

**A beginning Mandarin teacher researcher's exploration of her own
professional development through classroom teaching – A self study**

Wenqiong Hong

Bachelor of Arts (Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language)

(China Jiliang University, 2013)

A research thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education (Honours)

Research Oriented, School Engaged Teacher-researcher Education

(ROSETE) Partnership

Centre for Educational Research, School of Education

University of Western Sydney

Research Panel

Dr Jinghe Han (Principal Supervisor)

Professor Michael Singh (Associate Supervisor)

March 5, 2015

Declaration

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 Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

.....
[Redacted Signature]

5 March, 2015

Acknowledgements

Thesis writing was a long, but joyful process. During the 18 months I worked as a teacher-researcher in Western Sydney schools and University of Western Sydney, there were many difficult tasks that once made me feel powerless. Great support from my supervisors, colleagues and friends enabled me to overcome all the difficulties during my study.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my dear principal supervisor Dr Han, for her constant encouragement and academic guidance throughout the whole process. She spent a huge amount of time supervising me, sharing valuable ideas when I was lost, frequently checking my progressing, and generously providing intellectual input in my thesis. Without her effort, patience and wisdom, the completion of this thesis would not be so smooth. Apart from the academic assistance, I was also inspired by her life philosophy. She was willing to help us students solve all sorts of problems as possible as she can, and she often cheered me up by a few personal stories whenever I felt down. Being her student is a great honour and I appreciate all her help for me.

Second, I would like to express my sincere gratefulness to Professor Michael Singh, the head of ROSETE program, my secondary supervisor. His eloquence, wisdom and humour left a deep impression on me. Through the weekly workshop run by him and Dr Han. I learned how to effectively read literature, how to write methodology, how to conduct the research and how to analyse data. He is a great supervisor. His trust in me enabled me to make progress day by day to fulfil myself.

In addition, my sincere thank goes to three organizational parties of ROSETE program: the Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau; the Department of Education and Training, Western Sydney Region, New South Wales; and the Centre for Educational

Research, the University of Western Sydney. This three partner organisations offered me and other ROSETE volunteers a valuable opportunity to study in Australia and practice my teaching at Sydney local schools. I feel grateful to my lovely students for spending 18 months with me learning the Chinese language.

My special thanks also go to Ms Julie Vuong and Ms Laura Williams, my mentoring teachers in the two schools where I worked. I started with very limited teaching experience. It was them who gave me firm support at school all the time. I will always remember what they did for me: picked me up at the station every week, showed me around at school when I first arrived, planned all observation activities at school and helped me progressing my teaching.

Finally, I especially appreciate my beloved Australian and Chinese families for their warm love and considerations for me. Living with Lynn and her family was such an amazing experience, and this made my stay in Australia fun and cozy. I also would like to show my sincere gratitude to my family in China. Thanks for their great confidence in me all through these years.

Author's Conference Presentations

Hong, W. (2013 November). A beginning Mandarin teacher researcher's exploration of her own professional development through classroom teaching – A self study, presented at Centre for Education Research, University of Western Sydney, 2013 Higher Degree Research Conference

Contents

Declaration.....	II
Acknowledgements.....	III
Author’s Conference Presentations.....	V
Contents.....	VI
List of Tables.....	IX
List of Figures.....	X
Abbreviations.....	XI
Abstract.....	XII
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Research background.....	1
1.2.1 Australian context.....	1
1.2.2 Personal context.....	4
1.3 Research questions.....	6
1.4 Overview of methodology.....	7
1.5 Significance of this study.....	8
1.6 Research outcomes.....	9
1.7 Outlines of the thesis.....	9
Chapter 2 Theoretical work: literature review.....	11
2.1 Introduction.....	11
2.2 Beginning teachers and their problems.....	11
2.3 Teachers’ professional development.....	13
2.3.1 Definition and its phases.....	13
2.3.2 Teachers’ identity.....	15
2.3.3 Teacher’s reflection.....	17
2.3.4 Teacher research.....	17
2.4 A teaching learning framework.....	18
2.4.1 The definition of learning cycle.....	19
2.4.2 An innovative teaching learning cycle in this research.....	21
2.4.3 Engagement.....	22
2.4.4 Knowledge building.....	25
2.4.5 Knowledge transfer.....	25
Chapter 3 Methodology.....	30

3.1 Introduction.....	30
3.2 The choice of qualitative research.....	30
3.3 Self-study.....	31
3.3.1 Definition of self-study.....	32
3.3.2 Five characteristics of self-study.....	33
3.3.3 Significance of self-study.....	34
3.4 Research principles.....	35
3.4.1 Ethics.....	36
3.4.2 Reliability and validity.....	37
3.4.3 Triangulation.....	38
3.4.4 Generalizability.....	39
3.5 Overview of research design.....	40
3.5.1 Sites and timeline.....	40
3.5.2 Participants.....	41
3.6 Data collection.....	41
3.6.1 Self-reflection journal.....	43
3.6.2 Interview.....	43
3.6.3 Documents.....	44
3.7 Data analysis.....	45
Chapter 4 Engaging students' Chinese learning in class.....	48
4.0 Introduction.....	48
4.1 Mobilizing students' full emotions for Chinese learning.....	48
4.1.1 Getting familiar and building rapport with students.....	48
4.1.2 Involving "strange" and fun incidents.....	56
4.1.3 Engaging through challenging students.....	59
4.2 Regularizing students' behaviours for Chinese learning.....	63
4.2.1 Routine behaviour: Chinese classroom discipline.....	63
4.2.2 Routine exercise: Pen and Paper time.....	66
4.3 Discussion.....	69
4.4 Conclusion.....	70
Chapter 5 Building students' Chinese language knowledge.....	72
5.0 Introduction.....	72
5.1 Teacher-dominant, one-way delivery.....	72
5.1.1 Unfocused talk.....	72
5.1.2 Mǎn táng guàn (the cramming education).....	74
5.2 Multiple modes of teaching.....	77
5.2.1 Aural mode of teaching.....	77
5.2.2 Body moving mode of teaching - gestures.....	79
5.2.3 Visual mode of teaching.....	81
5.3 Considering students' prior knowledge in teaching.....	87
5.3.1 Prior knowledge from the first language.....	88
5.3.2 Prior knowledge from the second language.....	89

5.4 Discussion.....	92
5.5 Conclusion.....	94
Chapter 6 Making students' Chinese language knowledge transfer.....	96
6.0 Introduction.....	96
6.1 Passive or active: rote learning.....	96
6.2 Interaction or presentation: designing lesson reviews.....	99
6.2.1 Lesson reviews through worksheets.....	100
6.2.2 Lesson reviews through PowerPoints.....	102
6.3 Knowledge transfer through interactive activities.....	104
6.3.1 Silent ball.....	105
6.3.2 Card game.....	107
6.4 Expansion of knowledge transfer.....	110
6.4.1 Inquire prices in Chinese.....	111
6.4.2 Find the right person.....	113
6.5 Discussion.....	116
6.6 Conclusion.....	118
Chapter 7 Conclusion.....	120
7.1 Introduction.....	120
7.2 Overview of thesis.....	120
7.3 Key propositions of thesis.....	122
7.3.1 Capturing students' characteristics to engage their Chinese learning.....	122
7.3.2 Lifting student-centeredness in building new knowledge.....	124
7.3.3 Bearing interactivism in mind in transfer new knowledge.....	125
7.4 Implications.....	128
7.4.1 Implications for beginning teachers.....	128
7.4.2 Implications for Chinese teachers in Australia.....	129
7.4.3 Implications for further study.....	129
7.5 Reflection on the teacher-researcher's professional development.....	129
7.6 Conclusion.....	130
References.....	132
Appendix 1.....	139
Appendix 2.....	140
Appendix 3.....	141
Appendix 4.....	143
Appendix 5.....	144
Appendix 6.....	145

Appendix 7.....	146
Appendix 8.....	147

List of Tables

Table 1: Timeline and sites.....	36
Table 2: Six phases of thematic analysis.....	40
Table 3: Numbers.....	51
Table 4: Chinese classroom routine.....	56
Table 5: Tones.....	70
Table 6: Chinese characters (Sports).....	73
Table 7: Chinese characters (yesterday, today and tomorrow).....	78
Table 8: Chinese characters (last year, this year and next year).....	79
Table 9: Expanded Numbers.....	87
Table 10: Multiples of 10.....	88
Table 11: Number Review.....	88
Table 12: Four kinds of cards.....	95
Table 13: Text 1 for card game.....	95
Table 14: Chinese money.....	97
Table 15: Find the right person.....	99

List of Figures

Figure1: The SCIS learning cycle (Cited from Blank, 2000, p. 488).....	19
Figure 2: 5E Model (Bybee, cited in Hanuscin and Lee, 2008, p. 51).....	20
Figure 3: Mandarin teaching learning cycle.....	22
Figure 4: Cycle of data collection (Adapted from Creswell, 2013, p.146).....	42

Abbreviations

TCFL: Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language

ROSETE: Research-Oriented, School-Engaged Teacher Education

MCEETYA: the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs

NSW: News South Wales

DET: Department of Education and Training

HDR: Higher Degree Research

MOU: Memorandum of Understanding

NMEB: Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau

UWS: University of Western Sydney

VMTs: Volunteer Mandarin Teachers

WSR: Western Sydney Region

ESRC: Economic and Social Research Council

NEAF: National Ethics Application Form

SERAP: State Education Research Approval Process

Abstract

This research explored the teacher-researcher's professional development as a beginning Mandarin teacher in terms of teaching strategies and language skills. She recorded the critical problems and dilemmas she met, and wrote down how she dealt with them and how she figured out ways to solve them. Specifically, she explored her own teaching skills through teaching practice in three areas: how to engage students, how to build new knowledge and how to make students' knowledge transformation occur.

Self-study was applied as the research method in this study. The main data in this research was collected from the teacher-researcher's self-reflection journals. In order to triangulate the research and increase the validity, data were also gathered from other channels: interviews of the classroom teacher and students as well as other written documents. The written documents included students' sample work, surveys and the classroom teachers' observation forms. Thematic analysis was selected to conduct the whole analysing process, including organizing, categorizing, coding and interpreting.

Throughout the research, efforts were made to explore better ways to engage students' Chinese language learning in class, build students' Chinese language knowledge and make their language knowledge transfer occur. Reflecting upon data and browsing through literature, three key propositions emerged. Overall, this study contributes knowledge about Chinese teaching, and it benefits beginning teachers as well as Chinese teachers in Australia.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This research explores a beginning Mandarin teacher's professional development in terms of teaching strategies and language skills. Many problems were encountered as the teacher-researcher was a Mandarin teacher with limited practical experience. Critical problems and dilemmas faced by this teacher-researcher, how they were dealt with and how solutions were pursued were all recorded during an 18 month period of teaching and learning. The aim of the study is to contribute to the transformation of a graduate who majored in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (TCFL) from the theoretical level to the practical level.

The first part of this chapter is a general introduction to the research focus, followed by the research background in the Australian context and the personal context. The research questions are subsequently presented. The overview of the methodology will be illustrated and the outcomes of the study, and then a discussion of the significance of this research. Finally, the outline of the thesis will be provided.

1.2 Research background

This research explores a beginning Mandarin teacher's professional development, but it is not confined to the teacher-researcher herself. Instead, the study is based on a broader socio-cultural cycle: the Research-Oriented, School-Engaged Teacher Education (ROSETE) Program. In addition, this program was launched against the backdrop of the increasing importance Asia Literacy in Australia.

1.2.1 Australian context

In 2008, the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) of Australia announced *The Melbourne Declaration*, which set a national education agenda for Australia for the next decade (Asian Education Foundation, 2011). It pointed out that the world was experiencing great changes which created pressing new requirements to current education in Australia: India, China and other Asian nations were developing and their influence on the world was increasing. Australians needed to become “Asia literate”, engaging and building strong relationships with Asia (MCEETYA, 2008).

According to *The Melbourne Declaration*, the second educational goal for young Australians was to make them successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens (MCEETYA, 2008). One of the criteria to being an informed citizen which was listed in the document was that he or she be able to relate to and communicate across cultures, especially the cultures and countries of Asia (MCEETYA, 2008).

The Australian Curriculum has also established the expected outcomes for achieving the Asia Literacy:

by the time they leave school, all young people will have developed Asia literacy through gaining foundational and in-depth knowledge, skills and understandings of the histories, geographies, societies, arts, literatures and languages of the diverse countries of Asia and their engagement with Australia (Asian Education Foundation, 2011, p. 10).

As a supporting document to *The Melbourne Declaration*, *the National Statement on Asia Literacy in Australian Schools 2011–2012* demonstrated this commitment to Asia literacy. As Australia’s engagement with Asia in trade, investment, immigration, tourism, education and humanitarian assistance has grown at a faster rate than its engagement with the rest of the world combined (Asian Education Foundation, 2011), relevant language and communication requirements have increased accordingly.

It should be noted out that Chinese was chosen as a potential language (the four others were: Japanese, Indonesian, Korean and Vietnamese) to be listed into the Australian Curriculum by the draft *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Languages* paper released by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority on 31 January 2011 (Asian Education Foundation, 2011).

Orton (2008) has also stressed the significance of learning Chinese, writing that Australians in every walk of life who are familiar with basic information about China and have good proficiency in Chinese are needed so as to develop the economic and social partnership with China.

A strong atmosphere for learning Chinese has recently developed in Australia, where more schools have set up Chinese lessons, more students are engaged with Chinese and many Chinese programs and activities have emerged. In terms of NSW, “the mandatory language learning requirement is 100 hours of study of one language in one year in junior secondary” (Chesterton et al., 2004, p. 49). NSW high schools also designated languages as “a Key Learning Area”, requiring that “students presenting for the School Certificate credential (Year 10, students generally aged 15–16) complete the study of 100 hours of a language over a 12-month period” (Chesterton et al., 2004, p. 49). Primary schools are not forced to include a language in the curriculum, but ‘almost half of the NSW government primary schools chose to carry out a language program’ (Chesterton et al., 2004).

As mentioned in the *National Statement on Asia Literacy in Australian Schools 2011–2012*, six interrelated aspects were pointed out as requiring continuous action to cope with the present schooling so as to achieve Asia literacy, and one of them is Asian language education programs (Asian Education Foundation, 2011). The ROSETE Program that the teacher-researcher in this study has joined is a language education program, aiming to promote Chinese teaching and learning in Australia.

The ROSETE Program was launched through an Australia-China collaboration with the intent to enhance the learning of Chinese (Mandarin) and Chinese culture and society in the State of New South Wales (NSW) by its Department of Education and Training (DET) schools; and to cultivate the Chinese Higher Degree Research (HDR) students' capabilities as bilingual-teacher-researchers (Singh and Zhao, 2008; Zhao and Singh, 2008). It is based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between NSW DET; the People's Republic of China Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau (NMEB) and the University of Western Sydney (UWS). According to the MOU, volunteer Mandarin teachers (VMTs) will be selected each year by NMEB from hundreds of candidates and recruited by NSW DET to help bolster Chinese language and culture in the Western Sydney Region (WSR). NSW DET provides teaching methodology training workshops for VMTs and UWS has provided further by integrating their teaching practices into educational research (Zhao and Singh, 2008).

Every VMT plays the specific role in the ROSETE Program. As stated in MOU, the VMT will be allocated to one to three public schools in WSR with the role of 'supporting the teaching and learning of Mandarin language and Chinese culture' (NMEB, NSW DET and UWS, 2009). Each VMT is required to teach a maximum of ten hours' Chinese lessons in public schools, and is responsible for improving students' spoken Chinese and offering activities to advance students' understanding of Chinese culture. A supervising teacher in each school is assigned to assist the VMT in this regard.

These same volunteers also conduct a research study toward the degree of Master of Education (Honours). The research is usually based on the teaching experience at schools, and VMTs dedicate themselves to finding more creative and effective ways to make Chinese learnable in Australia. As a member of the ROSETE Program, the teacher-researcher in this research will explore her professional development through classroom teaching and seek better ways to improve Chinese learning in Australia.

Except the Australian context, the teacher-researcher's personal experience also contributes to the generation of this research.

1.2.2 Personal context

At the end of 2012, the researcher was selected as a member of ROSETE 6, and travelled to Australia in July, 2013 as a VMT. For her, this chance provided a vehicle for narrowing the gap between her dream and the reality of being a Chinese teacher abroad. Her major in university in China was TCFL, and this opportunity made it possible to apply her theoretical knowledge with what she learned in practice.

The researcher's major mainly focused on the combination of Chinese and English education. During four years of study, she was exposed to many Chinese-related subjects, such as Ancient Chinese Language, Contemporary Chinese Language, Putonghua (also known as Mandarin or common language) and Classical Chinese Literature, which provided a solid grounding in Chinese. Contemporary Chinese Language and Ancient Chinese language are two basic subjects which emphasise systematic theories of Chinese language. They involve lexicon, pronunciation methods and grammar. She also studied Comprehensive English, Advanced Comprehensive English, English Writing, Intercultural Communication, linguistics and other related units to cultivate her English proficiency. She felt that she had accumulated sufficient theoretical knowledge to conduct Chinese teaching in Australia.

The researcher was first sent to a school in the WSR in July 2013, to observe other teachers' teaching. During this period, she found things were different in Australian public schools than what she had expected. Firstly, the students were usually not 'well-behaved' in her eyes. Some of the behaviours would not have been tolerated at all in a classroom in China. For example, they ate fruit or snacks when the teacher was doing the roll-call. They moved about freely as they wanted during lessons

without asking for their teacher's permission. Some special students even called out or played on their Ipads from time to time. She began to worry about these naughty students, and wondered how she would be able to attract their attention and engage them in her own classes.

Secondly, the Chinese lessons the researcher observed at the school had a great impact on her. One teacher-researcher from ROSETE 5 used the Australian style of pronunciation to demonstrate Chinese words for local students, such as 'yánggròu' (lamb) pronounced as 'Young Role'. This practice was not advocated when the researcher was learning in the university, but it worked well here and proved to be effective in delivering new words to students. The ROSETE 5 teacher-researcher also took advantage of visualisation to teach Chinese characters. A playground game was designed to create a Chinese context where students were encouraged to speak Chinese only. She also taught Chinese through music. Her class was full of enthusiasm with beautiful songs, vivid gestures and postures and warm praise. Her teaching broadened the researcher's views and it was then that the researcher fully realised her lack of practical teaching experience. The researcher's neat and tidy blueprint for teaching Chinese was an illusion. Though she had gained much theoretical knowledge about teaching Chinese, she had too little experience of teaching real classes in China, let alone in Australian classrooms. As a beginning teacher, the researcher started to worry about her teaching capabilities.

Beginning teachers, also referred to novice teachers, pre-service teachers and student teachers, are "those who are still undergoing training, who have just completed their training, or who have just commenced teaching and still have very little (e.g. less than two years) experience behind them" (Gatbonton, 2008, p. 162). The researcher had no idea of how to attract students' attention in class, how to deliver new knowledge to students and how to design class games or activities properly to contribute to their knowledge transfer.

All of the above-mentioned doubts and questions comprise the research. Teacher-researchers are those who own two roles, teaching and researching, at the same time. A reflective teacher identifies a continual problem in teaching and a classroom inquiry will be initiated (Baumann and Duffy, 2001). Teachers can be seen as researchers when “bringing together past and present personal and professional stories of experience”, and “fostering a critical awareness of the value that their practice knowledge and inquiry holds in terms of research” (Binder, 2012, p. 118). As a volunteer Mandarin teacher with no prior practical experience outside China, the researcher decided to study her experiences at the practical level from her beginnings as a teacher-researcher to explore her professional development through 18 months of teaching practice at school in the WSR.

1.3 Research questions

This research, grounded on practical teaching in class, examines how this teacher-researcher can develop Mandarin teaching strategies and language skills to increase the learnability of the Chinese language for the students in Western Sydney schools. Specifically this research asks:

- 1) How can the teacher-researcher develop her teaching strategies and language skills to engage students?
- 2) How can the teacher-researcher develop her teaching strategies and language skills to build students’ new knowledge?
- 3) How can the teacher-researcher develop her teaching strategies and language skills to make students’ Chinese language knowledge transfer?

Contributory research questions rest within a typical teaching learning cycle. Basically, the first important thing in delivering a lesson is to engage the students to

attract their attention and get them involved in the lesson - a tricky task for a beginning teacher. Once students are ready, the problem of building new Chinese language knowledge shows up when the teacher attempts to start the lesson. How to convey new Chinese language knowledge in a lesson? How could a teacher make the knowledge transfer occur? If the teacher is able to handle with these problems effectively, it indicates that the beginning teacher is making significant progress in her professional development.

1.4 Overview of methodology

Self-study will be employed to conduct the research. As a popular method for educational research, self-study offers teachers a chance to examine their teaching practices as an insider in a more concentrated way, and leads them to better understand who they are as teachers. Self-study facilitates personal reflection and adjustment during the long and gradual exploration of individual and effective teaching strategies and language skills. The main data will be collected from the reflective journals of the teacher-researcher. In order to triangulate the research and increase its validity, data will also be gathered through semi-interviews of the classroom teacher and written documents from students in class. Thematic analysis was selected to be the method of data analysis. This will include data organisation, categorisation, coding and interpretation. The outcome of the analysing process will be presented in the evidentiary chapters.

1.5 Significance of this study

As discussed in the research background, this study is set in a broad context in close relationship with Asia literacy and Chinese teaching in Australia, as opposed to the research as confined to the researcher herself.

This study has considerable significance to the researcher, one able to apply theory learnt in a Chinese university to Chinese teaching abroad, and to explore teaching strategies and language skills in practice. The research will assist in identifying and solving teaching problems, to enhance her teaching capabilities. Useful teaching experience will be accumulated through this research, and lays a solid foundation for future teaching and professional development.

This research also responds to Asia literacy and can benefit Australian students who are learning Chinese. Asia literacy aims to promote Asian language teaching and learning in Australia so as to achieve high Asia literacy among young Australians. In this aspect, the research, which mainly explores a beginning Mandarin teacher's teaching strategies and language skills, could be regarded as one contribution to the teacher education of Chinese language in Australia. Research showed that students had great difficulties in learning Mandarin (Orton, 2008). Though more Asian language classes had been set up and more Asian language teachers had been recruited, the real teaching conditions were in contrast with positive momentum. Orton (2008) clearly pointed out that a problem in learning Chinese was that 94% of learners dropped out before Year 12, usually once the language was no longer mandated. With the expected research outcome, more effective teaching strategies and skills will be generated to strengthen students' Mandarin learning. The research outcomes may also be applied in other Mandarin classes so as to benefit other Mandarin learners.

1.6 Research outcomes

According to the initial research plan, two main research outcomes are expected as follows:

- Identify the problems the teacher-researcher has in engaging students, building

new Chinese language knowledge and making students' new knowledge transfer.

- Develop teaching strategies and language skills to improve students' engagement, knowledge building and applying.

1.7 Outlines of the thesis

Chapter 1 begins with the overall information of the thesis, and then explains the research background. Following is an introduction to the key terms in the thesis. Three contributory questions are then stated, and the overview of methodology is illustrated. The significance of the research follows and the research outcomes are set out. Finally, an outline of the thesis concludes this chapter.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature. Relevant studies concerning a beginning teacher, teaching strategies, teaching and learning cycles and teachers' professional development will be reviewed. Teaching strategies, especially in students' engagement, students' knowledge building and transferring will be highlighted.

Chapter 3 compares quantitative methodology and qualitative methodology, and then focuses on introducing the research method of self-study. The history, definition, characteristics, significance and limitations of self-study are presented. The chapter moves on to the specific operational procedures of this research, which include research design, data collection and data analysis. The guiding principles, including generalisation, reliability and validity and triangulation, will be discussed at the end.

Chapter 4, 5 and 6 are the evidentiary chapters, each of which addresses one contributory research question.

Chapter 7 renders the conclusion of the research, including its key propositions,

implications for further study.

Chapter 2 Theoretical work: literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of three sections, namely beginning teacher, teachers' professional development and the teaching and learning cycle. Current literature is reviewed in these sections, and the key terms of the research and empirical studies in these areas are also covered.

2.2 Beginning teachers and their problems

Beginning teachers usually have similar attributes, which include “their understanding of pedagogy and its influence on students' learning, their technical abilities to organise and manage learning, their motivation to improve their practice and the ability to engage in individual reflection” (Shulman and Shulman, 2004, p. 455).

For novices, then, “becoming a teacher is very much a process of learning, through their engagement in teaching practices, what aspects of teaching matters to them, and striving to become more skilled in those areas” (Kanno and Stuart, 2011, p. 246). Armed with relevant theories and strategies, beginning teachers try their best to present a wonderful lesson every time, but problems still exist. This researcher is a beginning Mandarin teacher in Western Sydney with little professional teacher training or teaching experience in a real classroom, only theoretical knowledge about teaching Chinese as a foreign language, acquired during her Bachelor degree studies. During her first few weeks of teaching, problems appeared: how to apply theoretical knowledge to reality, how to behave like a proper teacher in class, how to create student involvement in class and how to plan a lesson.

It is natural for beginning language teachers to be stunned by the gap between what they thought of as teaching and real conditions in the classroom (Kanno and Stuart, 2011). This is one of the common problems a beginning teacher will encounter at the onset of teaching. Beginning teachers are viewed as teachers that are “often too preoccupied with their own teaching to pay much attention to what their students are learning” (Kanno and Stuart, 2011, p. 237). In this sense, beginning teachers are too anxious to notice what is happening in a real classroom and have a limited idea of what students need to learn.

Another problem faced by new teachers is that they assume the complete duties of a veteran teacher including the instruction and management of a full contingent of students (Fantilli and McDougall, 2009). Generally, a beginning teacher is expected to immediately shoulder the same responsibility as a formal teacher. However, the fact is that as a novice, a beginning teacher cannot handle with everything well. “Despite an elapse of over forty years, the trend in education as it relates to the socialisation of new teachers remains a sink or swim mentality” (Maciejewski, cited in Fantilli and McDougall, 2009, p. 814). This awkward situation ‘sink or to swim’ situation is too absolute for the smooth development of a beginning teacher and the requirements of undertaking the same responsibilities as a formal teacher are too harsh. Gradually deepening their understanding about what it means to be a teacher and becoming more and more comfortable with themselves during teaching is a long process (Kanno and Stuart, 2011). Gradual and proper development for beginning teachers and avoiding overwhelming tasks would be more appropriate.

It is also not advisable to judge beginning teachers for a deficiency of strategies and qualities possessed by experienced teachers. Conversely, “the ways in which new teachers operate in their classrooms, although clearly different from those of their veteran colleagues, show a form of competent practice as understood by their contexts of situation and of the mind” (Freeman, cited in Kanno and Stuart, 2011, p. 249). It is possible that beginning teachers’ new approaches to teaching will bring

potentially creative strategies, and beginning teachers ought to be encouraged and supported in their innovation, and their imperfections tolerated.

Notwithstanding this, there are still many problems concerning beginning teachers, such as classroom instruction. Beginning L2 teachers are likely to be disturbed by students' unexpected questions and "tend to view student initiations as off-task and a threat to their instructional control" (Johnson, cited in Kanno and Stuart, 2011, p. 247). Lessons are of course critical for beginning teachers, since good lessons can contribute to faster development. Beginning teachers need to manage their relationship with students, and to make full and effective use of teacher authority. As beginning teachers gradually come to treat themselves as formal teachers, they start to perform more confidently in the classroom and their teaching contains a greater sense of control (Kanno and Stuart, 2011).

Currently, two gaps are evident in literature concerning beginning teachers: many aspects of problems beginning teachers encounter are still waiting to be addressed, and relevant information about beginning Mandarin teachers is rare.

2.3 Teachers' professional development

2.3.1 Definition and its phases

"Teaching, like all professions is a highly complex and skilled practice" (Sutherland et al., 2010, p. 455). There are many things that the practitioner needs to know and master, and it is indeed a long way for beginning teachers to walk. The process of a beginning teacher to a formal and experienced teacher could be regarded as a teacher's professional development, during which there will be a great many problems. The most challenging aspects for beginning teachers in their transition to a veteran teacher are: "classroom management, discipline, motivating pupils, dealing

with individual differences, assessment, relations with parents, classroom organisation, insufficient resources and dealing with problems of individual students” (Veenman, cited in Fantilli and McDougall, 2009, p. 815). The teacher’s professional development is a continuous learning process, as the journey to profession is full of confronting and solving problems.

A teacher’s professional development is “linked to changes in the teacher’s ways of thinking about professional dilemmas and concerns” (Vogrinc and Zuljan, 2009, p. 54). To better understand a teacher’s professional development, a three-phase model was constructed by Frances Fuller, which could be viewed as one of the first empirical attempts at elaborating upon professional development (Vogrinc and Zuljan, 2009). Fuller’s model is comprised of the survival stage (during which a teacher is mainly concerned about his or her own role and performance in class), the mastery stage (this phase combines experience and clear direction into the teaching position) and the final stage, where the teacher pays more attention to students’ needs and learning conditions (Vogrinc and Zuljan, 2009). A beginning teacher’s development passes through these three stages, among which the first survival stage plays an important role. Marshall, Fittinghoff, and Cheney suggest that “it is not until they have survived the initial shock of the first year that novices are able to begin to concentrate on the important areas of long-term planning, overall student goals, and individual students’ needs” (Fantilli and McDougall, 2009, p. 814). As a consequence, to keep their heads above water, beginning teachers have to set aside much more time for their endeavours compared with veteran teachers. Otherwise, the experiences they encounter along their path of transition are likely to result in veteran teachers finding their work disappointing, fruitless and unbearably hard which at last raises the risk of them being a casualty of the profession (Fantilli and McDougall, 2009).

2.3.2 Teachers’ identity

Kanno and Stuart (2011) observed that at some points during their teacher training, student teachers must make a transition from being primarily students to being primarily teachers. Teachers' professional development involves a change about self and transition of one's identity. According to Thomas and Beauchamp (2011), teachers might have diverse views about their 'selves':

as the self that actually exists; as one that might stand in the future as the self to strive toward; and as a construction of society or the world around them, an 'ought' self, that represents what is expected of them, the role they must fulfil according to common societal views of teaching (p. 763).

For beginning teachers who are subjected to teaching environments, these criteria of 'selves' may be in conflict with what is in their own mind (Flores and Day, 2006). However, cognitions of the self must be comprehended in the close link between the personal and the professional self (Thomas and Beauchamp, 2011). To put it another way, for a teacher, the self includes not only the standards of 'who am I?', but also of 'who am I as a teacher?' (Thomas and Beauchamp, 2011) A focus on self is central to teacher education: who you are as a person has a profound influence on what you will or will not learn in teacher education, but perhaps even more importantly, it shapes what you will be as a teacher, what and how you will teach, and how you will respond to the changing context of teaching (Bullough and Gitlin, cited in Timostsuk and Ugaste, 2010).

What is the relationship between self and identity? Before we delve into this relationship, let us first focus on the difference between role and identity. There is a clear division between role and identity: "role is a public function often assigned externally, whereas identity involves inner commitment" (Kanno and Stuart, 2011, p. 239). In some respects, role is what people can show to others, namely the ongoing tasks or works people are doing; identity is like a kind of inner performance, which can only feel and change by the owner of identity. Thereby, being a formal teacher demands the commitment of the self, not just playing an assigned role in the

classroom. The development of self contributes to that of identity.

Nowadays increasing research attention is given to professional identity in teachers among educational researchers and a part of the reason is to comprehend and enhance the 'professionalization' of teaching (Thomas and Beauchamp, 2011). Then what is a teacher's professional identity? Taylor once noted that identity is "what allows us to define what is important to us and what is not" (Kanno and Stuart, 2011, p. 246). Using Wenger's concept of learning, the professional identity of the teacher is "the person's self-knowledge in teaching-related situations and relationships that manifest themselves in practical professional activities, feelings of belonging and learning experiences" (Timostuk and Ugaste, 2010, p. 1564). However, Flores and Day's version is: the development of a professional identity has been defined as "an ongoing and dynamic process which entails the making sense and (re)interpretation of one's own values and experiences that may be influenced by personal, social and cognitive factors" (Thomas and Beauchamp, 2011, p. 762).

In fulfilling the evolution from student to teacher, beginning teachers produce their own professional identity. Teachers' identities are vital to their beliefs, values and practices that guide their actions within and outside the classroom (Sutherland et al., 2010). Pre-service teachers not only need to be armed with the complex knowledge and skill base of a teacher, they also need to refine their understanding of pedagogical practices and extend their professional knowledge (Sutherland et al., 2010).

It is believed that classroom practice can help nurture beginning teachers' identities, and their emerging identities in turn shaped their practice (Kanno and Stuart, 2011). Through their engagement in abundant teaching experiences, beginning teachers repeatedly refine their early concepts of teaching and are able to create a self-image of themselves as a teacher (Sutherland et al., 2010).

2.3.3 Teacher's reflection

Reflection, as one of the most important means in developing a profession, has long been a research hot spot. The roots of the term 'reflective' can be traced back to John Dewey (1933;1993) and his influential book *How We Think: A Re-statement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educational Process* and to Schon (1983; 1987; 1991) (Akbari, 2007). Dewey defined reflection as action based on "the active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it" (Akbari, 2007, p. 194). Fendler (2003), in addition to Dewey and Schon, referred to the term reflection as "having a Cartesian basis, which views knowing about the self or self-knowledge as a valid means of knowledge generation" (Akbari, 2007, p. 194).

Reflection is a critical process for beginning teachers in their development of a professional identity. It is well acknowledged that reflection benefits beginning teachers in supporting and promoting their professional development. Reflection is "not simply a series of steps or procedures, but rather a holistic way of meeting and responding to problems" (Sutherland et al., 2010, p. 455). Observing, assessing and revising ideas and actions will keep operating in an effortful cycle on the basis of new ideas and discoveries (Sutherland et al., 2010). Intuition, emotion and passion are also involved during the process (Sutherland et al., 2010). In a nutshell, through reflection, the professional identity is cultivated as beginning teachers form a more profound understanding of their work as a teacher through their practical experiences in classrooms (Sutherland et al., 2010).

2.3.4 Teacher research

Teacher research is also a necessary part of teachers' professional development. The idea of teachers' undertaking research work upon teaching practice originated with Schon. He delineated his idea in *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals*

Think in Action (1983) and *Educating the Reflective Practitioner (1991)*. The specific abilities and skills for reflecting effectively examined in these two books so as to improve one's research work. In-service and pre-service teachers are encouraged to "take into consideration the whole picture – analysing the effectiveness of a lesson or series of lessons through an attempt to evaluate what was learned, by whom, and how more effective learning might take place in the future" (Vogrinc and Zuljan, 2009, p. 54). For beginning teachers like this teacher-researcher, this is a meaningful way to know how the lesson is going, which part or parts need to be adjusted and what is expected to be improved.

Schon also suggested that practitioners should: (1) "participate in research of their own practice" and (2) "develop educational theories that directly reflect actual educational practice" (Vogrinc and Zuljan, 2009, p. 54). The former is what is being done now as a teacher-researcher, teaching at schools and conducting research by combining the two. The latter is what will be done during 18 months research study: record the problems encountered during teaching practice and endeavour to develop relevant teaching strategies to improve the actual teaching.

2.4 A teaching learning framework

In this section, a crucial concept called 'learning cycle' will be introduced and its definition and basic components will be presented in detail. By means of this concept, this section will review literature concerning student engagement, knowledge building and knowledge transfer, which respond to each research question. Based on the learning cycle in the literature, this teacher-researcher has developed her own teaching learning framework.

2.4.1 The definition of learning cycle

The learning cycle, also known as the SCIS (Science Curriculum Improvement Study) learning cycle, was created by Karplus and Thier (Hanuscin and Lee, 2008) in 1960s to assist science learning and teaching. It gradually came to be regarded as “one of the most enduring approaches for modelling and implementing inquiry teaching” (Blank, 2000, p. 487). As the following figure demonstrates, the learning cycle consists of three key stages, called exploration, concept introduction and concept application. The first stage, Exploration, involves teachers’ leading-in or asking questions and students’ thinking about the general ideas of the coming new concepts. The Second stage mainly deals with an introduction or explanation of the new concepts. The third is the period of applying newly-acquired knowledge to new conditions or new problems, and is the end of a learning cycle as indicated in the figure.

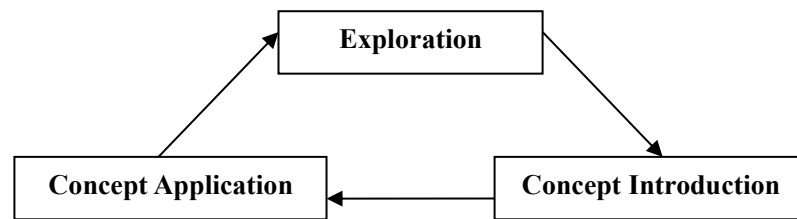


Figure1: The SCIS learning cycle (Cited from Blank, 2000, p. 488)

The learning cycle has been used as a model for planning instruction since its introduction, and enables teachers’ packaging of important teaching objectives into a condensed conceptual ‘storyline’ that provides both selection and sequencing of learning chances (Hanuscin and Lee, 2008). By adopting the learning cycle, teachers can get rid of using short and discontinuous teaching activities (Hanuscin and Lee, 2008). This might be the main reason why scholars have been interested in researching the learning cycle. Since Karplus and Thier put this concept forward, different models based on the original but with different numbers of phases have been proposed, the most popular version of which is the 5E Model: Engagement, Exploration, Explanation, Elaboration, and Evaluation (Bybee, cited in Hanuscin and Lee, 2008, p. 51).

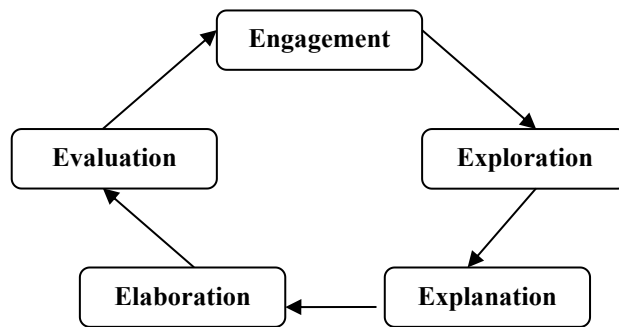


Figure 2: 5E Model (Bybee, cited in Hanuscin and Lee, 2008, p. 51)

According to Bybee, engagement involves teachers’ setting up proper study contexts and motivating students, while students try to connect past and current knowledge and start thinking about the new knowledge to be explored. During the next phase Exploration, teachers provide students with relevant information and find out how students are processing and what needs to be explained next, while students might delve into new knowledge by discussions or inquiries. In the Explanation phase, teachers will introduce the teaching content formally, encourage students to absorb new knowledge on the basis of their prior knowledge and decide which part is going to be strengthened and tested in the next phase; students will develop explanations based on prior knowledge and learn the new lesson. The teacher’s task in the Elaboration phase is to design activities related to the lesson so as to apply or extend what students have just learnt and begin to summarise; students are given a chance to practice and transfer their knowledge. Finally, the Evaluation phase is, to a large extent, a summary of the lesson, during which teachers will assess students’ learning conditions and decide which part of the lesson should later be improved upon while students make a summary of their study. A detailed template for debriefing learning cycle lessons is provided in Appendix 8.

2.4.2 An innovative teaching learning cycle in this research

Figure 2 illustrates the five phases of a complete learning cycle. It has been playing an important role in science teaching and learning and benefited science teachers and

students. However, problems will emerge if the learning cycle is directly and strictly applied in this research. First, the general conditions of Chinese teaching and learning are different from those of science. In science, the lesson emphasises operability, that is, students need considerable time to observe special phenomenon with or without instruments, and to perform experiments. In this respect, the Exploration phase is essential for science lesson. However, in Chinese lessons there are no similar special items for students to explore, so this part can be eliminated. Next, there might be misunderstandings between Explanation and Elaboration. In terms of their literal meanings, explanation and elaboration are quite similar and it is difficult for people to connect the Elaboration phase with applying or extending knowledge through new activities. As a beginning teacher, the focus in each phase will vary. As a result, the relevant cycles need to be reconstructed in the new Mandarin teaching and learning context.

The innovative Mandarin teaching learning cycle in this research will consist of three elements: Engagement, Knowledge building and Knowledge transfer. Given that this study mainly focuses on teaching strategies and language skills and there is no formal assessment when teaching Mandarin, the evaluation phase will not be covered individually in the research. However, it will be recorded in the self-reflection journals and used as a way to measure and reflect upon constantly changing teaching strategies and language skills.

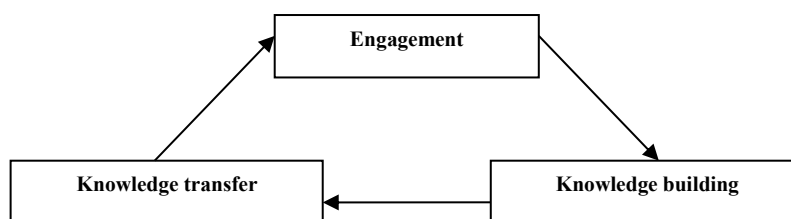


Figure 3: Mandarin teaching learning cycle

The Engagement phase responds to the first question in this research of how to

engage students. The Knowledge building phase is the core part of the cycle, because it is in this phase that new knowledge is specifically introduced and built in. Methods and strategies will be explored in order to make knowledge delivery easier. This phase matches the second research question of how to deliver and build in new knowledge. The next phase, Knowledge transfer, offers students opportunities to apply their knowledge in new situations and internalise it. Primary transfer is achieved through various kinds of activities.

This is the theoretical framework of this teaching research. Below is the review of current literature concerning these three parts: Engagement, Knowledge building and Knowledge transformation.

2.4.3 Engagement

Engagement, or student engagement in educational research to be more precise, has long been the hot research topic of educators. It functions as a main way to analyse school dropout and is the promising method for stopping this phenomenon (Appleton et al., 2006). The level of student engagement at certain schools is even regarded as a powerful indicator which reflects schools' superiority (Axelson and Flick, 2010). As mentioned in Chapter One, Orton (2008) pointed out that 94% of the Chinese learners drop out before Year 12, usually once the language is no longer mandated. Therefore the significance and necessity of studying engagement so as to remedy this situation stands out.

There are different definitions of student engagement. A general definition was offered by Harris (2011), who said that engagement was viewed as 'a disposition towards learning, working with others, and functioning in a social institution, which is expressed in students' feelings that they belong at school, and in their participation in school activities' (Harris, 2011, p. 377). From Harris' point of view, engagement is a sense of disposition and tendency of students' belonging in activities and in their

school. However, Axelson and Flick (2010, p. 38) contended that student engagement refers to “how involved or interested students appear to be in their learning and how connected they are to their classes, their institutions, and each other”. Axelson and Flick emphasised students’ involvement and connection with engagement. Lewis et al. (2011, p. 251) likewise paid attention to students’ involvement but added an emotional component. In his opinion, student engagement means “a student’s degree of active involvement in school through his or her thoughts, feelings, and actions”.

Student engagement is “generally conceptualised as a multidimensional meta-construct, comprised of behavioural, cognitive, and emotional domains” (Lewis et al., 2011, p. 251). Behavioural engagement, cognitive engagement and emotional engagement are three categories of student engagement. Behavioural engagement is a concrete concept, which can be measured by specific data such as “students’ attendance, compliance with school rules, and participation in classroom and extracurricular activities” (Harris, 2011, p. 377). This is something teachers can observe directly and take actions to influence. In some research, behavioural engagement is separated into two dimensions: behavioural engagement and academic engagement (Harris, 2011). Academic engagement refers to “the time spent doing schoolwork in school or at home, academic credits accrued, and homework completed” (Harris, 2011, p. 377). Cognitive engagement is briefly defined as “self-regulation, understanding the importance of school, students’ investment in learning, and desire for challenge” (Fredricks et al., cited in Lewis et al., 2011, p. 251). This part is related with students’ personal investment in learning (Harris, 2011). Emotional engagement is equal to the “affective reactions of students toward school or their teachers” (Lewis et al., 2011, p. 251). It is also called as psychological engagement, which, to be more exact, contains “interest, enjoyment, support, belonging, and attitudes towards school, learning, teachers, and peers” (Harris, 2011, p. 377). Among the three categories, behavioural engagement is the most transparent one and educators can adjust their teaching mainly according to this. The other two

parts also require close attention in order to facilitate teaching.

The common effective strategies have been summarised from the literature so as to enhance student engagement: (1) Interaction, (2) Exploration, (3) Relevancy, (4) Multimedia, (5) Instruction, and (6) Authentic assessment (Taylor and Parsons, 2011, p. 7). These six strategies are believed to be useful in engaging students in class, and the first research question of how to engage students will be studied through this framework. The first part, Interaction, argues that the teaching process ought to include communication, negotiation, discussion and exploration instead of simply telling students what to learn. Friendly and comforting relationships between teachers and students are expected during a lesson. Secondly, more time and chances for thinking and learning by students themselves are needed more to facilitate their exploration of new knowledge. Thirdly, relevancy determines that the engagement where students are involved must be “relevant, meaningful, and authentic – in other words, it needs to be worthy of their time and attention” (Willms, et al., cited in Taylor and Parsons, 2011, p. 12). Lastly, various forms of multimedia and technology such as SmartBoards, blogs, wikis, YouTube and video documentaries are playing a powerful role in engaging student.

These four strategies will be explored in the teacher-researcher’s teaching practice.

2.4.4 Knowledge building

In a broad sense, knowledge building is ‘a social process through which people work collaboratively to create and improve ideas of value to their community’ (Sun et al., 2010, p. 148). Similarly, Silver and Barrows (2008, p. 48) also define knowledge building as a social norm: “knowledge building involves increasing the collective knowledge of a group through social discourse”.

In a narrow sense (for this research), the knowledge building pedagogy intends to

“bring this process to students and transform classrooms into knowledge building communities” (Sun et al., 2010, p. 148). To be more specific, knowledge building in class means engaging students in figuring out tricky questions, learning from all sorts of resources and following the objects as knowledge building is in progression (Silver and Barrows, 2008).

In order to achieve knowledge building in a lesson, teachers ought to have relevant strategies according to Silver and Barrows (2008, p. 52):

Three kinds of discourse moves are especially important in knowledge building. The first is questioning. Questions have specific purposes that can open up or constrain a dialogue as well as guide its direction (Burbules, 1993). Another type of move is a statement - this may be a simple assertion or development of a new view, reformulation, or elaboration of an idea. The third type of discourse move refers to regulatory statements that are directed at collaboration and learning processes. Together these moves enable knowledge-building discourse.

These three strategies will be explored during the teaching.

2.4.5 Knowledge transfer

At present, a gap in current academic study is the lack of literature concerning knowledge transformation in Chinese lessons. To guide the exploration of this part, supportive ideas about L1 and L2 transfer will be introduced.

In this study, beginning learners are being taught Chinese in Australian schools. For the purpose of promoting students’ knowledge transfer, the L1 and L2 issue needs to be dealt with and taken advantage of.

In 2008, Cummins listed three primary conditions that are effective for students’ L2 learning: (a) engaging prior understandings, (b) integrating factual knowledge with

conceptual frameworks, and (c) taking active control over the learning process through meta-cognitive strategies (Cummins, 2008, p. 67).

As for engaging prior understanding, Cummins (2008, p. 67) said that “students’ prior knowledge is encoded in their L1, then their L1 is inevitably implicated in the learning of L2”. This encoded L1 knowledge, could be understood as all the previous knowledge, namely, pronunciation rules, grammar and lexicons the L1 students have already acquired. In addition, it also includes students’ insights into the specific people, culture and the society. Therefore, students have sufficient L1 linguistic knowledge about how to talk with each other, and they have their own views about their nation, which becomes a foundation for knowing another nation’s language and is able to enlighten their learning to a large extent. “New understandings are constructed on a foundation of existing understandings and experiences” (Donovan and Bransford, cited in Cummins, 2008, p. 67, italics in original). This foundation can be divided into two parts: the similarities and the differences. When learning an L2, students recognise the similarities between the two languages and take advantage of these to promote their language learning; they may also encounter with differences, by which they are able to have a glimpse of the uniqueness of the L2. For instance, learning the L2 (Chinese) order of the subject, verb and object can be time-saving because L1 learners (English speakers in this case) can be contended with the same pattern in the two languages. Students are also familiar with transliterated words such as chocolate, sofa and cafe. Apart from these two points, learners will also enjoy understanding the L2 culture and its social conventions, further improving their language learning. Students can imagine how the society of the target language looks by associating it with their own. It works as the same way as the first example. Thus, this principle implies that teachers of Chinese to English speaking students “should explicitly attempt to activate students’ prior knowledge and build relevant background knowledge as necessary” (Cummins, 2008, p. 68).

In the second part, Cummins (2008, p.67) argues that “there is an underlying

cognitive/academic proficiency that is common across languages.” Language learners all start from learning simple and concrete knowledge before learning complex and abstract knowledge. In addition, students who learn a new language will learn from the abstract to the concrete. Usually theoretical rules and knowledge will be shown before students engage in a lot of concrete examples, such as making a new sentence following certain orders and rules. These are common phenomena in language learning. With regard to surface aspects (e.g., pronunciation) there are similar sounds in English and Chinese, but their meanings and tones differ. As mentioned above, transliterated words do exist across the two languages which simplify the students’ learning. New words like chocolate, sofa and café impress students with the similar sounds, so in this regard they will not find it painstaking in learning the new knowledge. It is the invisible cognitive capacity that strengthens students’ confidence of studying the target language and overcoming difficulties. It is a fact that the tones of these words in Chinese are different, which will take learners more time to remember. Cummins (2008, p. 67) cited a range of “empirical research that supports the interdependence of literacy-related skills and knowledge across languages.”

Thirdly, Cummins (2008, p. 69) identified five strategies of teaching for L1/L2 transfer. Given the objective of making Chinese learnable for beginning learners in an Anglophone country then the following approaches to teaching for L1/L2 transfer will be investigated:

- 1) Transfer of meta-cognitive and meta-linguistic strategies

The transfer of meta-cognitive and meta-linguistic strategies aims to facilitate students’ cognitions of new knowledge and make it easier for students to absorb linguistic information. In other words, these two strategies have the power to help students know about new words, phrases and sentences and remember them quickly.

2) Transfer of phonological awareness

Phonology varies in different languages, but some principles of phonology may be the same, such as words consisting of distinct sounds. In teaching a new language, teachers are responsible for cultivating students' phonological awareness, which is of great importance for new beginners.

3) Transfer of conceptual elements

A concept map is a good strategy to undertake the transfer of conceptual elements. When introducing a new concept, teachers should encourage students to think as much as possible and tell them to point out any new concepts related with it. The more new concepts students can figure out, the better the previous concept can be understood.

4) Transfer of pragmatic aspects of language use

The pragmatic aspects of language use refer to setting the language in practical contexts. The goal of a learner studying a new language is to take advantage of the language and use it to deal with different kinds of problems in real target situations, in which practicability is highly emphasised. In order to make the language usable, teachers need to engage students in all kinds of conversations through L2, including buying things, seeing the doctor, asking for directions and going travelling. In addition, teachers themselves are required to speak and act in L2 when teaching.

5) Transfer of specific linguistic elements

As for the transfer of linguistic elements, there are many points concerning second language acquisition which should be given attention to. When learning a new language, the students' development during a period is limited, and which is called

Zone of Proximal Development. Thus, it is sensible for teachers to adopt 'i+1' strategy and bring appropriate information for students every time. Apart from this, students' learning mode may be shaped like the U model, that is, students learn quickly in the beginning, forget a lot afterwards and gradually return to the best conditions. It is possible that students will experience some 'down' phases and teachers need to inspire them and not give up on them.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology adopted for this study. A brief comparison will first be made between qualitative research and quantitative research to explain why the former was selected. The main research method self-study will be introduced in detail - its definition, characteristics and significance. The essential criteria of the research will next be presented, followed by the overview of research design. The most important parts of the research, data collection and data analysis are illustrated in the following two sections.

3.2 The choice of qualitative research

The quantitative research and qualitative research methods have long been contentious within the academic community. Stake (2010) defined them as follows:

...By quantitative we mean that its thinking relies heavily on linear attributes, measurements and statistical analysis; by qualitative we mean that it relies primarily on human perception and understanding (p. 73).

The main difference between quantitative and qualitative research is that the former uses exact numbers and data to explain science while the latter aims to promote understanding of professional practices such as teaching and nursing, through one's personal observations and reflections. Professional practice should first be explained before continuing to compare these two methodologies. There are a great many definitions about professional practice and the key dimensions common to all include: "specialised knowledge, intensive preparation, a code of conduct, an emphasis on continued learning, and the rendering of a public service" (Clarke and Erickson, 2004, p. 200). Teaching has recently come to be regarded as professional practice.

Education delivers professional knowledge, and profession knowledge is sometimes abstract and complex, and cannot be dealt with using only figures. Educational research involves many factors, for example, objects (students), situations (different classes and subjects) and time. People expect that teachers are able to teach different students in different classes, which is equal to work in different situations. This is comparable to a doctor's diagnoses of patients' illness, which greatly depend on each person's symptoms. This is why professional and clinical knowledge rely heavily on qualitative inquiry.

This research is a qualitative research. Compared with quantitative research, qualitative research is much more detailed and explicit, with ample descriptions of personal actions and sufficient attention being given to specific points. Educational research is complex, abstract and dynamic, and cannot be mechanically manipulated by simply gathering numbers and drawing conclusions from them. It is not the same as many scientific experiments which rely on substantive data. Qualitative research, characterised as interpretive, experiential, situational, and personalistic, fits comfortably with researchers who concentrate on education, examining conditions by means of long term observations, reflections and interpretations. Though it may be argued that qualitative research is likely to be subjective, the effort among professional people to promote a subjective research paradigm is strong (Stake, 2010). With authentic data, core evidence and corresponding analysis, qualitative research can stand on its own and be well triangulated. Whenever qualitative researchers cannot see for themselves, they will inquire of other participants. Also, there are formal observation records, frequent reflections and interview feedback from others during the research process, in which readers can also participate. This greatly increases the trustworthiness of the research.

3.3 Self-study

3.3.1 Definition of self-study

Self-study is a research method “characterized by the examination of the role of the self in the research project” (Gallagher et al., 2011, p. 881) and “the space between self and the practice engaged in” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 15). Coia and Taylor (2009) also argued that self-study research emphasizes on the researchers’ own roles within the practice. It is also known as teacher research or teacher inquiry, provides an approach to performing research that enables teacher-researchers to solve practical problems and make progress in their own teaching. This makes self-study research related yet distinct from earlier paradigms of practitioner inquiry.

The birth of self-study research dates back to 1950s (Lunenberg et al., 2010). Stenhouse's (1975) and Elliot's (1978) work on action research and the relevant concept of ‘teachers as researchers’ reinforced the interest in teacher research. More recently, Whitehead has been one of the most famous representatives of teacher research (Lunenberg et al., 2010). Schön's work (1983, 1987) on the reflective practitioner made reflection become “a buzzword in the field of teacher education” (Lunenberg et al., 2010, p. 1281). Late twentieth saw new developments in teacher education, and teacher educators were motivated to study their attempts to improve teacher education practices (Lunenberg et al., 2010).

Specifically, Stenhouse, who in 1975, advocated that “teachers research their practice in an attempt to better understand their own practice and therefore understand classroom contexts in meaningful ways” (Brandenburg, 2008, p. 21). Currently, with more precise definitions and more refined theoretical backup, self-study has been well developed:

[Self-study is] a generally agreed upon set of insider research practices that promote teachers taking a close, critical look at their teaching and the academic and social development of their students... [It] involves classroom teachers in a cycle of inquiry, reflection, and action. In this

cycle, teachers question common practice, approach problems from new perspectives, consider research and evidence to propose new solutions, implement these solutions, and evaluate the results, starting the cycle anew (Lewison, cited in Clarke and Erickson, 2004, p. 207).

Self-study offers the teacher-researcher an internal perspective to view teaching problems, namely, everything starts from the teacher, including identifying a problem, reflecting, seeking new ways to solve it, experimenting with new methods and refreshing the plan. By these means, the teacher-researcher will gradually cultivate an increased alertness to new ideas and become more proficient in solving problems. Therefore, as a research-centred method, self-study is a process of self-improvement of teaching pedagogy. In the meantime, with an intention to explore profound insights into teaching difficulties, it also involves changing the status-quo within the profession. To put it in another way, self-study researchers endeavour to change and make a difference for themselves, students, and other teachers and schools.

In its methodology, qualitative methods are often used because of its focus on educators' own practices (Lunenberg et al., 2010). But it does not mean that self-study research equals to per definition qualitative. Quantitative analyses, including student evaluations and tests, enable teacher educators to gain concise and deep insights into their practices. Nevertheless, in self-study research visuals, discourses and texts generally play an important role (Tidwell, Heston, & Fitzgerald, cited in Lunenberg et al., 2010, p. 1281).

3.3.2 Five characteristics of self-study

Self-study is conducted in many forms and practitioners at all levels of the educational enterprise can be included. According to LaBoskey, self-study is characterised by five points:

1. An initiation by, and focus on self

2. Improvement-aimed
3. Interactivity at one or more stages throughout the process
4. Utilisation of multiple, mainly qualitative methods of data collection, analysis and representation
5. Conceptualisation of validity as validation thus endeavouring to advance the field through the construction, testing, sharing and re-testing of exemplars of teaching practice (LaBoskey, cited in Brandenburg, 2008, p. 23).

It is natural for the researcher's initiative and self to be highlighted in self-study because the researcher plays an imperative role in the entire process. It is the researcher who finds a problem, does the reflection work, tries to figure it out, and implements a new plan. Without the researcher taking the initiative, the research would likely be at a standstill. Reflection is also crucial since the research content is mainly about self. Keeping reflections facilitates focusing and analysing better on oneself. Self-study strives to make improvements and progress, which is the ultimate goal of the research. A high-quality self-study will improve the researcher personally as well as participants involved. Third, interaction exists during the research process. For example, there is interaction when the teacher-researcher teaches students and identifies problems; there is interaction when the teacher receives feedback from other staff members – another method of reflection. Fourth, qualitative methods such as data collection and analysis will be adopted since self-study relies greatly on reflective records, which involves dealing with literary data. Finally, there are few measurements in self-study so other criteria and methods, such as believability, credibility, consensus, and coherence are developed to increase the validity of the research.

3.3.3 Significance of self-study

As mentioned above, self-study has its five characteristics that make it a distinct research method. The famous education researcher Schwab cites the concept of the commonplace to summarise those essential elements about teaching:

For teaching to occur, someone (a teacher) must be teaching someone (a student) about something (a curriculum) at some place and some time (a milieu). There must be a 'somehow', a way for an educator to know, recognise, explore, and act upon his or her practice. For us, that somehow is self-study (Clarke and Erickson, 2004, p. 206).

Suffice it to say that, self-study, as the fifth common place, is indeed a cornerstone of professional practice as well as the life-blood of the teaching and learning dynamic (Clarke and Erickson, 2004). Though self-study is a relatively new research approach, it has been continuously influential on the professional practice of teacher educators, locally, nationally and internationally (Brandenburg, 2008).

For this research, self-study is of great importance. The research mainly focuses on the teacher-researcher's personal practical teaching experiences at a public school in Sydney, and concentrates on exploring her professional development as a beginning Mandarin teacher. As the teaching experiences and the exploration are personal and unstable, it is appropriate to count on self-study to conduct the research because it offers "an insider perspective, the ongoing and ever-evolving study of practice-within-context" (Brandenburg, 2008, p. 26). It is also vital for this research because self-study inspires this teacher-researcher, one with little practical teaching experience or relevant background, to focus on herself as a beginning Mandarin teacher. As Feldman (2003, p. 27) commented, this (self-study) enables us to "study ourselves, not as navel-gazing but to understand the way we are teacher educators and to change our ways of being educators". Largely through a series of self-study research activities, the teacher-researcher will learn more about how to deepen her knowledge, expand her teaching repertoire, adjust her teaching conditions and manage her classes. Self-study works as a systematic and rigorous process to explore and develop teacher knowledge and practice.

However, there are potential pitfalls. As have mentioned in 3.3.1, everything about

the self-study research starts from and is conducted by the researcher individually. The accuracy of what is seen when focusing upon oneself from a single perspective is, finite and subjective, cannot be guaranteed. Therefore, one should be careful about romantic notions which may appear when researchers are overly concerned with their own learning (Brandenburg, 2008). In order to increase the accuracy and validity of the research, several research criteria such as triangulation, validity and reliability are brought into the research, and will be discussed below.

3.4 Research principles

There are a number of issues that need to be taken into careful consideration by researchers throughout the whole research process, or the research may lack in morality, validity and reliability and then lose its worth. These issues are the preliminary work that researchers should undertake before commencing their research. Overall, this section involves four research principles: ethics, reliability and validity, triangulation and generalisability.

3.4.1 Ethics

Ethics is “concerned with the attempt to formulate codes and principles of moral behaviour” (May, cited in Basit, 2010, p. 56). Before the research starts, researcher must ensure that everything is to be conducted in an ethical manner. They need to officially obtain the consent of participants and their ethical approval for the research. They are also required to make clear to the potential participants that it is voluntary, not compulsory, and participants can object to continue or withdraw from the research anytime they don’t want to do it anymore (Singh et al., 2011). According to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)’s six key principles of ethical research (cited in Basit, 2010, p. 58), a researcher is responsible for the following things:

...participants must be well informed fully about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research, what their participation in the research entails and what risks if possible; the confidentiality of information supplied by participants must be respected; research participants are free from any coercion, and harm must be avoided...

This research will only begin after receiving consents from students and parents, the National Ethics Application Form (NEAF) and the formal approval through the State Education Research Approval Process (SERAP). Throughout the research process, the privacy and confidentiality of participants will be highly respected and anonymity will be used when participants' relevant information is involved. In addition, all collected data will be stored and locked in the teacher-researcher's office for a period of time, during which only she or her supervisors can gain access to it. At the end of this period, these records will be destroyed and will not be exposed to the public. The benefits of the participants (mainly the students from two schools where the teacher-researcher will teach Chinese, supervising teachers who are teaching and ROSETE teammates in this case) will not be harmed.

Researchers should try their best not to exert too much influence on research sites and keep them from interruption (Basit, 2010). This research is to be mainly conducted at one school. Interviews and observations will be conducted at the participants' convenience.

3.4.2 Reliability and validity

Reliability is a prerequisite for validity. Reliability "denotes that the research process can be repeated at another time on similar participants in a similar context with the same results" (Basit, 2010, p. 69). One thing researchers should pay attention to is that reliability differs in qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Quantitative research depends on statistics and numbers to measure whether the

research is reliable or not. Qualitative research however, uses a human as the instrument, so it is not reasonable to turn to statistical methods during the research period (Morrell and Carroll, 2010). In order to make the qualitative data reliable, researchers are expected to show readers that their overall research project, specific information of data collection and analysis included, has been unbiased, not subjective, rigorous, accurate, authentic and comprehensive, and has also handled the research questions (Morrell and Carroll, 2010). Qualitative researchers frequently “use video recordings, tape recordings and multiple observers when collecting data” (Morrell and Carroll, 2010, p. 76). In this research, all interviews will be recorded to ensure the reliability of the study. The classroom teacher will also be present in classes as an observer, which increases research reliability. Data analysis will be closely guided by the supervisors.

Validity is “a term that typically goes hand-in-hand with reliability” (Morrell and Carroll, 2010, p. 77), and is the key to successful research. According to Creswell (2013, p. 249), validation in qualitative research is “an attempt to assess the accuracy of the findings”. There are two types of validity, namely internal validity and external validity. Internal validity “seeks to demonstrate that the explanation of a particular event, issue or set of data which a piece of research provides can actually be sustained by the data” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 183). However, external validity is more statistical, and refers to “the degree to which the results can be generalised to the wider population, cases, settings, times or situations, i.e. to the transferability of the findings” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 186). Therefore internal validity is what matches qualitative research. The validity of qualitative research can be achieved by means of “honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, and the use of triangulation” (Basit, 2010, p. 64).

3.4.3 Triangulation

Triangulation is a strong tool to manage the validity and reliability of a qualitative

study. It involves “using multiple data sources to help ensure that the data collected are accurate and a true representation of what you are studying” (Morrell and Carroll, 2010, p. 77). Generally speaking, triangulation can be achieved by adopting a combination of the following: 1) multiple forms of data: collecting a variety of data; and 2) multiple subjects: collecting multiple viewpoints about the same topic (Morrell and Carroll, 2010). The first of these refers to collecting information from various and different channels. In this research, data from self-reflection journals, interviews, observations and written documents will be collected in time and in order. Where “the same phenomena are investigated by using two or more methods of data collection such as questionnaires and observation, or interviews and documents”, it is called methodological triangulation (Basit, 2010, p. 67). It is an essential type of triangulation.

The latter one requires more perspectives on the same section. As previously mentioned, one of the research questions is about how to engage students in class. For example, according to the literature, the teacher-researcher will observe students’ cognitive, emotional and behavioural engagement together. Researching the engagement issue cognitively, emotionally and behaviourally presents three perspectives of one research section. To sum up, triangulation pushes researchers to take advantage of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories so as to provide effective evidence (Creswell, 2013).

3.4.4 Generalizability

In research, generalisability means “whether your result will hold true for subject and settings beyond those in your study” (Morrell and Carroll, 2010, p. 76). Usually quantitative research concludes with findings which can be applied in other cases and contexts. However, the situation differs in qualitative research. As Borko, Liston and Whitcomb contended, qualitative study “seeks to describe, analyse, and interpret features of a specific situation, preserving its complexity and communicating the

perspectives of participants” (Morrell and Carroll, 2010, p. 76). The outcomes of qualitative research are not capable of application beyond that case or context, nor are those the goals of the research. This is not to imply that there is no generalisability in qualitative research. In qualitative research “comparability and transferability are the equivalent of generalisability” (Basit, 2010, p. 66). Researchers are expected to describe data and information as much as possible, and then the readers can decide for themselves the degree to which findings are generalisable to another situation and can be transferred to another context.

Since this study is a self-study concerning the teacher-researcher’s Mandarin teaching at one school in WSR, there are problems and limitations in reaching a high degree of generalisability. Based on the two concepts of comparability and transferability, this research will present detailed information about the data and offer readers clear and comprehensive research, by which they can judge what is suitable to be applicable to other contexts.

3.5 Overview of research design

Based on the ROSETE program launched by the DET of NSW and NMEB, the concern of this research is about this teacher-researcher’s teaching experience in a high school (to be referred to as Maidou School) in the WSR. It begins with observation of formal teachers’ lessons in order to gain an understanding of basic teaching routines and procedures and a general idea of the Mandarin teaching to follow. The real teaching practice will fall mainly in three areas: how to engage students, how to build new Chinese language knowledge and how to make their new knowledge transfer occur. Through promptly completing self-reflection journals and collecting feedback from students and the classroom teacher, this teaching will be adjusted appropriately and will hopefully improve. Overall, the focus will be upon this teacher-researcher as a beginning Mandarin teacher, and exploring how to

develop a beginning Mandarin teacher's teaching strategies and language skills by means of self-study.

3.5.1 Sites and timeline

The research site is Maidou School, an exciting and dynamic high school with approximately 1400 students from Year 7 to Year 12 and over 100 teachers. The school has been strongly supporting Chinese lessons for more than five years. At the moment, there are two classes learning Chinese, and an additional class will begin Chinese lessons next year.

The teaching period at Maidou School will extend across Terms 1, 2 and 3 in 2014. Throughout the process, the focus will be on students' engagement, Chinese language knowledge building and knowledge transfer according to the three research questions. Below is the schedule for the research.

Table 1: Timeline and sites

Time	Maidou School
Term 1 in 2014	Year 9 Chinese class
Term 2 in 2014	Year 9 Chinese class
Term 3 in 2014	Year 9 Chinese class

3.5.2 Participants

The teacher-researcher will teach Chinese, interact with students and observe them. The main participants will be the twelve students from Year 9 Chinese class. Students chose Chinese on their own, and this is a selective class. They are all from English-speaking backgrounds, and cannot speak Chinese. Only one student has

learned Chinese in Year 7 for one term, and the others are all fresh. There are two Mandarin lessons each week, and each lesson lasts 80 minutes.

The classroom teacher of this class will also be invited to participate. This teacher will observe the teacher-researcher’s teaching, and be asked to provide feedback. After the last lesson of each term (Terms 1-3 in 2014), the classroom teacher will be interviewed for 30 minutes, focusing on the teacher-researcher’s progress and making suggestion for the next teaching term. The classroom teacher will also observe the teacher-researcher’s teaching strategies and language skills, and fill in observation forms. Student work samples and lesson quizzes will also be collected as document data.

3.6 Data collection

Data collection is not simply a matter of identifying the potential data resources and approaching them. It also includes “gaining permissions, conducting a good qualitative sampling strategy, developing means for recording information both digitally and on paper, storing the data, and anticipating ethical issues that may arise” (Creswell, 2013, p. 145). Figure 4 below illustrates the cycle of data collection.

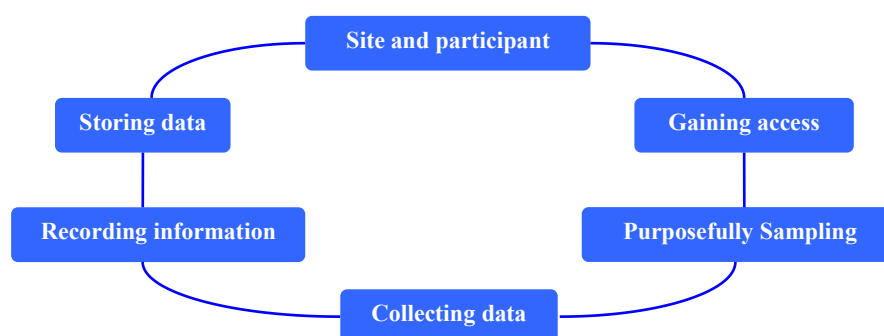


Figure 4: Cycle of data collection (Adapted from Creswell, 2013, p.146)

The research is allocated to a specific site or sites with certain participants, as

discussed in section 3.4. Another crucial preliminary step is to obtain access to conduct the research at the chosen sites and among the potential participants. It is important to first gain approvals from the institutions/places and people, or the research cannot begin therefore. NEAF and SERAP will first be applied for. Next, concrete and holistic samples must be developed with all the necessary details concerning participants, types of sampling and sample size. Then the main data collection work begins. There are many approaches to conducting data collection, among which there are observations (ranging from nonparticipant to participant), interviews (ranging from closed-ended to open-ended), documents (ranging from private to public), and audio-visual materials (including photographs, compact discs, and videotapes) (Creswell, 2013). In this research, the interview, the reflection journal and the document will be adopted as the main methods of collecting data, and will be elaborated upon below. After collecting data, extra useful information should be recorded and all the data must be properly stored. This is the data collection process.

In the rest of this part, three specific methods of data collection will be discussed in detail, including the self-reflection journal, the interview and the document.

3.6.1 Self-reflection journal

The main data resource of the research comes from the self-reflection journals. A self-reflection functions as a recorder, keeping what one has done and thought within a certain context. It is “written regularly over a specified period of time in which one describes experiences, events and issues associated with his or her professional practice and also analyses and reflects on them” (Mariko, 2011, p. 72).

Keeping self-reflection journals is an important way for beginning teachers to improve their teaching since the process enables them to act as reflective practitioners. During the process, it is believed that teachers can enhance their

capabilities of understanding their strength and weaknesses and take the initiative to improve themselves as better teachers (Gu'n, 2010).

A self-reflection journal contains ample data from all aspects about every teaching day. By means of a self-reflection journal, lessons can be revisited in a detailed and vivid way to more deeply explore teaching strategies. One reflection journal will be completed after each teaching week, recording teaching experiences, lesson plans, teaching activities and personal reflections on the overall teaching process.

3.6.2 Interview

Interviewing is a common data collecting technique, which is frequently used by qualitative researchers (Morrell and Carroll, 2010). The fundamentals of interviewing include generating and maintaining conversations with participants on specific subjects, and the way the data obtained are interpreted by researchers (Basit, 2010). The interview's popularity is attributed to its advantages: (1) Interviewing offers the researchers the chance to build rapport with participants, which makes a relationship of trust; (2) It also enables the researchers to explain questions if the participants do not initially understand; (3) The response rate is 100 percentage as the interviews are conducted either face-to-face, by telephone, by email or on the Internet with participants who have agreed to be interviewed.

Generally, there are three basic types of interviews, according to the formality of the interaction: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. The structured interview is closely guided and fixed; the semi-structured interview allows more freedom; and the unstructured interview is open and flexible. The semi-structured interview has been selected for this study. The classroom teacher will be interviewed once each term for 45 minutes, focusing on her opinions of the teacher-researcher's progress and offering feedback or suggestions for the next stage of teaching.

3.6.3 Documents

Qualitative researchers often use documents as data sources. Unlike interviews, documents are “less invasive, and are very much a solitary activity” (Basit, 2010, p. 138). Documents can show up in the form of lesson plans, samples of student work, journals, essays, PowerPoint presentations, or other documents generated in teaching (Morrell and Carroll, 2010).

Throughout this research, documents including lesson plans, samples of students’ work, lesson quizzes from students, classroom teachers’ observation form and other teaching and learning materials will be constantly collected and used as data for this study.

3.7 Data analysis

Data analysis is of utmost importance during the whole research process, to make sense of all the collected data. It is defined by Morrell and Carroll (2010, p. 118) as follows:

...qualitative analyses are typically done by reading and rereading the data and finding common themes that emerge from data. Different names are sometimes applied to the specific qualitative methods depending on the type of data being analysed... but all qualitative analyses are inductive and involve the same primary steps. All methods texts recommend the use of coding and categorising qualitative data.

Raw data initially has no meaning, so the process of data analysis, which is basically consisted of coding and categorising, is like interpreting the storyline of a play. In this research, thematic analysis and the coding strategy will be applied as the main analysis methods.

As a widely used method, thematic analysis is “essentially a method for identifying and analysing patterns (themes) in qualitative data” (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 120). Through thematic analysis, data can be organised and described in a rich and detailed way (Braun and Clarke, 2008). A theme is a conceptualised session that can seize key points of the data with regard to research questions, and demonstrate underlying meanings of data within the certain contexts. Generally speaking, thematic analysis can be conducted in six phases, namely familiarisation with the data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and writing-up (see Table 2).

Table 2: Six phases of thematic analysis

Six phases	Description of the phases
Familiarisation with the data	Immersing in data (reading, re-reading and noting)
Coding	Generating pithy labels for relevant data
Searching for themes (categories)	Coding codes, identifying similarity in the data and generate initial themes (categories)
Reviewing themes	Checking whether each theme works properly or not
Defining and naming themes	Analyze themes and name them
Writing-up	Interpreting the data extracts, contextualizing them by engaging external concepts in the literature

(Adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.121)

First of all, sufficient time must be set aside to become familiar with the whole of the data. Basically this phase consists of reading and re-reading the database and jotting down notes or memos. The notes or the memos could be a single word, a phrase,

random ideas or key concepts which happen to arise.

Secondly, coding is going to be put into operation. As an essential part of data analysis, coding disassembles and reassembles the data. The study relies on open coding, selective coding and axis coding as its coding strategies, the aim of which is to make the data chunks manageable and comprehensible. To begin, all the data from self-reflection journals, transcribed information from interviews and documents will be gathered together and processed by open coding. Open coding means that “data and units of analysis are coded to identify meanings, perceptions, experiences and so forth” (Basit, 2010, p. 192). According to the extracts from the original information, many codes will be created. Through the initial work of coding, information is sorted out with distinct labels. This is the second phase.

Next, different codes and data generated from the open coding will be grouped and integrated according to certain central meanings. This step is the axial coding. During the process of axial coding, researchers will “link categories and codes around the axes of the main categories” (Basit, 2010, p. 192). Hence the similar information about teaching, such as engagement, knowledge delivering and knowledge transformation, is packed together. This is the third phase: searching for themes (categories).

Then the review work commences in order to check whether the initial categories work or not. This phase mainly classifies principal codes, studies the relationships with other sub-codes, “validates those relationships, and compares the coding format with existing theory” (Basit, 2010, p. 192), which is also called the selective coding. Overall, the researchers reflect on whether or not the categories show compelling and convincing stories.

During the fifth phase, formal themes come into being as researchers begin defining and naming themes. Themes in qualitative research (also called categories) are

“broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea” (Creswell, 2013, p. 186). A theme is like a family, which contains many codes inside. The data analysis work is nearing the end.

In the final phase, writing-up consists of representing and interpreting the data extracts and themes, to make the analysis outcome complete and reasonable. These are the 6 phases of thematic analysis attach as an overview picture about how the data is coded in detail (see Appendix 7).

Chapter 4 Engaging students' Chinese learning in class

4.0 Introduction

Chapter Three provided the methodology and methods of this research. According to the themes that emerged from data, the thesis developed three evidentiary chapters. They are Chapter Four (this chapter), analysing and discussing the data on engaging students' Chinese learning in class; Chapter Five, on building students' Chinese language knowledge and Chapter Six, on making students' Chinese language knowledge transfer occur. In this chapter, data concerning the teaching explorations of engaging students are discussed from two aspects: emotional engagement and behavioural engagement.

4.1 Mobilizing students' full emotions for Chinese learning

In order to organise teaching effectively, one of the most important things teachers need to do is to get students ready for lessons physically and psychologically. This requires that students not only have to be in class physically with their teachers, but also to ensure their minds are prepared to concentrate on their lessons. Making students focused in class requires students' full array of emotions to be highly centralised in class. As a beginning teacher, the teacher-researcher spent much time and energy trying to stimulate students' full attention so as to facilitate their Chinese learning.

4.1.1 Getting familiar and building rapport with students

The task of stimulating students' full emotions begins when the teacher first gets to know the students and they get to know the teacher. Trying to establish rapport with the students is very important for a new teacher. Early studies have pointed out the

close connection between students' learning in class and the quality of teacher-student relationships (O'Connor, 2010). The teacher-researcher's first attempt to establish a harmonious relationship with them so as to engage their learning in class was through telling personal stories.

After a big smile, I started my lesson by saying, 'I'm so happy to meet you all here because you have selected Chinese as your second language. From now on, you are going to prove that you made a worthy choice. The power of learning a second language is infinite. I started learning English when I was in Year 3 of primary school. Thanks to English, I am now able to travel aboard and teach you Chinese here. Learning a second language is really amazing. Generally speaking, with a new language, you can communicate with people from different backgrounds and know more about other cultures. Chinese is especially important in this respect. There are many Chinese people living in Australia. You can make business with Chinese people if you master how to speak Chinese. My landlady and her husband could be a good example. They knew each other because of selling solar panels. Her husband can speak Chinese and made friends with my landlord when she bought solar panel from him. Later they started selling solar machines together and doing a big business.' I noticed almost everyone's eyes were focusing on me, gladly commenting, 'This could be the potential benefit you would get from learning Chinese, but you could have more than that. Of course, you are able to know the unique Chinese culture and learn Chinese people's customs. Maybe you can also have a Chinese girlfriend or boyfriend. That is possible.' The class burst into laughter. (Part 1, Feb. 3rd, Week 2 in Term 1, 2014, Researcher's self-reflection Journal)

This piece of data illustrated how the teacher-researcher made efforts to engage students in class at the very beginning. Her personal experience of learning English as a second language and a real story of using Chinese to make business in Sydney were shared with the students. She felt students were following her during the lesson from their "focused eyes", which implied that she had successfully attracted their attention. The most crucial explanation for this might have been showing the exact benefits of learning Chinese by using a real story as well as her personal experience. On one hand, the real story of doing business and her personal experience of learning English as the second language directly motivated students to learn Chinese.

Considering the two examples were real life, students might link themselves with future expectations concerning learning Chinese. Therefore, students might be stimulated to work hard at learning Chinese to find their potential fortunes. On the other hand, students' inner pursuit was lit by the inspiring stories. The reasons why people learn a second language are basically related to their goals in learning it, such as doing business, learning about another culture or career requirements in careers. All of these goals ask that second languages be practical and useful, and students also have their own expectations of learning Chinese. By means of showing one aspect of its benefits, students might feel more confident in believing that it is worth learning Chinese.

In addition, the class's "bursting into laughter" also indicated that students were well engaged in class. It could be due to the involvement of humour. The teacher-researcher was making a joke when she mentioned having "a girlfriend or a boyfriend" as the benefit of learning Chinese. Students' "on-time" laughter indicated that they were listening carefully and they understood the interesting points the teacher-researcher intended to make. Therefore, the laughter was a positive sign saying that students were following her teaching on that day.

The teacher-researcher was also trying to establish rapport with students during the whole process. To start with, the aims that she showed students through personal experience and stories were to let them get to know her better. Humour also contributed to a relaxing class atmosphere. According to Chauvet and Hofmeyer (2007), the general function of humour was that typical humorous interactions with others strengthen people's feelings of delight, laughter and fun, and can "provide a sense of connection, acceptance and affiliation" (p. 286). In terms of humour in learning, early studies by Powell and Andresen have shown that moderated humour in class increased students' attention and interests, and facilitated a more positive lesson Baid and Lambert (2010). Therefore, the teacher researcher used humour to ease students when they met each other the first time. The joke of "girlfriend or

boyfriend” is kind of personal and it is usually talked about between friends. As a result, the students’ laughter towards her joke naturally narrowed the distance between them and her and made the relationship more easy and cosy.

All the above attempts that made by the teacher-researcher can be regarded as her emotional supports towards the students. Emotional support is “closely related to the notion of personal or emotional involvement, which can be described as the teachers' ability to access the more personal part of the children” (Buyse, Verschueren, Doumen, Damme, and Maes, 2008, p. 369). The benefit of sufficient emotional support has been reported by Rudasill, Gallagher and White (2010): classrooms with high levels of emotional support offer a significant context for students’ success in learning. Reflected from the data, the teacher-researcher was more capable in arousing students’ emotions and making contributions to a positive emotional classroom climate. Overall, this can be viewed as a nice beginning of engaging students in Chinese learning.

Having established this easy and delightful atmosphere, the teacher-researcher started to introduce her personal background to the students:

‘Ok. My name, Hong Wenqiong, you’ve already known. I’m 24 years old and from Ningbo, China. It’s a lively city near Shanghai. I majored in TCFL in the university in China. After I graduated in June 2013, I came here. I’ve been here for over half a year. Here are some photos.’ I started showing students my general information and also displayed my colourful photos on the screen. One was taken in my university with roommates and teachers. It was the graduation day then. We all wore the traditional suit Qipao in order to take the last photos of each other. Several photos were about my journeys in Hainan, Yunnan and Beijing. The peaceful Lijiang River, the awesome sceneries in Yunnan and the Great Wall in Beijing were impressive. What’s more, I also showed students some exquisite craftwork that I collected, for example, paper cutting, Chinese traditional seals and fine chinvas. When I was happily explaining every little story related with each photo, I found one student was very sleepy, yawning from time to time. Most students stayed calm and seemed not interested at all. But I still continued introducing

different cultural information since these were the pre-made plans. (Part 2, Feb. 3rd, Week 2 in Term 1, 2014, Researcher's self-reflection Journal)

A self-introduction was made to further build rapport with students. The teacher-researcher's personal photos were presented, including a graduation dress Qipao, journeys in different places as well as exquisite craftwork such as paper cutting and chinas. The reason why she designed the introductory session was that students could be more familiar with the teacher's life in China. By associating the unique dress Qipao and colourful craftwork with their Chinese teacher, students would be impressed by her as their special and amazing Chinese friend. Her assumption was that students would be impressed by the exquisite craftwork and would have a heated discussion about it. However, she read students' indifference to these photos from one student's "yawning" from time to time and most students' calm facial expressions, which meant her second teaching attempt failed.

There might be three explanations account for their responses. It's most likely they were simply not interested in these items. On one hand, the traditional style of dress and fine craftwork were too far away from students' daily lives, and did not have direct connection to them. For teenagers, modern item may be more fascinating than "antiques". On the other hand, the teacher-researcher was introducing what she thought would be interesting and special to students from a teacher's perspective but actually had no idea of what interested them. Another part of the problem was caused by her one-way teaching.

Another explanation was probably due to the long time the teacher-researcher spent talking alone at the front. She showed students' photos one by one and talked for more than 10 minutes by herself. The first problem was that the students' attention was short. They could not bear such a prolonged talking. Even though the Qipao and other Chinese items were unique, students' fresh feelings faded quickly when the teacher-researcher spent an excessive amount of time showing PowerPoint and

talking about these things. The second problem that emerged from the data was the lack of frequent interaction. As stated by Rudasill (2011), “one mechanism for building positive relationships between teachers and children may be the frequency of interactions between them” (p. 147). Without close interaction, students easily became inattentive and would not follow the lesson any more. Therefore, appropriate content and interaction need to be taken into consideration in trying to engage students in class.

Lastly, the manner of presenting the unique Chinese items affected their impact. The teacher-researcher simply showed everything through PowerPoint slides, which had limited impact on students. The situation might be different if she brought the real item to the class. For example, let students touch Qipao to feel the difference between normal cloth and silk. Students could be pretty excited to have a try, which might be an unforgettable memory. Through doing this, students can be engaged in the relevant stories concerning the photos and will be more active during the lesson.

More factors need to be considered during the process of engaging students in class, including determining their real interests, ensuring proper interaction between sessions and the manner of doing presentations. These key points were what the teacher-researcher learnt from this piece of data. Looking back, the first lesson was still satisfying for her because she made efforts to let the students learn about her and she was able to learn about them. They knew about her personal background and she had a rough idea of what they were not interested in, which meant the teacher and the students were becoming familiar with each other.

In order to continue narrowing the distance from the students, the teacher-researcher also gave them Chinese names and made our class into a “Chinese community”.

Four new students came to join Chinese lessons today. In order to help them fit into my class well, I adjusted my lesson and added an

introduction session for them.

T: Alright, guys. First, I will briefly show you what we have learnt. We have learnt about Chinese New Year, Pinyin, names and numbers till now.

I briefly introduced each part and asked several old students to practice what they had learnt. **(T for teacher, S for student)**

T: (come to Ihsan) *Nǐhǎo, nǐ jiào shénme míngzì* (Hi, what's your name)?

S1: (slowly and unconfidently) *Nǐhǎo, wǒ jiào Ihsan* (Hi, I'm Ihsan).

S2: (before I ask him) Ms, that's strange. We're saying Chinese sentences with our English names!

S3: Yes, can we have a Chinese name?

T: (surprised and smiled) How do you know that? I mean, I was planning to give each of you a Chinese name yesterday. Here are your name tags! (Handed out the name cards)

S: Wow!

I showed students the pronunciations and the meanings of their Chinese names. They were excited, talking and looking at others' name tags.

T: Ok, guys. From now on, I will call you by your Chinese name in class. It's the only name you have in our Chinese community, alright? (Walk to Jeremy) *Nǐhǎo, nǐ jiào shénme míngzì?*

S4: *Nǐhǎo, wǒ jiào Wáng, Wáng, Wáng shuāngjié?* (Wondering)

T: (the class burst into laughter) Yes, you're *Wáng shuāng jié*. (S4 smiled shyly)

I also asked the other students' Chinese names and they all showed special feelings about their new names. (Part 1, Feb. 24th, Week 5 in Term 1, 2014, Researcher's self-reflection Journal)

Offering students Chinese names is another attempt the teacher-researcher made to build rapport. To begin with, she asked one student 'what's your name' in Chinese and he replied with the Chinese sentence, using his English name. Student 2 expressed his doubt before she asked him to answer the question and the class asked for a Chinese name immediately. The students' quick response here suggests a closer relationship with their teacher. Compared with the very beginning, students appeared to be more active in joining the teacher-student conversation in asking questions and freely expressing their opinions. This implied that a communication breakthrough had been achieved in communicating with their teacher during the lesson.

The teacher-researcher noticed students' excitement after getting a new name, which

may mean they liked the “gift” she gave to each. In fact, she anticipated they might enjoy Chinese names in the lesson and had them prepared. Rudasill et al. (2010) claimed that “the hallmark of a highly emotionally supportive classroom is that the teacher is in tune with the needs of students and readily responsive to them” (p. 118). In the teacher-researcher’s lesson, she played jokes to ease the students, and prepared Chinese names for students before they asked her. This indicated that the teacher-researcher made progress in understanding what students need so as to better engage them in lessons.

In addition, the students’ “laughter” about Student 4’s sentence and their lively performance also suggested successful engagement. The reason may lie in the introduction of Chinese names. They are different from their English names, which could heighten their curiosity and attention towards mastering their own names and those of other students’. At the same time, the pronunciations of some names might be slightly beyond students’ reach so they had to guess and try, which usually made their attempts sound strange and funny. This will lead to laughter in class. The Chinese names also provided identities for the students during their Chinese lessons, facilitating a sense of belonging and of community among the learner, thus engaging them more easily.

The evidence showed that over several weeks of teaching, the students and the teacher were becoming more and more familiar with each other though they also encountered some frustrations. According to O’Conner (2010), high quality teacher-student relationships are “more often observed in classrooms that are managed well such that teacher expectations are clear and the pacing and level of activities are appropriate” (p. 191). As O’Conner said, the teacher need adjust teaching to be suitable for students in order to contribute to high quality relationship with them. The teacher-researcher gained a better understanding of what she should do to engage students and build rapport with them.

Language is a complex, and language learning is never a linguistic phenomenon only. Brown (2014) stated that psychological, sociological and pedagogical factors all affect the learning and teaching of languages. Learner's prior knowledge, attitudes, personality, learning styles and skills and motivation are among the above mentioned factors that related to final result of the language learning and teaching (Brown, 2014). For these Year students, Chinese were new for them. The top priority for the teacher-researcher was to build rapport with students, create positive learning atmosphere and elicit them to learn Chinese. Once the teacher-researcher builds rapport with her students and knows more about the students' needs and diagnosed levels of ability, her teaching will potentially facilitate students' learning (Mitsutomi, 2012). With teachers' encouragements and inspirations, "motivated L2 students with a positive attitude toward the target language and culture are more likely to be successful than those whose feelings toward the same things are negative or fearful" (Mitsutomi and McDonald, 2005, p. 231). Therefore, building rapport with students over teaching a second language is of great importance for teachers.

4.1.2 Involving "strange" and fun incidents

During the teacher-researcher's explorations in engaging students for Chinese lessons, she unexpectedly developed a strategy to attract their attention: always introduce some "strange" and fun incidents to the class. These incidents usually lasted for short periods of time, but they functioned well in causing the students to focus on lessons.

Today we learnt 'How are you' and four typical answers for it. Before we started our lesson, I asked students questions as I usually did before a new lesson.

T: Guys, what did we learn in our last lesson? (Students were still busy chatting)

T: (raised my voice) what did we learn last week, guys? (No reply. Noise still came from somewhere constantly)

T: Neilson, could you tell us what we've learnt last week? (This is my

third try)

S1: (thought hard while noise was lighter) em, we learnt numbers.

T: Hǎo (good)! What else?

S1: (looked very shy and shook his head) No.

The classroom teacher was disappointed at this passive beginning. She took over the class and led them reading some Pinyin from flash cards. (Part 1, Mar. 10th, Week 7 in Term 1, 2014, Researcher's self-reflection Journal)

The teacher-researcher was engaging students by conducting a quick review of what they had learnt from the previous lesson. She tried three times altogether. They were busy talking when she asked the class as a whole to answer questions. She raised her voice, but there was no reply; just constant noise, which reduced when she picked one student to answer her question although it was not a nice answer. This disengagement situation made the classroom teacher take over the class. The possible reason could be that students forget what they learnt in the last lesson and did not know how to answer. Perhaps they were discussing the last lesson when she asked them the first time. Her second and third attempts failed, though she raised her voice and named one student to answer her question. Recalling what they learned a week prior is relatively hard for students and they do need time to remember. For future teaching, she might offer students some hints, use the flash cards or write something on the board to facilitate their learning.

After this failure, the teacher-researcher realised she had to change the way of guiding students before starting a new topic.

Several minutes later, the class was back to me. I adjusted my leading-in session.

T: Silvia, how are you today? (Her eyes were wide open and she was not sure about what I said just now. So did her classmates.)

T: (grinned) I said, how are you today Silvia?

S1: I'm good, Miss Hong. (Unconfident voice)

T: Jordon, how are you today? (The class suddenly became quite silent and more students stared at me, watching carefully.)

S2: Not bad. And you?

T: I'm pretty good. Thanks! (Happily)
 Then I wrote down 'how are you' in Chinese, the four typical answers for it and thanks in Chinese on the board. (Part 2, Mar. 10th, Week 7 in Term 1, 2014, Researcher's self-reflection Journal)

This excerpt shows how the teacher-researcher engaged students by greeting them in English during the lesson. The girl seemed astonished at the teacher's English greetings with her "wide open" eyes and unconfident voice. The teacher's second greetings with the boy even caused the class to start quietly watching her. She finally succeeded in engaging the students because she could read their surprise and curiosity in their responses. Greetings normally occur when people first meet each other, yet this teacher greeted them after half an hour's teaching. This out-of-routine greeting made them wonder 'what's happening in today's Chinese lesson?' Their curiosity was spontaneous and the class quickly paid attention. Therefore, creating some 'strange or novel' incidents is needed to arouse students' curiosity and engagement.

The teacher-researcher also loved creating funny incidents from time to time to get them focused.

Following the name session, I began to review numbers for the new students.

T: Silvia, Kim and Neilson, could you write one to three in Chinese characters please? They're really simple.

Table 3: Numbers

<i>yī</i>	<i>èr</i>	<i>sān</i>
一	二	三

T: (Students wrote one, two and three by Chinese characters. See Table 3) Thanks. We use one line, two lines and three lines to represent the Chinese characters for numbers one to three. Jeremy, Leon and Phillip, could you write the Chinese characters four to six on the board?
 There was laughter coming from somewhere in class. Three students wrote down four lines, five lines and six lines accordingly.

T: Ok. This is number four from Jeremy's version (the old students burst into loud laughter while the new ones looked confused). Well done, Jeremy. You mastered the characteristics of Chinese characters, and that was a good guess. But not all the numbers consist of simple lines. Otherwise we have to draw one hundred lines to write one hundred. That will be crazy (the class laughed again). Bridget, could you show us how to write four in Chinese characters?

The new guys watched carefully when Bridget wrote the number four. (Part 2, Feb. 24th, Week 5 in Term 1, 2014, Researcher's self-reflection Journal)

When the teacher-researcher introduced previous lessons, she was trying to engage the class as a whole. She asked three students to write down one to three in Chinese characters. One is a horizontal line, two is two horizontal lines and three is three horizontal lines. She set the new students up by asking them to write four, five and six, because she knew they would keep adding one more line as the number increased. The class's "loud laughter" and the new students' "confused" facial expressions indicated their full attention.

This successful engagement was mainly attributed to the funny session that the teacher-researcher designed. For the previous students, she mainly took advantage of the difference between numbers three and four to create humorous points for the class. According to Baid and Lambert (2010), fun incident can be prepared to "encourage a deep rather than surface level of learning" (p. 549), exerting a greater influence upon students' learning. Considering they had already learnt about numbers, they were actually "teachers" like the teacher-researcher, observing the new students being fooled. They laughed because they were watching the mistakes the new students made and caught the laughing points. To a large extent, this actually constituted a lesson review for the previous students.

However, for the new students, it was a surprising and impressive leading-in session, in which the teacher first confused them to create sense of suspense and then explained in detail. The "error" of Chinese character 四 (four) was intentionally

designed to make them focus and then to figure out what was actually going on. After several incidents of “laughter”, the new students might feel more eager to know the correct numbers. That was the external power leading the new students to learn and “watch carefully” when a previous student demonstrated how to write the number correctly. Vos, Meijden, and Denessen (2011) claimed that students learn better from their mistakes and attempts to search the correct answers by trial-and-error. Therefore, this fun incident involved in class did play a surprising and effective role in helping the teacher-researcher to engage students for their Chinese learning.

4.1.3 Engaging through challenging students

Apart from creating some “strange” and fun incidents to engage students in class, the teacher-researcher also designed competitive sessions into her lessons. The sessions were basically conducted through various games, which usually stirred up the students’ interest and heightened attention for the lesson.

In the last lesson, we briefly learnt to ask and answer ‘what date is it today?’ Before the new lesson started, I let them read the whole sentence.

T: Ok, who can try the whole sentence? (One student put up her hand)

T: (with a questioning tone) Just one person? (Another two put up their hands)

T: (I urged) Come on, always these hands? Show me your passion! (Another one joined)

T: (feel powerless with this situation) Ok, you please.

S1: (said the sentence very slowly with two pauses) *Jīntiān, shì, jǐyuè jīhào?*

T: Not bad, but a little slow. Who else can have a try? (Turned to another side)

The students all stared at their worksheets and dare not have another go. One idea flashed in my mind and I changed my way of inducing students.

T: Or maybe who can do it really fast? Let’s see who is going to be No. 1 today!

More eyes suddenly focused on me, and three students put up hands very quickly.

T: Ok, have a go.
 S2: (looked at the board seriously and cleared his throat) *Jīnti ān, sher, jīwèi*, oops! (Had a slip of tongue and looked embarrassed)
 T: (The class burst into laughter) that's alright. You've made your first step! Who can say it much faster?
 S: Me! /Me!
 More students put up hands and could not wait to join the competition. One boy and one girl said the sentence really fast.
 T: Guys, who is much faster?
 S: It's Kim! /No, Jackey! /Yeah, Jackey! /Try one more time!
 The class started a heated discussion.
 T: Alright, let them do it again! Listen carefully. Jackey, you go first!
 After they tried, the class pointed out the fastest one quickly. We had Jackey as the fastest guy today. Later we tried the slowest way to say the sentence. (Mar. 17th, Week 8 in Term 1, 2014, Researcher's self-reflection Journal)

This piece of data demonstrated how the teacher-researcher engaged students to say the sentence 'what's the date today?' by means of competitions. The class atmosphere was not lively when she first asked them to practice the sentence. Only four students put up their hands after she prompted them twice. She then picked one student but felt powerless with the student's unsatisfactory performance. The reason why students dared not to have a go might be that the sentence was a bit hard for them to say, or they lacked practice. Then the idea of having a competition among students occurred to the teacher-researcher. After she mentioned "number one", students responded quickly with their eyes focused and hands put up. The class was much more active, laughing and discussing who was number one. More and more students joined the competition. Compared with the beginning, their emotions were finally aroused enough to focus on the lesson.

The success of engaging students in class can be attributed to the different reasons: to begin, the concept of being "number one" drove them to be competitive. On one hand, students became energetic as soon as the teacher-researcher mentioned "number one", a catalyst that transformed their passivity into activity in a flash. Active participation and interactivity was cited among the advantages of the

competitive approach (Burguillo, 2010). Students immediately looked confident and everyone wanted to have a try. Rudasill et al. (2010) stated that active students might be prone to showing excitement and aspiration to instructional activities and learning. Therefore, students were first “waken” up and their energy was lit up in order to conduct the lesson. The teacher-researcher reckoned that it was the students’ nature to be enthusiastic about competitions. They no longer felt it was difficult to practice the sentence and were not afraid of saying the sentence inappropriately, because they were willing to try their best to win the title of number one. Competition provided students with fuel to concentrate on the lesson by setting goals.

From the above data, competition has proved to be an effective way to arouse students’ interest and promote engagement. By simply asking them to say a sentence very quickly or slowly, they became active and participated in the competition. Teacher-researcher will add competitive sessions whenever the class needs to be warmed up and become engaged in future teaching.

Peer mentoring also played an important role in motivating students to practice the difficult sentence. According to Colvin and Ashman (2010), teaching also takes place “between and among students as they work together and at times mentor each other in and outside the classroom” (p. 122). The definition of peer mentoring has different versions. A simple version was put forward by Giddens, Helton, and Hope that peer mentoring “provides a network of support from peers and higher level students, who serve as mentors to students at lower academic levels” (2010, p. 24). Colvin and Ashman (2010) stated a more concrete definition that peer mentoring “focuses on a more experienced student helping a less experienced student improve overall academic performance, and provides advice, support, and knowledge to the mentee” (p. 122).

During this lesson, the mentor-mentee relationship had been naturally established among students though they were not required by the teacher-researcher. Those

students who did not dare to practice the sentence became braver and join the competition because of the capable students' attempting it first. These more capable students were actually models for the students with weaker foundations. As a result, the weaker students were led by the stronger ones to be active participants in the lesson. As pointed out by Colvin and Ashman (2010), peer teaching sometimes may have stronger influence on students than teachers' teaching in class. This sort of peer teaching is another way of learning collaboration, which is more natural and has less pressure from teachers' stressing instruction. The easy and open atmosphere of cooperation among students benefited their learning.

As the first cycle of a lesson, how to engage students in class is the top priority. Teachers cannot deliver knowledge to students and lead them to apply it if they fail to first engage them in their lesson. It is for this purpose the teacher-researcher was paying great attention to building rapport and trying different ways to capture their emotions in order to ensure that they followed her in class.

4.2 Regularizing students' behaviours for Chinese learning

The behavioural engagement of the students is another aspect the teacher-researcher worked on during her exploration of how to better engage them in class. The students' behavioural engagement is mainly achieved through regularising specific behaviours for Chinese lessons. One is Chinese classroom discipline and another one is Pen and Paper time for Chinese.

4.2.1 Routine behaviour: Chinese classroom discipline

Typical routines for the students and the teacher-researcher included starting each lesson by greeting each other in Chinese and doing the roll call in Chinese. Originating in classroom discipline in China, these two practices are special rituals

for the students to perform in every Chinese lesson.

It's the first day of Term 2. Students looked very excited, talking and laughing.

T: Morning, guys. We are going to do Chinese classroom routine and roll call from this term on.

S: Chinese classroom routine and roll call? What are they?

T: Let's first learn the classroom routine. All is about three actions. (Write on the board) Write it down in your notebook.

Table 4: Chinese classroom routine

<p style="text-align: center;">Chinese classroom routine</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Teacher claps hands three times, and students <i>stand up</i>.2. T says: (with a <i>bow</i>) <i>Tóngxuémen hǎo!</i> (Hello, students) S reply: (with a <i>bow</i>) <i>Lǎoshī hǎo!</i> (Hello, teacher)3. T says: <i>Qǐngzuò.</i> (Sit down please) S <i>sit down</i>.
--

I clapped my hands. Some students stood up while some were still in the dark.

S: (in chaos) what's happening? /Hey? /Stand up, Jeremy! /Oh! /What?

Students gradually stand up and felt thrilled, turning around to check what were others doing and patting their classmates now and then.

T: (smiled) Standing up is the first step. Now secondly, we will do bows and say the greeting sentence. (Students looked surprised at my bow) The bow represents your respect to each other. (I read the sentence and students repeated)

T: Lastly, sit down after I give out the instruction. And that's all. Are you ready?

S: (nod with eyes, all looking at me) yes.

I clapped my hands again and the students all stood up quickly this time. I bowed and said the greeting sentence. Students replied me with the

actions and smiles. After this, students could not wait to learn the Chinese roll call. (May 5th, Week 2 in Term 2, 2014, Researcher's self-reflection Journal)

The students' three actions make up the Chinese classroom routine. The first action was standing up after the teacher-researcher clapped hands three times. The next action was the greeting, which involved saying the greeting sentence and doing a typical bow. Lastly, the students sat down after she said 'sit down please' in Chinese. Though it is a simple practice, the teacher-researcher felt students' excitement when they were learning and practicing it. The students' thrill was obvious from their "turning around" and "playing with classmates" from time to time when they heard the sound of clapping hands. Students also showed surprising facial expressions at the bow. "Focused eyes" and quick responses to the clapping hands told the teacher-researcher that students were taking an active part in the lesson.

The most likely reason for this successful engagement is the involvement of physical movements. Though it was very easy for students to stand up, bow and sit down, these actions might have an important influence on their lesson. The Chinese classroom routine took them from their fixed tables for a few moments, and let them stretch their legs and hands. During the process, students may relax or be refreshed by these simple movements. Afterwards, the class will be more lively and energetic. The Chinese classroom routine leads students to pay attention to the lesson through performing specific actions, and ensures they are well engaged for lessons.

Another reason might lie in the uniqueness of the practice. The greetings in Chinese distinguished this lesson from others the students experienced at school. The style and content of this practice were also different from past activities in the teacher-researcher's Chinese lessons, which greatly aroused students' curiosity. Once their interest had been stirred up, they gave one hundred percent of their attention. The uniqueness of the Chinese classroom routine assisted students in realising that it's time for Chinese lessons and they all needed to be focusing on the lesson.

From a personal perspective, the reason teacher-researcher introduced this Chinese classroom routine was to create an authentic Chinese context in which her students could learn and practice, just like every Chinese student does in China. Through various typical practices in Chinese lessons, the teacher-researcher hoped the students and she could establish more vivid and authentic Chinese lessons, and fix students' attention.

4.2.2 Routine exercise: Pen and Paper time

As the name suggests, Pen and Paper time was set aside for students to use their pen to write something on the paper, namely, to do an exercise. Unlike the ordinary exercise time that teachers set for students near the end of lessons, the Pen and Paper time in the teacher-researcher's Chinese lessons was usually set at the very beginning of the lesson. During this time, students would be given worksheets as well as specific time limits. The process usually lasted about 15 minutes.

Today I planned to conduct consolidations concerning number and name.

T: *Nǐhǎo*, Year 9!

S: *Nǐhǎo*, Miss Hong. (Low voice)

I noticed only a small part of the students replied. The majority who didn't join greeting were busy talking.

T: That was not a good greeting, Year 9. (Look forward to a better one)

S1: (suddenly) Ms, we're going to excursion today!

T: Yes, you're going to excursion. But it's not now. Pay attention to our lesson and fill in the worksheets. We learnt about numbers. Now I give you seven minutes to copy the new characters.

When I finished handing out the worksheets, the noise was reduced by half. I looked around, and saw the class gradually focusing on their sheets. Some students were looking at the instructions and some began writing down, but three students were still discussing their coming excursions.

T: Five more minutes. (Walk around and look at my watch)

At this time, the small and noisy crew also stopped talking and devoted themselves to their worksheets. No one was talking. The classroom was quiet, with only one or two students struggling reading their sentences.

(Part 1, Mar. 3rd, Week 6 in Term 1, 2014, Researcher's self-reflection Journal)

This piece of data illustrated how the teacher-researcher used the Pen and Paper time to engage students in class. Students' "low voice" for greeting and their "busy talking" indicated that they were distracted by the coming excursion. She quickly handed out the worksheets, which almost cut the noise in half. Most students gradually focused on their work while some continued talking, but the whole class was silent after she reminded them of the remaining time. The quick cool-down suggested that the Pen and Paper time was working effectively to get students engaged in class.

Two possible factors have contributed to the successful engagement. One was the contribution of the writing session, namely, the Pen and Paper time, which offered students a silent interval where they could write and concentrate on practising what they had learnt without distractions. The data reveal that the students became quiet soon after they were assigned the writing task. The conclusion can be drawn that a piece of routine work such as Pen and Paper time is a useful strategy to engage students in learning. Another factor was the imposition of a time limit. Time limits could reinforce the concept of time and help accelerate the speed of the work they are doing. When the teacher-researcher mentioned the remaining time, the stubborn and noisy students quickly calmed down to focus on their work, realising that the writing work was a task and it had to be completed in time.

In fact, Pen and Paper time could be viewed as a static rather than dynamic way of learning as it required students to learn through writing in silence, instead of active speaking. There is a famous Chinese concept called *dòngjìng jiéhé* (动静结合) (Ye, 2010), which means a combination of dynamics and statics. This concept is a term which derived from Taoism. A Taoist (one who believes in Taoism) is regarded as a master if he can effectively balance the dynamic and static components of martial

arts. The principle of dynamics emphasises the visible movements such as gestures, postures and other actions while practising the martial arts. This is a low level of kung fu. The principle of statics refers to the peace of both the body and the mind. When people practise static kung fu, it appears they are doing nothing but actually they are performing invisible actions. This stresses inner understanding, and is a high level of martial arts. Sometimes the principle of *dòngjìng jiéhé* is also applied in fields outside martial arts. Bearing *dòngjìng jiéhé* in her mind, the teacher-researcher gave students dynamic tasks such as speaking and acting, and also static tasks such as Pen and Paper time to internalise their learning.

The worksheet was actually the teacher-researcher's back-up Plan. Although she had prepared it in advance, she was not sure whether she would use it or not. She normally tended to review a previous lesson by simply asking and seeking oral answers from students. However, the students were too excited to be attracted to her questions. As far as she was concerned, the main reason that she set Pen and Paper time during the lesson was that it could help distract students' attention from the excursion. Pen and Paper time appeared to avert their attention by giving them temporary and time-limited writing objectives.

For the students, Pen and Paper time afforded a break from the screen or the board, to focus on the paper. Considering each lesson lasts 80 minutes in high schools, students may feel exhausted after having several continuous lessons. Instead of listening to teachers and practicing language, students might prefer to work alone for a while and cultivate the cognition of Chinese characters.

Overall, the teacher-researcher explorations into students' behavioural engagement had two aspects. One was Chinese classroom discipline and the other was Pen and Paper time. The Chinese classroom discipline, consisting of Chinese greetings and Chinese roll call, made the lessons unique and appealing for students. However, Pen and Paper time aimed to calm them down and assist them in getting rid of

distractions through writing tasks. The Chinese classroom discipline commits students to focus on the lesson via the unique Chinese lesson styles while Pen and Paper time tries to engage students with the writing content. According to Rudasill et al. (2010), students' learning in class can be enhanced by "modifying classroom routines, structures and interactions to maximize opportunities for emotional support" (p. 130). As also proved by the evidence, these two practices had an effect in engaging students in class by regularising their behaviour in every lesson and further developing it to facilitate better engagement.

4.3 Discussion

This chapter demonstrated how the teacher-researcher engaged students emotionally and behaviourally. On one hand, she mainly tried to stimulate students' learning motivation and interest through emotional involvement. On the other hand, efforts were made to regularise students' behaviours so as to contribute to students' better participations in Chinese lessons.

The teacher-researcher's teaching exploration in students' emotional engagement was divided into two parts. One was getting students emotionally close to the teacher and the other was getting them interested in the teaching content. In the first part, the full focus was on establishing teacher-student familiarity and building rapport. The teacher's personal background and experiences were shared in class. Data demonstrates that students were interested in her personal experience but not interested in traditional Chinese cultures. They were also interested in making friends with her. This implies that more language related personal stories in lieu of traditional Chinese culture can be employed to engage students.

The second part of the teacher-researcher's exploration into students' emotional engagement was her use of unexpected strategies to attract students' interest and

attention, and to create some competition when the energy of the class was low. After experiencing a few disengagements in class, she figured out two strategies to deal with them. Some “strange” incidents were introduced into the class so as to attract their attention. The “strange” incidents refer to the ones which would not show up under normal class circumstances and would likely surprise them and arouse their curiosity. This is the major function of the “strange” incidents, called *chūqībùyì* (出其不意) in Chinese. This Chinese concept means taking actions outside others’ expectations. Secondly, various competitions were introduced during lessons. These could be carried out through a variety of games and activities involving prizes and titles for which the students could compete. In fact, competitions reflect students’ one typical characteristic, which can be called *hàoshèng xīn* (好胜心), another Chinese concept. *Hàoshèng xīn*, also known as competitiveness in Chinese, is a strong catalyst to stimulate students’ willingness and motivation to focus on the lessons. As indicated by the data, *hàoshèng xīn* was the main reason that students became energetic and paid attention to the lessons.

The students’ behavioural engagement was accomplished via two practices: the classroom discipline and the Pen and Paper time. As a ritual for Chinese lessons, Chinese classroom discipline focused on several specific actions to make students experience learning by doing in class. The students and teacher begin each lesson after finishing their greetings with specific actions. The actions subconsciously reminded students that it was time for Chinese lessons and they needed to be quiet and focus on the lesson. Introducing Chinese classroom discipline characterised the uniqueness of Chinese lessons and students’ belonging as Chinese language learners. The Pen and Paper time facilitated students’ engagement by means of writing tasks. According to Rudasill et al. (2010), students with focused attention and moderate activity levels are more productively engaged in class. The specific writing tasks with imposed time limits pushed students to concentrate on the written work, so they gradually calmed down and became engaged during the process of writing. To a large

extent, writing offers students space to internalise the learning and stop talking. This proved to be an effective way to engage students.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, the teacher-researcher analysed and discussed the data from two aspects: students' emotional engagement and behavioural engagement. Specifically, emotional engagement is comprised of three teaching approaches. They build rapport with students, involving "strange" and fun incidents and challenging them through competitions. Behavioural engagement has two components, including Chinese classroom discipline and routine exercises. Next chapter the teacher-researcher will explain how she builds students' Chinese language knowledge in class.

Chapter 5 Building students' Chinese language knowledge

5.0 Introduction

Chapter Five focuses on the analysis of the strategies used by the teacher-researcher regarding building students' Chinese language knowledge. Building their content knowledge is another essential part of teaching, which will influence how much information they receive from teachers and how well they receive it. Three thematic aspects emerged from the author's practical teaching experience in building new Chinese language knowledge. They are teacher-dominant one-way delivery, multiple modes of teaching, and building the students' learning based on their prior knowledge.

5.1 Teacher-dominant, one-way delivery

The theme of teacher-dominant, one-way delivery emerged from the data collected from personal teaching experiences. Immersed in and cultivated by typical Chinese education in China, this beginning teacher subconsciously sank into the same style of teaching experienced in her own education. The styles were similar in primary school, high school and tertiary education. The teacher stood in the middle of a platform at the front of the classroom, imparting knowledge points for most of the lesson. The teacher was always the one who selected the teaching and learning materials. The student's role was to sit on a chair, listen, and take notes. This does not mean there was no active thinking, but there was no encouragement to ask questions. In China and many other Asian countries, it is usually not welcomed to question a teacher (Clarke, 2010). Questions were saved and the teacher was asked after class.

5.1.1 Unfocused talk

This teacher-researcher gave a personal introduction to the students at the beginning of a lesson before commencing the topic of the day, Chinese New Year. However, after her brief introduction of herself, she continued babbling:

... When I was still talking about my life in China, the classroom teacher Julie who was sitting at the back made a stop sign to me. I awkwardly nodded and concluded, 'Ok. That's all.' Next page was about my family. The first one was my father, and he was travelling in a traditional ancient town. 'Father is called *bàbà* in Chinese. My *bàbà* loves travelling and the photo was taken in an ancient town which is famous for its traditional style buildings and decorations,' I looked at the photos and enjoyed introducing my family, 'This is my *māmā*, mum. We took this photo in the airport before I came here.' When I was about to introduce my younger sister, Julie interrupted, 'We will talk about these family members later in this term, but today Ms Hong is going to show you the Chinese New Year.' ...the teacher later suggested to me that I should also add a time limit for each session in my lesson plan. In order to avoid being aimless in a lesson, she advised me to write down a short list of the teaching content before each lesson starts. (Part 3, Feb. 3rd, Week 2 in Term 1, 2014, Researcher's self-reflection Journal)

The classroom teacher twice lent a hand during that lesson. She first made a stop signal during the self-introduction. The second time she interrupted with a reminder that it was not the time to talk about family. There were problems.

Too much time was being spent on personal background, but this teacher-researcher was enjoying introducing herself in the hope that they would come to know her better. The lesson was gradually being lost. As a beginning teacher, emotions and personal preferences had begun to dominate the lesson. Content to be presented should follow the curriculum.

Inexperience in properly pacing a lesson also was shown. It was not realised how much time had passed while standing at the front. The classroom teacher had played an important mentoring role for this beginning teacher. Mentors "educate, guide, coach, support, counsel, and serve as role models" for mentees (Milmer & Bossers,

cited in Giddens et al., 2010, p. 24). The classroom teachers' reminder of better time management in future lessons was critical to the teacher-researcher's improvement. She explained that time limits would help lessons to be better organised and easier to follow when leading lessons.

This beginning teacher was talking about a topic that was irrelevant to the lesson. Though taking up too much time, she persisted, in spite of being signalled by the regular classroom teacher. Full intending to teach about Chinese New Year, other topics were introduced. The teaching goal of the lesson as forgotten and it had affected the lesson. This beginning teacher wanted to teach as much as possible and show everything she knew in that lesson. The classroom teacher had to directly intervene to prevent it from getting worse. She shared her opinion: make a list of what you are going to do on the board. Make sure you are aware of the teaching goals and make lessons clear to both your students and yourself.

5.1.2 *Mǎn táng guàn* (the cramming education)

The problems were a lack of sensibility to the timing and a loss of the teaching objectives. Another problem arose soon after:

Finally I started teaching the basic information of Chinese New Year. I taught students to pronounce *chūnjié* (Spring Festival) and *mǎnián* (the Year of Horse). Shortly I told them the legend of 12 zodiacs and played the relevant video. They were silently listening. After that, I explained 13 customs one by one, including pasting spring couplets, setting off fireworks, enjoying a family reunion dinner and playing mah-jong. I presented every detail for students, but I found almost half of them looked sleepy while their eyes were still struggling to look at me. The more I talked about background information, the worse the situation went. Some even started yawning at times. (Part 4, Feb. 3rd, Week 2 in Term 1, 2014, Researcher's self-reflection Journal)

The main content of this lesson was taught here, beginning with them learning how

to say Spring Festival and Year of Horse in Chinese. They were told the story of the 12 zodiacs and a video was played for them. The culturally intensive part 13 typical customs was covered in 25 minutes, and every detail was presented. Their responses were ordinary, and there were no excited facial expressions or comments. They just silently listened, with sleepy eyes, yawning.

The most likely reason for their responses was simply too much information at one time. There was no activity where they could interact. Regardless of how unique and interesting it may have been, all this information in 25 minutes ignored their learning pace and was hard for them to digest. Some parts of the teaching content overlapped, and the lesson seemed endless. They were overwhelmed.

Another possible reason, and perhaps most essential, was one-way teaching mode. The whole 80 minute lesson was spent introducing topic after topic while the students played the role of audience rather than actors. The lesson was taught and the content was covered without involving them. There was no interaction and no connection between the teacher and students, and only built a wall. In Chinese, this kind of crammed teaching is called “*mǎn táng guàn*” (*mǎn*: full; *táng*: lesson; *guàn*: infill).

The *mǎn táng guàn* style of teaching is simple force-feeding, or spoon-fed education. The teacher is the source of knowledge to the student (Clarke, 2010). Teachers deliver a great amount of information or knowledge to students without paying attention to the ultimate effects of students’ learning (Wang & Wang, 2008). This kind of education only cares about the teachers’ delivery and ignores the students’ reception. The amount of information that students can effectively digest is often neglected, and the aim is to give them as much as possible in a short time. Therefore, teaching in China is usually viewed as “transmitting knowledge and not facilitating individuals to construct knowledge, as in the West” (Clarke, 2010, p.16). This is mostly caused by the test-driven education system in China. Comparatively, critical

thinking and evaluating arguments were more emphasised in terms of teaching methods, which focuses on interpretation and analysis (Wang and Farmer, 2008). In the Australian system, heuristic teaching and students' knowledge application abilities are often the focus and emphasis in teaching.

These problems emerged partly due to the teacher-researcher's limited experience as a beginning teacher, becoming lost in the lesson and not effectively using the time. The more important reason was related with this beginning teacher's learning and teaching background. The familiar teacher-dominant one way teaching mode simply fed everything to the students and proved ineffective, although even at that time this beginning teacher understood that *mǎn táng guàn* was not an effective teaching mode.

This was also a sort of surface learning for students. Surface learning and deep learning were first discerned in 1970s by Marton and Saljö (Vos et al., 2011). Surface learning refers to the fact that students tend to memorise the given information by detail (Vos et al., 2011). During this lesson, students were pushed towards all the details by the teacher-researcher since no extra teaching content was involved. However, deep learning includes "the critical analysis of new ideas, linking them to already known concepts and principles, and leads to understanding and long-term retention of concepts so that they can be used for problem solving in unfamiliar contexts" (Vos et al., 2011, p. 128). Reflected on this lesson, the teacher-researcher did not achieve the goals of deep learning. The former educational influence was long after all, and it will take time and a lot of practice for this beginning teacher to adjust to a better teaching mode where students are at the centre of the lesson planning.

5.2 Multiple modes of teaching

After analysing these classroom teaching problems, it was necessary to find better ways to facilitate students' language learning. Combined multiple modes of teaching would be introduced to build different Chinese language skills, including speaking and listening to Chinese through videos, learning the tones through body movement, and recognising Chinese characters by visual mode.

5.2.1 Aural mode of teaching

The aural mode of teaching refers to students' Chinese language knowledge building through listening. This beginning teacher was stuck in this mode and did not lead her students to pronounce new words and phrases. They were asked to listen to video clips and identify the pronunciation of some words.

Following the first lesson concerning Chinese New Year, I introduced students to the Lantern Festival as the end of this part.

T: Ok, guys. I told you that *chūnjié* (Spring Festival) ends on January 15th in lunar calendar. (Write down *yuánxiāo jié* on the board) Actually it's another festival called the Lantern Festival.

S1: Ms, what's that? (Puzzled)

T: It's Pinyin or Chinese phonetic alphabets. I know you could not read this, but I will play a video for you. Let's listen and figure out how to say this festival in Chinese way.

(It's an English introductory video. The host mentioned the Lantern Festival as *yuánxiāo jié* at the beginning. It was quick and most students had a confused look. At the end, two foreigners were interviewed about their feelings to the festival and they said *yuánxiāo jié* when they referred to the festival. Confusion was reduced as I noticed several students were busy practicing.)

T: Ok. How to say the festival? (Most students put up hands) Phillip!

S2: Was that *yuánxiāo jié*?

T: Perfect. That's correct. (I also asked the leftover students and found they could all say the pronunciation out fairly well.) (Part 1, Feb. 10th, Week 3 in Term 1, 2014, Researcher's self-reflection Journal)

Here the students were being taught to say a new word "*yuánxiāo jié*" (Lantern Festival). This was first written for them in the Chinese phonetic alphabets, but they

were puzzled because they had never seen Chinese Pinyin. A video about *yuánxiāo jié* was shown to them where the host pronounced this term three times at the beginning, and then by two foreigners. The first time when *yuánxiāo jié* was spoken, the students looked confused. By the end of the video, a few were actively practicing the pronunciation. This suggests gradual progress being made by the students in learning this new word. With the help of the video, they might have gained a rough idea of the pronunciation. After hearing two more people pronounce the word, confusion faded and confidence eventually grew, and almost everyone could pronounce it well. This was a satisfactory teaching approach, through which the students not only learned Chinese listening and speaking skills, but also gained background information because the whole *yuánxiāo jié* story was told in English.

Reflecting on the first lesson, previous teacher-dominant problems were resolved by introducing an external video resource and made the students take the initiative in knowledge building. Instead of the teacher talking alone at the front of the class, the videos gave the students a break from listening to just the teacher. This reduced their boredom and helped them better concentrate on learning.

In general, the aural mode of teaching is a simple but useful mode to train students in listening and speaking. On one hand, this mode of teaching does not consume much time or energy. The teacher needs only to obtain relevant audio resources and play them, while the students' job is to carefully listen. On the other hand, this mode focuses on students' listening ability specifically, and challenges through videos to acquire new Chinese language knowledge. As proved in this piece of data, almost every student was able to pronounce the new word *yuánxiāo jié* very well. This indicates that listening to the new word *yuánxiāo jié* three times impressed the students and contributed to their Chinese language learning. Thus, the aural mode of teaching is helpful for students' Chinese language building.

5.2.2 Body moving mode of teaching - gestures

The body movement mode of teaching refers to teaching by means of gestures. This mode was first used by this beginning teacher when teaching students to pronounce the four tones of Pinyin. Tones are essential parts of speaking Chinese, because two words with the same pronunciation but different tones could have a totally different meaning. Strictly speaking, tones do not exist in English, which presents challenges for Chinese learners who speak English as their first language. In her lessons this teacher described these as the “flat” tone, the “rising” tone, the “bouncing” tone and the “dropping” tone. In order to help students overcome the difficulty in learning, gestures were introduced:

Continuing the lesson after the introduction of Lantern Festival, I started teaching tones after I introduced the basic information.

T: Ok, there are four tones in Pinyin. The first one is a flat and smooth tone. For example, if we pronounce *ā*, it sounds like ah. Read after me (Students followed).

T: Very good. The first tone is easy. Now the second tone is a rising tone. It sounds like that you say ‘what’ to ask others. *á*! (S followed) Good. The third one is a bouncing tone. Imagine that a ball goes down and then jumps up again. First drop and then go up. It’s just like that you say em hm. *ǎ*! (S repeated) Wonderful, you guys have talent. Now, last one is a dropping tone. It sounds like that when you say a flat ‘no’ to others. *à*! (S repeated) Perfect.

T: (after I led them to read three times) now tell me how to pronounce the first one.

S: Ah.

T: Good. How about the fourth one?

S: Ah? (Sounds strange)

T: Not exactly. The fourth one is a dropping tone. Bridget, have a go.

S1: (confused) Ah.

T: No, that’s the first tone, smooth and flat. Joanna please.

S2: (tried hard but still didn’t lower tone) Ah.

I asked students to tell me different tones but they seemed messed up like the above situation.

(Part 2, Feb. 10th, Week 3 in Term 1, 2014, Researcher’s self-reflection Journal)

Each tone’s characteristics were first explained and they were shown vivid examples. For instance, the second tone sounds like the “wha-” part of the question word “what”, the third tone is like a mumble response “em hm” and the fourth is similar to the short and brief answering word “no”. The tones were pronounced one by one as models for students to repeat. They were then practiced by reading and repeating several times with this teacher, and the students pronounced all four tones well. They were then asked to pronounce the four tones themselves. They had no problem with the first tone, but were confused and struggled to pronounce the fourth tone. The former and latter responses by the students might imply that they didn’t grasp the real difference of some of the tones. They could follow the teacher in repeating these but without being led, they were lost. It became clear that the students themselves not only needed to hear the pronunciations but also to understand and internalise them.

To help the students distinguish the differences in the four tones, they were demonstrated with the aid of gestures:

I was nervous about how to make the four tones’ differences clear and noticeable by students. I suddenly recalled what my primary teachers did when I was learning about tones. I was inspired.

Table 5: Tones

The first tone	The second tone	The third tone	The fourth tone
—	/	V	\

T: Alright, guys. Let’s try another way. (Write down four lines on the board) follow my hand please (Holding up the right hand in horizontal level and move from right to left) Keep your voice all the same when pronouncing it. It is *ā*. (Students repeated) Ok. Now try the second one (raise the right hand). Pronounce this with your hand and your head going up like me. *á*! (S followed) Good. Now I need you to practice the first two by yourself. I’ll check soon.

T: (two minutes later) Ok. Silvia, can you pronounce the second tone with a?

S1: Ah.

T: No, that's the first one. Raise your tone with your hand.
S1: (looked shy, only raised her head a little) Ah?
T: Closer! Don't be afraid. Try one more time with your hand.
S1: (raise her hand) á!
T: Beautiful! That's it! Next, Leon. Say the second tone.
S2: (struggling to raise his hand and head) á.
T: Excellent! You got it!
Later I led students to pronounce the rest of tones with gestures and they were able to easily pronounce all of them. (Part 3, Feb. 10th, Week 3 in Term 1, 2014, Researcher's self-reflection Journal)

The second time the teacher-researcher tried to teach students about the four tones, she started by writing them on the board and moving her hands from right to left horizontally while pronouncing each one. She raised her hand and head while pronouncing the second tone. The students followed. After setting aside two minutes for them to practice by themselves, the teacher-researcher chose two and ask them to have a try. The first attempt by one girl was not good. She got closer to the standard tone when she repeated it, raising her head. She successfully pronounced the tone on the third try, raising her hand and head together. A boy tried next, and got the correct pronunciation with his hand and head fully raised. A breakthrough had been made by students in pronouncing the four tones with the accompaniment of body movement. This body movement mode of teaching, namely teaching with gestures, played an important role in teaching the tones.

5.2.3 Visual mode of teaching

The visual mode of teaching refers to the teacher-researcher's use of images. This mode of teaching was mainly utilised in teaching Chinese characters, considered to be one of the hardest aspects of learning Chinese (Reference). Chinese characters are made up of different strokes, which make them appear complex. Most Chinese characters have six to 13 strokes. The simplest only have one stroke and the most complicated characters have up to 24 (Anderson et al., 2013). This leads to complexity in recognising Chinese characters.

In ancient times, primitive Chinese people drew rough pictures to represent what they wanted to express. For instance, they drew a circle with a dot inside to refer to the sun (日: *rì*), a half-moon shape for the moon (月: *yuè*), and a simplified horse to express horse (马: *mǎ*). These rough images of the initial Chinese characters were called *xiàngxíng zì* (pictographic character). Though simplified from the original pictographic characters, most of the present Chinese characters still retain pictographic parts or characteristic radicals. The teacher-researcher elaborated upon Chinese characters by means of pictures to facilitate the students' Chinese language building.

The visual mode of teaching was first used when the students were being taught about sports:

Before the end of the lesson, I started introducing the new words for next lesson. I wrote down five new phrases (篮球: basketball, 网球: tennis, 排球: volleyball, 足球: soccer, 乒乓球: Ping-Pong) on the board.

T: Guys, next lesson we're going to learn about sports. Take out your workbook and write down these new words before the bell goes.

S: (start whispering) Ms, it looks too hard! /So many strokes! /Kill me!

T: Calm down. You can do that. Just write stroke by stroke.

Five minutes later, I walked around to check students' work. Unfortunately most of them were still writing the third phrases. One student who only finished one gave me a desperate look.

S1: Ms, it's really too hard for me. Each one is so complicated and I could not tell which one is which. I wrote many times, but still can't have this character finished. (Part 1, May 26th, Week 5 in Term 2, 2014, Researcher's self-reflection Journal)

Here, students were being taught new phrases for the next lesson. The characters were written on the board as usual and they simply copied them into their books. The students heatedly whispered when they saw the new characters, possibly anticipating painful writing process. After five minutes, most had only finished two phrases, and one student who had only finished one character said that the characters were too

complicated. They had problems in writing these new characters, though they had been practicing writing characters since earliest lessons. It ought to have been effortless for them to quickly finish these six characters. The reason might have been due to the complexity of the characters. There were nine compound characters (with two or more components in each character) among these twelve characters. Each character had more than five strokes, and was beyond a beginner’s reach. From the students’ response, the problem became obvious but this teacher had no idea how to convey this knowledge to them.

When searching pictures for different kinds of sports online, the idea of teaching Chinese characters by images came to mind:

I was looking for some pictures about sports in order to make a PowerPoint for next lesson. I typed “soccer”, clicked “picture” and browsed through various pictures. One picture showed the moment when David Beckham was shooting the ball, with the left leg stretching ahead and the right leg behind. I looked at the character 足, and found that the picture was almost the same with the shape of the character. I was inspired by this. I quickly looked at other characters and tried to spot special parts in order to link them to specific pictures. At last, I figured out new illustrations by six pictures.

Table 6: Chinese characters (Sports)

足球 <i>zúqiú</i> (Soccer)		The square at the top of 足 looks like people’s head. Two strokes at the bottom were stretching legs, ready to shoot the ball. One short line in the middle is people’s hand, trying to keep balance. So the character 足 shows that a person is shooting the soccer.
-----------------------------	---	---

<p>网球 <i>wǎngqiú</i> (Tennis)</p>		<p>If we turn over the two crosses inside 网 to the horizontal level and stretch the lines, the character will be a standing tennis net.</p>
<p>排球 <i>páiqiú</i> (Volleyball)</p>		<p>The left part of 排 is a radical called <i>tíshǒu páng</i>, which means hand. This part tells everyone that people use hands to play the volleyball. The right part looks like the volleyball court. Two vertical lines in the middle represent the net. Three short lines on each side stand for players who are fighting against each other.</p>
<p>篮球 <i>lánqiú</i> (Basketball)</p>		<p>If we rotate the picture 90 degrees clockwise, then the backboard inside looks similar to the bottom part of 篮.</p>
<p>乒乓球 <i>pīngpāngqiú</i> (Ping-Pong)</p>		<p>Suppose that we link the bottom parts of the first two characters together, we could get a Ping-Pong table as shown in the picture.</p>

(May 27th, Week 5 in Term 2, 2014, Researcher's self-reflection Journal)

Chinese characters consist of different components, and have various constructions. The teacher-researcher focused on one comparatively characteristic component of one character, started imagining the possible changes that could be made to it, and searched for relevant pictures. According to the principle of pictographic characters, a pictographic image can be tracked inside most Chinese characters, and that is how the visual mode of teaching works. Special parts were linked with specific pictures to create a new elaboration of these six characters.

It was the second lesson of sports. I wrote down the previous six phrases on the board again. Someone frowned and some lowered their heads.

T: Guys, learning Chinese characters is indeed difficult, but sometimes we have special express to know about them. Now look at the picture first (take out the picture of soccer) and then compare it with the character 足. Can you find any similarities between them? (Students put up hands) Leon please!

S1: That's David Beckham and David plays the soccer called *zúqiú*.

T: Yes, that's description, not similarity. Look carefully. (Pick another student) Ihsan!

S2: Oh, I found the character just looks like the picture.

T: Wonderful. You got eagle's eyes.

S: (surprised and exclamatory) yeah, it is.

T: Ok, let me explain for you (see the above data in the table)...

S1: Wow, yes.

S2: That's interesting.

S3: Cool, easy now.

Later I asked students to compare the Chinese characters with some pictures and led them to spot the relations themselves.

S: These characters are amazing.

T: Yes. Got easy now, right? Next I'll give you a little quiz, in which you'll have to match the five characters with their English meanings.

S: Easy! Easy!

... The whole process only took three minutes. I collected the sheets and the classroom teacher and I marked them immediately. Eleven students (twelve altogether) got the five characters correct.

(Jun. 2nd, Week 6 in Term 2, 2014, Researcher's self-reflection Journal)

The students went through emotional changes during the lesson. At the beginning

they appeared to be afraid of the characters, frowning or lowering their heads. After elaborating upon the different version of the character “足”, they were surprised and gained a new insight into Chinese characters. Gradually they started commenting that characters looked “interesting” and “easy”. Their previous anxiety seemed to disappear. Unlike the previous lesson, students looked relaxed and were willing to do a quiz concerning the new characters. The reason for the students’ emotional shift could be that they had become more familiar with the Chinese characters and had begun recognising them. They seemed scared of the Chinese characters because of their awful experience in the previous lesson. After they knew about the special component of the characters, they looked more relaxed and effortlessly finished the quiz.

This was the second attempt to build these new characters for students. When they were taught for the first time, they could not finish copying down the characters. However, this lesson went more smoothly with an average score of 91.7% correct in the short and quick quiz. The quiz in fact played a role as a formative assessment to check whether students have achieved the early objectives or need more advice in this area (Baid and Lambert, 2010).

The most likely trigger of students’ breakthrough was the power of pictures. Chinese characters are very complex with assorted components and constructions. The 12 Chinese characters here all have more than six strokes, which might have dazzled the students. Without guidance, Chinese characters appear as little more than abstract squares to beginning learners. Unable to understand them, they became nervous. However, the visual mode of teaching by using pictures helped these learners look at each part of the characters. Students could have a special story for each Chinese character by imagining and linking the teacher’s explanations, which made them meaningful. The imagination was creative and impressive, and students seemed to enjoy this fun process.

Secondly, pictures can offer learners another perspective on Chinese characters, which might look dull and unattractive with their various tangled shapes and lines. The strong colours and straightforward patterns of pictures make them more vivid and impressive, which was suggested by the result of the quiz.

To sum up, the teacher-researcher has been attempting to avoid teacher-dominant, one-way teaching, and developed different modes such as listening, body movement and visual modes to convey new Chinese language knowledge. These teaching approaches solved problems at that time and the teacher-researcher gradually led students to be closer to deep learning approaches.

5.3 Considering students' prior knowledge in teaching

During the ongoing teaching exploration, various attempts were made to build the students' Chinese language knowledge. Previous problems were solved and several modes of teaching adopted in order to suit the teacher-researcher's style of teaching, with increasing attention being given to the students' prior knowledge.

Prior knowledge is viewed as the powerful catalyst, which contributes to learners' higher achievement of understanding a second language (Yeh, 2012). Prior knowledge includes not only the knowledge associated with learners' first language, but also the knowledge concerning the second language. The teacher-researcher covered both sides, namely, the students' prior linguistic knowledge (first language) and what they learnt in their second language lessons, in building their Chinese language knowledge.

5.3.1 Prior knowledge from the first language

The first teaching attempt involving the students' prior linguistic knowledge dates back to the second lesson concerning Pinyin:

Last week students learnt about vowels and consonants and there were six difficult consonants left for this week. I wrote down the remaining six consonants 'zh', 'ch', 'sh', 'z', 'c' and 's'.

S: (busy commenting or saying the consonants randomly) what are those? /Look so different! /Z? /H? /Does 'h' have the sound? /Zh? / Sh? What's this?

T: Ok, guys. These ones might confuse you at the moment because some of them don't exist in English. What I will do is to let you master all of this in three minutes!

S: Wow! /Cool! /Go ahead!

T: Ok. Don't worry too much about the 'z' or 'h' in zh. When you meet it, refer the pronunciation to the right part 'dge' from 'judge'. It just sounds like the right part. 'zh'! Read after me. (Students followed) Good! The second one is easy for you, because you often meet 'ch' in your daily life. For example, 'ch' in 'lunch', 'peach' and 'church'. It's the same. 'ch'! (S followed) next one, don't you be afraid! 'sh' in 'cash', 'rush' and 'crash' are the same. 'sh'! (S followed) easy? (S nodded) Now, be careful with the following three. They're all different from what you usually say. Refer to the ending part of 'yards' to the pronunciation of 'z'. 'z'! (S followed) got it?

S: (confidently) yes.

T: Alright. Let's continue. We can refer to the ending part of 'cats', 'hats' or 'oats' when we say 'c'. 'C'! (S followed) do you still feel hard?

S: (happily replying) no.

T: Last one 's' is also simple. Refer it to the ending part of 'guess', 'chess' or 'mess'. 'S'! (S followed) Ok, finished. Have you mastered all of these pronunciations?

S: (loudly) yes. Easy!

I randomly picked students to say certain consonants and they all got the correct answer.

(Feb. 17th, Week 4 in Term 1, 2014, Researcher's self-reflection Journal)

Six new consonants were taught to the students. At the sight of these strange consonants, the students couldn't help airing their opinions or practicing consonants heatedly. Some similar English pronunciations were linked to these consonants, referring to the ending part "dge" from judge to "zh", lunch to "ch", cash to "sh", yards to "z", cats to "c" and guess to "s". Students constantly gave positive responses,

including their nods at first, a confident ‘yes’, happy replies and even loud voices. At the end, individual students were chosen to check their learning and it was found they all could correctly pronounce the consonants. As promised, the whole process only took about three minutes. The success of teaching consonants here might be attributed to the engagement of the students’ prior knowledge of English pronunciation. The students’ heated commentary and practicing implied their restlessness at the very beginning when they saw the strange consonants. Their restlessness could have been aroused because the consonants were completely new for the students and they had no idea of the consonants at all, let alone how to say them. The teacher-researcher’s responsibility was to build students’ prior knowledge into this new learning. English and Chinese similarities were specifically used in pronunciation. This reduced their cognitive load and built up their learning confidence. Using English pronunciation or students’ prior knowledge to scaffold their learning of the new language (six consonants here) worked well.

5.3.2 Prior knowledge from the second language

The students’ prior knowledge from the former lessons was also engaged and utilised to facilitate their Chinese learning:

After playing the game silent ball, I began my new lesson.

T: Guys, can anyone tell me how to say year in Chinese?

S1: Was that *nián*, Ms?

T: Correct! We have learnt how to say *zuótiān*, *jīntiān* and *míngtiān*, right?

(Draw a table on the board) Can you find anything similar in this table?

Table 7: Chinese characters (yesterday, today and tomorrow)

昨天	Yesterday
今天	Today
明天	Tomorrow

S: Yes, the first column has the same endings.
T: Yeah. (Give students some hints) This phenomenon also happens in the Chinese words last year, this year and next year. Could you try to say those words out?
S2: (take the initiative) this year must be *jīnnián*!
T: (praise him) Wonderful! You're right.
S3: Next year should be *míngnián*, I guess.
T: Bingo! (Ready to hear the wrong answer) One more left.
S1: (he reckoned) so last year is called *zuónián*. Am I right, Ms?
T: Nice guess. Unfortunately, you got the wrong answer this time, Phillip. (Try to comfort him and explain) You know tomorrow, without the same ending 'day', is different from today and yesterday. Just like today, yesterday and tomorrow, we have a different name for last year. It's called *qùnián*.
S4: Oh, tricky one! We got you (The class burst into laughter).
T: Yes, it is. (I quickly drew another table)

Table 8: Chinese characters (last year, this year and next year)

去 年	Last year
今 年	This year
明 年	Next year

(Mar. 24th, Week 9 in Term 1, 2014, Researcher's self-reflection Journal)

Three new phrases were being taught: last year, this year and next year, on the basis of yesterday, today and tomorrow. Three steps were involved in building these new knowledge points. At first, the teacher led the students to recall what they had learnt in previous lessons. The students were asked to pronounce the word year orally and the teacher then reminded them how to say yesterday, today and tomorrow in Chinese by drawing a table on the board. Secondly, the teacher told the students that the three new phrases were similar to the old ones and led them to figure out the answers by themselves. According to the teacher's hints, they gradually deduced three possible answers "*zuónián*", "*jīnnián*" and "*míngnián*". At last, the teacher showed the real answers to them and corrected the wrong one.

This teaching process can be called the process of *jǔyī fǎnsān* (*jǔ*: to give examples; *yī*: one; *fǎn*: to give new examples; *sān*: three). *Jǔyī fǎnsān* is an idiom which dates back two thousand years. At that time, the great Chinese educator and thinker *Kǒng zǐ* (also known as Confucius) said, “举一隅不以三隅反, 则不复也 (*Jǔ yīyú bùyǐ sānyú fǎn, zé búfù yě*).” It means a teacher should stop showing examples if a student cannot figure out other examples after being given an example by the teacher. The idiom *jǔyī fǎnsān* is derived from this saying, and is widely acknowledged as one of the popular education concepts in China. This teacher-researcher, cultivated by the typical Chinese education, was also influenced by this teaching philosophy. The teaching process can be divided into two parts, *jǔyī* and *fǎnsān*. Firstly, *jǔyī* is carried out by teachers. The teacher drew a table and led the students to figure out the relationship of *zuótiān* (yesterday), *jīntiān* (today) and *míngtiān* (tomorrow). Next, the teacher told them that the new phrases (last year, this year and next year) worked the similar way. The teacher was showing students the example, namely, they were on the first step of *jǔyī*, which was about recalling learners’ prior knowledge and setting examples. Secondly, *fǎnsān* was completed by the students. After absorbing the example they were shown, the students offered feedback that last year was *zuónián*, this year was *jīnnián* and next year was *míngnián*. During *fǎnsān*, students were offering examples. Thus *fǎnsān* is about building and applying new knowledge. Though the phrase for last year was incorrect, students were doing well because they bravely guessed at the new phrases based on the old ones. Students moved forward and made a breakthrough to pronounce the new phrases. This is the power of *jǔyī fǎnsān*, or prior knowledge.

To sum up, prior knowledge played an important role in the teaching. By means of it, students made much progress in constructing their new knowledge. Sometimes it worked as a bridge to transfer the students’ first language knowledge to the second language, and sometimes, it acted as the scaffold to assist students to gain new knowledge from the previous knowledge within the second language. Prior

knowledge helped cultivate the students' capabilities of analysis and comparison. They sorted out what they had learnt (their prior knowledge) and then linked it to new knowledge, during which they experienced the differences and the similarities between their prior knowledge and new knowledge. Prior knowledge facilitated new knowledge building and at the same time improved the students' personal capabilities.

As proved by the study of Laird, Shoup, Kuh and Schwarz (Vos et al., 2011), students who conduct deep approaches to learn have better performances in maintaining and internalising information and knowledge at higher rates. In the future, the teacher will stick to engaging students' prior knowledge and motivate them to learn better.

5.4 Discussion

In this chapter, the teacher's attempts at building the students' Chinese language knowledge were described. Many problems occurred from the beginning stages.

The first problem was that the delivery strategies were inappropriate. In the first lesson, the teacher talked alone in front of the students and did not consider whether they digested the information or not. This teacher was immersed in the teacher-dominant, one-way delivery teaching mode. In essence, it is consistent with the long-term influence by the teacher's educational background. She was taught by the intensive *mǎn táng guǎn* education in China, and was influenced by the teacher-centred teaching style in class. According to Schuh (2004), it's a teacher-centred model when the teacher decides the conduct of the instruction and management of the learning process. "More teacher talk and questions than student talk and questions" is the typical characteristic of teacher-centred instruction (p. 835). As a result, problems unavoidably turned up. Later, she gradually adjusted her

teaching and paid more attention to the students' factors and teaching conditions improved with ongoing adjustment.

The second problem was that this teacher was not familiar with the students' learning conditions, namely, how much they learnt (the effect of students' learning) and how they want new knowledge to be built (the way of students' learning). The problem of *mǎn táng guàn* would not happen if the teacher knew the students' learning characteristics. Her lack of understandings about the learners' knowledge was due to the different levels of expectations placed upon teachers in China and Australia. When this teacher was still a student in China, her teachers usually explained more than 10 new knowledge points in one lesson. Sometimes there were 20 and sometimes even 30 knowledge points. This was the usual volume for each normal lesson in China. Teachers even viewed the big volume as an achievement because their students learned so well and quickly. This sense of achievement was derived from the teachers' high expectations for students.

Conversely, conditions were totally different in Australia. During the first lesson, this teacher-researcher explained 13 customs and other background information concerning Chinese New Year to the students. It proved to be too much for them. In the following lesson with Year 7, the classroom teacher only allowed four typical customs to be introduced to the students. The teacher-researcher could feel how much the classroom teacher expected from her Year 7 students. After the first lesson, four to six new phrases or four sentences were prepared to be taught in an 80 minute lesson. There would definitely be more in China. During the process, the teacher-researcher saw her lack of understanding about her learners' knowledge and will take more care of this in the future.

The third problem was concerning the choice of teaching materials. The teacher began with no specific focuses and followed her own subjective feelings. In other words, her subjective attitudes dominated each lesson she delivered. Reflecting on

her teaching situations and her personal factors, the reason ought to be that excessive “freedom” to choosing teaching materials was given by the Australian education system. In Australia, there are no fixed textbooks for Chinese lessons that teachers can refer to; there is no curriculum advising teachers how to teach Chinese to precise plan lessons. The only thing Chinese teachers can refer to is the syllabus, which gives rough directions for what to do in Chinese lessons. Teachers are able to plan any content to teach since they have been given the highest privilege, that is, they were free to teach. “Freedom” in choosing teaching materials intends to offer teachers flexibility of teaching, but extreme freedom has its side effects. Such a teaching situation might be desirable for experienced teachers, but it is bound to be worse for beginning teachers. With no guidelines and no fixed textbooks, beginning teachers will easily become lost and lessons descend into chaos.

This situation could never happen in China, where almost every school has prescribed textbooks for specific subjects, and schools in same region even use the same textbooks (Wang and Farmer, 2008). In addition, courses in China have an exact curriculum and syllabus that is to be followed. Teachers carefully organise and plan their lessons according to these guidelines, with knowledge points highlighted and listed by number. Strict arrangements for lesson plans may lose some flexibility and liveliness, but they guarantee students’ orderly learning and are well organised. Therefore, the freedom given to teachers to choose their teaching materials ought to be reconsidered.

5.5 Conclusion

The teacher-researcher identified and reflected on the problems she encountered, and then carried out multiple modes of teaching to drill students in different Chinese language skills. The aural mode of teaching mainly focused on the students’ listening abilities, the body movement mode of teaching emphasised tones learning and the

visual mode of teaching highlighted the recognition of Chinese characters. The third teaching attempt she made was to incorporate the students' prior knowledge into the teaching. These teaching attempts were just three aspects among them all, but they did witness improvement in building the students' Chinese language knowledge. The next chapter will present the teaching explorations in making Chinese language knowledge transfer occur.

Chapter 6 Making students' Chinese language knowledge transfer

6.0 Introduction

Chapter Five analysed and discussed the data concerning the teacher-researcher's teaching exploration in building students' Chinese language knowledge. This chapter focuses on analysing the data relating to how the teacher-researcher developed her skills in assisting the knowledge transfer of Chinese language to students. These include stages from the initial teaching without designing activities for knowledge transfer, to designing basic lesson reviews through worksheets and PowerPoint, to teaching a variety of activities, to designing practical activities that embraced the students' real life language practices.

6.1 Passive or active: rote learning

A lesson usually includes a procedure for engaging students, building their new knowledge and transferring what they have learnt. Transferring students' new knowledge can be accomplished through oral and written work. For example, oral work could be instant conversations, role plays and speech while written work could be worksheets and quizzes. Most of the time, practical activities are also needed to transfer the new knowledge. However, the teacher-researcher's first lesson was "different" and "impressive", because she had no activities at all to interact with students:

...I knew students were having a hard time following me along the journey of learning Chinese New Year. But it was not far from the end of the lesson. What's more, I didn't prepare other content or activities. So I continued introducing the thirteen customs, regardless of their boredom and my own misgivings. About ten minutes later, the bell finally rang and students seemed to be relieved, rushing out of the classroom. The classroom teacher concluded after class, "It was a cultural-intensive lesson. You were talking too much cultural information while students

had nothing to do with you. So you need to give students tasks or work to do or practice, and interact with them from time to time. They will forget soon after listening to you only.” (Part 5, Feb. 3rd, Week 2 in Term 1, 2014, Researcher’s self-reflection Journal)

This above excerpt described the last part of the first lesson with the Year 9 students. The teacher-researcher had noticed they were tired of hearing so much cultural information and even she was feeling tired, yet she went on to introduce the 13 customs because no extra teaching content or activities had been prepared. The bell that ended the class rescued the teacher and the students. The classroom teacher said the teacher-researcher had talked too much and more activities needed to be introduced to the teaching. Reflecting on the lesson, the teacher-researcher spent the majority of the time (70 minutes out of 80) introducing herself and the Chinese New Year while only a brief amount of time was set aside to interact with the students or have them do some oral or written work. Their responses had indicated the lesson was in vain and meaningless. The time at the end of the lesson ought to have been spent giving them opportunities to apply their new knowledge. If the students had been offered activities, they could have reviewed what they had been taught, and would have been more active in joining the lessons.

The teacher-researcher had a chance to observe the classroom teacher give her first Chinese lesson to the Year 7 students and to see how she usually organised her lesson:

Julie started by doing a brainstorming about China with students. Students actively shared their opinions from panda to the difference between Mandarin and Cantonese. Then Julie asked students to draw their own brainstorming of China in the sheet. Students happily drew as many bubbles as they could around the central bubble “China”. Secondly, Julie asked students to draw a title page “Chinese” in their new workbooks and then glue the brainstorming sheet on next page. Around 15 minutes later, Julie asked me to introduce Chinese New Year for students. When it came to the 12 zodiac animals, Julie handed out the relevant information sheets (12 zodiac animals with introductory

information in 12 squares inside), let students cut them out, glue them in order (the zodiac animals had a race) on another page according to the video story I played. This was the third activity. Next, I was asked to introduce four typical customs for students and then let them do the worksheets I prepared for Year 9 students. The bell went unexpectedly when students were still doing the worksheets. (Part 6, Feb. 3rd, Week 2 in Term 1, 2014, Researcher's self-reflection Journal)

The teacher-researcher observed how the classroom teacher arranged her Chinese language lesson. The lesson involved four activities altogether. First, there was a brainstorming activity concerning China. The students were asked to share what they know about China and Chinese things and to draw a concept map. Next, the classroom teacher had the students draw a title page for the Chinese lesson and to glue the brainstorm sheet into the book. For the third activity, they cut the information sheet about 12 zodiac animals and reordered (the zodiac animals had a race) and glued them into their workbooks according to the teacher-researcher's introduction and the video. Finally, worksheets were handed out to them after the introduction of four typical customs.

In the first activity, the classroom teacher not only transferred some students' prior knowledge, but introduced new knowledge at the same time. On one hand, some students may know something about China and Chinese, so the classroom teacher asked them to use their knowledge to speak out, which could be viewed as knowledge transfer. On the other hand, students who knew little about China and Chinese would learn from the ones who shared what they knew with the teacher. During the process, these students were acquiring new knowledge. All the students put what they had learnt into their concept maps as their written work. By using the brainstorming activity, the classroom teacher successfully completed the introduction of background information about China and caused the transfer of the students' new knowledge as well. In the third activity, putting the 12 zodiac animals in order to glue onto the workbook was another attempt that the classroom teacher made so as to transfer students' knowledge about the legend of the 12 zodiac animals. The fourth

activity required students to finish relevant worksheets after they learnt about four typical customs. Here the classroom teacher also accomplished transferring the students' knowledge in written work. The lesson was joyful. The students were all busy doing their work and the lesson seemed so short that they did not even notice the ringing bell.

Looking back at the four activities, the teacher-researcher realised the necessity of activities in teaching, especially in a class involving a second language. By adding more activities, the teachers not only gives students things to do over an 80 minute lesson, but also provides them opportunities to practice what they have learnt. Practice ought to be a part of the lesson in a second language class, because that is what helps students check whether they have mastered the language or not.

“Teaching without activities?” is a question the teacher-researcher subsequently and frequently asked herself, to avoid the initial problems she had in the first lesson. After observing the classroom teacher's lesson and reflecting, she began working on creating more chances for students to apply their new knowledge.

6.2 Interaction or presentation: designing lesson reviews

More attention was given to interaction with students and the practice they needed after that first lesson. Whenever planning lessons, the teacher-researcher always double checked whether she had added enough sessions to interact with them and to let them practice the new teaching content. Basically the teacher-researcher let students repeat pronouncing the new words after her and then picked some of them to check the learning conditions. Worksheets were used to assist their learning, and PowerPoint slides were also prepared to do quick reviews with them. The aims of doing these were to have students practice through basic lesson reviews.

6.2.1 Lesson reviews through worksheets

A typical lesson review with the aid of worksheets was shown below:

Following the Pen and Paper time session, I taught students how to count from 1 to 10 and write from 1 to 10 in Chinese characters as well. According to the rules I taught them, students were believed to count and write from 1 to 99. To let students apply their new knowledge, I gave them worksheets to do.

The first worksheet was a basic one, which tested students about the formula I told them. Below was a part of the worksheet. It seemed very easy and only took students three minutes to finish it. They looked satisfied with their work and some were eager to practice more, 'Ms, do you have more?'

Table 9: Expanded Numbers

Whole Number	Expanded Number	Chinese character
19	$10 + 9$	十九
12		
17		
15		

Then I handed out another basic one. It was about numbers with the multiples of ten. Students looked excited at the new worksheets. They finished really quickly once again. Some of them waved their sheets at me and waited for more.

Table 10: Multiples of 10

	<i>Shí</i>	10
	<i>èr shí</i>	20
	<i>Sān shí</i>	30
	<i>Sì shí</i>	40

I handed out the last one. This worksheet required more applications of their new Chinese language knowledge. Students were asked to find the logic in each group of numbers and then fill in proper numbers. They spent more time on this tricky one but their expressions told me that they were enjoying the challenge.

Table 11: Number Review

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1) | 1, 3, _____, 7, 9. |
| 2) | 十, 八, _____, 四, 二。 |
| 3) | <i>yī, sān, _____, èr shí qī, bā shí yī.</i> |
| 4) | 11, 12, 14, 17, _____, 26, 32, 39. |
| 5) | 二, 四, 八, _____, 三十二, 六十四。 |

At the end, I collected students' worksheets and some students told me that these worksheets really helped reinforce and practice what they had learnt. After class, I found few wrong answers in the worksheets.

(Part 2, Mar. 3rd, Week 6 in Term 1, 2014, Researcher's self-reflection Journal)

After the numbers were taught to them, the students were given three worksheets in order to make their new Chinese language knowledge transfer. The first worksheet, which included the formula of how to say Chinese numbers, was the most basic one. The students easily finished it in three minutes and were content with their work. At the request of the students, the teacher-researcher handed out the second worksheets, which were about the multiples of ten. The second one did not contain any hints, but the students quickly completed them. The trickiest worksheets were then handed out. They had five series of numbers, either in Pinyin, Chinese characters or English. The third worksheets took more time but the students seemed to enjoy themselves. The worksheets were collected and the teacher-researcher found a high accuracy rate. The students said the worksheets really helped.

Overall, the written work contributed to transferring the students' new Chinese language knowledge. Three worksheets concerning numbers constituted of the written work, the first of which assisted in transferring their most basic knowledge of the pronunciation rules of Chinese numbers. The second one, without hints, led the students to apply their new knowledge about multiples, and the last one transferred their new knowledge at a high level with five series of numbers. By writing the relevant Chinese characters, the Pinyin or the English, the students were applying their new knowledge step by step. The students' satisfied expressions and eagerness

for more work, and the three worksheets which tested the students, made the transferring process fun and interesting. The final correction rate also indicated the positive effects of the worksheets.

6.2.2 Lesson reviews through PowerPoints

The teacher-researcher also reviewed lessons by PowerPoint. She simply carried out the “asking and answering” mode to do a quick review:

After reviewing numbers, we started to review how to ask and answer ‘what’s your/ his/ her/ its name’ in Chinese by PowerPoint.

T: (We briefly reviewed the sentences) Next, you will see lots of pictures and I would like you to use the sentences to ask and answer ‘what is someone’s name’. Ok, the first one. (Students looked surprised and started whispering about the person on the screen) Phillip, could you ask Leon ‘what’s her name’ in Chinese?

S1: *Tā jiào shénme míngzì?* (Looking at Leon while pointing to the screen)

S2: *Tā jiào Lynne X*, our principal.

T: Good. (Turn to next slide and the class exclaimed, ‘Wow!’) Next one, Kim and Neilson.

S3: *Tā jiào shénme míngzì?*

S4: *Tā jiào Doraemon* (burst into laughter).

T: Yes, *tā jiào Doraemon*. (Turn to another slide and the class also whispered) How about this one? Joanna and Jordon.

S5: *Tā jiào shénme míngzì?*

S6: *Tā jiào Tony Abbott*.

(Part 3, Mar. 3rd, Week 6 in Term 1, 2014, Researcher’s self-reflection Journal)

The process of practicing the new Chinese language knowledge by PowerPoint was presented in this piece of data. The teacher-researcher asked the students practice sentences according to the pictures. The first picture, which raised a few whispers among the students, was about the principal. This picture reviewed how to ask and answer “what’s her name”. The second slide was about the adorable cartoon character Doraemon, which reviewed the sentence “what’s its name”. The last one, which showed the Australian prime minister, reviewed the sentence “what’s his

name”. The sentences were practiced by the students in pairs, asking and answering. Combining the sentences with various pictures or contexts was how the teacher-researcher normally transferred the students’ Chinese language knowledge by means of PowerPoint. By reviewing lessons through PowerPoint, the students experienced the most direct and convenient way to practice and review what they had learnt.

On the whole, transferring the students’ Chinese language knowledge by worksheets and speaking practice using PowerPoint was easy and handy. The teachers only need to design relevant worksheets and prepare the PowerPoint beforehand. However, problems inevitably emerged when reviews of this kind were given too often. Students sometimes became bored writing new characters again and again and reviewing lessons by PowerPoint. The teacher-researcher was at a loss, due to the limited ways known to her of transferring students’ Chinese language knowledge. She turned to her supervisor for advice:

Me: I had a problem at the moment. Since the very beginning of this term, I found all I can do was to review students’ new knowledge by the worksheets or the PowerPoint. I felt bored and I think so did students. It seemed that there was no meaning in making students’ new language knowledge transfer.

Supervisor: Ok. You said lesson reviews by the worksheets and PowerPoint bored students and you. Transferring students’ new knowledge is a slow process, during which students made progress bit by bit. It could not be done simply and quickly. So think about whether you were transferring students’ new knowledge or making them present what they had learnt.

(Mar. 4th, Week 6 in Term 1, 2014, Researcher’s self-reflection Journal)

Only by then did the teacher-researcher realise the reason for her problem, that is, she lost her way in making students’ Chinese language knowledge transfer occur. She did not have clear concepts about facilitating students’ new knowledge transfer and conducted the wrong teaching plan, though she intended everything to go well. The

lesson reviews carried out by means of worksheets and PowerPoint were actually different kinds of presentations, not interactions among the students. Activities which transfer the students' Chinese language knowledge ought to include interaction between students and gradual processes to internalise the new knowledge. Therefore, she went astray in this stage, but finally clarified her misconceptions about interactions and the presentations.

6.3 Knowledge transfer through interactive activities

The teacher-researcher was confined to basic lesson reviews for a period of time. In order to get rid of the rigid reviews by PowerPoint, and also properly transfer students' new language knowledge, the teacher-researcher decided to bring games and activities to the class. According to Clark (1987), a game is an activity, and activities are designed to enhance students' active participation and interaction in class (Burguillo, 2010). Early exploratory research by Robertson and Howells also indicated that "making a game is an authentic learning activity in which students are actively engaged" (Vos et al., 2011, p. 130).

Games in class were proved as helpful for students' learning by the following researchers. The benefit of engaging games in learning has been emphasised by Bergin and Reilly, and they pointed out that games aroused students' interest while students had stronger motivation (Burguillo, 2010). Boctor (2013) also supported the positive function of games in students learning that "games are one technique that can be utilized to obtain students' attention and bring deep rather than surface level, passive learning" (p. 96). The teacher-researcher then asked the classroom teacher how to conduct games and activities:

Me: Julie, my teaching activities were quite constrained and I have no idea to figure out any creative activities. Could you give me any advice please?

J: You're doing well, Wenqiong. Maybe try to add a few more new elements in the activities. You can refer to the activities the students usually play at school, such as silent ball, bingo, whispering game and so on. Or you can design new activities on the basis of the ones you did in China. Get started and just try!
(Mar. 4th, Week 6 in Term 1, 2014, Researcher's self-reflection Journal)

The teacher-researcher told her problems to the classroom teacher Julie. The teacher-researcher was advised to introduce new games and activities from those that the students play here and the ones that are played in China. Inspired by the classroom teacher's suggestion, the teacher-researcher began navigating a kaleidoscope of activities.

6.3.1 Silent ball

The first activity the teacher-researcher tried was called the silent ball.

Our topic today was the dates. We reviewed how to ask and answer "what's the date" and learnt new phrases yesterday, today and tomorrow. Then I tried to transfer students' new knowledge by the activity silent ball.

T: Ok, guys. We're going to do the activity called silent ball. The rules are quite simple. The first one who got the ball should say yesterday in Chinese, the second one should say today in Chinese and the third one should say tomorrow in Chinese. Then go back to the first one. Clear?
I held the ball and walked around, planning to deliver the ball to someone. Everyone got excited, waiting to be the first one.

T: (suddenly passed the ball to Jackey) Maybe you please.

S1: (Jackey almost ran out of the time but quickly said it out) Oh, what am I supposed to say? *Zuótiān?*

S2: (Ihsan passed it on quickly) *Jīntiān.*

S3: *Míngtiān!*

S4: (the ball was thrown to Jeremy) *Jīntiān?* (With a suspicious tone)

S: Oh, you missed out! You're out!

T: Yes. You should say *zuótiān* instead. Sit down please. Next one!

S5: *Jīntiān.*

S6: *Míngtiān.*

S7: *Zuótiān!*

S8: *Jīntiān.*

Everyone looked serious, and no one wanted to be caught by others because of mistakes.

T: Stop! Now opposite!

S9: Alright (Leon was quick in response and threw the ball to Phillip)

S10: Oops! (Phillip never expected the abrupt situation and missed the ball)

S: (the class burst into laughter) Ms, he should be out. /yes, out! /He's inattentive.

T: No worries this time. But be careful next time, Phillip.

S10: Thanks, Ms. *Jintiān* (continue).

S11: *Míngtiān*.

S12: *Zuótiān*.

... The activity lasted about seven minutes, and everyone had fun throwing the red ball.

(March 17th, Week 8 in Term 1, 2014, Researcher's self-reflection Journal)

The students were practicing the new Chinese words for yesterday, today and tomorrow through the silent ball activity. The rules were first explained and they were asked to say the words one by one while throwing the ball. The teacher-researcher started the activity by passing the ball to one student. The ball went smoothly until it was passed to Jeremy. He said the wrong phrase and was out. After that, the game resumed and every student tried hard to remain in the activity. Later the teacher-researcher increased the level of the activity to make the ball go the opposite way and the first student could not react to the abrupt change. The class was amused by this and the activity continued for seven minutes.

The silent ball was the activity that the teacher-researcher introduced to lead the students to transfer what they have learnt. In this activity, the ball worked as a moving microphone with the power to determine who was to speak and who was not. The student to whom the ball was passed should pronounce the word and the others were expected to be silent, listening to the one who was talking. That is why it is called silent ball. By conducting this activity, the students were given opportunities to practice the words they learnt because everyone took a turn. The students might also gain deeper impression of the words after hearing others say them many times. Therefore, the silent ball benefited all students. The activity also reduced the

boredom of solely practicing the words by themselves since they had to concentrate on the changing words and the ball's direction.

In addition, the theory Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is also reflected here. According to ZPD theory, learners could attain a higher level after they learn the present level well. Here the students had already learnt to say *zuótiān*, *jīntiān* and *míngtiān* well. To lead them to use the new words more fluently, the teacher-researcher challenged them by attaching the numbers one, two and three, in other words, Number 1 is *zuótiān*, Number 2 is *jīntiān* and Number 3 is *míngtiān*. This required students to transfer their knowledge further when the word they should say was linked to the number and the sequence. Later she unexpectedly asked the students to conduct the activity in the opposite direction, which added to the difficulty. The students should always be carefully aware of the sequence, otherwise they may be out of the activity. This activity also trained the students to make quick response and pay close attention to the lesson in which everyone could see whether the other students were listening carefully or not. If a certain student was not following, he or she was very likely to miss the ball and not say the correct word. As Vos et al. (2011) viewed, “games have the potential to enhance motivation for learning” (p. 127).

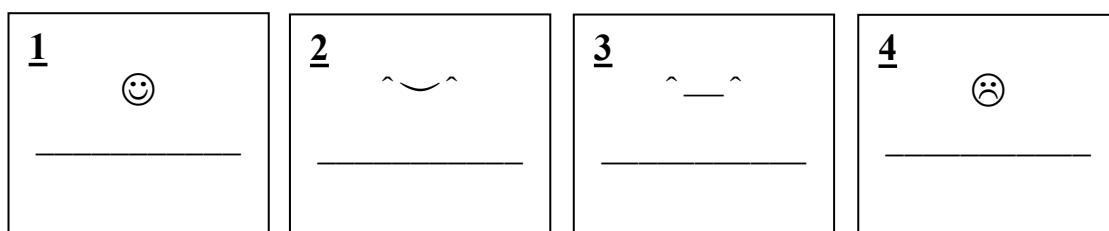
6.3.2 Card game

Silent ball was an activity the students were all familiar with, but the card game the teacher-researcher presented was an activity that she invented by herself:

Students just learnt how to ask ‘how are you’ and how to answer by four answers in Chinese. In order to examine what students had learnt, I quizzed them by playing a card game.

T: We are going to play a card game. Everyone will draw two pieces of paper from my box. On each piece of paper, there are a number from 1-24 and a special facial expression from four facial expressions in total.

Table 12: Four kinds of cards



T: The first facial expression equals to the first answer “I’m very good”, the second one equals to the second answer “I’m pretty good”, the third one equals to “I’m ok” and the fourth one equals to “I’m not good”. When you get the paper card, you have to fill in the right sentence according to the special facial expression in Chinese. After this, I will call two numbers randomly and two of you who are holding the numbers should come to the front to do the role play according to Text 1.

Table 13: Text 1 for card game

<p>Q: <i>Nǐ hǎo ma?</i> (How are you?)</p> <p>A:</p> <p>1) <i>Wǒ hěn hǎo.</i> (I’m very good.) ☺</p> <p>2) <i>Wǒ tǐng hǎo de.</i> (I’m pretty good.) ^~^</p> <p>3) <i>Wǒ hái kěyǐ.</i> (I’m ok.) ^__^</p> <p>4) <i>Wǒ bù hǎo.</i> (I’m not good.) ☹</p> <p>Q: <i>Nǐ ne?</i> (And you?)</p>

T: (hold the box and walk around) now please draw two pieces of paper. Students began to be excited. They all stared at the box when others were drawing paper inside. One student even took his cards in one second as if someone was going to grab his cards.

S1: (whispering) you got a sad face! I saw it!

Everyone filled in the card quietly and waited for a go.

T: Number 10 and number 17! Let us welcome the first group.

All the students looked around curiously, wondering who the first one was.

S2: (jump up) Wow! It’s me!

Another girl smiled and came up slowly.

T: (pointing to the boy) Maybe you begin first.

S2: (grin and say slowly) *Nǐ hǎo ma?*

S3: (reply after looking at her paper) *Wǒ hái kěyǐ.* (Think for a while) *Nǐ ne?*

S2: (with a strange tone) *Wǒ bù hǎo* (aroused big laughter in class).

T: Thank you so much. (clap my hands) *Fēicháng hǎo* (very good)!

The two students themselves seemed satisfied with what they had done and they all went back to their seats smiling. I looked around and was ready to call another pair. The class was anxious, exciting and noisy.

S: Call me! /Call me! /Number 3! /Let me have a go!

The activity lasted for about ten minutes and six pairs were invited to be the front. We ended up our lesson with doing the booklet. (Part 3, Mar. 10th, Week 7 in Term 1, 2014, Researcher's self-reflection Journal)

By means of playing a card game and doing role play, the teacher-researcher was trying to enhance what the students had learnt. She first explained the rules. In the card game, there were four kinds of cards altogether and she used four facial expressions to stand for specific sentences. For example, a smiling face stands for "I'm very good" and a sad face stands for "I'm not good". Every student drew two cards upon which there were different facial expressions and a number. They were then asked to write the Pinyin of the sentence according to the facial expression and to role play with another student.

Students accomplished transferring their new language knowledge three times during the activity. At the first sight of these cards, they had to change the facial expressions to the corresponding Chinese sentences, for example, a happy face matched the sentence "I'm very good". They had to transfer another time to put the English sentence into a Chinese sentence. Here the happy face was "*wǒ hěn hǎo*". This was actually the first knowledge transfer they conducted. The students then needed to fill in the exact Pinyin under the facial expression on the card, which was another transfer. The next step involved speaking practice, in which they had to open their mouths and perform the role play. This can be viewed as the third knowledge transfer.

There were significant points in this activity. First, the students benefited from the role play, even though some might not have been able to pronounce the sentences in an acceptable way. At least, the students had practiced them and tried twice, during which they internalised what they learnt and forced themselves to use it by translating the facial expressions. It was also a novel and enjoyable consolidation activity. Compared with former basic reviews, the card game provided students with a more lively way to practice, by drawing random numbers and translating facial expressions. Drawing random numbers stimulated the students' interest. Everyone had to be ready at all times because they could be called upon at any time to stand in front of the class. Some students may have been excited, and some may have been worried. Both of these responsibilities made them focus on the lesson and what they had learnt. This was the charm of the card game.

According to (Vos et al., 2011), educational games can enhance students' higher intrinsic motivation in learning. Overall, introducing games and activities to classes is a good and fun way for students to apply what they have learnt. Unlike rote learning, they are a stress-free way for them to express their knowledge. The most important point in conducting an activity is that it is fun and interesting, which might leave a lasting impression.

6.4 Expansion of knowledge transfer

The teacher-researcher had begun introducing a variety of activities into the class since her first-day debacle. She used activities that were popular with the Australian students, such as bingo and whispering, as well as activities she had participated in as a student in China. She gradually began to invent new activities, adjusting the existing ones to better fit her lessons, more practical and authentic, and embedded in socio-cultural background.

6.4.1 Inquire prices in Chinese

During this lesson, the teacher-researcher taught students how to pronounce different denominations of Chinese money and how to ask and answer about price. In order to practice their new knowledge, she used the Taobao Website.

Table 14: Chinese money

New words:

Dollar: 元/ *yuán*, 10 cents: 角/ *jiǎo*, Cent: 分/ *fēn*

New sentences:

How much is this item? (*Zhègè dōngxī duōshǎo qián?*)

This item is _____. (*Zhègè dōngxī _____。*)

T: Guys, Taobao is the most popular online shopping website in China, which you could regard it as EBay in Australia. Now give me a keyword, and let's have a look at the prices on Taobao.

S: (start discussing) Iphone? /Nike? /Fridge? /Microwave?

T: Alright! Bridget please.

S1: Nike shoes.

T: (type "Nike" at the top) Ok, let us find the price out. (Different kinds of shoes pop on the screen) Wow, so many. Now Neilson, (pointing to the first item) could you tell me that *zhègè dōngxī duōshǎo qián?*

S2: Em, *zhègè dōngxī sānbǎi sìshí yuán* (¥340).

T: *Fēicháng hǎo* (very good). Now guys, I would like you to work in pairs to do a role play. I need you to open your laptop and find the Taobao Website. One of you gives a keyword and the other one searches the price for you. Then you two conduct the role play like what I did with Bridget. After the conversation, make a list and write down the price you have inquired about in Chinese characters. Inquire 10 items each person. Students all happily turned on their laptop and excitedly conducted their role play by referring to the price on Taobao. (Jun. 23rd, Week 9 in Term 2, 2014, Researcher's self-reflection Journal)

The teacher-researcher introduced the background information of Taobao Website and then asked two students about prices on the website by using the sentences they had been taught. After that, she told the students to work in pairs to conduct conversations by following what she did. Each student had to inquire about 10 items, make a list and write down the prices in Chinese characters.

The students applied their new Chinese language knowledge three times during this activity. They first needed to use the two sentences to ask and answer about the price, which was their first knowledge transfer. Next, the student who were asked questions had to translate the price from English to Chinese, namely, to apply “*yuán*”, “*jiǎo*” and “*fēn*” into the price, and then pronounce it. This was about the transfer of pronunciations. Third, the students who were told the price needed to write it in Chinese characters, namely, to apply “元”, “角” and “分” in making the list. Here, the students were transferring their new knowledge concerning characters. After ten inquiries, the students gained proficiency in applying their new knowledge to those new conversations.

Integrating this role-play activity into a real socio-cultural context made it special and valuable. The teacher-researcher was actually presenting a real life scene from the lives of Chinese people by showing the students the Taobao Website, which is a part of most Chinese young people’s daily life. Therefore, introducing the Taobao Website to students made them feel closer to real Chinese society and believe that what they learnt was useful and practical.

6.4.2 Find the right person

“Find the right person” was one of the activities designed by the teacher-researcher herself:

Students learnt six new phrases about occupation. They were secretary, businessman, doctor, teacher, driver and policeman. In order to let them practice these phrases, I simulated some scenes of life.

T: Guys, we're going to do an activity called "Find the right person". I will divide you into two groups. One group stays inside the classroom and the other one waits outside. Everyone will be given a unique sheet with a specific Pinyin on it. Here are the rules about how we conduct the activity.

Table 15: Find the right person

For outsider students:

Step 1: Know who to find by looking at Pinyin on the sheet.

Step 2: Go inside and start the conversation with anyone that you think might be the right person.

Step 3: Say hi and then inquire: *Nǐ hǎo! Nǐ shì _____ ma?* (if yes, wait to be asked about name and age; if no, go to someone else until you get yes)

Step 4: Answer your Mr. right's questions. Try to do it as fast as you can.

For insider students:

Step 1: Know who you are by looking at Pinyin on the sheet.

Step 2: Start to conversation with some guy by saying: *Shì* (yes) or *Búshì* (no).

Step 3: If yes, ask the person: *Nǐ jiào shénme míngzì?* (What's your name?)

Nǐ jīnnián jǐsuì? (How old are you this year?)

T: Alright. Let's have a go. So Silvia, Kim, Phillip, Joanna, Jordon and Leon come to pick a piece of sheet from me and then go outside please. The rest please come to pick your sheets too. Find a spot in class and keep distance. (After one minute) Ok, let's get started. Ms Vuong, time us please.

T1: Not a problem.

T: (open the door) Welcome, Jeremy!

S1: (look excited and quickly go to Jackey's side) what am I supposed to say? (scratch his head and the class burst into laughter) Oh, *nǐ hǎo! Nǐ shì...* (opened the sheet to look) *yīshēng* (doctor) ma?

S2: (wave his head) *Búshì*.

S1: (quickly turned around to another boy Neilson) *Nǐhǎo! Nǐ shì...*
 (opened the sheet again) *yīshēng ma?*
 S3: (laughing) *Búshì.*
 S1: Gosh! (turned to another boy Ishan) *Nǐhǎo! Nǐ shì yī shēng ma?*
 S4: (look feel sorry for Jeremy) *Bú shì.*
 S1: (pat his own head) Oh, come on! (The crew in class is all laughing)
 T: Poor Jeremy, be quick.
 S1: (finally go to a girl's side) *Nǐhǎo! Nǐ shì yī shēng ma?*
 S5: *Shì. Nǐ jiào shénme míngzì?*
 S1: Thank god. Em, *wǒ jiào* Jeremy.
 S5: *Nǐ jīnnián jǐsuì?*
 S1: *Wǒ jīnnián shíwǔ suì.* (Put hands and cheered for himself) I finished!
 T1: That's 58 seconds. Well done, Jeremy!
 (Aug. 25th, Week 7 in Term 3, 2014, Researcher's self-reflection Journal)

This was a relatively difficult activity that the teacher-researcher designed for students to make their new language knowledge transfer. Twelve students were split into two groups. One group member stayed inside and another one stayed outside the classroom. Everyone was given a piece of paper with special Pinyin on it, which told the students how to find the person with that occupation or how to be the person with the occupation. The teacher-researcher allocated the students inside the classroom to sit in different places. Each of the outside students took turns going inside to find the person they were searching for by conducting conversations according to Table 15.

In this activity, it was most important to properly pronounce the Pinyin and tell difference between the different occupations. The students outside the room had to know how to pronounce the occupation they were looking for so the insiders could understand. The inside students had to clearly know all the occupations in order to understand whether the outside students were looking for them. So games that need students to answer questions will check if learning goals have been achieved and can therefore work as an informal way of assessment (Baid and Lambert, 2010). Another advantage of using this sort of game was that students gained quick feedback by means of correct or wrong answers (Boctor, 2013). As proved by the example of Jeremy, the students' pronunciation of the new words was enhanced by saying the

new words by continuously practicing the pronunciations of the six occupations. Therefore, games are able to increase students' level of deep learning and knowledge transfer (Vos et al., 2011).

In addition to its practical function in transferring the students' Chinese language knowledge, the "Find the right person" activity also embraced the socio-cultural context, which made the activity more real. Six real life scenes were stimulated according to the different occupations. If one student was given the sheet of *jǐngchá* (policeman), then he or she might go to the police station to report the loss of something; if the sheet was *lǎoshī* (teacher), then the student might be enrolled; if the sheet was *mìshū* (secretary), then the student might ask her to leave a message; if the sheet was *shāngrén* (businessman), then the student might buy some items from the businessman. The other two phrases *yīshēng* (doctor) and *sījī* (driver) also had their own contexts. All of these integrated with the real life background and made students feel they were practicing new Chinese language knowledge in reality.

The "Find the right person" activity was designed to add fun and challenge to the activity. There were six students inside the classroom and the outside students never knew who the right person was. They could try their luck again and again. The exploration made the activity more challenging and interesting. The student Jeremy's gestures, facial expressions and the class' laughter showed the students enjoyed the process, even though there were sometimes awkward moments for the outside students.

These two activities were expanded upon the former activities in 6.3, but they were rooted in a more real socio-cultural background, making what the students learnt more practical and authentic. This may help students establish a better overall understanding of their new Chinese language knowledge.

6.5 Discussion

In this chapter, the teacher-researcher presented how she strived to facilitate the students' Chinese language knowledge transfer. The data demonstrated four different explorations, although they were subtly related.

The teacher-researcher started with rote learning type of teaching when trying to make knowledge transfer occur. She stood at the front of the class, talking alone, and did not set aside time to have the students practice or review their new knowledge. However, when she observed the classroom teacher's lesson, she found it was conducted through four central activities. The students finished the activities one by one and enjoyed the lesson. The strong contrast between the classroom teacher's lesson and her lesson ought to be attributed to the different lesson styles in China and Australia.

In China, the majority of time during lessons is spent on building students' new knowledge rather than conducting activities for knowledge transfer. This might be because a Chinese class is usually bigger than an Australian class, which makes activities hard to organise. Another reason could be due to the education system – exam-oriented learning. Teachers usually try to cover as many knowledge points as they can, while students take notes or just listen. Knowledge transfer has to occur after class by way of memorisation by the individual learners themselves rather than interactive activities between peers. The majority of Chinese classes were teacher-dominant.

The observation notes illustrate that the local teacher conducted her lesson through a series of students' activities rather than dominating the class herself by talking. The local teacher accomplished knowledge transfer through activities, whereas it may not occur if the student is merely thinking or passively memorising. Students need time

to process their new knowledge through external activities in class.

Having learned from the failure from previous lessons, the teacher-researcher changed her focus to the students' activation to enable knowledge transfer occur. She mainly used two ways: one was asking students to do a worksheet, and the other one was organising lesson reviews by PowerPoint. A bottleneck was encountered when the students were not engaged with these activities. Reflections and discussions with colleagues made the teacher-researcher realise that the activities she designed were actually "knowledge presentation" rather than "knowledge transfer". Transferring learning involves the internalisation of knowledge through external interactive activities. By asking students to do the worksheet and review the lesson, the teacher-researcher actually forced them into an assessment stage to present their new knowledge. Either the worksheet or the lesson review by PowerPoint was checking students' learning situation instead of assisting in transferring the students' new knowledge. By carrying out a simple "yes or no" assessment, the teacher-researcher did not give students enough space to transfer their new knowledge.

The next stage of understanding knowledge transfer was interactivity between the students. The teacher-researcher paid much more attention to introducing activities that local students were used to. Through the silent ball and the card game, the students were given opportunities to interact with their peers. These activities involved students' thinking, judgement and pronunciation practice, which was different from rote learning. Peer mentoring was also demonstrated in these activities. According to Baid and Lambert (2010), group activities in class contribute to team building and peer learning by which they can learn from each other. The performances of faster learners became models for the slower learners. Such an interaction made students concentrate on learning.

The last step of the teacher-researcher's learning journey about knowledge transfer was combining interactive activities with real life context. Buying items through the

Taobao Website and matching people by occupation were two activities that she designed for the topics of money and occupation. These two activities commonly occur in everyday life, therefore, they were no longer restricted to classroom site. By setting activities in a real socio-cultural context, the teacher-researcher had students understand that what they had learnt and what they had practiced were useful and practical. Overall, integration with the real socio-cultural background enabled the students to expand their Chinese language knowledge transfer into use in real life. This was the most meaningful improvement the teacher-researcher had made during her exploration in making students' Chinese language knowledge transfer.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter focused on analysing and discussing the data from the teacher-researcher's teaching Chinese lessons, specifically how she developed skills and understanding of knowledge transfer during the students' learning. The findings from these data demonstrated her professional development in making students' Chinese language knowledge transfer, which passed through four stages, beginning with the rote learning style of a teacher dominant class, then to misunderstanding of knowledge presentation as knowledge transfer, to stage three, interactive classroom activities, and the fourth stage, socio-culturally oriented interactive activities. Chapter 7 is going to present the conclusion and the implications drawn upon from this study.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This research demonstrated a beginning Mandarin teacher's professional development through classroom teaching. Three aspects of classroom teaching were explored, that is, how to engage students' Chinese learning in class, how to build students' Chinese language knowledge and how to make students' Chinese language knowledge transfer occur. Through exploration of these three aspects, this self-study examined how a beginning teacher developed her teaching strategies and language skills so as to increase the learnability of Chinese language for students in Western Sydney schools.

7.2 Overview of thesis

The first chapter gave a brief introduction of the research. The research background was first discussed from the Australian and then the personal context. Three research questions, the methodology and the significance of this research were explained based on the research background. In order to reveal the feasibility of the research, its potential outcomes and the outlines of the thesis were depicted in detail.

Chapter 2 established a conceptual base for the research through literature. The chapter consisted of three parts, including "Beginning teachers and their problems", "Teachers' professional development" and "A teaching learning framework". The last part brought in the concept of the "teaching learning cycle" and created a new framework in order to fit the research concerning Chinese lessons. The three segments in the cycle, "Engagement", "Knowledge building" and "Knowledge transformation" were discussed in detail.

Chapter 3 elaborated upon the methodology of this study. The reason why the qualitative research method was chosen was explained. The introduction of the definition of self-study, its characteristics and significance all supported its rationality in this research. Research principles were then discussed so as to guarantee the quality and validity of the research. The main data came from the researcher's self-reflection

journals, interviews with the classroom teacher and relevant documents. Thematic analysis was illustrated later as the method of data analysis.

Chapter 4, 5 and 6 were the evidentiary chapters, constructed upon the three key themes derived from the data analysis: “Engagement”, “Knowledge building” and “Knowledge transfer”. As the main body of the thesis, these chapters presented the teacher-researcher’s teaching explorations through various data, and witnessed her gradual growth in the teaching of Chinese at a school in Western Sydney.

Chapter 4 reported the teacher-researcher’s teaching efforts in engaging students emotionally and behaviourally. On one hand, a rapport with students was built which gradually narrowed the distance between them and the teacher-researcher. In order to stimulate the students’ interest and further attract their attention, “strange” and fun incidents were specially designed and challenges were set up for the students. On the other hand, a Chinese classroom greeting and the routine exercise called Pen and Paper time were organised to make the students focus on lessons through specific behaviours.

Chapter 5 showed the three developmental stages of the teacher-researcher building the students’ Chinese language knowledge. Her initial stage was constrained to one-way teaching, which revealed her early problems and teaching inexperience. By adjusting her approach, she was able to conduct her teaching in multiple ways, namely, through listening, body movements and visualisation. In the later stage, the students’ individual factors were given more attention and their prior knowledge was utilised to scaffold their Chinese language learning.

Chapter 6 demonstrated the teacher-researcher’s exploration of the “Knowledge transfer” cycle. Problems arose in beginning period, as a result of teaching without activities and misunderstanding presentation and interaction. Advice from her supervisor and the classroom teacher inspired her to design interactive activities. These activities included the activities that Australian students usually played in class and the ones the teacher-researcher did in China. She then expanded activities into real life and made the students’ Chinese language learning more practical.

7.3 Key propositions of thesis

The self-study research method was employed, and the main data were collected from the researcher's self-reflection journals. The data was divided and analysed according to the three key themes of "Engagement", "Knowledge building" and "Knowledge transfer". During the analysis process, the researcher located and merged the data according to themes into relevant literature and came up with three key propositions of this self-study:

- (1) Capturing the students' characteristics to engage their Chinese learning
- (2) Lifting student-centeredness in building new knowledge
- (3) Bearing interactivism in mind in the transfer new knowledge.

7.3.1 Capturing students' characteristics to engage their Chinese learning

The first proposition responded to the first research question: how to engage the students' Chinese learning in class? It was initially a difficult task for a beginning teacher with limited experience. Throughout the exploration, the teacher researcher's initial stage was filled with nervousness and confusion. She made attempts according to what she thought would help engage the students in class.

Efforts were first made to build a rapport with the students. To shorten the distance between the teacher-researcher and her students, she shared her personal stories and experience with them. Chinese names were assigned to each of them, establishing a Chinese "community" in the classroom. As proved by data, these practices were useful in establishing a harmonious relationship with the students and attracting their attention. Another teaching attempt concerning traditional Chinese items bored students. The teacher-researcher lacked sufficient understanding about the students, including their characteristics, thoughts and interests.

The students' characteristics, or temperaments, refer to "an individual's biologically based style of responding to people, events, and situations" (Rudasill, 2011, p. 148). According to Rudasill et al. (2010), attention and activity level were two main aspects of temperament that might affect students' participation and responses in class. Based

on this statement, the teacher-researcher promoted the students' engagement by better gaining their attention and designing different learning activities.

The teacher-researcher aroused students' attention by adhering to two Chinese concepts “*chūqíbúyì*” (出其不意) and “*hàoshèng xīn*” (好胜心). “*Chūqíbúyì*” referred to the “strange” and amusing incidents she designed for the lessons, while “*hàoshèng xīn*” was presented in students' competitions to pursuit Number One in class. The former concept caught the students' curiosity and the latter aroused their competitiveness. Emotional engagement was the main objective in raising the students' attention.

The teacher-researcher also conducted the concept “*dòngjìng jiéhé*” (动静结合) depending on different conditions. This concept referred to two in-class practices, one of which was starting each lesson with Chinese greetings and the other was writing Chinese characters during Pen and Paper time. The Chinese greetings reflected the “*dòng*” (to move) aspect by having the students stretch their hands and legs, and writing Chinese characters demonstrated the “*jìng*” (to be silent) aspect in distracting the students' attention from an upcoming excursion and motivating them to learn through writing in silence. This concept was conducted so as to attain a moderate activity level. Rudasill et al. (2010, p. 115) gave explicit explanations concerning a moderate activity level:

Depending on the context, high activity level may be viewed as positive or engaged behaviour, such as showing enthusiasm (e.g., jumping up and down in excitement about a present), being energetic (e.g., enjoying physical, rather than sedentary, activity), or being inquisitive. In other contexts and to greater extremes (i.e., very high levels of activity), activity may be viewed as negative, or disregulated behaviour, such as being overly excited or unable to sit still.

According to Rudasill et al. (2010), contexts determine the effectiveness of “high activity level”. A sufficient “high activity level” may play a positive role in engaging students in class, but it can be negative if the activity level is too high. In the first practice involving Chinese greetings, the students were required to move (stand up, bow and sit down), which refreshed them, and made them active and energetic. In this sense, the activity level “*dòng*” (to move) was suitable for the class. As Baid and

Lambert (2010) viewed, an activity that requires students to physically move in the room can break up a traditional presentation style of lecture and avoid long time sitting in a chair. However, when the students' attention was distracted by their upcoming excursion, the activity level needed to be reduced to "*jìng*" (to be silent), otherwise the class might be out of control.

Overall, the data demonstrated that the students' focused attention and moderate activity levels contributed to more productive classroom engagement. Properly taking advantage of students' characteristics to design engaging activities was able to fully stimulate their interests in learning Chinese and also to ensure their steady attention to lessons.

7.3.2 Lifting student-centeredness in building new knowledge

Centred on the theme of "Knowledge building", the second proposition attempted to answer the second research question: how to build students' Chinese language knowledge? The teacher-researcher went through three developmental stages in building the students' Chinese language knowledge. In the original phase, her teaching was comprised of one-way teaching and did not let the students participate during the process. She next tried multiple modes of teaching and gradually strengthened the students' involvement. During the last phase, the students were encouraged to utilise their prior knowledge when being taught new Chinese language knowledge. Looking back at these teaching attempts, the research question was actually about considering student-centeredness during the process of teaching.

There was a slight increase in lifting student-centeredness during the process of building their new Chinese language learning. Wright (2011) pointed out that there was an increasing interest in student-centred learning, though the definition of it was still unclear. From Wright's perspective, the common concern of student-centred learning was to "adjust teaching activities in ways that can enhance student learning" (p. 92). Though student-centeredness is of great importance and benefit in building new language knowledge, it needs to be controlled in a moderate range so as to have the students take the initiative in learning and explore new knowledge by themselves.

There are many versions concerning the definition of student-centred learning. Schuh (2004) named it as Learner-centred practices (LCP), which “moved the teaching focus from the teacher and instruction to the student and learning” (p. 835). Clarke’s view was close to Schuh’s but it was more specific: “student centred learning shifts the focus of power, in terms of what is learnt and how it is learnt, from the teacher to the student” (2010, p. 16). According to Granger et al. (2012), the teaching mode was a matter concerning “who is doing the sense-making”. In student-centred teaching mode, “the sense-making rests with students, and the teacher acts as a facilitator to support the learning as students engage” (p. 105). Reflected upon the definitions from different time, students weighed even more importantly during the teaching process.

The three aspects of her teaching, failures and successes included, illustrated that taking the students’ factors into consideration contributes to their new knowledge building. Wright (2011) advocated that “a student-centred classroom provides a more effective learning environment” (p. 96) and teachers were making efforts toward this end. But this has to be controlled within the specific limits. The situation that students should take the initiative to study and explore new knowledge completely on their own ought to be avoided. As second language learners, they need the teachers’ leadership and modelling to help them to acquire new knowledge, unless the learners have achieved an advanced level where they can study on their own by using all the resources around them. Apparently beginning learners, who do not have sufficiently firm foundations to explore by themselves, have to follow teachers in order to learn. This teacher’s students were all beginning learners, so they had not acquired sufficient knowledge to explore new knowledge in class.

To conclude, it is reasonable to lift student-centeredness in teaching new language knowledge. As the data displayed, incorporating the students’ participation was helpful for contributing to the building of new language knowledge. In order to attain the pre-set learning goals, teachers ought to understand students’ world and also assist their existing capabilities (Schuh, 2004). Therefore, collaboration between the teacher and students may facilitate more effective learning.

7.3.3 Bearing interactivism in mind in transfer new knowledge

Emphasis upon the proposition of interactivism responded to the third research question of how to make students' knowledge transfer occur. During the teacher-researcher's exploration in this part, she motivated the students to transfer their new knowledge in activities, but experienced a long and winding road. Four key concepts emerged through the data analysis. They were passiveness, presentiveness, interactivism, socio-cultural interactivism.

In the beginning class, her lengthy lecture without involving any activity frustrated the students and herself. Requiring the students to merely sit and listen during that first lesson could be described as passiveness in learning, or passive learning. Passive learning is depicted as learning that is "caught, rather than taught", and it is featured as "typically effortless" (Huang, Starner, Do, Weinberg, Kohlsdorf, Ahlrichs, and Leibrandt, 2010, p.791). The description "caught, rather than taught" precisely outlined the characteristics of the students' passive learning. They seemed to be thrown to learn when "caught" by teachers in class instead of joining lessons and learning by themselves. Under this circumstance, teachers verbalise new knowledge to passive students who play roles as "spectators" instead of "participants". This is the biggest problem with passive learning. In addition, lessons naturally become "effortless" because of an absence of student participation. But easy lessons do not help students transfer their new knowledge. As a result, passiveness should be eliminated and students' activeness needs to be aroused.

In the second stage, a discussion with her supervisor led her realise that the teaching attempt she made was not about transferring students' new knowledge. The lesson reviews through the worksheet and PowerPoint ought to be summarised as presentativeness. Generally speaking, few studies have offered an accurate definition of presentativeness, so it has been given a new definition in this study. Presentativeness is the character of being presentative, which literally means capable of being perceived directly rather than through association. Presentativeness is characterised as individual, not interactive. For instance, doing presentations in class is one's personal show time, which does not associate with other people. Publishing books is another example where authors present their own ideas directly. These characteristics were also shown in the lessons of the teacher-researcher. Either filling in worksheets or practicing new words according to PowerPoint belongs to individual

presentations. Students were presenting what they had already known without associating with others. As such, this teaching attempt motivated the students to present their new knowledge directly, rather than facilitated them in making new Chinese language knowledge transfer.

Clarifying the doubts between presentation and interaction cleared the way for the following exploration. The teacher-researcher brought various activities into the class and successfully facilitated the transfer of new knowledge through student interactions with each other. This stage could be called as interactivism. According to Campbell (2014), interactivism is a process that “takes knowing into interaction between a system, or an organism and its environment” (p. 120). Highlighted by interactivism, interaction is a channel for practicing new knowledge. In both activities, the silent ball and the card game, the students were put together to perform tasks such as pronouncing new phrases by passing the ball to others and checking whether everyone said the correct phrase or not in the silent ball, and performing a role play using cards in the card game. Compared with passive learning, interactivism caused individual students to interact with each other and made them learn in groups. To a large extent, interactivism is one kind of cooperative learning, which has been proven to be more effective in strengthening students’ capability in acquiring new knowledge than traditional learning (Hwang et al., 2008). Interactivism improved the effectiveness of the teacher-researcher in transferring the students’ new Chinese language knowledge, and offered her more insights to make further explorations.

Based on these successful experiences, the teacher-researcher designed more activities embedded in real life backgrounds for relevant lessons. One activity was inquiring about prices of purchasing through the Taobao website, and another was matching people with their occupations. The fourth concept, socio-cultural interactivism, could be used to describe this teaching stage. Socio-cultural interactivism refers to interactions set up for students to interact with each other in a socio-cultural background. Bruno and Munoz (2010) stated that “the subject, while learning, needs to construct a network integrating his internal existence with what the external world (society) says about that knowledge” (p. 368). Their statement emphasised the importance of considering society during the learning process. Learners, especially language learners, have to take the language’s practicability into consideration

because the ultimate goal of learning a language is to use it in reality. By integrating two activities with real life scene, she contributed to the students' language practice from the class to the real life and accomplished transferring the students' Chinese language knowledge at an advanced level.

These concepts represented the four teaching explorations the teacher researcher made in order to make students' Chinese language knowledge transfer occur. Its process was a transformation from "passiveness" to "activeness". "Interactivism" and "socio-cultural interactivism" embodied students' interactions in activities, which indicated the raising activeness in her teaching. Overall, she became capable of carrying out the concept of interactivism in her teaching and at the same time students effectively received their new knowledge transferred.

7.4 Implications

The research demonstrated how a beginning Chinese teacher engaged students' Chinese learning in class, built their new Chinese language knowledge and made new knowledge transfer occur. Based on collecting and analysing data, the research came up with three key propositions, which have implications for beginning teachers, Chinese teachers in Australia and further study.

7.4.1 Implications for beginning teachers

The research, focusing on a beginning teacher's professional development, could be drawn upon for reference by those who are going to be teachers. The researcher started her teaching with limited teaching experience, encountered a variety of problems and experienced some dilemmas. It was difficult to get on track at the beginning. For beginning teachers, there are many teaching problems waiting to be explored and solved, including how to engage students in class, how to build students' new knowledge and how to make their new knowledge transfer occur. This research dealt with three cycles of Chinese teaching: the learning cycle, engagement, Chinese language knowledge building and knowledge transfer. These common teaching problems (engagement, knowledge building and knowledge transfer) generally exist

in other subjects. Therefore, the researchers' exploration in Chinese teaching could also offer inspiration for beginning teachers to cope with and overcome tough problems.

7.4.2 Implications for Chinese teachers in Australia

This research is closely related with Chinese teaching in Australia. A fast growing number of teachers are teaching Chinese at local schools and Confucius Institutes in Australia, where there are currently no fixed teaching materials and pedagogies. Under these circumstances, this research will play a positive role in Chinese teaching for these teachers. It could supply Chinese teachers with new teaching ideas or resources. It will contribute to improved communication Chinese teaching, and may inspire other teachers of Chinese to make new teaching improvements through comparison and analysis. In addition, the research will especially exert a supportive and familiarising influence on future ROSETE teachers who, as newcomers, may not be familiar with teaching objectives, teaching content or pedagogies under their new Australian circumstances.

7.4.3 Implications for further study

Through self-study, this research answered the three research questions of how to engage students' Chinese learning in class, how to build their new Chinese language knowledge and how to make their new knowledge transfer occur. These research questions actually match three cycles of Chinese teaching and learning, namely, engagement, knowledge building and knowledge transfer. Given that time was limited, this research only covered the above three cycles. The remaining two cycles of elaboration (or presentation) and evaluation (or assessment), are the last two procedures during a lesson, and as two necessary parts of the teaching and learning cycle, how to have students present their Chinese learning and how to evaluate it deserve further study and exploration.

7.5 Reflection on the teacher-researcher's professional development

As a beginning teacher, the teacher-researcher was pleased with her efforts to promote her professional development. Gradual progress was made, as reflected in the data of her whole teaching exploration.

Looking back, she did not have clear concepts of conducting Chinese teaching at schools, and began with limited teaching experience. Missing teaching objectives, spending excessive time on unnecessary topics, and absence of activities and other problems created a dilemma. However, through frequent reflection and her supervisors' guidance, she made continuing teaching attempts and realised improvements.

After her teaching exploration, she was more familiar with the students and able to engage them in class according to their characteristics; she developed multiple modes of teaching and gave greater consideration to the students' factors when building their new Chinese language knowledge; she clarified the concept of interaction and was able to design various activities to make her students' new knowledge transfer occur. Overall, she gradually mastered basic teaching strategies and language skills to carry out Chinese teaching.

Teaching is a long-term activity, which requires considerable effort and exploration. The teacher-researcher will continue exploring more teaching strategies and motivate herself to go further on her path of professional development.

7.6 Conclusion

Centred on three cycles of the teaching and learning cycle, this research focused on answering three questions: how a beginning Mandarin teacher engages students' Chinese learning in class, how she builds students Chinese language knowledge and how she makes their new knowledge transfer occur. Through self-study, three key propositions came into being: capturing the students' characteristics to engage their Chinese learning; raising the proportion of their participation in building new knowledge and bearing interactivism in mind in the transfer of new knowledge.

Student engagement has long been a popular topic, but there is little literature about knowledge building and knowledge transfer, especially in Chinese teaching. Therefore, this research filled in the gap and gave relevant reference in Chinese language teaching.

References

- Akbari, R. (2007). Reflections on reflection: A critical appraisal of reflective practices in L2 teacher education. *System*, 35, 192–207.
- Anderson, R. C., Ku, Y., Li, W., Chen, X., Wu, X., & Shu, H. (2013). Learning to see the patterns in Chinese characters. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 17(1), 41-56.
- Appleton, J. J., Christenson, S. L., Kim, D. & Reschly, L. A. (2006). Measuring cognitive and psychological engagement: Validation of the student engagement instrument. *Journal of School Psychology*, 44, 427–445.
- Asian Education Foundation. (2011). National statement on Asia Literacy in Australian schools 2011–2012. Retrieved from: [http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/verve/_resources/AEF_NationalStatement_\[20Sept2011\].pdf](http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/verve/_resources/AEF_NationalStatement_[20Sept2011].pdf)
- Axelson, R. D. & Flick, A. (2010). Defining student engagement. *The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 43(1), 38-43.
- Baid, H., & Lambert, N. (2010). Enjoyable learning: The role of humour, games, and fun activities in nursing and midwifery education. *Nurse Education Today*, 30, 548–552. doi:10.1016/j.nedt.2009.11.007
- Basit, T. N. (2010). Conducting research in educational contexts. *Continuum International Publishing Group*.
- Baumann, J. F., & Duffy, A. M. (2001). Teacher-researcher methodology: themes, variations, and possibilities. *The Reading Teacher*, 54(6), 608-615.
- Beijaard, D., Meijer, P. C., & Verloop, N. (2004). Reconsidering research on teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20, 107–128.
- Binder, M. (2012). Teaching as lived research. *Childhood Education*, 88(2), 118-120.

- Blank, L. M. (2000). A metacognitive learning cycle: A better warranty for student understanding? *Science Education*, 84, 486–506.
- Boctor, L. (2013). Active learning strategies: The use of a game to reinforce learning in nursing education. A case study. *Nurse Education in Practice*, 13, 96-100.
- Brandenburg, R. (2008). *Powerful pedagogy: Self-Study of a teacher educator's practice*. Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices, Volume 6.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2008). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2013). Teaching thematic analysis. *Psychologist*, 26(2), 120-123.
- Brown, H. D. (2014). *Principles of language learning and teaching: a course in second language acquisition (6th ed.)*. White Plains, NY : Pearson Education.
- Bruno, S., & Munoz, G. (2010). Education and interactivism: Levels of interaction influencing learning processes. *New Ideas in Psychology*, 28, 365–379. doi:10.1016/j.newideapsych.2009.09.011
- Bullough, R. V., & Pinnegar, S. (2001). Guidelines for quality in autobiographical forms of self-study research. *Educational Researcher*, 30(3), 13-21.
- Burguillo, J. C. (2010). Using game theory and Competition-based Learning to stimulate student motivation and performance. *Computers & Education*, 55, 566-575. doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2010.02.018
- Buyse, E., Verschueren, K., Doumen, S., Damme, J. V., & Maes, F. (2008). Classroom problem behavior and teacher-child relationships in kindergarten: The moderating role of classroom climate. *Journal of School Psychology*, 46, 367–391. doi:10.1016/j.jsp.2007.06.009

- Campbell, R. L. (2014). Giving naturalism a change: Interactivism, emergence, and nonlinearity. *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, 10(1), 118-130.
- Chauvet, S., & Hofmeyer, A. (2007). Humor as a facilitative style in problem-based learning environments for nursing students. *Nurse Education Today*, 27, 286–292. doi:10.1016/j.nedt.2006.05.008
- Chesterton, P., Steigler-Peters, S., Moran, W., & Piccioli, M. T. (2004). Developing sustainable language learning pathways: An Australian initiative. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 17(1), 48-57, doi: 10.1080/07908310408666681
- Clark, C. A. (1987). *Serious Games*. University Press of America. ISBN 978-0-8191-6148-2.
- Clarke, A., & Erickson, G. (2004). Self-Study: The Fifth Commonplace. *Australian Journal of Education*, 48(2), 199-211.
- Clarke, J. (2010). Student centred teaching methods in a Chinese setting. *Nurse Education Today*, 30, 15–19. doi:10.1016/j.nedt.2009.05.009
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in Education*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Coia, L., & Taylor, M. (2009). Co/autoethnography: exploring our teaching selves collaboratively. *Research methods for the self-study of practice*, 3-16.
- Colvin, J. W., & Ashman, M. (2010). Roles, risks, and benefits of peer mentoring relationships in higher education. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 18(2), 121-134. doi:10.1080/13611261003678879
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*, 7th ed. Sage Publications.
- Cummins, J., & Hornberger, N. H. (2008). *Teaching for transfer: challenging the two*

solitudes assumption in bilingual education. Encyclopedia of Language and Education, 2nd Edition, Volume 5: Bilingual Education, 65–75.

Fantilli, R. D., & McDougall, D. E. (2009). A study of novice teachers: Challenges and supports in the first years. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25, 814–825.

Feldman, A. (2003). Validity and quality in self-study. *Educational Researcher*, 32(3), 26-28.

Flores, M. A., & Day, C. (2006). Contexts which shape and reshape new teachers' identities: a multi-perspective study. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 22(2), 219-232.

Gallagher, T., Griffin, S., Parker, D. C., Kitchen, J., & Figg, C. (2011). Establishing and sustaining teacher educator professional development in a self-study community of practice: Pre-tenure teacher educators developing professionally. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27, 880-890. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2011.02.003

Gatbonton, E. (2008). Looking beyond teachers' classroom behaviour: novice and experienced ESL teachers' pedagogical knowledge. *Language Teaching Research*, 12(2), 161-182.

Giddens, S. S., Helton, C., & Hope, K. L. (2010). Student peer mentoring in a community-based nursing clinical experience. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 31(1), 23-27.

Gu'n, B. (2011). Quality self-reflection through reflection training. *ELT Journal*, 65, 126-135.

Hanuscin, D. L., & Lee, M. H. (2008). Using the learning cycle as a model for teaching the learning cycle to preservice elementary teachers. *Journal of Elementary Science Education*, 20(2), 51-66.

Harris, L. (2011). Secondary teachers' conceptions of student engagement:

- Engagement in learning or in schooling? *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27, 376-386.
- Huang, K., Starner, T., Do, E., Weinberg, G., Kohlsdorf, D., Ahlrichs, C., & Leibrandt, R. (2010). Mobile music touch: Mobile tactile stimulation for passive learning. *CHI 2010: Tactile Interaction*.
- Kanno, Y., & Stuart, C. (2011). Learning to become a second language teacher: identities-in-practice. *The Modern Language Journal*, 95(2), 236-252. doi:10.1111/J.1540-4781.2011.01178
- Lewis, A. D., Huebner, E. S., Malone, P. S., & Valois, R. F. (2011). Life satisfaction and student engagement in adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 40(3), 249-262. doi:10.1007/s10964-010-9517-6
- Lunenberg, M., & Samaras, A.P. (2011). Developing a pedagogy for teaching self-study research: Lessons learned across the Atlantic. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27, 841-850. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2011.01.008
- Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs. (2008). Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians. Retrieved from:
http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf
- Mitsutomi, M., & McDonald, V. (2005). Factors in learning second languages. *Academic Exchange Quarterly*, 9(2), 230-234.
- Mitsutomi, M. (2012). Some fundamental principles of language teaching and learning. Retrieved from:
<http://aeservices.net/English/Language-Learning-Mitsutomi.pdf>
- Morrell, P. D., & Carroll, J. B. (2010). *Conducting educational research: A primer for teachers and administrators*. Sense Publishers.

- NMEB, NSW DET, & UWS (2009). A partnership of the NSW Department of Education and Training Western Sydney Region.
- O'Connor, E. (2010). Teacher–child relationships as dynamic systems. *Journal of School Psychology, 48*, 187–218. doi:10.1016/j.jsp.2010.01.001
- Orton, J. (2008). *Chinese language education in Australian schools*. Melbourne: University of Melbourne.
- Mariko, S. (2011). Student teachers' reflective journals on teaching practice experiences. *Contemporary PNG Studies: DWU Research Journal, 14*, 67-83.
- Rudasill, K. M., Gallagher, K. C., & White, J. M. (2010). Temperamental attention and activity, classroom emotional support, and academic achievement in third grade. *Journal of School Psychology, 48*, 113–134. doi:10.1016/j.jsp.2009.11.002
- Rudasill, K. M. (2011). Child temperament, teacher–child interactions, and teacher–child relationships: A longitudinal investigation from first to third grade. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 26*, 147–156. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2010.07.002
- Schuh, K. L. (2004). Learner-centered principles in teacher-centered practices. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 20*, 833–846. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2004.09.008
- Shulman, L. S. (1998). Theory, practice and the education of professionals. *The Elementary School Journal, 98*(5), 511–526.
- Shulman, L. S., & Shulman, J. H. (2004). How and what teachers learn: a shifting perspective. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 36*(2), 257–271. doi:10.1080/0022027032000148298
- Silver, C. E., & Barrows, H. S. (2008). Facilitating collaborative knowledge building.

Cognition and Instruction, 26(1), 48-94.

Singh, M., Reid, J., Mayer, D., & Santoro, N. (2011). Forming, informing and transforming teacher education researchers as ethical subjects. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 39(4), 281-291.

Stake, R. E. (2010). *Qualitative research: studying how things work*. The Guilford Press, New York London.

Sun, Y., Zhang, J., & Scardamalia, M. (2010). Knowledge building and vocabulary growth over two years, Grades 3 and 4. *Instructional Science: An International Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 38, 147–171. doi:10.1007/s11251-008-9082-5

Sutherland, L., Howard, S., & Markauskaite, L. (2010). Professional identity creation: Examining the development of beginning preservice teachers' understanding of their work as teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(3), 455–465. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2009.06.006

Taylor, L., & Parsons, J. (2011). Improving student engagement. *Current Issues in Education*, 14(1). Retrieved from <http://cie.asu.edu/>

Thomas, L., & Beauchamp, C. (2011). Understanding new teachers' professional identities through metaphor. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(4), 762-769. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2010.12.007

Timostuk, I., & Ugaste, A. (2010). Student teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(8), 1563-1570. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2010.06.008

Vogrinc, J. & Zuljan, M. V. (2009). Action research in schools – an important factor in teachers' professional development. *Educational Studies*, 35(1), 53–63. doi:10.1080/03055690802470399

Vos, N., Meijden, H. V., & Denessen, E. (2011). Effects of constructing versus playing

- an educational game on student motivation and deep learning strategy use. *Computers & Education*, 56, 127–137. doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2010.08.013
- Wang, V., & Farmer, L. (2008). Adult teaching methods in China and Bloom's taxonomy. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 2(2), 1–14.
- Wang, Y., & Wang, Y. (2008). Economic analysis concerning discussional teaching and cramming teaching. *Economic Research Guide*.
- Wright, G. B. (2011). Student-Centered learning in higher education. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 23(3), 92-97.
- Ye, F. (2010). Combination of dynamics and statics creates highly efficient Chinese lesson. *Scientific Education*.
- Zhao, D. (2012). Being bilingual teacher-researchers: a case study of a research-oriented school-engaged teacher education program. *Local-Global: Identity, Security, Community*, 9, 2012, 76-92.
- Zhao, D. & Singh, M. (2008). International Cooperation in Teacher Education: Case study on an innovative model of language teacher training, published in the proceedings of the International Conference on Teacher Education Transformative Society & Teacher Education Reform (Changchun, Northeast Normal University) , 269-276.

Appendix 1

Timeline for the research

	July –Sep. 2013	Oct. - Dec. 2013	Jan.-Mar. 2014	Apr.-June 2014	July-Sep. 2014	Oct.-Dec. 2014
Determining the research questions	×					
Literature review	×	×	×	×	×	×
Methodology	×	×		×	×	×
Design the project	×					
Research proposal	×	×				
Ethics application		×	×			
Revise COC proposal		×				
Self-reflection journal	×	×	×	×	×	×
Interview			×	×	×	
Documents			×	×	×	
Updating and analysing data				×	×	×
Thesis submission						×

This timeline, as a flexible plan, may change with the particular circumstances when being undertaken.

Appendix 2

Interrelationship between research questions, data sources and data collection and analysis procedures

Research questions	Primary data sources	Data collection participants	Data analysis procedures
<p>Research question 1:</p> <p>How can the teacher researcher develop her teaching strategies and language skills to engage students?</p>	<p>1) Documents (lesson and unit plans, observation forms from classroom teachers and members from ROSETE group)</p> <p>2) Self-reflection journals</p> <p>3) Interviews with classroom teachers</p> <p>4) Students' quizzes</p> <p>5) Students' work samples</p>	<p>1) myself as a teacher researcher</p> <p>2) classroom teachers</p> <p>3) Students</p> <p>4) ROSETE members</p>	<p>Thematic analysis</p>
<p>Research question 2:</p> <p>How can the teacher researcher develop her teaching strategies and language skills to build students' new knowledge?</p>	<p>1) Documents (lesson and unit plans, observation forms from classroom teachers and members from ROSETE group)</p> <p>2) Self-reflection journals</p> <p>3) Interviews with classroom teachers</p> <p>4) Students' quizzes</p> <p>5) Students' work samples</p>	<p>1) myself as a teacher researcher</p> <p>2) classroom teachers</p> <p>3) Students</p> <p>4) ROSETE members</p>	<p>Thematic analysis</p>
<p>Research question 3:</p> <p>How can the teacher researcher develop her teaching strategies and language skills to make students' knowledge transformation occur?</p>	<p>1) Documents (lesson and unit plans, observation forms from classroom teachers and members from ROSETE group)</p> <p>2) Self-reflection journals</p> <p>3) Interviews with classroom teachers</p> <p>4) Students' quizzes</p> <p>5) Students' work samples</p>	<p>1) myself as a teacher researcher</p> <p>2) classroom teachers</p> <p>3) Students</p> <p>4) ROSETE members</p>	<p>Thematic analysis</p>

Appendix 3

Sample unit and lesson plans

Table 1: Sample Unit plan

Unit Overview		
Class:		Date:
Unit name:	Number of weeks:	Number of lessons:
Rationale–Why are you teaching this unit of work at this time?		
Summary of language to be taught (possible topics related to the theme)		
Intercultural understanding		

Table 2: Sample Lesson plan

Topic/Unit of work:	
Lesson purpose:	
Language teaching goal:	
Intercultural understanding goal:	
Lesson outline:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Greeting and introduction to lesson purpose 2. Introduction to language and intercultural goals 3. Revision activity (brief) 4. Introduction to new language 5. Scaffolding strategy 6. Language practice 7. Interaction 8. Production
Resources (authentic, appropriate to students and language/intercultural goals)	
Possible related topic:	

Appendix 4

Observation scheme

(For classroom teachers and ROSETE members)

Date:	Duration:	Class:	Number of students:
Teacher:		Observer:	
Practice of teacher		Response of students	
Engagement:			
Knowledge building:			
Knowledge transformation:			
General evaluation of the lesson:			
Suggestions:			

Appendix 5

Sample teacher's self-reflection journal scheme

Date: _____ School: _____ Classroom teacher: _____

Topic	Detailed contents	Students' reaction	Teacher's feeling and assessment	New related topic

The contents in the form are summarized from the researcher's self-reflection journals so as to have a quick review whenever necessary.

Appendix 6

Sample interview questions (For classroom teachers)

Question Category	Sample interview questions
General questions	1. How do you think of my Mandarin teaching during this term?
	2. If there are any improvements in this term, could you name a few?
	3. Is there any weakness of my teaching?
	4. How do you think of my strategies in engagement?
	5. How do you think of my strategies in knowledge building?
	6. How do you think of my strategies in knowledge transformation?
	7. Do you think these strategies useful and helpful?
	8. If yes, how could you find it helpful to your knowledge constructing?
	9. If no, what are the main obstacles in learning with mind map? And what parts need to be strengthened?
	10. What is your strategy in these three areas?
	11. Could you give me some suggestions for the following teaching?

These are the only draft questions, most of which will be used in the formal interview. But there will also be some changes to this if necessary.

Appendix 7

Sample thematic analysis

Themes	Categories	Codes	Quotes
L1/L2 Transfer	Sound similarity	pinyin	Extract 1: I ask learners to create the similar pronunciation to scaffold their recognition of Mandarin Chinese Characters. (an example of reflective journals)
Sociolinguistic transfer	Cultural comparison	Cultural difference and similarity	Extract 2: the teacher apply a way of comparison to scaffold the recognition of both the difference and similarity between China and Australia. (an example of observation)
L1/L2 transfer	Written language	characters	Extract 3: I find the difficulty of learning Mandarin Chinese characters. (an example of questionnaire)
Graphic transfer	Memorization	Mind map	Extract 4: I could not memorize the language I've learned, even if I made some notes but I can with the help of the mind map that we usually do in the classes. (an example of interview)

This table is an example which illustrates how I will conduct thematic analysis in detail.

Appendix 8

Template for debriefing learning cycle lesson

Figure 1. Template for Debriefing Learning Cycle Lesson (*Emphases indicated are for instructor purposes and are adapted from Abell & Volkmann, 2006*)

The Learning Cycle		
Phase of Instruction	Activities of the Teacher	Activities of the Students
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a context for study. Motivate students. Identify students' current science ideas and misconceptions. Figure out what students need to explore in the next phase. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect past and present learning experiences. Start thinking about concept to be explored. Get motivated and interested.
Exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a common set of experiences for students. Determine how students are processing in their conceptual understanding. Determine what students need explained in the next phase. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify and test their ideas against new experiences. Compare their ideas with ideas of their peers and the teacher.
Explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities for students to use previous experiences to begin making conceptual sense of prior explorations. Introduce formal language, scientific terms, and content information as needed. Determine what concepts need further instructional attention. Determine what elaborations will help scaffold learning in the next phase. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate their current understandings. Develop explanations based on prior experiences. Use formal language, scientific terms, and content information to aid them in describing and explaining.
Elaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities to apply or extend the students' developing ideas through new activities. Assess how students use formal representations of science knowledge (i.e., terms, formulas, and diagrams). Determine what will be important to evaluate in the next phase. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply and transfer their knowledge and skills in new contexts. Relate past experience to current activities. Communicate their current ideas.
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess what students understand and can do at this point. Encourage students to be metacognitive. Determine what should occur in subsequent learning cycles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess their own understandings as they solve problems. Be metacognitive about their learning.