

Journey to the West:
Reading Communicative Language Teaching in Australia

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Declaration

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 Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

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Author's publications

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List of Abbreviations

AACLAME: the Advisory Council on Languages and Multicultural Education
ALTICS: Asian Languages Teachers In-Country Scholarship
ANTA: the Australian National Training Authority
ASC: Asian Studies Council
AVCC: Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee
BoS: Board of Studies
BS: Background Speaker
CC: Communicative Competence
CLT: Communicative Language Teaching
COAG: Council Of Australian Governments
DLC: Directorate of Language and Curriculum
DEST: the Department of Education, Science and Training
DET: the Department of Education and Training
DFAT: the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DSE: the Department of School Education
EAAU: East Asia Analytical Unit
ELT: English Language Teaching
L1: First Language
L2: Second Language
NALSAS: The National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools
NCEE: National College Entrance Examinations
NMEB: Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau
NSW: New South Wales
SEDC: State Education Development Commission
UNNC: University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China
UWS: University of Western Sydney
VTR: Volunteer Teacher Researcher
WSR: Western Sydney Region

Abstract

This research traces the researcher's *reading* of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Second language (L2) (especially Mandarin) during her journey in Australia as a Volunteer Teacher Researcher. In simple terms, Communicative Language Teaching is an approach to L2 teaching which puts emphasis on the function of the language, especially **communication** which is considered as both the means and goals of learning a new language. Based on Freebody's and Luke's four resources model (cited in NSW Department of School Education, 1997), the researcher follows four different reader roles (code-breaker, text-participant, text-user and text-analyst) to interact with and reflect her learning of CLT. Therefore, the researcher's reaction to and reflection on her *reading* of CLT is emphasised in the context of Australia, instead of pure analysis of CLT. Autoethnography is used as the major methodology to trace the researcher's *reading* because it allows her to oscillate between her personal experience of encounters with CLT, and the context (the text of CLT, literature and the cultural context of L2 teaching in Australia).

After framing the general context of Mandarin teaching in Australia—the new 'policy continent', this research was developed into two parts: first, it sought the meaning of CLT and its manifestation in documents, along with the researcher's own reflections on her prior learning experience as CLT code-breaker and text-participant; second, it went further to the text-user stage and focused on how the researcher made use of CLT in her Mandarin class in NSW.

From the researcher's experience, it is found that classroom management and class control issues were the most challenging obstacles to implementing CLT. Although the researcher made progress in obtaining some effective teaching techniques in a CLT-oriented class, one and a half years of teaching is not enough for developing one's overall skills in effective teaching, especially in balancing the relationship between classroom control, pedagogy (CLT) and learning. Nevertheless, it is believed that the researcher's unsmooth development in the use of CLT was not because of the methodology itself, but mainly due to lack of confidence, and

engagement with a CLT class of low-motivated students. CLT requires teachers to empower themselves to be reflective with teaching problems, seeking for alternative ways to make CLT appropriate to different classroom contexts.

Finally, the work looks at the implications for China, of what the researcher learnt from her journey in Australia. It discusses both enabling and limiting factors in the context of China. Under this context, the researcher suggests a compromise solution combining measures of the traditional Chinese method (the Grammar-Translation Method) and CLT in language classes, in order to make CLT adapt to China's particular context.

Overall, this research aims to explore and reflect what the researcher thinks about the usefulness and feasibility of CLT in different contexts (especially Australia and China) by unfolding her own reflections on her prior learning experience in China and learning and teaching with CLT during her *reading* process in her 'journey to the west' as a Volunteer Teacher Researcher in Australia.

Chapter 1

Introduction to my ‘Journey to the West’

1.1 ‘Journey to the West’

There is a Chinese tale that is commonly known as the ‘Monkey story’ in Western countries. The literary name of this novel is translated as ‘*Journey to the West*’ (in Mandarin: 西游记). It is a series of legends about Xuanzang, a Buddhist monk who makes a pilgrimage to India, aiming to acquire Buddhist religious texts. In this journey, Monkey King, the apprentice of Xuanzang, is a key figure in the eventual success of this journey. In this novel, there are scenarios parallel to my own journey as a new foreign teacher and researcher in Australia. First, the Monkey King is chosen by his head, Guanyin (the bodhisattva associated with compassion) to accompany Xuanzang on the journey. According to Guanyin’s request, the Monkey King’s mission is to help the Monk fight against demons and ensure the bringing back of Buddhist scriptures from a foreign land—India (Wikipedia, 2008). In my case, I was also sent on a mission in my journey to a foreign country—Australia. According to the Ningbo (the city where I was educated in China) agreement with Western Sydney, as a Volunteer Teacher Researcher (details are explained in Section 1.2.1), my mission in Australia is to promote Mandarin teaching in NSW and bring knowledge of education and the skills of a bilingual teacher leader back to Ningbo, China.

Another parallel scenario is that the Monkey King encounters a series of episodes on a new ‘continent’, characterised by different magical monsters or evil magicians which he has to confront with during the journey (Wikipedia, 2008). Since I arrived in Australia as a Mandarin teacher, I have also entered a new continent, both a ‘policy continent’ (the cultural and policy context of Chinese teaching in Australia)

and an ‘intellectual continent’ (Communicative Language Teaching and L2 teaching in general). Therefore, in this study, I conceptualised my experience in Australia as my own ‘journey to the West’. Details about my background information and my journey in Australia are introduced in the following sections.

1.2 Introducing my ‘Journey to the west’

1.2.1 The Ningbo program and my part in it

With great excitement and great anticipation for the future, I came to Australia after finishing undergraduate studies in China in mid-2008. I successfully applied to an international program (colloquially called the ‘Ningbo Agreement’) between the Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau (NMEB) in China, the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) in the Western Sydney Region (WSR) and the University of Western Sydney (UWS). Because it was always my dream to be a teacher since I was a little child, I felt so excited and honoured when I was finally selected to be one of the volunteer teachers to teach Mandarin and advocate Chinese culture in Australia. It was a great opportunity for me to develop my professional knowledge in teaching through the teacher training provided by the NSW DET and through the Master of Education (Honours) research program offered by UWS. More importantly, it was an invaluable chance for me to experience an exotic physical, cultural and educational context in this brand new continent—Australia, since I have spent almost my entire life living and studying in China.

1.2.2 Coming to the new continents: the ‘policy continent’ and the ‘intellectual continent’

At the end of June in 2008, I finally arrived in Australia, the place I had always been looking forward to visiting. According to the Ningbo Agreement, my role here was to be a Volunteer Teacher Researcher. As a researcher, I was enrolled as a research candidate in the Master of Education (Honours) at UWS to do research into my teaching in Australia. My teaching was the focus of my research and of this thesis. As a Volunteer Teacher, my mission was to teach Mandarin and to advocate Chinese culture in local schools in the Western Sydney Region. In my case, I was sent to teach Mandarin in one Year 8 class (from the end of July 2008 till the end of 2008) and one Year 7 class (from the beginning of February 2009 to the end of 2009) at Kangaroo High School (pseudonym). I also taught one Senior High class (from the end of July 2008 to mid 2009) at Koala Senior High School (pseudonym). Generally, I went to teach each class once a week. By doing so, I was exposed to a new ‘policy continent’—a cultural context which is very different from China in terms of policies and the educational background of L2 teaching (especially Mandarin and Asian languages teaching) in Australia.

During my journey in Australia, I encountered and learnt a range of theoretical and practical knowledge about L2 teaching, according to the L2 teacher training provided by the NSW DET and my teaching practice in Mandarin classes. This allowed me to develop and enrich my intellectual knowledge of the L2 teaching field. What impressed me most in the L2 teacher training was the lecturer’s demonstration of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) which I had never heard about or experienced before, as a student in China. This approach proposed a communicative view of language learning and teaching, and focused on the development of learners’ communicative skills. It was these skills that I felt I had always lacked when I learnt my English. This inspired my great interest in learning and practising this approach in my own class. Therefore, Communicative Language Teaching was conceptualised as the new ‘intellectual continent’ which I researched, learnt and *read* as a VTR.

Therefore, My ‘journey to the West’ is about my encounters with the new ‘intellectual continent’ of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as an L2 volunteer teacher under the particular ‘policy continent’—the general context of Mandarin teaching in Australia.

1.3 What is the focus of this thesis?

The research reported here focuses on an aspect of the intellectual continent: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). It traces my journey as someone who has to learn to *read* this new continent: CLT. *Reading* here is not a passive process, instead, it is understood as an active and interactive process between readers and texts. I applied Freebody and Luke’s (cited in NSW Department of School Education (DSE), 1997) four resources model to define *reading*. More importantly, the journey this study focuses on has been structured around the four resources model in terms of *reading* processes. By following this *reading* model, there are four research questions emerged accordingly:

- What is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)?
- How does CLT manifest itself?
- Can I make use of CLT in my own class?
- How can it fit in my new world?

1.3.1 Defining reading

According to Freebody and Luke, there are four roles readers have to take on in order to read effectively (cited in NSW DSE, 1997, pp. 12-13). The first role is to be a **code-breaker**, which is to decode the visual information in a text. During this process, readers need to consider the question of how to ‘crack’ the text (Freebody & Luke, cited in NSW DSE, 1997). As a CLT reader, during the initial phase, I had to think about this question: What is CLT? The second role is **text-participant**. During

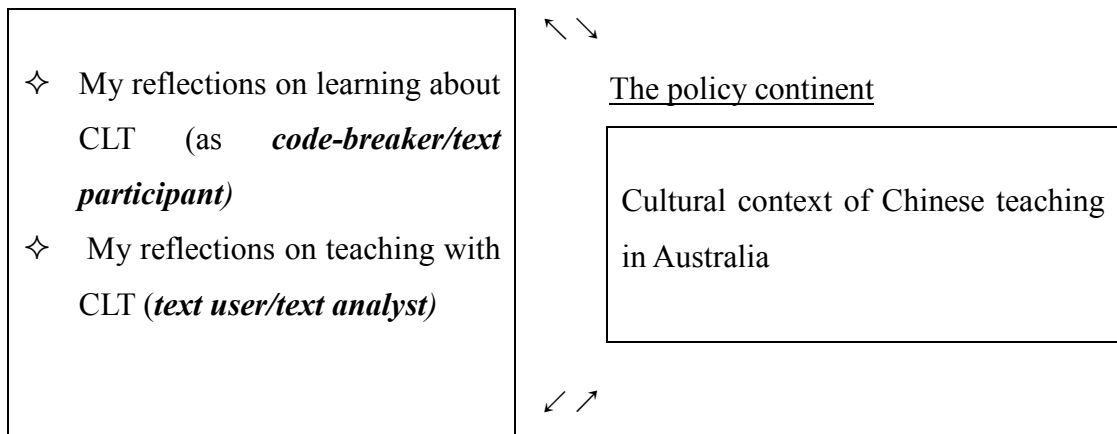
this process, readers begin to seek the deeper meaning of the text. What is this text trying to say? (Freebody & Luke, cited in NSW DSE, 1997). As a **text-participant**, I was seeking to understand how CLT manifests itself and what it looks like in L2 policy documents in NSW. The next role readers have to take on is to be a **text-user**. During this process, readers need to consider what actions they can take that are prompted by the text. Readers adopt this role when they use a text in social situations such as classrooms or when they participate in the events in which the text plays a part (Freebody & Luke, cited in NSW DSE, 1997). So as a CLT reader, during this stage I was concerned about whether I could make use of CLT and if so, how I could use it in my class. The last role readers should take is that of a **text-analyst**. As part of this role, readers have to explore the underlying and unstated assumptions in the text (Freebody & Luke, cited in NSW DSE, 1997). As a **text-analyst**, I strove to explore the underlying assumptions of CLT and consider how it might fit into my new world when I return to China.

1.3.2 Structure of the research

Following the four resources model, I trace my *reading* of this ‘intellectual continent’ (CLT) by tracing my encounters with CLT experiences in my teaching and learning of CLT. Here I draw on my reflections about these and the cultural contexts of these experiences in Australia. The tracing of my experiences is embedded within, and reflected within, the cultural context of Australia in terms of L2 teaching—Mandarin teaching in particular. Figure 1.1 presents the structure of my research based on my journey as a ‘reader’ of CLT in Australia.

Figure 1.1 Design of the thesis

Reading
The new intellectual continent



After framing the context of Mandarin teaching— the new ‘policy continent’ in Australia, this thesis traces my encounters with the new ‘intellectual continent’ as a ‘reader’ of CLT. The *reading* process is developed through two parts. First, in the process of being a **code-breaker** and **text-participant**, I sought for the meaning and the manifestation of CLT in combination with my experience in L2 learning and teaching and document analysis of policies in NSW in terms of CLT. Second, the **text-user** stage focuses on the problems I encountered in my Mandarin class, my reaction to teaching with CLT and its theoretical implications. In addition, data from other groups, including language teachers in Australia and China, training lecturers, and an education official, is used in triangulation measures to check the reliability of my reflective journals and confirm the results of my analysis. Finally, as a **text-analyst** of CLT, this thesis explores the implications of my ‘journey to the west’ for my future work in China.

Autoethnography was employed as the research methodology to allow me to oscillate between my personal experiences and the cultural context. These personal experiences can be understood as my reactions to my *reading* of CLT, including my reflections on my teacher training, my learning of English (my L2) in China and my teaching of Mandarin in NSW using CLT. The cultural context involves the CLT texts, the context of L2 teaching in Australia and China, and literature related to beginning teacher theory. Therefore, this thesis explicates my experiences and reflections as a CLT *reader* within cultural interpretations that move between my personal reflections and the contextual factors in terms of L2 learning and teaching. Details of how I constructed my autoethnography for framing my *reading* process are discussed in Chapter 2.

1.4 Purposes of the research

Overall, this research has focused on my own reactions to my *reading* of CLT, what I really thought and felt as a CLT learner and practitioner in Australia. It aimed to discuss and explore the underlying meaning for and usefulness of CLT, especially in an Australian context by considering various contextual and cultural factors in L2 teaching based on my own experience as a *reader* of CLT in Australia.

1.5 Rationale for this research

1.5.1 Contrasts between learning about CLT and experience as an L2 learner in China

From my encounters with CLT through L2 training and teaching, as well as my review of L2 policy documents and related research literature, I realise that CLT has been given prominence in L2 teaching in many countries, including Australia and China. I was surprised to see the popularity of CLT in the L2 teaching field, because this was not how I learnt English (my L2) in China. As far as I remember, my English teachers mainly focused on vocabulary, grammar drills, writing and reading. I found that this was not enough to develop my communicative skills, especially in speaking and listening. Thus, when I first encountered CLT during a teacher training session, I was deeply impressed by the way a communicative class can be delivered and began to appreciate the communicative view of language teaching and learning. Therefore, my past learning experience and its contrast with what I learnt about CLT prompted me to learn more about CLT and find out whether it is useful for my teaching in particular classroom contexts in Australia.

1.5.2 A lack of CLT-related studies on Mandarin teaching in NSW at both

document and practice levels

There is a shortage of studies on Mandarin teaching in Australia. There are few if any studies that give insight into the development of policy documents on Mandarin teaching in NSW and that specifically analyse the manifestation of CLT. In this research, the policy documents on Mandarin teaching in NSW were analysed in order to examine how CLT is manifested in Mandarin teaching documents.

In terms of practice, there is also a lack of research literature concerning how L2 teachers, especially Mandarin teachers, practice CLT in Australian classroom contexts. Little insight has been given to exploring what practitioners think and do during their implementation of CLT in Mandarin lessons. This study analyses my own experiences in Australia as a novice Mandarin teacher from China. Specifically, it focuses on the problems I encountered in CLT implementation and how I dealt with these emergent issues in teaching as a CLT practitioner. My professional development was informed by drawing on relevant pedagogical theories.

1.6 Significance for this research

There are three points of significance to the research reported in this thesis:

1.6.1 The author's unique position to do the research

This research offers a valuable study of the practice of L2 teaching, because I am experienced as both an L2 learner and an L2 teacher in China and Australia respectively (in China I learnt English as my second language; in Australia where people speak English as their first language, so I taught Mandarin as the second language). Therefore, I am in a good position to understand and express what practitioners (my English teachers in China and I in NSW) think and do in L2 classrooms. I offer my unique perspectives on the issues and challenges of CLT practice in the different contexts of Australia and China.

1.6.2 A development of pedagogical knowledge of CLT

Moreover, this study develops pedagogical knowledge of CLT, because I discuss the meaning of CLT at the level of theory, policy documents and practice, and do so by following the reading process through the roles of **code-breaker**, **text-participant**, **text-user** and **text-analyst**. Combined in this way, this knowledge can help us better define and understand from various sources, what CLT is. Therefore, this actually contributes to the knowledge needed to have CLT more appropriately employed in practice.

1.6.3 An improvement of practical understanding of CLT in Australia

The study also provides both practitioners and researchers with better knowledge and practical understanding of CLT in L2 classes in Australia. More specifically, it helps an understanding of what different factors exist in China and Australia that influence CLT implementation. According to the analysis of my own stories of teaching Mandarin in NSW as a novice teacher, the study provides knowledge about various factors and issues that constrain CLT practice that might be encountered in an Australian context by beginning teachers (of non-native background). Therefore, this study provides inexperienced and foreign teachers with more knowledge about the issues and factors needing to be considered in L2 teaching in the Australian context.

1.7 Outline of Chapters

In terms of the argument about the progression of my *reading* of CLT, the organisation of chapters is as follows:

Chapter 2 introduces the methodology of my research. First I discuss autoethnography as a method for educational research used by scholars such as Ellis

and Bochner (2000). After a justification for using autoethnography as the methodological framework, it describes how I used autoethnography to construct my story of *reading* by following Freebody and Luke's (cited in NSW DSE, 1997) four resources model. It gives details of the data sources, data collection process and the different methods I used to analyse data.

Chapter 3 frames the new 'policy continent'—the cultural context of Mandarin teaching in Australia that I entered as part of my journey as a novice Mandarin teacher from China. The discussion starts with a debate over the Rudd Report (1994) about strategies for teaching Asian languages in Australia. The second part of the discussion focuses on the recent policies on Asian (especially Mandarin) languages in Australia, including the *National Statement* (2006) and Orton's (2008) report on Chinese language teaching in Australia. Comments from one education leader who participated in the Chinese language policy making process are also gained, to explore the dynamics of Chinese language policies in Australia.

Chapter 4 starts to unfold my journey as a *reader* of CLT in the given 'policy continent' of Australia. This chapter traces the first part of my journey as a CLT **code-breaker** and **text-participant**. It begins with my first encounter with CLT during L2 teacher training in NSW. The meaning and the key principles of CLT are discussed via a review of my teacher training and the literature on CLT. Second, this chapter examines how CLT is manifested in the policies on Mandarin teaching in NSW based on my framework for analysis in terms of CLT characteristics (see Table 2.1). These *readings* lead to my reflections on my own experiences of learning English in China, in contrast to CLT, and in which the cultural context of China is taken into account.

Chapter 5 presents the second part of my journey: *reading* as a CLT **text-user**. It analyses the evidence of how I made use of CLT in my own class as a novice Mandarin teacher. After coding my data—my self-reflections on my teaching—it describes and discusses the results of my analysis, including the problems. Here the focus is on the classroom management issues I encountered in implementing CLT in some classes, as well as the reasons for successful CLT practice in other classes. This gives insights into a novice Mandarin teacher teaching at different Year levels. This

chapter concludes with a presentation of the theoretical implications of my teaching with CLT. Two theories are applied: stage theory and a model of pedagogical knowledge development. Both theories are employed to explain my professional development with CLT as a novice L2 teacher.

Chapter 6 concludes my journey as a **text-analyst** of CLT. It begins with a summary of what I have learnt from my *reading* of CLT as a novice Mandarin teacher during my ‘journey to the west’ in Australia. Then it looks at the implications of these learnings for China. It discusses both the enabling and the limiting factors in the context of China. Given this context, I suggest measures for a compromise between the Grammar-Translation Method and CLT in language classes in order to make CLT cope with China’s particular context. This chapter concludes by indicating possible problems in the practice, which could provide a focus for future research, the next step in my journey as an L2 teacher when I return to China.

Chapter 2

Autoethnography as my methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the design of this research and details the methodology employed in this study. It begins with an explanation of autoethnography as the methodological framework used in this study. Justification for using this approach is also provided. The following sections describe the process of constructing my autoethnography and also the methods used for data collection (such as interviews) and data analysis (such as content analysis). In addition, this chapter also reiterates the focus for the study, including research aims and research questions.

2.2 Autoethnography as a methodological framework for this study

2.2.1 What is autoethnography?

According to Ellis and Bochner (2000), autoethnography is considered an autobiographical genre of educational research which connects the personal to the cultural. Through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, the researching and writing of an autoethnography on the one hand focuses outward on the social and cultural aspects of an autoethnographer's personal experience while on the other hand, it looks inward on a vulnerable self 'that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations' (Deck, Neumann and Reed-Danahay, cited in Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739). Most autoethnography is written in the first person voice. There are various forms of autoethnographic texts, such as 'short stories, poetry, fiction, novels, photographic essays, personal essays, journals, fragmented and

layered writing and social science prose' (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739).

However, Ellis and Bochner (2000) also argue that the precise definition and application of autoethnography has become increasingly more difficult, as the meaning of the term has evolved in many different ways. For example, autoethnography has come to refer to other, similarly situated terms, such as personal narratives (personal narrative groups, cited in Ellis & Bochner, 2000), narrative of the self (Richardson, cited in Ellis & Bochner, 2000), personal experience narrative (Denzin, cited in Ellis & Bochner, 2000), self-stories (Denzin, cited in Ellis & Bochner, 2000), first-person accounts (Ellis, cited in Ellis & Bochner, 2000), personal essays (Krieger, cited in Ellis & Bochner, 2000), and ethnographic short stories (Ellis, cited in Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

Unlike Ellis and Bochner, Jones (2005) defines autoethnography as a radical democratic politics that is committed to creating space for narrative texts and conversations that prompt and shape social change (Reinelt, cited in Jones, 2005). First, Jones describes autoethnography as a balancing act that seeks to embrace self and culture together, to create a state of movement 'between story and context, writer and reader, crisis and denouement' (Jones, 2005, p. 764). On the other hand, Jones (2005, p. 767) agrees with Ellis and Bochner that autoethnography can incorporate features of other writing forms such as autobiography, personal narratives, memoirs, short fiction and performances, to define 'moments for autoethnography'.

According to Hesse-Biber and Nagy (2006), autoethnography can have different meanings, depending on how it is applied and what theory is applied to it. Hesse-Biber's and Nagy's (2006) journal looks at autoethnography as a very general form of autobiographical oral history. Autoethnography explicitly constructs data from the researcher's own life history. In autoethnography:

the personal experience can be interlinked with collective memory, political culture, social power, and so forth, showing the interplay between the individual and the society in which she or he lives (Hesse-Biber & Nagy, 2006, p. 189).

Overall, autoethnography can be classified into many different categories, depending on the particular emphasis: whether on the ‘research process (graphy), on culture (ethnos), or on self (auto)’ (Reed-Danahay, cited in Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 740). Some common approaches associated with autoethnography include reflexive ethnographies, native ethnographies, personal narratives, and literary autoethnographies. In reflexive ethnographies, researchers use their own stories in the culture reflexively to turn back on the self and then move forward in an interaction between self and others. In addition, in reflexive ethnographies the researcher’s own personal stories are important, especially in how they illuminate the culture under study (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Recently, personal narratives focusing on both academic and personal lives have been increasingly applied by social scientists, including educational researchers. These aim to make readers understand a self or some aspect of a life lived in a cultural context. My study is a typical example of the latter, looking into my own journey as a novice Mandarin teacher in the cultural context of Australia. By moving between the culture and myself reflexively, I have been able to look deep into my experience in learning and teaching CLT by considering the social and cultural context where I was situated.

2.2.2 Criticisms

There are many criticisms of the legitimacy of narrative research and writing as an approach to social science (Freeman, 2007; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). First, it is argued that the stories that researchers write have a ‘fictional’ nature, since the structure the stories have does not exist in real life. In addition, the writing of stories to a large extent relies on memory, so the distortions of memory and the mediation of language can make the story questionable. Therefore, there is a question of narrative truth (Freeman, 2007; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). The stories we tell always run the risk of distorting the past. A second group of criticisms hold that the personal narrative reflects or advances a romantic construction of the self which has little value for social science (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), or educational research in particular.

In response, Ellis and Bochner (2000) argue that indeed, for researching and writing a coherent story, the experiences need to be rearranged, redescribed, omitted and revised, but this attribute of personal narrative does not devalue it. The ‘truth’ of the narrative is not akin to a correspondence with prior meanings assumed to be located in some sort of pre-narrative experience, and it does not aim to recover the facts and the already constituted meanings in the past. Instead, the researching and writing of personal stories aims to draw meaning from personal experiences within a particular context from a current view of the researcher. In personal narrative, the project of telling a life is a response to the human problem of intellectual scholarship, the desire to make sense and preserve coherence over the course of our lives.

2.2.3 Significance

Compared to other methods of educational research, the personal narrative of autoethnography is potentially more evocative. According to Geertz (cited in Ellis & Bochner, 2000) the story that narrative researchers write often focuses on a single case and thus leads to some differences from the traditional concerns of research: from generalisation across cases to generalisation within a case. The accessibility and readability of the story encourages readers to be co-participants in dialogue rather than passive receivers of knowledge. Moreover, the revelation of hidden details of personal life emphasises emotional experiences, stressing the journey rather than the destination. The evocative stories activate subjectivity and compel emotional responses. Ellis and Bochner (2000, p. 744) argue as follows:

They long to be used rather than analysed, to be told and retold rather than theorized and settled, to offer lessons for further conversation rather than undebatable conclusions and to substitute the companionship of intimate detail for the loneliness of abstracted fact.

Jones (2005, p. 766) considers that there is a triple crisis among representation, legitimation, and praxis in researching and writing autoethnography:

the drama of representation, legitimation, and praxis is part of an ongoing dialogue between self and world about questions of ontology, epistemology, method, and praxis: what is the nature of knowing, what is the relationship between knower and known, how do we share what we know and with what effect?

In response to these questions, autoethnographic research is focused on personal and detailed experience as a clue to exploring and unfolding the relationships between self and other or between individual and community (Jones, 2005).

The construction of selves in researching and writing personal narratives is also significant in doing autoethnography. Personal narratives can shape and be shaped by the ways of telling (Jones, 2005). It is believed that autoethnographic texts can help an author develop a 'self-investigation' of his/her role in a community, a context and world. Furthermore, autoethnographies can help both the researchers and readers to create, interpret and change their social, cultural, political and personal lives, and more importantly, to enhance their power to reveal and revise some aspects of their world (Jones, 2005). Hence, Jones (2005) finds the necessity to move the focus from representation to presentation, seeking to tell the story in new and interesting ways, to think and rethink researchers' 'positions and commitments, to push through resistance in search of hope' (Jones, 2005, p. 767). Doing autoethnographic research is to seek to use personal experience as 'a means for interpreting the past, translating and transforming contexts, and envisioning a future' (Jones, 2005, pp. 767-768).

Hesse-Biber and Nagy (2006) consider that by doing autoethnography, researchers can use their own experiences, thoughts, feelings and emotions as data to better their understanding of the social world. In addition, doing autoethnography can empower the researcher-subject by raising her/his self-consciousness and reflexivity (Hesse-Biber & Nagy, 2006).

Therefore, in my case, the narrative quality of autoethnography and its oscillation between culture and personal experiences offers an opportunity for me to gain deep insights into CLT at both the theory and practice levels. This is made possible by an interaction between the text (CLT) I learnt from my *reading* and my reaction to this, with a reflection on my own experiences in the cultural context of Australia. This helps me rethink and look deeper into my experiences by moving between cultural

context and my experiences. From this I have been empowered to explore the contextual dynamics underlining my journey as a *reader* of CLT. More importantly, by means of autoethnographic research, I have been able to understand more thoroughly, the underlying meaning of CLT and its relationship with my new world as a novice L2 teacher, by interlinking my own experiences in *reading* CLT with my collective memory and external factors, including the literature in terms of teaching theories, policy and cultural contexts where I have been studying and teaching.

2.2.4 Issues of validity, reliability, and generalisability

Validity is understood as research that seeks verisimilitude. A valid work of research can make readers feel that the written report or thesis is ‘lifelike, believable, and possible’ (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 751). Researchers also understand validity in terms of whether it helps readers communicate with others different from themselves or even improves the lives of the ‘participants’, ‘readers’ or even the researchers. In terms of reliability, autoethnographic research can never meet the requirements of orthodox reliability. What autoethnographers are trying to do is to create a situated personal narrative so as to ‘make the present, imagined future and remembered past cohere’ (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 751). A reliability check can be an effective measure to make data more reliable when doing autoethnography. The researchers can take the work to the people who are involved and let them make comments, add materials, or offer their own interpretations of stories (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

In doing this study, some reliability checks were conducted to confirm my data. In doing so, I used different triangulation measures, including semi-structured interviews, email conversations and phone interviews to seek comments from the people who were also involved in my story. These included my supervising teachers, L2 training lecturer in NSW, my English teacher in China and a policy maker of the Ningbo agreement I was engaged in. From them I was able to gain their interpretation of my own story as complementary data to my reflections on my L2 teaching and learning.

Regarding generalisability, autoethnographic research does not aim to make stories generalisable, though sometimes the stories and lives described can be typical and generalisable, since we still live in a limited number of cultures and social contexts. Ellis and Bochner (2000) argue that the generalisability of autoethnographic research is determined and tested by readers in terms of whether the stories tell something about their experiences and those of others they know. Ellis and Bochner (2000) use the term ‘naturalistic generalisation’, which means that the stories ‘bring “felt” news from one world to another and provide opportunities for the reader to have vicarious experience of the things told’ (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 751).

In terms of naturalistic generalisation, my study may offer some valuable advice and findings for novice teachers who have a similar background to mine and who are beginning teachers from different cultural backgrounds coming to Australia to teach L2. However, generalisability per se is not the major aim of this research. Instead, this study seeks to provide unique perspectives and reflections on a novice’s *reading* of CLT in the cultural context of Australia. I explore and demonstrate what I, as a CLT *reader* and practitioner, really think and do in learning and teaching CLT by tracing my reflections about my L2 teaching and learning experiences. Embeddedness within the cultural context where I was situated was included in the data collection and analyses. Because I was an L2 teacher in Australia and also have experience of L2 learning in China, I was in a good position to conduct this study and offer a valuable perspective on issues on L2 teaching and learning, including the manifestation and usefulness of CLT in the cultural context of Australia.

2.3 Doing my autoethnography: data collection and analysis

2.3.1 Structure of this research

The structure of this research with regard to my *reading* of CLT is summarised in Figure 2.1. By following this framework, I traced my *reading* of CLT through the unfolding of my experience in learning and practising CLT within the cultural

context of Australia. First, I focused outward on the cultural and contextual aspects of my journey. The cultural context of Mandarin teaching in Australia is regarded as a new ‘policy continent’ for me as a novice Mandarin teacher. The ‘policy continent’ is discussed in relation to the *Rudd Report* (1994), the *National Statement for engaging Young Australians with Asia in Australian schools* (2006), and some of the latest perspectives on Chinese teaching in Australia (Orton, 2008). In addition, an interview with a key leader who promoted the Ningbo program for Mandarin teaching is used to gain policy maker’s views on the dynamics of promoting Mandarin teaching in NSW and in Australia more generally (details about interview procedure was in Appendix 2).

After exploring the new ‘policy continent’, this study looks inward on my personal experiences—*reading* the new ‘intellectual continent’ (CLT). Freebody and Luke’s four resources of reading model (cited in NSW DSE, 1997) is applied to demonstrate my *reading* journey. According to this four resources model, the *reading* was manifested in four ways: **code-breaker, text-participant, text user and text analyst**. Key questions that were considered during each stage as a *reader* of CLT follow:

Figure 2.1 Structure of this thesis

A study of questions as a *reader* of CLT

Research questions

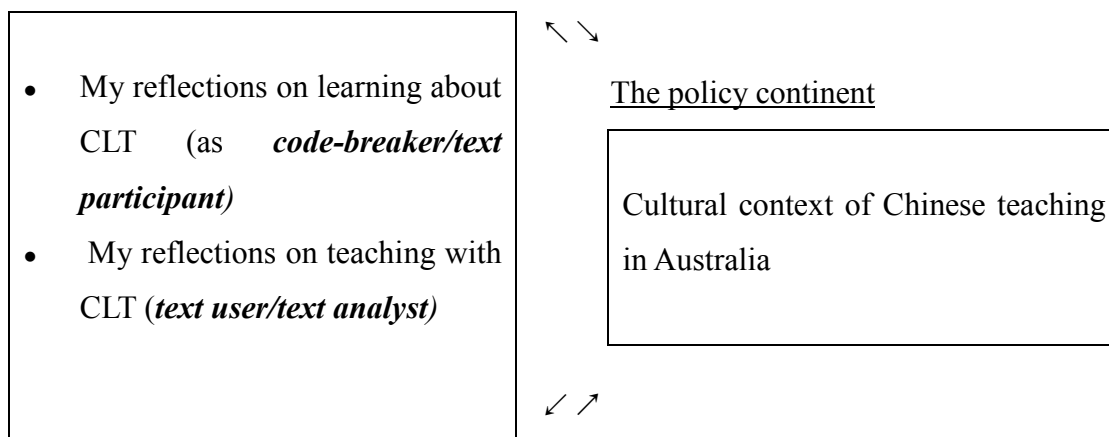
- What is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)? (researcher’s role as code-breaker)
- How does CLT manifest itself? (researcher’s role as text-participant)
- Can I make use of CLT in my own class? (researcher’s role as text-user)
- How can it fit in my new world? (researcher’s role as text-analyst)

to be investigated through the framework of:

Design of this study

Reading

The new intellectual continent



with the data being brought to bear being:

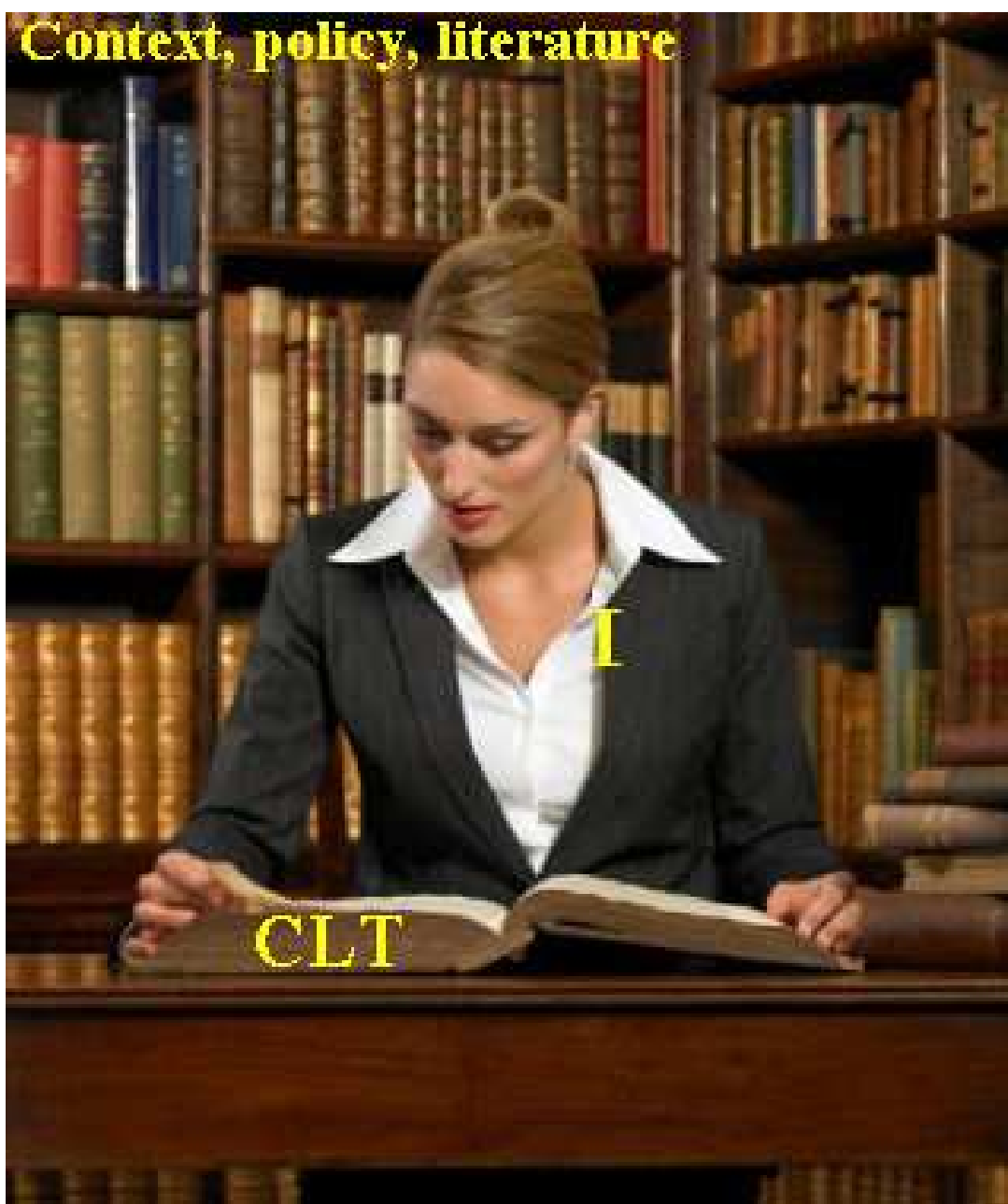
Data sources

Key data	Triangulation data	Documents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • my reflective journal on my teaching in NSW schools • my reflections on L2 teacher training organised by the NSW DET • the memoir of my English learning experience in China 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interview with my supervising teacher, who supported me in my Mandarin class • email conversation with my L2 training lecturer • email conversation with my former English teacher in China • Phone interview with one of the key leaders who promoted the program I am currently involved in as a VTR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Chinese K-10 syllabus</i> in NSW • Chinese teaching resource produced by the NSW DET: <i>Zouba!</i>

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Thus, during my *reading*, there was an interplay between the cultural context and my experiences as *reader* of CLT, which aimed to interlink my personal experiences with literature, theories and the policy context in which I lived. Evidence of the cultural and contextual factors was analysed so as to better understand my experiences and to use my experiences to illuminate the cultural context. Therefore, by using autoethnography, I have been able to oscillate between my personal experiences and the cultural context in tracing my *reading* of CLT. I use Figure 2.2 as a metaphor to illustrate how I constructed my autoethnography for my *reading*.

Figure 2.2



(Photo library image. Retrieved January 6, 2010 from:

<http://cache1.asset-cache.net/xc/200516905001.jpg?v=1&c=NewsMaker&k=2&d=BEE8F6E6581A1106D4B08DCC3B6F76491F6F6178A68B340C>>.

As Figure 2.2 shows, the whole picture of my study can be conceptualised as a woman (I) *reading* and reflecting on her *reading* of CLT within her surrounding context (which in this research involved the CLT literature, the policy context where I was living, and L2 teaching theories). To frame this picture, Freebody and Luke's four resources model (cited in NSW DSE, 1997) is applied by the reader to trace her

reading step by step.

2.3.2.1 Part 1 of my *reading*

As a **code-breaker** and **text-participant**, I first sought to understand what CLT is by tracing my experiences in learning about CLT in L2 teacher training and through a literature review. My reflections on my prior English learning experience in China followed this and were used to describe my reactions to my *reading* and to illustrate how my learning of CLT and prior learning experiences led to my appreciation of this teaching approach. To triangulate my data, I conducted an email conversation with my former English teacher in China, exploring her views on L2 teaching in the context of China (for details see Appendix 2). The aim was to complement my set of analyses by exploring a practitioner's point of view on the underlying forces that influenced her teaching in a Chinese context.

In addition, I also analysed how CLT is reflected in and what CLT looks like, in NSW policy by analysing the Chinese syllabus (Board of Studies [BoS] NSW, 2003) and Chinese teaching resources *Zouba!* (DET NSW, 2003). I used Table 2.1 to analyse these policy texts in terms of CLT. Based on this framework (Table 2.1), first, from each document, I picked out the objects that are connected with CLT characteristics. Then I analysed the deeper meaning for those objects and examined the extent to which those objects conform to each CLT principle. After that, I wrote an overview of the whole structure of each policy text to analyse how explicitly CLT is reflected in those policies. By doing so, I sought to explore the beliefs and policy directions in terms of L2 learning and teaching so as to ascertain how CLT is manifested in these policy texts. Furthermore, interview evidence from my L2 teaching training lecturer and my supervising teacher, who taught in NSW schools, has also been used in order to gain practitioners' views on the role of CLT in syllabus and how this influences their teaching. Details about interview questions and procedures are listed in Appendix 2.

Table 2.1 Framework for the analysis in terms of CLT characteristics

Basic Principle	Leads to
Emphasis on communication more than structure (Lee & Vanpatten, 2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Dialogues, if used, centre around communicative functions and are not normally memorised’ (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 156) • A tolerance of grammatical errors
Emphasis on functional uses of language in different social settings (Nunan, 2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a genuine, realistic learning situation
Emphasis on meaningfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drilling may occur, but peripherally • In favour of active meaning-making through activities such as group work, task-work, information-gap activities and projects (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).
Activity based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise students’ use of target language through task-based activities and group works etc.
Emphasis on authenticity (Richards & Rodgers, 2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of authentic, from-life materials
Learner-centred and experience-based (Richards & Rodgers, 2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organising various learning programs to cater for the different communicative needs of different groups of learners (Murphy, n.d.).
Teacher is a guide, counsellor, organiser, and facilitator to create experiences for the learners (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).	

2.3.2.2 Part 2 of my *reading*

In the process of being a **text-user**, I looked at how I made use of CLT in my own Mandarin class. I focused on what issues and challenges I encountered during my teaching. My own reflective journals on my teaching have been the key data used in the analyses. Content analysis was applied for coding and data reduction. The aim was to reduce the copious amounts of my journal data to manageable and comprehensible proportions, while respecting the quality of my data (Cohen & Manion & Morrison, 2007). To achieve this goal, I engaged in a process by which the ‘many words of texts are classified into much fewer categories’ (Weber, cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 475).

To code my reflective journals, I used three coding categories to characterise each lesson of my class based on my framework for analysis in terms of CLT characteristics (Table 2.1):

1) Not CLT

2) CLT attempted but not fully successful

3) CLT successful

There is also a discussion of problems/issues that arose where relevant. After summarising each lesson into key points in terms of CLT, the second step was to put these lessons into a separate Table according to the level of CLT implementation and Year level (see Appendix 1). Based on each data set, the next step was to categorise themes, which helped explain success in CLT or its lack, for example. During this process, I highlighted similar concepts or terms with the same colour, to produce a descriptive analysis of preliminary categories (Strauss & Corbin, cited in Watzke, 2007) based on the different levels of CLT implementation. The fourth step involved further analysis of the preliminary categories by examining the relationship between different categories to identify core categories for addressing linkages across my data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

Based on the developed categories, the presentation of the results addresses key issues that emerged from the analysis of evidence of my teaching as a CLT practitioner. Expanded samples from my reflective journals were also incorporated as contextual illustrations of my analysis. In addition, comments from interviews with my supervising teachers were also used as triangulation measures to check the reliability of my data and confirm the results of my analysis. To do so, I interviewed my teacher training lecturer and two of my supervising teachers, asking for their opinions about CLT and my practice of it in my class.

After coding evidence of my practice of CLT, I explored the theoretical implications of my experience as a novice teacher and CLT practitioner. Two theories were applied: stage theory (Barnes, 2006; Leask & Moorhouse, 2005; Arends, 2004) and a model of pedagogical knowledge development (Watzke, 2007). Both theories were employed to explain the struggles I had been through in my teaching and the development I had achieved as a novice L2 teacher and CLT user.

In the final process of my *reading*, as a CLT **text-analyst**, this research explores the implications of my *reading* journey for China. How can it fit in my new world? First, both the enabling and the limiting factors are discussed in the context of China. Under this context, I suggest compromise measures between the Chinese traditional method (the Grammar-Translation Method) and CLT in language classes by adopting what I learnt from my *reading* in my ‘journey to the west’. Nevertheless, these suggestions lack empirical evidence, and this requires further research to examine their feasibility in the Chinese context.

The next chapter explores the ‘policy continent’ I discussed in Australia and explains the policy background and context for my journey as a novice Mandarin teacher who had to learn and *read* CLT and L2 teaching methodology in NSW.

Chapter 3

The ‘policy continent’ I entered

3.1 Introduction

Because of my engagement in the Ningbo Agreement as a Volunteer Teacher Researcher, I was sent to Australia by the Ningbo Government on a mission to advocate Mandarin and promote Chinese culture in NSW. As a novice Mandarin teacher who has always lived and studied in China, the cultural context of Chinese teaching in Australia was a brand new ‘continent’ to me. Therefore, I conceptualised the cultural context of Mandarin teaching in Australia as my new ‘policy continent’. To fulfil my mission as an ‘ambassador’ of Chinese language and culture in NSW, and to explore the contextual dynamics underlining my journey of Mandarin teaching and *reading* with CLT, an understanding of the context of Mandarin teaching in Australia is the first step on my ‘journey to the west’.

By unfolding this new ‘policy continent’, this chapter explores the driving forces behind Australia’s Chinese language policy and programs. This includes the Ningbo Agreement, as part of which I was involved in advocating for Chinese language and culture in the WSR of NSW. More specifically, this enabled me to understand more thoroughly the underlying factors as to why I was needed in Australia and how significant my mission was as a volunteer Mandarin teacher. More importantly, by reviewing the literature on Chinese teaching in Australia, including both the positive and negative sides, I was empowered to recognise, account for and cope with the challenges I faced within the context of Australia and the mission I undertook in order to make my teaching fit to the needs of Australian students.

In order to explore this ‘policy continent’, the discussion is first based on the debate about the Rudd Report (1994), which was one of the most significant policies developed in 1994 for promoting Asian languages in Australia. The second part of

discussion focuses on more recent policies on Chinese language teaching in Australia: specifically, the *National Statement for engaging young Australians with Asia in Australian Schools* (Department of Education, Science and Training [DEST], 2006) which presents the fundamental knowledge about the current context of policies regarding the teaching of Asian languages in Australia. In addition, Orton's (2008) report provides a recent and comprehensive picture of Chinese language teaching in Australia. Furthermore, the opinions from a NSW education leader are also included, to provide a policy maker's perspectives on Chinese language education policy in Australia.

3.2 The Rudd Report

Kevin Rudd's (1994) *Report prepared for the council of Australian Governments on a proposed national Asian languages/studies strategy for Australian schools* comprehensively argues the significance of Asian languages and cultures to the development of Australia's economy in the Asia-Pacific region, especially given China's role in Australia's export market. Here it should be noted that the author of this report, Kevin Rudd, became Australia's Prime Minister in 2007. He was the Director-General of the Office of Cabinet in Queensland at the time when he proposed this Report. In this position, Rudd initiated a number of reforms for the development of national programs for teaching foreign languages, especially Asian languages.

3.2.1 Asian countries' economic role in Australia

The background to the Rudd Report (1994) is as follows: sources of investment in the international economy, including Australia, have changed in the modern era. Statistics show that a third of the world's foreign currency reserves and savings are held by Asian central banks. As a consequence, the world will increasingly rely on Asia for its capital (Rudd, 1994). This was borne out in the 2008-2009 global financial crisis, when China financed the USA's stimulus recovery strategy. It was

estimated by the East Asia Analytical Unit (EAAU) of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in 1994 that between 1994 and 2012, most of Australia's top ten merchandise export markets would be in East Asian countries, including China (Rudd, 1994); this is now the case. Apart from merchandise trade, trade in services is also significant in Australia's economy, in which tourism and education are major service exports. Foreign visitors from South-East Asian countries have increased significantly in recent years. It was anticipated in 1994 that in the future an increasing number of the affluent and mobile middle class in East Asian countries would travel to Australia (Rudd, 1994, p. iv). China is now a source of many tourists coming to Australia.

Given the significant role of East Asian countries to Australia's economy, in the 1980s and '90s, the Government made a concerted national policy effort to promote the internationalisation of the Australian economy. The major policy measures included 'exchange rate deregulation, financial deregulation, the lowering of protection, an active multilateral trade policy' (Rudd, 1994, p. ii). However, only relying on the implementation of those economic policy measures to enhance Australia's competitiveness was not enough. Rudd (1994, p. ii) argued that competitiveness is not only determined by objective costs (although it is always the primary determinant), it is also affected by non-cost factors, especially effective inter-cultural communication skills.

3.2.2 Economic significance of East Asian languages and cultures to Australia

In the years immediately preceding the Rudd Report (1994), Australian 'export culture' had been a subject of study in terms of Australia's growing economic interdependence with other countries. The Asian languages Australia focused on at that time were: Japanese, Chinese (Mandarin), Indonesian and Korean. In the view of Rudd (1994), the export culture involved the continuation of the national economic policy measures for enhancing Australia's international cost-competitiveness. Moreover, this also involved 'removing attitudinal and perceptual impediments to exports by equipping firms with future employees who were familiar with the

countries, languages and cultures of the region (Rudd, 1994, p. ii). Therefore, Rudd argued that Australia needed an export culture which is 'Asia literate', with more people possessing the range of Asian linguistic and cultural competencies need by Australia to operate effectively at different levels in various dealings with the region (Rudd, 1994, p. ii).

The importance of promoting an export culture in the Asian region partly focuses on the domestic market by inculcating languages and cultural skills into the overall skills base of the Australian workforce. Rudd's (1994, pp. vi-vii) rationale for fostering an export culture in firms in Australia is as follows:

- First, language skills are important to equip firms with an enhanced physical capacity to communicate with those in regional markets.
- Second, 'culture' skills are essential to communicate with Asian people sensitively and effectively by understanding Asian societies and their political, economic and cultural diversity.
- Furthermore, culturally appropriate communication skills are crucial to the effective performance of firms in any market, either export or domestic.
- Moreover, although English is generally conceived of as an important international language, it cannot replace other international languages, such as Chinese, especially in trade with small and medium size businesses selling specialised products and services.
- The rapid development of information technology in the field of voice-activated translation, applied to commercial activities, cannot meet the more fundamental attitudinal objective of developing a long term Australian labour force, management and general community which is adequately 'Asia literate'.
- Also, the gradual growth in the quantity, complexity and intensity of Australian economic transactions with other regions in the two decades before this report, had led to a demand for 'a greater breadth and depth of languages/cultures skills' than in the past. What is more, there was also a need for a generation in Australia to incorporate language and culture techniques in other professional and occupational skills, rather than just generating specialist linguistics.
- Finally, according to community surveys, Rudd argued, the Australian community was generally convinced that Australia's future economic success

largely depended on progress in developing second language skills, in particular Asian languages skills.

3.2.3 Commonwealth, state and territory government's efforts in supporting Asian language teaching at the time of the Rudd Report

With the recognition of the overall importance of promoting Asian languages to future Australian economic interests, the Rudd Report (1994) also reviewed the efforts by State jurisdictions in fostering Asian language teaching in Australia. A range of programs had been offered to promote second language teaching (including Asian languages) in schools by the Commonwealth, for example:

- The **school language program** provided two elements: **the priority languages incentive element** (which offered a \$327 payment for every student completing a Year 12 course in a second language) and the **languages, Community languages element** (which gave support for the provision of Asian languages in mainstream and ethnic schools; Rudd, 1994, p. vii).
- The **Asian Languages Teachers In-Country Scholarship (ALTICS)** went to support Australian teachers of Asian courses to have short-term in-country study of Asian languages and cultures (Rudd, 1994, p. viii).

Efforts were also made by many States and Territories to encourage second language teaching. The study of a second language was moved toward being a non-elective part of the core curriculum for the compulsory years of schooling. In particular, New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland adopted this policy prior to the Rudd report (1994).

Funding for the implementation of strategies in Asian languages was significant in Australia in 1994. \$ 52 million went to government schools for implementing Asian languages, and \$ 69.2 million was provided for Asian language teaching programs in the non-government sector. However, there was a significant gap which needed to be addressed, between the policy intent of jurisdictions for mandating L2 study in the curricula and the overall funding performance of jurisdictions (Rudd, 1994).

Government and education authorities in Australia had made an effort to advocate and support the study of Asian languages in school teaching, such as by demonstrating the importance of Asian language learning for national and personal reasons, and increasing the funding for teaching in that area. Notwithstanding this, the reality was that the proportion of Year 12 students in Australia choosing a second language was in decline in 1994 (Rudd, 1994). In the late 1960s, almost 40% of final year school students studied a second language. By 1982, the figure had declined to 16.1% (Rudd, 1994, p. iii). In 1992, only 12.5% of Year 12 students in Australia were studying a second language, with only 4% choosing an Asian language as a priority language (Rudd, 1994, p. iii).

3.2.4 Recommendations for supporting Asian language study in Australian schools

The Rudd Report (1994) gave a variety of recommendations to the Council Of Australian Governments (COAG) to reinforce the development of Asian language teaching in Australia. Recommendations for the promotion of Asian languages and cultures mainly focused on three key elements:

- **Appropriate national targets (both quantitative and qualitative):**

It was recommended that the Governments set up adequate quantitative and qualitative targets for Year 12 students studying a second language, especially Asian languages, in order to achieve reasonable outcomes. In addition, Governments should over time, develop second languages as a compulsory school subject (Rudd, 1994, pp. x-xi).

- **Structured measures to increase the supply of high quality language and culture skills over time**

Long term teacher supply was considered critical to the overall development of Asian language study in schools. It was believed by Rudd (1994) that a long term training program for new teachers was needed, to improve the quality of Asian language teaching. Moreover, the curricula, syllabuses and course materials for

Asian languages also needed to be further developed and refined to improve the quality of Asian language teaching. It was recommended that Education Ministers endorse current second language curriculum developments in all jurisdictions. Rudd (1994) argued that a more co-operative relationship between schools, TAFE and universities was needed to effectively facilitate students' studying of second languages, especially Asian languages.

- **A range of measures to increase demand for Asian languages/culture skills in the economy**

It was recommended that:

- a working group of representatives of the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, AVCC and ANTA to examine the future role of second languages as a possible pre-requisite, or bonus, for certain post-secondary courses, and report back to COAG by March 1995;
- all systems examine any impediments arising from current Year 12 assessment, reporting and testing procedures for languages other than English so as to remove any existing disincentives faced by non-native speakers competing against native speakers.
(Rudd, 1994, p. xii).

Moreover, it was also suggested that Governments advance the starting age for the study of Asian languages, to Year 3 (Rudd, 1994, p. xiii). It was also recommended that more desirable 'intensities' of instruction be set up to achieve desirable outcomes in studying second languages. Immersion courses in Asian language studying were recommended in both primary and secondary schools (Rudd, 1994, p. xiii).

3.3 Singh's and Henderson's discussions of the Rudd report

3.3.1 The context of the Rudd Report regarding Asian countries' growing role in trade, national security and career issues in Australia

Michael Singh (1996) indicates that the strategy's aim in the Rudd report was to boost Australia's economic performance and provide new employment by making Australians 'Asia literate', given Asian countries' increasingly important role for

Australia and the world at large (Singh, 1996, p. 153). It is considered that the Rudd Report provided a reasonable understanding of the issues within the context of changing geopolitical and international economic relations. According to Singh (1996), the Rudd report proposes policies that occurred in Australia's transition from British imperial dependency to being repositioned in a post-modern, postcolonial world characterised by the rapid rise of Asia and growing interdependence between Australian and Asian countries.

Agreeing with Singh, Deborah Henderson (2008) argues that the Rudd Report reflects the far-reaching policy dynamics of the Hawke/Keating period in a broad sense, when domestic economic policy was aimed at upgrading Australia's international competitiveness, and when the Asian region, especially East Asia, experienced rapid economic growth. By 1992, the Asia-Pacific economies made up the largest economic grouping in the world, and were major sources of capital for the global economy (EAAU, cited in Henderson, 2008). Therefore, Asia became a great potential investor and market for Australian goods. And the change pattern of Asia could be considered as a model for the transformation of the Australian economy. Moreover, Asian countries also became important potential partners in developing a new security agreement (Henderson, 2008).

Singh (1996) argues that the Rudd report also interlinks Asian studies with career issues in Australia. In order to 'penetrate' Asian markets, the Rudd Report increases support to those who advocate languages other than English as compulsory in schools. More importantly, the Government indicated its intention to fund educational provision for particular Asian languages. The focus for Asia literacy (Japan, Korea, Indonesia and China) implies that students with high Asian literacy can be provided with greater access to the job market (Singh, 1996).

3.3.2 Social, cultural and educational challenges to promote Asian studies in Australia

During the period when Howard government was having the election, there was a

popular resistance to Asian literacy. According to Henderson (2008) and Singh (1996), there were many constraints on Australia's move to engage with Asia. First, political and cultural differences determined that Australia was neither in, nor of, the Asian region but rather remained constantly adjacent to it (Viviani, cited in Henderson, 2008). Second, the rise of economic power in East Asia prompted local belief in the superiority of Asian cultural traits. The notion of an 'Asian Way' was used by leaders in Southeast Asia in particular to demonstrate their distinctiveness from the West for political purposes, especially for rebutting Western criticism of human rights. This led to challenges for Australia's diplomacy with Asia (Henderson, 2008).

Socio-cultural issues were also challenges to Australia's policy of engaging with Asia. According to Singh (1996), it has been commonly recognised that Asia has an increasingly significant impact on Australia in terms of economics, but the cultural implications of these changes remain controversial and even unacknowledged. Singh (1996) argues that this contestation could be considered part of both Australia's struggle to deal with the decentring of an apparently obsolete British centre and its aristocratic and monarchical remnants, as well as its heightened consciousness of being peripheral to the process of global restructuring (Bamyeh, cited in Singh, 1996, p. 165). The massive Asian immigration from 1975 onwards was significant for creating a socio-cultural climate in which some Australians—some, but certainly not all—feel threatened by the idea of Asian communities within their society (Viviani, cited in Henderson, 2008). The Government's awareness of such resistance to Asian engagement, and the growing role of Asia in the Australian economy, presented the necessity for Australia to shift public opinion and to create a new workforce with new skills for facilitating interaction with Asia (Henderson, 2008).

In terms of education, although it was assumed by the Hawke Government that national education was indispensable to economic recovery, the prioritising of Asian languages and culture was a matter of debate among policy elites. The utilitarianism in the approach to Asian studies is one issue that was criticised, for 'downgrading the intellectual, philosophical and cultural rationales for Asian studies' (Healy, cited in Henderson, 2008, p. 177). Part of the critique was of the education sector, which showed a lack of foresight and preparation for an emphasis on Asian studies, along

with discontent with Government intervention in education policy. As a consequence, policies targeting Asian studies in the Hawke Government were not all implemented. Moreover, Singh (1996) argues that the Rudd Report (1994) only looks at a very few aspects of the national debate, such as multiculturalism, in terms of Asian studies, while no consideration is given to sensitive issues including 'imperialism, racism, ethnocentrism and sexism'. For instance, issues of Asia literacy can be associated with 'civil rights, social justice, gender equity, economic morality and environmental issues (Asia Education Foundation, cited in Singh, 1996, p. 166). The Rudd Report (1994) also failed to recognise the significant but problematic connections between multicultural education and Asia literacy (Forbes, cited in Singh, 1996; Lo Bianco, in Singh, 1996). These two educational initiatives show the repositioning of Australia in the past half century, due to the decline in its economic and military dependency on Britain and its growing economic interdependence with the Asia-Pacific region (Singh, 1996, p. 164).

Therefore, Singh (1996) argues that the Rudd Report (1994) only incorporated selected aspects in its socio-historical context. The social and cultural aspects of the influence imposed by Asia are not given enough account in the Rudd Report, given that not only the economy, but Australian society and culture, are also potentially influenced by studies of Asian languages and culture (Singh, 1996). The Rudd Report, he points out, lacked a long-term strategy for reconstituting what and how Australians think about themselves and about Asia, as well as lacking recognition of the interdependence of Australian and Asian cultures and histories.

Singh (1996) considers that studies of Asian languages and culture do, at least to some extent, provide an opportunity to reconstruct Australia's curriculum in order to engage with Asians and to realise that Australia is a fluid country with multiple cultures, where the unbecoming subjects of British imperialism and colonialism now live, and in which 'Asia is a part of its culture, its identity affected by a history of transnational cultural traffic' (Singh, 1996, p. 163). Singh (1996) indicates the necessity to consider how to productively link together the crises created by policy developments in Asia literacy and by apparent indifference to multicultural education. Through productive negotiations with the crises arising from the urgent need for Asia literacy in areas such as multicultural education and social democratic educational

projects, policy makers might be able to explore what education has to offer this social, cultural and economic project.

3.3.3 Resistance from bureaucrats to Asia literacy strategies in Australia

Resistance from bureaucrats to Asia literacy strategies is also indicated by Henderson's (2008) and Singh's (1996) studies of the Rudd Report. In addition to giving a demonstration of the importance of Asian studies in terms of Australia's economic interests, the Rudd Report (1994) also indicated a series of problems to Chinese curriculum development, especially the inadequate funding and the lack of uniform language proficiency standards and the insufficient number of qualified teachers (Singh, 1996). Less funding was available to implement policies for Asian studies partly because of the split of available funding between the Advisory Council on Languages and Multicultural Education (AACLAME) and the Asian Studies Council (ASC) (Henderson, 2008). In spite of the strong rhetoric of the Government for Asian studies, part of the Commonwealth Government still did not value the importance of Asian languages, and the push towards Asia literacy was still considered suspect by some, especially given the limitations and dangers of an economic reductionist framework (Henderson, 2008; Singh, 1996). The long-standing dominant role of English was also used to reinforce their argument. As a consequence, although the proposal was endorsed in 1994, powerful resistance from bureaucrats made Rudd unable to secure the Commonwealth's position on funding (Henderson, 2008).

3.3.4 Implementation and achievements

Although there were many difficulties, coming from various sources, in implementing Asia literacy policy, there were many achievements. The NALSAS Taskforce was founded to coordinate the strategy, though the responsibility for implementing it still depended on State and Territory education authorities. Despite

the contested issues of funding and the readjustment of timelines, success was achieved in the initial phase, through the NALSAS strategy. The key achievement involved an increase in Australian school enrolments in the priority languages so that there were more than 600,000 Asian language learners in schools by 1998 (NALSAS, cited in Henderson, 2008). In addition, there was a rapid rise in the number of teachers who participated in training in Asian languages and Asian studies. Moreover, many projects were also completed in areas of ‘teacher training and professional development, program delivery, curriculum resources and international and cooperative partnerships’ (Henderson, 2008, p. 187). Henderson (2008) argues that these achievements were significant, given the policy’s broad scale: ongoing debates over funding and the power plays among different political groups.

3.4 Review of *National Statement for engaging young Australians with Asia in Australian Schools*

The *Statement* illustrates the fundamental knowledge, understandings and skills in terms of engagement with Asia¹ within the current context of policies on teaching and learning in Australia (DEST, 2006). It reflects the efforts of all education jurisdictions and schools in integrating Asian studies across learning areas, in particular Asian languages.

3.4.1 Significance of engaging with Asia for Australia

Enhancing an understanding and knowledge of Asia and relationships between Australia and Asia can contribute significantly to Australia’s social, creative and intellectual development and also to harmony in Asian countries and the wider world.

¹ Studies of Asia involve the regions of:

- North-east Asia, including China, Japan, North Korea, South Korea and Taiwan.
- South-east Asia, including Indonesia, Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, Vietnam, Laos, East Timor, the Philippines and Cambodia.
- South Asia, including India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

The Asian region plays a significant role for Australia in areas such as security and economics, education, migration, and service industries. This has grown over the past several decades. Therefore, young Australians should be prepared to engage with Asian peoples in order to ensure a sustainable future and to secure a stable economy in Australia within the changing world (DEST, 2006, p. 4). Moreover, a better understanding of Asian societies and cultures can help Australian people to resolve possible future political, strategic or economic conflicts between Australia and the Asian region (DEST, 2006, p. 5).

An understanding of cultural diversity in the Asian region can make a contribution to a harmonious and multicultural society in Australia (DEST, 2006). Up until 2006, 800,000 Australians were Asian language speakers at home, and Asian students comprised 20% of all university students in Australia by 2006 (DEST, 2006, p. 5). Therefore, schools have to assist students' understanding of the diversity, values and society of Asian countries in order to ensure community harmony, given that Australia is characterised by cultural diversity (DEST, 2006). The *Statement* also points out that a deeper understanding of Asian cultures and societies is also likely to have a great impact on the evolution of Australian cultural life, as the Asian region's diverse cultures (in philosophies, aesthetics and arts) broaden Australians' intellectual and creative horizons (DEST, 2006).

For Australia, engaging with Asia also carries great economic benefits. In 2005, more than half of Australia's two-way trade was with Asia. It was anticipated then that by 2010, Australia's largest trading partner would be China (DEST, 2006, p. 6); this is now the case. The rapid change in and increased affluence of Asian countries requires Australians to develop a deeper knowledge of Asian cultures, values and languages so as to have better communication skills with the people of Asia. In particular, the ever-growing services sector in Australia demands an enhancement of cross-cultural communication skills and understandings (including languages; DEST, 2006, p. 6).

3.4.2 Knowledge, understandings and skills related to studies of Asia in

Australian schools

The *Statement* (DEST, 2006) identifies the knowledge and skills related to Asia that are required to be developed by the end of the schooling of young Australians. Through courses in Asian studies, students are expected to be able to understand what Asia is, to develop informed attitudes and values about Asia; to have knowledge of contemporary and traditional Asia; to connect Australia and Asia; and also to develop communication skills with the people of Asia.

3.4.3 Engaging young Australians with Asia through education

The *Statement* (DEST, 2006) identifies six elements intended to support engaging young Australians with Asia. The first element is teaching and learning, in which studies of Asia and Australia are included across the curriculum to help engage young Australians with Asia. The *Statement* suggests that Asian studies should have long-term planning for at least five years so that students have many chances to be exposed to a knowledge of Asia in a range of curriculum areas. Moreover, it is also necessary to include studies of Asia within the mainstream curriculum in schools. In addition, a whole school plan should be specific about Asian studies in terms of time allocation, the level of resources and staffing arrangements (DEST, 2006, p. 11). The *Statement* also gives recommendations in terms of curriculum design. An appropriate set of learning experiences about Asia is expected to span the curriculum from school entry to Year 12 and should be created to give opportunities for students to have lifelong learning about Asia.

With regard to sequence, different level of requirements about knowledge in Asia needs to be clarified for students at different year level of schooling. In the beginning years of schooling, studies of Asia should be aimed to inspire students' interest, and willingness to know about cultural diversity in Asia. In the middle years, students should develop 'a conceptual framework, a body of knowledge and set of skills' in Asian regions according to Asian studies (DEST, 2006, p. 12). By the end of secondary schooling, students should be able to 'synthesise, analyse, reflect on and

apply their learning to personal experiences of Asia' (DEST, 2006, p. 12).

As to curriculum resources, this *Statement* indicates that the following are criteria for resource development to the support of studies of Asia and Australia:

- Provide new content knowledge in national, State/Territory priority areas linked to studies of Asia and Australia
- Link directly to a programme of professional learning, aimed at assisting teachers to implement the intentions of that programme.
- Illustrate the adoption of new teaching and learning approaches, designed to counteract ethnocentric attitudes and stereotyping.
- Assist teachers in acquiring authentic and culturally respectful sources of information about Asian peoples, events, issues and lifestyles.
- Assist teachers in receptivity to and empathy towards different cultures and an understanding of broader philosophical and pedagogical issues involved in the development of cultural understanding and empathy.
- Illustrate exemplary classroom practice in this area.
- Be available in a range of media, including text, CD-ROM, DVD and online.

(DEST, 2006, pp. 15-16)

In order to ensure high teaching quality, teachers should engage in continuing professional learning to support studies of Asia and Australia. This *Statement* suggests that programs could deliver through a range of initiatives such as 'formal university courses, in country study programmes, short and extended professional learning workshops and school-based programmes' (DEST, 2006, p. 17).

Engaging parents and the community is also an important element for supporting the engagement of young Australians with Asia, as parents are essential to school leadership and setting school priorities through a variety of parent bodies. Increasingly, more programmes are expected to be developed for supporting schools in engaging parents and school communities to put the priority of engaging young Australians with Asia (DEST, 2006, p. 17). Apart from parent engagement, in order to ensure a qualified teacher supply, adequate teacher training programmes have to be developed to prepare a sufficient number of new teachers who are able to support studies of Asia and Australia (DEST, 2006).

In order to monitor and review progress in students' achievement in engaging with Asia, the following programmes are to be developed:

- The integration of studies of Asia and Australia in the curriculum, measured by system policies and numbers of schools, teachers and students participating
 - The quality of school programmes, teacher skills and student learning achieved as a result of the programme.
- (DEST, 2006, p. 19)

Moreover, it is pointed out that the following indicators will be useful in measuring progress in both participation and learning and teaching about Asia and Australia in schools. Indicators are such as:

- Curriculum policy statements of education jurisdictions that reflect the vision of this National Statement
 - Levels of provision for students engaged in learning an Asian language are monitored
 - Student achievement in knowledge, skills, understandings and attitudes related to studies of Asia Australia are monitored
 - Teachers have access to professional learning designed to improve studies of Asia and Australia in schools
 - High quality teaching and learning resources about Asia are being used in schools
 - Teacher education programmes offer increased attention to studies of Asia and Australia in course content and practice.
- (DEST, 2006, p. 19)

3.5 Orton's report on Mandarin teaching in Australia

With regard to the context of Chinese language education in Australia, this section derives heavily from the work of Orton as providing the most comprehensive recent overview of the field. Orton (2008) argues that nowadays, China is playing an increasingly important role in Australia and the world at large. For Australia, Orton (2008, p. 4) describes China as:

A regional neighbour
 Its largest trading partner
 A rising world economic power
 A major source of immigrant workforce
 A major source of international students
 A major source of tourists to Australia
 A major destination for Australian tourists
 The source of its biggest immigrant settlers

A country with a long and prestigious culture
Home to 1 in 5 human beings on the Earth

Therefore, developing a sound relationship with China implies great economic and social benefits to Australia. This requires Australians to have a deep understanding of China and good skills in using Chinese languages. However, despite Australian Governments recognising the importance of promoting Chinese language in Australia and also putting efforts into supporting that, the results to date are not very promising. Statistics indicate that by 2007, there were fewer than 20% of Australian workers in China who could speak Chinese and only 10 % of them had studied subjects related to China (Orton, 2008). Nationally, only 3% of Year 12 students in Australia study a Chinese language (especially Mandarin), and 90% of them are Chinese-background learners. Almost 94% of learners who have taken Chinese language drop out before Year 12, when the language is no longer mandated (Orton, 2008).

3.5.1 Chinese programs

Orton (2008) provides a detailed picture of the situation of Chinese language teaching in Australia in terms of program types, curriculum, current development, staffing and professional development. At present, Chinese as a language course is taught in a total of 319 schools in Australia, with Victoria having the largest number of students learning Chinese (Orton, 2008). Nevertheless, Chinese is mainly taught in large urban areas. It is very difficult to take Chinese courses in the countryside of Australia unless it is through distance education. Another problem concerns the grouping of different types of students. There are no uniform rules for determining the allocation for local students as first or second language learners in Australia (Orton, 2008).

Primary Chinese language courses are almost totally organised for second language learners, but there are also community language programs for students who speak Chinese at home, such as programs in Queensland and NSW (Orton, 2008). In primary schools, the 'Chinese program' can be delivered in a variety of ways, with different content taught and different times allocated to its teaching. There are some

especially successful Chinese programs in primary schools, such as bilingual Chinese programs in two government primary schools in Melbourne, a primary immersion school in NSW and some primary schools adopting an intensive program of one hour per day of language work over Years 6 and 7 in Queensland (Orton, 2008).

The Chinese program in secondary schools is much more uniform than in primary schools. In many secondary schools, there are no separate Chinese programs for absolute beginners, as opposed to students who had Chinese learning experiences in primary schools as well as students who speak Chinese at home. In some private schools with strong primary programs, there may be separate streams for Chinese beginners, on-going second language learners, and native speaker streams as well. In all States and Territories, all secondary schools are required to provide language courses in the first two to three years (Orton, 2008). In NSW, language study only takes a total of 100 compulsory hours for a student's entire secondary schooling (Orton, 2008).

There are many external programs in Chinese studies, especially programs with sister schools in China. Many reciprocal activities are arranged for students and teachers in sister schools in China and Australia, such as exchange programs or study tours (Orton, 2008). Some independent schools even establish their own campus in China. By 2008, a variety of Chinese programs had been funded by the International Office of the Victorian Government Department of Education (Orton, 2008).

3.5.2 Chinese Curriculum

All States and Territories, except NSW, group Chinese with other languages in a common curriculum and assessment framework (Orton, 2008). Only NSW developed a curriculum particularly for Chinese course. There has been no nationally-based Chinese school curriculum for use since the early 1990s. Textbooks and other teaching material and national curricula for primary and secondary Chinese were produced in the early 1990s. Many of those teaching resources are now considered outdated in regard to the recent changes of China's contexts especially economic and

cultural change, many of which have been momentous (Orton, 2008).

While some new courses and revised materials have been produced for learning Chinese in recent years, the range is quite narrow. Only two or three textbook series are commonly used throughout Australia (Orton, 2008). Interactive computer-based materials have been developed especially for learning Chinese, in particular for beginner-intermediate students (Orton, 2008). In recent years, a number of more generic language teaching documents, such as the Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning in Practice project, have been published; these focus on Asian languages (Orton, 2008). Apart from that, many imported Chinese teaching materials from Singapore, Hong Kong, and mainland China are part of the resources for teaching in Australia. However, those imported materials are not positively accepted by local second language teachers and students (Orton, 2008). Critics argue that in those materials, there are too many unknown characters, and that these destroy smooth reading and understanding. Further, there are different learning styles and aims embedded in resources from Chinese mainland societies. There is a lack of scaffolding in tasks, a use of too many question-answer checks, and a lack of interculturality (Orton, 2008).

3.5.3 Staffing and teacher supply

Regarding teacher supply, most teachers of Chinese in Australia are native Chinese speakers; these are about 90 % of the entire group of teachers. Many of them are just part-time teachers (Orton, 2008). The lack of supply of qualified teachers has become the primary concern that constrains the development of Chinese programs in many parts of Australia (Orton, 2008). In order to ensure a more qualified teacher supply, many States and Territories fund Chinese teacher education places in university for those already approved teachers of Chinese who lack formal language teaching qualifications (Orton, 2008). However, such teacher educator programs are usually grouped with other languages. Therefore, the challenges of their particular language are not addressed (Orton, 2008). Thus, teachers of Chinese are rarely trained in the teaching of tones, characters and grammatical features of Mandarin (Orton, 2008).

As mentioned before, most teachers of Chinese in Australia are L1 (first Language) teachers. L1 teachers of Chinese are those who speak Chinese as a first language. L2 (second language) teachers of Chinese involve teachers whose first language is not Chinese. There are particular issues associated with both groups. Problems of L1 teachers include their intercultural difficulties in relating well to school students, colleagues and parents in Australia; being criticised about their reliance on character teaching at the expense of oral practice; and their lack of ability to employ the communication strategies and modes of intercultural expression that are suitable for bilingual students in Australia (Orton, 2008). As for L2 teachers of Chinese, the primary issue is about their low level of Chinese proficiency (Orton, 2008). It is often the case that the proficiency of background language students is superior to the L2 teacher (Orton, 2008).

Orton (2008) states that in NSW, one program for supplying native speakers as teacher aides to Chinese programs in the local schools is well established. The program is a collaboration between the Western Sydney Region of the NSW DET and Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau (Orton, 2008). Seven Chinese students enrolled in the Master of Education (Honours) at UWS are engaged in this arrangement as volunteer Mandarin teachers aiding the teaching of Chinese in local schools in that region. (I have been one of that program's participants). Part of the benefit of this program is the positive collaboration between all involved in the schools, the Regional Office, the University and the Chinese participants themselves (Orton, 2008).

3.5.4 Challenges to the study of the Chinese language

In the early and mid-1990s, the Commonwealth Government and all States and Territories funded numerous projects to support Chinese teaching and learning. This brought positive effects, especially on curriculum design, assessment procedures, school textbooks and the spread of Chinese programs (Orton, 2008). However, the Asian literacy drive was almost dead by the turn of the century, and the actual

number of students continuing to study Chinese had declined in recent years (Orton, 2008). Previous efforts to promote studies of the Chinese language can be considered either a short-term success or a failure to some extent. In order to reverse or improve the situation, Orton (2008) argues that the primary task is to find reasons for the current huge losses of students from Chinese studies. Investigation indicates three key reasons.

- ‘The deterrent of being in class with, and competing unsuccessfully in examinations with, students who speak Chinese at home’.
- ‘The generally poor level of proficiency achieved by most classroom learners’.
- The commonly poor support for their study from schools, parents and the community.

(Orton, 2008, p. 29)

The intrinsic linguistic difficulties that L2 students encounter in the Chinese language are so daunting that teachers of Chinese need to be trained to be more focused on the teaching of tones, homophones, characters and particles and complements. However, these have rarely been taught to teachers of Chinese (Orton, 2008). Moreover, the lack of opportunities to use the target Chinese language largely prevents students from developing a sense of how Chinese should sound (Orton, 2008). Exploration of the effective use of modern technology for Chinese teaching is rather time-consuming and most teachers tend to avoid it (Orton, 2008). Apart from that, despite there being a variety of Chinese teaching conferences, as well as human and learning resources, little research has been conducted into the actual effectiveness of what is introduced beyond the teacher’s own classroom (Orton, 2008). Overall, there is insufficient time available for Chinese classes per week; there are outdated and not well-developed teaching resources; teachers of Mandarin have inadequate qualifications and training; there are important intercultural differences between Chinese speaking teachers and people in the local environment, and the inadequate allocation of positions for Background Speakers (BS), L1, L2 students makes very difficult the task of developing large numbers of students with high proficiency in Chinese in Australia.

Orton (2008) argues that altering the success rate of promoting Chinese requires

sound pedagogical planning and resources, well-developed teaching practices, abundant scaffolded chances for learners to use Chinese, and sufficient time available for doing tasks. All these need to be provided along with a sounder external situation in which the learning can take place.

3.5.5 Recommendations

Six recommendations are proposed by Orton (2008, p. 41) for assisting Chinese teaching and learning in Australia:

1. All States and Territories should recognise the three levels of Chinese learner; these need to be included in Chinese language education nationally.
2. Schools need to increase the time for students of Chinese, given the very different system of the Chinese language from that of other languages. Moreover, examinations should be conducted for L2 learners in community environments, such as shops, restaurants, cinemas and excursions.
3. Decisions should be made about a Chinese program at primary level by reference to good and successful programs already implemented in some schools, such as the ‘Intercultural Investigations’ programs in Queensland.
4. Innovative programs need to be advocated, which allow a concentrated amount of time to be spent on the use of the language, such as the late years primary program in Queensland, and Melbourne’s and Sydney’s bilingual programs.
5. Standards of Chinese proficiency and pedagogy for language teachers need to be developed by collaboration with the *Hanban*² and other education sectors in Australia and China.
6. Investigation into the number of current and future teachers of Chinese should be conducted to lay the base for recruitment planning.

² *Hanban*, as a public institution affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Education, is committed to providing Chinese language and cultural teaching resources and services worldwide.

3.6 A policy maker's views on Chinese policy in NSW and Australia

In order to find out what policy makers (especially those who promoted Chinese programs in Australia) think of the context of Chinese studies in Australia, and the underlying factors that drive them to pursue such a policy as promoting Chinese, I interviewed one of their leaders. George (pseudonym) contributed significantly to the Ningbo agreement I have been involved in, in NSW. A semi-structured interview was conducted based on two major questions:

- Why do you think NSW/Australia needs a Chinese policy?
- What are the major reasons that drove you to promote the Ningbo Agreement and to advocate Chinese studies in the WSR of NSW?

3.6.1 Importance for Australia of establishing a strategy to engage with China, given China's significant economic and strategic role in Australia

George began by discussing China's important role in Australia, both strategically and economically. He anticipated that China will become the strongest and most important partner of Australia in various fields, such as the economy and education. It is already so in both areas. He used one example to describe the interactive and reciprocal relationship between China and Australia. Ningbo (in China) is a city famous for its shipping business. According to what he knew, many ships came from Australia and this brought great economic benefits for Ningbo. 'The economy of Ningbo is strongly linked to Australia' (George, personal communication, November 10, 2009). Meanwhile, Australia's economic prosperity relies on clients in Ningbo (China). Therefore, just as the example shows, Australia's and China's economic future are closely linked:

We (Australia and China) should do something very strategic about developing our capacities to have an economic relationship and also the educational relationship. Understanding these relationships really stand in the good steps into the future . . . unless you develop a strategy to build those ties, then it won't happen in this possible way, the most efficient way and where both sides get the best benefits (George, personal communication, November 10, 2009).

George went further, saying that an understanding of China's culture, beliefs and language can reinforce Australia's effort to establish even better cooperation with China and to avoid possible conflicts and misunderstandings:

if we know the cultures, and those things about the intricacies of the way different people operate, think and how they relate to each other, and what they value then you can get much better foundations for stronger relationship, stronger friendship, better cooperation and mutual benefits that might flow from that as well (George, personal communication, November 10, 2009).

3.6.2 Importance of engaging young Australian people with knowledge about China, its language, history and culture

Given China's strong business, economic and educational ties with Australia, George argued for the importance of providing good opportunities for Australia's young people to learn Mandarin and understand the Chinese culture, in order to equip them with better skills for future careers and later lives. This was the underlying driving force for him to promote the Ningbo Agreement and to advocate Mandarin teaching in WSR:

So for western Sydney and for NSW, the western Sydney first, we also need to make sure that the young people in western Sydney, have the best opportunities for their future and learning Mandarin and learning about the culture and society of China will help them in their future careers and in their lives, because this is where so much of the business and of the learning will be focused on in the future (George, personal communication, November 10, 2009).

A second reason, George pointed out, for engaging young Australian people with China, was the importance of developing understanding of the world. George argued that in the next few decades, China will become the central part of the world, so understanding Chinese people, culture, society and language was significant for young Australians to become world citizens and to be intellectually richer (not in wealth) in understanding the world with broader views (George, personal communication, November 10, 2009).

In addition, George also expressed his understanding of the difficulties I may confront in teaching Mandarin in Australia, as some students may not understand the importance of China for Australia or the value of learning Mandarin and Chinese culture in their future lives. Therefore, students may not be engaged in the class and may not have positive attitudes toward learning Mandarin, which could lead to behaviour problems. This could be compounded by the different teaching style in Australia compared to China (George, personal communication, November 10, 2009). Hence, an important part of my job was to ‘engage and to motivate and to persuade students and build expectations of good results coming out of that working relation to Chinese and Mandarin’ (George, personal communication, November 10, 2009).

3.6.3 Other factors and expectations for promoting a Chinese strategy—the Ningbo Agreement in the WSR

Apart from all the good reasons for learning Mandarin, George argued that the huge support from NMEB and the Government in Ningbo, and a positive relationship between leaders in the WSR of NSW and Ningbo, were also key to the success of this program. In particular, he expressed his understanding of the importance of *guān xi* (means ‘relationship’) in China: this is ‘central to the way in which Chinese people do business or make agreements and keep them’ (George, personal communication, November 10, 2009). This program could be regarded as a model for the one in which leaders in different countries can work together, supporting good ideas for mutual benefit. On the one hand, this program aims to equip young volunteers from China with better skills and understandings of Australia and the West and then bring back to China ideas that benefit education there. On the other hand, this program is also expected to provide enormous benefits for Australia in having native Chinese volunteer teachers teach authentic Mandarin and promote Chinese culture for young people in the WSR of NSW (George, personal communication, November 10, 2009). Both expectations underlined my fundamental missions in my journey in Australia as a novice Mandarin teacher from China.

3.7 My reflections on this ‘policy continent’

By revealing this ‘policy continent’, I came to realise the great social, cultural, and economic significance behind Australian policy for engaging with China and Chinese studies in Australian schools. Moreover, it provided me with knowledge about the overall policies and strategies that the Australian Government and States have made to develop Mandarin courses, as well as the outcomes and achievements to date. Under this enlightenment, I was better able to appreciate the different expectations given to my journey as a VTR in NSW. Not only did I have to teach Mandarin but more importantly, I was also obliged to bring Chinese culture, society and history into Australian schools in order to make students have a better understanding of China and its language. This can equip them with necessary social and cultural capital to participate in future career and industry in Australia, given China’s rapidly rising role in Australia.

The ‘policy continent’ also informed me of the existing constraints and challenges in the Australian context at both the macro level (social, cultural and historical background) and the micro level (such as classroom context and the intrinsic characteristics of Mandarin itself). Based on this knowledge, I anticipated some of the difficulties I was going to experience as a Mandarin teacher and could also understand the reasons behind these challenges. Issues included students’ low motivation to study languages other than English (including Mandarin); schools’ (where I worked as a volunteer teacher) reluctance to have formal Chinese courses, and my struggle to communicate well with students as a native teacher. This helped me look deep into my journey and equipped me with necessary knowledge to interpret my experience as a VTR and think reflexively about the challenges and breakthroughs I went through in the particular context of Australia.

Hereafter, in Chapter 4 I start to unfold how my journey proceeded under this ‘policy continent’. I had to prepare myself to be a competent Mandarin teacher who was able to accommodate well to this ‘policy continent’; overcome its existing constraints,

and encourage more Australian students to learn Mandarin and Chinese culture. Therefore, a learning and *reading* of L2 teaching methodology, especially CLT, was essential to my development to be an effective Mandarin teacher. The following chapter focuses on the first part of my *reading* as **code-breaker** and **text-participant** of CLT.

Chapter 4

The journey—*Reading* the new ‘intellectual continent’

(Part 1: Code-breaker/text-participant: What does CLT mean? How could it manifest itself?)

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter offered an analysis of Chinese (Mandarin) policy under the cultural context of Australia. This informed me about the driving forces for Chinese language education in Australia (including the program I was engaged in as a volunteer Mandarin teacher in the WSR of NSW). It also indicated current achievements and existing constraints. This helped identify various expectations for me as a volunteer Mandarin teacher within this ‘policy continent’, such as engaging Australian students with China, its language and culture, and enhancing the value they put on Chinese studies. Therefore, the enlightenment of a new ‘intellectual continent’, L2 teaching methodologies, especially CLT, was very important for me at the beginning of my journey to fulfil these missions.

This chapter traces the first part of my journey, which focused on my experiences in and reflections on my learning about this ‘intellectual continent’ (CLT). Much of this knowledge came through the L2 teacher training and a review of literature in relation to CLT. As this is the first part of my *reading* of CLT as **code-breaker** and **text-participant**, it seeks to analyse the meaning of CLT and its manifestation in Chinese language education policies in the cultural context of Australia.

4.2 Learning about CLT and L2 teaching in the training

In order to help us VTRs with fundamental knowledge of L2 teaching as well as an

understanding of the general L2 teaching situation in WSR public schools in the initial phase, the Directorate of Language and Curriculum (DLC) of the NSW DET organised a four-month teacher training workshop for us. This training was essential to my learning about L2 teaching and, especially, learning about CLT, in Australia. My first encounter with CLT was when I read the material provided by Mary (pseudonym), the key organiser and lecturer of this training. When speaking with Mary, I was told that CLT was one of the foundations of the NSW Chinese syllabus (2003) and other teaching programs developed by the NSW DET. Gradually, I realised how popular CLT is in documents on L2 teaching in Australia. One thing that impressed me most was a 20-minute CLT-oriented German class led by Mary in one session, as she wanted to give us a living example of what a CLT class was like. In that class, most of the time the teacher only spoke in the target language. Even when we couldn't understand what the teacher talked about, we could understand the meaning through her body language. She used different gestures and expressions to explain what she had said in the target language. The teacher liked to present real objects (such as real fruit) in her teaching. In such cases, she could directly deliver the meaning of what she had said in the target language by showing the real items to us. Apart from that, the teacher created many imagined communication situations and tasks for us to use the target language in order to finish the task. For example, Mary sent each of us a survey and asked us to finish it by using German to find out each person's favourite fruit. We had many opportunities to practise the target language. In that class, we had experiences in employing the target language to solve a real problem in a meaningful way. I found much fun from that class, which was very different from those I had experienced in L2 classes in China. Having fun from a class is a powerful facilitator for students to learn.

After the mini-class, Mary then gave us a systematic and detailed presentation about the meaning and implications of CLT for classroom practice. First, she explained what CLT is by stating a long list of its principles for language learning:

- emphasise the development of communication skills;
- maximise purposeful use of the target language;
- language is learnt through use;
- encourage the active participation of the learner in the learning process;
- recognise that student interaction and cooperation are essential in the language learning process;

- when students are involved in meaning-focused tasks, then language learning will take care of itself;
 - plentiful exposure to language in use and plenty of opportunities to use it are vitally important for a student's development of knowledge and skills;
 - activities that involve students in real or realistic communication for which there is a purpose, to enhance language learning
- (Mary, personal communication, August 11, 2008).

After that, she classified the characteristics of CLT as follows:

- holistic
 - interactive
 - outcome-oriented
 - activity-based
 - learner-centred
- (Mary, personal communication, August 11, 2008).

Also, she argued that a CLT-oriented class was actually a very flexible form of teaching. There was no control of any particular materials and no required form of content. There were probably only two key principles: an emphasis on communication and learner-centredness. However, although CLT is a learner-centred approach, input from teachers was still needed and significant for efficient learning in students. The input included:

- presenting content to the students; giving instructions;
 - explaining areas of difficulty; giving examples and providing feedback.
- (Mary, personal communication, August 11, 2008).

The main difference of CLT from traditional methods is that teachers' instruction in the front of the class should not dominate the class and teachers' instruction should not be at the expense of student activity.

Mary's demonstration and encouragement of the use of CLT, as well as the general popularity of CLT in L2 documents, prompted me to apply CLT in my teaching and to study more about the CLT approach. So after this session, I read a wide range of literature about the CLT approach and focused on the communicative way of teaching in my class. The literature I read in relation to CLT is reviewed below.

4.3 Review of literature on CLT

4.3.1 What is CLT?

The communicative approach is 'eclectic in that it recognises the value and incorporates elements of other methods and approaches, where they are pertinent to the development of communicative skills' (DET NSW, 2008, n.p.). CLT is not a single teaching method with clear defined classroom practices. Instead, it is actually a very broad approach, which values and incorporates elements of other methods and approaches. For instance, it encourages the Direct Method, in which the lesson is taught in the target language. It also values the importance of patterning and repetition, like Audiolingual and Audiovisual Approaches. However, it clearly opposes the Grammar Translation Method, which is teacher-centred and relies on accuracy in the structure of the language.

The CLT approach is usually defined by key principles or features. According to the document (*Ningbo Volunteer Program Language Methodology*), the principles are classified into the following five categories (DET NSW, 2008). First, it is a holistic approach. Unlike methods which focus on skills in the basic components of listening, speaking, reading and writing individually, the proponents of the CLT approach believe that the most effective language learning happens when learners are involved in authentic language performance and simulated real situations (DET NSW, 2008). This approach puts great emphasis on authenticity in L2 Learning. Another characteristic of the CLT approach is its attitude toward error occurrence. In the CLT approach, it is not encouraged to point out errors directly unless meaning is interfered with. In the communicative classroom, teachers put more emphasis on meaning rather than grammatical correctness (DET NSW, 2008).

Second, interactivity is also an important principle in this approach. Interaction is considered both the means and ultimate goal of learning a second language. In the communicative classroom, teachers provide a learning environment where learners are comfortable enough to take risks and take control of their own learning in various ways, such as: allowing students to work in groups or pairs, to have choices of

activities such as learning stations, or to participate in different types of activities in order to draw on learners' various abilities and cater for different learning strategies (DET NSW, 2008).

CLT is also an outcome oriented approach, which regards a manageable outcome as a starting point in program planning for a communicative classroom. Teachers' expectations should be realistic, so that learners can feel confident that they are achievable during the learning process. It is suggested that teachers have to ask the following fundamental questions when doing teaching plans:

What knowledge and skills do the learners possess?
What knowledge and skills do they need to gain?
Do the activities build on the skills and knowledge the learners already have?
How will the program develop the learners' ability to use language purposefully?
How will I know whether the intended outcomes have been achieved by the learners?
(DET NSW, 2008, n.p.).

Third, CLT is an activity-based approach. According to Clark and Yinger (cited in DET NSW, 2008), the notion of activity is central to an understanding of CLT. A large portion of time is used for students' activities and for maximising students' use of the target language, such as through group work and student centred tasks. An activity-based approach has to make sure that learners have the opportunity to:

Engage in genuine communication in the target language
Be actively involved in a wide range of learning experiences
Draw on the skills they have acquired through structure exercises
Interact and cooperate with the teacher and other learners
(DET NSW, 2008, n.p.).

4.3.2 Teacher and learner roles

Common to all versions of Communicative Language teaching is learner-centredness. The reasons for adopting a learner-centred approach to instruction are informed by an understanding that individual learners have different learning styles which need to be

catered for by different teaching strategies (Nunan, 2004). Therefore, the CLT teacher is responsible for providing activities catering for different learning needs (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Breen and Candlin claim that in a communicative context

the teacher has two main roles: The first role is to facilitate the communication process between all participants in the classroom, and between these participants and the various activities and texts. The second role is to act as an independent participant within the learning-teaching group . . .these roles imply a set of secondary roles for the teacher; first, as an organizer of resources and as a resource himself, second as a guide within the classroom procedures and activities . . .a third role for the teacher is that of researcher and learner, with much to contribute in terms of appropriate knowledge and abilities, actual and observed experience of the nature of learning and organizational capacities.

(Breen & Candlin, cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 167)

Apart from that, Richards and Rodgers (2001) propose that teachers also have other roles: needs analyst, counsellor and group process manager. The teacher is not simply the drill leader, but is charged with providing a learning environment where learners are comfortable enough to take risks in using the target language, which in turn empowers learners to take control of their own learning in a variety of ways. The most common activities are group or pair work, and different tasks which draw on learners' various abilities and learning needs (Lee & Vanpatten, 2003). CLT often uses activities including group/pair work. Learner-centredness means that individual learners will be encouraged to:

Engage in interactive learning with their peers
Manage their own learning to a greater degree
Participate in the design of activities and in the monitoring of
assessment of their own progress and that of their peers.
(DET NSW, 2008, n.p.).

Therefore, Communicative approaches to language learning are those approaches which emphasise 'the development of communication skills and are based on the premise that language is learned through use' (DET NSW, 2008, n.p.).

It is important to note that although CLT is a more learner-centred approach, teachers still provide significant input in the class. They can:

Present content to the students; give instructions; explain areas of difficulty, including a specific language focus where needed; give examples; provide feedback (DET NSW, 2008, n.p.).

The input delivered from the front of the class should not dominate the lesson at the expense of students' activity. Input could be provided through means of:

Experience with real objects, processes or events, e.g. demonstrations, excursions etc..

The use of visual and other aids

Drawing on the students' knowledge of the world

(DET NSW, 2008, n.p.).

One of the most controversial issues in CLT is the role of grammar in instruction. While some scholars such as Lee (2003) and Vanpatten (1995) argue that the CLT teacher should try to avoid direct grammar instruction and facilitate meaningful communication for all learners during the learning process, other scholars, such as Nunan (2004), Richards (2001) and Rodgers (2001), hold broader views on CLT:

It is sometimes assumed that the approach is a unitary one, whereas in reality it consists of a family of approaches . . .not all members live harmoniously together all the time. There are disagreements from time to time. However, no one is willing to assert that they do not belong to the family . . .it is even possible to find essentially grammar-based curricula that fit comfortably within the overarching philosophy of CLT. (Nunan, 2004, p. 7)

From this perspective, CLT neither forbids the teacher's teaching of grammar nor only promotes 'game' activities to entertain students. CLT is about a balance between teacher input, student activity and language practice, in which a large portion of time is for students' activities, aiming to maximise their purposeful language learning.

4.3.3 Communicative Competence

Communicative competence is an essential element in a communicative approach, as the development of communicative competence is the main goal of language

teaching. Communicative competence has been conceptualised in a variety of ways by different scholars. Hymes (cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001) considers a student who acquires communicative competence as acquiring both knowledge and ability for using the language with regard to:

1. whether (and to what degree) something is formally possible
 2. whether (and to what degree) something is feasible in virtue of the means of implementation available
 3. whether (and to what degree) something is appropriate (adequate, happy, successful) in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated
 4. whether (and to what degree) something is in fact done, actually performed, and what its doing entails
- (Hymes, cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 159)

Another point of view, from Halliday's functional linguistics complements Hyme's conceptualisation. According to Halliday (cited in Richards & Rogers, 2001), when children learn their first language, the language performs seven basic functions, the same functions being seen as important by CLT proponents in terms of learning a second language:

1. the instrumental function: using language to get things done
 2. the regulatory function: using language to control the behavior of others
 3. the interactional function: using language to create interactions with others
 4. the personal function: using language to express personal feelings and meanings
 5. the heuristic function: using language to learn and to discover
 6. the imaginative function: using language to create a world of the imagination
 7. the representational function: using language to communicate information
- (Halliday, cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 160)

Canale and Swain (cited in Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999) have identified four dimensions of communicative competence: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. Canale and Swain's model of communicative competence was further elaborated by Bachman (cited in Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999), who charted a theoretical framework for communicative language ability as: knowledge structure, strategic competence, psychophysiological

mechanisms, context of situation, and language competence. Based on this knowledge, Brown (cited in Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999) suggested a definition of CLT with the following principles:

- 1 classroom goals are focused on all of the components of communicative competence
 - 2 language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes
 - 3 fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques
 - 4 students ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively
- (Brown, cited in Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999, p. 495)

In terms of the principle of Communicative Competence (CC), it is argued that it has a reactionist flavour: reacting to other paradigms that put the emphasis on the grammatical structure of language (DET NSW, 2008).

However, it also should be recognised that the attempt to completely apply these principles to the actual classroom would be an 'exhaustive endeavour'. It is suggested that the following classroom teaching 'rules' might emerge:

1. Remember that grammatical explanations or drills or exercises are just one part of a lesson or curriculum: give grammar some attention, but don't neglect the other important components of CC (e.g. functional, socio-linguistic, psychomotor, and strategies).
2. Some of the pragmatic (functional and sociolinguistic) aspects of language are very subtle and therefore very difficult. Make sure your lessons aim to teach such subtlety.
3. In our enthusiasm for teaching functional and sociolinguistic aspects of language, don't forget that the psychomotor skills (pronunciation) are an important component of both. Intonation alone conveys a great deal of pragmatic information
4. Make sure that your students have opportunities to gain some fluency in English without having to be overly wary of little mistakes all the time. They can work on errors at home some other time.
5. Try to keep every technique that you do as authentic as possible: use language that students will actually encounter in the real world and provide genuine techniques for the actual conveyance of information of interest, not just rote techniques.
6. Some day your students will no longer be in your classroom. Make sure you are preparing them to be independent learners and

manipulators of language ‘out there’.
(DET NSW, 2008, n.p.).

The next phase of inspecting the new ‘intellectual continent’ was to interrogate the use of CLT in Australia, focusing on how CLT is manifested in documents on Chinese language education policies in NSW, including the *Chinese K-10 Syllabus* (Board of Studies [BoS] NSW, 2003) and a Mandarin teaching resource developed by the NSW DET—the *Zouba!* program (DET NSW, 2003). The analysis was conducted based on my framework for analysis in Table 2.1, which represents the key characteristics of CLT. Excerpts from interviews with my language training lecturer and a supervising teacher who worked in NSW schools are also used to gain practitioners’ views on the role of CLT in the syllabus and how this influences their teaching.

4.4. Is CLT taught in NSW schools in Mandarin?

4.4.1. The official policy in NSW: *Chinese K-10 Syllabus*

4.4.1.1 Document analysis with respect to CLT

The manifestation of CLT characteristics in the *Chinese K-10 Syllabus* (BoS NSW, 2003) is summarised in Table 4.1 at the end of this section.

In *Introduction* to the *Chinese K-10 Syllabus*, it is stated that one of the students’ learning outcomes is to ‘understand, develop and communicate ideas and information’ (BoS NSW, 2003, p. 5). This reflects an emphasis on **communication** in learning.

In the *Objectives* part, it states that *Using language*, *Making linguistic connections* and *moving between cultures* are the objectives of learning Chinese. ‘Each objective describes the active commitment students will make to the acquisition of skills in communicating in Chinese . . .’ (BoS NSW, 2003, p. 14). This statement clearly demonstrates the focus on **communication**. *Using language* as one objective

(‘students will develop the knowledge, understanding and the listening, reading, speaking and writing skills necessary for effective interaction in Chinese’) also indicates the priority of **communication** in learning Chinese (BoS NSW, 2003, p. 14).

Under *Outcomes*, *Using language* is considered the primary element that students are expected to achieve. *Using language* involves many aspects relating to the emphasis on **communication**. For example, for Stage 1, with respect to speaking, it is expected that students ‘use(s) known words in Chinese to interact in everyday activities’ (BoS NSW, 2003, p. 15). For Stage 3, students aim to ‘interact(s) with others by sharing key points of information in Chinese’ (BoS NSW, 2003, p. 16). For Stage 4, it is necessary that students or an individual student ‘establish(es) and maintain(s) communication in familiar situations’ (BoS NSW, 2003, p. 16).

In the organisation of *Content*, many statements in the Syllabus present a CLT orientation, including an emphasis on **communication** and **functional uses of languages**. The optional element of content focuses on ‘learning to use a language to communicate’, demonstrating both characteristics: **communication** and the **functional uses of languages** (BoS NSW, 2003, p. 19). In addition, the *key competences* listed in the Chinese K-10 Syllabus also embed some CLT characteristics. One of the *key competences* is to communicate ‘ideas and information through developing the listening, reading, speaking and writing skills necessary for communication’ (BoS NSW, 2003, p. 22). This reflects a focus on **communication** in language learning. One competence is ‘working with others and in teams through interaction between students for the acquisition of knowledge, understanding, skills, values and attitudes’ (BoS NSW, 2003, p. 22). This requires students to actively participate in classroom activities such as group work, and task-based activities, and taking control of the learners’ own learning to a greater degree. This meets the CLT characteristic of **activity-based** approaches to learning. Meanwhile, the Syllabus also reflects **learner-centredness** by encouraging students’ maximum participation in classroom activities. The competence of ‘solving problems through analysing texts to comprehend meaning from context’ shows the Syllabus’ emphasis on **meaningfulness** in language acquisition (BoS NSW, 2003, p. 23).

With regard to specific content for each Stage, there are elements that fit with CLT

features in terms of being an **activity based** approach. For instance, in Stage 1, the *content* in *Using language* is illustrated as ‘respond(ing) to greetings . . . in familiar social interactions such as games, role-plays, classroom instruction’ (BoS NSW, 2003, p. 25). This implies the essential role of student activity in the language classroom.

Furthermore, some content in *Using language* reflects the notion of **functional uses of language in different social settings**. In Stage 3, one outcome of *Making linguistic connections* is to ‘recognise the importance of context in language use’ (BoS NSW, 2003, p. 27). Another outcome is ‘the identification of word function and the principles of word substitution in making meaning’ (BoS NSW, 2003, p. 27). In Stage 4, with respect to speaking, students are to learn to ‘maintain social interactions and communicate appropriately in familiar contexts’, and ‘students can demonstrate a growing confidence in the use of Chinese to communicate in everyday situations within and beyond the classroom’ (BoS NSW, 2003, p. 65). In Stage 5, students of Chinese are required to be able to ‘function in a range of practical situations’ and also ‘to use metalanguage to explain what is wrong and how the problem can be solved’ (BoS NSW, 2003, p. 65). Furthermore, students in Stage 5 are expected to ‘initiate and maintain communication, and use appropriate register in familiar formal and informal situations’ (BoS NSW, 2003, p. 65).

Meaningfulness is also stressed in the *Content*. For Stage 2, in speaking, students are to learn about ‘elements of active conversation and ways of seeking attention, interrupting, initiating and concluding, expressing comprehension and non-comprehension’ (BoS NSW, 2003, p. 30). In writing, students have to ‘learn to use scaffolds to experiment with language and produce their own texts . . .’, and students are also expected to ‘learn about the construction of text in order to convey meaning’ (BoS NSW, 2003, p. 31).

In terms of *Grammar*, illustrations in the syllabus show its emphasis on **communication** and **functional uses of language**, and grammatical structures of language are mainly used as the context for supporting the use of the target language. It is stated that ‘students will learn about grammatical structures in context as they complement the content and the organisation of individual programs’; ‘Grammar should be used to support the process of language acquisition and to facilitate

communication, rather than being taught in isolation’ (BoS NSW, 2003, p. 51).

Assessment in the syllabus presents one of the key features of CLT: **learner-centredness**. In *Assessment for learning*, assessment ‘involves students in self-assessment and peer assessment’ (BoS NSW, 2003, p. 67), which ‘helps students take responsibility for their own learning’ (BoS NSW, 2003, p. 68). This in a way stimulates learners to take control of their own learning. In a certain sense, *assessment for learning* also reflects the importance of **activity** and **meaningfulness** in language classes. It is stated that ‘assessment is embedded in learning activities . . .’, and moreover, in assessment, ‘teachers use tasks that assess, and therefore encourage deep learning’ (BoS NSW, 2003, p. 68).

Table 4.1 (below) lists a selection of the statements (third column) in the Syllabus (BoS NSW, 2003) that are related to CLT principles (first column) and their demonstration in practice (second column).

Table 4.1 Framework for analysis of CLT characteristics in Chinese K-10 Syllabus in NSW

Basic CLT Principle	Leads to . . .	<i>Chinese K-10 Syllabus in NSW</i>
Emphasis on communication more than structure (Lee & Vanpatten, 2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Dialogues, if used, centre around communicative functions and are not normally memorised’ (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 156) • A tolerance of grammatical errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (One of the learning outcomes is to) understand, develop and communicate ideas and information. • Each objective describes the active commitment students will make to the acquisition of skills in communicating in Chinese . . . • Objective—<i>Using Language</i>: Students will develop the knowledge, understanding and the listening, reading, speaking and writing skills necessary for effective interaction in Chinese. • One of the <i>key competences: Communicating ideas and information</i> through developing the listening, reading, speaking and writing skills necessary for communication. • Stage 1 students are expected to use known words in Chinese to interact in everyday activities. • For Stage 4, students need to establish and maintain communication in familiar situations. • For Stage 3, students aimed to interact with others by sharing key points of information in Chinese. • The optional element of content is focused on learning to use a language to communicate. • Grammar should be used to support the process of language acquisition and to facilitate communication, rather than being taught in isolation.

<p>Emphasis on functional uses of language in different social settings (Nunan, 2004)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates a genuine, realistic learning situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The <i>optional element</i> of <i>content</i> is focused on learning to use a language to communicate. In Stage 3, recognise the importance of context in language use The identification of word function and the principles of word substitution in making meaning in Stage 3. Learning to maintain social interactions and communicate appropriately in familiar contexts in Stage 4. Students of Chinese who have progressed through Stage 4 demonstrate a growing confidence in the use of Chinese to communicate in everyday situations within and beyond the classroom. Throughout the Chinese syllabus students will learn about grammatical structures in context as they complement the content and the organisation of individual programs. They are able to use structures and features of the language that will allow them to function in a range of practical situations. Using metalanguage to explain what is wrong and how the problem can be solved Students initiate and maintain communication, and use appropriate register in familiar formal and informal situations.
<p>Emphasis on meaningfulness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drilling may occur, but peripherally In favour of active meaning-making through activities such as group work, task-work, information-gap activities and projects (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of the <i>key competences: solving problems</i> through analysing texts to comprehend meaning from context For Stage 2, in speaking, students learn about elements of active conversation and ways of seeking attention, interrupting, initiating and concluding, expressing comprehension and non-comprehension. In Stage 2, students have to learn to use scaffolds to experiment with language and produce their own texts . . . In Stage 2, students learn about the construction of text in order to convey meaning. Assessment is embedded in learning activities and informs the planning of future learning activities. Teachers use tasks that assess, and therefore encourage, deeper learning.
<p>Activity based</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximise students' use of target language through task-based activities and group works etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of the <i>key competences: working with others and in teams</i> through interaction between students for the acquisition of knowledge, understanding, skills, values and attitudes In Stage 1, one element of content in <i>Using language</i> is to respond to greetings . . . in familiar social interactions such as games, role-plays, classroom instruction Assessment is embedded in learning activities and informs the planning of future learning activities.
<p>Emphasis on authenticity (Richards & Rodgers, 2001)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of authentic, from-life materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students of Chinese who have progressed through Stage 5 maintain effective communication in authentic situations.

Learner-centred and experience-based (Richards & Rodgers, 2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organising various learning programs to cater for the different communicative needs of different groups of learners (Murphy, n.d.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of the <i>key competences</i>: working with others and in teams through interaction between students for the acquisition of knowledge, understanding, skills, values and attitudes Students begin to correct their own errors and those of their peers, using metalanguage to explain what is wrong and how the problem can be solved. Assessment involves students in self-assessment and peer assessment Helping students take responsibility for their own learning through <i>assessment for learning</i>.
Teacher is a guide, counsellor, organiser, and facilitator to create experiences for the learners (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).		

4.4.1.2 Discussion

The *Chinese K-10 Syllabus* (BoS NSW, 2003) mainly draws an outline of curriculum, focusing on ‘what’ should be taught in Chinese class, whereas only some insight is suggested about ‘how’ to deliver the input. There is no particular direction for pedagogy in the Syllabus. A number of L2 teaching approaches can be used to teach the curriculum in addition to CLT, such as the Audio-lingual Method (a method which focuses on listening and speaking) and the Direct Method (a method which encourages the teaching in the target language), but all of these involve similar characteristics to CLT. This is because CLT is a broad approach which incorporates elements of all these methods. Nevertheless, the nature of the curriculum suggested by the Syllabus is compatible with CLT. From the *Content* and *Outcome* sections of the Syllabus, the Grammar Translation method (opposed to CLT) alone is obviously not appropriate to deliver the Chinese curriculum. For instance, it is stated that ‘Grammar should be used to support the process of language acquisition and to facilitate communication, rather than being taught in isolation’ (BoS NSW, 2003, p. 51). In email conversation with my L2 Methodology lecturer, Mary, she commented that:

It is true to say that ‘the Communicative Approach’ is one of the foundations of the Chinese K-10 syllabus . . . however, the document does not say you must teach in a certain way, it does however put forward the concept that learning a language is about communicating in that language . . . There are other objectives in the syllabus which include not

only using language but also making linguistic connections and moving between cultures. As a languages teacher you would have to draw on a variety of approaches to your teaching in order to be able to meet those objectives (Mary, personal communication, July 11, 2009).

From Mary's answer, as I have shown previously, it can be seen that the Syllabus does not require teachers to teach in any particular way, including CLT. However, it does give priority to 'communication', which is the key principle of the Communicative approach.

A local L2 teacher John (pseudonym), who supervised my teaching in NSW, also gave a similar view on the Syllabus. During our interview, he said that:

it's a very open Syllabus. If you read the outcomes, students will be able to use the communicative technique, sustain the conversation—that is teaching and learning to speak; it is encouraging communicative approach as well . . . It gives me a sense of direction and context to work within, and it doesn't stop me from using the Communicative approach (John, personal communication, June 25, 2009).

4.4.2 A NSW DET-produced Chinese teaching resource: *Zouba!* program

Zouba! (DET NSW, 2003) is an interactive computer-based Chinese course for beginning learners, especially for secondary students. It was also the major teaching resource I used for teaching my Mandarin classes in secondary schools, because it is a task-based course which is very suitable for planning CLT-oriented classes (details about how I used *Zouba!* in my class are discussed in the next chapter). From my analysis, I found that active tasks and language functions are given prominence throughout *Zouba!* In many respects, CLT characteristics are demonstrated in this program. Table 4.2 presents all statements in *Zouba!* (mainly from *the Summary of content*, *Overview* and *the Learning sequence*, not from specific teaching activities in every unit) related to the CLT characteristics based on my *Framework for analysis* (Table 4.1).

4.4.2.1 Document analysis in terms of CLT

In terms of organisation, *Zouba!* (DET NSW, 2003) develops five or six paths for each unit and there is a ‘Get it together’ consolidation unit after every four units of work. Every path has a key language function to teach, which is followed by several tasks for learners to consolidate understanding (DET NSW, 2003). Therefore, *Zouba!* consists of a number of on-computer and off-computer tasks, and an **activity-based** approach is adopted in this course. Moreover, at the beginning of each unit, a new function of language to be emphasised during the lesson is demonstrated. Thus, **functional use of languages** is a key characteristic of this program. Take Unit 1 as an example—all functions are clearly indicated in the teaching content at the outset:

- Greeting people
 - Asking and giving names
 - Talking about who someone is
 - Talking about nationalities
 - Talking about the time
 - Saying ‘let’s go’
 - Talking about going to places
- (DET NSW, 2003, p. 1)

Social-cultural information is also an important element of each unit’s content, including notes and socio-cultural tasks. Each unit incorporates a list of socio-cultural information within the teaching content. For instance, in Unit 1, socio-cultural information includes:

- Appreciate the respect shown the elderly
- Understand how Chinese people say their names
- Understand how to start using a Chinese dictionary
- Understand how to address different people
- Understand some general facts about China
- Understand that in China the time is the same wherever you are
- Appreciate why some numbers are lucky and unlucky in Chinese culture
- Talk about some famous cities in China

...
(DET NSW, 2003, p. 2)

By delivering this input, students are expected to gain insight into the context and background knowledge of the target-language community. In a way, it enriches students’ background knowledge in order to use the target language more

appropriately and authentically through an increased appreciation of its context. Therefore, the incorporation of social-cultural information accords with the CLT characteristics of **authenticity** and **functional uses of language in different social settings**.

The *Outcomes* in the *Summary of Content* show a focus on the goal of **communication** and **functional uses of language** in this Chinese course. For example, in the *Outcomes* of Unit 1, it is stated that in ‘Speaking: practise Chinese in predictable exchanges and activities . . . interact with others by sharing specific information in Chinese’ (DET NSW, 2003, p. 4). Therefore, **communication** and **functional uses of language** are given prominence in the *outcomes*.

With regard to specific plans for the *learning sequence*, at the beginning of each path, new language is introduced by a comic style ‘scenario’ or ‘feature’ to present the language in a context. With visual clues, students can be more easily immersed in the target language environment so as to realise how the language functions in context (DET NSW, 2003). Thus, the **functional use of languages in different social settings** is reflected within the delivery of the ‘scenario’. Furthermore, it also shows the **authenticity** of the target language by creating a real life situation for learning by playing the ‘scenario’. The following list is what students have to do in a ‘scenario’:

- Students are expected to use the visual clues in the animated sequence to guess the meaning of the language. Students are in full control of the scenario and can view it as many times as they like.
- After viewing the sequence, students attempt three questions to see if they have understood correctly.
- Students can proceed to a written explanation of the language to further confirm their understanding.
- Students should then return to the beginning of the scenario and view each scene one-by-one. This time, students should click on each person, listen to what is said and repeat aloud what they hear.
- Students should then return again to the beginning of the scenario and view each scene one-by-one. This time, students should turn on the speech bubbles, click on each person to hear what is said, then read aloud from the speech bubble. Where Pinyin is missing, students can roll the mouse of the Hanzi to have it displayed.

(DET NSW, 2003, n.p.)

In the step ‘Say it!’, students have to do a task that enables them to demonstrate their aural comprehension of the new language. For instance, in *Path 3 Unit 2*, in ‘Say it!’

students have to press a picture of a person from a different country by listening to a conversation between two persons talking about nationality. By doing so, students can practise and show how they have learnt about the new language in terms of nationality (DET NSW, 2003). So it is an **activity-based** course which requires students to finish a variety of tasks for practising the target language. Apart from aural practice, there are also some tasks for demonstrating reading, listening and speaking skills. ‘Read it’ involves tasks for students to practise reading comprehension of the new language. It is basically to choose the right picture that people are talking about by reading the conversation shown in the screen. For example, in some listening and speaking tasks, students are required to speak and respond to one person’s question or speech by looking at the signs of the person they represent.

The great quantity of these interactive tasks show that the program is more focused on **communication** and **functional uses** of language than on grammatical structure. There are very few isolated grammatical instructions for teaching structure and grammar itself. While some tasks do have supplementary hints for information about language, this is only in case extended understanding is needed to be provided for successful communication (DET NSW, 2003). It is pointed out that language hints are ‘not essential knowledge for the course’ (DET NSW, 2003). Therefore, it seems that the teaching of structure and grammar is designed in a subordinate role to **communication** goals and **functional uses of language**.

Apart from being presented with new language and on-computer tasks, there are also some off-computer interactive tasks which involve more complex language skills in reading, writing, reading and speaking (DET NSW, 2003). By doing these tasks, students are expected to develop their skills in the **functional use of language** and **meaningful communication** in the target language. Tasks are classroom activities such as role-plays, surveys and the description of items or people in a picture. I chose three samples to illustrate how classroom activities reflect CLT principles. In *Path 5 Unit 2*, Task 10 instructs as follows:

Imagine you’ve arrived at a restaurant to meet a Chinese friend.

- greet your friend
- let your friend know you feel hungry

- find out if they're hungry
- tell them what you want to eat and drink
- ask them what they want to eat and drink
- make comments about the food you're eating
- ask the waiter or waitress for the cost
- say 'thank you'.

Suggestions:

- you can work in pairs with your friend, your teacher, or a relative
- practise the role-play until you're good at it
- perform the role-play for your class, perhaps with some props
- record the role-play on a video, an audio cassette or as a sound file on the computer.

(DET NSW, 2003, n.p.)

This role-play focuses on students' ability to effectively **function** and use the target language in context. Moreover, **meaningfulness** is essential to this activity, because students have to respond to each other in a meaningful way so as to successfully communicate in the new language. All of these are key principles of CLT.

The second sample is selected from *Path 3 of Unit 1*. The task is to give flags of a different country to different classmates and ask them their name and nationality. The persons being asked has to respond with their real name and the country name according to the flag they are given (DET NSW, 2003). It is obviously **communication** by using the target language. During this activity, they also use the real object to create an authentic context to use the language. This in a way shows the **authenticity** of teaching and learning. And moreover, students have to respond differently depending on the different flag, so the **functional use of language** is demonstrated in this process. In *Path 3 Unit 5*, the classroom task is to do a survey. Here are the instructions:

- Use Chinese to conduct a survey of at least six people to find out how many have brothers and sisters.
- Write the name of the person you're asking under the column 名字.
- Put a tick for the brothers and sisters people have.
- Put a cross for the brothers and sisters people don't have.
- To help you, look at the example. Can you see that Kim has an older brother but does not have any older sisters, younger sisters or younger brothers?

名字	gēge 哥哥	jiějie 姐姐	didi 弟弟	jiějie 姐姐
Kim	√	x	x	x

(DET NSW, 2003, n.p.)

In this survey, students need to actively employ the target language to get information from others. So it is a **functional use of language**, and meanwhile it is also meaning-making in the target language. Therefore **meaningfulness** is demonstrated. And **communication** is the aim of this activity.

In addition to these interactive tasks, there are also some games and activities which are provided just for learning through enjoyment, such as *paper-cutting*, *Jacob's ladder game* and the *Miming game* (DET NSW, 2003). All these different activities, including listening, speaking, reading and writing and combined-skill tasks, are aimed at catering for learners' different needs and learning styles. Therefore, it is not only an **activity- (task-) based** course, but also a **learner-centred** approach in which most of the time is used for students' usage of the target language, followed by the teachers' organisation of many activities.

Table 4.2 Framework for the analysis of *Zouba!* in terms of CLT characteristics

Basic Principle	Leads to	<i>Zouba!</i>
Emphasis on communication more than structure (Lee & Vanpatten, 2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Dialogues, if used, centre around communicative functions and are not normally memorised' (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 156) • A tolerance of grammatical errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Overview) <i>Zouba!</i> is an interactive browser-based Chinese course for beginners. • To learn to have a conversation in Chinese, you need to talk with someone. • (the sequence) A scenario is the most complex interactive component.
Emphasis on functional uses of language in different social settings (Nunan, 2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a genuine, realistic learning situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Overview) Each learning path begins with a comic style scenario or feature that introduces new language • (Overview) The language is presented in a context with visual clues to support understanding • When you play a scenario through . . . try to work out what people are saying. This is how you would learn if you were living in China. • (the sequence) Each path teaches a key language function and provides approximately ten tasks to consolidate understanding. • (the sequence) A scenario presents a new language function. • (the sequence) Students view an animated

		<p>comic style sequence that demonstrates the new language in context.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (the sequence) A ‘Say it!’ usually includes or proceeds to a task that requires students to demonstrate their aural comprehension of the new language. • (the sequence) A ‘Read it!’ may include or proceed to a task that requires students to demonstrate their reading comprehension of the new language. • (the sequence) After being presented with new language and drilling it, students proceed to tasks that require them to demonstrate aural and reading comprehension or combinations of both. • (the sequence) Socio-cultural information is integrated into the language content as notes and as tasks. <p>(Consolidation units) A feature is an animated comic style story that incorporates the language of the previous three units and as far as possible, language from earlier units.</p>
Emphasis on meaningfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drilling may occur, but peripherally • In favour of active meaning-making through activities such as group work, task-work, information-gap activities and projects (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Overview) Tasks provide students with opportunity to reinforce and demonstrate their knowledge of new and learned language. • <i>Zouba!</i> is made up of lots of tasks. • (the sequence) Each path teaches a key language function and provides approximately ten tasks to consolidate understanding. • (the sequence) Each path . . . provides approximately ten tasks to consolidate understanding. • (Consolidation units) GemQuest is a computer game that can be played with one or two players. It targets listening and reading skills.
Activity based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise students’ use of target language through task-based activities and group works etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Overview) Tasks provide students with opportunity to reinforce and demonstrate their knowledge of new and learned language • <i>Zou ba!</i> is made up of lots of tasks. (the sequence) Each path . . . provides approximately ten tasks to consolidate understanding. • (the sequence) A ‘Say it!’ usually includes or proceeds to a task that requires students to demonstrate their aural comprehension of the new language. • (the sequence) A ‘Read it!’ may include or proceed to a task that requires students to demonstrate their reading comprehension of the new language. (the sequence) After being presented with new language and drilling it, students proceed to tasks that require them to demonstrate aural and reading comprehension or combinations

		<p>of both.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (the sequence) The later tasks in a path tend to be off-computer tasks. They involve more complex speaking, reading and writing tasks. (the sequence) Sometimes activities are provided just for fun • (Consolidation units) GemQuest is a computer game that can be played with one or two players. It targets listening and reading skills. • (classroom management tips) Encourage students to repeat the interactive online tasks
Emphasis on authenticity (Richards & Rodgers, 2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of authentic, from-life materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (the sequence) A scenario presents a new language function. Students view an animated comic style sequence that demonstrates the new language in context. • When you play a scenario through, listen carefully, look at the clues in the scene and try to work out what people are saying.
Learner-centred and experience-based (Richards & Rodgers, 2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organising various learning programs to cater for the different communicative needs of different groups of learners (Murphy, n.d.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (the sequence) Sometimes activities are provided just for fun. • (the sequence) A ‘Say it!’ usually includes or proceeds to a task that requires students to demonstrate their aural comprehension of the new language. • (the sequence) A ‘Read it!’ may include or proceed to a task that requires students to demonstrate their reading comprehension of the new language. • (the sequence) After being presented with new language and drilling it, students proceed to tasks that require them to demonstrate aural and reading comprehension or combinations of both. • (classroom management tips) Encourage students to repeat the interactive online tasks
Teacher is a guide, counsellor, organiser, and facilitator to create experiences for the learners (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).		

4.5 My reflections on this new ‘intellectual continent’

What CLT suggests about the nature of language teaching is very different from what I experienced in my L2 (English) class in China. I began my English learning when I entered middle school, which lasted for six years. CLT is very far from how I learned

English in China. When I was a student, my teachers emphasised grammatical knowledge rather than the ability to communicate in English. Group work was seldom used in English classes. Instead, the learning and teaching strategies were mainly characterised by systematic and detailed study of sentence-level grammar, extensive use of translation, rote learning of vocabulary, an emphasis on intensive reading skills, and a focus on written language. The grammar-translation method could be considered the major teaching method in my English language education. In a typical class, it was our routine to do the following activities in sequence when I was learning English:

- learning and reading new words aloud;
- repeating sentence patterns;
- reading and translating English texts;
- doing exercises focusing on grammar and word usage.

In the class, most of the time was used for the teacher's direct instruction and writing on the board. We just sat there quietly and took notes on what the teacher talked about in terms of grammar and new vocabulary. Therefore, there was very little interaction and actual communication between students and teacher or among students in English. Probably the only opportunity for me to listen to English was listening to the teacher and to classmates reading passages from textbooks. The following episode typifies what my English class was like when I was a junior high student in China:

When the bell rang, my English teacher Mrs Chen (pseudonym) came to the class and greeted us: 'Good morning, class!' Then all of us stood up and responded: 'Good morning, teacher!' Then Mrs Chen told us to sit down and formally began the lesson. At the beginning, she called on some students to recite textbook passages in English. During that time, most of the students felt nervous and were afraid of being called. Once the teacher found some students who were unable to recite well, she would ask them to review it and to recite to her after class. After that, Mrs Chen asked us to do a dictation to check whether we had remembered all vocabulary from the previous lesson. Therefore, sometimes, during the break right before the class began, some students hurried to memorise and review new English words and passages from previous lessons just in case they might be caught by the teacher in the class.

After the revision part, Mrs Chen then started a new lesson. She began

by introducing new vocabulary. She gave us a very detailed explanation for each new word especially focusing on grammar and usage. We just quietly listened to her instruction while taking notes. Sometimes she also asked students to make a sentence by using the new word in order to check the level of our grammatical accuracy. After introducing the new vocabulary, she then moved to a new passage in the textbook. At the beginning, she let us listen to the tape and then asked us to follow it. Then she reviewed the passage again and indicated all the important grammar points and where a difficult part appeared in the passage, especially on issues of tense, and common phrase and word usage in different conditions. After taking all these important notes, we had to read it over and over again, sometimes reading it after the teacher, sometimes reading it together. Memorising and rote learning was our major learning method to learn about language structure and its usage. Sometimes, the teacher also liked to call on two students to take a different role in reading out the dialogue, because the textbook passage was often a conversation between two persons.

Although the textbook did incorporate real-life topics and conversations into texts aiming to develop students' skills in communication, in actual teaching the teacher focused on grammar and used textbook content as the single major sources of material with which to drill students. There were very few chances given for us to actually speak in English. Writing and reading skills were emphasised more than oral skills. After introducing a new passage, we were often asked to finish exercises in the textbook and then were given some worksheets in order to practise our skills in grammatical accuracy and new word usage. This was also a way to develop our reading and writing skills.

From my perspective, this particular way of teaching in China can largely be attributed to the assessment system in China. To some extent, teachers' emphasis on structure and knowledge about the language illuminated the particular context of China when I was a student. The National College Entrance Examination (NCEE), which was the main access route to university, was extremely important for secondary graduates. Parents and schools so cared about the NCEE that the teacher was required, or often felt obliged to focus on the content limited by examination outlines and textbooks, especially in an intense competitive context such as China.

What I remember most about my English class in senior high school are endless worksheets and worrying about the examination. In my senior high school, exam-oriented instruction was the prevalent way of teaching. In most cases, the teacher

used an approach which was similar to how my junior high teacher taught, such as the grammar-translation method, rote learning, the use of memorising, and sentence drilling. In the final year of senior high school, the teaching content and strategies that the teacher used in the class were increasingly exam-oriented. In many classes, the teacher just gave us sample exams and reading materials to drill our ability to do the test more efficiently, especially to speed up our reading and writing in English. Also in some classes, the whole time was used by teachers explaining grammatical points and indicating students' mistakes in the worksheet which they had just done.

Below I have excerpts from evidence provided by my junior high teacher Ms Chen (pseudonym), who used to teach me English in China with respect to the situation of CLT in China. From email correspondence, she says that although China has been deeply involved in the CLT approach, it is mainly limited to documents. In terms of practice, CLT is not widely used among the English teachers she knows. She listed various constraints which English teachers face in successfully practising CLT in China. These constraints include 'large classes, grammar-based examinations, teachers' low English proficiency and lack of cultural knowledge, lack of communicative teaching materials, and students' low English proficiency' (Chen, personal communication, August 1, 2009).

In terms of Ms Chen's own practice, she expressed her appreciation for the value and significance of CLT in L2 teaching, especially for developing the learners' communicative competence. She has used CLT in some of her classes by carrying out activities such as group or pair work and role-plays, but she said that the CLT approach was not commonly adopted when I was learning English in her class. She indicated a variety of difficulties she encountered in implementing CLT:

Although Communicative Approach is perfect in theory, it also encounters some difficulties after being put into practice. Large classes, students' unwillingness to practice in activities, and grammar-based examinations were considered as the main barriers to the practice of the communicative approach. Apart from these factors, students also lack many opportunities of practising speaking English. Another problem is that Communicative Approach is aimed at training students' listening and speaking, so it relatively ignores training of reading and writing. Since grammar still plays a decisive role in all examinations in China. These

examinations emphasize reading and writing skills. Thus, students in the past were supposed to increase their English vocabulary and recite English grammar, then use what they've learnt to write articles (Chen, personal communication, August 1, 2009).

The grammar-based examination system is an important factor that constrains the implementation of a CLT approach in China, and the experience of Mrs Chen provides a suitable illustration of this. Because the national examination mainly emphasises grammar, writing and reading skills, the students are expected to expand their vocabulary and recite English grammar in order to improve their writing and reading skills. There are also other constraints, some of which may be manageable, such as large classroom sizes and students' reluctance to practise in activities. In my opinion, the students are not used to it, mainly because the teachers rarely practice CLT. As a result of these difficulties, Mrs Chen stated:

teachers used their traditional ways to improve students' reading and writing skills and spent a lot of time teaching students how to read new words and sentence patterns and explaining grammar rules in class instead of giving students opportunities to practice communicating in different social contexts and in different social roles (Chen, personal communication, August 1, 2009).

Therefore, the way my teachers taught in high schools (such as the grammar-translation method, exam-oriented instruction, rote learning) was good for helping me (and Chinese students in general) to establish a solid foundation in vocabulary, grammar, reading and writing (mainly reproductive writing). However, in terms of real practice, I often felt it difficult to actually use the target language (English) to communicate, especially in speaking. Therefore, due to the lack of active student involvement (such as pair work, tasks and role-play) and meaningful communication in the target language (English), Chinese students' skills in communication and in actually functioning in the language are in my experience rather limited. This was often the case with me. No matter how much I was familiar with the people I talked to, I always had a strong feeling of nervousness and lack of confidence about comfortably and fluently communicating in English. Grammar is always my first concern when I speak. I think this is an important reason for causing me to struggle to convey and exchange ideas in English confidently and smoothly. All this reminds me how important communication is in language learning. That is why my first

encounter with CLT so greatly inspired my interest and curiosity, as this approach aimed to develop skills in communication and functioning in the use of language, exactly the abilities that I feel I have always lacked.

Hence, in my teaching in Australia, I was very cautious not to use the Grammar Translation method alone to teach. Instead, I attempted to adopt CLT in my own class in order to link the language to students' real life and develop their ability to use Mandarin by providing authentic Chinese input and active tasks. The next chapter focuses on the analyses of evidence of how I employed CLT in my class as a user of CLT, based on my own reflective journals on my teaching in different year levels in NSW.

Chapter 5

The journey: *Reading* the new ‘intellectual continent’

(Part 2: Text-user: How can I use CLT and does it work for me?)

5.1 Introduction

After my exploration as a **code-breaker** and **text-participant** of the meaning and manifestation of CLT, I had a better understanding of this new ‘intellectual continent’. More importantly, this *reading* helped me establish a communicative view of language teaching and learning. This method focused on developing learners’ communicative competence, especially the ability to use the target language. CLT promotes an authentic input and simulated real-life experiences, rather than teaching the knowledge of language alone. Based on this understanding and my previous learning and training experiences, I built a firm understanding of CLT. Therefore, when I began to teach in NSW, CLT was the approach I aspired to test in practice.

My story as a user of CLT in NSW is the focus of this chapter. Specifically, it focuses on how I made use of CLT, and what issues I encountered as a novice Mandarin teacher. My reflective journals provide the key data for analysis, as I had made reflections on each of my lessons, recording what I really felt and thought about my teaching. Therefore, from the evidence in my own journals I analyse the key issues I encountered in my class. More importantly, I examine the trend of my professional development and my reactions as a user of CLT. The themes coded from my journals were generated through content analysis. In addition, triangulation measures were taken to check the reliability of my data (my journals) by incorporating evidence from persons who observed my teaching or who were involved in the Ningbo program. This included comments from my supervising teachers in different year levels, Elisa (pseudonym) and John, and my L2 methodology lecturer, Mary.

5.2 An analysis of my Communicative Language Teaching

5.2.1 Coding of my reflective journals on my teaching (Step 1)

Table 5.1 and Table 5.2 represent two examples (only two examples are given, simply because of space concerns) of my initial coding of my lessons in different years levels, which were recorded in my reflective journals during my beginning year of teaching (from August 2008 to June 2009). First, I used the following three coding categories, because these are important indicators of the outcomes of my teaching as a user of CLT:

- **Not CLT**
- **CLT attempted but not fully successful**
- **CLT successful**

I used these categories to characterise either a whole lesson or a significant part of a lesson. Coding categories are in bold text. Bracketed phrases in italics identify the relevant CLT characteristics based on the framework of analysis of CLT characteristics (see Table 2.1). Where relevant, there is also a discussion of problems or issues that arose.

Table 5.1 Sample 1 of my initial coding

<p><u>Date:</u> 26/08/2008</p> <p><u>Year Grade:</u> Senior High class:</p> <p><u>Type of class:</u> not CLT</p> <p><u>Nature of activities:</u></p> <p>I merely focused on the pronunciation of the target language (in the beginning, I just planned to explain how to use tongue and organs of the mouth to show students how to pronounce Mandarin accurately, as authentic pronunciation is also what they were eager to learn in Mandarin class).</p>
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Table 5.2 Sample 2 of my initial coding

Date: 30/06/2009

Year Grade: Year 7

Type of class: **CLT attempted but not fully successful**

CLT-oriented activities:

1. 'Warm up' conversation with students about topics I had taught in Chinese (*communication, functional use of language, meaningfulness*)
2. I asked students to tell me in Chinese the place where they lived, according to the map I showed them (*communication, meaningfulness*).
3. I asked some students to stand up and introduce themselves to us in Chinese. Their performance was much better than I had expected. They were so excited and proud at being able to show their ability to use the target language (*functional use of language, meaningfulness*).
4. Writing task: I sent each student a sheet on which they had to fill in the blanks and to complete some personal information about themselves as well as two other people in the picture. It took a long time for them to finish the worksheet as I did not give the instructions clearly enough and they did not like to listen to me while doing the exercise. Anyway, it was a good exercise for practising their ability to use the target language functionally (*functional use of language, meaningfulness*).
5. Survey: I asked students to investigate two other students' ages by having a conversation in Chinese (*activity-based, meaningfulness, functional use of language, communication*).
6. I had a little conversation with some students in Chinese in terms of their age, in order to let them have a sense of the usage of the new sentence pattern I taught. After that, I asked questions to the rest of the students according to my previous conversation (*communication, meaningfulness*).
7. Writing task: I asked students to write a short paragraph in Chinese to introduce themselves, including information about their name, nationality, place of living and age and the topics they had learnt so far. Then I collected their sheet and planned to give them back next class (*functional use of language, meaningfulness*).

Problems:

- I did not give instructions clearly enough, so it took a long time for students to finish the tasks, including the writing task and survey. Sometimes, it left students some spare time to chat when they had no idea what to do, so the class became a little noisy by that time.
- When I had conversation with individual students, the rest of the students usually became talkative, and misbehaved. What I was trying to do was just to speak with as many students as possible to make sure everyone got a chance to practise the target language, because students often did not like to respond or repeat after me along with others, so I had to try to speak with them individually.
- I gave them too many worksheets in this class because I heard some students complaining about being given too many tasks. Nevertheless, I thought it was a good way to keep them busy and avoid their naughty behaviour. My worrying about management issues was always my primary concern.

5.2.2 Coding of my reflective journals (Step 2)

Based on the data, which were summarised as key points in terms of CLT by the coding process (Step 1), *all* these lessons (which were all the lessons taught, except for one month, which had no journal entries) have been tabulated into one of the following 9 categories, according to the level of CLT implementation and different Year level (see Appendix 1):

Table 5.3 Lessons which were not CLT-oriented in Year 8

Table 5.4 Lessons which were not CLT-oriented in Senior High

Table 5.5 Lessons which were not CLT-oriented in Year 7

Table 5.6 Lessons in which CLT was attempted but not fully successful in Year 8

Table 5.7 Lessons in which CLT was attempted but not fully successful in Senior High School

Table 5.8 Lessons in which CLT was attempted but not fully successful in Year 7

Table 5.9 Lessons in which CLT was successful in Year 8

Table 5.10 Lessons in which CLT was successful in Senior High School

Table 5.11 Lessons in which CLT was successful in Year 7

By doing this initial analysis, I can explore patterns of my professional development with CLT and identify different problems I encountered in implementing CLT in different classroom contexts. The order of these Tables reflects the chronological order of teaching rather than an order of ascending Year level. I began teaching Year 8 and Senior High School, then later I taught Year 7 and Senior High School. Because of this, my expectation was that I would begin teaching Year 7 with more experience and capability.

5.2.3 Coding for themes (Step 3)

This next analytical step of coding was to categorise themes to help explain my success or its lack in CLT, in different classes. The coding was carried out according to three main categories:

- **Lessons which were not CLT-oriented** (Tables 5.3, 5.4, 5.5)
- **Lessons in which CLT was attempted but not fully successful** (Tables 5.6, 5.7, 5.8)
- **Lessons in which CLT was successful** (Tables 5.9, 5.10, 5.11)

A number of themes were coded from the grouped data under different subheadings in each of these three areas. The evidentiary statements below are copied directly from the Tables mentioned above (see Appendix 1 for details).

5.3 An analysis of themes coded from my reflective journals as CLT-user

5.3.1 Lessons which were not CLT-oriented

A preliminary category was inserted (in brackets) in each evidentiary statement from

my journal. Only one category was relevant for Tables 1, 2, 3, viz: **reasons for not using CLT**:

Reasons for not using CLT

Year 8:

- Lack of confidence in classroom management. I dared not to try (lack of confidence and belief in myself)
- My lack of experience in managing the class and disciplining students (lack of experience in managing the class)
- I didn't expect that students would react to the activity so differently (lack of experience in responding to students properly)
- My teaching was interrupted by students' overwhelming questions during the lesson (lack of experience in responding to students properly)
- The class was not tightly structured so students had a lot of spare time to chat (loose teaching plan)
- My feeling of sorrow and guilt for being late to the class and having an insufficient teaching plan (insufficient teaching plan)
- Organisation of pair work (activity organisation)
- difficulty in managing the class during the survey task (which allowed students to walk around the class) (activity organisation)
- Inability to react properly to students who deliberately disobeyed what I asked (lack of experience in managing the class and responding to students properly)
- I was too emotionally involved with students' bad behaviour to carry on the class properly (negative emotional interference)
- Students were hard to control when my supervising teacher was not around (lack of authority without my supervising teacher's support)
- I did not plan any CLT activity because I just intended to let students have experience in traditional Chinese writing (my decision to give a structured teacher-centred class for special purpose)

Senior high class:

Pronunciation required direct physical demonstration (my decision to plan a teacher-centred class to show accurate pronunciation)

Year 7:

- It was difficult to make students focus on the lesson after a half-day test when they got more restless and naughty (students' negative attitude after half-day test)
- Problems in cooperation between the supervising teacher and myself as we had different beliefs about L2 teaching (lack of cooperation and agreement with supervising teacher)
- Inability to handle the situation where conflicts were caused between students and the other teacher (lack of experience in confronting the situation where students and the other teacher had serious conflicts)
- This was a very structured class and most of the time I was in charge of their learning, as there were many dictation, listening and writing exercises (my decision to plan a structured, mostly teacher-centred class)
- My previous unsuccessful experience in practising CLT activities (problems in classroom management issues) gradually shifted my strategy to a structured and more teacher-centred approach (my previous unsuccessful experience prompted me to shift my strategy from CLT)
- I aimed to make sure students were under control and concentrated on learning in a normal routine (by doing reading, listening, writing and speaking exercises step by step) (my aim to avoid students' behaviour problem and to organise the learning in a more secure routine).
- Poor technology support, which substantially limited the effectiveness of this class, because I planned a computer-based class (technology problem)
- I should have had a backup plan when I chose to have a computer-based class (I had no backup plan in case the computer did not work properly)
- Therefore, I felt so nervous and guilty so I rushed over the class (my lack of confidence and feeling of anxiety for insufficient preparation)

Six themes were developed by further analysis of preliminary categories of **reasons for not CLT**, according to a grouping of the relevant issues. Arabic numerals were placed against the number of lessons where each theme was mentioned in each year level: *Y8, S, Y7* stand for *Year 8, Senior High class* and *Year 7* class respectively. In addition, it proved difficult to distinguish and separate these three themes (**Classroom management; Lack of confidence; lack of experience**), since they are closely interrelated to each other, especially in my case as a beginning teacher. One thing usually leads to another and in many cases problems were caused by a combination of two or all three elements. Therefore, I grouped these three themes

into one broader category: **Classroom management, Lack of confidence and Lack of experience**. A presentation of the results is based on the following four major categories. Moreover, expanded evidentiary excerpts from my reflective journals on my teaching were incorporated as contextual illustrations of my analysis.

a) Classroom management, Lack of confidence and Lack of experience:

(Y8) 9; (S) 0; (Y7) 5

b) Inappropriate preparation: (Y8) 2; (S) 0; (Y7) 2

c) My decision not to use CLT for a particular instructional goal: (Y8)1; (S) 1; (Y7) 1

d) Conflicts between my supervising teacher and students/I: (Y8) 0; (S) 0; (Y7) 1

In addition, evidence from interviews with my supervising teachers was also used in triangulation measures to test emergent themes. Elisa worked with me in Year 7 and Year 8 classes, and John was my mentor in the senior high class.

Results: reasons for not CLT

It may seem that one reason why one would not pursue a CLT lesson could justifiably be because the lesson content simply was not suitable. As this group of lessons were characterised as ‘**not CLT**’, decisions about not pursuing a CLT orientation would mostly be made beforehand and would mostly be in the light of the question of suitability of CLT at this stage of the program. However, only three of my diary entries were about the lack of suitability of CLT for different instructional goals (Y8 on 9/12/08; S on 26/8/08; Y7 on 2/6/09). According to the frequency with which each theme occurred at each year level, it could be argued that the reason for my decision not to pursue CLT was more often associated with my own **lack of experience**, and **lack of confidence** in dealing with **classroom management**. The following issues were considered the most important ones that caused my **not CLT** lessons.

5.3.1.1 Classroom management, Lack of confidence and Lack of experience:

As a teacher who had no previous teaching experience, it was not easy for me to

adjust immediately to the transition from being a learner to a teacher. This lack of experience was evident in my lack of practical skills and professional judgement in dealing with specific classroom management issues, especially in the early phase of my teaching. The difficulties I encountered kept challenging my belief in myself as a good teacher and even made me doubt whether I was suitable to be a teacher. At the very beginning, my lack of confidence and lack of adaptation to being a teacher constantly caused me to be anxious and nervous in front of students. Therefore, it was very difficult for me to pay enough attention to my students' learning. The following scenario is from one of my very early lessons and shows these issues:

I think maybe subconsciously I isolated myself from the students I was teaching to. This time the case became more serious. The teacher asked one Indian student to apologize to me because of his rude language to me, but I didn't notice anything had happened to him . . . Next time, I need to pay more attention to students' behaviour. In doing so, the first job is to remember the naughty students' names. Second thing is to ask them to do something when they misbehaviour. KEEP IN MIND!³ (Year 8, August 26, 2008).

Without a certain self-belief and self-adaptation (in my first half year of teaching), it was extremely challenging for me to be fully in charge of the class and to manage the students' behaviour with authority, especially when students were less engaged. The students could also feel my sense of insecurity and did not necessarily view me as a 'real teacher'. All of this constrained my ability to control the class and give appropriate responses to students' various behaviours. The following evidentiary excerpt is from my reflections on one of my very early lessons:

The class was noisy. I felt I had lost control to some extent, because what I did was just to say 'quiet', 'pay attention', 'stop talking'. They didn't care with my soft attitude. I couldn't help myself from being friendly and nice to students. I always worried about hurting their feelings if I acted too strict to them. But one thing I learnt from this class is that being a teacher, you have to be tough with students, you have to establish a firm image to students, especially those who don't have high motivation for learning. When I asked questions, students liked to murmur a lot with the answer and few liked to raise hands. If I asked them to stop talking and

³ It might be noticed that the grammar I used in my reflective journals, especially the early ones, is different from the other parts of my thesis. This is because my English kept progressing while I was teaching and studying in Australia. I decided not to change these passages, so as to keep my data original.

put hands up if any one knowing the answer, then no one would raise hands. I was frustrated with their reaction. I didn't know what to do with this situation . . . During the class, students kept asking me different questions, even I didn't have much time and didn't really like to answer all of them, I still tried to tell them my answer which to some extent interrupted my teaching plan and wasted the time of the entire class. From this lesson, I realised that being tough sometimes was a necessary action to make students respect to the teacher and regulate their behaviour. One more thing, it's not always good to answer all question of students because time is limit, teachers have to be responsible for the entire class. Maybe I could save some time in the end of the class if students asked too many questions (Year 8, October 14, 2008).

This excerpt shows that in this lesson, I was overwhelmed by students' lack of engagement with my teaching and their endless talking. Their poor motivation for studying Mandarin I think was related to the long-standing dominant role of English (Henderson, 2008) they perceived in Australia and internationally. As mentioned in Section 3.5.4, the value of languages other than English is vastly underrated by Australians. So, in school, language studies do not have the political clout that mainstream courses such as Mathematics do (Orton, 2008). In the junior high school in which I worked, there was neither qualified Mandarin teaching staff nor a Mandarin course. I only took part as a volunteer Mandarin teacher, once a week in another language course which had been set up as a formal course. It seemed to me that most of my students in Year 7 and Year 8 came to my class just for fun and did not take the course as seriously as other subjects.

As a novice teacher, I found it difficult to give immediate and efficient responses to students' misbehaviour and various reactions. This also resulted from my 'soft' attitude and my worrying too much about hurting students' feelings. Without my supervising teacher's help, I had to spend much time and energy to calm students down and to ask them to follow my lesson. Once I sensed that the class was in danger of being out of control, I dared not risk practising CLT-oriented activities, which are characterised by a high degree of student self-control and flexibility. Since much of my time was spent disciplining students, I felt that my relationship with the students was too confrontational to deliver a communicative class in which students were supposed to be more in charge of their own learning and the teacher was more like a 'facilitator'. Orton's (2008) illustration of the 'policy continent' points to problems associated with L1 teachers of Mandarin who worked in Australia (Section

3.5.3). Compared to native Australian teachers, language teachers from China have difficulty in employing the communicative strategies and modes of intercultural expression appropriate to Australian students in L2 classes (Orton, 2008). Native Chinese teachers often have problems in relating well to school students and other groups in Australia (Orton, 2008). My feeling of my different cultural background from my students and my unfamiliarity with the local environment constrained me to communicate well with my students. This reduced my confidence in trying out alternative ways of implementing CLT.

Therefore, in a less engaged and noisy class, I would use more structured learning activities, such as repetition, listening exercises, dictation and worksheets, just to avoid students' being out of control and to make sure I had effective classroom management.

In addition, at the very beginning of my teaching, I was often 'stuck' in answering students' questions during the lessons. On the one hand, I did not want to spend too much time answering questions, since many were not related to what I taught. On the other hand, I was frightened that I might hurt students' feeling and discourage them from engaging with my class if I ignored their questions. As a result, I would not have enough time to carry out the many activities I had planned or the time to teach all the important language points in my plan.

Finally, being too emotionally involved with students' particular behaviour also prevented me from the successful delivery of a CLT-oriented class:

This was a disappointing class again. One student's negative reaction to my instruction really influenced my emotion in my entire teaching. At first, I clarified the rules again, and asked them to follow Chinese way of greeting to begin and end the class. One student found it hard to believe and refused to do it. She was quite good in all my other classes, so I didn't know what was wrong with her today, as she ignored my teaching during the whole lesson. The more terrible thing was that my supervising teacher even tried to please her and talk to her many times during the class which was rather disturbing to me because they sat right in front of me. The entire class was noisy and I had to raise my voice several times. Student A was very talkative. No matter how many times I warned him, he simply didn't care. ... In an annoying class, it's very easy for me to

mess up my teaching plan, everything went wrong. No any communicative activities were carried out; let alone the meaningful communication (Year 8, October 28, 2008).

From my teaching experiences, I found difficult to balance an impersonal manner with my strong emotional reactions to students' various behaviours. Once I was too obsessed with students' misbehaviour, there was no way I could successfully deliver any class, let alone a CLT class. I understand that being overly sensitive to students' misbehaviour and allowing my negative emotional reactions to interfere with my teaching might be regarded as unprofessional behaviour. However, it was a struggle for me to learn to be professional and to be 'cool' about depressing things. My supervising teacher Elisa told me in the interview:

You must not take it personally. That's something you have to learn as a young teacher or a new teacher. It's not about you. You are good at what you do. There is an expectation of you from this class. That could be challenging, how to grab the attention of the ones who don't want to learn. How will you make it interesting for them? (Elisa, personal communication, June 25, 2009).

Elisa's comment indicates that disciplining and engaging students who do not have the motivation to learn can be very difficult. Therefore, discipline problems are very closely related to motivation. Rather than only focusing on specific classroom management and control, finding ways to enhance students' interest and motivation about what is being taught is a key issue. However, given the common view in Australia that English is the most widespread language in the world, the learning of other languages is seen as an exotic private pursuit beyond the ability of most of people (Orton, 2008). It was challenging to help the students, especially young ones (Year 7 and 8 students in my case) understand how important it is to learn another language other than English. That is why George (in Section 3.6.2) indicated during an interview that students in Australia may not all have positive attitudes toward Mandarin study and that this could lead to behaviour problems and struggle over different teaching/learning strategies (George, personal communication, November 10, 2009). Therefore, engaging and motivating students to develop a good expectation from learning Mandarin was an important part of my job as a VTR from China (George, personal communication, November 10, 2009).

However, it seems to me that most of the students in Year 7 and Year 8 came to my class just for fun, since they had no pressure of taking an exam. In such cases, designing an interesting class is extremely important to engage the students and to avoid misbehaving.

5.3.1.2 Inappropriate preparation

Without sufficient planning, I could hardly give a coherent lesson and provide an efficient learning experience for students. More importantly, being aware of insufficient preparation and a feeling of insecurity could substantially reduce my confidence in leading the class and engaging students. I largely relied on my plan during teaching and was not competent at responding appropriately to unexpected classroom incidents and students' disengagement:

I didn't prepare very well for this class, so no particular interesting activities for them. I just taught them the name of different foods and some simple sentence patterns. Maybe it was because that my plan was too loose, they had much time to talk. I realised that I have to keep students busy and always have something to do in order to make them engage in the class . . . Having a good teaching plan and good preparation is really important. Not only it will improve students' learning efficiency, it will also enhance teacher's confidence to control and lead the teaching pace (Year 8, October 14, 2008).

This could be related to what my teaching supervisor, John, suggested (from our interview): 'make sure that you have momentum in your lesson' (John, personal communication, June 25, 2009). He described 'momentum' as, 'you don't have dead time. One activity should link to the other. You don't give them the time to talk about the weekend or whatever' (John, personal communication, June 25, 2009). He highlighted the importance of 'momentum' in a lesson to the control of the class, but this requires much planning and preparation beforehand. Moreover, 'never stay with only one task' (John, personal communication, June 25, 2009), which is to say, mix tasks such as some listening, some reading and other learning activities in one lesson in order to make sure the students practise the target language in a number of skills and they engage in various activities.

In addition, teaching a technology-based lesson without a backup plan is risky, because things which cannot be anticipated can always go wrong with technology. Therefore, it is especially important to have an alternative plan for a technology-based class; otherwise, the entire class could be ‘messed up’ once problems occur with equipment. This happened to me a couple of times:

Today’s lesson was kind of disappointing, because I’ve planned the entire class relying on computer support but which did not work as well as I expected. I had checked with my teacher for several times about the availability of laptop, but when I arrived there, the facility was still full of problems. At the beginning the teacher spent a lot of time setting up data projector, when we finally got it through, the screen is total unclear and the speaker was not working at all. So it was very hard to get students focused with this poor technology supply. The worse thing was that I didn’t have a backup plan. There were suppose to be many kinds of communicative activities and tasks in laptop, but in reality, nothing could work successfully because of the technical problem. In the meantime, I felt really impatient and felt guilty for my inability to give an interesting class to get them engaged. So I simply rushed all programs in the laptop and tried to get students to finish all tasks and listening exercise as soon as possible (Year 7, June 16, 2009).

5.3.1.3 In pursuit of specific instructional goals

Some lessons were not CLT-oriented, because of my decision to pursue specific instructional goals. In these lessons, I thought the teaching content was not very suitable for a CLT approach. For example, in one Year 8 class, I sought to expose students to Chinese calligraphy and to practise Chinese writing. In this lesson, I presented the teaching content—Chinese calligraphy and traditional writing tools. Students then learnt the right position for holding the Chinese brush and using it to write Chinese characters (following me at the beginning). From my perspective, it was not necessary to use communicative activities to immerse students in the culture of Chinese calligraphy; it was more efficient and easier to manage the learning in a teacher-controlled approach. Apart from that, in another lesson, which aimed at reviewing an examination which students had taken, in my opinion it was better for me to directly clarify the difficulties. This ensures a clear explanation and analysis of

the answer. Overall, my pursuit of particular instructional goals was one of my reasons not to plan a CLT class, since some teaching content requires a more teacher-centred method.

5.3.1.4 Conflicts in class

It is difficult to implement a smooth lesson when there is a serious conflict happening in the class. In one lesson, such a conflict was caused between my supervising teacher (whom I only worked with once) and the students.

Today my class in year 7 class was totally a mess. There are both external and internal factors. It was third period class so it was almost time to have lunch. That day the students went to my class right after finishing a half day of text, exhausted and hoping for a relax. Moreover, today I encountered a situation I had never experienced before. The students deeply hated the teacher who worked with me, as that teacher was extremely strict to them . . . So when the teacher left, the students went crazy, many students started to complain to me how much they hated the teacher. I didn't know how to respond, as it was probably that teacher's typical way of managing the class and she did it for the good order of class. Meanwhile, I was also upset about the teacher's behaviour, not only because of her 'radical reaction' to the students, but also her reluctance to stay and supervise my class all the time. What she did was just to show up sometimes and to punish students' misbehaviour and then go. It didn't help me at all. It just fuelled students' anger again and again. (Year 7, May 14, 2009).

Another problem in this class was the supervising teacher's disagreement with me in terms of the way I taught and my overly tolerant attitude to the students. She was very unsatisfied with my flexible way of organising the class and identified as a problem, my using group work in this class. She kept informing me about the importance of a fully structured and teacher-controlled teaching routine to teach a lesson and that any student misbehaviour should be absolutely forbidden and given an immediate response. Nevertheless, I was still discouraged by her criticism, especially when she pointed this out in front of my students. I was too upset about what happened that day, therefore the class was not successful. However, it highlighted for me the importance of cooperation between partner teachers and a harmonious relationship between teachers and students.

5.3.2 CLT attempted but not fully successful lessons

The beginning of this section provides introductory sentences to tell the reader about causes for not fully successful CLT implementation. A preliminary category was inserted (in brackets) in each statement.

Causes for not fully successful CLT implementation

Year 8:

- My unfamiliarity with students (unfamiliarity)
- Organisation of group work (activity organisation)
- Lack of confidence in being an independent and qualified teacher (lack of confidence)
- Relying too much on my supervising teacher's support (relying on supervising teacher's support)
- Focusing too much on my performance rather than students' response (focusing too much on myself)
- Problems in controlling time properly (improper time control)
- Organisation of group work (activity organisation)
- Problems in having individual conversations with students who were all attempting to gain my attention (problems in managing individual conversation)
- Difficulty in answering some of the students' questions (students' difficult questions)
- Inability to discipline students confidently and properly (difficulty in disciplining students)
- Difficulty in explaining and analysing the exam interestingly and communicatively (difficulty in explaining exam in communicative way)
- Difficulty in encouraging an active discussion among students due to my limited level of English and lack of experience (difficulty in guiding an active discussion due to my limited English and lack of experience)

- Problems in controlling time properly (improper time control)
- Communicative activities were not plentiful enough (I did not plan enough CLT activities)
- Many tasks focused on reading and writing skills alone, which emphasised sentence drills and memorisation (tasks were not very CLT oriented)
- My instruction was not clear enough for students to do tasks effectively (unclear instruction)
- Problem in selecting a right person as a 'role model' to perform conversations in Mandarin (activity organisation)
- Students found it 'weird' and were not used to speaking Mandarin without my supervision (my instruction was not encouraging and inspiring enough for pushing students to speak the target language)

Senior high:

- My unfamiliarity with students (unfamiliarity)
- Unclear instructions (unclear instruction)
- Difficulty in teaching basic students mixed with Chinese background speakers (difficulty in teaching mixed groups)
- Difficulty in explaining grammar accurately and giving responses immediately, especially when I was not sure about the answer (difficulty in giving accurate grammatical explanation)
- Difficulty in implementing active communication when students were so obsessed with accurate pronunciation (students cared too much about pronunciation accuracy to have meaningful communication)
- Students found it difficult to write Chinese characters, and this took a lot of class time (improper time control)
- Therefore, not much time for students to practise Mandarin orally and communicatively (improper time control)
- Inability to elicit an active discussion (difficulty in leading an active discussion)
- Too much time used by me to present content so students had little time to practise the target language on their own (improper time control, too much time taken for me to present the content alone)
- Improper time control as I spent too much time on revision (improper time control)

- Insufficient preparation of teaching material: I forgot to bring pictures, which made it difficult to practise conversation. (insufficient preparation)

Year 7:

- My instruction was unclear for students to do tasks effectively (unclear instruction)
- Most of the time was used by me to present the content to give them background knowledge of Chinese language in the early lesson (improper time control, too much time used by me to present the content)
- Classroom management issues: I felt exhausted from disciplining their behaviour while implementing CLT activities (too much energy used to discipline students' behaviour)
- Organisation of role-play (I did not estimate time properly so not many students had no chance to do this activity)
- Most of the activities were very structured and there was not much flexibility for students to use the target language. (activities were too structured and not communicative enough)
- My worrying about classroom management issues discouraged me from planning activities relying on students' self control. (class management issues emotionally discouraged me to try flexible CLT activities)
- Still many writing and listening exercises and not many CLT activities (I mainly planned structured learning exercises)
- My instruction was unclear, and some students even wrote comments in English in the sheet. (unclear instruction)
- The class was not communicative enough, and there were many listening, writing and reading exercises for students (I planned many structured, traditional learning routines)
- The map I used was too small to follow clearly for students at the back of the room. It made the implementation of activities less effective (inadequate teaching material)
- My instructions were not clear enough for students to do a writing task smoothly (unclear instruction)
- My instructions were not clear enough for students to do tasks effectively (unclear instruction)
- Classroom management issues: When I had conversation with individual students, the rest of them would become talkative and misbehave. (student discipline problem)

- I gave students too many worksheets, due to my worrying about students' possibly being out of control without enough tasks to do (student behaviour problem)

Five major themes were developed from these preliminary categories, through the grouping of related issues. These themes are listed below. Similarly to the coding process for **not CLT** lessons, Arabic numerals were used to identify the occasions when each theme was mentioned, for each Year level. Similarly to the analysis for **non-CLT lessons**, in presentation of my results, excerpts from my reflective journals were used as contextual illustrations of the categories below. Comments from my supervising teachers (Elisa and John) and my L2 methodology lecturer (Mary) were also employed in my analysis.

a) Classroom management:

1. Poor skill in organising activities and facilitating students' participation (Y 8) 8; (S) 5; (Y7) 6
2. Giving appropriate response to students (Y8) 1; (S) 2; (Y7) 0
3. Poor skill in dealing with students' behaviour problem (Y8) 1; (S) 0; (Y7) 4

b) Unfamiliarity with students and teaching role (Y8) 4; (S) 1; (Y7) 0

c) Worrying too much about my English fluency (Y8) 1; (S) 1; (Y7) 0

d) Insufficient preparation (Y8)1; (S) 1; (Y7)1

e) Activity itself is not CLT-oriented enough (Y8) 2; (S) 0; (Y7) 3

5.3.2.1 Classroom management

Similar to the **not CLT-oriented classes**, in the CLT-attempted lessons, classroom management was still the major problem. However, issues in classroom management were quite different. In the **not CLT-oriented classes**, students' behaviour and class control problems were the main issues, whereas in **CLT-attempted classes**, it was mainly my lack of practical skill in organising CLT activities and facilitating students' participation that influenced the effective implementation of classroom activities.

5.3.2.1.1 Skill in organising CLT activities and facilitating students' participation

In terms of the specific practice of CLT activities, there were many problems I encountered when I attempted to adopt CLT in my class. First, the organisation of pair or group work was difficult. Elisa, my supervising teacher, identified difficulties in carrying out group work, especially in the junior high class: 'during group work or pair work, it does get noisy, but it's part of it. Sometimes they don't stay on the task. That's also part of it' (Elisa, personal communication, June 25, 2009). The grouping of appropriate partners for the students was difficult. For example, in my Year 8 class, in pair work, there was often one boy who had no partner to work with. If I grouped members for the students, some of them were reluctant to work with their partners. Therefore, in my first few lessons, I usually let students choose their own partner and I worked with the person who had no partner.

However, this gradually caused another, even more serious problem. During their practice of pair/group work, many of them did not practise Mandarin or stay on the task; instead, they spent most of the time chatting. Usually, it was not until I approached them that they would focus on their task. Thus, during group work, the class was usually noisy because every student talked aloud, but I could not ensure that each group was staying on task. I had to check each group one by one, so it was quite time-consuming. Nevertheless, I still believed it was worth trying, so, in spite of the noise made, every student was given opportunities to actually speak and communicate in the target language (at least when I was checking), which is essential to language learning.

My other supervising teacher, John, gave me advice on the formation of group work. From his perspective, it was better not to always allow the same pairings; rather, it was better to allow students to get acquainted with different students in the class. He believed that 'we always assume that because they (students) are in a class they all know each other well, but it was not the case' (John, personal communication, June 25, 2009). Second, he said he did not always match students of a similar level. To do

so, he would need to know the students very well. Because I only had the class once a week, he pointed out the difficulty this made for me (John, personal communication, June 25, 2009). In my email conversation with my L2 methodology lecturer, she commented that:

Any group activities require significant preparation and an established classroom management process so that students don't misbehave—much of this has to do with experience. Have you tried establishing rules with your class? Does the classroom teacher provide any support? (Mary, personal communication, July 23, 2009)

Without sufficient prior preparation and sophisticated organisation, group work is unlikely to be carried out successfully. As Mary suggested, the establishment of rules and support from the supervising teacher were helpful.

Elisa also gave me much advice on the use of group work. According to her, making the group work a form of assessment could be an effective way to help students take it more seriously, because students can have greater sense of academic achievement.

This complies with what the Chinese syllabus suggests about '*assessment for learning*' (discussed in Section 4.4.1), which recommends the use of learning activities as assessment: that is 'teachers use tasks that assess, and therefore encourage deep learning' (BoS NSW, 2003, p. 68). In Australia where students don't have much exam pressure, task-based assessment is encouraged to use as ongoing activities in daily classes. From my experience, there could be two major reasons: 1. demonstrating students' current learning outcome so teachers can more adequately modify the teaching plans; 2. giving immediate feedback to students' mistakes or good performance in a more formal context so students can more clearly recognise their weakness and strengths. In addition, just as Elisa said, this can also be considered as means to help students engage the class and take a better attitude toward L2 learning.

Elisa also believed that setting up clear rules and structures was very important to successfully implementing group work. John also stressed the importance of clear and structured instructions to the success of group work:

In terms of group work, it has to be really extremely structured. You should have a very good idea before you start. Instruction should be very clear and once at a time. I would also go as far as leaving the structures and sentences on the board . . . What I mean by this is, it has to be extremely structured to actually work, especially with junior students. I luckily only have senior high students. I can just give them the task and say do it. Still with them I have to make sure that they stay on the task (John, personal communication, June 25, 2009).

Unclear instructions were one of the most frequent problems I had in my CLT-oriented lessons. At the very beginning of my lessons, I often gave them the instructions after I gave the students the worksheet, and in that case, few students paid attention to me. Instead, they focused on the sheet they had just received and discussed the task with other students. As a result, no matter how many times and how loudly I spoke to them, I could rarely gain their attention. Hence, they would then ask me repeatedly about what they were expected to do. Even worse, some students would chat or distract others:

. . . the second activity was to name the family member in a family tree. They were required to draw a picture of each family member in a circle, but many students weren't clear about it and kept murmuring what to do, because I only briefly mentioned the task and assumed that they could get it by looking at the instruction. So I wasted some time because of it and the class went a little noisy. (Senior High, September 12, 2008).

I sent some sheets to let students sequence those Chinese sentences in right order. Because there were many Chinese characters without pinyin, the students couldn't understand them, I put the pinyin of each Chinese character on the board. Even so, some of them were reluctant to look at the board and still struggling with the sentences. Many of them simply gave up. In result, I went to check each table and explained to them one by one. This activity went rather time-consuming and troublesome . . . (Year 8, December 2, 2008).

From my teaching experiences, I realise that not only should I have given instructions before giving out the task sheet; more importantly, I should have repeated the instructions and included all details beforehand.

Improper time control also influenced the effectiveness of my teaching. I found it difficult to anticipate the time that different activities needed. In some classes I had to rush the activities in order to finish on time, and in some other classes I might plan activities that were too loosely constructed and students had too much time left over.

In both cases, the effectiveness of my CLT implementation was reduced because of my miscalculation of time.

As well as the factors mentioned above, there were other problems that constrained my CLT implementation. The selection of appropriate students to role-play a task is important, to give all students a good role model. In one Year 8 class, I selected a person who had not previously completed the conversation in the worksheet at all. He was just interested in 'showing off' in front of the other students. So, during the conversation, he constantly asked his friends for help. In the end, I had to stop him and ask another student to continue the conversation. Meanwhile, I also worried that I might hurt his feelings by stopping him.

In addition, my inability to motivate different students to answer my questions or join in classroom activities also limited the success of my teaching. There was always the same group of students who participated in my activities or answered my questions. Without all students' participation, it was impossible to carry out a fully CLT class, as there were many (and usually the same group) 'audiences' just watching the others' perform. However, as I became more familiar with the students, things gradually improved. I realised that the students who were always reluctant were not necessarily unwilling to participate; instead, many of them were just too shy to raise their hands. Therefore, sometimes I just called the students' names to encourage them to participate. At the beginning, some of these were not quite used to being called on, but after a few times, many of them were actually happy about it as they actually liked to participate or at least they liked the feeling of being noticed.

5.3.2.1.2 Giving appropriate responses to students

Giving appropriate responses to students is one of the most challenging aspects on which I worked to improve the effectiveness of my teaching. It was difficult to confront the situation of students asking me questions that I do not know the answer to. However, it is a situation that a teacher can hardly avoid. When I first met this situation, I was 'stuck' for a while and felt embarrassed at not being able to give the

answer. So I just told the students, 'I'm sorry, I don't know'. I kept going on with the lesson, while the students remained puzzled.

Another issue I encountered in my junior high class was the difficulty of having individual conversations with students. Because there are thirty students in a junior high class, it was very difficult to make sure that all students were concentrating while I was trying to have conversations with other students. If many students knew an answer, they were all eager to call out, so that I had to change my mind and let them respond to me together. Once my conversation with a student became too difficult for the rest of them to understand, then many lost focus and began to talk. This made it difficult to encourage meaningful individual communication in the target language, which is essential to the CLT approach. The following is what happened in one of my Year 8 classes:

I planned to let the students tell the number one by one, but it didn't work, because students who knew the answer all eager to answer it, so I had to let them answer it together. I didn't know how to deal with this situation if I wanted to give all students chances to think and give the answer individually . . . Then the classroom teacher asked me a tricky question, why the Chinese characters of the numbers more than three were so complicated, I just answered that I didn't know. Maybe there are better ways to react even though I did not know the answer. Maybe I have to respond more positively to them, such as replying 'I will check it later and tell you next class.' (Year 8, September 10, 2008).

As my teaching experiences gradually increased, I found a better way to respond to the difficult questions students raised during the class. The first thing was to confirm the asker's good intention by saying 'It is a good or interesting question'. After that, I simply admitted my inability to give the answer but also told the students that I would try to check it after class and tell them next time. In that case, the students would sense that I valued their questions and they would get an answer next lesson. Moreover, this also meant I could keep enriching my knowledge in order to enable myself to solve most of the problems that students have in learning.

With regard to the problem of managing individual conversations, I later realised that only when everyone has something to do with the conversation will both 'audiences' and 'performers' concentrate. Therefore, before any role-play or individual

conversation, I gave everyone a questionnaire to fill in about the conversation they were to listen to. As a result, not only the ‘speakers’ but also the ‘audiences’ focused on the conversation in order to finish the task I gave them. In addition, Elisa suggested that when I brought students to the front for role-play, I could walk around the class, ‘sometimes looking at them, tapping them and directly whispering at them’ in order to make sure that the rest of them listen to it as well (Elisa, personal communication, June 25, 2009). These strategies seemed to work for me.

There were some other situations which were even more difficult to handle, such as the teaching of a class of mixed background and non-background speakers of the target language. In a few lessons, there were one or two students who were Chinese-background learners. Whenever I asked questions, the Chinese background students would call out the answer and the rest of students had no time to think or answer. As a result the beginning learners, who were most of the class, would feel discouraged and even annoyed by the L1 learners’ constant answers. If it happened too often in one lesson, I would have to ask the Chinese background students to stop calling out the answer and give more chances to the other students. This reminded me of one major constraint to learning Mandarin in Australia, according to my reading of the ‘policy continent’ (Sections 3.5.1, 3.5.4). In many secondary schools in Australia, including the schools where I taught, there are no separate Mandarin courses for Background Students, L1 and L2 learners of Mandarin. L2 learner usually felt great pressure from being with those who spoke Mandarin at home. This is one important reason for the huge loss of students who continue Mandarin courses at secondary schools in Australia. However, because only three lessons involved Chinese background students, it was not a major issue in my teaching.

5.3.2.1.3 Students’ behaviour problems

Although students’ misbehaviour was not a frequent problem in CLT-oriented lessons, once it occurred, the effectiveness of my teaching was reduced significantly (this has been discussed in detail in the previous section: **not CLT lessons**). In a class where many students were not engaged and were constantly talking, I would be too

exhausted to carry out communicative activities (as discussed in Section 5.3.1.1). This could discourage me from trying more CLT activities. To avoid students' being out of control, I delivered a more teacher-centred lesson when students' behaviour problems were serious.

5.3.2.2 My unfamiliarity with the students

When I just began to teach, the first thing I learnt was the importance of remembering students' names. In my first few lessons, I was very worried about having conflicts with them, as it would be difficult for me to communicate with them without being able to use their name. In addition, using the correct pronunciation of all the students' names was not an easy job. When I had just begun to teach the class, the mistakes I made in the pronunciation of certain students' names usually led to a rather embarrassing situation in which the students would make fun of me and even laugh at the students I had misnamed. As a result, I tended to avoid individual conversations before I was able to correctly pronounce and remember their names. Consequently, the interactions between myself and the students were constrained. This affected the effectiveness of my CLT-oriented classes, in which communication is a key principle. The following was noted in one of my senior high classes, relating to the problem of my unfamiliarity with the students:

What bothered me a little in this class was that when I asked volunteers to answer my question, the students didn't like to raise hands even if they knew the answer. In fact, I could have asked specific students to tell the answer. The problem was that I still couldn't remember their name (I think it was too rude to just say 'you' when calling any individual students to answer), so I could only ask the students to answer my question together. Because of my unfamiliarity with the students, it was so difficult to communicate with the students in person or interact with them as well as what I expected (Senior high class, September 2, 2008).

Because of a lack of understanding of the class context and the students' personalities, I found it difficult to predict students' possible reactions to my teaching or to predict

the problems which might emerge in actual implementation. It often made me unprepared and unable to give an immediate and appropriate response. For example, when I first decided to design group work, I did not know that some students disliked working with some others or that it would be difficult to find a partner for each one. Therefore, in practice, group work did not work as effectively as I expected. Another issue I often did not anticipate was the time that different students needed to finish a task. Some students always worked far more efficiently than others. Some students needed more specific explanations and instructions for tasks. This led to situations in which some students had completed their work without having anything further to do, while others were still working on a task or had no idea how to do it. This happened several times in my first few junior high classes. Besides, because I had lessons only once a week, it took a long time for me to become really familiar with the students in my class and to know them well. More importantly, this made it difficult for students to progress, due to the insufficient time available for Mandarin classes per week in the school. This reflected the necessity to include studies of Asia (including Mandarin) within the mainstream curriculum as the *Statement* (2003) suggested, for engaging young Australians with Asian studies. It is recommended that there should be a specific school plan about Asian studies in terms of time allocation, the level of resources and staffing arrangements (DEST, 2006, p.11). My schools had not prepared such a plan.

5.3.2.3 Worrying too much about my English

Because I speak English as a second language, I am always concerned about my spoken English fluency. This affected my teaching on many levels. In my first lesson, because I was nervous about my English fluency and worried about any mistakes in my speaking, I wrote down all the words that I might speak in the lesson, which effectively became a script for my presentation. When I actually taught my first class, I was so nervous that I only sought to recite everything I had written so as to make no mistakes. Without a doubt, in this class, my teaching was not effective. During the whole lesson, I constantly worried about my own English fluency and my own performance; thus, little attention was paid to my students' responses. Things were

even worse when students asked me questions, as there was no way that I could prepare for these beforehand. It took a long time for me to respond to them because of my worrying about the appropriateness of professional terminology as well as my English accuracy.

Nevertheless, what happened in the first lesson was a little extreme, and my interaction with the students became more effective and flexible after a little experience, due to my growing adjustment to teaching in a second language. However, compared to the native teachers, I think my constant worrying about English fluency constrained the flexibility of my communication with students. This more or less reduced my confidence or capability in teaching, especially when I had to discipline the students and respond to their misbehaviour:

The class went noisy for several times and every time I had to call out to them by saying ‘stop talking’, ‘quiet’, ‘pay attention to me’, which seemed really powerless. Even sometimes the students imitated what I said because they knew exactly what I would say to make them quiet. I really felt that my English was too poor to effectively discipline the students and communicate with them (Year 7, May 5, 2009).

Except for problems in disciplining the students, my limited level of English and my insufficient language skills also limited my ability to give an appropriate response to students’ different opinions or to encourage them in active discussion. In discussions about Chinese culture, my feedback on students’ different opinions I think was not very constructive. My words were limited to ‘good’, ‘interesting’ or ‘I didn’t know this before’. Although I did ask many questions, the discussion still could not go on for long. It may have been more related to my lack of teaching experience, but I am sure that my limited level of English was a factor that reduced my confidence in leading a discussion or conversing with students.

Nevertheless, when I talked to Elisa about my concerns about English, she disagreed, telling me that my English was actually good enough to lead a good lesson. Instead, she said:

Your English is not the problem, I think it’s the culture, as you said, coming from a Chinese culture where the students know their role as students. Sometimes the students here at school don’t know their role.

Therefore, in this class [Year 7], academically the students are able to do it, but socially you have to teach them (Elisa, personal communication, June 25, 2009).

Therefore, differences in educational cultures were another obstacle for me to overcome so I could feel confident about my teaching as well as my English. The students in my Year 7 and Year 8 classes in Australia, from my perspective, were very different from students in China, who in my experience are much more obedient and have a more serious attitude toward studying at school. I had to get used to the Australian setup and become familiar with the local culture, language and students' various behaviours. I had to adjust my teaching to my particular context of teaching within the 'policy continent' I entered in Australia (see Chapter 3). From my understanding, the Australian culture appears to encourage freedom, equality and critical thinking, while in China, from my experience, more emphasis is given to respect (to teachers), school rules and working hard.

5.3.2.4 Insufficient preparation

A sufficient preparation beforehand is also very important, without which, I can hardly have a successful CLT class:

After reviewing all previous language points, I started a new lesson in terms of activities in leisure time. One thing I forgot to do was to prepare printed pictures of the activities I planned to teach this lesson. Without pictures and visual clues, I found very inconvenient to help the students review these activities and link the meaning with the new language in conversation (Senior high, June 25, 2009).

This was a small thing, but shows that lessons can rise or fall on such small things.

5.3.2.5 Activity itself is not CLT-oriented enough

Apart from implementation problems, in some classes, it was my decision not to plan sufficient CLT-oriented activities that prevented the possibility of a fully successful

CLT class. It was mostly because of my overriding concern about other issues, especially the suitability of teaching content (this has been illustrated in Section 5.3.1.3). For example, in order to measure how the students achieved in my lessons, in particular their knowledge of vocabulary and use of phrases in the target language, it was important to give them a routine writing test over a period of time. This was not necessarily CLT-oriented, as it mainly focused on vocabulary, sentence patterns and listening exercises. In these cases, the activities I planned would not be very CLT-oriented since communication in the target language is not the major aim of these lessons. So, in effect, these lessons were simply not regarded as CLT-suitable.

5.3.3 Lessons in which CLT was successful

According to Tables 5.9, 5.10 and 5.11, the **lessons in which CLT was successful** only occurred in the Senior High class, and mostly in the middle and later phases of my teaching. Comments from John, who supervised my teaching in the senior high class, are used to illustrate my adoption of the communicative approach to my teaching. There is no simple reason why CLT was successfully implemented for each of these lessons. In each case, the reason for the possibility of success was a complex mix of the nature of the activities, successful classroom management, the relationship between me and the students, and the relationship between the students and each other. Details of each reason follow.

Figure 5.1 (at the end of this section) shows the pattern of my professional development as a teacher in terms of CLT implementation in the senior high class compared to my Year 7 and Year 8 classes. Through my teaching experiences, I found myself becoming increasingly more comfortable and confident in teaching students communicatively in the senior high class. The atmosphere was right. Nevertheless, at the very beginning, things were not that promising. In the first few lessons, I was too concerned about some students' need to emphasise accurate pronunciation. Therefore, I spent much time giving details on how to place and function the tongue to pronounce Mandarin accurately. After a weeks of practice, I realised that it was probably too ambitious for me to attempt to make non-

background Australian beginners acquire skills in authentic pronunciation in such a short period of time. Accurate pronunciation and language fluency only come with sufficient learning experiences and speaking practice. I decided not to teach pronunciation alone.

Therefore, I gradually shifted my focus from pronunciation to the communicative function of language, which was more CLT-oriented. Apart from providing many on-computer and off-computer tasks for students, suggested by the *Zouba!* program (DET NSW, 2003), a large portion of the time was spent in casual talk with individual students around topics I had taught previously. Through this interaction, students could apply and practise their prior knowledge of Chinese and also be exposed to the target language. Although at the beginning, they were very nervous and shy when having a conversation with me in Mandarin, as time went by, they became more used to, and comfortable in, talking in Mandarin. In addition, the students enjoyed role-plays because in this activity, they acted like they were really immersed in a real life situation and they had much fun playing different characters as if they were really Chinese natives. The class was always filled with laughter and fun. It was because that students and the teacher built a sound cooperative relationship, and also a relaxing environment was established to empower them to speak the target language more freely in simulated real situations. Sometimes this was because of their strange pronunciation, sometimes it was because of the interesting topics they talked about in Chinese or because they were learning about some special traditions in China which are very different from Australia. The students seemed to really enjoy my class. From this class, I felt that CLT and my teaching were really rewarding and it was worth making an effort to practise CLT.

In interview, my supervising teacher, John, also confirmed my improvement in teaching and recognised my adoption of the communicative approach in the senior high class:

With practice, I've noticed that in fact, you have adopted a much more communicative approach to language teaching, meaning as far as I'm concerned, communication, meaning that you involve the students in communication, in the act of communication. So there has been a really good improvement. In terms of instructions, they are much clearer these days and you have a very good notion of what is required of the level of

your students. You want the students to actually express something and be engaged in real dialogue. I'm seeing you with the students in my school not needing you to follow sort of structured lessons, but afterwards, you expand and add materials to actually to give the opportunity to the students to take part in the real act of communication (John, personal communication, June 25, 2009).

There are many reasons for my success in CLT implementation in this class. First, unlike my Year 7 and 8 classes, there were no discipline problems in the Senior high class. Students who came to this class were highly motivated to learn Mandarin, because it was an after-school lesson. Therefore, it was much easier to organise and have them engage in classroom activities.

Second, the school culture is also important in creating a relaxing and comfortable environment for a communicative class. In this senior high school, the relationship between teachers and students was not 'control and being controlled'; instead, it was more like equal friends. I felt this atmosphere from their warm greetings to each other, and by the fact that students called teachers by their first names. This friendly relationship also extended to my class, and this substantially reinforced active communication and interaction between myself and my students. In this atmosphere, both students and I empowered ourselves to be more confident in engaging in learning and teaching activities in the class. It made the students more willing to take risks in practising Chinese. This is absolutely important for CLT, which aims to maximise students' practice of the target language and to develop their communicative competence. As for me, a novice foreign teacher, I lacked confidence in being a good teacher. This constrained my courage to challenge myself and to be more active in teaching and managing students' learning. The students' friendly attitudes enhanced my confidence and eased my anxiety in instructing in English (as a non-native speaker). More importantly, it gave me the courage to try more communicative activities with these students in order to provide them with deeper and more authentic knowledge of the target language.

Another important factor was the small size of this class. There were only five students in my class. So I was able to give my attention to every individual student and have more chances to communicate with, and give instructions to, each student.

More importantly, I could plan a variety of effective communicative activities for such a small class, so this allowed me to use CLT more effectively. Moreover, the good technical support—the availability of a computer each time—enabled me to access various on-line communicative activities and tasks. Therefore, I could more effectively make use of the *Zouba!* program (DET NSW, 2003) and design more types of learning activities (especially with more visual and auditory activities) in order to provide students with more authentic learning experiences (which is a key principle of CLT).

Figure 5.1 Phases of my CLT-related teaching

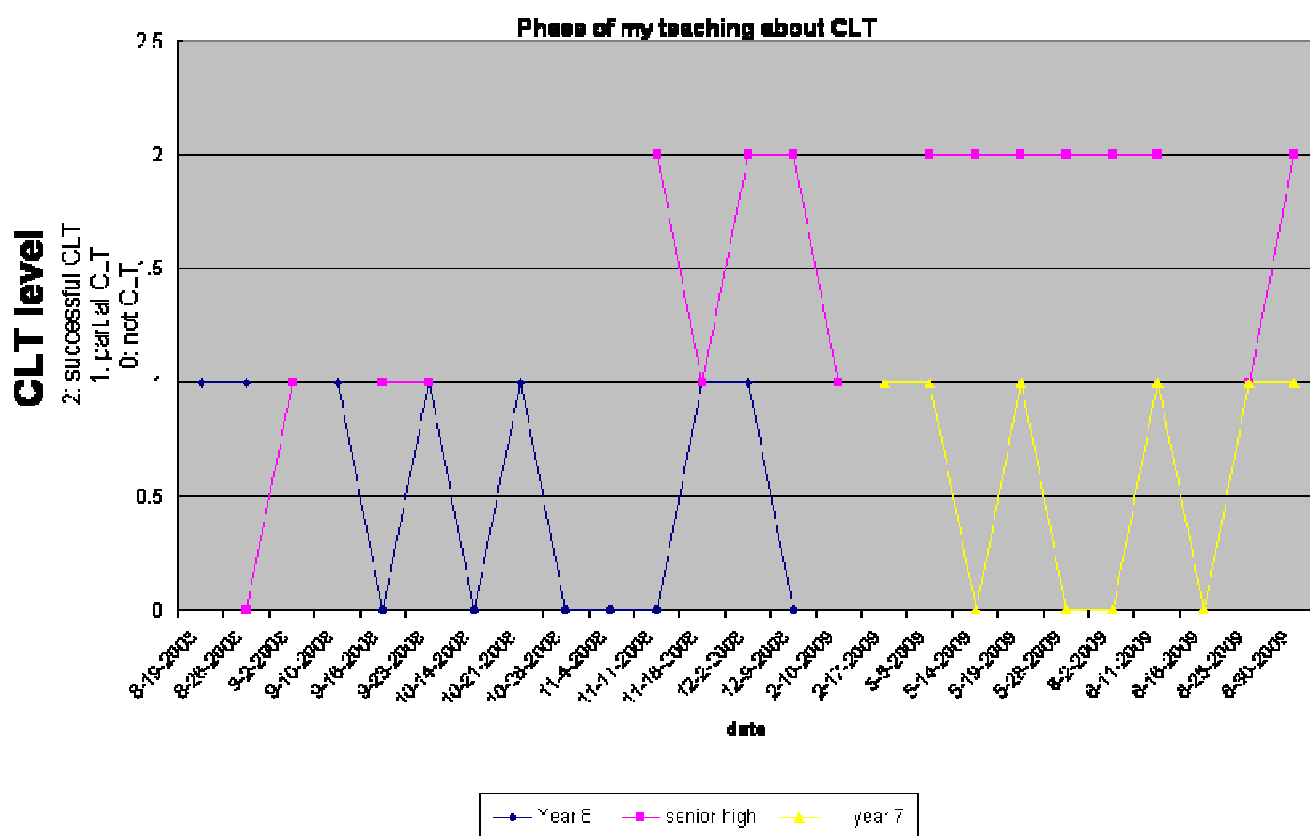


Figure 5.1 shows the pattern of my CLT implementation in Year 8, Year 7 and the Senior High class from 19 August 2008 to 30 June 2009. The different numbers in the left column indicate the different level of my implementation of CLT: 0 indicates not CLT class, 1 indicates CLT attempted but not fully successful class and 2 means fully successful CLT class. The different colour of the lines represents the change of

my teaching in different Year level with respect to CLT.

5.4 Discussion

The results of the foregoing data analysis reveal the obstacles and the change processes I experienced as a novice teacher in trying out CLT in the junior high classes (Year 8 and Year 7) and the senior high class during my first year of teaching in NSW. I entered the profession (as a volunteer teacher) with a set of beliefs based on prior knowledge in student-centred teaching, especially Communicative Language Teaching as an ideal way of teaching in the second language. Therefore, from the beginning, I attempted CLT approaches in my class by using real life simulations, creating communicative tasks and conducting games to engage the students and to develop their communicative competence.

5.4.1 My teaching in the junior high classes (Year 7 and Year 8)

From my experiences of teaching Year 7 and Year 8 classes, my views on teaching and the CLT approach deepened, and were shaped along the way. The obstacles I experienced in these classes led to remaking a fit between the practice of teaching and my thinking about ideal teaching. According to the analysis, this study has addressed the major issues I encountered and some possible solutions to implementing CLT, especially in Year 7 and Year 8 classes. **Classroom management** issues were found to be the biggest constraints on my implementation of CLT as a novice teacher of a foreign background. Other possible factors include:

- **Unfamiliarity with students**
- **Worrying about English as an L2 speaker**
- **My decision not to plan a CLT class**
- **Inappropriate preparation**
- **Classroom conflict**

My teaching in the junior high classes (Year 7 and Year 8) may not mirror the communicative approach because of all the constraints illustrated above. Even so, I continued to aspire to that ideal. Figure 5.1 shows my constant attempts to implement a CLT class in spite of many unsuccessful outcomes.

Through the initial phase of seeking control of the class as a beginning teacher and the later process of finding a balance between the actual classroom context and my pedagogical beliefs, I achieved certain improvements in managing the class and adopting suitable CLT activities in the class. These were appropriate to the class context and my teaching style. My supervising teacher, Elisa, commented that:

Generally you've been learning quite well, you know not to speak over them when they (students) are talking but to wait, because otherwise your voice will get loud. But it's better to set up rules in the class. I think you've been coping quite well with that . . . I think your control of the students is a lot better. In terms of communicative, you bring students to the front. And they do the pair work at front, and that's seemed to work for you. You can control it a little bit more. You have a very good structure (Elisa, personal communication, June 25, 2009)..

What I learnt from my teaching experience in the junior high classes is that for a beginning teacher with a foreign background, it is difficult to use CLT in a class where students are not always engaged. There are many teaching skills I have to work on in order to engage students more and to have a successful CLT class.

5.4.2 My teaching in the senior high class

Compared to my Year 7 and Year 8 classes, my teaching in the senior high class with CLT was much more successful. This was due to the different class context, many aspects of which were analysed in Section **5.3.3**:

- Students' high motivation for studying Mandarin,
- Friendly student-teacher relationship
- Cooperative student-student relationship
- Small class size
- Good technology support

More highly engaged students seem to appreciate and benefit most from CLT. Nevertheless, some of the problems I encountered in the junior high classes sometimes also occurred in this class, especially in the beginning, such as my unfamiliarity with students, unclear instructions, and my worrying about my English. However, as I became more familiar with my students, more used to teaching and more confident about my English, I was able to deliver many successful CLT classes. This included providing on-computer and off-computer tasks suggested by the *Zouba* program (DET NSW, 2003), having casual and simple conversations with individual students in Mandarin, creating real-life situations set in China, and pair or group work as well.

5.4.3 Outcomes of successful CLT lessons in the senior high class

In the Senior high class, I was able to fully realise the significance and the value of the communicative approach to language teaching. In my CLT classes, students were fully exposed to the target language and its culture with auditory and visual support by technology. They were involved with classroom activities driven by communication, such as surveys, role-plays and casual conversation in Mandarin. In the beginning, they were a little shy and not very active in communication and speaking the other language because of their overall concerns about pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. However, when their experiences gradually grew, I found that the students' own cooperation and encouragement could help each other and ease their anxiety in taking learning risks. Meanwhile, as they became more used to speaking in the other language, they started to enjoy the feeling of being able to communicate in the target language and became confident and enthusiastic to engage in various CLT activities.

More importantly, according to the frequent practice of communicative activities in Mandarin, as beginning learners, my Senior high students had good skills in speaking and using the target language. They were able to use the target language much more flexibly than I was able to when I first learnt English, as I was taught by more examination-oriented instruction based on rote memorisation, grammar and

vocabulary and knowledge about language. For example, my students had no problem in starting a conversation and performing in Mandarin when I gave them a topic or a scene I had taught previously. It occurred to me that when I began to study English, I was very afraid of being asked to speak the target language and could hardly have a real and meaningful communication, since the teacher rarely gave me opportunities to practise. In addition, my students were very active and enthusiastic to talk in the target language, which I think is an important quality for improving their communicative competence. They practised Mandarin not only in class, but also in their spare time when they met me or met their Chinese friends. Therefore, from the analyses of the foregoing evidence, Communicative Language Teaching was an effective approach not only for developing students' communicative competence, but also for increasing their interest and confidence in using the target language. However, it could be difficult to implement CLT in some classes, especially for beginning teachers (in my case these were Year 7 and Year 8 classes).

5.5 Reflections on my *reading* of CLT as a text-user of CLT

CLT appears to me an optimal approach to L2 teaching and learning. However, when CLT was put into my particular practice context, a range of issues emerged during my teaching. As a beginning teacher who had no prior teaching experience, effective classroom management was a major challenge for me in implementing CLT. It was not until I felt confident and comfortable with my teaching and control of the class that I was willing to take the risks needed to practise communicative activities.

Therefore, the evidence suggests that the use of CLT requires confidence and conviction and that teachers have to possess a high level of classroom management skills to elicit students' participation in highly self-reliant activities, while maintaining classroom discipline. In the junior high classes, with what I perceived to be poorly motivated students, sometimes I was afraid of giving up control and doubted my teaching skill in terms of students following my lesson and understanding the new language in communicative classes. This reflects what Lee and VanPattern (1995) argue: many teachers instead of promoting student-to-student

communication, adopt teacher-centred activities aimed to transmit knowledge and establish authority, lapsing into traditional patterns of language teaching. Notwithstanding this, my teaching of CLT in the senior high class was mostly successful, because of many favourable conditions, especially what I perceived to be the students' high motivation and the harmonious and cooperative student-teacher relationships (the evidence is analysed in Section 5.3.3).

According to the evidence, there is no simple answer to the question whether it was effective or useful to use CLT in classroom practice. It largely depends on the dynamics of the context and the teacher's own expertise in facilitating communicative activities. On the one hand, scholars such as Nunan (2004) and Lee (2003), argue for the superiority of a CLT approach to L2 teaching and learning. However, there is also a different side. According to Bax (2003), the benefits of an emphasis on communication in CLT are widely accepted in principle, but in terms of practice, 'traditional' methods (especially the Grammar-Translation method) still prevail in many parts of the world. Moreover, this methodology has always neglected one key aspect of language teaching—the context in which it takes place (Bax, 2003), which I found to be so important.

Although the appropriateness of CLT implementation in different educational cultures has been constantly debated, problems emerging from practice are not necessarily attributable to the methodology of CLT itself but rather to the practitioners' repertoire and expertise in adapting the approach. Hiep (2007) argues that inherent in CLT is a view of language, of language learning and teaching, that most teachers aspire to. The issues that emerged in putting CLT theory into particular contexts do not necessarily negate the potential usefulness of CLT (Hiep, 2007). In my case, my struggle to implement CLT classes was mostly due to my lack of experience in managing classes and my lack of confidence in taking risks by implementing communicative activities with what seemed to be poorly motivated students. Therefore, as an inexperienced teacher, how to engage students and myself in using a CLT class were key issues. Some teachers might lack the repertoire to realise CLT techniques in their context (Hiep, 2007). There are certainly problems in the transfer of CLT into some classroom contexts. However, it is important to find out the causes for these problems, rather than simply making the assumption that

CLT is inappropriate to a certain context. As Freebody argues (cited in Hiep, 2007, p. 196), ‘We may fail to understand the cause of the problem and run the risk of overacting and losing something valuable in the process’.

In addition, the difficulties teachers might encounter in CLT classes do not mean that we have to reject the spirit of CLT. As the evidence presented in this study illustrates, CLT proposes an L2 learning and teaching which is focused on the development of learners’ communicative competence; that is, the ability to use the target language appropriately in different social occasions. This should be the learners’ ultimate goal (at least long-term goal) for learning a language. Apart from having a conviction about the spirit of CLT, teachers (especially beginning teachers) also should empower themselves to be more willing to take risks to practise CLT in various contexts and to give CLT more chances and to seek better implementation. This is preferable to simply blaming the context and giving up because of early failures. More importantly, Hiep (2007, p. 8) argues that the process teachers are going through in terms of CLT implementation should be a process of becoming reflective—‘they have become conscious of their own instructional practices, have started to question their own understandings of what CLT actually means, and are seeking alternative ways of action’.

Therefore, the problems are not with necessarily CLT itself, but rather, according to Harmer (cited in Hiep, 2007, p. 200), it is ‘with how they [CLT ideas] are amended and adapted to fit the needs of the students who come into contact with them’. As for me, a novice teacher, it is about how I could become comfortable with issues of control with lowly engaged students. It is about empowering myself to deal with the problems I encountered in CLT classes and to seek appropriate ways of instruction to adapt, rather than simplistically adopting CLT in different contexts. Therefore, as CLT users, beginning teachers in particular need to be fully engaged and reflective during the teaching process in order to make CLT appropriate to the classroom context and compatible with the teachers’ development level.

5.6 Models of beginning teacher development

5.6.1 Stage theory

With regard to beginning teacher development, this might be thought of as a sequential order, turning from self-related issues, through class teaching concerns, to a focus on students' differentiation and needs.

According to Leask and Moorhouse (2005), during their early teaching career, beginning teachers go through three different stages, which are identified as:

- Phase 1: focus on self-image and class management;
 - Phase 2: focus on whole class learning;
 - Phase 3: focus on individual pupil's learning
- (Leask & Moorhouse, 2005, p. 22)

In the very early stage—*Phase 1*—class management issues and self-image are usually student teachers' major concerns. Beginning teachers are mostly worried about how to establish an authoritative image of a teacher and how they can act as a teacher (i.e. their self-image) and control the students. Therefore, in this phase, one of the essential issues is to make the transition from learner to teacher. This requires teachers to change their perspective from a student to a teacher, 'the person in charge'. It can take a long time for student teachers to adjust to this role change. It is common that beginning teachers lack confidence and self-belief when they first teach. During this process, they are constantly worried about questions such as:

- How do I come across (as a teacher)?
 - Will they do what I want?
 - Can I plan enough material to last a lesson?
- (Leask & Moorhouse, 2005, p. 23)

In addition to confidence and self-belief, a growing professional judgement and professional knowledge are also significant to a teacher's professional development and increasing effectiveness. As teachers' experiences increase, they gradually master a range of teaching and classroom management skills that increase their teaching effectiveness (Leask & Moorhouse, 2005).

After accomplishing a certain level of confidence and professional skills in class management, teachers then start to enter the *Phase 2*—focusing on whole class learning. In this process, teachers begin to shift the focus from their ‘self-image’ to students’ learning by considering whether the material and methods they apply are appropriate to students’ effective learning. Leask and Moorhouse (2005, p. 25) indicate the importance of identifying clear objectives for students and making students’ achievements measurable.

During *Phase 3*, teachers have established professional knowledge about learning, and start to consider how to cater for students’ individual learning needs. Teachers need to be aware of the differentiation among different students and design differentiated work as they become more familiar with students’ characteristics. Once teachers have the ability to manage, the individual students can gain more sense of achievement and thus increase their motivation toward learning (Leask & Moorhouse, 2005).

Arends (2004) also illustrates another model of teacher professional development. According to Arends, learning to teach is a lifelong developmental process which takes ‘purposeful actions fuelled by the desires for excellence . . . in which one gradually discovers one’s own best style through reflection and critical inquiry’ (Arends, 2004, p. 29). Arends (2004) considers that those teachers who perceive their teaching critically and reflectively, and have the courage to take risks in teaching are more likely to keep improving their professional competence. Arends (2004) refers to Fuller and Ferman-Nemser’s model, which also identifies the different stages that novice teachers have to experience during their professional development.

The first one they call the ‘survival stage’, during which the beginning teachers’ personal survival issues are mostly their primary concerns. They tend to worry about their interpersonal adequacy and whether the students and their supervising teachers like them (Arends, 2004). It is common that when people begin to teach and have their first encounters with students, they are most concerned about classroom management and whether everything is under control (Arends, 2004). This is the

‘concern for self’ stage.

After a teacher’s experiences increase and they build a certain level of confidence and management skills, they may enter the next stage (Arends, 2004), which is called the ‘concern for teaching task stage’. This is when beginning teachers gradually shift their focus from their personal concerns to the teaching situation itself. So, during this stage, teachers begin to handle issues more related to feasibility issues, such as time control, classroom size, inadequate material access and their own ‘meager repertoire of teaching strategies’ (Arends, 2004, p. 30).

It is not until beginning teachers become effective and sophisticated in dealing with survival and situational concerns that they begin to strive for higher-level concerns— ‘concern for the impact’. This is a concern for students’ social and emotional needs, the appropriateness of teaching strategies and teaching materials and most importantly, the feeling of full responsibility for students’ learning (Arends, 2004).

Norwich (cited in Barnes, 2006, p. 38) investigated four stages of beginning teacher’s development: the ‘honeymoon period’, when novice teachers are optimistic about teaching and solving problems; a phase during which teachers attempt to find ways to avoid class control problems and teaching difficulties; the ‘crisis period’, a feeling of frustration and depression due to being out of control and blaming the system or the students; and ‘learning to get by’, or ‘possibly failing (Norwich, cited in Barnes, 2006, p.38). Furlong (cited in Barnes, 2006, p. 38) describes ‘early idealism; survival; recognising difficulties; hitting the plateau; and finally moving on’ as various stages of beginning teachers’ development.

5.6.2 Stage theory and my development

These theories to some extent can be applied to explain my ups and downs during my beginner teaching. As a teacher who had never taught before, it was really a struggle for me to establish a level of confidence and accommodate myself to be a teacher and adjust to a new environment. Making students listen to me was always my first

concern when I first taught. Even now I can still clearly remember how much I was obsessively focused on my self-image and performance at the very beginning of my teaching. Once, I did not even notice that many students raised their hands until my supervising teacher reminded me. Even worse, sometimes I was hardly aware that many students were chatting while I was teaching, because I was too nervous about my own English fluency and self image. Here is an excerpt from my journals:

I don't think I am confident and qualified enough to be their teacher, and to certain sense, I think they think in the same way. Maybe I rely on Elisa too much with regard to the management of students' classroom behavior. My attention is just given to my own teaching and implementing what I've prepared in the plan. I even didn't notice some students were talking when Elisa disciplined them. I think maybe subconsciously I isolated myself from the students I was teaching to (Year 8, August 26, 2008).

Most of the time it was my supervising teacher who was in charge of class management and students' behaviour. I was mainly focused on my own implementation of CLT activities and students' reactions to what I taught.

It was not until later, when I worked with casual teachers, that I realised what it was like to take control of the class on my own and how challenging it was to manage the class and discipline students. Because the casual teachers with whom I worked were mostly novice teachers and not familiar with the class I taught, I had to empower myself to take more responsibility in controlling the class and looking after the learning situation. Although I went through struggles and critical moments during that period, it was also the time that I started to sense myself becoming a 'real teacher' who was in charge of the whole class and was able to resolve problems and difficulties on my own initiative. This included getting to know more about students' personal and academic history, setting up rules and practising different management routines:

Today I had a new classroom teacher to work with. She was a casual teacher who knew nothing about my work and the class . . . It meant I had to be in charge with students and have more responsibilities to control students . . . One thing I'm so glad about this lesson is that I realise I actually was able to calm the students down and don't always have to rely on classroom teacher to control the class. They were all nice students listening to and respecting to me. Every time they became

a little noisy, I just needed to have immediate response to them like knocking the desk and asking them to look at the board etc.. Not as complicated as I worried about, I just had to be braver and take initiatives to ask for students' attentions and give more immediate reactions (Year 8, September 23, 2008).

As I became more familiar with my class and gained more confidence in teaching after the times of struggle, I gradually put more emphasis on the class's learning situation and the effectiveness and appropriateness of the methodology (especially CLT) and materials I used in teaching. However, I also recognised that my classroom management skills and professional knowledge were still far from enough to equip me to flexibly adopt the method I preferred to use in junior high class.

It took time, effort and self empowerment to improve my teaching competence as a novice teacher. Concerns about self and class control were always important issues during my whole beginner teaching experience. Nevertheless, other issues such as the engaging nature and effectiveness of the teaching activities I delivered, and the students' contexts and differentiations between them, were also of some concern. These were not my primary concerns when I began to teach. It is hard to identify clearly when I entered the different stages. I even doubt whether I have yet entered the last stage—'concern for the impact', and for students' different needs. However, I was concerned about students' different learning needs and the impact of my teaching all the time. It is not fair to say that in the beginning I only cared about myself and class management issues, since in fact these were the issues I had to deal with first to ensure a productive learning environment. I always strove to give interesting and enjoyable learning experiences, such as various communicative activities and tasks to my students. Moreover, concerns for the self and class control never faded out, even in later stages when I was able to consider more specifically the effectiveness of my teaching and individual student's learning.

Therefore, my professional development as a beginning teacher was not as linear and sequential as the stage/concern-based theories might suggest. In my experience, a beginning teacher's development is more multi-dimensional than stage theory suggests. Other scholars propose different views from stage theory, with regard to beginning teachers' development. According to Barnes (2006) and Watzke (2007), beginning teachers do not consider *self*, *teaching task* and *impact* issues separately in

different stages. Instead, concerns about all three categories are demonstrated in the whole teaching process, but may gain different priorities in different teaching stages in different lessons, in different classes. Meanwhile, they also point out that despite concerns for ‘impact’ and students’ learning being unwavering from the start, how these concerns are put into practice largely depends on issues of classroom management. Nevertheless, beginning teachers do follow certain broad trends in their development, which is usually characterised by a downward turn in self-related issues and an upward turn in task-related issues, along with their increasing familiarity with the students and more sophisticated skills in analysing the teaching situation and students’ learning (Barnes, 2006; Watzke, 2007).

5.6.3 Model of *pedagogical content knowledge* development

Research on the development of teachers’ *pedagogical content knowledge* (Shulman, cited in Watzke, 2007) proposes more complex processes compared to stage theory. According to Shulman (cited in Watzke, 2007, p. 64), pedagogical content knowledge is the intersection of ‘subject-specific knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and knowledge of the teaching context’. There are basically three *processes* involved in the development of beginning teachers’ pedagogical knowledge.

The *first process* focuses on the influence of teachers’ *prior experience and beliefs* about teaching and learning on their knowledge development (Lidstone & Hollingsworth, cited in Watzke, 2007). Prior knowledge and experience is like a filter for beginning teachers. In the very beginning they may either adopt or avoid specific practices from their own learning experiences as a student, from teaching models provided by past teachers and from knowledge gained through teacher education. According to Watzke (2007), prior knowledge frames beginning teachers’ instructional decisions when they first teach.

The *second process* is called the ‘*wash out*’ *period*, which means that pedagogical knowledge gained from prior learning experiences and teaching education may ‘wash out’ or ‘fall away’ from beginning teachers’ beliefs and practices. This often

depends on the nature of the teacher, the teaching education program, and probably most importantly, the teaching context (Watzke, 2007). School culture and class context can influence beginning teachers' original beliefs about teaching and their instructional decisions. It is common that beginning teachers experience huge dissonance between learned methodology and school culture, which probably leads to stress (Watzke, 2007). All of these matters may lead beginning teachers to gradually shift their teaching practices from what was advocated in their teaching education and in the literature. In particular, Watzke points out that beginning teachers might initially struggle with issues of control and classroom management. This difficulty is often manifested in a change of teachers' instructional practices and content selection. In other words, teachers might adapt more teacher-centred approaches to maintain control over students, and selected instructional content, which can be easily managed in order to satisfy a need for control of task delivery and to avoid students' misbehaviour (Watzke, 2007).

In the *third process, the change and development in teachers' pedagogical knowledge occur simultaneously on inner and social levels* (Levin, cited in Watzke, 2007). The *inner level* involves knowledge development occurring through problem solving, such as resolution of conflicts, challenges, and dissonance in the classroom context. The *social level* refers to the impact of teachers' professional and personal relationships with colleagues and friends on their pedagogical thinking and practices (Watzke, 2007).

5.6.4 Model of *pedagogical content knowledge* development and my professional development

It seems to me that my experiences as a novice teacher can fit this model (*pedagogical content knowledge* development) nicely. At the very beginning of my teaching, when I had no teaching experience, I entered the classroom with a set of beliefs based on prior knowledge from my learning experience as an L2 (English) learner and the teaching training program I was undergoing during that period. During my high school experience, my English was mostly learnt through

examination-oriented instruction and teacher-centred lessons where the learning process was nothing more than the rote learning of vocabulary, sentence drill, and grammar and translation exercises. Although it was good for me to get high marks in exams and to develop my writing and reading skills, it was by no means interesting or enjoyable and besides, from my perspective, it did not develop a student's ability to actually function and use English in actual life. Therefore, when I first taught, I was very careful not to use the approach and method my former English teacher taught me.

What I strived to do was to deliver an enjoyable and entertaining lesson where students could learn the target language (Mandarin) through CLT activities and student-centred tasks. I wanted my students to develop their communicative competence and skills for functioning in the target language. This was basically what I learnt in the teacher training program and from the literature related to L2 teaching and learning. The training provided me with a variety of contemporary approaches in L2 pedagogy, especially CLT, which I found most convincing and effective in developing students' overall skills in acquiring a language. Meanwhile, much research related to L2 teaching also suggested the effectiveness and appropriateness of a CLT approach in teaching L2 (Nunan, 2004; Lee, 2003; Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Thus, it was mostly my prior experience as an L2 learner and training experience in L2 teaching that drove me to try out a CLT approach in my teaching. Nevertheless, it did not work as smoothly as I had expected. When it came to practice, there were far more issues that I had to consider apart from the teaching approach itself. Problems included my own adjustment to the transition from a learner to a teacher, overwhelmingly issues of class control and management.

After unsuccessful experiences in delivering CLT lessons and my overwhelming frustration in junior high classes due to my lack of ability to manage class order and discipline students' behaviour, I gradually shifted my teaching practice to more structured and teacher-centred activities. This can be seen as the *second process*—the 'wash out' period (Watzke, 2007). My stress over teacher control became increasingly overwhelming because of my worrying about students' being out of order. For example, I started to use many listening and writing exercises as my teaching became increasingly more structured and predictable. I used more

controlled and less flexible activities to ensure my control over students and to ease the management of students' behaviour. Activities such as dictation, listening exercises, reading and structured conversations in the target language were frequently used in my later lessons. In the middle of my teaching, I only occasionally used communicative activities, which also became less flexible and more teacher-controlled compared to what I had planned at the very beginning of my teaching. From analysis of my journals, I found that during my teaching there was a period when many 'unsuccessful' and 'not fully successful' CLT classes occurred, just because of my own reluctance to design various CLT activities and to employ more structured learning routines to ensure my control of the class and avoid total failure.

The 'struggling moments' I encountered in the very initial phase of my teaching led to my emphasis on teacher control by adapting more structured and teacher-centred approaches. However, this was not always the case. As my experience increased, along with my growing confidence, I sensed my ongoing change and (nonlinear) professional development through my continuous reflection on my teaching and problem-solving process. This can be seen as the *third process*, in which *change and development in teachers' pedagogical knowledge occur simultaneously on inner and social levels* (Levin, cited in Watzke, 2007). As I became more comfortable and confident with class control, more settled in my role as a teacher and in the new class context, my concern was gradually shifted from class control and student factors (such as behaviour or rule-setting) to teacher practice (such as the appropriateness of specific teaching approaches and to the enjoyment of the class). Both factors are central to my work, regardless of 'where I was' as a teacher. However, despite all these issues being under consideration during my whole teaching, it occurred to me that it was not until I was more competent in dealing with student factors that I was more able to put my energy into considering specific teaching practices.

Through my continuous problem-finding and problem-solving process, based on my reflective research practice and knowledge of teaching obtained from literature and my supervising teachers, I gained a range of knowledge and skills in managing the class and responding adequately to student affect. For example, I became increasingly clearer about giving instructions before delivering any tasks, as I found that students were more likely to be out of control if they were not 100% clear about

what to do in a task. In addition, I spent less time standing in front of the class alone and more time walking around the classroom and checking students' learning status while I was talking or after setting tasks. I became more sensitive to students' emotional changes and different responses to my teaching. As time went by, I was not only concerned about the settling down of students, I paid more attention to issues such as whether students were enthusiastic about learning; how they achieved in my class, and whether it was an enjoyable learning experience. Therefore, while still working on the avoidance of students' misbehaviour, I began to take risks to adapt a more flexible way of instruction (with more CLT characteristics) to allow students to have more freedom in implementing learning activities.

Nevertheless, the process was by no means smooth and linear. It came with ups and downs in my junior high class in terms of CLT implementation. Up till now, it was still a struggle for me to carry out activities with a high degree of student self-control and with high reliance on their own manipulation of language in junior high class. It was more like an ongoing cycle in the junior high classes. When I felt confident with class control, I attempted more communicative classes, but if I failed and became 'stuck' in managing the class, I would retreat back to a more structured and teacher-controlled class (lots of moving forwards and backwards, as in Figure 5.1). CLT was implemented with conflict, reflection and resolution. As a teacher who has only one year of teaching experience (and only two classes each schooling week), I still have problems in balancing the relationship between control, pedagogy and learning. Therefore, it seems that the development of my pedagogical knowledge as a teacher in the *third process* is still on the way and mostly on an *inner level* because of the little time I share with other teachers who teach in the same school as mine.

5.6.5 Importance of school and class context on teaching development

Research and theory has identified the importance of class/school context on influencing beginning teachers' professional development. However, few studies have investigated how differently the same teachers can achieve in different schools

and class contexts. In my case, I had been teaching two classes in the same period at two different schools. One was a set of junior high classes, another was a senior high class. What I have analysed most in this chapter is my experience in the junior high class, which is very different from what I experienced in senior high class.

In the senior high class, there were a variety of factors that differed from the junior high. First, the school of the senior high class has an educational culture which is very different from the junior high school. In the senior high school, there is a very friendly and equal relationship between teachers and students, whereas in the junior high classes, the relationship between teachers and students is more ‘confrontational’—more like ‘control’ and ‘being controlled’. The second difference is the class contexts. Students in the senior high class I taught all had a high motivation to learn Mandarin with absolutely no behaviour problems (because it is an after-school lesson, the class is completely optional and voluntary). Moreover, the relationship between the students and myself was very cooperative and friendly in the senior high class. Instead of misbehaving, students always attempted to support my teaching and to be cooperative with my teaching and learning activities. Sometimes, they even sought to ease my anxiety when I was nervous and felt insecure about my English fluency. Besides, there were only five students in that class, so it was much easier for me to manage different communicative activities. The last issue was the availability of the computer in senior high school. In that case, I was able to develop more flexible and CLT-oriented activities using technology for support, whereas in junior high classes, there were always different problems with the technology.

Under these favourable conditions, my development of CLT implementation in the senior high class was much smoother than that in junior high class. This is reflected in Figure 5.1, which indicates that except for the first few lessons, my implementation of CLT in the senior high class was always progressing and mostly successful, which is completely different from my pattern of development in junior high classes in terms of CLT.

Based on my reflections on my *reading* of CLT, the next chapter concludes this thesis by summarising my overall learning from my journey in Australia as a CLT **text-**

analyst. Further, it also looks at the implications of this learning for China when I begin my new journey as an L2 teacher in China.

Chapter 6

Implications for my next journey in China, with a reflection on my ‘Journey to the West’

6.1 Introduction

This chapter first provides a brief summary of what I learnt from my *reading* of CLT in Australia by answering four research questions according to the different reader roles. Then this chapter looks at the implications of my learning in Australia for China. This is aimed to fulfil another mission of my journey as a VTR from China: to support bilingual education in China. Based on a discussion of the context in China with respect to L2 teaching, I suggest compromise measures between the Chinese traditional method (the Grammar-Translation Method) and CLT, in order to avoid the risks of immediate and wholesale transition and to accommodate a form of CLT that is appropriate to the Chinese context. This chapter concludes by indicating possible problems in the practice, which could provide a focus for future research, the next step in my journey as an L2 teacher when I return to China.

6.2 What I have learnt from my ‘Journey to the West’ as a CLT reader

As a Volunteer Teacher Researcher, I have learnt much about L2 teaching and learning with respect to CLT from my journey in Australia.

Using the Rudd Report (1994) as a base text, it is clear that promoting Asian languages has great significance to Australia, due to the growing economic and social role of Asian countries in Australia. Australian Governments have put great efforts into advocating and supporting the teaching of Asian languages in Australia. Nevertheless, the outcomes have not been promising. In spite of the government’s

significant efforts in promoting Asian language teaching, the proportion of Year 12 students who continue to study Asian languages is in decline in Australia. As for Mandarin in particular, according to Orton (2007), Mandarin teaching might have been promoted more significantly in policy; however, at the level of practice there are still challenges to implementing the policy, due to physical conditions (such as the mixing of L2 learners with background students), the difficulty in learning Mandarin and the general undervaluation of languages other than English in Australia.

After entering this particular ‘policy continent’, I experienced a new approach to L2 learning and teaching in CLT, which I conceptualised as the ‘intellectual continent’. I started my journey of *reading* CLT as a novice Mandarin teacher. By adopting the different reader roles based on Freebody and Luke’s four resources model (in NSW DSE, 1997), I have gained some insights into CLT through reflections on my own L2 learning and teaching experiences.

6.2.1 What is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)?

As a **code-breaker** and **text-participant**, in *reading* CLT, two key questions emerged:

- What is CLT?
- How does it manifest itself?

With respect to the first question, according to my review of literature on CLT and the L2 training I received in Australia, there are five key principles of CLT. It is:

- Holistic
- Interactive
- Outcome-oriented
- Activity-based
- Learner-centred

(DET NSW, 2008).

CLT is a very broad approach which is focused on the development of L2 learners’ communicative competence by creating a ‘real’ or ‘authentic’ learning environment. Therefore, ‘communicative competence’ is an essential concept. The goal of CLT can

be understood as students learning the ability to function appropriately in the target language in different social settings.

6.2.2 How does CLT manifest itself?

As for the second question, ‘How does it manifest itself?’, I focused on how CLT was used and manifested in the policy on Mandarin teaching in NSW, including the *Chinese K-10 syllabus* (DET NSW, 2003) and the Chinese teaching resource—*Zouba* (DET NSW, 2003).

From my analysis, the NSW *Chinese K-10 Syllabus* (DET NSW, 2003) merely draws an outline of the curriculum, focusing on learning outcomes and content. Little insight is given into the delivery of input. No particular direction for pedagogy is indicated in the Syllabus. Notwithstanding this, the nature of this Syllabus is compatible with CLT. In particular, the Grammar-Translation method is not suitable for delivering this curriculum. Despite the Syllabus not explicitly recommending the CLT approach, the learning outcomes suggested by the Syllabus are suitable for teaching by a CLT approach (see details in Table 4.1). This is especially so given that *Using Language* is the primary objective for learning Chinese (DET NSW, 2003).

Zouba! (DET NSW, 2003) is a Chinese teaching resource produced by the DET NSW. This material is a highly task-based course in which functions are given prominence. The CLT characteristics (of communication, the functional use of language, and being activity-based) are demonstrated throughout the program. The emphasis on CLT can be found from its *Summary of content*, *Overview* and *the Learning sequence*. Therefore, this material is very suitable for use in CLT-oriented classes. That is why I used it as a major teaching resource in my Mandarin classes.

6.2.3 Can I make use of CLT in my own class?

As a **text-user**, this study sought to explore my use of CLT by tracing my teaching

with CLT in different years as a novice Mandarin teacher. According to the analysis of my reflection, the development of my teaching in different years was very different in terms of CLT implementation. In my senior high class, I was able to use CLT flexibly and smoothly, due to many favourable conditions in this class (Section 5.1.3.3):

- Students' high motivation for studying Mandarin
- Friendly student-teacher relationships
- Co-operative student-student relationships
- Small class size
- Good technological support

Nevertheless, in the Year 7 and Year 8 classes, I encountered a variety of obstacles to implementing CLT. According to the analysis of my reflective journals, problems in classroom management, together with my lack of experience and confidence were major constraints. There were certainly other factors, including: my unfamiliarity with students, worrying about my English as an L2 speaker, inappropriate preparation, my own decisions not to plan a CLT lesson, and conflict in class. As Figure 5.1 shows, there were many oscillations in my use of CLT in these junior high classes.

In the initial phase, it was mainly my obsession with myself and my control of the class (especially my worrying about my English fluency and whether I was in charge of the class) that limited my ability to facilitate communicative activities and to look after students' individual learning, just as stage theory indicates (Leask & Moorhouse, 2005; Arends, 2004). I did follow a downward turn in dwelling on self-related issues, and an upward turn in task-related issues. However, the analysis of my whole teaching process indicates my teaching with CLT was not as linear and straightforward as stage theory (Leask & Moorhouse, 2005; Arends, 2004) suggests.

A model of pedagogical knowledge development is useful for illustrating the phases of my teaching in terms of CLT. It was mainly my prior English learning experience that triggered me to avoid using pure Grammar-Translation methods in my class. This was because my prior learning experiences made me realise that the Grammar-Translation method alone is not enough for developing students' overall skills, especially the communicative skills of speaking and listening. In addition, my L2

training and *reading* of CLT confirmed my convictions about CLT, which therefore was attempted in my early lessons. Later, because of ‘reality shock’—a variety of constraints I encountered in the Year 7 and Year 8 classes with many poorly-motivated students, I gradually shifted my CLT lessons to more teacher-centred ones in order to satisfy my need for control over students. I realised that it is extremely difficult to effectively manage a class when carrying out CLT-oriented activities, which require a high level of student self-control and flexibility. It was not until I became more comfortable and confident with controlling the class that I began to put more focus on the effectiveness of my teaching methodology and individual students’ learning. Therefore, later still, I was willing to take more risks and to use different instructions and actions to make CLT appropriate to my classroom context.

However, I have only taught for eighteen months—not enough to develop my overall skills in effective teaching. In particular, I still have problems in balancing the relationships between control, pedagogy (CLT) and learning. There was an ongoing cycle in my CLT teaching, especially in the junior high classes (see Figure 5.1): when I was comfortable with class control, I attempted a more CLT-oriented class, but if I became ‘stuck’ in classroom management issues, I would retreat to a more teacher-centred approach.

Nevertheless, although CLT seems not to be an approach which could be easily implemented at my current level of experience, it does not mean we should deny the potential usefulness of CLT. Any pedagogy depends on the dynamics of classroom contexts and the practitioners’ expertise in effective teaching. Instead of simply blaming the constraints of different contexts, teachers should learn to critically reflect on emerging problems and empower themselves to try different alternatives and seek better pedagogies. I was probably not ready for a fully CLT class because of my skill level in class management and a psychological level that meant not fully engaging myself with the CLT classes. In addition, in spite of difficult implementation in some contexts, teachers might appreciate the spirit of CLT being focused on students’ communicative competence, which should be the ultimate goal (at least the long-term goal) of language learning. Therefore, my struggle in teaching the junior high classes using CLT was not caused by the methodology itself; instead, the issue was about how I can become comfortable with class control issues in CLT classes. There

are actually certain ways to facilitate ‘control’ in a CLT class, such as setting up a clear rule at the very outset, giving immediate response once students break the rule, or applying various means to attract students’ attention. Therefore, the issue is how I can help myself to be more reflective with problems and fully engage myself in trying out various ways of making CLT appropriate to my classroom context and to my level of professional development.

6.3 What does what I have learnt mean for my return journey to China? (Can it fit in my new world?)

After my one and a half year’s experience in Australia as a Volunteer Teacher Researcher, I am returning to China to fulfil the second mission of my ‘journey to the West’—namely, to support bilingual education in China. It is my aspiration to adapt what I have learnt in Australia (as a reader of CLT) for use in the Chinese context during my future career as an L2 teacher.

Nevertheless, I understand that the educational context in China is complex and might not be very promising for implementing CLT. Research and my own learning experience have identified issues and problems in CLT practice, including both enabling and limiting factors associated with the Chinese context.

6.3.1 Language education policy in China

As a positive aspect, the Chinese Government has carried out reforms to the English curriculum at the secondary level of education since the mid-1980s. CLT was introduced and promoted in China especially in the 1990s (Yu, 2001). Moreover, in 1992, the State Education Development Commission (SEDC) replaced the old structure-based English Syllabus for middle schools with a new one which adapted new second-language acquisition theories and CLT elements to the Chinese context (Yu, 2001). Along with the change to the Syllabus, English textbooks in middle

schools were also updated to accord with the SEDC education policies. With an emphasis on communication, the new textbooks adopted an eclectic approach, attempting to synthesise selected CLT principles with existing practices (Adamson, 2001).

However, the examination system in China has long been considered a major obstacle to implementing CLT and proceeding with reform processes. The very slow and limited change (only being implemented in very limited areas such as Shanghai) in test content can hardly meet the needs of educational reform in English Language Teaching (ELT) in China overall. The National College Entrance Examination (NCEE) is the main access route to universities for the huge population of secondary graduates. It is mainly tested on rigid textbook knowledge: the focus is on English grammar and vocabulary, rather than abilities in using language (Hu, 2003; Xiaoju, 1990). Therefore, teachers have found it more effective and easier to use Grammar-Translation methods to strengthen students' knowledge of grammar and language structure, as this helps students get high marks. My former English teacher, Mrs Chen, commented:

The grammar-based examinations were considered as the main barriers to the practice of the communicative approach . . . These examinations emphasise reading and writing skills. Thus, students were supposed to increase their English vocabulary and recite English grammar, then use what they've learnt to write articles (Chen, personal communication, August 1, 2009).

6.3.2 The Educational tradition in China

As mentioned, the Grammar-Translation method is the traditional method in China. This has a significant impact on the preconceptions (which could contradict CLT principles in terms of knowledge, the teacher/learner roles and the relationships between teacher and students) and behaviours of teachers and students (Sun & Cheng, 2000). Furthermore, administration staff, parents and other associated groups tend to embrace the traditional method, and this can seriously 'impede the exporting of CLT' (Sun & Cheng, 2000). This could bring extra pressure to teachers who attempt to try

CLT in class, especially if constrained by students who are not used to ‘innovative’ teaching activities (Sun & Cheng, 2000).

6.3.3 Learners in China

With CLT, students’ motivation and attitude toward learning plays a significant role based on my experience. There is a view that Chinese students tend to get used to, and even enjoy, rote learning, memorisation of grammar and vocabulary in language classes. Thus, Chinese students might emotionally refuse to participate in communicative activities; this was not true for me however. When I entered a British-based University—UNNC—after my graduation from secondary school, I was educated in an English immersion program, since almost none of the academics there understood Mandarin. A variety of communicative activities were used in classes, such as debates, group work and discussion. At the very beginning I was anxious about these interactive ways of learning, but as my experience grew, I could sense myself becoming increasingly more accustomed to these activities and enjoying the feeling of really communicating ideas in English. Sun and Cheng (2000) also indicate that students in their university in China tended to be increasingly more active in class.

Reasons for students’ unwillingness to participate in the communicative activities could include their low proficiency in English, their suspicion of the effectiveness of a methodology which they have rarely experienced before, and the overwhelming pressure of a grammar-based exam. In relation to proficiency, for example, Sun and Cheng (2000) suggest that activities should be suited to students’ language level and the rules should be clearly demonstrated, to help students to participate.

There are some other positive characteristics relevant to Chinese students with regard to CLT. First, as far as I am concerned, Chinese students have high motivation to learn English, apart from the pressure of the exam, because of the significant role of English in China, especially for a future career. English is now viewed as very important social capital to equip students for the highly competitive labour markets

in China. Moreover, compared to my experience in junior high classes in NSW, there are very few problems of student misbehaviour in classes in China. Therefore, teachers do not need to pay particular attention to classroom management, an issue with which I struggled often in my junior high classes. Thus, if activities are modified to fit students' current level and instructions are made clear, Chinese students are likely to participate and to realise the joy of communication. Nevertheless, implementation could be constrained by large class sizes of around 60 students. Therefore, different strategies will need to be developed to accommodate CLT to particular Chinese contexts.

6.3.4 How to adapt what I learnt from Australia in a Chinese context

Both enabling and limiting factors exist in the Chinese context (the context I discussed being mainly based on my prior experiences in China and limited literature, so the situation should not be over-generalised). The question now is: how to adapt CLT into the Chinese context on my return journey, by reflecting upon what I learnt in Australia?

My initial process of *reading* (as a CLT **code-breaker** and **text-participant**) enabled me to build a communicative view of language. This sees language learning and teaching focused on developing learners' communicative skills by providing a simulated environment with authentic language input. In addition, in reviewing the CLT literature and analysing NSW DET policies on CLT, I realised the importance of communication in L2 acquisition as well as its place in L2 policy. Therefore, my learning of CLT has given me a communicative view of language, rather than seeing language teaching as a process of delivering knowledge. This now equips me with an orientation toward CLT and helps me appreciate the spirit and (at least) the potential usefulness of CLT. This view of language provides a basic foundation to empower myself to take risks to strive for CLT-oriented lessons in China.

My experience in teaching through CLT in Mandarin classes in Australia (as CLT **text-user**) manifested a discrepancy between the 'text' and classroom practice in

terms of CLT. My development was not linear or straightforward, but came with struggles and breakthroughs. One of the most important things I learnt from my struggles in adopting CLT is that as CLT practitioners, no matter under what conditions, teachers have to empower themselves to be fully engaged and reflective. It is easy to say that CLT is not suitable in such-and-such a context. However, it is important not to assume that CLT is unsuitable in particular contexts beforehand. Instead, teachers have to be reflective, to analyse causes of problems, and to continuously modify their way of practising CLT. Although the context in China is very different from that of Australia, the ideas I discussed through my 'Journey to the west' are essential to making CLT suitable to the Chinese context.

Following this educational philosophy, in order to be an empowered and reflective CLT practitioner, my first step will be to seek any possible problems confronting CLT implementation in China based on my interviews with teachers and my review of literature about the context of China. From my perspective, the widespread acceptance of the Grammar-Translation Method in language teaching and the grammar-based examination are the most challenging obstacles to CLT implementation in China. As a consequence, due to the possible pressure of the discouraging voices of school administrators, other teachers, and even parents, and the pressure of the grammar-based exam, CLT teachers in middle schools will find it extremely difficult to make the class fit to different stakeholder demands. Therefore, an immediate change or transformation to fully CLT lessons is unlikely. Instead, compromise measures need to be taken.

First, Chinese students in middle schools often have a limited vocabulary and skill in English and they certainly lack opportunities to practise English in daily life. All of this makes communicative activities rather challenging for them. In addition, grammar and vocabulary are very important to students' academic results. Therefore, grammar and vocabulary need to remain a significant part of class content, whether for supporting students to undertake communicative activities or for examination. From my *reading* of CLT, the teaching of grammar is not negated in the CLT class.

Before doing any communicative activities, preparatory steps could be undertaken first. The content could include the introduction of the grammar, vocabulary and

background knowledge relevant to the upcoming activities. During this process, traditional Chinese techniques, such as ‘activities focused on the formal structures of language; text analysis, grammatical explanations, drills, text and rule memorisation’ (Gatbonton & Gu, cited in Sun & Cheng, 2000, p. 12) can be employed to facilitate the basic knowledge of the language more clearly and effectively at this preliminary stage. Apart from that, interactive methods could also be used to supplement traditional teaching, for example, ‘using interactive activities in teaching grammar or transferring text analysis into classroom discussion’ (Sun & Cheng, 2000, p. 23). So an effort could be made to retain the traditional Chinese methodologies within a communicative-oriented view of language (Gu, cited in Sun & Cheng, 2000). According to Li (cited in Sun & Cheng, 2000), a communicative approach and the traditional Chinese methods can complement each other.

After this preparatory step, students could be equipped with the necessary skills to participate in communicative activities in English. Based on my *reading* of CLT, these activities should follow two fundamental principles, namely: meaningful communication and the functional use of the language. In practice, large class sizes can affect the effectiveness of communication between teachers and students. It is difficult for teachers to look after individual learners if there are too many students in a class. Therefore, it would be better to divide the class into different groups first and deliver different tasks for different groups in turn (e.g. group work together with a writing task). It would be even better if teachers would cooperate in the same class (this depends on the availability of teacher resources and school policy).

Another issue that needs to be considered is the use of textbooks. Although currently, English textbooks for middle school students are much more CLT-oriented compared to older versions, activities are still limited and the authentic language input is still far from enough to satisfy students’ communication needs. In addition, the exam is mostly based on the content of the textbook, so it plays a significant role in English teaching and learning. On the one hand, an English textbook will remain the essential teaching material (to comply with exam requirements); on the other hand, however, various measures could broaden the lesson of the textbooks in more communicative and flexible ways. Sun and Cheng (2000) suggest that the teaching procedure could be reorganised and the focus could be reoriented even without a change of content.

The textbook could provide knowledge for the background of activities which are focused on communication, meaningfulness and the functional use of the language. For example, if the content of one unit in the textbook is about food, teachers could divide students into different groups and let them do research and make a presentation about food in English speaking communities. In contrast to the traditional class, teachers would not play a central role, but rather would facilitate students' participation, monitor their learning process and support them to fulfil the tasks (which is in accord with the CLT view of the teacher's role).

Textbooks alone are not enough to provide sufficient authentic language input for developing students' communication skills. Therefore, complementary resources, such as English language newspapers, magazines and videos, could be used to enrich students' experiences with 'authentic' English culture, writing and speaking. The difficulty might be that the language used in these authentic resources will not fit the students' limited language proficiency. Thus, the content of the materials should be well selected and modified to make them suitable to students' level of English, but also to 'stretch' their knowledge.

In the last step, consolidation activities would be used after the central communicative activities in order to make students clear about the difficult points, major content and objectives of the lesson.

By following these three steps, a complementary process may be formed that links the traditional Chinese methodology and communicative teaching, giving due emphasis to grammar/content and communication. This would mean task-based classes are supported by complementary practices (preparatory and consolidation steps in which grammar is integral). The textbook would be compensated by various resources, to facilitate and enrich students' communication in English. Ideally, and hopefully, there would be a tendency for all three steps to be taken by activities that over time become increasingly more CLT-oriented.

There may be various other problems when it comes to practice, which I have not anticipated. For example, pressure from stakeholders who do not accept CLT might impede teachers' enthusiasm to practise CLT. Large class sizes might not be easily

solved because of limited teacher supply and school facilities. In addition, students might prefer to exchange ideas in Chinese to finish tasks in their English classes because of the gap between what they can say in English and what they want to say.

Even though there might be difficulties in putting CLT into practice in China, it is important that teachers be willing to be adventurous, constructive and reflective. Furthermore, the ‘adoption of a communicative view of language is more important than introducing new teaching techniques’ (Sun & Cheng, 2000, p. 24). Teachers themselves should build a solid foundation in knowledge of CLT and recognise the importance of communication and function to students’ learning of a language. This will increase the possibility that CLT can be translated into practice. Otherwise, if teachers view language as only ‘about’ structure and vocabulary, there would be little opportunity to practise communicative activities. An overnight change is unrealistic; instead, change will come with gradual transformation, reflection and resolution.

6.3.5 Return from my ‘journey to the West’

In the novel of ‘journey to the West’, Monkey King helped Xuanzang (along with his two other protectors) obtain the Buddhist religious texts from India at the end of the journey after overcoming a series of difficulties on various new ‘continents’. During my journey in Australia, by *reading* the new ‘intellectual continent’—CLT—within this particular ‘policy continent’ as a volunteer Mandarin teacher and researcher, I gained many invaluable experiences and skills in CLT and in teaching L2 (especially Mandarin) in an Australian context. Nonetheless, unlike the Monkey King, whose mission was finished when he brought back the scripture from his journey and achieved Buddhahood (Wikipedia, 2008), after I return from my journey in Australia, I have another mission to accomplish: supporting bilingual education back in China. I believe (hope) that my ‘Journey to the west’ has equipped me with important theoretical and practical knowledge in CLT and L2 teaching so I can use CLT appropriately (complementary to traditional Chinese methodology) in English classes to cater for students’ communication needs in China’s particular context. Therefore, when I return to China I will be the future L2 teacher China now needs.

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Appendix 1. Tables for categorising lessons with respect to CLT and Year levels

Table 5.3 Lessons which were not CLT-oriented in Year 8

Lesson	Nature of activities	Reasons for not using CLT
16/09/08	Writing-based assessment task done individually	Lack of confidence in classroom management. I dared not try
14/10/08	The class was out of control so almost no activity went well	<p>My lack of experience in managing class and disciplining students</p> <p>I didn't expect that students would react to the activity so differently</p> <p>My teaching was interrupted by students' overwhelming questions during the lesson</p> <p>The class was not tightly structured so students had lot of spare time to chat</p> <p>My feeling of sorrow and guilt for being late to the class and insufficient planning</p>
11/11/08	<p>Pair work which students did not do properly</p> <p>Survey which turned out to be a mess</p>	<p>Organisation of pair work</p> <p>Difficulty in managing the class during survey task (which allowed students to walk around the class)</p> <p>Inability to react properly to students who deliberately disobeyed what I asked</p> <p>I was too emotionally involved with students' bad behaviour to carry on the class properly</p> <p>Students were hard to control when my supervising teacher was not around</p>
09/12/08	Most of the time was used for students to write Chinese calligraphy by Chinese brushes after my instruction.	I did not plan any CLT activity because I just intended to let students have experience in traditional Chinese writing.

Table 5.4 Lessons which were not CLT-oriented in Senior High School

Lesson	Nature of activities	Reasons for not using CLT?
26/08/08	Pronunciation lesson Teacher-directed	Pronunciation required direct physical demonstration

Table 5.5 Lessons which were not CLT-oriented in Year 7

Lesson	Nature of activities	Reasons for not using CLT
14/05/09	Almost no effective teaching activities were implemented	It was difficult to make students focus on the lesson after half-day test when they got more restless and naughty Problems in cooperation between the supervising teacher and me as we had different beliefs in L2 teaching. Inability to handle situation where conflicts were caused between students and the other teacher
28/05/09	Dictations, listening and writing exercises were used for students to be familiar with the sentence pattern and vocabulary in Mandarin. Role-play about buying food in Mandarin Showing traditional Chinese woman's dress and introduced the cultural information of traditional clothes in China	This was a very structured class and most of the time I was in charge of their learning, as there were many dictations, listening and writing exercises My previous unsuccessful experience in practising CLT activities (problems in classroom management issues) gradually shifted my strategy to a more structured and more teacher-centred approach
02/06/09	Dictation of vocabulary I taught previous lesson Sentence drilling, listening and writing tasks	I aimed to make sure students were under control and concentrated on learning in normal routine (by doing reading, listening, writing and speaking exercise step

	<p>Role-play about buying food</p> <p>My presentation of cultural information about the meaning of different colours in China</p>	by step).
16/06/09	<p>Tasks in <i>Zouba</i> program but which didn't work effectively because of poor technology support</p> <p>Repeating what I said in Mandarin about popular items I showed</p> <p>Dictation of items I taught in Mandarin this lesson</p> <p>Listening exercise</p>	<p>Poor technology support which substantially limited the effectiveness of this class, because I planned a computer-based class.</p> <p>I should have had a back-up plan when I chose to have computer-based class. Therefore, I felt so nervous and guilty so I rushed over the class</p>

Table 5.6 Lessons in which CLT was attempted but not fully successful in Year 8

Lesson	Nature of activities attempted	Why it was not fully successful
19/08/08	<p>Group work in which students discuss a favourite celebrity in Mandarin</p> <p>Responding to me in Mandarin about the name of a celebrity whose picture I showed them</p>	<p>My unfamiliarity with students</p> <p>Organisation of group work</p>
26/08/08	<p>My direct instruction and presentation of the content was the main teaching form</p> <p>Role-play —the only effective CLT activity in this class</p>	<p>Lack of confidence in being an independent and qualified teacher</p> <p>Relying too much on my supervising teacher's support</p> <p>Focusing too much on my performance rather than students' response</p> <p>Problems in controlling time properly</p>
10/09/08	<p>Ask students the number of different organs (e.g. eyes) I have in Mandarin</p> <p>Group work in which students discussed how many fingers they showed to their partners in Mandarin</p>	<p>Organisation of group work</p> <p>Problems in having individual conversation with students who were all</p>

	<p>Completing Mathematics formulas in Mandarin</p> <p>On-computer tasks and communicative activities in <i>Zouba</i> program</p>	<p>attempting to have my attention</p> <p>Difficulty in answering some of students' questions</p> <p>Inability to discipline students confidently and properly</p>
23/09/08	<p>Explanation of the exam taken last class (much time was spent)</p> <p>Responding to me in Chinese by telling me the time in Chinese according to a clock I showed</p> <p>'Guess game' in which one student asked what time in Chinese and the rest guessed the time correctly then asked the question in turn</p>	<p>Difficulty in explaining and analysing exam interestingly and communicatively</p>
21/10/2008	<p>Using Mandarin to hold a competition between girls and boys, and students were excited</p> <p>Discussing the different traditions between China and Australia regarding food</p> <p>Role-play which was to have a conversation about buying food in Mandarin</p> <p>Simple conversation in Mandarin between all girls and all boys</p>	<p>Difficulty in encouraging an active discussion among students (due to my limited level of English and lack of experience)</p> <p>Problems in controlling time properly</p>
18/11/08	<p>Tasks in <i>Zouba</i> program which combined many on-computer activities about shopping on food</p> <p>Writing task in which students were asked to write a conversation between a customer and a waiter in Mandarin</p>	<p>Communicative activities were not many</p> <p>Many tasks focused on reading and writing skills alone, which emphasised sentence drills and memorisation</p>
02/12/08	<p>Ask and answer among students about topics taught before</p> <p>Sequencing work: students had to sequence sentences in Mandarin to make a reasonable conversation. Then I asked one student to read it with me to role-play the conversation.</p>	<p>My instruction was not clear enough for students to do tasks effectively</p> <p>Problem in selecting a right person as a 'role model' to</p>

	<p>Showing pictures of different family members and asking students to tell me who they are in Chinese</p> <p>‘One minute dash’ game: students who wrote most Chinese characters without a mistake in one minute were the winners who could get a reward.</p> <p>In a worksheet, students were required to draw the picture of a different family member and put the family member in corresponding places in the family tree.</p> <p>After that, they had to introduce different family members in this tree to their partners in Mandarin (though few of them actually practised the conversation)</p>	<p>perform conversations in Mandarin</p> <p>Students found it weird to be speaking Mandarin without my supervision</p>
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Table 5.7 Lessons in which CLT was attempted but not fully successful in Senior High School

Lesson	Nature of activities attempted	Why it was not fully successful
2/09/08	<p>Casual talk with each other in Mandarin</p> <p>In pairs talk to each other in Mandarin about the name of a celebrity whose picture they had</p> <p>Completing a family tree in Mandarin and describing each member to their partners in Mandarin</p>	<p>My unfamiliarity with students</p> <p>Unclear instructions</p>
16/09/2008	<p>Casual talk with students in Mandarin</p> <p>Survey in which students had to ask other people’s nationality</p> <p>Role-play in which students talked about each other’s nationality and name according to a calling card and flag they had</p>	<p>Difficulty in teaching students mixed with background learners</p> <p>Difficulty in explaining grammar accurately and giving responses immediately, especially when I was not sure about the answer.</p>
23/09/08	<p>Group work in which students counted the number of fingers their partners showed in Mandarin</p> <p>Casual talk with students in Mandarin</p>	<p>It’s hard to implement active communication when students are so obsessed with accurate</p>

	<p>Communicative activities and tasks in <i>Zouba</i> program</p> <p>Do Maths in Mandarin</p>	<p>pronunciation</p> <p>Students found it difficult to write Chinese characters, which took a lot of class time</p> <p>Therefore, not much time for students to practise Mandarin orally and communicatively</p>
18/11/08	<p>Role-play in which students held a conversation about buying food in a restaurant</p> <p>Sequence work: students were asked to put sentences in a correct order to make a reasonable dialogue. After this work, two students were called on to role-play the conversation</p> <p>Reading task about tea culture in China, and students were asked to discuss the difference between China and Australia in terms of tea culture</p>	<p>Inability to elicit an active discussion</p>
10/02/09	<p>I made a Chinese name for each student and I asked them to give a brief introduction about themselves in Mandarin.</p> <p>Review almost everything I had taught by redoing tasks in <i>Zouba</i> program</p> <p>I gave a general introduction to the Chinese Spring festival by presenting pictures and showing traditional routines for celebrating this festival in China</p> <p>I gave each of them a red pocket (which was to give money to the younger generation as a good wish for the coming new year from the older generation) to deliver my best wishes and more importantly to enable them to experience a Chinese tradition. As an exchange, students had to say one Chinese New Year blessing (which I had taught before) to me.</p> <p>In each red pocket, there was a sheet listed with some questions related to the Chinese Spring festival. Students who were able to answer</p>	<p>Too much time was used by me to present the content so students had little time to practise the target language on their own</p>

	these questions could get a reward from me.	
25/06/09	<p>After finishing exercises about vocabulary I had taught, I asked students to make a sentence by using the vocabulary in the sheet</p> <p>Communication between me and students and among all students in Mandarin about activities on the weekend</p> <p>On-computer tasks in <i>Zouba</i> program, which allowed students to practise their language skill in context.</p>	<p>Improper time control as I spent too much on the revision section.</p> <p>Insufficient preparation of teaching material (I forgot to bring pictures, which made it inconvenient to practise conversation).</p>

Table 5.8 Lessons in which CLT was attempted but not fully successful in Year 7

Lesson	Nature of activities attempted	Why it was not fully successful
07/02/09	<p>Introducing Chinese names: I asked some students to introduce their Chinese name in Mandarin according to the name card I gave them</p> <p>Starting the class using the Chinese way of greeting as we did in Chinese classes</p> <p>Asking some students to help me count the number of students who were born in a particular year and tell it to me in Mandarin.</p> <p>Survey: I sent them a survey sheet and asked students to investigate the Chinese name of two people in the classroom by speaking Mandarin</p>	<p>My instruction was unclear for students to do tasks effectively</p> <p>Most of the time was used by me to present the content to give them clear ideas about background knowledge of Chinese language in this beginning lesson</p>
05/05/09	<p>I ask some students to introduce their name and nationality in Mandarin</p> <p>I asked one student to introduce one group of students to me in Mandarin, as I asked them as a favour to help me know more about them.</p> <p>Role-play in which I played a waitress and students were my customers and had conversations about buying food in Mandarin</p>	<p>Classroom management issues (I felt exhausted disciplining their behaviour while implementing CLT activities)</p> <p>Organisation of role-play (I did not estimate the time properly so not</p>

		many students had a chance to do this activity)
19/05/09	<p>Role-play in which two students were asked to have a conversation in Mandarin about buying food</p> <p>Responding to me according to my different gestures</p> <p>Responding to me with different fingers according to what number I said in Mandarin.</p> <p>Simple interaction between different groups: I asked girls to say thank you to boys in Mandarin and let boys reply politely to girls, and then the other way around.</p>	<p>Most of the activities were very structured and there was not much flexibility for students to use the target language.</p> <p>My worrying about classroom management issues discouraged me against planning activities relying on students' self control.</p>
11/06/09	<p>Responding to me in Mandarin according to what I showed to them about colour and clothes.</p> <p>Guessing the meaning of Mandarin from my gestures about comment on clothes such as 'too big, too small'.</p> <p>Writing comment in Mandarin on different clothes in the sheet I gave to students.</p>	<p>There were still many writing and listening exercises and not many CLT activities</p> <p>My instruction was unclear, and some students even wrote comments in English in the sheet.</p>
25/06/09	<p>Answering my questions in Mandarin according to the picture I showed</p> <p>Simple conversation between all girls and all boys in Mandarin about living in a place according to the map I showed</p> <p>Conversation between students and I: I had a little conversation with some individual students in Mandarin about where they lived</p>	<p>The class was not communicative enough, and there were many listening, writing and reading exercises for students.</p> <p>The map I used was too small for students at the back to see clearly. It made the implementation of activities less effective</p> <p>My instruction was not clear enough for</p>

		students to smoothly do the writing task
30/60/09	<p>‘Warm up’ conversation with students about topics I had taught in Mandarin</p> <p>I asked students to tell me the place where they lived in Chinese according to the map I showed to them</p> <p>I asked some students to stand up and introduce themselves in Mandarin</p> <p>Writing task: I sent each student a sheet on which they were to fill in the blanks and to complete the passage in Mandarin about their personal information.</p> <p>Survey: I asked students to investigate two people’s ages by having a conversation in Mandarin.</p> <p>Writing task: I asked students to write a short paragraph in Chinese to introduce themselves, including their name, nationality, address and age and all the topics they had learnt so far.</p>	<p>My instruction was still not clear enough for students to do tasks effectively</p> <p>Classroom management issues: When I had conversation with individual students, the rest of them would become talkative and misbehaved.</p> <p>I gave students too many worksheets due to my worrying about students’ possibly being out of control and without enough tasks to do.</p>

In the tables which follow, there is no column for why CLT was successful. In each case, the reason was a complex of the nature of the activities, successful classroom management, the relationship between me and the students and the relationships between the students and each other.

Table 5.9 Lessons in which CLT was successful in Year 8

Lesson	Nature of activities
none	

Table 5.10 Lessons in which CLT was successful in Senior High School

Lesson	Nature of activities
11/11/08	<p>‘guess game’ in which students had to speak in Mandarin to ask and guess the time appearing in clocks</p> <p>Survey in which students were required to investigate the others’</p>

	<p>timetable for doing different activities by speaking in Mandarin</p> <p>Communicative activities and tasks in <i>Zouba</i> program under a simulated authentic Chinese context with visual and auditory support</p> <p>Some casual conversation among students regarding topics I had taught before</p>
02/12/08	<p>I showed pictures and asked them what family members appeared in those pictures in Mandarin one by one.</p> <p>Pair work: students were required to ask each other who the family member was in different picture</p> <p>On-computer tasks in <i>Zouba</i> program to practise students' ability to use the target language</p> <p>Writing task: students were asked to write a few sentences to describe one of their family members in Mandarin. After the task, I asked some students to read aloud their paper and let the rest of the students tell me the information in that paper in Mandarin.</p> <p>Survey: students were asked to investigate their classmates, what family members they had, by speaking in Mandarin.</p>
09/12/08	<p>Ask and answer: I asked each person to tell me who the family member was in Chinese according to the picture I showed.</p> <p>'Guess game': one student asked the question: 'who is she/he' in Mandarin and let the rest of the students guess the person in the picture in Mandarin. The right guesser could come to ask the question in turn.</p> <p>Role-play: in this activity, I gave each person a different character and they had to carry out a conversation in Chinese according to my description of different scenes (eg. buying food in a restaurant, meeting with new friend, introducing family members to classmates).</p> <p>Filling in a conversation sheet in Mandarin according to their personal information. Then I asked two persons to act out the conversation and asked the rest of them to tell me what information readers had given in Mandarin.</p> <p>Practising Chinese calligraphy: I gave an introduced to the Chinese calligraphy. Then they followed my instructions and wrote the Chinese characters of merry Christmas and happy new year by Chinese brushes.</p>

05/05/09	<p>I asked students to read a passage in different ways, sometimes reading as a role play and sometimes reading as speakers and translator</p> <p>Casual talk with each of them in Mandarin about topics we had talked before</p> <p>Role-play: I asked them to have a conversation in Mandarin between a shop assistant and customers in a clothing store and restaurant respectively.</p> <p>Redoing on-computer tasks in <i>Zouba</i> program which they had practised last term</p> <p>Completing a map: I asked students to put the city name in Chinese on the right place of the map.</p> <p>Conversation among students: I asked students to ask and tell each other's living place in Mandarin</p>
14/05/09	<p>Casual conversation with students one by one about greeting and buying items in Mandarin</p> <p>I asked students to have a conversation with each other about the name, nationality and living place in Mandarin</p> <p>On-computer tasks I asked students to do in <i>Zouba</i> program</p> <p>Writing task in which students were asked to complete a passage by putting their own information in Mandarin. After that, they were required to talk to each other with what they had written in Mandarin.</p> <p>Cultural information in China: I told them the special meaning of Chinese characters of grandparents, relating to different role of daughters and sons in the old time of China.</p> <p>Redoing tasks in <i>Zouba</i> program to practise students' ability to use the new language knowledge in this class.</p>
19/05/09	<p>Chinese way of greeting to begin the class</p> <p>Casual talk with students in Mandarin about topics we learnt before</p> <p>Conversation among students in Mandarin: students asked each other's age in Mandarin. Because they did it so quickly, I let them ask the age of each other's parents in Mandarin so as to review previous lessons (family members and number).</p> <p>On-computer tasks in <i>Zouba</i> program to practise students' skills in using Mandarin in all four skills with visual and auditory support</p>
28/05/09	<p>Casual talk with students in Mandarin</p> <p>Cultural information in China: I told students a Chinese story about how the twelve animals became the symbols of years (zodiac signs in China).</p>

	<p>I showed the pictures of animals and asked students to tell me the name of each animal in Mandarin in each picture.</p> <p>Tasks in <i>Zouba</i> program to consolidate students' knowledge about Chinese characters and usage of Chinese zodiac signs</p> <p>Survey: I sent each student a survey sheet and asked students to have a conversation with their classmates about each one's zodiac sign in Mandarin. In the sheet, there was also a description of different personalities of the people with different zodiac signs. They discussed if the description met their personalities.</p> <p>After they finished the survey, I let them ask each other's parents' information about zodiac signs to combine the prior knowledge with the current one.</p>
02/06/09	<p>Casual talk with students in Mandarin</p> <p>Redoing tasks in <i>Zouba</i> program which allowed students to practise skills in using the target language in simulated real context.</p> <p>Responding to me with the sport's name in Chinese according to the picture I showed</p> <p>students were asked to practise conversations with their classmates about each other's favourite sport in Mandarin by showing the picture of different games to each other</p> <p>'Guess game' about asking and guessing the sport's name in the hidden picture in Mandarin</p> <p>Introduction to the Chinese culture: I talked about the meaning for the origins of Chinese characters about hand radicals, where these came from. Then I gave them a list of Chinese characters and I asked them to circle out the ones with hand radicals in order to consolidate their learning.</p>
11/06/09	<p>'Warm up' talk with students in Mandarin</p> <p>I called on some students to try to ask me yes/no questions, which they had never tried before, by applying the format I explained to them. Then we had a little conversation about yes/no questions in terms of sport, they were quite excited in being able to use the language so flexibly</p> <p>On-computer tasks in <i>Zouba</i> program, which was to enable students to be more familiar with the usage and function of new sentence patterns</p> <p>Cultural information in China: I introduced the situation of transport systems in China, especially the popularity and function of bicycles compared to in Australia</p> <p>Completion of a conversation sheet between two friends in terms of sport in Mandarin. After they finished, I asked two students to role-play</p>

	it.
30/06/09	<p>Casual talk with students in Mandarin about topics we learnt before</p> <p>I asked students to point out the body part, which I said in Mandarin. Then we swapped roles.</p> <p>I asked students to move their body according to what I said about body movement, then the other way around</p> <p>After teaching a Chinese song about clapping hands, I required students to move their body, followed by the song.</p> <p>In addition, I also changed the lyrics a little and incorporated some other activities into the song, so the students could perform different activities they learnt before in Mandarin.</p> <p>I then asked each student in turn to sing the song and let the rest of them do the body movement. It was fun as the students also changed the lyrics and added some new activities into the song, which made the students who performed the activities so funny and interesting</p>

Table 5.11 Lessons in which CLT was successful in Year 7

Lesson	Nature of activities
none	

Appendix 2. Interview profile

Pseudonym	Occupation	Date of interview	Mode of interview	Interview questions
Chen	English teacher (in China)	01/08 /2009	Email	<p>1) Do you think I am improving in implementing CLT in my class teaching?</p> <p>2) I have found it difficult to implement CLT in some classes. Do you have any advice on this?</p> <p>3) What are your views on the role of CLT in teaching L2?</p> <p>4) Do you see any discrepancy between the Syllabus and classroom practice in CLT implementation?</p> <p>5) What strategies do you specifically use to implement CLT in your class?</p>
Mary	L2 teacher training lecturer (in NSW)	23/07 /2009	Email	
Elisa	L2 teacher who supervised my teaching in the junior high classes (in NSW)	25/06 /2009	Face to face	
John	L2 teacher who supervised my teaching in the senior high class (in NSW)	25/06 /2009	Face to face	
Gorge	A NSW Education leader who promoted the Ningbo program	10/11 /2009	Telephone	

Appendix 3. SERAP approval letter from the NSW DET



Miss Wenyuan Zhang
K.2.24 School of Education
University of Western Sydney
Locked Bag 1797
PENRITH SOUTH DC NSW 1797

Dear Miss Wenyuan Zhang

SERAP number: 2009-021

I refer to your application to conduct in NSW government schools (Western Sydney Region) a research project entitled *Reading Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in China and Australia*.

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

Your approval will remain valid until 31 December 2009.

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

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

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

Yours sincerely

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

20 May 2009

NSW Department of Education & Training

Western Sydney Region Building T3C, Nirimba Education Precinct, Eastern Road, Quakers Hill NSW 2763 T 9208 7611 F 9208 7635
www.det.nsw.edu.au

Appendix 4. Approval letter from the UWS Human Research Ethics Committee

Notification of Approval

Email on behalf of the UWS Human Research Ethics Committee

Dear Wayne and Wen Yuan

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

TITLE: Reading Communicative Language Teaching (CTL) in China and Australia

Masters of Education (Honours) candidate: Miss Wen Yuan Zhang

The Protocol Number for this project is H6798. Please ensure that this number is quoted in all relevant correspondence and on all information sheets, consent forms and other project documentation.

Please note the following:

- 1) The approval will expire on 31 December 2009. If you require an extension of approval beyond this period, please ensure that you notify the Human Ethics Officer (humanethics@uws.edu.au) prior to this date.
- 2) Please ensure that you notify the Human Ethics Officer of any future change to the research methodology, recruitment procedure, set of participants or research team.
- 3) If anything unexpected should occur while carrying out the research, please submit an Adverse Event Form to the Human Ethics Officer. This can be found at http://www.uws.edu.au/research/ors/ethics/human_ethics
- 4) Once the project has been completed, a report on its ethical aspects must be submitted to the Human Ethics Officer. This can also be found at http://www.uws.edu.au/research/ors/ethics/human_ethics

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

The Committee wishes you well with your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Janette Perz,

Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee

Kay Buckley

Human Ethics Officer

University of Western Sydney

Locked Bag 1797, Penrith Sth DC NSW 1797

Tel: 02 47 360 883

http://www.uws.edu.au/research/ors/ethics/human_ethics