Exploring the Funds of Knowledge in the Chinese community in Australia for Mandarin Teaching and Learning in Schools

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

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March, 2011
Declaration

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 Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

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Yi WENG
March 2011
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the many people who have helped and supported me during this 18 months working on this thesis. My special appreciation goes to my principal supervisor Dr Dacheng Zhao, for his generous support in spending time and energy to guide my research process; his consistent encouragement provided me with a great deal of confidence to persist and finish my thesis. Moreover, his care about my life made my living in Sydney much easier and happier.

Secondly, special thanks go to Professor Michael Singh, whose support provided me with many inspirations and helped me find ways to overcome some difficulties during the research. He organised many workshops to deliver important skills of researching and writing theses, and this made a good start for me as a research candidate.

In addition, my gratitude should go to the supervisory team who participated in tutorial every Friday with the ROSETE group (Research-Oriented School-Engaged Teacher Education) research candidates. They also shared important knowledge about educational research with us, and provided much constructive advice on our research.

As a volunteer teacher researcher, I feel appreciative of the opportunity provided by cooperation between three parties: including Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau, the NSW Department of Education and Training (Western Sydney Region), and the University of Western Sydney. Without this opportunity, this 18 months’ experience would never have happened to me. Particularly Dr Shuangyuan Shi and Mr Lindsay Wasson of NSW DET, contributed great efforts to make this cooperation happen. Additionally, I want to say thanks to Cheryl Ballantyne and Evelyn Mark from NSW DET, for their tender care and support for both my work and my life.

Furthermore, I also have to thank all the schools I participated in teaching Mandarin. Their support and help made my teaching more easy, particularly as a
new teacher in a different cultural context. My special thanks go to my mentor Louis Payne, whose support and encouragement made me feel more confident to teach and manage the class.

Finally, I want to thank all the participants involved, and their contributions to my research. My family was definitely the most important support for me while I studied and worked in Sydney, and they gave me great emotional and financial support.
Author’s Conference Presentations


Weng, Y. (2009, November 2). Exploring the funds of linguistic and cultural knowledge in the Chinese community. Paper presented at the College of Arts Conference, the University of Western Sydney, Bankstown.
Table of Contents

Declaration .......................................................................................................................... ii
Author's Conference Presentations .................................................................................. v
List of tables and figures ................................................................................................... ix
List of Abbreviations ......................................................................................................... x
Abstract of the Thesis ......................................................................................................... xi
Chapter 1 .............................................................................................................................. 1
An introduction to the Background and Rationale of the Study ....................................... 1
  1.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1
  1.2 The Background of this Research ............................................................................... 1
    1.2.1 Background of the Researcher ........................................................................... 1
      1.2.1.1 The Researcher’s Experiences of Learning English as a Second Language ................................................................................................................................................. 2
    1.2.2 Background of the Research Study .................................................................... 4
      1.2.2.1 Australia’s Multiculturalism and its Relevance to this Research ............... 4
      1.2.2.2 Introduction of the Mandarin Program in Western Sydney Region .......... 5
  1.3 An introduction to the research questions .................................................................. 6
  1.4 Intellectual Background of the Study ....................................................................... 8
    1.4.1 The School/community partnership ................................................................... 8
    1.4.2 The Funds of Knowledge ................................................................................... 9
  1.5 Overview of the Methodology .................................................................................... 11
    1.5.1 Data Collection .................................................................................................. 12
    1.5.2 Data Analysis .................................................................................................... 13
  1.6 Structure of the Thesis ............................................................................................... 13
Chapter 2 .............................................................................................................................. 15
Literature related to the School/community partnership for Mandarin teaching and learning ................................................................................................................................. 15
  2.1 School and Community Partnerships ....................................................................... 15
  2.2 Funds of Knowledge .................................................................................................. 21
  2.3 Language Acquisition ............................................................................................... 30
  2.4 Gaps in the Literature ............................................................................................... 37
  2.5 Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 38
Chapter 3 .............................................................................................................................. 39
Methodology: A Qualitative Case Study .......................................................................... 39
  3.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................ 39
  3.2 Introduction of the Research Methodology ................................................................ 39
    3.2.1 Definition of Case Study .................................................................................. 39
    3.2.2 How to determine a Case Study ...................................................................... 41
    3.2.3 Critiques of Case Study .................................................................................. 42
  3.3 Design of this research ............................................................................................. 44
    3.3.1 Design of Case Study ...................................................................................... 44
    3.3.2 Design of this research study .......................................................................... 47
    3.3.3 Participant Recruitment ................................................................................... 49
    3.3.4 Data Collection ................................................................................................ 53
    3.3.5 Data Analysis ................................................................................................... 57
    3.3.6 Writing up Findings ....................................................................................... 59
  3.4 Ethic Issues, Validity and Reliability ......................................................................... 59
    3.4.1 Confidentiality and Privacy ............................................................................ 59
3.4.2 Risk and Benefit .................................................................................. 61
3.4.3 Validity and Reliability ........................................................................ 62
3.5 Conclusion ................................................................................................. 64
Chapter 4 ........................................................................................................ 65
Analysis of data of School/Community Partnership ...................................... 65
4.1 Introduction ............................................................................................... 65
4.2 Background of Interviewees, Story of the Reflection Journals, and
Document Content ......................................................................................... 66
4.2.1 Background of Interviewees .................................................................. 66
   4.2.1.1 Chinese community Member Mrs A ............................................... 66
   4.2.1.2 Chinese community Member Mrs X ............................................... 67
   4.2.1.3 School Mandarin Teacher Ms H ...................................................... 68
   4.2.1.4 School Mandarin Teacher Mr M ...................................................... 68
   4.2.1.5 School Assistant Principal Mrs L .................................................... 69
   4.2.1.6 Education Leader Mr W ................................................................. 69
4.2.2 Story of Reflectional Journals ................................................................ 70
   4.2.2.1 Participation in a Chinese Lesson ..................................................... 70
   4.2.2.2 Feedback of a Chinese Movie Excursion .......................................... 72
4.2.3 Document Content ................................................................................ 74
   4.2.3.1 National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program, Program
Guidelines (2009-2012) ................................................................................. 74
   4.2.3.2 Home, School and Community Partnerships, Fair Go Fair Share Fair
Say Fair Content (2003) ................................................................................ 74
   4.2.3.3 Project Leader Support Manual, Becoming Asia Literate: Grants to
Schools (2010), project information overview – (Luting shan) HS (2009)........ 75
   4.2.3.4 Activity Application form from Dongwan PS .................................. 75
4.3 Analysis of the Data of Triangulation ....................................................... 75
4.3.1 Mutual Understanding .......................................................................... 76
   4.3.1.1 Understanding of school/community partnership ............................... 76
   4.3.1.2 Understanding of Obstacles .............................................................. 80
   4.3.1.3 Understanding of each other for Mandarin teaching and learning ....... 84
4.3.2 Mobilization of resources from Chinese community ............................... 88
   4.3.2.1 Practises of Mandarin teaching ......................................................... 89
   4.3.2.2 Suggestions to mobilize resources from Chinese community ........... 92
Chapter 5 ......................................................................................................... 101
Findings and Discussion about the Contribution ........................................... 101
5.1 Introduction ............................................................................................... 101
5.2 Answers to the Research Questions ....................................................... 101
   5.2.1 Essential Criteria for School/community partnership ......................... 101
      5.2.1.1 Two-way communication............................................................... 102
      5.2.1.2 School support .............................................................................. 103
      5.2.1.3 Supply of Community Members .................................................. 104
      5.2.1.4 Inclusive organising .................................................................... 106
   5.2.2 Funds of Knowledge in Chinese community ....................................... 106
   5.2.3 Contradictory Issues over School/community partnership ................... 109
   5.2.4 Significance of School/community partnership ................................... 111
5.3 Discussion of the Findings to develop the Key Contribution:
School/community partnership Model ......................................................... 112
   5.3.1 Key Contribution – School/community partnership Model ................. 112
5.3.2 Discussion of the School/community partnership Model ...................... 115
  5.3.2.1 Two-way communication................................................................. 115
  5.3.2.2 School support.................................................................................. 117
  5.3.2.3 Two-way negotiation ................................................................. 118
  5.3.2.4 Various forms of Participation......................................................... 122
5.4 Conclusion....................................................................................................... 123
Chapter 6 ......................................................................................................... 125
Implication and Conclusion ................................................................................... 125
  6.1 Summary of Thesis Chapters...................................................................... 125
  6.2 Limitation of this Research Study ............................................................... 127
  6.3 Implications of the Research Findings ....................................................... 128
  6.4 Conclusion....................................................................................................... 130
Reference.................................................................................................................. 131
Appendix 1: University of Western Sydney Ethics Approval......................... 140
Appendix 2: State Education Research Approval Process (SERAP) Approval 142
Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet (Teachers & Principals) ............. 143
Appendix 4: Participant Information Sheet (Community Members) ............. 145
Appendix 5: Participant Information Sheet (Parent & Caregiver) .................. 147
Appendix 6: Participant Information Sheet (Students)................................. 150
Appendix 7: Participant Consent Form.............................................................. 152
Appendix 8: Survey about students’ feedback of a Chinese Movie Excursion 153
Appendix 9: Interview Question Samples.......................................................... 154
Appendix 10: Transcript of Interviews Samples................................................ 155
Appendix 11: Photos taken from Chinese related sites in the target school community and researcher’s experiences ......................................................... 157
List of Tables and Figures

Table 4.1  Survey feedback on a Chinese movie excursion  ............... .76
Table 4.2  “Mutual Interdependence” Category .............................. .80
Table 4.3  “Mobilization of resources from Chinese community” Category
......................................................................................... .94
Figure 3.1  Research Map .......................................................... 51
Figure 3.2  Procedure of data analysis ........................................ 61
Figure 5.1  Relations within the School/community partnership Model
........................................................................................... .120
List of Abbreviations

DET: Department of Education and Training
HS: High School
ICT: Interactive Communication Technology
ILT: Intercultural Language Teaching
MoU: Memorandum of Understanding
NALSSP: National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program
NEAF: National Ethics Application Form
NMEB: Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau
NSW: New South Wales
PS: Primary School
PSFP: Priority Schools Funding Program
SERAP: State Education Research Approval Process
UWS: University of Western Sydney
WSR: Western Sydney Region
Abstract

This research reports on an exploration of the “funds of linguistic and cultural knowledge” in a Chinese community, with the purpose of building school/community partnership to utilize community resources for Mandarin teaching and learning in Australian schools. The research originally derived from the researcher’s personal experience of learning English as a second language, in which the language environment and applications of language were found to be the most important factors that determined learning success. During her stint of research in the Western Sydney Region as a volunteer Mandarin teacher-researcher, she found that there was a lack of teaching and learning resources in the school, and that there was a need to build a systematic model to support the efficient utilization of community-based resources for educational purposes. This research focused on how to explore resources from the Chinese community through school/community partnership.

Case study was employed as the research methodology for this study. Interviews, reflective journals and document reviews were used to collect data and to triangulate the data sources. The research findings were discussed and reported in accordance to four contributory research questions: essential criteria, the forms of funds of knowledge, contradictory issues, and the significance of partnerships. The key finding of the study is presented in the form of a school/community partnership Model, which provides an answer to the principal research question: “How can cooperation be built up between schools and local Chinese communities to support Mandarin teaching and learning in Australian schools?”

This study contributes to our understanding of school/community partnerships to enhance teaching and learning Mandarin in Australian schools. It reveals the real situation of partnerships in the target school community, in which welcoming attitudes coexisted with poor actions. It argues that the Model of school/community partnerships can be used to explore linguistic and cultural knowledge in Chinese communities, with significant implications for improving the quality of Mandarin teaching and learning in schools.
Chapter 1

An Introduction to the Background and Rationale of the Study

1.1 Introduction

It is commonly perceived that exploring resources from the Chinese community for Mandarin teaching and learning in Australian schools would make a helpful contribution, but some serious challenges exist; these are explored in this research study. The aim of this study was to build a school/community partnership model for Mandarin teaching and learning practice in Australian schools. In this chapter, the background of the researcher and the research are first introduced. Then the research questions are outlined, followed by a brief review of the theoretical background of the research. In the last two sections, an overview is presented of the methodology and the structure of the thesis.

1.2 The Background of this Research

1.2.1 Background of the Researcher

As the result of a Memorandum of Understanding (NMEB, NSW DET & UWS, 2007; 2009) between the New South Wales Department of Education and Training (NSW DET) of the Western Sydney Region (WSR), the Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau (NMEB), and the University of Western Sydney (UWS), a volunteer Mandarin teacher program started in 2008. This Memorandum of Understanding is called a “Bridge”, and aims to promote Chinese culture and language in Western Sydney Region schools, to support students to learn an Asian language, with advantages for their future career. As a volunteer member of the second cohort of this program, the researcher came to Sydney in June 2009, and began teaching Mandarin in three WSR schools: Luting Shan High School, Dong Wan Public School and Mi Rui Public School (all the school names are pseudonyms). Meanwhile, she was studying for a research Master of Education (Honours) degree at the Centre for Educational Research at UWS.
Given the dual identity of the teacher-researcher, the researcher had the advantage of gaining first-hand information about her study, and of having a close look at Mandarin teaching and learning practice in Australian schools. As Tao Xingzhi (cited in Yao, 2002) said: “All true knowledge (is) derived from doing or direct experience”, so it is believed that this dual identity will make the research more significant, reliable and valuable.

1.2.1.1 The Researcher's Experiences of Learning English as a Second Language

This research study originates out of the English learning experiences of the researcher. During her stay in Australia, the researcher has heard different evaluations of her spoken English from various people. All the expressions were very encouraging, such as, “your English has been improved a lot”, “your English is so good that we can understand it without any problem”, “you speak very good English”, and so on. All these evaluation made the researcher feel proud, and more and more confident to speak in public, even to be confident enough to make a formal speech at a meeting of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training. Therefore, when taking on the role of volunteer teacher-researcher, she began to review her own experiences of acquiring a second language, learning English, to apply them to the needs of her students.

Back in China, the researcher first started learning English systematically in the middle school. Although she was always one of the top students in English, she was not able to speak out of class. This applied not only to her, but also to many other students. The biggest problem was that they hardly spoke English out of class, or even in class. In most cases, they did not have opportunities to speak, or dialogue in English, mostly they learned academic English, reading and writing. Some students wish to practice speaking, but they would prefer to speak alone, such like reading books or following the walkman along the school’s riverbank in the early morning, or on the top level of the building at break time. Perhaps the reason was that, within a Mandarin-dominated school, students considered that learning English was just for examinations, so they showed passive learning attitudes to spoken English. Moreover, the language environment of schools in
China is Mandarin, so students might not be willing to spend extra time and energy on tiring thinking about vocabulary and sentences, so as to make conversations happen. The last reason might be common to all language learners, namely, the learner’s lack of confidence and of opportunities to communicate with native speakers. However, communication with native speakers is actually the best way to strengthen language learning, and it is also the main reason why the researcher improved her English dramatically, since she went to university.

The university, at which the researcher spent four years, was the Chinese campus of a British university in Ningbo, and all the teachers were native English speakers. All the subjects were taught in English, and it was also the only language for communication in this university. Therefore, a complete English language environment was created for all the students, and the researcher began to get used to speaking English more and more, although sometimes she still felt strange about speaking English with other Chinese students in public, such as on the way back to the dormitory or talking gossip in the canteen. But as time went by, after her participation in some English corners (a popular activity in China where English is the only language for communicating, in order to practise oral and make friends), she became confident to speak. After she graduated from the university, she started a job as a foreign trade merchandiser, dealing with foreign customers. However, mostly communications were mostly by email, not verbal, and later she found that her spoken English regressed. In June 2009, the researcher came to Sydney, and because of her teaching job and research task, her grasp of English usage improved. As a result, encouraging and affirming feedback, as mentioned at the beginning of this section, was received.

After thinking through her experiences of learning English as a second language, the researcher summed up her conclusions in a Chinese four-character idiom: 耳濡目染 (ěr rú mù rǎn, people are easily get influenced by what he/she see and hear), which highlights the influence of environment on language learning. For language learners, if they are provided with an environment in which they can hear more, see more, and speak more of the target language, they will be able to master it finally.
1.2.2 Background of the Research Study

The site of this research study is “Luting Shan” school community, comprising three schools, and the area is located in a suburb in the Western Sydney region, where a small number of Chinese people live and work. In the year 2009, this school community successfully gained $38,500 funding from the “Project of Becoming Asian Literate: Grants to Schools” from the Australian government, to promote a four-year project named “The Learning Neighbourhood Asian Literacy Program”. With the assistance of the volunteer Mandarin teacher program, Mandarin has replaced German in becoming the only second language taught at “Luting Shan” High School (HS) since 2010.

In this school community, the researcher had two days of teaching every week, and on average, one lesson for each class every week. Chinese background students make up a tiny percentage of the school’s population. Even for those few of this background, their family might have immigrated to Australia ages ago, or their linguistic background was Cantonese, so that Mandarin was not their first language. In other words, the students had neither opportunity nor environment for further language practice, so the question emerged: “How to build partnerships between schools and Chinese communities in terms of language resource, and culture inspiration on students’ Mandarin learning?”

1.2.2.1 Australia’s Multiculturalism and its Relevance to this Research

When the researcher arrived in Sydney in the summer of 2009, the first impression was the warm and sunny weather, and the second impression was the multiculturalism presented in this city. As she walked down the road, there were people with different coloured skin, hair and eyes. Before she came here, she already knew that Australia is a country with a large immigrant population, but not that it is as multicultural as it really is. Furthermore, on the one hand, many current Australian-Chinese are second or third generation, so that their families have been settled in Australia for at least 30 years, and it is not surprising that they hardly speak their mother tongue, while English has become their first language. This is an uncontroversial truth. On the other hand however, multiculturalism is being
maintained. In many schools, there is a particular event called “Multicultural Day” or “Harmony Day”. Watching a DVD from a local school, the researcher was deeply impressed by what was being demonstrated on “Multicultural Day”. In the DVD, parents and community members were invited into the school to demonstrate their food, give art performances, and make speeches about their culture. It was a carnival where students, parents and community members celebrated and shared their cultures. In March 2010, the researcher took part in the “Multicultural Day” at one of her teaching schools, the “Luting Shan” HS, and found that different cultures (Aboriginal, Maoris, Indian, Mexican, Vietnam, Fiji, African, Chinese, and so on) were manifested in the form of cuisines, costumes and art performances by students, parents and teachers. This type of event not only provided a place for participants from various cultural backgrounds to show their culture to others, and to experience others’ cultures; but also made them feel proud of their own culture, through manifesting it and finding it appreciated.

Besides this type of event, there were other activities to turn multicultural knowledge into education outcomes, such as excursions and incursions. In Term 3 of the year 2009, the Mandarin teacher in Luting Shan HS took a class to visit the Chinese Garden in the city and had a Chinese lunch in Chinatown. The advantage of such activities is to provide students with interactive learning opportunities, and to let them have contact with Chinese speaking society. For Mandarin particularly, applying textbook knowledge through practising dialogue and exchanging knowledge about China with native speakers, can deepen students’ understanding of the language and strengthen their manipulation of this knowledge.

1.2.2.2 Introduction of the Mandarin Program into the Western Sydney Region

Asian languages are drawing more and more attention in Australia, while economic and political power in Asia is rising. As a close neighbour in the Asia-Pacific area, Australia is investing more and more in Asian language promotion. In December, 1992, the Council of Australian Governments started to work on a National Asian Languages and Cultures Strategy for Australian Schools to enhance Australia’s economic interests in the Asia-Pacific region (Rudd, 1994). After consideration of economic concerns, four Asian languages were identified: Mandarin, Indonesian,
Japanese and Korean. As noted in the latest policy document in the area (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009), from year 2008 on, the Australia Government launched its National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP), and committed $62.4 million dollars in funding over 2008-2011 to support these four Asian languages. The study of Mandarin, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean is being supported, along with the study of these cultures, throughout the whole nation. The main goal of the National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP) is that by 2020, 12% of the high school graduates will be able to speak one Asian language fluently, and can use the language to do business with Asian people or to do further study at Asian universities.

The former director of NSW DET’S Western Sydney Region, Mr Lindsay Wasson, saw the potential of China, intended to promote Mandarin in the region, and wanted to offer the students a language advantage compared to other Australian students. That is also the initiative of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Department of Education and Training (Western Sydney Region), the Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau of China (NMEB), and the University of Western Sydney. The object of the MoU is “to promote and expand the study of Chinese (Mandarin) and Chinese culture and society. NMEB agreed to support the teaching of Chinese in Western Sydney Region by assisting in the provision of Chinese teaching and learning resources and providing other related Chinese language learning in schools” (NMEB, NSW DET & UWS, 2007; 2009).

1.3 An Introduction to the Research Questions

As a volunteer Mandarin teacher from Ningbo working in Western Sydney region schools, the researcher was given the opportunity to gain insights into ongoing Mandarin programs in three schools, namely, “Lu Tingshan High School”, “Dong Wan Public School” and “Mi Rui Public School”. These three schools included in the “Luting Shan” school community, were all very eager to have a Mandarin program, and depended on volunteer Mandarin teachers at this stage. The school learning neighbourhood gained national funding in the year 2009, from the project
“Becoming Asia Literate: Grants to Schools” to support and develop the Mandarin program across schools. As stated in the application guideline documents and in other relevant documents, the emphasis of the project is on producing and utilizing more e-resources, literacy books, ICT (interactive communication technology), and on training classroom teachers to manage the use of ICT to utilize different resources. The objectives and initiatives of the project can be summarised as to implement resources to improve Mandarin teaching and learning in schools. The expected outcomes of this project will not only bring students more opportunities to learn the language and culture, but also assist classroom teachers to get support for doing some Chinese teaching themselves, when volunteer teachers are not there.

This research study emerged from both the learning and the teaching experiences of the researcher. On one hand, the researcher’s experience of learning English as second language suggested that it is important for learners to be inducted into social and environmental factors for language learning, to strengthen the learning outcomes and to maintain learning motivation. On the other hand, the researcher found from the target school community, that the school’s Mandarin teaching and learning resources appeared to be lacking. By using the funds they were granted, the schools wanted to create resources through different means, to develop and support students’ learning of Mandarin and Chinese culture, to buy resources, and employ people to create e-resources. However, it seems that these schools neglected to address the functions that the Chinese community itself can perform, to create a language learning environment for students.

The focus of this research was on exploring Mandarin teaching resources and learning in the “Luting Shan” school community, considered as a Western Sydney region case study. As a Mandarin teacher in the “Luting Shan” school community, the researcher decided to carry out a case study in this school community, to explore how to build school/community partnerships to support Mandarin teaching and learning in the schools. In this research, there was one principal research question and four contributory research questions:

The principal research question was:
How to build partnerships between schools and Chinese communities in terms of language resources, and cultural inspiration on students’ Mandarin learning

The four contributory questions were:

1. What funds of knowledge are available in the community that could be utilized by schools?
2. What criteria are essential for establishing Mandarin education program partnerships between schools and the Chinese community?
3. What factors may encourage or obstruct the building of partnerships?
4. What outcome would such partnerships have for the participants?

1.4 Theoretical Background of the Study

In order to get insights to answer the above research questions, some relevant literature was reviewed, to search for theoretical support. There were three main research topics: school/community partnership, funds of knowledge, and language acquisition.

1.4.1 School/community partnership

Studies of partnerships between school, home and community have been undertaken for decades. “Out-of-school influences such as family involvement and the presence of home environments that support academic achievement” (Sheldon, 2008, p. 40) have been widely acknowledged. The influence they bear on students’ learning outcomes is significant. However, this topic has not received sufficient attention to make these partnerships efficient:

Despite the evidence of the importance of school, family, and community partnerships for students’ academic success, this topic rarely receives adequate attention from school, district, and state education leaders. With budget deficits and increasing demands for accountability, educational leaders often are forced to make difficult decisions about how to spend limited resources. Understandably, educational leaders are demanding more and better research demonstrating the connections of parent involvement with student outcomes to help them decide whether and how to allocate financial
resources and personnel to this component of school improvement. (Sheldon, 2008, p. 40)

Regarding to the school/community partnership, there are also voices from the community to argue that “schools need additional resources to successfully educate all students and that these resources, both human and material, are housed in students’ communities (Epstein, 1995; Melaville, 1998; Sanders, 2003, p. 3). Therefore, it is believed that utilizing community resources well has potential to improve students’ learning significantly.

1.4.2 Funds of Knowledge

The concept of “funds of knowledge” originally addresses the impact of students’ household intellectual backgrounds on their academic learning at school. It states that integrating the background knowledge and the interests present in students’ household environments into the curriculum can increase students’ learning motivation. Moreover, it is suggested that teachers should get to know their students well or conduct research about their students, and try to link students’ community knowledge with practical classroom teaching. For teachers, “conscious reflection on social processes within the school community, as well as on the theoretical elaboration of households, artifacts, and cultural practices, enhances teachers’ use and understanding of meditation tools for academic achievement” (Moll & Greenberg, 2002). For students, by connecting their life and learning, connecting their home community to the classroom routine, they are encouraged to become conscious about non-text based information which can help them to be more sensitive and more independent in their learning.

1.4.3 Language Acquisition

The learning environment is important for language acquisition. Cheng (2009) highlights the influence of family values and cultural definitions on creating the optimal language learning environment for children. However, the language immersion environment is more important for language acquisition and learning. As Nelson (2001) suggests:
Acquisition is a process of gathering something subconsciously. It occurs without formal teaching, through exposure to models, trial and error, and practice within social groups. It happens in natural settings that are meaningful and functional, in the sense that the acquirers know that they need to acquire the things in order to function. This is how most people come to control their first language (p. 2).

Language acquisition is like a baby learning his/her mother tongue, subconsciously but not purposively. With the first word a baby speaks, the process of acquisition starts. Teaching a language requires not only the inputs of linguistic knowledge, but also plenty of practical application:

The most effective approach in the classroom is to avoid explicit teaching as much as possible and concentrate on creating natural communication situations: if learners receive plenty of ‘comprehensible input’ and their ‘affective filter’ is low, acquisition will occur naturally (Krashen & Terrell, 1983, p. 217).

The objective of learning a language is to use the language freely. Language is learnt well when it is acquired in an authentic language environment, as this helps the development of understanding and capability in language use. In the language acquisition process, learners come to understand more, and can speak more about, what they gain from the process:

Discourses are mastered through acquisition, not learning. People need to be at least apprenticed to a purposeful social environment to begin acquiring a discourse before productive learning can begin. This theory has important implications for how people are able to make changes to their current ways of doing things (Nelson, 2001, p. 2).

Learning a second language in social circumstances is important. This does not mean that the linguistic component is unnecessary, but rather that cultural and social implications are equally important:

Learning is a process that involves conscious knowledge gained through teaching (though not necessarily from someone officially designated a teacher) or through certain experiences that trigger conscious reflection (Nelson, 2001, p 2).
According to Vygotsky (1978), the education process can be seen as a psychological development, underlying learners’ interaction with social contexts rather than the sole acquisition of formal schooling knowledge. He argues that traditional schooling provides students with knowledge that is mediated mainly through signs and tools, separate from manipulation of the knowledge, and not in collaboration with social and cultural contexts. He advocates learning through social interaction and interdependence with social resources.

Maturing or developing mental functions must be fostered and assessed through collaborative, not independent or isolated activities. . . what children can perform collaboratively or with assistance today they can perform independently and completely tomorrow. . . it is a key theoretical construct, capturing as it does the individual within the concrete social situation of learning and development (Moll, 1990, pp. 3-4).

To develop, and help them achieve independence, an aim was advanced: to “help children obtain and express meaning in ways that would enable them to make this knowledge and meaning their own” (Moll, cited in Moll, 1990, p. 14). The teaching and learning process is viewed as a holistic process to integrate formal schooling and social interaction: in other words, the development of both “scientific and everyday concepts” of knowledge (Moll, 1990).

1.5 Overview of the Methodology

For this research, a qualitative case study was employed as the key methodology. The reason for choosing a case study as methodology, is that it is a specific, holistic, often unique instance that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle. . . of an instance in action. . . of an evolving situation. . . portray ‘what it is like’ to be in a particular situation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Therefore, to answer the research question, how to establish partnerships between schools and the Chinese community to strengthen Mandarin teaching and learning, the case study is a suitable methodology.
1.5.1 Data Collection

Three methods were used to collect data: interviewing, recording reflection journals, and reviewing documents. First, “Interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behaviour, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them” (Merriam, 2009, p. 88). The purpose of interviewing in research is “a move away from seeing human subjects as simply manipulable and data as somehow external to individuals, and towards regarding knowledge as generated between humans, often through conversations” (Kvale, cited in Louis, Lawrence & Keith, 2000, p. 267). For most qualitative case studies, since the aim is to obtain “some standardized information . . . some of the same open-ended questions are asked of all participants, and some time is spent in an unstructured mode so that fresh insights and new information can emerge” (Merriam, 2009, p. 320). During the conduct of the interview, asking appropriate questions sensitively, and interacting with respondents in a suitable manner is essential to producing a good response.

Second, reflection journals were used to record the researcher’s experiences and feelings about some activities in which she had been engaged during the research period, as related to this research. The researcher participated in different activities, aiming to understand the situation from different perspectives, both as Mandarin teacher and as Chinese community member.

Third, documents are widely defined as public records, personal papers, physical traces and artefacts. One issue concerning documents is the need for “authenticity”: the researcher needs to “reconstruct the process by which the data were originally assembled by somebody else . . . and be aware of the conditions under which these data were produced, what specific methodological and technical decisions may have been made . . . and the consequent impact on the nature of the data now to be taken over” (Riley, cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 116).

Participants in this research study

For interviewees, there were two Chinese community Members, two school teachers, one school leader and one education administrator. For the reflection
journals, two pieces relating to the experiences of the researcher as a Chinese community Member participating in Mandarin-related activities, were selected. For the document review, three relevant pieces, related to the Mandarin program at national, state and school levels respectively, were analysed.

1.5.2 Data Analysis

In this research study, a model adapted from Epstein (2009) is used for the data analysis. Categories were generated from Epstein’s model, and used as themes to guide the data analysis of the interviews, reflection journals and documents. Finally, there will be discussion in accordance with the four contributory research questions, while the principal research question is answered by providing a school/community partnership model specifically addressing Mandarin teaching and learning.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

The purpose of this research was to explore partnerships between the school and the Chinese community for Mandarin teaching and learning. This research is developed in the following chapters.

In Chapter 2, a review of the relevant literatures focuses on school/community partnership, funds of knowledge and language acquisition, and the gaps in the literature for these these themes are identified, in reference to the theoretical initiatives of this research study.

Chapter 3 is devoted to the methodology of this research study, the qualitative case study, and the research plan and details of the data collection and analysis are illustrated as well.

In Chapter 4, the data collected through interviews, reflection journals and document reviews are analyzed. The data are categorized according to an adaptation of Epstein’s six-point model, and under each category, several pieces of information are developed, which are used to answer the research questions.
In Chapter 5, all five research questions are answered through discussion of the data, in relation to the literature. The four contributory research questions are answered according to their particular focuses, while the principal research question is answered by means of outlining a school/community partnership model.

In Chapter 6, the limitation and implication of this research study are presented, as are the recommendations for further study and for policy making.
Chapter 2

Literature related to School/community partnership for Mandarin Teaching and Learning

In this chapter, the relevant literature on the topics of school/community partnership, funds of knowledge, and language acquisition are reviewed. The main purpose of this research study was to explore resources from the Chinese community, via school/community partnership, to support and improve students’ Mandarin teaching and learning. The selection of these three topics was closely related to the research questions, and was aimed at discussing partnerships criteria, what Chinese community resources can be identified and utilized, and also the significance of such partnerships. In addition, gaps found in the literature are identified, as related to the initiatives of this research study.

2.1 School and Community Partnerships

It is clear from the relevant literature that partnerships between school and community are always considered as part of the broader partnerships between school, home and community. In a working paper (2003) from the NSW DET Priority Schools Funding Program (PSFP), it is mentioned that home, school and community partnerships have been approached and developed with the purpose of supporting school communities to cooperate and work out strategies through mutual understanding of the beliefs, attitudes and practices from both parties: school and community. Other purposes include, increasing our knowledge of the positive impacts on educational outcomes; and planning strategies and addressing challenging issues.

Through the influence of the school, the family and the community, students learn knowledge in various ways, under different situations. Therefore, establishing an effective partnership between school, family and community can enhance and strengthen the learning process and learning outcomes of the students. For the teacher-researcher, the significance relates to looking for efficient ways to build up
partnerships. Epstein (2009) notes that the demand for partnerships emerges from three spheres:

Partnerships can improve school programs and school climate, provide family services and support, increase parents’ skills and leadership, connect families with others in the school and in the community, and help teachers with their work. However, the main reason to create such partnerships is to help all youngsters succeed in school and in later life. When parents, teachers, students, and others view one another as partners in education, a caring community forms around students and begins its work (p. 9).

Students’ knowledge learning is a continuous process and can take place anywhere; if it is blocked by the school gate, this will be a shame. Both the family and the community have a responsibility to cater for students’ learning, to ensure sustainability in their understanding and manipulation of knowledge.


For some time now, a number of educational researchers have been advocating the benefits of partnerships between schools, families and communities as a means of promoting student achievement for all students . . . the advantage to community involvement in their schooling is twofold, for it has the potential to enhance students’ learning opportunities and to ease the transition from high school (Hands, 2009, p. 54).

The effects of family and community environments on students’ learning outcomes have been studied by researchers. Schools are:

Looking to garner the financial and material resources, as well as the social support and breadth of educational experiences available in the community to supplement students’ in-school learning opportunities in order to meet students’ various needs through partnerships (Davis & Johnson, 1996; Epstein & Sanders, 1998; Henderson, 1987; Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007, cited in Hands, 2009, p. 54).
In addition, school leaders have expressed high levels of confidence that family and community involvement activities can help improve student learning and achievement (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005).

Therefore, to turn the focus systematically onto students’ learning, Epstein (2009) has worked out a framework of six types of involvement, to establish effective partnerships between school, family and community. The core concept in these six involvements is “caring”, a behaviour that encourages and supports students’ continuous learning in various ways, within the overlapping contexts of these three spheres.

As support from school, home and community accumulates, more students feel secure and cared for, understand and adopt the goals of education, work to achieve their full potential, build positive attitudes and school behaviours, and stay in school. The shared interests and investments of schools, families, and communities create the conditions of caring that work to “overdetermine” the likelihood of student success. (Boykin, 1994, cited in Epstein, 2009, p. 12)

Partnerships between school, family and community not only provide students with an opportunity to extend their learning time and their knowledge applications, but also assist students with feeling the value and importance of learning, and in maintaining their learning motivation. Since they are at the centre of school/community partnership, students receive “care” from the three spheres, which resulted from Epstein’s (2009) six types of involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community.

1. Parenting: how schools are working to increase families’ understanding of child and adolescent development.
2. Communicating: ways to increase two-way connections between school programs and students’ progress.
3. Volunteering: mobilizing parents and others who can share their time and talents to support the school, teachers, and student activities at the school or in other locations.
4. Learning at Home: providing families with information about the academic work that their children do in class, how to help their children with homework, and other curriculum-related activities and decisions.

5. Decision Making: enabling families to participate in decisions about school programs that affect their own and other children.

6. Collaborating with the community: encouraging the cooperation of schools, families, community groups, organizations, agencies, and individuals (pp. 58-59).

In this research context, the researcher adapted two spheres, school and community from the model, and developed a new model between school and Chinese community specifically for Mandarin teaching and learning. Moreover, in the researcher’s model, Chinese community resources that students can actually contact in their everyday life are explored.

Communities, however, have received increasing attention for their role in socializing youth and ensuring students’ success in a variety of societal domains . . . similarly, Heath and Mclaughlin (1987, p. 579) argued that community involvement is important, because “the problem of educational achievement and academic success demands resources beyond the scope of the school and of most families”. They identified changing family demographics, demands of the professional workplace, and growing diversity among students as some of the reasons that schools and families alone cannot provide sufficient resources to ensure that all children receive the experiences and support needed to succeed in the larger society (Sanders, 2002, p. 31).

As suggested by previous studies, “school-community partnerships that focus on educational improvement and neighbourhood revitalization can strengthen the social network, resources, and capital available to children and youth” (Sanders, 2002, p. 31). It is recognised that solely depending on school resources is far from sufficient, for every student to enjoy the resources they really want, and that are necessary for forming a particular knowledge. The concept of “community” in partnerships should not only be geographical, but should also refer to a context of interactive behaviour occurring in students’ everyday lives, which could produce rich and diverse knowledge.
Regarding the partnerships between the two spheres, school and community, many researchers found that considerable beneficial outcomes could be achieved:

Documented benefits of school-linked service integration initiatives include behavioural and academic gains for students who receive intensive services (Newman, 1995; Wagner, 1995). Researchers have also reported results of improved student attendance, immunization rates, and student behaviour at schools providing coordinated services (Amato, 1996). Finally, partnerships with businesses and other community organizations have provided schools with needed equipment, materials, and technical assistance and support for student instruction (Longoria, 1998; Mickelson, 1999; Sanders & Harvey, 2002). School-community partnerships, then, are an important element in schools’ programs of improvement and reform and an important part of a comprehensive program of school, family and community partnerships. (Sanders, 2002, p. 36)

Cooperating with a community is considered beneficial for both school and students, and different communities will bring different outcomes. For learning a language, working within a community in which the language is spoken will be particularly valuable for students, as they experience an authentic target language environment and get close to the culture and people.

School-community partnerships can be illustrated as “connections between schools and community individuals, organizations, and businesses that are forged to promote students’ social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development (Sanders, 2001, p. 20, cited in Hands, 2009, p. 55)”. As with any other type of partnership, various considerations have to be taken seriously, to establish partnerships between school and community:

Trust is one party’s willingness to be vulnerable to another based on the confidence that the latter part is (a) benevolent, (b) reliable, (c) competent, (d) honest, and (e) open (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000, p. 556, cited in Hands, 2009, p. 56).

Trust plays an integral role in the establishment and maintenance of partnerships. A basic level of trust was needed to successfully contact potential partners and to negotiate the goals and collaborative activities of the partnerships (Hands, 2009, pp. 66-67).
A base level of trust is required to successfully contact potential partners and to negotiate the goals and collaborative activities. This trust grows through repeated interaction where partners’ expectations are met . . . a growing number of schools and school districts are concluding that collaboration is an avenue through which students’ needs may be met and achievement promoted (Hands, 2009, p. 54).

Trust was identified by many educators and researchers as an important and fundamental issue in establishing partnerships between school and community. Moreover, as Hands mentions, trust grows from contact with partners and negotiation with partners, both of which are actually gained through communication. As Sanders (2002) indicates:

School-community partnerships flourished by maintaining a school environment where teachers and parents focus on students’ academic success, modelling for faculty and staff a genuine openness to community involvement and establishing an expectation for partnerships, actively networking with individuals in the community to inform them of their school’s needs and goals, and supporting others in developing leadership in the area of family and community involvement” (p. 35)

Having honest and fully opened channels for school and community to communicate with each other, is another key factor. “Good partnerships encourage questions and debates and withstand disagreements” (Epstein, 2009, p. 12). Sheldon and Epstein (2005) tested the three most effective practices of communication from an experiment related to mathematics instruction: giving parents information to contact Mathematics teachers, arranging conferences with parents having struggles, and reporting students’ progress to parents.

Furthermore, regarding the significance of school/community partnership, many researchers expressed their ideas positively. In Hand’s (2009) study, he concluded that:

The partnerships . . . not only provided students with academic support and learning opportunities with the financial, material, and human resources in the community, but there were additional benefits of partnering beyond those envisioned by the principals and their faculty . . . expanded the students’ networks and increased their social capital . . . partnering with community members is an avenue through
which school personnel may gain access to a variety of resources in
the community that they do not have within the school (pp. 66-67).

Moreover, Keith (1996) argues that “schools should develop horizontal ties with
the community to foster the social networks, educational, and economic
opportunities and cultural richness” (p. 254) for students.

In addition, there are many different benefits brought by partnership between
school and different community partners, such as pre-service training for students
to be more capable in the workforce, and wider experience of society before
formally entering into it, and so on. For example, the foxfire approach (Paris et al.
2005) which is a program aiming to develop teachers’ professionalism, emphasises
that “connections between the classroom work, the surrounding communities, and
the world beyond the communities are clear, course content is connected to the
community in which the learners live” (cited in Hands, 2009, p. 90).

2.2 Funds of Knowledge

The concept of “funds of knowledge” was originally generated from household-
based field research by Luis C. Moll, a professor of language, culture and reading
from the University of Arizona, USA in 1990. Moll and his colleagues carried out a
classic study to examine the impact of the household intellectual background of
Latino students on their English literacy learning at school. The research included
three components: teachers researching students’ households, talking about the
research results in after-school labs, and testing the results of that discussion in the
classroom. Teachers researched students’ households through home-visits,
purposing to identify and document the existing knowledge there, and not just
discussing students’ behaviour or academic work. Then, they put forward all they
found from the students’ households in an after-school lab. In cooperation with
colleagues and professional researchers, they then planned and developed
innovative lesson structures. The final stage was to test the structures out in the
classroom, then come back to the labs to revise again. Moll’s study identified the
positive impacts of students’ households’ funds of knowledge on their academic
outcomes, and also put a high value on the funds of knowledge existing in
students’ everyday lives as well. The conclusion was that integrating background knowledge and the interests presented in students’ household environment into the curriculum, will help to increase students’ learning motivation. The result of this study was proved through remarkable academic progress (Moll, 1990).

According to Moll (1990), “funds of knowledge” has been proved to be effective for education. The term conceptualises knowledge as a resource existing around an individual learner’s living experience, and as related to various subjects. It is recognised that “people are competent and have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge” (Moll & Gonzalez, 2002, p. 625). Greenberg (1989, cited in Moll & Greenberg, 1990) defines funds of knowledge as an “operations manual of essential information and strategies households need to maintain their well being” (p. 323). This highlights the basic function of knowledge, in terms of sharing and exchanging information on a reciprocal basis among schools and families. According to Moll and Greenberg (1990), the reciprocal relationship between families sharing and exchanging knowledge could be applied to classroom pedagogy as well. These strategies of teaching and learning can be understood in relation to the history of the families. The funds of knowledge are linked to the goals of teaching, so “knowledge from their homes and communities could be used within the school setting as an important resource for academic work” (Moll; Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, cited in Dworin, 2006, p. 510).

In Moll and Greenberg’s (1990) research, funds of knowledge exist in students’ households, in ethnic communities and in regions; in other words, these “funds of knowledge” are the knowledge belonging to the students themselves, are the possession of the students. Such a possession could be in substantial form, or insubstantial. The educational purpose of utilizing these “funds of knowledge” from household backgrounds, of feeding them into the classroom curriculum and pedagogy, is for the mobilisation of intellectual resources outside the classroom to form curriculum activities that are more favourable for students, so that students may feel more familiar and more engaged in the class. According to Browning-Aiken (2005):
Such knowledge became useful within a school curriculum as a means of stimulating and motivating students’ curiosity about their environment and local history in a context that was relevant to their lives. It could also help students restructure their existing knowledge and build new knowledge emphasized by curriculum objectives. Within school systems where there was an unequal distribution of funds and where materials and textbooks were limited, the use of a pedagogy that drew on the students’ own cultural knowledge and the educational resources available within the area made good sense (p. 175).

In Moll’s research, the target students were of Hispanic background, and mostly from low social-economic status households, in which their culture and language might not be valued so highly as Anglocentric and the English language in US society. Consequently, this highlights the significance of studying these students’ “funds of knowledge” for pedagogical purposes, of balancing their in-school and out-of-school learning, and making their learning more confident and familiar.

Andrew and Yee (2006) carried out a study in the UK similar to Moll and Greenberg’s. In their study, a group of Asian background students were researched, and their out-of-school learning was studied to find out “funds of knowledge” connected to Mathematics in particular. In their research, they followed students’ out-of-school activities, including family activities, and found out the different roles students play in their families compared to school, and also found out their own strategies for learning and practising Mathematics at home. The conclusion of the study indicates:

The children’s own perspectives need to be respected and acknowledged so that stereotyped understandings of their lives out of school are not developed. As well as the varied interests and activities of the children out of school were not that children take on a variety of roles out of school and these could also be factored into a consideration of what in fact constitutes their “funds of knowledge” . . . any research which aims to investigate learning out of school and “funds of knowledge” needs to take account of the changing nature of any picture that emerges (Yee, 2006, p. 447).

The traditional way of education does not always take students’ own knowledge into account; most knowledge taught in schools is systematic and academic. If students’ household knowledge is valued and useful, why should they come to
school for learning? This might be a key question for most people. However, inside schools, students are just students; they learn what teachers teach. The major thing they learn is methods which they can replicate, just like a framework that they can build up with everyday life issues. Outside of school, in students’ everyday lives, they play various roles: daughter or son, sister or brother, seller or assistant, dancer or singer, so there is not just one standard framework that is sufficient for them to use. Teachers should notice students’ differences, and help them to develop their own ways to find out frameworks for application in real life.

As Moll describes (1992, cited in Andrew & Yee, 2006, p. 442), a typical student-teacher relationship is “thin and single stranded”; the teacher knows a student only based on his/her performance in school, or even more limited, in the classroom context. However,

Children’s lives were much richer than accounts of their school experience appeared to acknowledge and if this is likely to be the case for many children we can see the importance of schools acknowledging children’s home lives as recommended (Andrew & Yee, 2006, p. 445).

Given these insights, a teacher-researcher should make a step forward to change the traditional view of student-teacher relationships, and pay visits to students’ family and community regularly, not for the purpose of discussing students’ academic performance, but with the aim of understanding students better through walking into their everyday life, through talking with the family, and finding out their real interests, the differences they have from school to home. Then these features should be integrated into pedagogy, to increase students’ learning interests and motivation.

Another group of researchers (Hattam, Lucas, Prosser & Sellar, 2007) have carried out research with a focus on the relationship between students and teachers. In their research, the traditional relationship between students and the teacher is criticised, as it puts forward “an unequal intellectual hierarchy between those who know and those who do not know and must therefore be taught” (p. 8). They suggest a new pedagogy that takes “students’ negotiation and self-direction” into account more.
However, as noted, it might bring challenges to the traditional classroom authority of teachers:

Draw on students’ ‘finds of knowledge’ to identify issues of concern in their communities and then support students to research and advocate for change, which in the process promotes views of students as active citizens and responsible learners. This interpretation shows the potential of ‘funds of knowledge’ to underpin pedagogies that unsettle deficit views of students and their communities (Hattam, Lucas, Prosser & Sellar, 2007, p. 4).

As Ranciere (1991) has argued, the difference between knowing and unknowing is created by people who want others to know what they know, and this difference itself shows inequality already:

Explication is not necessary to remedy incapacity to understand. On the contrary, that very incapacity provides the structuring fiction of the explicative conception of the world. It is the explicator who needs the incapable and not the other way around; it is he who constitutes the incapable as such. To explain something to someone is first of all to show him he cannot understand it himself. Before being the act of the pedagogue, explication is the myth of pedagogy, the parable of a world divided into knowing minds and ignorant ones . . . (cited in Hattam, Lucas, Prosser & Sellar, 2007, p. 8)

As we all know, everyone has his or her own knowledge derived from either the home background or the community background. However, generally all this existing knowledge is not valued in the school system, because it is not so academically based. It has almost accepted as a common sense that everyday life knowledge is not knowledge, nevertheless, it is “real knowledge”, and it is the kind of knowledge that people are able to manage best, as well. So that, as the researchers point out:

The funds of knowledge approach offers an alternative to this lack of connection by providing a concrete set of practices that teachers can use to discover and honour the validity and worth of the knowledge found in students’ households and broader social networks (Hattam, Lucas, Prosser & Sellar, 2007, p. 9).
Moreover, Moll and Greenberg (2002) have argued for the roles of both teachers and students in the process of using funds of knowledge. They suggest that teachers should play the role of researcher, to study their students actively, explore the knowledge networks of students to find out their interests, and try to link students’ funds of knowledge with real classroom teaching. They argue that “students’ learning is bound up in networks of relationships that social capital of students, teachers can not only validate knowledge but can activate these networks for pedagogical purposes” (Moll & Gonzalez, 2002, p. 638). For teachers, they recommend “the conscious reflection on social processes within the school community, as well as on the theoretical elaboration of households, artefacts, and cultural practices, enhances teachers’ use and understanding of mediational tools for academic achievement” (Moll & Gonzalez, 2002, p. 638). For students, by connecting their own life and learning, connecting their home community and classroom routine, they are encouraged to be conscious about non-text based information, which could help them to be more open to the world, and to discover more.

In the context of the present research study, which has its focus on Mandarin teaching and learning, the same situation exists. From the researcher’s teaching experiences, she found that in her class, some students appeared uninterested, while others gradually turned from uninterested to interested. For the teacher-researcher, it is necessary to look into the problem and to increase students’ learning motivation. A possible solution is through utilizing the “funds of knowledge” that are found in students’ everyday lives. However, the reality found in the researcher’s teaching is that most of the students learning Mandarin in her class were non-Chinese-background students, so the source of “funds of knowledge” became the Chinese community rather than households.

We define community funds and Discourse as the experiences, knowledge and ways of being students possess from being members of various figured worlds that matter to them, such as being members in the neighbourhood where they live or members of the larger school community. (Barton & Tan, 2008, p. 59)
Knowing about students’ family and community, will help teachers to design suitable curricula for lessons, and bring familiarity to students compared to what they experience every day. As Lee and Luykx (2006) argue, pedagogical approaches grounded in students’ cultural background and everyday knowledge can make a difference in their learning.

Andrews and Yee state that “knowledge is not a static entity and that new learning and new interests emerge and develop over time” (2006, p. 447), so that keeping students familiar with knowledge, to find connections between knowledge and their everyday life is crucial for maintaining their interest as well. This is like a circle: familiarity and interest are always two important issues to this circle, and related to each other.

In order to avoid understanding “Funds of knowledge” narrowly, Moll and his colleagues characterised the cultural part of knowledge as to avoid a consideration of ‘culture’ which relied on ‘folkloric displays’ including storytelling, arts, craft and dance performance alone rather than the life skills and expertise which they wanted to recognize and see valued in school (Andrews & Yee, 2006, p. 437)

It is true that the knowledge students learn from school and textbooks is limited, and generally of a fixed nature, such as language grammar and science formulas. However, without a connection to real life and real practice, such knowledge can not be activated, and students’ interest in learning knowledge will not be maintained. Knowledge is dynamic, especially for language, which is an interactive type of knowledge, so it might make little sense to students unless they keep practising and applying it.

Application of “Funds of Knowledge” in Education

The concept of “funds of knowledge” has been used in pre-service teacher education. Buck and Sylvester (2005) argue that it is important for pre-service teachers to contact and understand the school community’s funds of knowledge:

Progressive educational philosophy positions educators to make use of the communities surrounding schools as laboratories of learning
within which lie multiple possibilities for greater understanding of self, place in society, and possibilities for social change. Such a philosophy situates neighbourhoods as wellsprings of opportunity and calls attention to educators’ responsibility to contribute to the growth and healing of community (p. 213).

In their studies, pre-service teachers are encouraged to engage in the community, and to investigate its funds of knowledge, rather than focusing on the household-base only. They are required to venture out into urban neighbourhoods, to browse through corner stores, walk along the sidewalks, and map out residences, parks, and businesses” (Buck & Sylvester, 2005, p. 220). The key points addressed in their studies are:

The less immediate but ideally more consequential product is to position pre-service teachers to look toward families and communities as resources rather than constraints, a position that stands to affect not only curricular development but also interactional classroom dynamics, pedagogical approaches, and relations with family and other community members (Buck & Sylvester, 2005, p. 217).

For decades, Moll and his colleagues’ “funds of knowledge” have continued to be developed and consolidated, but they are also being employed and adapted more widely in educational practice and research. In the following paragraph, a recent study of “funds of knowledge” is presented, in order to show the common emphases of “funds of knowledge” approaches in the educational field.

Singh and Zhao (2009) carried out research to investigate the academic and social performance of high school boys from Indigenous, low socio-economic, rural and isolated backgrounds in Australia, under circumstances where their “funds of knowledge” are utilized in school projects. In this research, some successful examples from other countries are mentioned, such as a programme which drew “funds of knowledge” from parents and local communities to enhance middle and secondary school boys’ learning motivation in California; another was a programme that integrated indigenous cultural and linguistic knowledge into the curriculum in Alaska; moreover, a programme that took place in UK and that encouraged positive academic outcomes for boys by engaging them in community-based sports clubs, is mentioned. In their research, Singh and Zhao (2009) evaluated three projects in three Australian schools that aimed to improve and care
for a particular group of socially-disadvantaged boys’ social and academic outcomes, concentrating on contextualization of the curriculum to accompany the changing social context.

Consideration is being given to how students’ learning might better position them in relation to the changes impacting on their communities . . . engaging these changes raises questions about how to reinvent “traditional” curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, and just as importantly, questions about schools broking learning provision in different cultural and economic contexts (p. 14).

The task for teachers is put forward thus: “teachers recognised that their students came to school with considerable experiential learning, but little of this was valued as potential educational capital within schools, mostly because of curriculum prescriptions” (Hill et al., 2002, cited in Singh & Zhao, 2009, p. 4). Teachers need to think of methods to motivate and enhance students’ learning as much as possible. Teachers need to establish a bridge between students’ existing knowledge and school knowledge, in order to extend students’ learning.

“Effective early-years teachers were able to build on and extend the knowledge and skills children acquired through their out-of school literacy experiences, interests and concerns”. (Singh & Zhao, 2009, p. 4) Moreover, linking the family and community with schooling through an educational approach might produce more knowledge resources for teaching in school. It might even prove to be more interesting and more vigorous than conventional teaching. Singh and Zhao (2009, p. 14) argue that the effectiveness of utilizing the “funds of knowledge” with a pedagogic purpose has been demonstrated in creating students’ learning environment:

Where educational policies, schooling structures and pedagogies sought to articulate the funds of family and community knowledge, these interventions enhanced . . . potential for social and academic success . . . made an important contribution to enlarging what is regarded as legitimate “educational” knowledge, albeit outside the curriculum. They enabled the students to engage with knowledge networks hitherto excluded or otherwise ignored by school-centred forms of learning. (p. 14).
Integrating the “funds of knowledge” from outside of the school into the formal curriculum, is actually contextualising learning embedded in the nitty-gritty of real life, by connecting learning with outside world knowledge, such as “cultural traditions, work-based learning and links to local community organisations” (Singh & Zhao, 2009, p. 3). This resulted in increasing students’ motivation and engagement in turn led to good social and academic achievements.

2.3 Language Acquisition

To understand the significance of school/community partnership more deeply, and particularly for language teaching and learning, language acquisition is an important topic for the literature review.

As Cheng (2009) indicates, it is meaningful to engage different societies into language teaching and learning, in order to create an optimal learning environment. Students can learn best in an environment that is “conductive to questioning, discovering, creating conversation, and finally leading to understanding” (pp. 73-74). For those students from immigrant families, their home might have non-English-speaking environment, but only with home-language television programs, newspapers, books, and magazines. Less practice with English might lead to less conversancy and school failure (Cheng, 2009):

Language acquisition is one of the central topics in cognitive science. Every theory of cognition has tried to explain it; probably no other topic has aroused such controversy . . . Language is the main vehicle by which we know about other people’s thoughts, and the two must be intimately related. Every time we speak we are revealing something about language, so the facts of language structure are easy to come by; these data hint at a system of extraordinary complexity (Pinker, 1995, p. 135).

As products of society, human beings need to contact society, to get used to society. Similarly, as the fundamental tool for human beings to survive and communicate, language use needs to be formed by contact with society as well. Purely learning grammar, dialogue models and vocabulary from textbooks is far from sufficient for understanding and managing the application of language and techniques.
Practising in real situations is most necessary; that is also why oral tests are always considered the most difficult of all language tests.

Nonetheless, learning a first language is something every child does successfully, in a matter of a few years and without the need for formal lessons. With language so close to the core of what it means to be human, it is not surprising that children’s acquisition of language has received so much attention. Anyone with strong views about the human mind would like to show that children’s first few steps are steps in the right direction (Pinker, 1995, p. 135).

Language acquisition is similar to a baby learning his/her first language, subconsciously and not purposively. With the first word a baby speaks, the process of acquisition starts. Teaching a language needs not only linguistic knowledge but also, plenty of practical application:

The most effective approach in the classroom is to avoid explicit teaching as much as possible and concentrate on creating natural communication situations: if learners receive plenty of ‘comprehensible input’ and their ‘affective filter’ is low, acquisition will occur naturally (Krashen & Terrell, 1983, p. 217).

The objective of learning a language is to use the language freely, but a learning process dominated by teachers is still the main process for delivering knowledge. However, language is better acquired in an authentic language environment, as this helps the formation of deeper understanding and capability for language use. In the process of acquiring learning, learners understand more about, and can speak more about, what they gain from the process:

Discourses are mastered through acquisition, not learning. People need to be at least apprenticed to a purposeful social environment to begin acquiring a discourse before productive learning can begin. This theory has important implications for how people are able to make changes to their current ways of doing things (Nelson, 2001, p. 2).

It is important to learn a second language in social circumstances. This does not mean that linguistic knowledge is unnecessary, but that cultural and social implications are equally important:
Learning is a process that involves conscious knowledge gained through teaching (though not necessarily from someone officially designated a teacher) or through certain experiences that trigger conscious reflection (Nelson, 2001, p 2).

Students need to be attracted by what they are learning, and to want to gain knowledge. However, from the researcher’s experience of teaching Mandarin as a second language in Australian schools, she recognised that teaching a minority-community language in the host country, a target language environment is hard to organise, for these language environments are always lacking. In Australia, Chinese people seldom speak Mandarin outside of home, so the Australians can not readily find people to speak with. This causes a key problem for Mandarin learners in overseas countries: insufficient target language environment.

As Sha (2009) suggests, contacting with the community and communication with community members are important steps in establishing an Extracurricular Language Environment for language learning.

Sha emphasises that everything surrounding students’ daily lives are resources for language learning. Traditionally, teachers focus on textbooks, and deliver systematically arranged knowledge to students, but neglect connections to society. He suggests that language teaching needs to be connected with all subjects, not only in school but also out of school. Politics, economics, cooking and shopping: everything related to language application is necessary for language learning.

Research in second language acquisition is not a passive skill of recognition but a creative construction process . . . language learning results from communicative language use . . . unlike many textbook
exercises, however, such authentic communicative situations in ideal ways . . . it is possible for students to construct their own language learning environment and thereby refashion themselves into a community of learners (Von Der Emde, Schneider & Kotter, 2002, pp. 213-214).

Furthermore, Cheng (2009) highlights the influence of family values and cultural definitions on creating an optimal language learning environment for children. However, the researcher argues that a language immersion environment is more important for language acquisition and learning. As Nelson (2001) suggests:

Acquisition is a process of gathering something subconsciously. It occurs without formal teaching, through exposure to models, trial and error, and practice within social groups. It happens in natural settings that are meaningful and functional, in the sense that the acquirers know that they need to acquire the things in order to function. This is how most people come to control their first language (p. 2).

In traditional teaching, teachers teach students, and students passively receive what teachers deliver; that is the process of learning. However, the key difference between learning and acquisition is the type of process: the two key features of acquisition are that it occurs subconsciously and naturally. As is the case with acquiring our first language, language is always learnt most effectively in natural settings in everyday life, and subconsciously.

Values and beliefs of a learning context influence every aspect of educational practice, including the aims of the learners, the methods, and consequently the strategies used to achieve what that setting perceives to be a high level of competence in an L2 (second language) (LoCastro, 1994, p. 6).

In addition, the literature on dynamic views of intercultural language acquisition strongly supports the idea that language should be learnt embedded with culture, and through everyday usage.

The dynamic view is an important part of intercultural language acquisition, and inclines to understanding of and practice in the culture.
The dynamic approach to culture involves seeing culture as a set of practices in which people engage in order to live their lives. Culture is not about information and things, it is about actions and understanding. It is necessary to engage with the linguistic and non-linguistic practices of the culture and to gain insights about the way of living in a particular cultural context. Cultural knowledge is about knowing how to engage with the culture (Liddicoat, 2002, p. 7).

The dynamic view focuses on the involvement of culture in the language teaching and learning process. From the dynamic point of view, engaging in the culture is a necessary practice, to manage and use language properly.

There is a saying given by the readers of Shakespeare that “there are a thousand Hamlets in a thousand people’s eyes”: different people hold different opinions and definitions towards the same work of art, and the same applies to culture. Hence, from different perspectives and cultural backgrounds, people will have different understandings of the same culture. So, how could the differences in different readers’ perspectives not influence their language acquisition? A convenient way might be to provide them with a set environment in which there were people and sites related to the language and culture, to minimize any deviation that might be caused by individualistic perspectives. In such an environment, students can be allowed to apply the language and understand the culture, and they could get feedback on their performance and learning immediately. Liddicoat describes culture “as an important part of being able to communicate successfully and appropriately in another language” (2002, p. 6). To know another language is only to have a tool to open your mouth. When one starts a conversation with people in a different language however, the outcome of the conversation will depend on certain variables. Kramsch (1993, cited in Liddicoat, 2002, p. 6) indicates that every time we speak we perform a cultural act. So that every time we start speaking in another language, we are acting ourselves in that culture – perhaps in an appropriate way, perhaps in an imperfect way, if we do not know that culture well. Even a chemist’s formula needs to be tested in experiments by students themselves. Grammar too needs to be practised, and students would be impressed deeply and understand better when they apply it themselves. When culture is such an abstract subject, how can it be learnt by academic examinations and assessments solely?
Furthermore, Liddicoat (2002) describes the dynamic view as seeing competences of “intercultural behaviour”:

The dynamic approach . . . a set of practices in which people engage in order to live their lives. The practices are variable. Cultural knowledge is not therefore a case of knowing information about the culture; it is about knowing how to engage with the culture . . . it is the ability to negotiate meaning across cultural boundaries and establish one’s own identity as a user of another language . . . it is more a general body of knowledge that underlies how language is used and how things are said and done in a cultural context (pp. 7-8).

The key word “engage” conveys the core of the dynamic view of intercultural language acquisition. Knowing the written information of a culture is quite insufficient. Since, in different cultural contexts, the same word, the same sentence, or even the same behaviour might have different implications, it is important to know how cultural differences will really affect the language, and to manage the ways in which language learners approach fitting into a context.

Learners need to have opportunities to engage with, use, and manipulate their cultural knowledge in their communication rather than passively reproducing it . . . only through exposure to a new culture in the context of its language can learners fully develop their intercultural competence by discovering for themselves their own “third place” (Liddicoat 2002, p. 11)

Another feature of the dynamic view could be interactivity, which requires the learners to know the appropriate way of interacting with the language they’ve learnt in the particular cultural context of that language, such as: “what it is appropriate to say at a particular point in a conversation, and what someone is expected to say at this point” (Liddicoat, 2002, p. 8).

In order to prove his point of view, that language and culture should be learnt dynamically, Liddicoat (2002) has examined a language teaching process named Intercultural Language Teaching (ILT), which includes five principles: culture is integrated into other language skills; culture is taught from the beginning; the bilingual speaker is the norm; language acquisition involves intercultural exploration; learning how to keep learning (p. 9-10). These five principles
emphasise that culture is something that we need to learn with language from the very beginning, because everyone has his or her own assumption of the culture behind the language while learning the language, and once these assumptions become established, it is hard to make corrections. Culture is something that can help us to become a bilingual who can speak and perform comfortably between cultures, rather than the unrealistic ideal of the “native speaker”, which tends to be limited to language ability solely. Culture is something that makes language learning more significant for the exploration of different cultures, and allows us to appreciate our own culture better; culture can keep and attract our interest in learning the language, and thus by becoming acquainted with and analysing culture, language can become a long-term subject for learners themselves, for life.

Moreover, as Liddicoat explains, the goal of ILT is not to “assimilate learners into the target culture, but for learners to develop for themselves an intercultural position that moves beyond their own culture” (Kramsch 1993, Crozet et al. 1999, cited in Liddicoat, 2002, p. 9), which he calls “the third place”. The third place means that the language learner can use the target language comfortably in the target cultural context, and meanwhile, can maintain his or her own identity and culture, without being like a completely native speaker. In other words, becoming a completely native speaker is not the goal for language learning, but rather it is to become a bilingual speaker with competence in having a particular understanding of the two cultures.

To be aware that cultures are relative that is being aware that there is no one “normal” way of doing things, but rather that all behaviour is culturally variable . . . an important part of intercultural competence is having strategies for learning more about culture through interaction (Liddicoat, 2002, p. 10).

Applying this to the case of Mandarin learning, there are commonalities but also some idiosyncratic particularities as well. For non-background students learning Mandarin, there exists a completely different Chinese culture compared to their own, and Liddicoat (2002) argues:
Culture shapes what we say, when we say it, and how we say it from the simplest language we use to the most complex. It is fundamental to the way we speak, write, listen, and read (p. 5).

In most cases, language learners focus more on the target language during the learning process, and pay less attention to their own culture, so it may not be obvious for them to notice the differences between the two cultures. In Liddicoat’s (2002) words, “our cultural conventions are often invisible to us and noticing a cultural difference can be made more difficult because of this” (p. 10). Noticing the difference between our own culture and the target culture, reflecting on it and deciding what the responses should be, in a cycle of noticing, reflecting and responding, will support and accelerate language learning comprehensively and meaningfully.

2.4 Gaps in the Literature

In relation to the literature about the three topics outlined, gaps in the literature emerged. In respect of partnerships, the literature seldom focuses on partnerships between school and community solely. Moreover, the community partners that the literature looks at are profit-related organizations or institutions, but not individuals and voluntary-oriented organisations. Secondly, for funds of knowledge, the knowledge talked about mostly belongs to the students themselves, such as household knowledge. Necessarily, the literature does not address knowledge that is neither based on students’ own background, nor related to their language, culture or religion. In other words, it does not address knowledge that belongs to another cultural or ethnic group, which might be overlooked or devalued. The question arose rather, as how to utilize a minority group’s knowledge in a host culture for the educational purpose of learning a second language that is not spoken in the home. The last part of the literature review was language acquisition. The results of this review supported the research’s purpose. Utilizing the funds of knowledge from a Chinese community has as its aim to create a language environment for students to practise in and experience the target language. The embedded culture can help students strengthen their impressions and retention of the language.
In this research, it was intended to explore the funds of knowledge from the Chinese community. Issues around partnerships with this community were investigated, and the discussion includes essential criteria for partnerships, forms of participation, contradictory factors and the significance brought by the partnership.

2.5 Conclusion

To summarise, this chapter has provided an overview of the three key ideas, school/community partnership, funds of knowledge and language acquisition, which are relevant to the theoretical background of the research goals and objectives and research questions. With these ideas in mind, the methodology is outlined in the next chapter: this includes developing categories for data analysis from the literature on school/community partnership.
Chapter 3

Methodology: A Qualitative Case Study

3.1 Introduction

In the previous two chapters, the background and theoretical framework of this research study are provided. In this Chapter, the qualitative case study is introduced, and the rationale of the selected methodology is discussed. The research design follows, with details of the data collection and analysis procedures, issues of validity, reliability and ethics. The outline of this chapter is as follows:

3.2 An Introduction to the research methodology
3.3 The design of this research study
3.4 The validity, reliability and ethical issues of this research study
3.5 Summary

3.2 Research Methodology

In this section, the case study as the key research methodology of this research study is introduced. The methodology is defined, its features are outlined, and the potential weaknesses of the methodology are critiqued.

3.2.1 Definition of Case Study

“Using case studies for research purposes remains one of the most challenging of all social science endeavours” (Yin, 2009, p. 3), since case studies include almost all types of research methods for investigating and understanding a complex social phenomenon. The focus of a “case study” is study, so using any method to study a case can be defined as a case study. However, the broad freedom associated with the form, and the lack of restrictive focus, do not necessarily outline a good way to undertake research, and this can lead to difficult and confusing findings. Thus,
selecting the most suitable methods to study the case, and staying within the boundaries of the defined case are important.

Because of these complications, the case study form has had a long and controversial history. For a long time, case studies were overlooked, and failed to be recognised as a formal research method. As Yin (2009) state, case studies were always considered as one stage of a research method, but not as a method in themselves, and they were often confused with ethnographies and participant-observation studies. These conditions led to the case study suffering inferior status. However, Platt (1992, p. 46, cited in Yin, 2009, p. 17) has explained and helped to restate the importance of the case study as “a logic of design . . . a strategy to be preferred when circumstances and research problems are appropriate rather than an ideological commitment to be followed whatever the circumstances”. It is emphasised that a case study is study under certain circumstances, and follows the path of discovering, but not verifying new ideas and phenomena (Yin, 2009).

As a research method, the case study has its distinguishing particularities compared to other methods. The most obvious feature is its great relevance to real life phenomena and relevant contextual circumstances. Unlike experiments, the research context and phenomena of a case study are not controlled or limited by variables, and they also are mostly contemporary. Nonetheless, it is a classic methodology with a long history, and comprises two types of case study: quantitative and qualitative. In this research, a qualitative case study is employed. As Gerring (2007) suggests, a qualitative case study is:

Holistic, thick . . . utilizes a particular type of evidence . . . its method of evidence gathering is naturalistic . . . the topic is diffuse . . . it employs triangulation . . . the research investigates the properties of a single observation, or that the research investigates the properties of a single phenomenon, instance, or example. (p. 17).

In contrast with quantitative methodologies such as surveys and questionnaires, case studies focus more on “process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation” (Merriam, 1998, pp. 18-19). A case study is “a specific instance that is frequently designed to illustrate a
more general principle . . . help researchers to understand other similar cases, phenomena or situations” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 253). The general purpose of case study research is to “develop as full understanding of that case as possible” (Punch, 1998, cited in Silverman & Marvasti, 2008, p. 162). If there is any sampling in the case study, the aim is “to study a representative subsection of a precisely defined population in order to make inferences about the whole population” (Arber, cited in Silverman & Marvasti, 2008, p. 163). In fact, the qualitative case study is a methodology to search for an image of the macrocosm from study of the microcosm. By studying one particular case, establishing the link between the case studied and other cases, the results of the study can be applied to readers’ own circumstances, and become influential and significant beyond the boundaries of the given case. For most qualitative case studies, the aim is to obtain “some standardized information . . . some of the same open-ended questions are asked of all participants, and some time is spent in an unstructured mode so that fresh insights and new information can emerge” (Merriam, 2009, p. 320).

3.2.2 How to Determine a Case Study

Compared with other research methodologies, the case study has particular characteristics, so it seems that it is easy to define a case study once the research purpose and questions are stated. However, there are still some common points that can lead to the case study being confused with other methodology: “exploratory, descriptive and explanatory” (Yin, 2009, p.8). When determining the use of a case study for research, as Yin has suggested, three conditions must be considered. Firstly, “the type of research question posed; the extent of control an investigator has over actual behavioural events; the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events” (p. 8). After understanding the purpose of the research, clarifying the exact information that researchers want to get, and then deciding the research methods, “why” and “how”, are exploratory questions that favour the case study, which by its nature can lead to deeper understanding and to discovering hidden information. Moreover, case studies operate primarily through direct observation and interview, so all the evidence collected in a case study is first hand, raw and contemporary, and this does not entail manipulating social behaviours.
Moreover, after deciding to use the case study method, as Merriam (1998) suggests, three premises need to be met in defining the “case” for a case study. Firstly, as she suggests, using the case study approach to do research is especially suitable for addressing a situational or an individual problem. The process of the case study is to searching for a better understanding of a phenomenon, so the form of the “case” needs to fit in relation to “an individual, a program, an institution, a group, an event, or a concept” (Merriam, 1988, p. 44). Secondly, because case studies are carried out in a naturalistic way, the “case” must be observed and investigated without predetermined factors that might interfere with or direct the research outcomes. This means the researcher has to exclude all potential interferences. Finally, since the case study is related more to the research’s context rather than to a specific variable, this means the case must have a high degree of contact with the social context, and not be isolated from it.

3.2.3 Critiques of Case Studies

Nothing in this world is absolutely right or wrong. Every topic or theory must arouse different voices, just as the coin has two sides. There are three major criticisms levelled against the case study: the lack of rigour of the research process; the insufficient scientific basis for generalization; and the challenge of manipulating massive research results (Yin, 2009). First, the question of rigour arises from the fact that, unlike experimental method, although case studies have a ready procedure plan, the research process is more open. Relatively speaking, case studies have more possibilities for the unknown to be discovered, the direction of the research is open to influence, and the research question itself can also be changed during the process, as the researcher’s knowledge builds up and complications are discovered. However, it is good to come up with surprises and discoveries, in certain fields. For example, case studies are particularly suitable for innovation in the field of educational research. The second criticism is that case studies, as one case carried out in one situation, do not provide enough scientific basis for generalization, and it is always argued that a single case can hardly produce results leading to a commonly applicable theory. As Yin (2009) explains, a case study is “generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or
universe . . . like the experiment, [it] does not represent a ‘sample’, and in doing a case study, your goal will be to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization)” (p. 15). So Yin’s explanation emphasises that the function of case study is to expand the theory that may apply analogously to the reader’s circumstances, but not to create generalisations for all cases. The correct application of the case study is to evaluate first, and then apply it, if appropriate.

The third criticism is the challenge of handling and reporting the research findings. Since the data collected for a case study are in many different forms, such as observations, interviews, and others, it takes a long time to process, and it is always believed that the conduct of data collection and analysis is complicated, tiring and long drawn out. However, this remains conventional wisdom, and is only partly right. Mostly, a qualitative case study is truly protracted, as well as tiring. However, if prepared carefully, if a timeline is created and steps are taken in accordance with it, the case study will not be too complicated. Following these steps is crucial: taking one’s time, managing time, and keeping detailed records.

The value of the case study’s results depends on the researcher’s goal. Some studies are called “intrinsic case studies”; these are investigations for their own sake or in answer to one’s own interests. However, most qualitative case studies offer a thick description of the research process and plenty of information to address readers’ interests and their understandings, so that they can apply the research findings to their situation. This “transferability” (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) is a process of fit-and-apply, from a sending situation to a receiving situation. As Gomm, Hammersley and Foster (2000) conclude, in case study and research, proper generalisations need to clarify the boundaries of the case. It is also necessary to be “very clear about the basis on which they are claiming the general relevance of their findings; or when empirical generalization is involved, about what population is the target” (Gomm, Hammersley & Foster, 2000, p. 111).

. . . there are at least four different applications. The most important is to explain the presumed causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies. A second application is to describe an intervention and the real-life context in which it
occurred. Third, case studies can illustrate certain topics within an evaluation, again in a descriptive mode. Fourth, the case study strategy may be used to enlighten those situations in which intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes. Whatever the application, one constant theme is that program sponsors – rather than research investigators alone – may have the prominent role in defining the evaluation questions and desired data categories (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 1990, cited in Yin, 2009, p. 20)

The significance of case study results seems dependent on the different levels they may be applied to. However, no matter whether it is devised at a high academic level, or only for the researcher’s own sake and interests, the significance of research is in studying and understanding some aspect that is presently unknown. Once this goal is achieved, it does not matter which group gets the benefit.

3.3 Design of this research

This section talks about the design of the Case Study, beginning with the theory; then the design of this research study is introduced, followed by detailed information of participant recruitment, data collection and analysis, and the writing up of the findings.

3.3.1 Design of the Case Study

It is quite unwarranted that the case study has for a long time been considered solely as a part of other research methods. Thus, unlike other classic methods, there is no common case study design in existence (Yin, 2009). However, case studies are a collection of steps, starting from research questions being set, to the questions being answered and conclusions drawn. The research design is in effect, the logic of the whole research, which can be learnt from previous studies, or can be developed by researchers, and such logic is necessary to guide the research direction, and to guarantee the validity of the results in answer to the questions. The research design includes methods of collecting data, analysing data and interpreting data as well.
Yin (2009) suggests there are five components of research design: research questions, research propositions, units of analysis, logic linking the data to the propositions, and the criteria for interpreting the findings (p. 27). Absorbing inspiration from the existing literature, thinking and reshaping one’s own research focus is a good way of defining research questions. By identifying overlaps or gaps between the existing studies and their own research, the researcher will be able to make sure of the scope and significance of the research, and to carry out the research on a more comprehensive and transparent basis. Propositions are something that the research aims to examine. They are similar to hypotheses, and can lead the research directions of the study. The third component consists of the units of analysis, which are matched to the identification of the “case”, and are highly relevant to the stated questions and propositions. As Yin (2009) indicates, “Without such questions and propositions, you might be tempted to cover ‘everything’ about the individual(s), which is impossible to do . . . the more a case study contains specific questions and propositions, the more it will stay within feasible limits.” (p. 29).

It is also widely recognised that selection of the appropriate unit of analysis will start to occur when the researchers accurately specify their primary research questions. If the questions do not lead to the favouring of one unit of analysis over another, the questions are probably either too vague or too numerous. “The unit of analysis may have been defined one way, even though the phenomenon being studied actually follows a different definition” (Yin, 2009, p. 30). Defining the unit of analysis properly requires that the first two steps be carried out properly, well narrowed down and well clarified as well; else, the selection of units will fall into confusion.

To reduce the confusion, one recommended practice is to discuss the potential case with a colleague. Try to explain to that person what questions you are trying to answer and why you have chosen a specific case or group of cases as a way of answering those questions. This may help you to avoid incorrectly identifying the unit of analysis . . . the desired case should be some real-life phenomenon, not an abstraction such as a topic, an argument, or even a hypothesis. (Yin, 2009, p. 32)
Thus, it is true that prior analysis is crucial for research study, especially to avoid misunderstanding and vagueness. Colleagues who may be familiar with the research content and research field can help one to clarify and sharpen the research questions and propositions, and the units of analysis as well.

The fourth component is to find out the logic linking data to propositions and criteria for interpreting the findings. This is actually the soul of a research study as it links the preparatory stages, the practice and the analysis as a whole. Without a reasonable linking logic, researchers may collect too much data that is not later used in the data analysis or collect too little data, which prevents the proper use of a desired analytic technique. “Sometimes, the latter situation even may force researchers to return to their data collection phase, to supplement the original data” (Yin, 2009, p. 34).

The last component consists of the criteria for interpreting a study’s findings, which means the strategy for decoding the findings and extracting the results of the research.

One more important part of the research design is the theory that has been studied and that is related to the research undertaken. The purpose of starting with such a theory is to have “a (hypothetical) story about why acts, events, structures, and thoughts occur” (Yin, 2009, p. 36) in similar fields, as a “blueprint” for the research. Based on the above, “theory development prior to the collection of any case study data is an essential step in doing case studies . . . the benefit is a stronger design and a heightened ability to interpret your eventual data” (Yin, 2009, p. 36).

There are three main types of theory topic that can operate as research starting points. The first type exists with “a rich theoretical framework”, and is good for reference and for guiding the way; the second is called “descriptive theory”, which is more general, and where the researchers need to find out the relevance by themselves, to think of the essence and its underlying meaning. The last type is a much poorer initial base for research, where the studies on related topics are few. In such cases, where the research is more exploratory, the first three components of the research as stated above, still need to be clarified.
3.3.2 Design of this research study

In order to triangulate the data sources to increase the credibility, this research was designed to use three methods of data collection: interview, reflectional journal, and document review. All the data collected were used to answer four contributory research questions, and one principal question. The principal question was “how to build partnerships between schools and Chinese communities in terms of language resources, and cultural inspiration on students’ Mandarin learning”, while the four contributory ones were:

1. What funds of knowledge are available in the community that could be utilized by schools?
2. What criteria are essential for establishing Mandarin education program partnerships between students and the Chinese community?
3. What factors may encourage or obstruct the building of partnerships?
4. What significance would such partnerships have for the participants?

Figure 3.1 below illustrates the research steps, and their inter-relations. The data of this research mainly came from two contexts: the school and Chinese community. The school context refers to the whole school community of (pseudonym), in which three schools were involved (where the researcher taught Mandarin). An assistant principal and two Mandarin teachers were interviewed. Moreover, an educational administrator was interviewed, two reflectional journals of the researcher and four other relevant documents, were reviewed. The Chinese community mainly refers to individuals living or working in the area of the school community, and two Chinese community Members were interviewed.
In order to answer the research questions, six semi-structured interviews were conducted, two reflectional journals were recorded, and three documents were reviewed.

The interviews mainly aimed to ask interviewees’ expectation of Mandarin teaching and learning at schools, experiences of Mandarin teaching and learning, and their opinions about school/community partnership on Mandarin teaching and learning, including suggestions and concerns. The researcher’s reflection journals recorded the experiences and feelings of the researcher from the perspective of a Chinese community Member. Four documents, from the national level to the school level, talk about the promoting of Mandarin, or relate to school’s procedures for applying for funding of partnership activities.
3.3.3 Participant Recruitment

Initially there were five participant subgroups involved in this research, namely the: principal subgroup, classroom teacher subgroup, student subgroup, Chinese community member subgroup and language consultant subgroup. However, as the research proceeded, it changed into three: a school member subgroup (including an assistant principal and Mandarin teachers); a community member subgroup (including Chinese community Members and the researcher) and an educational administrator subgroup (comprising one administrator).

The school member subgroup included an assistant principal and two Mandarin teachers. The reason for choosing an assistant principal rather than principal is because she was the coordinator of the Mandarin program in the school, and knew the Mandarin program more than others; the two Mandarin teachers were the only two Chinese-background teachers in the whole school community, and had several years of experience of teaching. As the direct persons coordinating or conducting Mandarin teaching and learning at school, these school members’ attitudes towards the Mandarin language program and their views and suggestions about utilizing Chinese community funds of knowledge as resources for educational purpose are key information for the research.

The second subgroup was the Chinese community member subgroup, living or working around the target school community, including the researcher, who wrote two reflection journals recording her experience as a Chinese community member. Most of the Chinese community Members were Chinese-Australians, were able to speak Mandarin, and knew Chinese culture well. Since they could be the key participants in possible school/community partnership, it was important to be aware of their opinions about the various possibilities, and to be aware of their willingness to use their linguistic and intellectual resources to contribute to the school’s Mandarin program, with the aim of increasing students’ interests and deepening their understanding of Chinese language and culture. For the researcher, since she had an opportunity to teach Mandarin in the local schools, and was invited to one school to deliver a Chinese lesson to the students as a Chinese
community Member, in this respect she could be considered as a Chinese community Member.

The last subgroup was the education administrator subgroup, comprising one interviewee, a man who had extensive and rich knowledge and experience of teaching and education, and who also could provide advice at the policy level. Moreover, he understood resources for teaching and learning in the target school community and was familiar with the entire Mandarin program in the Western Sydney Region, so his suggestions were relevant and constructive.

The following interviewees were decided beforehand: assistant principal, Mandarin teacher, and the education administrator. The Chinese community Members were selected upon first contact, based on how they reacted to the researcher’s introduction, and on their willingness to be interviewed. A formal invitation was sent to all participants in advance, whether face to face or by email, supported by an information sheet; after that, a consent form was sent out (in order to gain permission after they read the information sheet) as well.

As a case study, the research aimed to investigate and discover new variables of a social phenomenon under a specific research question. A qualitative case study is not analysis of the existing evidence, but rather an exploration of hidden and covered evidence. In this sense, collecting as much evidence as possible, and from channels as various as possible, was the key process for a high quality case study. Whether it is written words, random interviews, expert advice or visual information, the objective of a case study is to investigate all evidence of a certain phenomenon under a research question. The more evidence there is, the more comprehensive the result, and the more varied the evidence, the more credible the results.

In this research, the three types of method for data collection were interview, observation, and document review.

At the first step of this research study, the researcher visited Chinese people and sites around the target school community, observing their life style, working situation, frequency of Mandarin usage, and other matters.
The next stage was undertaking the interviews. The selected interviewees for this research held different positions and points of view, from the school member, to the Chinese community member, to the education administrator. Around 10 interview questions were prepared, and the interviews for each participant lasted between 30-40 minutes. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured way. The interviewees were asked questions, and encouraged to give their answers from their particular perspective as much as possible.

During the research, as part of the normal school schedule, some excursions and incursions took place; some were directly related to Mandarin teaching, such as an excursion to Chinatown and an excursion to a Chinese movie. The researcher wrote reflective journals on these two activities, and treated them as the one source of data in this research study. One of the journals recorded a movie excursion, to a movie about Chinese Kung Fu that was filmed in China, and which had plenty of Chinese culture and language in it. The researcher asked students to write some feedback after watching the movie, aimed at seeing how they felt such activities differed from formal classes, and what they expected to gain from such activities and similar activities. The other journal described a day when the researcher and three other colleagues were invited by a school (out of the target school community) to have a Chinese class for a group of students, to bring Chinese culture and language to them.

The last step was a document review, and focused mainly on the national policy and strategy to promote Mandarin, on the school’s Mandarin strategy, and also on the procedure for applying for school/community partnership activities, which apply to each Australian school. Four documents were reviewed: National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program, Program Guidelines (2009-2012); the application document for an Asian Education Foundation grant from the target school; Project Leader Support Manual – Becoming Asia Literate: Grants to Schools (2010): Project Information Overview – (Luting shan) HS (2009); and the procedure form of activity application from the target school, which talking about the complexity of partnerships at the level practice.
3.3.4 Data Collection

Contrary to quantitative research, which is based on statistics, the data of qualitative research consists of “detailed descriptions of situations, event, people, interactions, and observed behaviours; direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts; and excerpts or entire passages from documents, correspondence, records, and case histories” (Shekedi, 2005, p. 47). During the research process, “the researcher makes decisions about what data to collect, whom to interview, and so on” (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009, pp. 239-240). Generally, compared with quantitative research methods, a qualitative case study employs multiple methods to generate data and makes data more comprehensive and interdependent. Moreover, the researcher has more personal influence on the data as well.

Yin (2009) argues that “a major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence” (pp. 114-115). Documentation, interview, observation and artefacts are all considered methods of data collection for case study. Different methods of data collecting provide multiple sources of evidence, and a “hybrid strategy” (Yin, 2009) is necessary to carry it out. The triangulated data sources included documentation, interview, and observation. As Denzin states, the advantage of triangulation is that “the flaws of one method are often the strengths of another, and by combining methods, researchers can achieve the best of each, while overcoming their unique deficiencies” (Denzin, cited in Blaikie, 2000, p. 263).

The purpose of using different methods to collect data is to decrease the subjectivity and personal influence of the researcher, and build up the quality and reliability of the case study through employing data from different sources and perspectives to assess the same situation.

One analysis of case study methods found that those case studies using multiple sources of evidence were rated more highly, in terms of their overall quality, than those that replied on only single sources of information (COSMOS Corporation, 1983, cited in Yin, 2009, p. 117).
The multiplication of data source is important, since it not only helps the researcher and readers to understand and trust the case better, but also makes the research more in-depth and comprehensive. Most importantly, where different data sources corroborate each other, this increases the quality and reliability of the research. However, it is not easy to manage the analysis of such data triangulation well.

When you have really triangulated the data, the events or facts of the case study have been supported by more than a single source of evidence; when you have used multiple sources but not actually triangulated the data, you typically have analysed each source of evidence separately and have compared the conclusions from different analyses – but not triangulated the data . . . without such multiple sources, an invaluable advantage of the case study strategy will have been lost . . . your text would constantly have to point out the self-reported nature of your data, using such phrases as “as reported by the interviewees,” “as stated in the interviews,” or “she/he reported that . . .” and the like. (Yin, 2009, p. 118)

The biggest challenge for triangulation of data sources is to really pay equal attention to the multiple data, and to ensure that they corroborate each other. It would be easy for researchers to rely overly on one source of data and overlook the others, which would make the outcome not convincing enough. Especially if the research relied unduly on an interview, the outcome would easily become more like a report that demonstrates interviewees’ opinions and attitudes rather than the product of inter-analysis of different sources of data. Thus, it is important to distribute attention to different sources of data, and make each analysis reasonable.

In this research study, in order to produce triangulation of data source and to increase credibility and trustworthiness, three methods were used: interview, reflection journal and document review. Six interviews were conducted in a semi-structured way, and two reflection journals were written to record the observational experience of the researcher, while the four documents reviewed were all related to the promotion of Mandarin in Australia, and the school application procedures for activities concerning the complexity of partnerships at the level practice will be referred as well.
Interviews are an essential, but also challenging method for case studies. The essence of the interview lies in the information that can emerge from it. By asking a series of in-depth questions relevant to the research questions, it is expected that the opinions and attitudes of the interviewees will provide the researcher with plenty of information from different perspectives. However, the challenges and the difficulty of interviews mainly come from the process of conducting them. These include problems such as how to avoid bias in both the researcher and in interviewees, and how to reduce interpersonal influence between the researcher and the interviewee. The researcher needs to hold a neutral point of view consistently. “Interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behaviour, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them” (Merriam, 2009, p. 88). The purpose of interviewing in research is “a move away from seeing human subjects as simply manipulable and data as somehow external to individuals, and towards regarding knowledge as generated between humans, often through conversations” (Kvale, cited in Louis, Lawrence & Keith, 2000, p. 267). Interviews can be divided into structured, semi-structured and unstructured types (Merriam, 2009). In this study, semi-structured interviews were selected as the key method of data collection.

According to Barriball and While (1994), there are two reasons for choosing the semi-structured interview. The first is its appropriateness to discovering the understandings of the interviewees regarding complicated and insightful issues, and its capability for exploring more information and for clarifying answers. Secondly, variation in the professional, educational and personal backgrounds of the interviewees excludes the use of a standardized interview schedule for all.

The second prong of the data triangulation of this research study was direct observation. As Yin (2009) mentions, observation can take place at meetings, at side-walk activities, in factories, classrooms and the like. Moreover, “the observations can be so valuable that you may even consider taking photographs at the case study site; at a minimum, these photographs will help to convey important case characteristics to outside observers” (Dabbs, 1982, cited in Yin, 2009, p. 110). Observation has the advantage of “affording the researcher the opportunity to gather ‘live’ data from ‘live’ situations” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p. 305). The degree to which a researcher can “predict behaviour from interview data
is at best limited, and the gap between the two can be quite large. In contrast to interviews, observational techniques yield data that pertain directly to typical behavioural situations” (Selltiz, Jahoda, Deutsch & Cook, cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 88). Observation is suitable in a case that “(1) serves a formulated research purpose, (2) is planned deliberately, (3) is recorded systematically, and (4) is subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability” (Kidder, cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 88). Compared with interviews, observational data is collected firsthand by the researchers themselves, which maximises the advantages of a human instrument for data collection. However, as with interviewing, researchers need to be sensitive during the observation process. In this study, the researcher recorded evidence from her observations in her reflection journals. Moreover, photographs were attached, to provide visual reinforcement or illustration of the observation if necessary.

The third prong of triangulation, documentation, involves taking into account various forms of information, usually related directly to the research question. According to Yin (2009), documentation can include many different forms: personal documents such as a diary and emails; reports of meetings and events; administrative documents; formal studies or evaluations of the same “case”; and articles from the mass media (Yin, 2009). In this study, documents focused on the Mandarin program, and schools’ documents related to activity application will be analysed. Documents are widely defined and may include public records, personal papers, physical traces and artefacts. As Merriam (1988) has said, there are no major differences between documentary data and interview or observational data, once they have been collected. One issue concerning document generation is the need for “authenticity”. The researcher needs to “reconstruct the process by which the data were originally assembled by somebody else . . . and be aware of the conditions under which these data were produced, what specific methodological and technical decisions may have been made . . . and the consequent impact on the nature of the data now to be taken over” (Riley, cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 116).
3.3.5 Data Analysis

Case studies are a highly descriptive methodology, and most of the data collected is narrative, but it is wrong to suggest that mere “narrative description is enough” (Merriam, 1988, p 131). If researchers leave readers to draw their own conclusions, they risk misinterpretation and “their results also may be trivialized by readers who are unable to make connections implied, but not made explicit, by the researcher” (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, cited in Merriam, 1988, p 131). So, transcending the narrative description of the research and abstracting the key ideas out for the readers, is an important step in analysis.

Qualitative research always produces a range of descriptive information from interviews, observations, and so on, so that Wiersma and Jurs (2009) stated coding is often the first choice for “data reduction”. In fact, coding is more like a process of selection, to “see what they have in the data” (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009, p. 238). As Wiersma and Jurs (2009) suggest, coding is the process of searching for “patterns of thinking or behaviour, words or phrases, and events that appear with regularity or for some reason appear noteworthy. The words describing such phenomena become the coding categories” (p. 238), which are also influenced by the research problem and purpose. Developing categories is the next step, and is both an organising and conceptualising process of data analysis as well. Generally, the categories that made out from the coding should be related to the research problem and purpose. For this reason, some analysis of the data should occur during the collection process. As Merriam (1988) indicates, “without ongoing analysis one runs the risk of ending up with data that are unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed” (p 124). Analysing the data as it is collected makes the data more concentrated and more related to the research purpose. This avoids the data being useless or irrelevant, and keeps the focus directly on the research results.

After categorising data, the researcher arrives at the writing up stage. For qualitative research, writing up contains more thick description than quantitative research. “Qualitative results focus on underlying structures, relationships among entities, influencing factors, and even the ‘meaning’ of events and experiences”
Wiersma and Jurs also express that the descriptive writing up of the case study aims to illuminate the “underlying dynamics” (2009, p. 241) of the context, and to provide an insightful understanding of the situation. At the core of the writing up stage is theorizing, expressing the researcher’s interpretation of the analysed data, and drawing inferences for future research. As Goetz and LeCompte (1984, cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 141) define it, theorising is “the cognitive process of discovering or manipulating abstract categories and the relationships among those categories . . . isolated variables that are mechanically linked together out of context”. The researcher’s speculation plays a key role in the theorising process. Theorising involves:

Playing with ideas probabilistically. It permits the investigator to go beyond the data and make guesses about what will happen in the future, base on what has been learned in the past about constructs and linkages among them and on comparisons between that knowledge and what presently is known about the same phenomenon. These guesses are projections about how confidently the relationships found or explanations developed can be expected to obtain in the future (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 141).

In the practice of this research study, there were mainly four steps of data analysis (see Figure 3.2):

1. Categories derived from Epstein's six-point model
2. Coding data accordingly
3. Generate themes
4. Develop findings

Figure 3.2. Data analysis procedure

In order to analyse the research data systematically, the researcher tried to look for some pioneering research in a similar field. The most related research for this case study was Epstein’s six-point model for school/family/community partnerships, in which the researcher found some points that agreed with her projected research
outcomes, while others did not. Consequently, she pulled two phases: mutual understanding and mobilization of resources from the Chinese community out of this model, and referred to them as categories instead for the following data analysis. Therefore, each interview, reflection journal and document was analysed in accordance with these two categories, and under each category, several themes were generated, in regard to the information gained from the various data sources. Integrating all these themes, the findings were developed, in application to the research questions.

The key findings of this research emerge as a school/community partnership model, particularly for Mandarin teaching and learning. Moreover, because of the particularity of the language, the community talked about is “Chinese community”, and the community members are all Chinese people in this local area who can speak Mandarin and know about Chinese culture.

3.3.6 Writing up Findings

From each source of data emerged the findings of this research study, and a school/community partnership model is presented as the key finding. From each data source, various findings relate to evaluation, suggestions and predictions about partnerships, from the perspectives of school members, Chinese community members and policy makers. Then, these data were integrated into a model containing necessary recommendations and proposed activities.

3.4 Ethics Issues, Validity and Reliability

In this section, ethic issues are presented first, and then the validity and reliability of the research are discussed.

3.4.1 Confidentiality and Privacy

Important information from both NEAF (National Ethics Application Form) and SERAP (the State Education Research Approval Process) are presented in this section, to show the protection and respect afforded to participants in this research.
study. Regarding each participant’s private rights, and the related requirements and regulations, a detailed and strict ethics application procedure was in preparation for this research. A NEAF was submitted to the Office of Research Services at UWS for the Human Research Ethics Committee’s approval. Besides a complete application form, information sheets and consent forms for all different participant groups were submitted as well, and interview question samples were attached. A SERAP application was submitted to the NSW Department of Education and Training in Western Sydney Region, and aimed to guarantee the rights of DET employees and students. Most of the information written on the SERAP application form was similar to NEAF, but SERAP focused more on the schools, in relation to the actual number of student participants and teacher participants, and the time that might be taken up. A list of the most important ethics issues, as required in both application forms, is presented below, and explained in depth.

Both the NEAP and SERAP approvals guaranteed the protection of participants’ confidentiality and privacy issues in this research, and the ethics guidelines directed, and were employed during the research process.

No private information about the participants, such as family background, was collected. Rather, the groups to which they belonged (age and occupation, etc) were identified. Moreover, pseudonyms were used for all participants and schools in the dissemination of research results to ensure confidentiality, and all the data collected in and generated from this research were not to be used for any other purpose than for the thesis.

Interviews were stored in electronic form and in transcription notes as well. All electronic files were saved in a folder on the researcher’s computer, and backed up on another hard drive as well. Printed information was stored in a locked cabinet; computer files, including emails and audio tapes, require a password for access. All the raw information will be stored for 5 years after the completion of this research; the mandatory period. After 5 years, the paper information will be shredded and all electronic information and audiotapes will be deleted completely. The researcher’s supervisors will have the right to deal with this information in accordance with ethics guidelines.
3.4.2 Risk and Benefit

One of the biggest risks regarding the outcomes of this research study may be over-generalization of the findings. Lincoln and Guba (2000) argue, “if one rejects the goal of achieving generalizations, all that can be left is knowledge of particular . . . ‘what value could there be in knowing only the unique’?” (p. 110). For a research study that could draw on plenty of time and money, having a reasonable generalisation as an end product, so that it could be adapted by others as a theory, or empirically in a wide range of situations, would make it more valuable. As Donmoyer (2000, pp. 46-47) mentions, the traditional view of generalisation is that:

Both the physical and the social world were thought to be places where lawful regularities existed between causes and effects. Whether in physical science or in social science, the role of research was to discover and validate generalizations about these regularities. (Donmoyer, 2000, pp. 46-47)

Nevertheless, the significance of generalization in qualitative research was overlooked. As Schofield (2000, p. 182) indicates, “the major factor contributing to the disregard of the issue of generalization in the qualitative methodology appears to be a widely shared view that it is unimportant, unachievable or both.”

However, arguments have emerged in social sciences against this view, and some researchers advocate generalization in qualitative research. First of all, it is not appropriate to connect generalisation with any individual cases without any justification (Donmoyer, 2000). A major factor can be the changeability of culture on the interpretation of generalization. So generalization needs to be reconceptualised in regard to cultural factors.

A second challenge is the paradigm issue. The highlights the influence of a priori conceptualization, which may determine the data collected. With some positive shifts occurring, the acceptance of generalization in qualitative research has increased. As Schofield (2000) suggests, with the increasingly common purpose of qualitative research as an evaluative process, “although formative evaluations are usually site-specific, the worth of a summative evaluation is greatly enhanced to
the extent it can inform programme and policy decisions relating to other sites”. Moreover, as readers become more and more educated and widely knowledgeable, “unless the researcher chooses a very typical site or presents an unusually insightful analysis of what is happening, the purely descriptive value of the study may be undercut or discounted” (Schofield, 2000, p. 73). As Stake (2000) argues, based on individual experience, readers can form useful “naturalistic generalization” through a process of comparing situations and implied knowledge (Schofield, 2000). Schofield (2000) lists two main questions helping researchers to conclude a proper generalisation:

1. To what do we want to generalise?
2. How can we design qualitative studies in a way that maximises their generalisability? (p. 76)

3.4.3 Validity and Reliability

What should be noticed in a case study? There are two important issues that specifically that need to be paid attention to when doing case study research: these are reliability and validity. As Yin (2009) suggests, several tests need to be conducted, including “trustworthiness, creditability, confirmability, and data dependability” (p. 40), and validity and reliability are two key issues related to these tests. Both these two issues are related to the trustworthiness and accuracy of the research findings for readers to judge.

From a traditional view, reliability “refers to the extent to which one’s findings can be replicated” (Merriam, 2009, p. 320); this means the result needs to be the same when the research is repeated. However, for qualitative research, as Lincoln and Guba (cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 172) suggest, “rather than demanding that outsiders get the same results, one wishes outsiders to concur that, given the data collected, the results make sense”. Reliability is assimilated to “dependability” and “consistency”, to some extent. Obtaining adequate reliability refers more to the accuracy of the researcher’s explanation of the research position than to his or her understanding of what the findings mean or how they relate to other research and theory (Bogden & Biklen, 2003). The central plank of reliability is the quality of recording and
Reliability is an issue related to the degree to which the research findings can be proved by further studies that arrive at similar findings. The purpose of reliability is “to minimize the errors and biases in a study” (Yin, 2009, p. 45).

Validity deals with to what extent the findings from case studies can be generalized beyond the original boundaries:

In qualitative data validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher . . . the subjectivity of respondents, their opinions, attitudes and perspectives together contribute to a degree of bias. Validity, then, should be seen as a matter of degree rather than as an absolute state (Gronlund, 1981, cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 133).

As a key issue, validity has both internal and external aspects (Merriam, 1988). Internal validity it focuses on to what extent the research findings match reality – in other words, the credibility of the research process that is described. External validity deals with the possibility of the research findings being applied to other situations. This means whether readers can interpret the research findings to fit their situation (Merriam, 1988). Another important factor closely related to validity is generalization. No matter whether it is a scientific experiment, or educational science research, generalizability is always desired.

As two principal issues, validity and reliability are closely tied to the quality of a case study. The greater these qualities are, the more trustable and credible the case study. In order to have a case study of high quality, triangulation of data collection needs to be employed. As mentioned by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p. 142), methodological triangulation is applied either by using the same method on different occasions or different methods on one occasion.

Triangular techniques in the social sciences attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint . . . triangulation is a powerful way of demonstrating concurrent validity, particularly in qualitative research (Campbell and Fiske, 1959) (cited in Cohen,
Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 141)

Exclusive reliance on one method, therefore, may bias or distort the researcher’s picture of the particular slice of reality being investigated . . . confidence can be achieved . . . when different methods of data collection yield substantially the same result (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 141).

In this research study, the application of three methods to collect data aimed to maximise the quality of the entire research, and used triangulation to minimise the subjectivity and bias of the researcher as well.

3.5 Conclusion

In summary, this Chapter has explained the methodology employed in this research study, and introduced the research design and the ethics application procedures that the researcher took. Qualitative case study was selected as the methodology, and the research design consisted of three methods: interview, reflection journal and document review. As Merriam (1988) has pointed out, a case study is neither about providing a predetermined point, nor a process to confirm an end product. In fact, the different outcomes will reveal the potential variables of the phenomena under a specific problem, and this is actually the key characteristic of the case study research process.
Chapter 4
Analysis of School/Community Partnership data

4.1 Introduction

From analysis of this case study, connections between the school and Chinese community for Mandarin teaching and learning, are not obviously created, particularly in the area like the target school community, a Chinese-disadvantaged area where few Chinese people are living and working around. In this Chapter and in Chapter 5, research data are analysed to answer the main research question: “how to build partnerships between schools and local Chinese communities in terms of language resources, and cultural inspiration on Mandarin teaching and learning”, to look into some real issues that need to be addressed, and to provide solutions to the research questions in the form of a school/community partnership model.

As introduced in Chapter 3, data were collected from three sources: interview, reflection journal and document review, and triangulation was applied to increase the quality of the study. Research data from different sources will be integrated, and preliminarily analysed in accordance with the adoption of Epstein’s (2009) six-point model. The procedure of data analysis was as illustrated in Chapter 3.

![Data analysis procedure diagram](Image)

Figure 3.2 Data analysis procedure
4.2 Background of Interviewees, Story of the Reflection Journals, and Document Content

In this research study, six interviews were conducted with interviewees including people from both sides of the school/community partnership, and also an education administrator. One of the reflection journals recorded the experience of the researcher as a Chinese community participant in one Mandarin lesson, and the other was about a survey of students’ feedback on a Chinese movie excursion. Four documents were reviewed. Two of the documents related to Mandarin promotion at both national and school levels, while the other, addressing procedures to apply for a school activity, concerns the complexity of partnerships at the level practice.

4.2.1 Background of Interviewees

The six interviewees came from different areas of school/community partnership, and expressed their thoughts from different representative perspectives. The ideas gathered and the different perspectives can provide insights into this research study.

4.2.1.1 Chinese community Member Mrs A

Mrs A is a middle-aged Chinese woman who migrated from Guangdong Province, China. Before arriving in Australia, she was a newspaper editor, and had a very successful career in China. Mrs A came here to join her husband, and she has been in Australia for more than 15 years. For the past four years, she has been working in a grocery store in the target school community. She likes Chinese literacy, and is particularly good at Chinese characters (Hanzi, 汉字). Since she was deeply impressed by her high school Chinese teacher, she has a particular perspective on the teaching of the Chinese language. Furthermore, she is interested in the contemporary Chinese economy, and keeps up to date with news from China almost every day. Her way of teaching Mandarin with her own children includes endowing characters with a story, to make it easy to memorise. In addition, she emphasised the importance of two key points: first, students should know the significance of learning Mandarin, and this can directly lead to learning
enthusiasm; second, they need to be convinced that learning Mandarin is not as difficult as they might think – it is just a different language from English.

When I walked into her store, she was busy with arranging newly arrived products. The store is about 50 square metres, and only Mrs A works there on the morning shift. The store was filled with home-wares, kitchenware, and daily necessities. At the beginning of the interview, she was hesitant about being interviewed. However, after the research purpose was explained, she showed more interest, and agreed to participate in this study. During the interview, the researcher found that the store was much busier than imagined, and our interview was interrupted several times. It seemed that the workload for Mrs A was not only busy, but tough. She had to deal with some difficult customers, and was subjected to some verbal abuse.

4.2.1.2. Chinese community Member Mrs X

Mrs X is a parent of one of the researcher’s primary school students, and is of Chinese background. She migrated to Australia 14 years ago, and before that she had been teaching a course in politics for 8 years, in a local vocational school in China. Regarding teaching her child, she insisted on using Mandarin to communicate at home, and provided her son with various media forms to gain information about China, such as watching Chinese satellite TV channels, and reading literacy books. The results of her home education were impressive, since her son can speak and understand Mandarin well, and knows many Chinese four-character idioms (成语 Chéngyǔ). Moreover, he knows the culture and customs of China well, even though he only visits China once a year. Furthermore, Mrs X had one year’s experience of teaching in a local Australian kindergarten, and she has had been taking advanced educational training recently. From her experiences as a Chinese parent who taught her son Mandarin at home, and furthermore as a teacher with both Chinese and Australian teaching experience, she provided some meaningful insights in her interview.
4.2.1.3 School Mandarin Teacher Ms H

Ms H is a new Mandarin teacher in one of the target schools, Luting Shan HS, and started her teaching at the beginning of the year 2010. Before she came to this school, she had two years of teaching experience in another high school and in a public school. As an Australian Chinese, she has lived in Australian over ten years, has knowledge of both Australian and Chinese cultures, and knows education in Australia well. She teaches seven classes in Year 8 at this school, and is busy everyday. As she mentioned, she used to organize her former students to go to yum cha and to Chinatown. She believes that students will recognise their achievement when they apply the language in an authentic situation, and that this will promote students’ interest and confidence in Mandarin learning. In this target school, she is also attempting to organize some activities related to authentic Chinese cultural and linguistic situation, such as preparing an excursion to Chinatown. The interview conducted with Ms H aimed to find out opinions on school/community partnership for Mandarin from a school teacher’s perspective.

4.2.1.4 School Mandarin Teacher Mr M

Mr M is a Mandarin teacher in one of the target schools, Luting Shan HS, and has been working there for two years. Meanwhile, he is also the head teacher of the Mathematics faculty in this school. As a Chinese living in Australia for over ten years, and having a successful career currently, he knows the Australian school system very well. Moreover, as a colleague of Ms H, he has the same student group that is learning Mandarin at the school, and is very busy every day. Similarly, he used to organize his students to go to yum cha, visiting Chinatown and the Chinese Garden. Mr M prepared assessment tasks for students to complete during the activities, such as practising certain language points with Chinese people, and recording the information they received. He believes that language needs to be applied, otherwise it will be dead. This interview also intended to find out his opinions on school/community partnership for Mandarin teaching and learning, from a school teacher’s perspective.
4.2.1.5 School Assistant Principal Mrs L

Mrs L is Assistant Principal of one of the target schools, Dongwan PS, and has over twenty-year experience in education, teaching and administration. She is also the classroom teacher of a Year Six class in which the researcher was teaching Mandarin, and is also the coordinator of the Mandarin Volunteer Teacher Program in her school. Mrs L shows much enthusiasm and interest in the Mandarin program, and helped the researcher with her teaching practice. When the researcher mentioned she would like to plan some activities, like bringing Chinese businessmen into the school to provide students with chances to talk to them, and practise their spoken Mandarin with them, she positively valued this idea and agreed to support it. Mrs L is a very optimistic, friendly and capable woman, and has a positive vision towards the Mandarin program. Moreover, she is a member of the school’s decision making group, so her participation in this project can offer an administrator’s perspective as well.

4.2.1.6 Education administrator Mr W

As the former administrator of the NSW DET (WSR), retired recently, Mr W is also the initiator of the Volunteer Program in which the researcher participated. Although he has left his departmental position, he is still working on cooperative projects between Ningbo city and the Western Sydney Region. This interview was the last one conducted in this research study. After talking to people from the Chinese community and the school, and participating in a couple of activities related to Mandarin and Chinese culture in schools, the researcher found this was the best time to interview Mr W, since problems identified in previous interviews could be discussed and advised, and from an education leader’s point of view. In this interview, Mr W expressed his opinions on policy initiatives and strategies for the Mandarin program across the Western Sydney Region, and suggestions relating to real issues that need to be addressed in implementing the policy.

Four of the interviews were conducted in Chinese. Both Chinese and English versions are quoted in the following sections; translations are my own.
4.2.2 Reflectional Journals

In this Section, discussion of two reflection journals is presented. These derive from two experiences of the researcher, as a participant in school activities related to Chinese culture and language.

4.2.2.1 Participation in a Chinese Lesson

This journal was recorded on 21 September 2010, when the researcher was invited by a high school in the WSR (not included in the target school community) to participate in its Chinese program with three other colleagues. This provided the researcher with an opportunity to experience school-community partnerships.

Today it was a great opportunity that we four volunteers went to a High School (Fu Man HS) to participate in a 100 minutes’ Chinese lesson, and in which we provided Chinese knowledge and interesting activities to students, and all of us enjoyed very much. This school is located in an area not quite multi-cultural, so students do not have opportunities to meet Chinese people or communicate with Chinese people in this school community. As the deputy principal told us, we were the first group of Chinese people visiting the school, and they were planning to invite more Chinese people on a regular basis in the future.

We prepared different activities for the students, including sharing general information about China, demonstrating calligraphy drawing, practising chopsticks, and making Chinese bows, moreover, two Chinese sports, Tai Chi (soft Kungfu) and kicking Jianzi (a traditional Chinese sport) were introduced.

Firstly, Miss Mao demonstrated Chinese calligraphy drawing. She showed them a video clip introducing the four measures of study in ancient China, and the correct pose to use the brushes. Each student had one brush and practised on used newspaper. Some girls were shy, and looked not confident to use the brushes for the first time. However,
when they followed the instructions step by step, they did really well. “Love” (爱) and “friendship” (友) were the two Chinese characters Mao taught students. Furthermore, Mao taught students to learn to write their names in Chinese characters, and one boy said he would take his name in characters home and frame it.

After calligraphy, chopsticks were introduced by the researcher. Each student got one pair in hand, while a video about using chopsticks was playing. It was so surprising for students when they heard digging chopsticks into rice in a straight-line was considered impolite. Later, the researcher also taught students how to make Chinese knot style bracelet, and introduced the significance of “red colour” in Chinese culture. After that, Miss Chen and Miss Huang delivered some general information about China, such as the population and landscape, and provided students with numbers to create a more figurative impression of China.

Finally, we took all students to the grass outside, and Chen taught them a bit about Tai Ji (soft KungFu), and Huang taught about kicking Jianzi (a traditional Chinese sports). Students were so engaged, and learnt very fast. For Tai Ji, Chen also mentioned to students that it focused on being calm through the slow movements, the slower the better, or else it would become violent fighting. Jianzi is a form of light sports, and can be played individually or by a team, so we suggested that it was also a good activity to practise teamwork. It was surprising that all the students and teachers said they would like to buy some videos of Jianzi, because they loved it. After the lesson, one teacher asked us many questions about China, and said it was great to talk to us and she knew more about China, and she also corrected some wrong impressions about China as well (reflectional journal, 21 September 2010).
4.2.2.2 Feedback on a Chinese Movie Excursion

This piece of journal recorded students’ feedback on a movie excursion which took place on 13 August, 2010. Students watched a Chinese Kung Fu movie, Karate Kid, which provided students an opportunity to encounter the Chinese language and culture out of the school. Four questions were listed on the survey:

1. How did you feel about the excursion last week?
2. Did you try to pick up some Chinese words while watching the movie, or did you talk about the movie when you got back home?
3. Do you know more about China after watching the movie? If so, what? (e.g. country & people, etc.)
4. Besides excursions, what other activities would you prefer, to increase your interest in and understanding of Chinese language and culture outside of normal lessons?

The results of this survey are presented in the following table:

Table 4.1. Survey feedback on a Chinese movie excursion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question No.</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
<th>Positive Responses</th>
<th>Negative Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Educational &amp; good; great &amp; fun; awesome; exciting; fantastic; love it.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Increased understanding of culture; picked up learnt words; talked about it afterwards; learn your language points: how to say go home.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>People &amp; culture; learn about what China looks like; Kung Fu; children’s lives in China; learn Chinese traditions such as clothes and food; learn more about China; Forbidden City; learn how to describe what China looks like; fighting style; impression of peaceful China, and yin/yang; school life; neighbourhood &amp; traditional places.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For Question 1, among the 33 valid feedback responses, 32 of them thought they had a great experience from the movie excursion, and the words they expressed most frequently were good, exciting and fun.

For Question 2, 28 out of 33 students said that they had some extended practice during and after the movie. For example, three of them picked up words they’d learnt in class, three of them talked about the movie with family or friends after the movie. Moreover, three of them mentioned that they learnt some new language points from the movie, such as how to say “go home”.

For Question 3, which asked about the benefits they got from this movie excursion, students’ feedback was various, and seems very beneficial. Thirty of the 33 students said that they had learnt more about China, such as what modern China looks like, and how Chinese people live. One student mentioned the movie made him more interested in Chinese Kung Fu and its fighting style. What is more, two students made comparisons between their own lives and the Chinese people’s lives demonstrated in the movie, such as students’ daily routines and neighbourhood relationships.

The last Question in this survey asked about their preferred activities in school that would relate to Mandarin and Chinese culture. Besides normal classes, over half of the students recommended going to Chinatown or to the Chinese Garden (the reason could be the awareness of “people there, culture there, and language there”). Cooking Chinese food and watching Chinese movies were both second choices for them. In addition, one student said that he wished the school could invite some Chinese people into the school to talk to, both for language practice and for cultural understanding.
4.2.3 Document Content

4.2.3.1 National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program, Program Guidelines (2009-2012)

The National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program, Program Guidelines (2009-2012) is a document that shows a clear point in emphasising the demand to enrich the resources for the language teaching and learning. The document talks about applying funds to strengthen partnerships and networks between the school and different institutions by different means. As one of the four targeted Asian languages, Mandarin has the same level of funds available as for the other three languages.

In the document, schools are encouraged to apply for funds to strengthen partnerships with Asian communities, to “support and add real world experiences to the teaching and learning” (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) 2009, p. 2):

   Online or virtual learning environments . . . community outreach/advocacy initiatives . . . electronic linking with schools in the Asian region . . . supporting sister school relationships” (National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program, Program Guidelines (2009-2012), p. 16).

Moreover, it is stated in the same document that “grant proposals that focus on innovative school community-based strategies or initiatives will be encouraged” (National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program, Program Guidelines (2009-2012, p. 16). At least from the policy level, community-based resources for school teaching and learning are highly valued, and are being supported with funding and policies.

4.2.3.2 Home, School and Community Partnerships, Fair Go Fair Share Fair Say Fair Content (2003)
This document talks about integrating home, school and community to enhance the classroom and school organisation and school culture, in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning. As suggested in this document, involving the participation of homes and the community into the school, is a “key strategy in improving the educational outcomes of socio-economically disadvantaged students and their communities”. Moreover, there is a list of actions advised in accordance with Epstein’s six-point model (2009), which could be worthy of trial in schools.

4.2.3.3 Project Leader Support Manual – Becoming Asia Literate: Grants to Schools (2010): Project Information Overview – (Luting shan) HS (2009)

This document comes from one of the target schools, “Luting Shan” HS. As part of the learning neighbourhood, along with other three schools – Luting Shan PS, Mirui PS and Dongwan P S – they were awarded $38,500 in funding for the year 2009, from the “Project of Becoming Asian Literate: Grants to Schools” program funded by the Australian government. This was for four years, for a long-term project named “The Learning Neighbourhood Asian Literacy Program”. The main use of these funds is to promote Asian language and culture in schools, and “Luting Shan” High School is the lead school in the project. As stated in the document, in relation to action plans and timelines, there are several steps involved, including developing virtual resources for students, and engaging with Chinese community.

4.2.3.4 Activity Application form from Dongwan PS

The key point drawn from this application form is the school’s concerns about students’ participation in excursion and incursion activities. As shown in document, there are two key points, including safety issues and educational goals.

4.3 Triangulated Data Analysis

In this section, data from three sources are analysed, preliminarily referring to the six-point model of Epstein. The structure of the analysis follows the two categories derived from Epstein’s model: mutual understanding, and mobilization of resources from the Chinese community. These two categories are closely related to the
research purpose and research questions, which aim to find out how to establish partnerships between school and Chinese community, in order to explore the resources available for Mandarin teaching and learning.

4.3.1 Mutual Understanding

This section talks about issues related to mutual understanding between schools and Chinese community. These include demands, concerns and consideration for each other. First of all, the information gained from both the school and from Chinese community regarding mutual understanding are presented; then the issues that construct the current situation are discussed.

The following table shows the research findings from data in terms of mutual understanding, including the possible challenges and solutions.

Table 4.2. “Mutual Interdependence” Category

| Problems | Insufficient Two-way Communication  
Few Chinese people around  
Complex application  
Risk for organizing  
Child protection  
Ensure the activity’s Suitability  
Time & language capability |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Solutions | Middle person  
Providing freshness  
Building up students’ confidence  
Gaining achievement |

4.3.1.1 Understanding of School/community partnership
First of all, it should be understood that the most basic initiative for approaching this partnership was the wish that students in the Western Sydney Region could have certain advantages the same as students from other parts of Sydney:

Students in the Western Area of Sydney should have the same opportunities to learn Mandarin as students anywhere in Sydney, as or more advantages than other areas of Sydney (Mr W, former head of the Mandarin program in NSW DET (WSR) 22 Sep, 2010).

According to Mr W, this opportunity will not only bring students new knowledge, but it is closely related to their future career:

In recognition of the importance of China to the future of the world, to the economy of Australia, to relationships that can bloom between Australia and China, and prepare a generation of young people who have knowledge of China, can understand Chinese people, can understand Chinese culture, and have a capacity to engage with China in a way that can only be developed if they have the language to do so . . . my view is that Chinese Mandarin should be the only language that we teach in our schools, in the whole Australia actually . . . we should give total priority to Chinese, because within a very short period of time, China will be the dominant economy in the world, it’s already number two, it has passed Japan, so now it’s number two just behind USA. And Australia’s future is tied to China . . . we should be supporting our young people to be able to engage with China through language and understanding for a better relationship in the future . . . the most beautiful thing about this is about the relationships, collaboration, partnerships, understanding, and also economic and other business can flow from engagement with China (Mr W, former head of the Mandarin program in NSW DET (WSR), 22 Sep, 2010).

Given this high value, Mandarin is gaining more and more attention in the Western Sydney Region. For example, the first English-Mandarin bilingual school in NSW has been built in this region, and more and more schools in this region have established sisterhood relationships with schools in China.

As Mrs L talked about the expectation of students’ Mandarin learning, it was more related to their future development:

. . . expose students to Mandarin and to have an understanding of Chinese culture, I think that . . . on a broader picture of our link between China and Australia . . . understanding about the language, and a lot
about the culture. To encourage them to actually take on the language in high school. (Mrs L, assistant principal, 14 Aug, 2010).

This understanding has encouraged more and more schools to participate in Mandarin. Partnerships between schools and Chinese community are becoming more and more noticeable, while teachers value the resources, and Chinese community Members are willing to play the role of ambassador to promote Chinese language and culture.

As mentioned by Ms H, the feeling of “achievement” is important during the process of learning. In order to stimulate students’ motivation and confidence, teachers should create opportunities for them to achieve educational goals regularly, to maintain their interest. Ms H suggested that through school/community partnership, students can be provided with opportunities to practise the language:

小孩子会觉得学到的东西马上可以用起来是蛮有成就感的... They will find Mandarin is practicable. Students will feel a sense of achievement when they can immediately apply what they learnt from class to real situations (Ms H, Mandarin teacher, 2 Aug, 2010).

Additionally, Mr M said that, differ from conventional ways of language learning, activities developed through partnerships with the Chinese community can bring freshness to students, and keep the learning attractive:

(这对他们来说是非常有新鲜感的，一旦有了新鲜感，他们就有动力学了) It will bring freshness to them, and once they feel the freshness, they will be refilled with energy and learn harder (Mr M, Mandarin teacher, 4 Aug, 2010).

In summary, from Ms H and Mr M’s points of view, teaching and learning Mandarin through school/community partnership, can create opportunities for students to apply the language, from which they would be able to get a feeling of “achievement”, and find learning more interesting.

Chinese community Members showed their strong willingness to contribute to Mandarin teaching and learning. As Mrs A expressed, although she is busy
working every day, she is still willing to contribute to the Mandarin program if necessary, since she values its importance very much. She expressed that even when students misunderstood or showed disrespectful behaviour, she would persist and continue to be involved:

(当我有这种热情去让他们了解更多的中文和中国文化，我就会有这种热情，相当于出于对孩子的爱而去教他).

I have this kind of enthusiasm to let them know and understand more Chinese language and culture, so I would keep this enthusiasm, and teach them with my heart and with my love. (Mrs A, shop assistant/former newspaper editor, 19 Jul, 2010)

Moreover, regarding the issue of time, she said that once she has a few spare hours, she would be willing to contribute her time to the Mandarin program, without payment:

(如果我需要他付我报酬的话，我还不如呆在家里好好看看电视。因为我工作了那么多天已经够累的了，拿一点自己的时间更好。但是我为什么还是愿意有一点时间精力的话去参与的话呢，只是单纯的因为有这种热情).

If I need they pay me money, I would rather stay at home and watch TV by myself. After working for so many days, I am tired already, it is better to enjoy my own time. But the reason I would prefer to spend time and energy is simply because of my enthusiasm. (Mrs A, shop assistant/former newspaper editor, 19 Jul, 2010)

Mrs X also expressed her strong willingness to participate in school/community partnership voluntarily, and said she was proud to promote the culture and language. With good two-way communication, ideas from the Chinese community can be shared and demonstrated to the school community, and the school will become familiar about the Chinese people their knowledge and talents which might be useful for school Mandarin teaching and learning.

As discussed in an early section of this chapter, the document from NSW DET, entitled Home, School and Community Partnerships, Fair Go Fair Share Fair Say Fair Content (2003) talks about how to make partnerships between home, school and community effective in strengthening students’ learning outcomes, particularly
in low socio-economic status areas. In the document, it was emphasised that mutual understanding, trust, and regular dialogue were at the heart. In addition, as mentioned in this document, regarding the community element of the partnerships, it says:

Knowing your community is about identifying the various individuals, groups, their characteristics, their needs and strengths . . . and the resources that are available in the community . . . sharing community resources to support the school . . . based on an in-depth knowledge of the community (2003).

Therefore, besides exchanging each other’s ideas about Mandarin and the benefits that partnerships would bring, there is a lot more that needs to be communicated. Schools need to have an in-depth understanding of the Chinese community, while the Chinese community has to have a full knowledge of how the Mandarin teaching goes on in school.

4.3.1.2 Recognition of Challenges

In fact, both parties also have to be aware that, although school/community partnership for Mandarin seemed to engender high expectations and received good responses from potential participants, there were some obstacles that visibly existed. As Mrs X pointed out, one of the challenges of school/community partnership for Mandarin teaching is the need of a leadership role to help to conduct the organizing:

(那么就需要一些组织出面来组织一些活动，有一些固定的活动，彼此就会知道了。不然的话，没有沟通确实不了解。这个社区里面只有很少的中国人).

It needs some organisations to organise some activities. If there are certain activities held regularly, school and Chinese community members will know each other well. Or else, it is true that they will not know each other without good communications (Mrs X, student parent/former politics teacher, 16 Aug, 2010).

Ms H also mentioned that sometimes the task is beyond teachers’ resources, so that schools should stand up to do something to support partnerships substantially:
Although I am willing to do extra work, such as paperwork and communicating with people, teachers do have limited time and energy, so sometimes there is still a need for the school to take the leading role and do some work (Ms H, Mandarin teacher, 2 Aug, 2010).

From her point of view, organising activities related to Mandarin is the responsibility of the teacher, although significant time and energy outside of the classroom are required (http://www.cal.org/, retrieved on 25 Oct, 2010), and she was willing to contribute extra time. However, school should provide support for the proposed partnership.

Furthermore, Mr M indicated that considerable preparation work needs to be done beforehand, to guarantee that the activities proceed well, and that discipline was his major concern:

(组织工作需要做的很周全, 纪律问题很大).

It needs comprehensive organization, and intensive discipline work (Mr M, Mandarin teacher, 4 Aug, 2010).

For him, discipline is the foundation for organizing successful activities, especially for those activities organised for the first time, and for the people who are new to the organization.

In addition, from the perspective of Chinese community Members, Mrs A and Mrs X raised the fact that, time, language capability and safety issues are the major concerns impeding their contribution to the Mandarin program:

(作为新一代移民我们背负了很多，那些教中文的老师呢更多的也是为了养家糊口。在职业的选择上呢，就利用了这方面的长处，选择了这份工作，但是平时为了生计也都是很忙的，所以其实也没有太多精力时间去做这些，只能说一句有心无力吧).

As a member of the new immigration generation, we bear a lot. Those Mandarin teachers do the job mostly to feed the family . . . they just took advantage of their own Mandarin background, and made the decision, and
they are really super busy every day, so that they really don’t have too much time and energy to do this kind of work. One sentence to sum up: intending to contribute but lacking strength. (Mrs A, shop assistant/newspaper editor, 19 Jul, 2010)

In addition, time is also an issue that the school was concerned about:

Time would be an issue for most people. Because they are working, and family, they’ve got family commitment. And from the school end, it is not just a commitment for people to come in... for the school, 9 am to 3 pm probably would be the time they are working... I don’t know how it will work in a school environment, when you know, we have six subjects needing to be covered, timetable and such, it would be very difficult to actually do it. (Mrs L, assistant principal, 14 Aug, 2010).

Time is really the number one problem in the way of school/community partnership building up. Without a steady human-resource supply, the effect will not emerge constantly and impressively:

The real issue is regular supply. If you are going to do this, it has to be in a very systematic way... they need to be reliable, in the sense that it is agrees what will actually happen, the supplier of the people is reliable and they understand the obligations attached to that school... you need to know that they are definitely going to be there, and the more regular they are, the more students will relate to them, and the better the learning I guess will occur because you not getting a constant turnover of people or whatever as well... There is an issue about the access to the members of the Chinese community, and also their preparedness to do so; are they happy to do that, to give up time, or whatever. (Mr W, former head of the Mandarin program in NSW DET (WSR), 22 Sep, 2010).

Perhaps, this concern was raised in relation to the extent to which the school distributes attention on the Mandarin program. If the Mandarin program could be considered as important as other subjects some day, time might not then be a problem. However, for Chinese community members, the problem of time is more serious. If some alternative ways could be developed to free the Chinese people from their work obligations, the partnerships would be better able to happen. Therefore, it should be suggested that schools increase their investment in the Mandarin program, and do more work to coordinate with Chinese community members.
Furthermore, as indicated in Epstein’s (2009) six-point model, school/community partnership encourages students to learn in the Chinese community. However, as Mrs A noted, while many Chinese people in Australia, their English language capability might be good enough to live by, but not good enough to communicate with students in a school context.

(不能说大部分华人的英语水平都很好...基本的日常沟通都是没有问题的，但是毕竟和我们母语来相比...用英语还是很多时候不能表达很确切的).

It cannot be said that the majority of Chinese people here speak English very well ... there will be no problem for basic daily communication, however, compared with our mother language ... it is still very hard to express the accurate meaning when using English to teach students. (Mrs A, shop assistant/newspaper editor, 19 Jul, 2010)

This poses another big challenge for school/community partnership. Students are aged differently from most of the Australians they meet in their life, and have different behaviours. Mrs A said that the language used at school with students was different from the language they used at work, so sometimes a small mistake would make a big difference of expression, and bring embarrassment. One more issue Mrs A referred to was the concern of students’ safety during the partnerships:

(我们这里经常很多货进来，万一弄伤了孩子，或是打烂了什么东西，你知道孩子什么都碰的，不是你叫他不碰他就不碰的).

We usually have many products imported, so if by any chance that kids get hurt, or they break something, because you know kids touch everything they can reach, it’s not like you ask them to stop then they stop. (Mrs A shop assistant/former newspaper editor, 19 Jul, 2010)

Hence, it is important to bear in mind that students’ safety is a crucial issue, however, community members’ property needs to be protected as well. Epstein’s six-point model mentioned community involvement with families, community groups, organisations, agencies, or individuals. Within such a partnership, neither party should be disadvantaged; otherwise, the partnership may not be long-lasting.
In fact, what is talked about above is basic information that the school and Chinese community have to understand about each other. First of all, they have to be aware of each other’s attitudes, and also have to find out each other’s concerns.

4.3.1.3 Understanding of each other for Mandarin teaching and learning

However, sometimes the understandings can differ. For example, in specific reference to the role of Chinese community members in the school/community partnership, Mr W advised that they should be aware that they are not real teachers, so that their job is to help students to engage but not to criticise:

It could be a volunteer or tutor to help the engagement of students in learning the language, conversing and operating in a, I guess some more real context where the language can be used in real, authentic places for dialogue, for reinforcement, and expanding their understanding, etc . . . students could be discouraged if they begin the conversation and are responded to with a level away beyond them (Mr W, former head of the Mandarin program in NSW DET (WSR), 22 Sep, 2010).

As Mrs A indicated, conducting activities like seminars, where community members talk freely with students about language and culture on suitable topics, would be workable. Her suggestions covered form, content, place and number of students, respectively:

(form) I might prefer a form of talking, or playing together . . . (content) I would start from the benefits of learning another language, the benefits for further growth, or from the reality that China is strong in both economic and other fields . . . so that learning Mandarin is significant . . . (place) perhaps [we] going into the school will be better. First of all, you could be aware which of students are interested
in Mandarin so they could come to your place, because if you bring 
students outside of school, there are so many things that can draw 
their attention. So (we) start inside the school, if some activities are 
necessary to be taken outside of the school, we can do that then . . . 
(number) no more than 10 would be the best, 20 is also acceptable . . . 
Every student has different interests, you need to focus on each of 
them, for the best effect. (Mrs A, shop assistant/former newspaper 
editor, 19 Jul, 2010).

Another interviewee, Mrs X, mentioned that she was good at origami and 
handwork, such as making cards, which could be shared with students, and 
associated with language and culture features as well:

(就是比较喜欢做那些贺卡, 也做的满好的, 还有就是作折纸 
的东西).

Relatively speaking, I like making cards, and making them 
beautifully, and also I’m good at origami as well (Mrs X, student 
parent/former politics teacher, 16 Aug, 2010).

It seems that they knew what they would do as “an assistant” or a “volunteer” in a 
partnership. In fact, more or less, every person has his/her strength in a particular 
field. Taking Mrs A and Mrs X for an example, perhaps if no one had 
communicated with them, no one would have known that they were good at 
Chinese literacy and crafts. Similarly other Chinese community members would 
have expertise in some other fields. Hence, communication could reveal the talents 
and knowledge existing in the Chinese community.

However, Mr M worried that the content provided by Chinese community 
members might not suit students’ level and interests:

(比如他在国内是文字工作者，文学水平很高，但是他所来讲的 
东西学生是不是感兴趣，这个就需要老师来做个衡量。比如他讲 
个红楼梦啊, 这个质量就 . . . 并不是说他讲的质量不好，但是不 
是切题，这个就要 . . . 还是我所说的，都是需要组织，要组织很 
周密。)

For example, if he is a writer in China, and has very high achievement 
in literacy, but whether what he is going to talk to students will catch 
their interest or not, teachers need to make the evaluation. For 
instance, if he is going to talk about 红楼梦 (the Dream of Red
Mansion), and the result would come . . . I’m not saying his work is bad, the key point is students’ interests, that need . . . well, go back to what I said before, every detail needs to be organized, and very comprehensively (Mr M, Mandarin teacher, 4 Aug, 2010).

He said, rightly, that comprehensive organisation was needed, but that challenges occur, they actually come from a lack of communication. In fact, as mentioned in Home, School and Community Partnerships, Fair Go Fair Share Fair Say Fair Content (2003), regarding “parents as volunteers”, surveying parents and community members about “their interests, talents and availability for volunteering in the school” was suggested. Once a profile with all the information has been collected from the collaborating community, it will be more convenient to arrange activities. However, much work has to be done in advance.

Furthermore, the school has the responsibility to deliver information to let Chinese community members know about what they can do for the school. This was also mentioned by Mrs A and Mrs X: that they would want to gain information about:

(你们的中文教学是更多侧重在华人孩子华文方面的教育呢，还是扩大中国文化的覆盖面呢？).

Does your Mandarin program focus more on Chinese background students, or on the promotion of Chinese language and culture to wider coverage? (Mrs A, shop assistant/former newspaper editor, 19 Jul, 2010)

(起码有а些资料,.AspNetи有关华文的资料,以及以什ѱ方式进行的中文教育,最主要及时资讯吧,多一点).

At least we can be provided (with) some Chinese materials (used by the school), and also the teaching methods applied for the Mandarin program. Anyway, the latest information (about the school program), as much as possible (help us understand and follow the school’s Mandarin program better). (Mrs A, shop assistant/former newspaper editor, 19 Jul, 2010)

As the document Home, School and Community Partnerships, Fair Go Fair Share Fair Say Fair Content (2003) says, by means of community radio, television, school newsletters and regular meetings, information can be distributed throughout the community, and achieve the result of mutual understanding.
Nevertheless, in order to guarantee the quality of Chinese community Members’ participation, Mr W suggested that training is necessary, to avoid discouragement being caused:

There will need to be some training (for the Chinese community members) to understand what the levels are, what the requirements might be, to understand the importance (Mr W, former head of the Mandarin program in WSR of NSW DET, 22 Sep, 2010).

This point was commonly shared with other interviewees, such as Mrs L and Ms H, who said that the degree of professionalism of the people coming into the school is always worrying:

... also they need to do a little bit of training on how to work with the students. They have to have an understanding of that, sort of be confident to do that as well. It’s not a common thing that happens, we had parents come in as volunteers, then even a lot of parents didn’t feel confident ... and they also need to be supervised, so it’s also having the time for the school to have the personnel to train them, when you’ve got classes, so I think there are a number of issues there. (Mrs L, Assistant Principal, 14 Aug, 2010).

(他们可以来，但是毕竟他们的年纪啊，背景啊都（和学生）太不一样了，学生太小，所以可能和他们交流起来也会有点（障碍）).

They could come. However, they have too different backgrounds [to students], so perhaps some obstacles will emerge when communicating with students (Ms H, Mandarin teacher, 2 Aug, 2010).

It seems that from the school perspective, training can promise the outcome of improving teaching and learning to some extent, and is also a responsible attitude. In the document Home, School and Community Partnerships, Fair Go Fair Share Fair Say Fair Content (2003), it is suggested that “parents are trained in how to help their children at home with school work”, and workshops are recommended for school communities to deliver skills and knowledge to parents to assist the children at home. Similarly, for those Chinese community members involved in partnerships with school, the same suggestion is practicable. Additionally, such training would advance the capability of the Chinese community members, which
might have positive effects on other aspects of the partnership. Thus, with the expectation of a reciprocally useful result, it deserves a try.

Therefore, the more communication made, the better the mutual understanding to be had. Communication can get rid of misunderstanding, help identify each others’ needs, and provide possibilities to negotiate. Given the importance of Mandarin expressed by Mr W, every member participating in the program should be aware of what they should do, what purpose they are aiming for, and should try their best to avoid the opposite effect.

As noted in Epstein’s (2009) six-point model, two-way communication between the school and the (Chinese) community should be seen as the precondition for any partnership activities. Communication helps the school and community know each other, and help schools to find out those Chinese people who are available, while the Chinese community Members need to be aware of the school’s needs. Schools need to deliver information to the community, to increase their understanding of Mandarin teaching and learning in school, and to exchange ideas to increase their mutual understanding of each other. Therefore, constructing two-way communication channels could be seen as the starting point for partnerships between the two parties.

4.3.2 Mobilization of resources from the Chinese community

In this section, the teaching practices being used to mobilize resources from the Chinese community, and those talents and knowledge existing in the Chinese community that were learnt from this research study are shared, and suggestions collected from the research are discussed. The purpose is to discuss the significance of school/community partnership, and their practicability.
Table 4.3. “Mobilization of resources from Chinese community” Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practices</th>
<th>Suggestions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourage to apply language in daily life, to feel its practicability</td>
<td>Cooperating with other schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real cultural situations: feel an achievement</td>
<td>Encouraging students to apply the language</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encouraging students to apply the language</td>
<td>Bring Chinese culture into the school</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Creating a language environment for students</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Embedding language with culture</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Displaying culture on Harmony Day</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Relationship with other schools</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Meeting Chinese people in the community</td>
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</table>

The aim of the school/community partnership is not to replace formal Mandarin teaching, but to supplement it with extra resources. It was learnt from this research study that those schools that have full-time Mandarin teachers do have some out-of-school activities related to Chinese culture and language.

4.3.2.1 Mandarin Teaching Practices

A Mandarin teacher, Ms H, suggested that activities engaging with Chinese people, organizations, institutions or Chinese Communities, could bring benefits to students. As she recalled, students felt very excited, and recognised their achievements when they able to speak Mandarin in an everyday way, such as ordering food or chatting with each other:

我带学生去饮茶，他们就会在 waiter 说对不起请等一下的时候，说没关系。会觉得比较实用 . . . 运用学到的中文，像是简单的你好，谢谢，早上好，对方也能给予一定的回应，他就会觉得，“诶 ~我学得还不错。还有一些东西可以和别人交流”。

When I brought students to yum cha, they could talk with the simplest sentences to the waiters . . . and apply the language, even if it is as easy as “hello” (你好/nǐ hǎo), “thank you” (谢谢/xiè xiè), and “good
morning” (早上好/zhāo shàng hǎo). When the others reply in the same language and have a bit of conversation, the students will feel cool, my learning was not bad, at least I have something to communicate with others (Ms H, Mandarin teacher, 2 Aug, 2010).

For Ms H, “achievement” is important for the learning process, and students have to feel the knowledge they are learning is useful in their daily life, and does not exist only in textbooks. Feeling of success and confidence will promote students’ learning motivation and attitudes impressively. However, it is hard to apply language within an area where it is not widely spoken. As a Mandarin teacher, she tried to transfer those resources from the Chinese community into her lesson as much as possible, to create a language rich environment that was dynamic and hands-on.

Mr M is a colleague of Ms H. Regarding the teaching practice, he mentioned that he used to use simple classroom disciplines, such as 早上好/同学们好/看这里/看那里 (good morning/hello class/look at this/look at that), or playing video clips with Mandarin dubbing, in order to create a language environment for students. As he indicated, although students might not understand the language well, or they might think it is useless to learn, once they get used to the language more and more, they will get familiar with it and begin to manage it:

(放录像不是简单的放录像，并不是为了省力耗时间，目的是为了抓学过的词，停下来问学生刚刚这个词是什么意思啦，如果在这种情况下你会怎么说。所以录像是提供简单容易准备的语境).

It is not simply playing a video, or killing time. The purpose is to practise the language students have learnt, such as pausing the video some times, and asking them what is word A’s meaning or, in this situation, what would you say in Mandarin. So I guess playing the video is a good and convenient way to provide students a language environment (Mr M, Mandarin teacher, 4 Aug, 2010)

In addition, Mr M indicated that creating a language environment is not only for students to get familiar with the language, but also to extend students’ learning content and scope, to make learning interesting and challenging.
Furthermore, Ms H advised that students need to be encouraged to apply the language as much as possible in their daily life, in order to feel the practicality and usefulness of the language:

可以尽量鼓励学生买东西，或者去饭店吃饭时用中文。学生可以自己先用中文，然后店家就会很惊讶，怎么会，然后也会用中文沟通。店家也会觉得学生会讲中文很开心的，他们也会很乐意跟他们交流的。

Try your best to encourage students to use Mandarin when shopping or having a meal in Chinese restaurant. Students can start using Mandarin first, then the Chinese people will feel supersised, how could it be, and then would use Mandarin as well. Chinese people would feel happy to see students speak Mandarin, and they would be pleased to communicate as well (Ms H, Mandarin teacher, 2 Aug, 2010).

Mr M said that Chinese restaurants and supermarkets are convenient for students to access practice in their daily life:

(中国餐馆，买定西，菜单都是中文的，服务员也是说中文的，可以创造使用语言的机会。)

Chinese restaurants, shopping (in Chinese stores or supermarkets), and menus (in Chinese restaurants) are all in Chinese, servant people can speak Mandarin as well, so the opportunity for applying the language can be created in this way (Mr M, Mandarin teacher, 4 Aug, 2010).

Finding applications for language is the crucial step for language learning, since communication is fundamental to people’s living. As Mr M emphasised, teaching activity embedding the language in its connection to daily life, can bring language learning to life:

(语言一旦被实用，它就活了。拉丁语是死的语言，因为它只是在字面上，在英语的字根里出现，它不被说，所以是死的。中文是活的，因为很多人在说中文，但不是学校的学生学了中文他就用会用了。当然如果为他们提供用武之地的话，对促进汉语教学，提高教学质量，肯定是有很大的帮助的。)

Language will come alive once it is applied. The Latin language is dead, since it only exists literarily, and is used in building some
English words, but it is not spoken by people so it is dead. Chinese is alive, because so many people speak it, but this not means that all students will know how to apply it once they learn it in school. As a result, if they can have somewhere to apply and practise the language, it will be very helpful, to increase the quality of Mandarin learning and teaching (Mr M, Mandarin teacher, 4 Aug, 2010).

Mr M emphasized the use of language, through which the language can be brought alive. Moreover, he mentioned that he created a language environment for his students as much as possible in his class, in order to encourage them to apply the language, either speaking or listening.

In addition, the researcher’s reflection journal described another type of activity. Four volunteers, including the researcher, went to a high school, and played the role of Chinese community members to deliver knowledge of Chinese culture and language to students. The key character in this activity was the middle person from NSW DET (Department of Education and Training), who helped establish the connections. As mentioned in the last section, communication is missing sometimes, and the first step is hard for schools especially without any Chinese-background staffs to take them. Sometimes “an interagency partner” or “a middle person” can enable connecting both parties, and start the partnership from the ground up. In this case, the method adopted by this high school was to search for Chinese community Members through some personnel who knew each other (both the school and Chinese Community), and could make the activity happen. As mentioned by Mrs L, “you know the link, to find the people who would do it, and we need that, the middle person.” (Mrs L, assistant principal, 14 Aug, 2010).

4.3.2.2 Suggestions for mobilizing resources from the Chinese community

However, besides the practices above, other ways of building partnerships are necessary, in case some issues are really hard to overcome. As this research study shows, some ways are presently developing, while others are worth a trial. It was commonly suggested that working with another school that also had a Mandarin program, on activities such as co-excursions or co-teaching, would increase their feeling of the importance of learning:
We need to let students understand that not only are they learning Mandarin, but other schools are learning as well, so that they can communicate with each other (Ms H, Mandarin teacher, 2 Aug, 2010).

As Mr M said, in his school, a sisterhood relationship with another school in China had been approached:

We will have our sister school in Shanghai very soon, and then we can communicate by telephone, internet or pen friend. Moreover, we have facilities for video conferencing now, so we can establish relationships with all other public schools in NSW, and have Mandarin classes together. In that case, students would have a chance to communicate with friends out of this school, they would definitely feel freshness, and once they have the freshness, they will like learning better (Mr M, Mandarin teacher, 4 Aug, 2010).

This was also mentioned by another interviewee, Mrs L. She said that establishing a sisterhood relationship with a primary school in China, to provide students opportunities to make Chinese friends, and communicate with them via the internet or video conferencing, could increase their learning motivation.

I think it would work maybe with another school, a school in China, maybe have a partnership, and they can do it through email or letter exchanges. I think guest speakers would be really good, but we need a link, in order to link the people who would be able to do it. (Mrs L, assistant principal, 14 Aug, 2010).

For students, bringing more mates to learn Mandarin together, is a good way to make them feel the importance of their language learning. Enlarging students’ learning network to have more learners at the same level, would build up students’ learning confidence and enthusiasm, and might also create a competitive environment for them.
Another suggestion that Mrs L gave was to invite guest speakers. They might come from different professions and backgrounds, but so long as they can speak Mandarin, Chinese language and culture can be demonstrated:

Maybe we could have a culture day at the school, and we do have those . . . We call that Culture Day, and we have people bring all different types of food for sharing, but if you just want to make it Chinese, I guess it would be guest speakers to come in, and talk to the students about aspects of China. (Mrs L, assistant principal, 14 Aug, 2010).

Mr M also indicated that probably “Harmony Day” or “Multicultural Day” could be utilized to promote Mandarin. Normally on this day, students from different cultural backgrounds demonstrate their culture by performances and food exhibitions, and Chinese can be a part of this. He gave an example of a school which has cooperated with the French Community on this annual event:

(他们把一个法侨，每学期请他去学校开一天的小铺，在那里做一天的 pancake，如果学生要买，就要用法语，不然他不卖给你。那天就变成学校的法国节。)

They invited a French Australian into the school each semester, to run a snack bar and make the famous French pancake there whole day. If students want to buy, they have to use French, or else they could not get one. Then, the day became the French Day in that school (Mr M, Mandarin teacher, 4 Aug, 2010).

Regarding the Chinese, he suggested that:

(我们有 harmony day，这一天可以做一个中餐铺，可以老师做，也可以请人来做，价格便宜点来卖。)

We have Harmony Day, (I guess) we can have a Chinese food table then, wouldn’t matter whether it was teachers or other Chinese people, we can make Chinese food and make it cheaper (Mr M, Mandarin teacher, 4 Aug, 2010).

In addition, as a Chinese community member, Mrs X suggested inviting Chinese people to come in and hold a Mandarin Corner in the school, for students to make Mandarin conversation with them, and exchange ideas about China. Also, Ms H
was searching for art groups from the Chinese community to demonstrate Chinese culture such as the (舞龙舞狮) Chinese Dragon and Lion Dance, and have face to face meetings with students on a particular event day. Engaging student’s Mandarin learning by cooperating with the Chinese community, such as businessmen, artists and Chinese parents would not only benefit the school and students, but also benefit the Chinese community by promoting Chinese language and culture.

Epstein’s (2009) six-point model emphasised utilizing community members’ talents and knowledge, and this would certainly apply to utilizing Chinese community members to support students’ Mandarin learning activities in school. If schools take Chinese community members’ talents and knowledge into account, make good use of them and share them, their thoughts about teaching Mandarin might be constructive for program organising, and might ultimately lead to beneficial results for students’ language learning.

The evidentiary excerpt below shows two Chinese community members, Mrs A and Mrs X, their talents, and the knowledge that they considered could be contributed to Mandarin teaching and learning. As Mrs A mentioned, she has specialised in Chinese literacy:

(比较爱好这方面。特别是象形文字这一方面呢, 我的中学语文老师经常用这种方法来教我们, 所以印象很深 . . . 首先, 要让他们了解学中文的意义在哪里, 然后我会告诉他们中文写起来可能会比英文难一些, 像是笔画那些 . . . 一下子你叫他特别没有华文背景的孩子突然间学一种不同的语言的话呢, 他觉得难度很大 . . . 我教我的孩子都是怎么记忆中文。因为中文呢, 本身就是象形文字, 就好像思想的想 . . . 你就想象一个人像木头一样站在那里, 眼睛呆呆的望着前面用心就是在想了, 但是首先他要知道最简单的木, 目, 心字 . . . 从最简单的开始, 一步步地深入下去, 想就记住了).

I was particularly interested in Chinese characters . . . my high school Chinese teacher usually taught us by a method (endowing characters with a story), and it has left a deep impression on me . . . First of all, I would like to tell them the significance of learning Mandarin, then I would tell them writing Chinese characters might be a bit more difficult than English, such as strokes . . . if you encourage these kids
who have no Chinese background at all to turn to learn a completely different language, they will feel it is so hard . . . how do I teach my own kids to learn Mandarin? Because Chinese characters are pictographic characters themselves. Such as 想 (thinking) in “思想” (thought) . . . you can just imagine a person standing as a piece of wood over there, eyes are staring stiffly forward, and thinking carefully. Anyway, you should firstly teach them the basic characters of wood (木) eyes (目) and heart (心) . . . teaching starts from the simplest, and progresses step by step, then all will be memorized.
(Mrs A, shop assistant/former newspaper editor, 19 Jul, 2010)

Mrs A has her own understanding of teaching Mandarin, particularly the characters. Besides, a point commonly shared by Mrs A and Mrs X is they use Mandarin to communicate with their own children at home, to create a language environment for them to practise in. As Mrs X said, she used to encourage her child to watch Chinese satellite TV to gain various types of information about China. Furthermore, she also likes to bring her child to Chinatown in the city, and push him to talk to Chinese people in Mandarin. She told the researcher proudly that now her child can use plenty of Chinese four-character idioms and slang, and knows Chinese traditional legend very well.

According to Mrs X, the most ideal language acquisition process should be like the first language acquisition process, in which language is gained subconsciously from everyday life experiences. So she believes that the environment of application is significant for language learning:

(对于教汉语的经验推荐嘛，我觉得接触的环境是很重要的，如果你学了之后不应用的话，他有时候忘的就很快 . . . 学完语言一定要应用，这个很重要的 . . . 我还是觉得环境很重要 . . . 特别是文字，如果不应用，确实提高得很慢，对当地的孩子来说，确实要给他们提供一些东西，让他们能够听和说).

Talking about recommendations for Mandarin teaching and learning, I think the environment for learning is very important. If you do not apply the language after you learn it, it will get forgotten easily . . . once you learn the language, you need to apply it, it is very important . . . I still believe the environment for language learning is very important . . . especially for learning Chinese characters, if you do not apply them, it really progresses slowly. For non-background students here, they need material and resources for listening and speaking
practice (Mrs X, student parent/former politics teacher, 16 Aug, 2010).

Mrs X repeated two words “环境” (huán jìng, environment) and “应用” (yīng yòng, application), but the environment for her child is different from that of most of the Australian students. For schools without Chinese-background staff, the situation is more challenging, but through experience, schools can learn to make use of the funds of knowledge from the Chinese community.

As Mrs L described, although the program had been run in the school for over two years, it had still not been fully accepted throughout the school.

I think most people are positive, the people involved in it are positive about it, and welcome it, but we haven’t given enough information to other people . . . I think possibly it has been a problem on our part that we haven’t really given enough information to the other stages, to let them appreciate exactly what the program is about, so probably they don’t have any feeling either way about it. (Mrs L, assistant principal, 14 Aug, 2010).

Regarding working with Chinese community on the Mandarin program, Mrs L said that because the school is located in an area with a small number of Chinese people, and far away from places where Chinese people gather en masse, a problem of access to Chinese resources resulted:

I know within (Lu Tingshan) the other HS, they have a Mandarin teacher, that would be the only one we get support from . . . we don’t have the expertise, not able to do it. The only available thing to do it may be some online resources where a teacher is speaking Mandarin, and would be done that way. So we would probably depend on that resource. (Mrs L, assistant principal, 14 Aug, 2010).

She pointed out that school knows few Chinese people, and has no Chinese-background staff. Hence, she stated, “if we didn’t have the volunteer at the school, I don’t think we would have a Mandarin program.” (Mrs L, assistant principal, 14 Aug, 2010). Although she was positive about the Mandarin program, she expressed a pessimistic assumption, which might indeed prove to be a reality when the volunteer program finishes. Therefore, consideration of how to make the Mandarin program continue, needs to be addressed seriously. As Mrs L mentioned, perhaps because
Mandarin is not a key learning area at this moment, it might not receive attention so much, compared to other subjects. Therefore, she suggested that support from the NSW DET (Department of Education and Training) might be helpful, and she mentioned the idea of a recommendation list to be provided by the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET):

> Endorsed by the Department of Education and Training, a lot of these people, they get, actually get qualifications through the department, so the department would give us, these are the people that we support to come into your school, so a lot is done that way, that people come in, and it’s done through that. (Mrs L, assistant principal, 14 Aug, 2010).

People on the list would all have their specialties, and would be guaranteed access to the professional skills of the NSW DET. Her point was, that if some Chinese people could appear on the list, they would be the best candidates to participate in partnership, though the current situation is that there are “possibly not” any Chinese people on the list. Probably, both the school and DET need to do some work to put some Chinese names onto the list, so that their talents and knowledge might be shared.

In addition, as Mr W said, “a lot of learning can occur when students travel to China”. However, such trips are not easy to arrange. Therefore, creating a real and authentic environment through school/community partnership might also benefit students’ learning.

> I think . . . the real issue is that thinking that using the language in real situations, with real Chinese, in a way that they can be encouraged, can be really excited by the possibility of the language in that use, and be really turned on by the idea that they are becoming sufficiently able to have the facility with the language that can be taken into a whole new culture, a whole new set of understanding, and then they can feel success for themselves in relation to their learning (Mr W, former head of the Mandarin program in NSW DET (WSR), 22 Sep, 2010).

Mr W advised that making Mandarin a compulsory subject might have a dramatic influence:
When you start to make a language compulsory, or to expand the numbers of hours where it is required, you grow the market for that language, and teachers for that language . . . those sorts of things are the strategies that I think are actually crucial to expanding it . . . because it is so difficult to grow a language when it is not mandatory . . . we have 12 priority languages, but 12 doesn’t mean priority, it means multiple languages, a priority to me means 1, we need to give priority to one language, my view is actually it should be Mandarin (Mr W, former head of the Mandarin program in WSR of NSW DET, 22 Sep, 2010).

Regarding the issue of time and English capability, Mr W gave another helpful suggestion, to create regular and systematic supply of participants, to make the influence and outcomes broader and more constant:

. . . for example, we are having a group of Chinese students who are learning to become teachers, for example, then one way of doing this is to try to make that experience of working in a school as a language volunteer part of the course, and get credit for it. So it is a value to the school, and also a value to the students, because they get credit for it, so that’s one model (Mr W, former head of the Mandarin program in WSR of NSW DET, 22 Sep, 2010).

Furthermore, he provided some ideas that could be made part of policy, to formalise the engagement of Chinese community in school Mandarin programs. He suggested that adding the Chinese community as an element of the NALSSP (National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program) initiatives could be a good way to give official support to this particular type of resource:

It could be part of a strategy for Chinese, as part of the NALSSP initiative, that could be an element, part of that could be, theoretically, an element to try to find community people who, or commercial groups, Chinese groups or whatever, who would be prepared to provide service to schools in a way that would support Mandarin learning and understanding of the culture, through performance, or whatever it might be. The department could advertise, it would need to be done in a way that is part of the Board’s strategy, for example under NALSSP (Mr W, former head of the Mandarin program in WSR of NSW DET, 22 Sep, 2010).

Mr W’s suggestions are helpful, because when a subject is engaged with seriously at the policy level, more and more priorities will come along, such as compulsory
learning. With such priorities, policy guidelines would assist and support the establishment of partnerships in different aspects.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, two categories derived from Epstein (2009), mutual understanding, and mobilization of resources from the Chinese community, were used to conduct the data analysis, and evidence from different resources was applied to discuss these two categories, which are further discussed and developed into the main findings in the next chapter.
Chapter 5

Findings and Discussion of the Contribution of this Research Study

5.1 Introduction

In this Chapter, the data analysis of the previous chapter is integrated with the literature in relation to the research questions, and discussed in depth, particularly with the development of the key contribution of this research study. As mentioned in the first three chapters, there were four contributory research questions and one principal research question guiding the entire research process. The principal research question of this research aimed to explore “how to build up partnerships between schools and the local Chinese community to support school Mandarin teaching and learning” and the four contributory research questions sought to discover four key aspects associated with the principal question: “what criteria are essential for establishing partnerships?”, “what funds of knowledge are available in the community?”, “what factors may encourage or obstruct partnerships?” and “what is the significance of this partnership?”. Therefore, in Section 5.2, answers generated from the data are applied in answer to the research questions while in Section 5.3, the key contribution, the model for school/community partnership, particularly in Mandarin teaching and learning, is presented and discussed.

5.2 Answers to the Research Questions

In this Section, findings from this research study are presented in terms of the essential criteria regarding school/community partnership, the forms of funds of knowledge to be developed, contradictory issues, and the significance of school/community partnership.

5.2.1 Essential Criteria for School/community partnership
From the data analysis, the first answer to the research questions was found: that to build school/community partnership, there are four main issues: two-way communication, school support, supply of community participants, and inclusive organising. These four criteria need to be put into the criteria list for both parties: the school and the Chinese community.

5.2.1.1 Two-way communication

Sanders (2002) emphasises “the importance of honest, two-way communication between schools and potential community partners so that each party is fully aware of the intent and expectations of the other” (p. 35). As the foundation for any form of partnership, communication makes cooperation happen, and should be the first issue on the list of criteria. However, from the interview it was found that there is not sufficient information exchange between the school and the Chinese community, or that the information channel has not been fully opened. Sanders (2003) explains the need “for schools that are open to involvement by the local and wider community and that are responsive to community need” (p. 3). For example, one community interviewee expressed her curiosity about the school Mandarin program; this indicated that a communication block existed. Another school interviewee said that “to be honest, if we didn’t have a volunteer at the school, I didn’t think we would have a Mandarin program, because we don’t have the expertise, not be able to do it” (Mrs L, assistant principal, 14 Aug, 2010). Perhaps, if the school had more communication with the Chinese community, they would not think that. The real issue is, for this direct administrator of education, that the school is capable and needs to take the first action to establish two-way communication. As Hands (2005) suggests, there is a need to “clearly outline the nature of the partnership from the initial contact” (p. 71). Schools need to let the Chinese community know what is going on in the school about Mandarin teaching and learning, and take the initiative to investigate what funds of knowledge exist in Chinese community, and how to utilize them for educational purposes.

In fact, there exist information resources from NSW DET, such as, Home, School and Community Partnerships, Fair Go Fair Share Fair Say Fair Content (2003) and Helping Your Child with Reading and Writing, A Guide for Parents (2007), to
help parents to assist their children learn better at home. Epstein’s (2009) school/family/community partnerships model, originally talks about “how schools are working to increase families’ understanding of child and adolescent development” (p. 58), and also how “two-way communication increases understanding and cooperation between school and home and shows students that their teachers and parents are in contact to help them succeed in school” (p. 58).

Thus, what is missing now is information, and the documents to guide community members in helping students learn. Furthermore, there are some magazines (by NSW DET), and hotlines where parents can request information about their children’s learning, and such measures also could be applied to school/community partnership. Therefore, in respect of both DET and schools, they could produce material or channels to communicate with Chinese community Members. By doing this, the school would be able to recognise that besides volunteers, there are other Chinese people in the community who could participate in Mandarin teaching and learning. In addition, the researcher’s reflection journal also indicated that sometimes, a middle person or organisation that is familiar with both the school and the Chinese community is also a feasible and convenient way to start two-way communication. As Sanders (2002) suggests, two-way communication between school and Chinese community can be “developed to enhance schools’ curricula, identify and disseminate information about community resources” (p. 32).

5.2.1.2 School support

The second criterion related to school-community partnership is comprehensive support from the school. It was found in the school interviews, that schools having Mandarin programs welcome partnerships in their words, but do not show too much support in action. The reason might be that Mandarin is a newly introduced language in the WSR and, compared to other languages, is not considered as important as it should be. From the school interviewees’ perspectives, it seemed that they did not care too much whether the Mandarin program would continue or not. As in the comment quoted in the previous paragraph, if there were no volunteers, the school might not continue its Mandarin program, which would mean that the school might not search for other resources to replace the volunteers
with. In fact, it does not only because Mandarin is not receiving sufficient attention, but also because the school is not familiar with this new subject.

Despite the evidence of the importance of school, family and community partnerships for students’ academic success, this topic rarely receives adequate attention from school, district, and state education leaders . . . educational leaders are demanding more and better research demonstrating the connections . . . with student outcomes to help them decide whether and how to allocate financial resources and personnel to this component of school improvement. (Sheldon, 2008, p. 40)

Additionally, Sanders (2002) concluded that three other factors support schools in developing and maintaining a great partnership with a certain community: “high commitment to learning”, “Principal’s support for community involvement”, and “a welcoming school climate” (p. 35). As Sanders (2002) discovered, schools which were “well organized, student centred, family friendly, and academically rigorous” (p. 35) were considered the most desirable partners with whom community members would prefer to cooperate. Furthermore, as the administrative head of the school, the Principal’s support could create more opportunities for community members’ participation, and could prevent engagements being turned off by complex application procedures. Thirdly, necessary appreciation needs to be given to the community members participating, to maintain their enthusiasm. As Sanders (2002) noted, “although most community partners . . . agreed that formal acknowledgement was not necessary, they valued the school’s expressions of gratitude” (p. 35).

In addition, Sanders (2002) mentions that “partnerships should be a theme throughout educators’ professional training so that they enter schools, classrooms, offices, and departments of education with a clear understanding of the rewards and benefits of collaboration and a working knowledge of strategies for successful partnership” (p. 36). Support from the school needs to be not only verbal, but also acted upon, with the proper knowledge and with the necessary theoretical preparation, to actively do something to make partnerships happen.

5.2.1.3 Supply of Community Members
The third issue is the supply of community participants. As Sanders (2002) states, school might spend time developing the supply of those participants: “A school with little experience in community collaboration might elect to engage in some simple connections before venturing into more complex collaborations” (p. 37).

As for the Chinese community, as far as the interview data shows in this research study, the two interviewees expressed welcoming and supportive attitudes, and were even willing to sacrifice their weekend time. They were willing to play the role of ambassador to promote their language and culture, because they received this request as an honour. However, they would have to think about how their own circumstances would influence their availability, and about matters such as time, language capabilities and professionalism issues, which would need to be negotiated and solved through communication with the school. As school interviewees suggested in this research study, necessary training needs to be offered to Chinese community members, no matter whether it is related to academic or non-academic learning outcomes. NSW DET’s document Home, School and Community Partnerships, Fair Go Fair Share Fair Say Fair Content (2003) highlights workshops as a recommendation for parents to learn about their children’s life in school. This could also be applied to Chinese community Members, to build on their skills and knowledge in helping and assisting students’ Mandarin learning.

Furthermore, it emerged from the research data that there are several objective issues affecting the availability of participants from the Chinese community, such as time and workplace circumstances. Therefore, as Hands (2009) indicates, “during face-to-face meetings, the school personnel and the community members [should] discuss the possibilities for partnering and establish partnership activities in which all parties benefit” (p. 55). Partnerships are between different parties, and mutual goals are necessary to guide the activities. In addition, at least no loss should be caused to any of the parties.

Furthermore, one of the interviewees suggested having Chinese students at local universities who are majoring in education or teaching, take voluntary teaching in schools to earn credits, as an assignment. As Sanders (2003) said, “examples and
studies of university partnerships are increasingly found in the community involvement literature” (p. 167) and they may bring their expertise, and assist through the provision of professional development. This suggestion might be workable, because it would be possible to solve the problem of professional preparation and time. “Partnerships are most easily established through existing professional and social personal networks of relationships” (Hands, 2009, p. 55), so that searching for and building up a network of well-trained and available potential participants would be important for developing partnerships.

5.2.1.4 Inclusive organising

One more issue is the organising work involved in the whole process of building up partnerships. Two focuses raised in the interview data analysis were content preparation and safety. Because if the content that Chinese community members taught were difficult for students to understand, or if the content did not meet students’ interests, the teaching goal would be hard to achieve, and students’ motivation would be reduced. For instance, in the researcher’s reflection journal, four Chinese community members prepared interesting content for a lesson, and because all the content was selected from their experience of Mandarin teaching, teaching outcomes were achieved. In addition, safety is another important point related to the continuum of activities and to mutual trust between the two partners. From the document review of school application forms, it was found that safety and management concerns mostly, were emphasised. Moreover, details of and solutions to any emergency situations needed to be addressed clearly in writing, at the point of applying.

5.2.2 Funds of Knowledge in the Chinese community

Another answer to the research questions generated from the study, referred to the funds of knowledge existing in the Chinese community, in terms of both people and places. Not only does it include those practices that are being conducted in relation to the knowledge of the Chinese community, but it also includes those suggestions which are worth a trial.
Sanders (2002) suggests that “community involvement in schools can range from very simple, short-term connections to very complex, long-term arrangements” (p. 37). Therefore, those talents, and knowledges in the Chinese community, can also be diverse in form.

First of all, in terms of Chinese people, as studies have shown (Hugo & Fellows, 2007) the recent generation of Chinese immigrants are not like the first, who came out for the gold rush as a labour force. Now they are more skilled and educated. (2007)

A ‘brain drain’ involving a net loss of skilled persons from less developed nations in Asia and a net gain in the more developed countries of the OECD was recognised as long ago (Adams 1968). More recent analyses (e.g. Carrington and Detragiache 1998; Dumont and Lemaitre 2005) have confirmed that emigration rates in LDCs in Asia are higher for skilled groups and that many Asian countries experience a significant brain drain . . . OECD nations have placed greater emphasis on skill in their selection of immigrants and this with the increasing global competition for talent and skilled workers (Abella 2005) have exacerbated these tendencies. (pp. 29-30)

Before Chinese immigrants came to Australia, they might have received a high degree of education in China, and worked there as teacher or engineer. After arriving in Australia, they began to absorb another culture and language, but took on very different jobs. Taking two community interviewees in this research as examples, they were a professional editor and a teacher in China, while now one is working in a grocery store, and the other works at home as a housewife. However, they do have “Funds of Knowledge”, “those historically developed and accumulated strategies (e.g., skills, abilities, ideas, practices) or bodies of knowledge that are essential to a household’s functioning and well-being” (National Centre for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning, 1994). To some extent, as the recent generation of Chinese immigrants can speak both Chinese and English, they know both cultures, so might be the perfect candidates to promote Chinese language and culture to Australian students. Those Chinese community members could be seen as the “alive/interactive textbook” for students to learn Chinese language and culture from, if they get the opportunity to know each other and talk to each other.
The other form of funds of knowledge is place – referring to locations where Chinese people work or meet. These are good sites for students to practise Mandarin, and learn the culture. For example, while visiting the Chinese community, the researcher found some stores, supermarkets and restaurants around the target school community (see photo in Appendix 11), and had short talks with Chinese community members who worked there. From the researcher’s field work, it was found that people working and living in these places can speak Mandarin and are well-educated; they are friendly, and support Mandarin teaching and learning in school. Students could be encouraged to go to these places to practise Mandarin and Chinese culture in their life. For example, the dining culture of China can be learnt at a Chinese restaurant, and those necessities daily used by Chinese people can be learnt at the Chinese supermarket.

In addition, as shown in Chapter 4, Chinese art groups and people with expertise in Chinese culture can also be considered good choices to perform and demonstrate certain types of art or skill, which would provide students with a close look at Chinese culture within a western country. As some interviewees mentioned, they had invited or were preparing to invite some performers to introduce Chinese culture to the students. Dornyei (1990) found that:

. . . success in language attainment was dependent upon the learner’s affective predisposition toward the target linguistic-cultural group . . . which reflects “a high level of drive on the part of the individual to acquire the language of a valued second-language community in order to facilitate communication with that group”. It is associated with components such as “interest in foreign languages,” “desire to learn the target language,” “attitudes toward learning the target language,” “attitudes toward the learning situation,” “desire to interact with the target language community,” and “attitudes toward the target language community” (p. 2).

Chinese community fosters students by affording extended resources and practice opportunities. Not only does it care about their language learning, and provide them with immediate feedback, but it also offers contact with the culture, and a closer look.
Finally, if the engagement with Chinese community was not limited to the local area and were extended to the wider Chinese community wherever it was located, more possibilities would arise for school/community partnership. As some interviewees suggest, other strategies to employ funds of Chinese language could be having a sister school in China, connecting with each other via the Internet, or co-learning through video conferencing technology with other schools in Sydney that also had Mandarin. Such methods can create the similar advantages for students as access to real Chinese language and culture. In the application document from the school community for the project Becoming Asia Literate: Grants to Schools (2010), several points are suggested, in relation to virtual linkups or in-country study experiences of Mandarin. Moreover, as an interviewee suggested, “a lot of learning can occur when students travel to China” so possibly an exchange trip could be arranged for students to gain more contact with the Chinese language and culture.

Therefore, with the different forms of resources, different ways can be developed to make good use of them. As Sanders (2002) notes, “school-community partnerships can take a variety of forms” (p. 32), such as collaboration with “universities and educational institutions, government and military agencies . . . and volunteer organizations . . . cultural and recreational institutions, other community-based organizations, and community volunteers” (p. 32); these can all provide resources and support to the school. As Sheldon (2008) mentions, “more recently, researchers have begun studying how different types of involvement relate to specific student outcomes” (p. 41). Evolution is needed, to develop knowledge from the Chinese community into different types of involvement, with different learning outcomes. “It is becoming increasingly clear that educators need to consider which types of involvement they want to increase in order to attain specific school goals and desired student outcomes” (Sheldon, 2008, p. 41).

5.2.3 Contradictory Issues over School/community partnership

Analysis of the data suggests different ideas from different perspectives, especially regarding both encouraging and discouraging aspects of school/community partnership for Mandarin teaching and learning. Among these ideas, certain points
are unique and representative. In the following section, these ideas are discussed, and possible solutions are identified.

As evidenced by the survey, students like going out to places related to Chinese language and culture, and talking to Chinese people. Moreover, as described by interviewees, the benefits of learning Mandarin involving the Chinese community are numerous. They bring students confidence in learning, and a feeling of achievement when they have the opportunity to apply the language and encounter immediate feedback. So if partnerships can be built up, students will be able to learn in a more authentically and interactive environment. Additionally, from analysis of interviews and reflection journals, it was found that positive and encouraging factors such as initially supportive attitudes, and positive evaluations from both school and Chinese community, make it possible to achieve the desired outcomes of school/community partnership.

However, on the other hand, it was found that, although school/community partnership is a welcome topic, they stay mostly at the theoretical level, since some discouraging factors impede their establishment. Firstly, it was mentioned by one interviewee from the school that the first contact is difficult to make, because the school has no Chinese-background staff or wider human network. Also, the availability of Chinese community members for participation is closely connected to their working and daily routines. Regarding this point, Hands (2009) suggests that “it is advantageous to outline the possible benefits of liaising for potential partners from the first contact” (p. 55). Secondly, interviewees from both the school and the Chinese community raised their concerns about the confidence and skills of Chinese community members to communicate with students in a school context. The safety of students was also a worrying point. As the document Home, School and Community Partnerships, Fair Go Fair Share Fair Say Fair Content (2003) suggests, training is necessary for parents who want to be involved with assisting students’ academic learning at home; similarly, for students’ Mandarin practice and learning in the Chinese community, the necessary training should be offered if the goal is academically oriented.
As Hands (2005) suggests, “there are elements of compromise and personal flexibility during this negotiation phase . . . to communicate their goals for the relationship and to negotiate agreeable terms and appropriate activities . . . required flexibility and capability . . . for the educators’ responsiveness to community members’ needs” (p. 73).

5.2.4 Significance of School/community partnership

As mentioned in Section 5.2.3 above, one benefit of school/community partnership is offering students a more authentic and interactive environment, to bring the language alive for learning. As Sanders (2002) says, “school-community collaborations focused on academic subjects have been shown to enhance students’ attitudes towards these subjects” (p. 34). Moreover, it has been learnt from this research study that partnerships can also increase and accumulate resources for schools and students. Various suggestions can be made to policy makers about how to efficiently promote Mandarin across the country by involving Chinese community:

Partnerships with businesses and other community organizations have provided schools with needed equipment, materials, and technical assistance and support for student instruction . . . school-community partnerships, then, are an important element in schools’ programs of improvement and reform and an important part of a comprehensive program of school, family, and community partnerships. (Sanders, 2002, p. 34)

Students’ needs and interests become more diverse in their adolescent years, and their activities in the community become more numerous and noticeable. Therefore, during this period of time, they are more easily influenced by the Chinese community in their Mandarin learning. Schools need to identify and activate resources from the Chinese community to serve their learning more fully.

Epstein (2009) has said “it is possible to have a school that is excellent academically but ignores families, however . . . [this] will build barriers . . . affect school life and learning. It is possible to have a school that is ineffective academically but involves families in many good ways . . . [but will] shortchange
students’ learning.” (p.12). A similar logic can be applied to relationships between school and community. The three points (5.2.1-5.2.3) mentioned above have to be taken into account seriously, in establishing and running successful partnerships between school and Chinese community: essential criteria, forms of funds of knowledge from the community, and consideration of contradictory issues. The process of developing good partnerships includes solving “questions and debates and withstand[ing] disagreements” (Epstein, 2009, p. 12); once conflicts and differences are resolved, these can become strengthened thereafter.

### 5.3 Discussion of the Findings in Relation to the Key Contribution: a School/community partnership Model

In this section, the key contribution of this research study is presented, and followed by discussion in relation to literature. The principal research question is answered by providing a school/community partnership model for Mandarin teaching and learning, based on the answers to the four contributory questions, which affords the key contribution of this study. The school/community partnerships school/community partnership model includes criteria points and suggested solutions, and could be applicable to school communities with similar situations at the beginning stages of promoting Mandarin teaching and learning.

#### 5.3.1 Key Contribution – a School/community partnership Model

In this section, the school/community partnership model derived from this research study is presented and discussed. Regarding each point, several possible solutions are suggested.

A 4-point school/community partnership model

1. Two-Way Communication: open a free and full communication channel between parties.
2. School Support: school shows enthusiasm and support for action, to make Chinese community members feel the importance placed on their participation, and encouraging engagement.

3. Two-Way Negotiation: it is necessary for both the school and the Chinese community to discuss and negotiate some necessary steps to make partnerships happen.

4. Various Developments: Develop partnerships using different forms of participation.

Figure 5.1 Relations within the School/community partnership Model

Figure 5.1 above shows relations among the four points of the school/community partnership model. At the bottom of this figure, two-way communication and school support are the foundations, while the former point is more basic than the latter. Two-way communication increases mutual understanding and inspires the school to show its support. This in turn strengthens communication in a more interactive way. With good mutual understanding and support, dialogue takes place between the parties, and which negotiation is encouraged. Through negotiation, some hard to avoid issues can be solved in different ways with different perspectives. Various forms of participation can increase the flexibility of participation, in order to realize sustainability in school/community partnership.
5.3.2 Discussion of the School/community partnership Model

5.3.2.1 Two-way communication

First of all, opening a free and full communication channel between school and Chinese community members, to produce good two-way communication, can provide a platform for exchanging ideas about Mandarin teaching and learning, and allow both parties to understand each other.

It emerges from this research study that communication blocks mainly arise as a result of mutual ignorance between the school and the Chinese community. When a Mandarin teacher was asked about school/community partnership in this school community, he did not seem know that there were at least four stores run by Chinese people around the school, and he had not thought about planning any activities to engage them. Another non-Chinese background teacher also knew little about Chinese community around the school, and even preferred to collaborate with distant Chinese Communities in some activities. However, since the researcher has met most of the Chinese people of this district, and spoken with them, she found that they spoke really pure Mandarin, and showed great interest in working with the school Mandarin program. Therefore, it seems that school members were not clear about, or had no knowledge of, the Chinese community around the school.

For the Chinese community members, their ignorance was mainly due to the busy workload and the passive nature of information received from the school. As one interviewee said, although she had been working in the Luting Shan area (where the target school community is located) for four years, and the school was only five minutes walk away from her working place, she did not know that a Mandarin program was being run in this school. This was a seemingly contradictory situation, and excuses from both parties may have caused the communication block.

Having regular and comprehensive communication is the fundamental issue for talking about any partnership. Schools providing information to Chinese community can increase their understanding of students’ Mandarin learning in school, and then increase interaction between the school and Chinese community, which ultimately
will help students learn Mandarin better. As Epstein (2009) explains in his model, partnerships encourage the mobilization of time and talents of parents, to share in and support school activities at the school or in other locations. Therefore, in the above model for school/community partnership, Chinese community members should be encouraged to contribute their time and talents. To achieve this aim, good communication is needed.

Three solutions for two-way communication are suggested by this research:

1. Build up an exchange platform (either virtual or face to face, e.g. school website, workshops, or exhibiting a Mandarin program) to promote information between the school and the Chinese community as much as possible. The school should announce information about its Mandarin program, and the demand for resources and personnel needed for relevant activities; for Chinese community members, the platform could be used to demonstrate their knowledge and talents, and share their ideas of Mandarin teaching and learning. Through this platform, good communication can be built up, information can be exchanged, and cooperation can develop.

2. School provides opportunities to let the Chinese community observe, communicate with students and staff, or even participate in more hands on way, such as teaching in Mandarin lessons, to increase their interest in and engagement with the partnerships.

3. Encourage teachers to pay visits to Chinese background students’ homes; the Chinese community to research and document what resources can be used for school Mandarin teaching and learning activities, and make a record for future utilization.

In summary, two-way communication is the foundation of school/community partnership, and needs to be well developed from the very beginning. The three solutions listed above would allow the building up of platform, and would encourage both the school and Chinese community members to exchange their ideas.
5.3.2.2 School support

The second point is that the school needs to show enthusiasm and support for action, to make Chinese community members feel their importance, and to encourage their engagement. Within cooperative ventures, whichever party gains more benefit should be the party to take the first step. Since the Mandarin teaching and learning happens in the school, and comes under the administrator of the school, it is the school that gains more benefit, and so needs to take more responsibility. For the purposing of improving or raising students’ learning outcomes, the school should welcome and support the Chinese community members in a positive manner.

Teachers can do most of the work of identifying and documenting the existing knowledge through visits to the Chinese community. However, teachers’ work cannot replace support from the school, to highlight and emphasised the importance and value of the contribution that Chinese community members could make.

For example, while staying in Australia, the researcher can also be considered as a Chinese community member. Without school support or without the necessary appreciation, this would cause feeling of neglect and of one’s efforts being undervalued. School support is crucial for those participants to maintain their enthusiasm, and their continued contribution is encouraged when they receive appreciation and affirmation.

The following are three solutions that can guide schools how to show their support for school/community partnership properly, and to cement partnership relations:

1. Advertise the partnerships via Internet or posters in the local community, including the names of participants, institutions or groups, to make Chinese community members feel that their work is noticed and appreciated.
2. The school invites Chinese community members to participate in school activities, and makes them feel valued and involved.
3. School gives necessary appreciation to and evaluation of the Chinese community Members after the activities, to value the contribution they have made.
To sum up, support from the school is another fundamental factor in the establishment of partnerships between school and Chinese community. Such support relates not only to the material level; more importantly, it relates to a feeling of being acknowledged for what they have contributed.

5.3.2.3 Two-way negotiation

Thirdly, since several obstructive issues emerged from this research study, it is necessary for both the school and the Chinese community to discuss and make some concessions to make partnerships happen. Thus, this point aims to talk about negotiations regarding these challenges with both parties, in order to secure the success of the partnership. There are generally three obstacles, namely: professional preparation required, matching availability times, and supply of participants.

Regarding the obstacle of Chinese community members’ lack of professional preparation, three main points arose from this research study, namely: skills to communicate with students, extent of knowledge, and the safety issue.

Making a speech or communicating with students in the school context is different from what most Chinese community members experience in their daily life, such as working in a store or a company. One difference is that students’ behaviours are far different from the people they encounter everyday, and also different from their own children at home. Another issue is language capability, since the language required at school differs from the language use in other contexts. For many Chinese people in Australia, their English language capability might be good enough for living and working in this country, but not good enough for communicating with students. Therefore, without prior experience or appropriate training beforehand, it is very much possible that unexpected situations will occur, contrary to what Chinese community members would be used to encountering. As Epstein (2009) points out, in the school/family/community partnerships model, necessary information needs to be given to families about what is being taught in class and how to help students at home. Similar logic applies to school/community partnership. Thus, in order to achieve effective cooperation, certain information
and training needs to be supplied to those Chinese community members who wish to participate in the partnerships, or they should be allowed to become familiar with the school and the students beforehand. In fact, necessary professional preparation aims to provide Chinese community members with a comfortable teaching experience, and with confidence in their ability to deliver suitable and interesting content to engage students’ Mandarin learning. Likewise, community members could become discouraged if they faced unexpected difficulties.

Another point is the knowledge coverage mentioned by a Mandarin teacher. As he expressed, the worry comes from the gap between Chinese community members’ talents and knowledge, and students’ interests and comprehension. Too big a gap would possibly discourage students’ learning outcomes. As shown in the researcher’s reflection journal, it was lucky that the researcher and her colleagues had had one year’s experience of teaching beforehand, including teaching language and lesson planning. Hence, when they were invited to hold a Chinese lesson, they were aware of what to do with students of that certain age group, and how. However, this would not be the case for most Chinese community members, who may have had no experience managing students in classroom before. Due consideration needs to be given, both by the school and the Chinese community, to selecting suitable content for students, to increase and maintain their learning interests and motivation.

Safety is a third point related to the professional preparation of Chinese community members. Because they have had no relevant experience before, they might not have a clear expectation of what might happen. As an interviewee from the Chinese community mentioned, she worries that the students might hurt themselves whilst in her store, or break her goods. Again, good communication is demanded here. The school should provide information in advance to let Chinese community members know what could happen, based on their teaching experiences, and which students may require special attention. But actually my teaching experience shows that one never knows how a student may behave. The nature of teaching is relatively unpredictable.
Matching time availability is another obstacle that concerns both school and Chinese community members. Teachers are the direct administrators of the activity, and should contact Chinese community members directly. Although the two Mandarin teachers interviewed in this research study suggested that they were willing to spend extra time after work, one of them said time needed to be squeezed out away from normal school hours, so they could fit the needs of the partnership. For Chinese community members, time needs to be negotiated with their working times and workload. Therefore, to accommodate the needs of Chinese community members and to make them feel valued, one possible measure could be to replace them and free them out of workload.

A final obstacle is the difficulty of search for a supply of participants from the Chinese community. As discussed in Section 5.2, in order to achieve a stable and suitable supply, professional preparation and a matching schedule that works for both parties also have to be considered, and moreover, it would be better if benefits could be offered to the Chinese community members.

In the following list, three solutions are suggested for schools to minimize the obstacles between school and Chinese community members, and to allow better cooperation in the partnership:

1. School provides workshops at school, or in video form via school’s website, to provide Chinese community members with the necessary training to get familiar with teaching techniques and management.
2. School and Chinese community members schedule a timetable for partnerships and negotiate time issues with Chinese community members themselves or their employees, to work out some alternative ways to make up their workload.
3. School documents the available expertise, and notes the time constraints and other issues of the Chinese community members, for possible future use. This could later be applied to different forms of participation.

In summary, two-way negotiation stands for both parties considering the obstacles seriously, and working them out. The solutions suggested above are aimed at
dealing with such obstacles. Issues like training to prepare the professionalism of Chinese community members, and searching for available participants, should also be considerations.
5.3.2.4 Various forms of Participation

The fourth point is to develop different forms of participation to increase the sustainability of school/community partnership, and provide different perspectives on the obstacles. In fact, there are many different ways Chinese community members can participate, and different requirements for different kinds of participation.

Once the requirements for community participation are allowed to differ, in relation to participants, forms of activity, and educational outcomes, there will be more possibilities for partnerships. To embrace culture, professional performers could be scheduled once per term, and for oral practice, a Chinese community member could be invited once per week. Community members might not able to speak good English, but they must speak good Mandarin. Producing teaching and learning resources could be done with Chinese community members who are not able to speak good English, since they do not need to communicate with students directly, and the frequency of contact could be less; but for formal knowledge delivery, Chinese community members need training, and the content to be delivered needs to be selected carefully, and more often; if students are learning for fun, the school can establish relationships with other schools in Sydney or in China through virtual linkups, so students can learn together. Many more different forms can be developed.

Through developing various forms of participation, partnerships may become more consistent, and will possibly last longer. Depending on whether the educational outcomes are formal or informal, the requirements for participation can differ, in respect of professional preparation, time and the supply of participants from the Chinese community.

The requirements for different aspects of partnerships can vary. The points below show some suggestions for developing different ways of achieving various educational goals:
1. Have Chinese overseas students majoring in Teaching or Education in local universities, as Chinese community members participate in school/community partnership to work on Mandarin teaching and learning, working towards earning credit for their degree. They would be well prepared, professional, and have knowledge of teaching, so they can be considered good candidates.

2. Work with sister schools in China, or with other schools also teaching Mandarin in Sydney via video conferencing or email exchange, to increase students’ understanding of the importance of Mandarin, and to give them the feeling that they have more peers, all learning together.

In sum, developing various forms of participation makes it possible for school/community partnership to last a long time, to create new perspectives, and to look into the obstacles to work out more practicable solutions. It has been shown in this research study that the three solutions suggested above can support the various forms of participation.

5.4 Conclusion

“A comprehensive program of school, family, and community partnerships is a planned, goal-oriented, and ongoing schedule of activities that inform and involve all families and the community in ways that promote student success” (Epstein, 2009, pp. 196-197). Ideally, school/community partnership will not be one-off activities but regular, systematically organised contact. As shown in this research study, it is important to prepare the essential criteria well. These include two-way communication, school support, supply of Chinese community members and inclusive organization; consideration has to be made, in reference to the different forms of funds of knowledge, to developing different kinds of participation; moreover, complicating issues and the significance of these partnerships can not be ignored. The model developed from this research study, and its four points: two-way communication, school support, two-way negotiation, and various developments, is worthy of a pilot program to test the feasibility and effectiveness.
The benefits that school/community partnership can bestow on Mandarin teaching and learning are numerous, for the students, school and Chinese community. For students, such partnerships would bring them more opportunities to experience an authentic language and cultural environment, and build up their confidence and feeling of achievement. For the school, such partnerships would bring in and accumulate teaching and learning resources for Mandarin. More importantly, these resources are sustainable, relatively cheap, or even free. For the Chinese community, it will be good to contribute their talents and knowledge to the school, the contributions of the Chinese community will be emphasised and appreciated when they turn into positive educational outcomes for students, and they may become more involved in Australia’s mainstream school system.
Chapter 6

Implications and Conclusion

In the previous chapter, the key finding of this research, the school/community partnership model was presented. In this chapter, a summary of the chapters, limitations of the research and possible applications of the school/community partnership model are briefly addressed, and followed by a conclusion to the entire thesis.

6.1 Summary of Thesis Chapters

The first chapter introduced the background of the researcher and the research context, including the theoretical basis of the initiatives of this research study, and also included a brief introduction to the methodology of this research. The dual identity of the researcher, both as research candidate and Mandarin teacher in Western Sydney Region public schools, stimulated her to look into Mandarin education from a particular perspective, seeking possibilities for the acquisition of educational resources to meet the needs of students, to encounter language learning in social contexts that are appropriate to the target language. Besides, literature related to the research questions, including school/community partnership, funds of knowledge, language acquisition, and also the methodology of the case study were briefly introduced, to give a general idea of how this research study would be conducted and why the researcher wanted to explore the research questions in a particular way.

In Chapter 2, the three topics of literature relevant to this research study were reviewed in depth, and a research gap identified, to guide the research questions of this study. The focus of this study, namely school/community partnership, was derived from school/family/community partnerships, and emphasized the influence of community on students’ learning outcomes at school. In addition, Epstein’s six-point model focused on types of involvement, and this was developed as the framework of data analysis for this study. To understand what resources could be
explored from the community, literature related to the funds of knowledge was reviewed, including its impact on and application to education. This also included the topic of language acquisition, which was tightly connected to the impact of school/community partnership on students’ language learning, in which environment and authentic settings were important for practice and experience.

Chapter 3 talked about the methodology of the case study, and outlined the research design and steps, including important issues of concern. The case study format was selected because of its appropriateness to this research study, regarding the purpose of investigating and answering the main research question: “how to establish partnerships between school and community to explore funds of knowledge from the Chinese community for school Mandarin teaching and learning”. The research design was introduced, with detail of structure and steps, issues of validity and reliability, and ethical considerations of the research study.

The fourth chapter presented the data of this research study, and produced a preliminary analysis in accordance with the two categories developed from the six-point model of school/family/community partnerships in Chapter 2. By analysing research data, two key answers to the research questions emerged, in terms of mutual understanding as a foundation for partnerships, and ways of mobilizing resources from the Chinese community.

Chapter 5 offered further discussion on the preliminary analysis of the previous chapter, and the key contribution of this study was provided: a four-point school/community partnership model. The discussion in this chapter was specifically focused on the four contributory research questions: essential criteria for school/community partnership, funds of knowledge in the Chinese community, contradictory issues over school/community partnership, and the significance of school/community partnership. The four-point model of school/community partnership includes two-way communication, school support, two-way negotiation and varied development, through which, ideally, healthy and sustainable partnerships between schools and Chinese community can be established.
6.2 Limitations of this Research Study

As a qualitative case study, this research study had limitations in its process and findings, to some extent. In terms of research process, it was limited to the researcher’s knowledge and skills, which were influenced by the researcher herself as primary instrument for data collection and analysis. In terms of the research findings, it is hard to generalize a final conclusion that would suit every reader. However, it is widely recognised that case studies rely on analytic generalization, and a particular set of results can be generalized to broader theory (Yin, 2009).

The first limitation related to the researcher. As a research candidate, the researcher is learning while conducting this research study. Moreover, as a single researcher, it is inevitably that her personal influences reflected on it. Dyer (1995) described case study as “descriptive and detailed, with a narrow focus, combining subjective and objective data” (cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 254). However, in order to increase the reliability of the findings, three methods were used to collect data and enable triangulation of the different data: Semi-structured interviews, reflection journals, and document reviews. As the data were collected from different perspectives, triangulation maximized the reliability and validity of the research, and minimized the researcher’s personal influence on the study.

The second limitation goes to the findings. For a case study, generalizability is always a sensitive issue. As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) indicate, “the nature of generalization in case study to be clarified . . . from the single instance to the class of instances that it presents . . . from features of the single case to a multiplicity of classes with the same features; from the single features of part of the case to the whole of that case” (p. 254). Attention needs to be paid to a “Caution against using case studies solely as preliminaries to other studies” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 255). Different readers should be aware that the findings from a case study are made within one particular context, whereas interpretation needs to be applied within different contexts. The process and findings of a case study are not like an experiment, which aims to prove the same situations and results as others, but aim to illuminate or guide the way for further study.
In addition, the context of this research study was limited by the target school community, and all the data collected was in this context. However, because Mandarin is a newly introduced language in Western Sydney Region public schools, and because the region is mostly Mandarin-disadvantaged, the findings of this research study might also be suitable for other school communities in the Western Sydney Region. However, for those school communities in other regions of Sydney, or other school communities in Australia or around the world, which may have completely different circumstances from the Western Sydney Region, interpretation of this research study and its implications could be modified, according to their own situation.

6.3 Implications of the Research Findings

This study contributes to our understanding of school community partnerships. The implications of this research study can be utilized mainly at three levels: the school community level, the educational research level, and the Mandarin teaching and learning, policy making level.

The most straightforward implication of this study goes to school communities. First of all, the research indicated that there were many potential possibilities for building school/community partnership in the school community. Even in this target school community, where Mandarin or Chinese language teaching was disadvantaged, there were some Chinese people living and working in the community. Therefore the research findings might be helpful in informing school communities that they might reconsider, and search for possibilities to build partnerships locally. Secondly, issues hindering the partnerships are worth the focused attention of school communities. It is important to know about the disadvantages for oneself, and then try to overcome them. For example, the most common issue raised in the research was two-way communication, over other issues such as professional preparation, availability of participants from the Chinese community, and students’ safety. Discussion of these issues can provide schools with a starting point to think about partnerships with the Chinese community, as they begin to evaluate whether they are ready for partnerships, and what needs to be prepared. The last point was to develop different forms of
partnership, for different educational outcomes. In this way, the requirements of the community participants would not be as strict as supposed, and some obstacles could be resolved flexibly, such as learning Chinese culture by dining in a Chinese restaurant, inviting a chef to show Chinese cooking to students, or recognizing Chinese characters in Chinese supermarkets. It may also be practicable to enlarge the concept of Chinese community outside of geographically fixed boundaries, by means of working with a sister school in China or in schools in other areas of Sydney that also have Mandarin programs, via video conferencing technology. The main idea of the different forms of partnerships is to create more opportunities for students to contact the language and culture and to have more people working together, no matter whether they are native speakers or learners.

Secondly, this research study broadens our understanding of the concept of school/community partnership and funds of knowledge, especially in relation to Mandarin teaching and learning in an Australian context. Given the limited time, the limited skills of the researcher and the limited amount of data, this research study has operated primarily at the theoretical level, yet the findings might convince school communities of some points that would otherwise never have been thought of. Moreover, the key finding of this research, the school/community partnership model, might contribute to building a theory of school partnership, and would be worth a trial, with any necessary modifications according to the different contexts. Case studies are illuminating, but never produce final conclusions. This research study could be pioneering in this research area. Therefore, further studies are encouraged, to strengthen the theory of school community partnerships, to test and extend the findings through practice and research.

The last implication is that policy maker could develop strategies to take Chinese Communities’ funds of knowledge into account, and this might broadly improve Mandarin teaching and learning. It is a constructive point to underline the value of utilizing funds of knowledge from the Chinese community into school Mandarin teaching and learning, to create more opportunities for students to apply the language within an authentic environment. In fact, there are in existence, some government initiatives addressing the promotion of Mandarin teaching and learning, such as the national funding project for Chinese literacy. However, it
seems that there is a lack of details or suggestions for how to realize the funded outcomes scientifically, which efficiently related to students’ learning outcomes. This research study started from an innovative perspective, regarding the funds of knowledge in Australia’s Chinese community as one resource for Mandarin teaching and learning in an appropriate linguistic and cultural context, and clarifies what can be utilized and how. The findings may help to broaden the thinking of policy makers in drafting policy, and attract their attention to the knowledge that already exists in the Chinese community.

6.4 Conclusion

To sum up, this study, as an innovative study within particular time and environmental constraints, terminates with no final conclusion. However, it is hoped that readers’ interpretations of the possibilities for school partnerships with Chinese community, after reading this thesis, will be shaped somewhat differently. This research study purposed to explore the advantages of using Chinese community resources for Mandarin teaching and learning through a case study of a target school community. It may be supposed that, if it is possible for school/community partnership to be established in a Chinese-disadvantaged area, they could be established everywhere. It was hoped that this research could draw the public’s attention to the special types of resources existing in the Chinese community, which currently are more or less ignored or at least underestimated, for teaching purposes. The findings from this research study point out the significance of school/community partnership in Mandarin teaching and learning, and encourage school communities to glean insights into their own circumstances from a new perspective, with some suggestions about how to utilize funds of knowledge from Australia’s Chinese community. The main purpose was to contribute a new type of resource, to increase students’ interest in learning Mandarin, and to deepen their understanding of the culture as well. Moreover, school/community partnership are also a good platform for Chinese community members, to realize their value by becoming involved in the mainstream education system in Australia, in recognition of the growing advantages of Chinese language and culture in this Asia-Pacific country.
References


Appendix 1: University of Western Sydney Ethics Approval

From: Kay Buckley
Sent: Tuesday, 23 February 2010 12:53 PM
To: Dacheng Zhao; 16836091@student.uws.edu.au
Subject: HREC Approval H7701

Notification of Approval

23 February 2010

Email on behalf of the UWS Human Research Ethics Committee

Dear Dacheng and Yi Weng

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

TITLE: Exploring the funds of linguistic and cultural knowledge in Chinese community for Mandarin teaching and learning purpose

H7701   Student: Yi Weng (Supervisor: Dacheng Zhao)

The Protocol Number for this project is H7701. 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 2011. 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/researchers/ethics/human_ethics/human_ethics_adverse_eventend_of_project_report

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/researchers/ethics/human_ethics/human_ethics_adverse_eventend_of_project_report

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

The Committee wishes you well with your research.
Yours sincerely

Associate Professor Janette Perz,

Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee

Kay Buckley

Human Ethics Officer

University of Western Sydney

Locked Bag 1797, Penrith Sth DC  NSW 1797

Tel: 02 47 360 883

Appendix 2: State Education Research Approval Process (SERAP) Approval

Ms. Yi Weng
Room J.G.13
Building J
Kingswood Campus
University of Western Sydney
Locked Bag 1797
KINGSWOOD NSW 1797

SERAP number: 2009204

Dear Ms. Weng,

I refer to your application to conduct in NSW government schools (Western Sydney Region) a research project entitled Exploring the funds of linguistic and cultural knowledge in Chinese community.

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

Your approval will remain valid until 31 December 2010.

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

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

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

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Kerrie Ikin
School Education Director, The Hills
Western Sydney Region Education Research Manager
16 March 2010

NSW Department of Education & Training
Western Sydney Region, Building 73C, Nininha Education Precinct, Eastern Road, Quakers Hill NSW 2763 T 9208 7611 F 9208 7635
www.det.nsw.edu.au
Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet (Teachers & Principals)

Project Title: Exploring the funds of linguistic and cultural knowledge in Chinese community—for Mandarin teaching and learning purpose

Who is carrying out the study?
YI WENG

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by YI WENG, RHD candidate for MED (Hons) from the Centre for Education, UWS.

What is the study about?
this study is about how to utilize the Chinese resources around students' living place, like a Chinese supermarket, a Chinese restaurant, a Chinese neighbor, for Mandarin language teaching and learning purposes. Besides Mandarin class in normal school time, it is very important for you to practise speaking and listening in students' free time. So this study mainly aims to suggest and provide ways to use Chinese communities as resources for language teaching and learning.

What does the study involve?
you will be required to participate in the coordination of the activities, and provide feedback to the researcher, such as how do you think about these activities, and how can it be improved, etc.

How much time will the study take?
1.5 hours per activity, about 2-3 activities in total. 15 minutes for feedback.

Will the study benefit me?
yes, through this research, the resources available in Chinese communities can be explored, and the ways how to utilize will be developed by trial activities as well. All can be learnt and applied in further Mandarin program by schools.

Will the study involve any discomfort for me?
there will be no anticipated discomfort for you, but if you feel that way, please feel free to choose to withdraw at any time.
How is this study being paid for?
This study is self-funded by the researcher

Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?
All aspects of who provides the evidence will be confidential and only the researcher and her supervisors will have access to information about participants. The result will be de-identified in dissemination as:
1. Thesis to be submitted for the requirements for the Degree of Master of Education (Honours)
2. Report to the schools involved
3. Publications in scholarly journals

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, Yi WENG 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 Dr. Dacheng Zhao, CER, 0410322732; Prof. Michael Singh, CER, 0404012409

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

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

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

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.
Appendix 4: Participant Information Sheet (Community Members)

Project Title: Exploring the funds of linguistic and cultural knowledge in Chinese community— for Mandarin teaching and learning purpose

Who is carrying out the study?
Yi WENG

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Yi WENG, RHD candidate for MED (Hons) from the Centre for Education, UWS.

What is the study about?
This study mainly aims to explore resources for Mandarin teaching and learning purposes existing among you and other Chinese people living in this community.

What does the study involve?
1. you will be invited into a semi-interview with the researcher to answer some prepared questions, before the interview, you will be provided a consent form; 2. you may be invited to participate some activities to devote your speciality in language and culture to Mandarin teaching and learning.

How much time will the study take?
30-40 minutes for interview, and 1.5 hours for activity

Will the study benefit me?
yes, through this research, you may realize what you can contribute to Mandarin teaching and learning in an Australia context, and the activities the researcher design and practise out may give you some ideas about in what forms to contribute.

Will the study involve any discomfort for me?
there will be no anticipated discomfort for you, but if you feel that way, please feel free to choose to withdraw at any time.

How is this study being paid for?
This study is self-funded by the researcher
Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?
All aspects of who provides the evidence will be confidential and only the researcher and her supervisors will have access to information about participants.
The result will be de-identified in dissemination as:
1. Thesis to be submitted for the requirements for the Degree of Master of Education (Honours)
2. Report to the schools involved
3. Publications in scholarly journals

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, Yi WENG 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 Dr. Dacheng Zhao, CER, 0410322732; Prof. Michael Singh, CER, 0404012409

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

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

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

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.
Appendix 5: Participant Information Sheet (Parent & Caregiver)

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: Exploring the funds of linguistic and cultural knowledge in Chinese community — for
Mandarin teaching and learning purpose

Who is carrying out the study?
Yi Weng

Your child is invited to participate in a study conducted by Yi WENG, Research Higher Degree candidate
for Master of Education (Honours) from the Centre for Educational Research, University of Western
Sydney, and [if appropriate] will form the basis for the degree of MED (Hons) at the UWS under the
supervision of Dr. Dacheng Zhao and Prof. Michael Singh

What is the study about?
The purpose is to investigate
1. how a school running its Mandarin program in relation with the local Chinese community, in terms of
language teaching and learning.
2. Find out ways for my working schools' Mandarin program to utilize their local Chinese communities as
resource, which might fulfill the lack of teaching and learning resources inside school.
3. Try out some possible activities between schools and Chinese communities to see how efficiently they
can work, or what problems might be caused, and how can they be dealt with.
4. Summarize and write up some strategies for schools to make reference in terms of seeking resources in
Chinese communities and cooperation with them.

What does the study involve?
This study will involve:
1. Observation and investigation of a similar school on its Mandarin program;
2. Observation of my working community on its available resources for Mandarin program;
3. Interview with local Chinese community members, school teachers, students, and language consultants
about their attitudes and opinions on the value of Chinese community as resource for Mandarin teaching
and learning purpose;
4. Organize one or two activities based on my previous research, to see how efficiently they work for
Mandarin program, or what makes it failed;
5. Conclude all my research findings in a program proposal.

How much time will the study take?
Recordings will be: Collected on April 2010-Nov 2010 during Mandarin classes.

If you have concerns about what has been recorded, you may access recordings of your child within the
period of storage. These recordings can be accesses in the following ways: call 0451433773 or email to

Page 1 of 3
16836091@uws.student.edu.au

Children not participating in the study will be looked after by other school teachers during the time the research is being carried out.

Will the study benefit me?
Yes. Through participating in the activities, students will be able to have more contact with Chinese people and Chinese culture, they will be able to stay in a Mandarin environment and experience the real Chinese, rather than only a 40 mins class per week. Their understanding and interests of the language and culture will increase.

Will the study have any discomforts?
There will be no anticipated discomfort for you, but if you feel that way, please feel free to choose to withdraw at any time.

How is this study being paid for?
The study is all depended on the researcher own

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.
The result will be de-identified in dissemination as:
1. Thesis to be submitted for the requirements for the Degree of Master of Education (Honours)
2. Report to the schools involved

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

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

What if I require further information?
When you have read this information, Yi WENG 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 Dr. Dacheng Zhao, CER, 0410322732; Prof. Michael Singh, CER, 0404012409

What if I have a complaint?
This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is [enter approval number]
If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel 02-4736 0883 Fax 02-4736 0013 or email humanethics@juws.edu.au. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.
Appendix 6: Participant Information Sheet (Students)

Project Title: Exploring the funds of linguistic and cultural knowledge in Chinese community— for Mandarin teaching and learning purpose

Who is carrying out the study?
Yi WENG

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Yi WENG, RHD candidate for MED (Hons) from the Centre for Education, UWS.

What is the study about?
This study is about how to use the Chinese resources around your living place, like a Chinese supermarket, a Chinese restaurant, a Chinese neighbor, to practise you Mandarin, and increase the your opportunity to speak and hear Mandarin. Besides Mandarin class in normal school time, it is very important for you to practise it in your free time. So this study mainly aims to provide you ways to use resources around yourselves, and make use of them.

What does the study involve?
You may be invited to participate in some activities, like having a talk with a Chinese businessman, or having a chance to make dumplings with a Chinese cook, or going out to visit a Chinese supermarket. After participating in these activities, the researcher may ask you for some feedback, like how you feel about these activities, what you have learnt from them, and how are you willing to participate in further activities, etc.

How much time will the study take?
1.5 hours per activity, about 2-3 activities in total. 15 minutes for feedback.

Will the study benefit me?
Yes, this research can provide you ways to use Chinese resources around yourselves, and make use of them in your daily life besides normal Mandarin classes in school.
Will the study involve any discomfort for me?
there are no anticipated discomfort for you, but if you feel that way, please feel free to choose to withdraw at any time.

How is this study being paid for?
This study is self-funded by the researcher

Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?
All aspects of who provides the evidence will be confidential and only the researcher and her supervisors will have access to information about participants.
The result will be de-identified in dissemination as:
1. Thesis to be submitted for the requirements for the Degree of Master of Education (Honours)
2. Report to the schools involved
3. Publications in scholarly journals

Can I withdraw from the study?
yes, you can withdraw at anytime as you like, and no consequences will cause.

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, Yi WENG 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 Dr. Dacheng Zhao, CER, 0410322732; Prof. Michael Singh, CER, 0404012409

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

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

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

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.
Appendix 7: Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form for Parents/Caregivers

This is a project specific consent form. It restricts the use of the data collected to the named project by the named investigators. Where projects involve young people capable of consenting, a separate consent form should be developed. A parental consent form is still required.

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

Project Title: Exploring the funds of linguistic and cultural knowledge in Chinese community--for Mandarin teaching and learning purpose

I, [print name] .................................................., give consent for my child [print name] ........................................ to participate in the research project titled Exploring the funds of linguistic and cultural knowledge in Chinese community -- for Mandarin teaching and learning purpose.

I acknowledge that:

I have read the participant information sheet [or where appropriate, 'have had read to me'] and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my child’s involvement in the project with the researcher/s.

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

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

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

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

I consent to the interview being audio-tapes, the written feedback being collected and activities being photographed. Please cross out any activity that you do not wish your child to participate in.

Signed (Parent/caregiver): SIGNATURE  

Signed (child): SIGNATURE  

Name:  

Name:  

Date:  

Date:  

Where projects involve young people capable of consenting, a separate consent form should be developed. A parental consent form is still required.

Return Address: UG.13, Building 2, Kingswood Campus, UWS, Locked Bag 1797, Penrith South DC NSW
Appendix 8: Survey of students’ feedback on a Chinese Movie Excursion

Short Survey

1. How do you feel about the excursion last Friday?

2. Did you try to pick up some Chinese words while watching the movie, or talk about the movie when you go back home?

3. Do you know more about China after watching the movie? What, for example? (e.g. country & people. etc.)

4. Besides the excursion, what other activities would you prefer to increase your interests in and understanding of Chinese language and culture out of normal lessons?
Appendix 9: Interview Question Samples
--- For Chinese community Members

1. (请问你了解当地中小学有开展汉语教学么？)
   How much do you know about Mandarin teaching and learning in local schools?

2. (有没有想要进一步了解他们汉语教学的内容，有没有好奇想知道他们是是怎么开展的？)
   Would you have interests in knowing about its content, and how it is being developed?

3. (如果能够将附近的华人语言文化资源进行整合利用，跟学校进行一些合作，对学生学习汉语会有什么样的影响呢？)
   If there is a chance to integrate the resources from the Chinese community, and work with schools, what influence would be brought to students’ Mandarin learning?

4. (那么现在学校如果邀请你去参加一些有关汉语的活动，你会愿意参加么？有什么因素你是必须考虑的？)
   If a school invited you to participate in activities related to Mandarin, would you go, and what might be the obstacles you would have to consider?

5. (你个人觉得你身上有哪一些可以帮助到学生学习汉语呢？)
   What do you think you can contribute to school Mandarin teaching and learning?
Appendix 10: Sample Interview Transcript

Please tell me something about the general attitude of the school towards the Mandarin program.

General attitude? I think in the stage 3, it is very well received, and is being very valuable. I think possibly it has a problem on our part that we haven’t really given enough information to the other stages, to let them appreciate exactly what the program is about, so probably they don’t have any feeling either way about it. And at the early stage, the kindergarten, I think they value it, and again they began to learn it because the timetable’s changed. I think most people are positive, people involved in it are positive about it, and welcome it, but we haven’t given enough information to other people.

Besides the volunteer program, can you think of any other resources to utilize for the school?

Probably not. I know they have to depend on the high school, I know within Rooty Hill HS they have a Mandarin teacher, that would be the only one we would get support from, to be honest, if we didn’t have the volunteer at the school, I don’t think we would have a Mandarin program. Because we don’t have the expertise, not able to do it. The only available thing to do it maybe would be some online resources with a teacher speaking Mandarin, and would be done that way. So we would probably depend on that resource.

Are there any other issues that may concern the school?

Child protection and criminal checks, also they need to do a little bit of training on how to work with the students. They have to have an understanding of that, sort of be confident to do that as well. It’s not a common thing that happens, we had parents come in as volunteers, then even a lot of parents didn’t feel confident. In my experience, about 20 years, there hasn’t been so much people that come to school from the community, but that is something probably would be worthwhile.
Lack of professionalism may cause their lack of confidence, are there any other issues that might cause their lack of confidence?

I think time is one issue, even time for the school, 9 to 3 probably would be the time for their working. Lack of training, and they also need to be supervised, so it’s also having the time for schools to have the personnel to train them, when you got classes, so I think there are a number of issues there.
Appendix 11: Photos taken from Chinese related sites in the target school community and from researcher’s experiences

Taken from a grocery near Luting Shan HS
Taken from a supermarket near Luting Shan HS
Taken from researcher’s experiences as Chinese community Member in a local HS