first language (L1) classroom environment, but where this L1 is my L2? This research question was responded to by analysing evidence generated from my teaching situation throughout the whole year. In this section, a discussion of the thesis’s key findings is presented, followed by a note on the limitations of this study, and implications for further research.

9.7.1 Key Findings

From the unique perspective of a beginning L2 teacher with no previous training and teaching experience, the thesis has provided insights into the complexities of my teaching context. It investigated my professional change and development, as well as my deepening understanding about teaching and learning over a one-year period. My contribution to this research field arises from my particular context—an L2 teacher teaching in a country (Australia) that is different from my own (China), both culturally and educationally. This program was my teacher training. Initially, I was mainly concerned about my identity. Later other issues like experiencing a mentoring relationship, language class size, classroom management and the impact of pre-existing knowledge became important. In general, the trend in my professional learning in this context was consistent with previous research into the learning experiences of beginning teaching, as discussed above.
9.7.2 Limitations of This Study

The time for data collecting spanned more than one year, but this is still a short period. Limited samples of data from students were collected. As the major source of data, my self-reflections were triangulated with feedback from students and interviews with teachers, but this could be more extensive in future research. Findings from this research are limited to a specific teaching context within a particular timeframe, and cannot be generalised, although the research methods can be. Different personal backgrounds or capacities, different teaching contexts or a longitudinal study would yield different results.

9.7.3 Implications of This Study

Based on my research, there are some suggestions that can be made to assist the teaching and learning of Mandarin in NSW DET schools. First, establishing a mentoring relationship in schools is helpful for beginning teachers to engage with schools, and to have an effective start in their professional learning as teachers. Second, having Mandarin classes fortnightly did not work well for the children’s learning, in my situation. In primary schools, half an hour every week would be recommended as a minimum time of involvement. Students’ learning can be reinforced if classroom teachers help them practise during the rest of the week. Other tools like sound-editing software, CDs, and DVDs, can be used. Children’s memorisation of this language, particularly vocabulary, can be enhanced by constant review through hearing and repeating. This is probably something that schools can do if there are no full time language teachers available. Third, students are capable of knowing some basic Chinese characters, especially those in which they are really interested. However, teaching tone marks requires much more effort. I assume that it is because their first language—English—is not a tonal language.
As mentioned in the introductory chapter, when I get back to China, I will probably be involved in teaching. So what knowledge will I bring back? How will this knowledge help me in my future teaching? With regards to pedagogy, having experienced teaching a second language in Australia, I learned the importance of using games in language teaching, of individualising students’ learning, of emphasising, to some extent, memorisation through repetition, and of introducing communicative skills. Chinese students’ learning of English is often seen as “dumb English”. All of these ideas are essential outcomes of my learning along this journey. It was the process of becoming a teacher-researcher that allowed me to reflect, to generate and analyse evidence and to change and improve as a professional.

9.7.4 Recommendations for Further Research

This thesis is a self-study of my first year teaching experience, focusing on my professional development and improvement across time, as well as my deepening understanding of teaching and learning. Based on what I have found from this research, I am quite interested in researching the place of repetition and memorisation in language teaching, compared with a much more communicative approach; researching the impact of classroom management on beginning teachers; exploring the influential factors on beginning teachers’ identity; and effective ways of teaching a second language in large class settings (particularly in China). All in all, I would suggest further research using the methodology of self-study, paying attention to a specific teaching issue, rather than to general professional development.

Researching beginning languages teachers’ pedagogical concerns, within the framework of beginning teachers’ stage development, is another recommended area for further research. In addition, the teaching of Mandarin is not an area that has been frequently studied in terms of its methodology in the context of L1 English,
compared with Western European languages such as French, or Spanish (Duff & Li, 2004). Considering the increasing need to learn Mandarin in Australia and throughout the world, answers about how to teach this “different” language to L1 English learners will be worthwhile exploring in the field of second language teaching and learning.

9.7.5 Reflections on Becoming a Teacher-Researcher

Eighteen months ago, I was a recent undergraduate from a Chinese university with no previous training or teaching experience. I had just started my journey in Australia as a Volunteer Teacher-Researcher (VTR) assigned by Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau (NMEB) to support Mandarin teaching in WSR DET schools.

When I look back now, 18 months later, what I have experienced on the way has helped me to grow as a teacher-researcher, and to deepen my understanding and knowledge about being a teacher and being a researcher. It was a surprise to me that my concern about identity was of such significance in my data. My teaching practice provided the primary evidence for this self-study research and an area in which I could investigate my professional learning. On the other hand, research into my teaching practice helped me to understand what I have been doing, so that I could improve my teaching skills. Dinkelman (2003, p. 8) states that “By self-study, I mean intentional and systematic inquiry into one’s own practice”. The word “systematic” is of key importance in Dinkelman’s work (2003), in which he highlights a five-part rational use of self-study in teacher education. The role of teacher-researcher is one that potentially yields desirable results through the interaction of its constituent elements. A teacher stops at a self-reflection journal, but a researcher will do something with that journal. Reflection should be disciplined by research; otherwise, reflections are reflections, and may not be systematised, analysed and given value. The methodology of self-study research, which bridges the teacher and the researcher,
helped me pursue the goal of becoming a teacher-researcher, through reflective
school-engaged research. Figure 9.1 summarises my process of becoming a
teacher-researcher.

![Diagram](image_url)

**Figure 9.1 My process of becoming a teacher-researcher**

To sum up, this splendid journey to become a teacher-researcher through self-study
research was worth taking. It has enabled me to review who I was; to understand and
research who I am, and to prospect who I will be in the near future.
References


Appendix 1 Information Sheet for Parents/Caregivers

Participant Information Sheet (Parent/Caregiver)
An information sheet, which is tailored in format and language appropriate for the category of participant - adult, child, young adult, should be developed.

Note: If not all of the text in the row is visible please `click your cursor` anywhere on the page to expand the row. To view guidance on what is required in each section `hover your cursor` over the bold text. Further instructions are on the last page of this form.

Project Title: What is it like to be a bilingual teacher teaching a second language (L2) in a first language (L1) classroom environment?

Who is carrying out the study?
Zhang Minmin, a student in the degree of Master of Education (Honours) at the University of Western Sydney under the supervision of Assoc Prof Wayne Sawyer.

Your child is invited to participate in a study conducted by conducted by Zhang Minmin. The research will form the basis for the degree of Master of Education (honours) at the University of Western Sydney under the supervision of Assoc Prof Wayne Sawyer.

What is the study about?
The purpose is to investigate Zhang Minmin's development as a Languages teacher.

What does the study involve?
There are three aspects to the study:
i) collecting normal classroom work to assess the students' progress in Mandarin
ii) using normal assessment tasks done in class to assess the students' progress in Mandarin

No student or school will be identified in the study by name

How much time will the study take?
Material will be:
Collected at the end of their Mandarin lesson
Copied (in the case of assessment tasks and work samples)
De-identified
Stored in locked filing cabinets for 5 years after which they will be destroyed.

Accessed by my supervisor and myself only

Used in the following ways: to report on how the class in general progressed in Mandarin during my teaching of them. This report will be in my thesis and may be reported in later academic articles. No students or schools will ever be identified.

If you have concerns about what has been recorded, you may access records of your child within the period of storage. These records can be accessed by contacting my supervisor: Associate Professor Wayne Sawyer (02) 4736 0795 wsawyer@uws.edu.au
Children not participating in the study will not have their work collected and will not be asked to provide any written feedback.

Will the study benefit me?
The study will only benefit students indirectly. I anticipate that the study will advance knowledge about the teaching of Languages.

Will the study have any discomforts?
No

How is this study being paid for?
N/A

Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?
All aspects of the study, including results, will be confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants. Results will be disseminated through my thesis and academic journals and articles, however no participants will be identified.

Can I withdraw my child from the study?
Your child’s participation in the study is entirely voluntary; you are not obliged to consent. Your child may withdraw from the study at any time - or you may withdraw your child from the study at which point all written records of your child’s participation will be destroyed.

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

What if I require further information?
When you have read this information, Zhang Minmin will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Zhang Minmin 16601693@student.uws.edu.au

Associate Professor Wayne Sawyer (02) 4736 0795 w.sawyer@uws.edu.au

What if I have a complaint?
This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is H6798.

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

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.
Appendix 2 Information Sheet for Teachers

Participant Information Sheet (General)

An information sheet, which is tailored in format and language appropriate for the category of participant - adult, child, young adult, should be developed.

Note: If not all of the text in the row is visible please 'click your cursor' anywhere on the page to expand the row. To view guidance on what is required in each section 'hover your cursor' over the bold text. Further instructions are on the last page of this form.

Project Title: What is it like to be a bilingual teacher teaching a second language (L2) in a first language (L1) classroom environment?

Who is carrying out the study?
Zhang Minmin, a student in the degree of Master of Education (Honours) at the University of Western Sydney under the supervision of Assoc Prof Wayne Sawyer.

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Zhang Minmin. The research will form the basis for the degree of Master of Education (Honours) at the University of Western Sydney under the supervision of Assoc Prof Wayne Sawyer.

What is the study about?
The purpose is to investigate my personal growth and development as an L2 teacher working in an L1 environment.

What does the study involve?
I am seeking your participation in giving me feedback through interview on my teaching after observing me in the classroom. I will ask your permission to tape the interview

How much time will the study take?
The interview will take approximately 30 minutes.

Will the study benefit me?
Only indirectly. I anticipate that the study will advance knowledge about the situation of bilingual teachers teaching L2 in an L1 environment.

Will the study involve any discomfort for me?
No
How is this study being paid for?
N/A

Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?
All aspects of the study, including results, will be confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants. Results will be disseminated through my thesis and academic journals, however no participants will be identified.

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

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

What if I require further information?
When you have read this information, Zhang Minmin will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Zhang Minmin 16601693@student.uws.edu.au
Associate Professor Wayne Sawyer (02) 4736 0795 w.sawyer@uws.edu.au

What if I have a complaint?
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Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.
Appendix 3 Information Sheet for Chinese Language Teachers

Participant Information Sheet (General)

An information sheet, which is tailored in format and language appropriate for the category of participant - adult, child, young adult, should be developed.

Note: If not all of the text in the row is visible please ‘click your cursor’ anywhere on the page to expand the row. To view guidance on what is required in each section ‘hover your cursor’ over the bold text. Further instructions are on the last page of this form.

Project Title: What is it like to be a bilingual teacher teaching a second language (L2) in a first language (L1) classroom environment?

Who is carrying out the study?
Zhang Minmin, a student in the degree of Master of Education (Honours) at the University of Western Sydney under the supervision of Assoc Prof Wayne Sawyer.

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Zhang Minmin. The research will form the basis for the degree of Master of Education (Honours) at the University of Western Sydney under the supervision of Assoc Prof Wayne Sawyer.

What is the study about?
The purpose is to investigate my personal growth and development as an L2 teacher working in an L1 environment.

What does the study involve?
I am seeking your participation in giving me feedback through interview on my teaching after observing me in the classroom. I will ask your permission to tape the interview.

How much time will the study take?
The interview will take approximately 30 minutes.

Will the study benefit me?
Only indirectly. I anticipate that the study will advance knowledge about the situation of bilingual teachers teaching L2 in an L1 environment.

Will the study involve any discomfort for me?
No
How is this study being paid for?
N/A

Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?
All aspects of the study, including results, will be confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants. Results will be disseminated through my thesis and academic journals, however no participants will be identified.

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

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

What if I require further information?
When you have read this information, Zhang Minmin will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Zhang Minmin 16601693@student.uws.edu.au
Associate Professor Wayne Sawyer  (02) 4736 0795  w.sawyer@uws.edu.au

What if I have a complaint?
This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is H6796.

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

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

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.
Appendix 4 Information Sheet for the Language Methodology Lecturer

Participant Information Sheet (General)

An information sheet, which is tailored in format and language appropriate for the category of participant - adult, child, young adult, should be developed.

Note: If not all of the text in the row is visible please ‘click your cursor’ anywhere on the page to expand the row. To view guidance on what is required in each section 'hover your cursor' over the bold text. Further instructions are on the last page of this form.

Project Title: What is it like to be a bilingual teacher teaching a second language (L2) in a first language (L1) classroom environment?

Who is carrying out the study?
Zhang Minmin, a student in the degree of Master of Education (Honours) at the University of Western Sydney under the supervision of Assoc Prof Wayne Sawyer.

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Zhang Minmin. The research will form the basis for the degree of Master of Education (Honours) at the University of Western Sydney under the supervision of Assoc Prof Wayne Sawyer.

What is the study about?
The purpose is to investigate my personal growth and development as an L2 teacher working in an L1 environment.

What does the study involve?
I am seeking your participation in giving me feedback through interview on my teaching after observing me in the classroom. I will ask your permission to tape the interview.

How much time will the study take?
The interview will take approximately 30 minutes.

Will the study benefit me?
Only indirectly. I anticipate that the study will advance knowledge about the situation of bilingual teachers teaching L2 in an L1 environment.

Will the study involve any discomfort for me?
No
How is this study being paid for?
N/A

Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?
All aspects of the study, including results, will be confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants. Results will be disseminated through my thesis and academic journals, however no participants will be identified.

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

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

What if I require further information?
When you have read this information, Zhang Minmin will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Zhang Minmin 16601693@student.uws.edu.au
Associate Professor Wayne Sawyer (02) 4736 0795 w.sawyer@uws.edu.au

What if I have a complaint?
This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is H6789.

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

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

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.
Appendix 5 Consent Form for Parents/Students

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN SYDNEY
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Consent Form: Parents/Students

Consent Form for Persons Participating In Research Projects Involving Interviews, Questionnaires or Disclosure of Personal Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Title:</td>
<td>What is it like to be a bilingual teacher teaching a second language (L2) in a first language (L1) classroom environment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name(s) of Investigator</td>
<td>Zhang Minmin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>(02) 47360 272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor:</td>
<td>Assoc Prof Wayne Sawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>(02) 4736 0735</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Name of student participant

1. I have received a statement explaining the research project.
2. I consent to my son/daughter participating in the above project.
3. I acknowledge that:
   (a) Having read the Plain Language Information Statement, I agree to the general purpose, methods and demands of the study.
   (b) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw my child from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.
   (c) The project is for the purpose of research. It may not be of direct benefit to me or my child.
   (d) The privacy of the information I provide will be safeguarded. However should information of a private nature need to be disclosed for moral, clinical or legal reasons, I will be given an opportunity to negotiate the terms of this disclosure.
   (e) The security of the research data is assured during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published, and a report of the project outcomes will be provided to University of Western Sydney.
   (f) Any information which will identify my child will not be used.

Participant’s Consent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Parent/Guardian)</td>
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Parent’s Consent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Parent/Guardian)</td>
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</table>

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is H6756. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel 02 4736 0003 Fax 02 4736 0013 or email humane@usu.edu.au. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix 6 Consent Forms for Teachers/Lecturers

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN SYDNEY

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Consent Form: teachers/lecturer

Consent Form for Persons Participating In Research Projects Involving Interviews, Questionnaires or Disclosure of Personal Information

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<th>Education</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Title</td>
<td>What is it like to be a bilingual teacher teaching a second language (L2) in a first language (L1) classroom environment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name(s) of investigator</td>
<td>Zhang Minmin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>Assoc Prof Wayne Sawyer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Name of participant

1. I have received a statement explaining the research project.
2. I consent to participate in the above project.
3. I acknowledge that:
   (a) Having read the Plain Language Information Statement, I agree to the general purpose, methods and demands of the study.
   (b) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.
   (c) The project is for the purpose of research. It may not be of direct benefit to me.
   (d) The privacy of the information I provide will be safeguarded. However should information of a private nature need to be disclosed for moral, clinical or legal reasons, I will be given an opportunity to negotiate the terms of this disclosure.
   (e) The security of the research data is assured during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published, and a report of the project outcomes will be provided to University of Western Sydney.
   (f) Any information which will identify me will not be used.

Participant’s Consent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The approval number is HS976. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel 02 4736 0863 Fax 02 4736 0013 or email humanethics@uws.edu.au. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix 7 Interview Questions for Classroom Teachers

Question 1: Please comment on the lesson just delivered (except Stage 3).
Question 2: Are there any particular lessons that you remembered working really well or the opposite—lessons that students didn’t engage with well?
Question 3: Could you please give some more tips on teaching little children? (For Kindergarten and Stage 1 only)
Question 4: Compared with being taught large groups, do you think being involved in small groups makes a difference for students’ learning?
Question 5: Have I been improving over this one year? If yes, in what ways?
Question 6: As a teacher, how do you know that you’ve been improving your teaching skills? How do you measure your own growth?
Question 7: What suggestions do you have for my long-term improvement as an L2 teacher?
Appendix 8 Interview Questions for Chinese Language Teachers

Question 1: What are your approaches to teaching Chinese?
Question 2: How do you manage students’ different learning abilities and levels?
Question 3: Do you have any experience in teaching little children, like K-2 students?
Question 4: What’s your view on boys’ learning outcomes in Chinese and girls’?
Question 5: In terms of four skills in language acquisition: listening, speaking, reading and writing, do you emphasise the balance of development of all these four skills?
Question 6: As an L2 teacher, how do you know that you’re improving over a period? How to measure the growth?
Appendix 9 Interview Questions for the Languages Methodology Lecturer

Question 1: I previously had very large class sizes at one school—about 80 to 90 students during 45 minute periods. In what ways do you think it is possible to adapt what you have taught me to the large numbers?

Question 2: What do you think is the biggest difference between teaching small groups and large classes? What do you think is the biggest difference for students between being taught in a small group and in a fairly large class?

Question 3: I found kindergarten students a particular challenge. Do you have any advice for me on teaching L2 to little kids? (At the very beginning, when I used that DVD program, I always pushed them to learn the same thing as what other stages did. I did not realise at that time that it was too difficult for kindergarten children.)

Question 4: What, in your view, would be a good measure of whether I was improving as an L2 teacher? How would you see me measuring this growth?
Appendix 10 Students’ Test Paper

I Matching (4)

Part 1: Family members

bā bā  older sister  māo  ox
爸爸  老大  猫  水牛

dì di  big brother  gǒu  rabbit

mā mā  father  yú  tiger

jǐ jǐ jǐ  little sister  nǐ  cat

哥 哥  mother  tǔ zǐ  dog

meiměi  little brother  niú  fish

Part 2: Animals

nǐ  你好  xǐ xiè  谢谢  zài jiàn  再见

Ⅱ Multiple choice (13)

1. How to say hello in Chinese? Please circle it.

A 你好  B 谢谢  C 再见
2. How to say teacher in Chinese? Please circle it.

A 你 (nǐ)  B 对不起 (duì bù qǐ)  C 老师 (lǎoshī)

3. What does 谢谢 mean? Please circle it.

A Thank you  B like  C Goodbye

4. What is the question word in Chinese? Please circle it.

A 好 (hǎo)  B 吗 (má)  C 不 (bù)

5. What does 你 mean? Please circle it.

A I/me  B you  C he/she/it

6. What does 我 mean? Please circle it.

A I/me  B you  C he/she/it

7. What does tā mean? Please circle it.

A I/me  B you  C he/she/it

8. What does this sentence — 你喜 欢 还 喜欢 吗? mean? Please circle it.

A Good morning.  B Do you like …?  C I do not like…

9. What is the word for welcome in Chinese? Please circle it.
10. According to your understanding of Chinese culture on lucky & unlucky numbers, which car license plate is much more preferred by Chinese people? Please circle it.
A 浙 C 80868
B 浙 A 45934
C 浙 B 67123

11. What is shísì plus sìshísi?
A wūshíshí
B wūshíbā
C liùshíwǔ

12. How to say what’s your name in Mandarin?
A: Nǐ zhùzài nǎlǐ?
B: Nǐ jǐ suì?
C: Nǐ jiào shénme mínɡzǐ?

13. Which traditional Chinese festival is for family reunion?
A: Double Seventh Day
B: Mid-autumn Day
C: Lantern Festival

III Writing (7)

3. Fill the blank with Chinese numbers
( ) + 二 = 十
九—四= ( )
七—( ) = 四

4. Please write four Chinese characters that you’ve learned in the following boxes and write down English at bottom box as well.
Answer the following questions (10)

1. 北京欢迎你. What does this sentence mean in English?

2. Spring festival is also called

3. Is the time of Spring festival according to the traditional Chinese calendar (lunar calendar) or the modern calendar (solar calendar)?

4. Nǐ de bàba jiào shénme míngzi?
   ① The meaning of this question in English:
   ② Please answer it in a full sentence in Mandarin with Pinyin.

5. What is Chinese pronunciation system called?

6. What does 汉字 mean?

7. Is 汉字 the Chinese pronunciation system or writing system?

8. How to say happy birthday in Mandarin? Please write in Pinyin.

9. Nǐ shǔ shénme?
   ① Please answer it in Mandarin with Pinyin:
   ② Translate your answer into English:

10. What’s the meaning of 新年好?
V Reading comprehension

A Year 8 student, Lucy, is introducing one of her new teachers to you in Mandarin. Please read carefully and then answer the following questions in English. English meanings for underlined new words are given in parenthesis ().

Lucy says:

Tā jiào WángXiá Tā shì wǒde zhōngwén lǎoshī Tā zhǔzài kānpéilā
她叫王霞。她是我的中文老师。她住在堪培拉

Tā jīnnián èrshísān suī Tā shǔ tǔ Tā jiā yǒu bà ba mā mā liǎng gè dì dì sān gè jiě jiě hé tā Tā jiā yǒu sìzhī
她今年（this year）二十三岁。她属兔。她家有爸妈、妈妈、两个弟弟、三个姐姐和她。她家有四只（a measure word）鸟和八条（a measure word）鱼。她的英文名字叫Sharon。

Tā xǐhuan chīdāngāo hé shǔpiàn Tā bùhuì yòng kuàizi Tā de yīgè
她喜欢吃蛋糕和薯片。她不会用筷子。她的一个（a measure word）弟弟叫王刚，今年十八岁。他不喜欢吃

xiāngjiāo Tā de yīgè jiě jiě jiào WángMǐn jīnnián sānshí suī zhǔzài
香蕉。她的一个姐姐叫王敏，今年三十岁，住在

Zhōngguó WángXiá lǎoshī xǐhuan Aodàliyà Tā hái xǐhuan chī píngguǒ
中国。王霞老师喜欢澳大利亚。她还喜欢吃苹果，

hē kělè Tā hěn hǎo wǒ hěn xǐhuan tā
喝可乐。她很好，我很喜欢她。

Questions (16):

1. What’s the name of Lucy’s new teacher?

2. Is Lucy’s new teacher male or female? How do you know?
3. What subject does this teacher teach? Please Write down the indicative word in hànzì.

4. Which city does this teacher live?

5. How old is this teacher?

6. What’s the animal sign of this teacher in Chinese zodiac?

7. How many people in total in this teacher’s family?

8. What pets does this teacher have in the family?

9. Can this teacher use chopsticks?

10. What’s the name of this teacher’s younger brother?

11. Is WángMǐn an older sister of this teacher or a younger sister?

12. What certain fruit does WángGāng dislike?

13. Which country does WángMǐn live?

14. Which certain country does this teacher like?

15. Does this teacher like kiwi fruit or not mentioned in the passage?

16. Does Lucy like her new teacher?
## Appendix 11 Students’ Oral Test

| Q1: 你好！ Respond | Understand | None | a few | half | almost everyone |
| Q2: 你叫什么名字？ Respond | Understand | None | a few | half | almost everyone |
| Q3: 你住在哪里？ Respond | Understand | None | a few | half | almost everyone |
| Q4: 你几岁？ Respond | Understand | None | a few | half | almost everyone |
| Q5: 你家有什么人？ Respond | Understand | None | a few | half | almost everyone |
| Q6: 你的妈妈叫什么名字？ Respond | Understand | None | a few | half | almost everyone |
| Q7: 你有姐姐吗？ Respond | Understand | None | a few | half | almost everyone |
| Q8: 你家有什么动物？ Respond | Understand | None | a few | half | almost everyone |
| Q9: 你有狗吗？ Respond | Understand | None | a few | half | almost everyone |
| Q10: 你喜欢鸟吗？ Respond | Understand | None | a few | half | almost everyone |
None a few half almost everyone

Q11: 你属什么？ Respond Understand
None a few half almost everyone

Q12: 你的生日是几月几日？Respond Understand
None a few half almost everyone

Q13: 祝你生日快乐！ Respond Understand
None a few half almost everyone

Q14: 你要吃什么？ Respond Understand
None a few half almost everyone

Q15: 你喜欢喝可乐吗？ Respond Understand
None a few half almost everyone

Q16: 这是什么？ Respond Understand
None a few half almost everyone

Q17: 谢谢同学们！ Respond Understand
None a few half almost everyone

Q18: 同学们再见！ Respond Understand
None a few half almost everyone
Appendix 12 Questions for Students

1) What have you enjoyed about learning Mandarin through the year?
2) How do you think you are progressing with Mandarin? What is your biggest improvement? How do you know?
3) What do you know well and what can you do well in Mandarin?
4) How does Minmin’s teaching help you learn and make you be able to do it in Mandarin?
5) What has helped you the most in your learning of Mandarin?
6) What advice would you give me about improving the lessons?
7) What is the most valuable advice you could give someone learning Mandarin?
8) Think of a way to use … (something in Mandarin that you’ve learned) since we practised them in class. For example: food; pets; family members etc.
Appendix 13 Notification Email of Ethics Approval

Email on behalf of the UWS Human Research Ethics Committee

Dear Wayne and Minmin

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

TITLE: A bilingual teacher teaching bilingually: A self study

Masters of Education (Honours) candidate: Minmin Zhang
The Protocol Number for this project is H6796. Please ensure that this number is quoted in all relevant correspondence and on all information sheets, consent forms and other project documentation.
Please note the following:

1) The approval will expire on 31 December 2009. If you require an extension of approval beyond this period, please ensure that you notify the Human Ethics Officer (humanethics@uws.edu.au) prior to this date.

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

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

4) Once the project has been completed, a report on its ethical aspects must be submitted to the Human Ethics Officer. This can also be found at http://www.uws.edu.au/research/ors/ethics/human_ethics
Finally, please contact the Human Ethics Officer, Kay Buckley on (02) 4736 0883 or at k.buckley@uws.edu.au if you require any further information.
The Committee wishes you well with your research.

Yours sincerely
Dr Janette Perz,
Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee

Kay Buckley
Human Ethics Officer
University of Western Sydney
Locked Bag 1797, Penrith Stn DC NSW 1797
Tel: 02 47 360 883
Appendix 14 Approval Letter of State Education Research Approval Process (SERAP)

Miss Minmin Zhang
K2.25 School of Education
University of Western Sydney
Locked Bag 1797
PENRITH SOUTH DC NSW 1797

Dear Miss Minmin Zhang

SERAP number: 2009-003

I refer to your application to conduct in NSW government schools (Western Sydney Region) a research project entitled A bilingual teacher teaching bilingually: A self-study.

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

Your approval will remain valid until 31 December 2009.

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

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

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

Yours sincerely

Kerrie Iklin
School Education Director, The Hills
Western Sydney Region Education Research Manager

20 May 2009
Appendix 15 2008 Ningbo Volunteer Languages Methodology Program

- Language learning theory
- Syllabus implementation
- The communicative approach
- Quality Teaching
- Technology and resources
- Practical classroom strategies
- Intercultural language teaching and learning
- Teaching Pinyin and Hanzi
- Planning and programming
- Assessment and feedback
Appendix 16 Summary Statements and Codes during Term 3, 2008

29/7/2008
I offered help to teach one more school.
Warmly welcome by the school
Students were cute and active to ask lots of questions about China.
I like these children.
Support and passion of promoting Mandarin
Worried about extra transportation fees

Reactions to difficulties
School’s organisation
Reactions to students
Reactions to students
Reactions to teaching environment
Reactions to difficulties

30/7/2008
Cheryl’s accompany to the school for the first time
Being nervous
Feeling difficult to understand one’s accent
Not clear about my roles at this school
Introduced to the principal and some staff
The teachers were in a hurry all the time.
Uncomfortable being there
First time to meet the part-time Chinese teacher
From our conversation I believe that she was nice
First time to meet the permanent Chinese teacher
Saying hello to her without any response
Unhappy conversation between a permanent Chinese teacher and me
Being annoyed without showing
Being frustrated
Thanks to another teacher’s friendliness

Help from others
Reactions to environment
Lack of confidence
Reactions to environment
Reactions to environment
Reactions to environment
Reactions to environment
Reactions to others’ attitude
Reactions to others’ attitude
Reactions to others’ attitude
Reactions to others’ attitude
Reactions to others’ attitude

5/8/2008
Feeling lost at school
School not organised yet
Sympathetic to students
Impressed by service to disabled students
Large numbers of students to teach

Reactions to environment
Teaching problems: school
Reactions to students
Reactions to curriculum
Teaching problems: numbers
Lots of repetition
Constrained in what I can teach
I am bored.
I run out of things to do.
Teaching is not what I expected.
Teaching is hard.

6/8/2008
I am stressed.
Upset for being refused to observe a Chinese lesson
Survived by another teacher’s invitation to her class
The class I observed kept talking / discussing.
Teaching is demanding.
I cannot manage such a class.
Uncomfortable to stay in the staff room
A hard conversation with another Chinese teacher
I understand my job.
I also understand her situation.
My positions and roles should be made clear to everyone.
I was really upset and I needed help.
Terrible to feel helpless
I asked for a well-organised schedule.
The Deputy knew the issue but he could not understand why it happened.
I felt hard to fully express my thinking in English.
I needed clarify my roles in the school.
The deputy would do something for me.
Although unhappy, it was still a good experience.
I learned something about the culture.

12/8/2008
Students enjoyed seeing photos of my hometown.
Lesson plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching constraints</th>
<th>Teaching constraints</th>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching constraints</td>
<td>Reactions to my teaching</td>
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<td>Expectations</td>
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<table>
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<td>Class management</td>
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<td>Lack of confidence</td>
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<td>Reactions to environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationship with other teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reactions to others’ attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help from others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ reactions to my teaching practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching practice: lesson planning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students’ different responses to my teaching
Kindergarten’s less concentration but better pronunciation
Little children’s low interest in learning
Large number of students
My preference to teaching older students
Pleased by students’ discussion with me
Use of proper language and examples

13/8/2008
Nicely treated
My assumption about that unhappy issue
Feeling being respected / happy

19/8/2008
School’s well organisation
Clear idea about my roles in this school
My staff package, including school’s information and Mandarin teaching material
Teaching special boys numbers
Sympathetic to students but also impressed by their equal learning opportunities
They loved to be involved in Mandarin program
Difficult to teach little children
Students love music.
Homework
Classroom teacher’s comments on building up relationship with students

20/8/2008
No lesson preparation
Teaching basic greetings
It was boring to ask them to read after me all the time
I gave students time to ask question at the end of the lesson.
My first lesson at this school was not bad.
Encouraging my self to be better next time

Students’ reactions to my teaching practice
Teaching problems: little children
Teaching problems: large classes
Reactions to my teaching
Reactions to students
Teaching problems: the use of proper language
Reactions to others’ attitude
Reactions to the issue
Reactions to others’ attitude
Reactions to environment
Reactions to environment
School’s organisation
Teaching practice
Reactions to students/curriculum
Students’ reactions to my teaching practice
Teaching problems: little children
Students’ reactions to my teaching practice
Teaching practice: homework
Advice and help from others
Teaching constraints
Teaching practice
Teaching constraints
Teaching constraints
Reactions to my teaching
Self-encouragement
25/8/2008
I run a high fever.
I hovered whether to go teaching the next day.
I learned culture difference about this issue.

Teaching problems: my health
Reactions to culture difference
Culture awareness

26&27/8/2008
No teaching this week/I asked for a leave
Reading material gave me fresh ideas about my research
I was still puzzled.

Teaching problems: my health
Improvement
Reactions to culture difference

29/8/2008
Discussion on the use of theory in research
Focus on my progress and what I have learned through the research

Advice and help from others: research
Reactions to my research

30/8/2008
Research tips from our supervisor

Advice and help from others: research

2/9/2008
Students of stage 3 did much better than my expectation.
Classroom teachers were also surprised.
I felt proud and happy.
P&C gave me $100 / their way to say thank you to me.
It was embarrassed for me to accept money from my culture concepts.
I experienced culture differences about whether receiving money.
Cheryl commented that my work was quite valued by them.
Teachers’ stop work meeting to ask for better staffing

Expectation to students
Reactions to others’ attitude
Reactions to students
School’s organisation/ help from others
Reactions to culture difference
Culture difference
Reactions to others’ attitude/ advice from others
Culture difference

5/9/2008
Participation to an orientation workshop in the uni for HDR students
We’ve been given many reading material on language teaching.

Advice and help from others: research
Advice and help from others: research
9/9/2008
Presentation of scholarship
I gave a short speech on behalf of our group.
So grateful to Michael’s help
Feeling a huge responsibility/need work harder
Schools’ thoughtful preparation—specially made DVD to the director
Proud of students’ performance
Believe myself as a good teacher
Encourage students to speak as much as possible.
Get my timetable next term in another school

Help from others
Reactions to others’ help
Help from others
Self-encouragement
School’s organisation
Reactions to students
Self-encouragement / confidence
Reactions to students
School’s organisation

16/9/2008
Arrived early to have lesson preparation
Try to have some interesting activities
Feeling difficult to teach little children
Kindergarten children were new to this language and slow-thinking
Having fun is essential.
Principal’s observation on my teaching
Sang a song, rather than repeat my words all the time
Encourage my students to perform freely.
No laughing but applause for these brave students
I was always looking forward to teach stage 3 students
A game for numbers
Kids love competition.
Students of stage 3 really did well/quick learners
A game for basic greetings
Good engagement
I paid attention to students’ responses
Their performance was higher than my expectation.
They loved games.

Efforts to improve my teaching
Efforts to improve my teaching
Teaching problems: little children
Reactions to students
Reactions to my teaching
Advice/help from others
Teaching constraints
Reactions to students
Students’ reactions
Reactions to my teaching
Teaching practice: games
Students’ reactions
Students’ reactions
Teaching practice: games
Students’ reactions
Reactions to my teaching
Expectation to students
Students’ reactions
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How to get my feedback from those classroom teachers</th>
<th>Reactions to my teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion on the class size with my supervising teacher</td>
<td>Efforts to improve my teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I preferred small classes if there were options at the moment.</td>
<td>Reactions to my teaching environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 17 Summary Statements and Codes during Term 4, 2008

20/10/2008
Teachers’ feedback was useful.
I tried those tips and they worked really well.
They made me quite clear about my teaching problems.
Five areas that teachers made comments on
Having fun is important for little kids, instead of being pushed to learn
The importance of sufficient lesson preparation
Keeping records of teaching
Felt terrible about my laziness to do the work sometimes

21/10/2008
Partnership with another Chinese teacher
I preferred to be asked to do something, instead of telling people that what I want to do
My assumption about this confusion

27/10/2008
Attended the graduation ceremony of Methodology training course
We learned a lot by listening to experienced teachers talk about language teaching.
Shaping our own beliefs about L2 teaching through this program
Learning to teach is a long journey.
The language methodology lecturer was so great and handy.

28/10/2008
Always prepared too much for a lesson
Students’ responses were not what I expected.
Students need more time to review, instead of learning new things.

Being afraid of teaching kindergarten kids

Little kids were only interested in that Monkey program.

Purposely tried a message-passing game and it engaged students so well

Kids love cute and colorful pictures.

The game enabled every student to have a chance to practice

29/10/2008

Well working with another Chinese teacher

The culture here required me to give a clear attitude towards others’ offer, about yes or no.

30/10/2008

Met a new name — mentor

Mentor program aims to help new teachers to survive during their beginning time.

We will establish such kind of relationship with one teacher at one school.

I badly needed such a person helping us at schools.

I wondered whether this would make differences about my identity at different schools.

3/11/2008

Attended the opening ceremony of Australia Chinese Books Exhibition

Great to see huge enthusiasm on learning Chinese and its culture

Felt honored to be a Mandarin teacher here and would try my best

4/11/2008

Forgot what I’ve taught in kindergarten class.

Teaching tips: keep records of teaching
I realised the importance of keeping records of my teaching

5/11/2008
Other teachers at one school had no idea what I should do today
I felt like that I was not important, tiny.
Observation of a class when kids were having yearly examination
Through their way of teasing, I learned that there were so many differences between Chinese and Australian education.
My experience was not able to tell me which one was better.
Emphasis on individuality and creativity

11/11/2008
Kindergartens were split into two sessions.
Always make changes for better organisation
Experienced the “remembrance day”
Kids performed gym at the assembly.
They enjoyed what they were doing
No matter good or not, each student was equally treated.
Had a lesson without preparation
I was in low spirit.
Kids were too excited for something to calm down in my lesson.
Language points need to emphasise again and again for little kids to learn.
Kids would not follow if they felt hard.
I was concerned about how to teach little kids in a large class size.
One student said “it is hard” when I asked them to say something new.
It is hard for little kids to be pushed to learn, instead of being interested in.
The class with the casual teacher did not have the same good behaviour as they had their normal classroom teacher.

Teaching tips: keep records of teaching

School organisation
Reactions to school organisation
Observation
Educational differences
Reactions to the differences
Educational differences

Change in my teaching situation
School organisation
Cultural awareness and practice
Reactions to what kids did
Reactions to what kids did
Reactions to what kids did
Teaching problem: no lesson preparation
Teaching constraints: myself
Teaching constrains: classroom control
Teaching problem: little kids
Students’ reactions
Teaching constraints: little kids in a large class
Students’ reactions to my teaching
Teaching problem: little kids
Behavior management
Some students were really good, while there were always some students who were slower. I want to help each student learn within their ability. The reality failed that it was hard to pay individual attention, let alone in big classes. Tried to teach a little grammar and it was challenging. Explaining Mandarin grammar in English was difficult without preparation.

**12/11/2008**
It was nice to work with one Chinese teacher. Unhappy relationship between another Chinese teacher and her. I had my own judgment. She commented that Chinese lacked team spirit. I assumed that she was a good Chinese teacher.

**14/11/2008**
A Chinese class observation at a new school. That Chinese teacher was so great, patient and helpful. I was impressed by the way she treated us, so nicely. Compared in my mind with another Chinese teacher. People’s personalities were so different. The importance of applying what I learned from this experienced teacher to my own teaching situation. My teaching situation was so different. Her opinion was that the number of students in a class should not exceed 30.
I had no idea what to do and was confused and even a little frustrated every time when I talked about this issue with other people. It was impossible for me now to do any writing or reading practice in that situation. Quick-learners were able to get my attention even in large classes. I would feel sorry for those silent ones and I was a little worried about them. I learned a lot from this Chinese teacher.

18/11/2008
Felt very confident in teaching students of Stage 3. They could understand what I tried to convey. I was able to carry out my lesson smoothly in Stage 3 due to their good responses. Large classes disabled me for caring each student’s learning. I was happy with those top students’ performance in learning Mandarin. I was much more concerned about those being paid less attention. I was afraid that they have been ignored to some extent. I was also worried about whether I should ask them to answer some questions in class. Being stared by so many students sitting on the floor and waiting me to teach I believe that I did well at teaching them those new language points. Little rewards for students of great efforts in learning. Kindergarten kids still remain at the same topic. Only 5 kids did well. Most of them were not able to ask the question “who are in your family” in Mandarin.
I was very impressed by students’ good memory about what they have learned so far in Mandarin.
One student was able to count numbers to 999 in Mandarin.
Students’ performance was much beyond my expectation.
They were so great and wonderful.

19/11/2008
Teachers’ strike again for better staffing
In China we never had such kind of strike around us.
Differences between China and Australia in teachers’ social status and respects
One supervisor commented that teacher was nothing in Australia and another said that she was disappointed with Australia’s education.
I prefer Chinese quality in elementary education, but some concepts here deserved consideration to better teach kids.
Kids here like to ask questions and to make things.

25/11/2008
Talked about mentor program with my mentor and a DET officer at one school
My experience told me that this was great for new teachers.
Getting help and then mental support is so important for us.
We need others’ help to relief from stress and pressure.

26/11/2008
Experienced a kindergarten orientation program
Kids had the chance to get familiar with their new school before they actually went to school.
Kids were asked basic questions in order to help teachers know more about them and to group them in a reasonable way. I was so impressed by this orientation program. Students were paid individual attention. A few students with sufficient teachers were so good.

1/12/2008
Being a little nervous when talking with native speakers, I always tried to speak perfect English. I realised that expressing myself freely was the right thing to do. I was so grateful to my supervisor for his support, patience and suggestions. I think that I improved a lot.

2/12/2008
Class observation at a kindergarten class. Kids were more active than they were in Mandarin lesson. They like to share their knowledge about everything, or maybe they want to help me. I love them. It reminded me of another year one boy. He was very quite and shy, but he came to show me where Lost and Found was in their school after I lost my reading glass. I was really touching. For me, it was not a minor matter. I love kids here. I changed my teaching plan when I learned that it was five students’ birthday today. Another reason was that they were all excited and tired in the afternoon. I taught them the song “happy birthday”. Boys in my lesson did much better than girls. Kids love competition, especially boys.

School’s service
Reactions to school’s culture
Reactions to teaching small groups

Diffidence
Reason for diffidence
Reactions to diffidence
Reactions to others’ help
Improvement

Observation
Reactions to what kids did
Reactions to kids
Reactions to my student
Reactions to my student
Reactions to my student
Teaching tip: change plans when necessary

Classroom control
Teaching practice
Reactions to students’ different performance
Kids’ likes
One teacher said that she was very impressed by kids’ performance in Mandarin. She also said it was an indication that I was a good teacher.
Appendix 18 Summary Statements and Codes during Term 1, 2009

27/1/2009

Invited to participate School Development Day
Being a little nervous but excited
Felt being part of the school and being a teacher
Haven’t gained a sense of being a real teacher after half a year
Reasons for not considering myself as a teacher
Welcome back by the school and felt respected
Encouraged myself to communicate with teachers
Tried to talked to them before they talked to me
Being introduced updated child-protection policy and a software
Mentor’s suggestion for the use of that sound-editing software

3/2/2009

Made sound files for good students’ extension
The school was thoughtful.
Happy to see that tiny girl’s participation in my lesson
It reminded me of an incident happened to her the last week last term
I reckoned whether my encouragement led her change
I prepared a lesson on culture which the school did not have a plan for today
I changed my always-yes attitude.
I explained to the school that it was worth teaching something about Chinese New Year at this right time.
Teachers were quite happy with having my lesson even if it was not the plan.
Encouraged myself to be more confident to express my concerns and ideas
Teachers were always helpful and friendly
Realised that I needed to be braver to take more chances communicating with other teachers
It would help me feel like I am a teacher.

4/2/2009
This term working with one Chinese language teacher only
Being nicely introduced again
Students learned the culture of Chinese New Year
Helping students make a lucky money envelope
Students were engaged well and kept repeating words
Students were really interested in today’s activities

10/2/2009
Planned a game for revision
Students enjoyed it a lot

11/2/2009
Had nothing to do when I did not have classes at school
I did not to stay in the staff room
I preferred to read some children’s book in their library.
Shopping t lunch was my routine, avoiding staying with lots of teachers
Felt losing my place at school, being a visitor, rather than a teacher
I had a session with two classes of stage 1 students for an hour.
The class was out of control.
Students did not respond to what I said to them, feeling myself as a clown
Classroom teachers were not helpful today
I prepared to meet these difficulties.
Encouraged myself to be better next time

17/2/2009
Played the revision game with good preparation
The rules of this competition game
Students were engage well
One reason was that students enjoyed the sense of competition
The other reason was that the rules allowed students to turn for help.
Boys did better than girls in this game
It reflected what other teachers commented on this point
This finding was contradiction with my own learning experience
Tried my first small class
Little children enjoyed making a panda
Little children like my rewards to them.
Little rewards were helpful.

18/2/2009
Little children needed very clear instructions to do things
What I considered as clear was not clear enough for them ability

24/2/2009
Invited to help prepare a performance in Mandarin for kids’ assembly
It was great information for parents about their children’ learning Mandarin
I taught the song “two tigers”, which was learnable for little children
Always forgot to do something planned
I prepared worksheet for extension of those students who were keen on Mandarin
School expected to focus on oral skills.
2/3/2009
The discussion about large class sizes between the Principal and the Methodology lecturer
My self-conversation with those two parties

3/3/2009
One classroom teacher’s comments on my teaching dates last week – too much
She suggested I review separately.
I taught years/months/days/weekdays separately.

4/3/2009 (Chinese-English)
Felt terrible when having nothing to do at school
Still felt separate among those teachers
Felt terrible that few teachers knew me and knew what I was doing at school
Prefer not to stay at staff room when there’re lots of teachers
Prefer to spend time in library or in any classroom alone
Avoided meeting with teachers
Uncomfortable to be seated among teachers with nothing to say
I had nothing in common with them.
Maybe I did not see myself as a real teacher.
Felt not respected to stop what they were doing and then spend a short time with them
I only had about 20 minutes or so with these little children.
It was easy for me to waste this time if I did not take it seriously.
It happened again that teaching little kids was a problem for me.
Behaviour control/ how to make it more attractive to them/engagement
Students like games.

Different ideas around my teaching large groups
Reactions to the dispute

Teaching problem: too much information in one lesson
Working with other teachers
Teaching practice: make change

Reactions to school’s environment
Reactions to being a teacher
Reactions to school’s environment
Reactions to school’s environment
Reactions to school’s environment
Reactions to school’s environment
Reactions to school’s environment
Relationship with other teachers
Reactions to being a teacher
Reactions to school’s organisation
Time
Reactions to my teaching
Teaching constraints: little children
Teaching constraints
Teaching tips: games
I started to think about my goal or aim of teaching Mandarin here.

9/3/2009
Being in low spirits partly because of that debate
I was stressed to some extent.
My opinion was that I misread the culture here.
Maybe I worried too much.
People here directly express their feelings.
Other reasons for my low spirits
It’s hard for me to go through all those things at one time
I wish to be better soon
I cried when I met my supervisor.
I got good comfort from him.
We had a good talk and then I felt better.
I felt lucky to work with him.
I was grateful to his understanding and advice.
I want to go home so much and I believe it can help me deal with all the problems.

10/3/2009
I was not well but still tried to have lessons.
It’s part of Chinese values for a teacher.
Students needed a lot of repetition and practice in class to enable them to say a sentence.
Asking and answering someone’s birthday is a little difficult for stage 2.
After repeating many times, more students were able to ask and answer.
Students were motivated a lot to participate by little rewards.
I was suggested by the principal to go home and to have a rest.
We had a discussion about organisation of classes.
All of us agreed that smaller classes would help students learn better. School had a dilemma to solve my teaching situation. We finally decided to go back to normal class sizes and students would have Mandarin lessons fortnightly. I learned that two high schools in this area didn’t have Chinese course. I was very disappointed that students were not able to continue. I wondered whether what I was doing now a waste of time for them. That teacher and parent strongly asked for some changes in those high schools. I questioned my aim of teaching Mandarin here.

**11/3/2009**  
Students were so easy to get help from the teacher in a small class. It helped them learn better.

**17/3/2009**  
Planned lessons for my small classes next week. I was still weak.

**18/3/2009**  
I had one hour for each Year 5 class at this school. I like this organisation because I then had time to plan different activities for students. Taking notes was very good.

**24/3/2009**  
I was worried about my teaching in small groups. I was not confident enough to teach small groups as I was used to teaching large groups.
I considered this was a new and good start for me. My first small group turned out to be a disaster although I prepared. I felt crowded when I came into their classroom as little children always sat on the floor. It was awkward that there was no space for me to write on their blackboard. I classified the whole class into three groups according to their engagement. The group sitting quietly but also with no responses to my teaching held the largest number. I reckoned that my teaching was boring today. I learned from my planning notes and teaching practice that I actually planned too much and pushed them to learn. They did not follow me well. My first trial in small groups was far away from my expectation. I like to teach students of Stage 3. Little children were able to learn a little within half an hour. I got several concerns after my first small class. It made me feel good in another class that students sat on their chairs and the board was clean. Students of Year 5 and Year 2 were very different. It was my first time that I was able to ask students to practice one by one. It was fantastic that I felt students were under my control and followed well. They were interested in the topic “birthday”. I had another terrible lesson in Stage 1. I was asked to wait until students finished their Maths games.
I adjusted what I planned for them because of the failure in the previous Stage 1 class. I continued what they were doing with number but did it in Mandarin. Reviewing numbers and saying a date or weekday cost me a lot of time. I could not help pushing them to learn so that they could catch up with other classes, although I understood it. I finally stopped doing numbers and moved on to “birthday”, which was so terrible! It was too difficult for them and I didn’t get any responses from them. I had a good talk with the Principal about teaching little kids and she commented that they were different.

25/3/2009
Helped students’ speaking test today I thought it was quite simple and that my primary students could do it too. I was told that students here didn’t like study and that teachers could never push them to learn. It was so different from China. I was told students learned better through entertainment or games. Students don’t care about their studies. Classroom control was not good when in casual teachers’ classes. Little rewards worked well for students of all stages. I prepared different activities in order to keep a balance development in those four different skills.

31/3/2009
Very excited because I will fly back to China tomorrow
Boys did better than girls in showing what they were capable of doing as well as in their accent.

Everything was good in my first lesson. I for the first time enjoyed teaching so much.

Limited time in each class, not enough.

Students had lots of chances to practice in class, especially those who were silent in large classes.

I was impressed by their excellent job.

It was so wonderful to see everyone trying.

The class with casual teacher was not good as with their supervising teacher.

It was harder to deal with behaviour issues by myself due to lack of knowledge of classroom language.

I looked for help from classroom teacher at those hard moments.

I need learn and master those skills for behaviour control as a teacher.

Half an hour was not enough for little children to learn numbers from 6 to 10.

5 new words might be too many for kids of this age within a short period.

Kindergarten made a paper panda in their first Mandarin lesson.

Children had a lot to say and they like to share their ideas.

Students always asked for help if they think they cannot do something.

It was different from Chinese students because we seldom tell teachers that we cannot do something.

Students’ engagement

Reactions to my teaching

Reactions to students’ learning

Classroom management

Working with other teachers

Teaching practice

Students’ learning habit

Cultural/educational difference
Appendix 19 Summary Statements and Codes during Term 2, 2009

29/4/2009
Back to teaching and working harder
Still being homesick
Life has happiness and stress.
Got resilience from family
Asked students to take notes to develop their writing skills
No responses to my questions in one class
Asking myself how to solve this problem
I chose to rephrase my questions.
I was unhappy with some students’ calling out in class.
My praise to a boy encouraged him a lot.
Little rewards worked well in students’ participation.
I underestimated students’ ability in knowing characters.
I believed that taking notes helped them a lot.

Reactions to teaching
Personal problems
Personal problems
Personal problems
Teaching practice: note-taking
Students’ engagement
Reactions to students’ engagement
Reactions to students’ engagement
Behaviour management
Students’ responses
Teaching practice: little rewards
Reactions to my teaching
Teaching practice: note-taking

5/5/2009
The first class always had less time, less than half an hour.
Pace in teaching was too slow last term.
Started new topics instead of spending too much time reviewing
The “birthday” topic was of children’s interest.
A successful lesson today with good responses and engagement.
I realised that I talked too much in kindergarten classes.
Repetition might make them bored.
Little preparation worried me that whether it could last a lesson.
Attention to teach more in a lesson was not students’ taste.
The need to apply more games into my teaching little children

Teaching constraints: time
Teaching concerns
Teaching practice
Students’ engagement
Reactions to my teaching
Teaching concerns
Teaching concerns
Teaching concerns
Teaching concerns
Teaching concerns
Teaching concerns
Teaching concerns
No excuses for no game in small classes of teaching
Being frustrated by students’ poor engagement in class
A number game
I reckoned that they did not learn well on seeing their no idea.
Classroom teacher said some even did not know numbers in English.
I need to understand children’s cognitive level.

6/5/2009 (conversation after observing a lesson)
1. choose those material of children’s interest.
2. combine different activities in a long period
3. students learned something through playing games
Felt very happy as a teacher when a boy expressed his gratitude to me.

12/5/2009
Little children loved games.
This lesson was better than any lessons last year.
Started reading books on games in language teaching.
Wondered whether students learned more through games.
Stage 1 and stage 3 required different teaching strategies.

13/5/2009
A lot of revision lessons for preparing exams.

19/5/2009
Technical problems took a lot of time to fix.
Children would be engaged well if they were attracted by something.
Achieved my goal today
Classroom teachers made differences in students’ learning.
One teacher asked me to use simple words in teaching little children.

20/5/2009
I forgot a naughty boy when the whole class were playing a game.
He was quiet in class but with no participation before.
He asked for joining the game with good manners.
Games worked well in engaging students.

26/5/2009
Started reading books on games in language teaching.
One class was always out of control, even the teacher helped.
Felt frustrated when children not listening to my teaching.
Having plan B could help from technical problems.

27/5/2009
I came up with an idea today “what was my aim of teaching”.

9/6/2009
Students’ enjoyed visual shows and had excellent behaviour.
I reckoned interesting things could engage students very well.
A teacher was responsible for students’ learning.

10/6/2009
Observation of a lesson with chopsticks and students engaged well.
Want to try myself and combine language and culture
One class did not have fixed students.
I changed my lesson plan just before it started, due to a girl’s advice.
I accepted students’ suggestions of teaching an interesting thing.
Plans could be changed due to its reality.
Map-matching game was good for revision and engagement.
That naughty boy volunteered an answer and made it right.
He also asked for worksheet in class, instead of having nothing to do.
He changed to be more willing to participate in my lessons.
A boy with Chinese background asked for something more difficult.
There were different learning levels in the class, hard to cater all.
One girl told me she had a Chinese conversation in Chinatown.
I praised her and was proud of her and myself.
Language was learned to communicate.
Rethink about the SHUOSHUOXIAOXIAO program.

17/6/2009
I had a plan that students needed write an introduction in Chinese.
I wanted to teach all the words for that writing task but failed.
The reality was that students learned a little.
Note-taking was a good way of learning language.
The topic on family members was of students’ interest.

23/6/2009
Meeting with some parents
Learning to teach from others
Class organisation
Teaching practice: changing lesson plans
Teaching practice: changing lesson plans
Teaching practice: changing lesson plans
Teaching practice: game
Observation of a boy
Observation of a boy
Observation of a boy
Students’ different learning levels
Students’ different learning levels
Students’ achievement
Reactions to students’ achievement
Reactions to language teaching
Teaching practice: material/resource
Teaching practice: writing task
Teaching problems: attention to teach a lot in a lesson
Students’ responses
Teaching practice: note-taking
Teaching practice: interesting topics
School’s organisation
They thought positively about their children’s learning. They required much more time for their children in learning Mandarin. Another point was that language teaching needed culture introduction. I would think about their advice.

8/7/2009
I got four major findings from students’ written work.
Different learning levels
Different learning styles
Ignoring tone marks
Favor in drawing.

Parents’ responses
Parents’ responses
Parents’ responses
Reactions to others’ advice
Reactions to students’ work
Reactions to students’ work
Reactions to students’ work
Reactions to students’ work
## Appendix 20 Overview of School 梅梅’s Mandarin Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Year</th>
<th>Second Year</th>
<th>Third Year</th>
<th>Fourth Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Getting to know you</strong></td>
<td><strong>School</strong></td>
<td><strong>Getting around</strong></td>
<td><strong>Entertainment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- greetings</td>
<td>- classroom objects</td>
<td>- transport</td>
<td>- planning activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- talking about self</td>
<td>- basic subjects</td>
<td>- cities / countries</td>
<td>- movies and actors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- about me / about you</td>
<td>- stationery</td>
<td>- organising outings</td>
<td>- timetable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- personal information</td>
<td>- sport</td>
<td>- seasons / weather</td>
<td>- likes and dislikes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- counting numbers</td>
<td><strong>Routines</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sports and hobbies</strong></td>
<td><strong>Travelling around</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- days of the week</td>
<td>- time / timetable</td>
<td>- leisure activities</td>
<td>- how to get somewhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- time to o’clock</td>
<td><strong>Friends</strong></td>
<td>- likes and dislikes</td>
<td>- transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- time to o’clock</td>
<td>- basic body parts (face)</td>
<td><strong>Shopping</strong></td>
<td>- directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- talking about one’s family</td>
<td>- colour</td>
<td>- where to shop</td>
<td><strong>Home</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- daily routine</td>
<td>- big/small – long/short</td>
<td>- asking and paying</td>
<td>- types of dwellings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- talking about pets</td>
<td><strong>Eating and Drinking</strong></td>
<td><strong>Celebrations</strong></td>
<td>- number of rooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- likes and dislikes</td>
<td>- food and drink</td>
<td>- Mid Autumn Festival</td>
<td><strong>Celebrations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Chinese zodiac</td>
<td>- at a restaurant</td>
<td>- birthdays</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Chinese New Year</td>
<td>- likes and dislikes</td>
<td><strong>Celebrations</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Chinese New Year</td>
<td><strong>Celebrations</strong></td>
<td><strong>Travelling around</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Dragon Boat Festival</td>
<td><strong>Entertainment</strong></td>
<td><strong>Home</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Dragon Boat Festival</td>
<td><strong>Home</strong></td>
<td><strong>Travelling around</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fifth Year</td>
<td>Sixth Year</td>
<td>Seventh Year</td>
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<td>- Qing Ming Festival (Grave Sweeping)</td>
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