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Adult Beginning Learners' Engagement in Learning Mandarin as An Additional Language at a Canadian Post-secondary Institute

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Adult Beginning Learners' Engagement in Learning Mandarin as An Additional
Language at a Canadian Post-secondary Institute

by

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A THESIS

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Abstract

This research investigates the Mandarin learning experience of both heritage and non-heritage beginners in a Canadian post-secondary institution to understand students' engagement in learning Mandarin as an additional language (MAL). It integrates the complexity theory with an ecological perspective on second language education to capture the dynamic relationship between the learning context and the learners' engagement in learning MAL. The case study methodology was chosen for the research purpose, and data were collected through classroom observations, focused group conversations and individual interviews. Research findings are presented from two perspectives: the learning experience and the classroom teaching and learning practices. Issues related to student engagement were discussed, including motivation, identity, curriculum, and teaching practice. Analysis on the findings reveals the complexity and ambivalence of Chineseness to heritage and non-heritage MAL learners, which must be understood in their particular socio-cultural context. It also advocates for promoting learner agency through the development of their own "Chinese voice". In addition, in order to encourage students' long-term engagement in learning MAL, it is important for the curriculum designers to allocate more time for students to practice Mandarin, make the teaching content more relevant to students' knowledge and experiences, and develop an assessment system that values learner difference while remaining fair to both heritage and non-heritage students. Implications for MAL education are discussed at the end of the thesis.

Key words: student engagement, Mandarin as an additional language, complexity and ecological approach, Chineseness, curriculum and teaching practice

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INTRODUCTION

The learning of Chinese as an additional language (CAL) has gained popularity worldwide in recent years due to the increasing impacts of China in international economy and politics. A recent survey conducted by the Chinese Language Teachers Association (CLTA) among college-level Chinese language programs in the US and Canada (Li, Wen, & Xie, 2014) shows that interest in the Chinese language is enjoying an unprecedented upsurge, as indicated by the largest enrollment ever. Data collected from 162 higher education institutions including 4-year and 2-year public and private colleges and universities in the USA and Canada shows that a total of 21,103 students enrolled in the Chinese language programs in the academic year 2011-2012. However, the survey also reveals low retention in the Chinese language programs. Li et al. reported that the decrease was found in all tracks including heritage and non-heritage combined track, heritage track, and the intensive track which completed a one-year curriculum in one semester. The average enrollment decrease rate from the first year to the second year was 47%. The intensive track had the highest decrease rate, 61% from the first year to the second year and 81% from the second year to the third year. While the heritage track showed the lowest decrease rate in the second and the third year, being 31% and 24% respectively, its most severe decrease rate appeared in the fourth year at 74%. With an average of almost half decrease each year, Li et al. pointed out that for a four-year Chinese language program, only one out of eight students who enrolled in the first year would actually complete the courses and graduate as Chinese majors (pp. 20-21).

The issue of low retention leads to the question of how to effectively engage CAL learners in higher education institutions in North America. It is possible that students

take the Chinese courses for credit purposes and do not continue with the Chinese courses once they meet the requirements of their majors. However, the low retention rate still points to the importance of effectively motivating and engaging learners in a long-term learning of CAL. This is the prerequisite for the healthy and sustainable growth of the CAL education. Thus, this research was conducted with the purpose of obtaining a better understanding on the learners and their Chinese language learning experiences so as to provide insights into effective ways to engage adult CAL learners. The following two questions guide the research:

- 1) Who are the Chinese language students in the CAL classrooms? Why do they want to learn Chinese?
- 2) How do they describe their experience of learning Chinese in terms of the teaching method, the content, and the overall learning environment?

The thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 begins with explanations on some essential terms in the field of teaching Chinese as an additional language (TCAL) such as the relationship between Mandarin and Chinese, the different writing systems in Chinese, and the definitions of heritage and non-heritage Chinese language learners. These terms are frequently used in the data analysis, so it is important to clarify them in the first chapter. After that, I discuss several key issues in TCAL based on the literature review of an adult beginning learner's experience in a fast-track Mandarin program in an American university. These issues include teaching methods, Chinese characters, and relationship between Chinese language and culture. They serve as the guideline for the interview and conversation questions during the data collection.

Chapter 2 reviews literature on student engagement and presents the theoretical framework for this research. Student engagement is understood as a dynamic and multi-dimensional construct which consists of behavioral, psychological, social, and cultural factors. From the learning perspective, intellectual engagement as a result of intense emotional and intellectual excitement plays an important role in engaging students in the learning process. The theoretical framework has two major components: complexity theory in second language acquisition as proposed by Larsen-Freeman and the language ecology perspective as represented by Kramsch. Both theories emphasize language and language learning as an open, dynamic, interactive, and emergent process in which language learners incorporate their previous knowledge and experience into the learning of the new language in an active and creative way. They also provide understandings on issues like learners' agency and identity as well as translanguaging teaching practice.

Chapter 3 is the methodology chapter in this thesis. The interpretive case study methodology was adopted in this research because it fits well the purpose of understanding the learning experience of a specific group of students in a specific context. Multiple methods were employed to collect the data, including individual interviews, focus group conversations, classroom observation, and student participants' written compositions. Data collection process including research context, participants' demographic information, and explanation of key aspects discussed in the interviews and group conversations was presented in this chapter as well. Finally, I discuss Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and its impact on this research and the data analysis.

Chapter 4 and chapter 5 are research finding and analysis. Chapter 4 presents research findings related to the learners' experiences in learning MAL including why

they decided to learn Mandarin, how they enjoyed the learning process, and their future plans for learning and using Mandarin. The findings revealed interwoven motivational factors that affected learners' engagement in learning MAL. They also pointed to the importance of understanding both heritage and non-heritage learners' identification with Chineseness in effectively engaging students in the learning process.

Chapter 5 presents findings related to actual classroom Mandarin teaching practice such as the learning materials, the teaching method, the Chinese characters, the cultural content, and the assessment. Data analysis focuses on issues of providing more practice opportunities in class, making teaching content relevant to students' knowledge and life experience, and the positive and negative roles that assessments played in engaging MAL learners.

In chapter 6, the last chapter, I summarize the research findings and discuss implications as well as limitations of the research. The main implication of the research is to develop a learner-centered approach towards teaching MAL based on a better understanding on learners' needs and the role of learning Mandarin in their identity transformation. Aspects such as curriculum and teacher training are discussed to promote learners' engagement. The limitations of the research include lack of translanguaging practice in beginning learners and lack of accounts on learning experience from the perspective of students who were not engaged in learning MAL. Thoughts for future research are presented at the end of the chapter.

CHAPTER 1: ISSUES IN TEACHING CHINESE AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

1.1 The Chinese Language Family

The term “Chinese” does not refer to any one specific language, but rather a Chinese language family. In the 2011 Census of Population conducted by the Statistics Canada (Statistics Canada, 2011), the Chinese language family is classified into eight categories: Mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka, Taiwanese, Teochew, Fukien, Shanghainese and Chinese n.o.s. (not other specified, which may include other Chinese dialects). Mandarin, evolved from a group of related dialects in northern and southwestern China, especially the Beijing dialect, is the official and standard language in Mainland China. It is called 普通话(pǔtōnghuà) in Mainland China, 国语(guóyǔ) in Taiwan, and 华语(huáyǔ) in Singapore. Overseas Chinese in North America used to be primarily from Hong Kong and Guangdong province in southern China. Their spoken and written language was Cantonese. As a result, Cantonese used to be the primary Chinese language among overseas Chinese. However, in recent years, the growing international economic and political influence of Mainland China has made Mandarin the most commonly taught Chinese language among schools and universities in many countries including the USA and Canada.

There are two types of written scripts for the Chinese characters (汉字, Hànzì): the simplified script that is used in Mainland China and Singapore, and the traditional script which is mainly used in other Chinese-speaking regions such as Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. People in the overseas communities can find newspapers in both scripts catering to the needs of Chinese from different regions. In addition to the written scripts known as

Hànzì, there are also two types of writing systems indicating the pronunciation of Hànzì: Hànyǔ Pīnyīn or Pīnyīn, the romanized orthography which is used in Mainland China and Singapore and ㄅㄆㄇ (Zhùyīn Fúhào or Zhùyīn), the non-romanized phonetic orthography which is used in Taiwan. Table 1.1 lists three examples of the writing systems.

Table 1.1 Examples of Chinese writing systems

English	Pīnyīn	Zhùyīn	Simplified Character	Traditional Character
dragon	lóng	ㄌㄨㄥˊ	龙	龍
hello	nǐhǎo	ㄋㄧˇ ㄏㄠˇ	你好	你好
automobile	qìchē	ㄑㄧˋ ㄔㄜ	汽车	汽車

The simplified script was promoted by the Chinese government in the 1950s and 1960s to improve literacy. Some characters were simplified by reducing the number of strokes to make them easier to remember and faster to produce by hand from memory. Like the character for “dragon” in Table 1.1, the simplified character 龙 contains much fewer strokes than the traditional one 龍. The second character for “automobile” – 車 which means vehicle, is also simplified into 车. However, not all the characters were simplified. The second example shows that 你好, which means “hello”, has the same number of strokes for both the simplified and traditional versions.

As for the two phonetic writing systems – Pīnyīn and Zhùyīn, it needs to be noted that both systems are only used to assist the reading of Hànzì. They themselves are not considered as independent writing systems for communication purposes. In other words, all the Chinese books, magazines, newspapers, and websites are written in Hànzì, not in Pīnyīn or Zhùyīn, except for some children’s books which may have Pīnyīn on top of the characters to help children learn the characters. Actually, both Pīnyīn and Zhùyīn were created in the early 20th century as a means to assisting the reading of Hànzì. Before that, Chinese people had used Hànzì as the only writing system for thousands of years. Pīnyīn makes it easier to learn the pronunciation of Hànzì, but it does not replace Hànzì to be the dominant written script in daily life. Besides, many Hànzì share the same pronunciation, so Pīnyīn or Zhùyīn alone does not indicate clear meanings. For instance, “tā” can be the Pīnyīn for “她” which means “she” and “her”, or “他” which means “he” or “him”, or “它” which means “it”, and more. Thus, in the case of TCAL, it is important that the learners learn at least two writing systems, the most popular being Pīnyīn and the simplified Hànzì.

Pīnyīn and the simplified Hànzì are the phonetic and script systems used in Mainland China. They are also the two components in the teaching and learning of Mandarin in most of the Chinese programs in post-secondary institutions in North America. Li et al.’s survey confirms that Pinyin and the simplified Hànzì are the predominant choice among the higher institutions in North America (Li, Wen, & Xie, 2014, pp. 26-27). The Chinese program under study in this research also teaches Mandarin using Pinyin and the simplified Hànzì. In this thesis, both the term *Chinese as an additional language (CAL)* and *Mandarin as an additional language (MAL)* are used.

The former is used for Chinese language teaching and learning in general terms, and the latter is mainly used for discussion and presentation of findings related to the current research.

The last point about the Chinese language is that although the writing system was unified in as early as the Qin Dynasty (221BC to 206 BC), which has been believed to be one of the most important factors that contributed to the thousands of years of unification of the whole country, the spoken languages are so vastly different that people from different areas cannot understand each other if each speaks their local language. This is specifically true in areas to the south of the Changjiang River. For example, a Cantonese speaking person will not understand a Shanghainese speaking person, and vice versa. The Chinese linguist, Yuen Ren Chao once commented that the difference between the Mandarin groups and the other language groups were “about as far...as Dutch or Low German from English” (1943, p. 63). Of course, since the promotion of Mandarin as the official language at school and in media all over Mainland China, the majority of Chinese people nowadays can speak both their local language and Mandarin. For CAL learners, this means that they would get by in all regions of China with Mandarin.

1.2 Chinese as An Additional Language

The term “additional language” is used for Chinese or Mandarin in this research rather than “foreign language” or “second language” because it captures the diversity and complexity of the learners and contexts in which the language is used. Some learners may speak one or two varieties of Chinese languages at home such as Cantonese, Teochew, or Mandarin; some may speak only English at home but somewhat understand a Chinese language because one or both of their parents are from China; while others may have no

Chinese background but already speak one or several other languages such as English, French, Spanish, Japan or Russian. In this sense, Chinese or Mandarin is more than just a “foreign” or a “second” language for the learners, but rather one more language in addition to the language(s) they already have.

As we know, Chinese has a long tradition of being learned and maintained as a heritage language among the Chinese immigrant families in North America who hope to pass the Chinese language and culture to their next generation (He & Xiao, 2008). As a matter of fact, the increase of immigrants from China, mainly Mainland China in recent years will sustain the continuation of Chinese as a heritage language in Canada. The 2011 Census conducted by the Statistics Canada shows that Mandarin is the fastest growing variety of Chinese language spoken as home language in Canada. The number increased by more than 50% between 2006 and 2011. Accordingly, we could expect that weekend Chinese schools, the key player in the field of teaching and learning Chinese as a heritage language, will keep growing in major cities in Canada. Both Cantonese and Mandarin are taught in the weekend schools, although more and more schools have shifted from teaching Cantonese to Mandarin. The majority of the students at the weekend schools are from families with Chinese background.

However, the past two to three decades have seen a steady increase in the number of CAL learners with no Chinese background. The unprecedented upsurge in the interest in learning Chinese is thought to be the result of the phenomenon of China rise. Duff, Anderson, Ilnyckyj, VanGaya, Wang, and Yates (2013) describe Chinese as an “emerging...powerful, global language” (p. 1) because on one hand, Chinese has already had its speakers and learners all over the world as a heritage language; on the other hand,

China's strong economic growth is attracting more and more learners of Chinese, many of whom have no Chinese background, to learn Chinese as a foreign language (p. 1).

Gil's (2014) survey among 20 Chinese language learners at universities in Australia and China also indicates that economic, political and population competitiveness are the three major factors that support the increasing demand in learning Chinese.

1.3 Learners of Chinese as an Additional Language

Li et al.'s survey provides concrete statistics concerning the diverse ethnic background of the Chinese language learners in North American post-secondary institutes. Of 14,912 students in 154 institutions, 50.68% was Caucasian, followed by 14.12% of Mandarin speaking heritage students and 11.47% of non-Chinese speaking Asian students which included Chinese descendants. Cantonese speaking learners composed of only 6.85% of the student body, while Latin American and African American together counted for 15.66% of the learners (p. 23). With more than half of the student body being Caucasian and another 30% of learners being Latin American, African American, and non-Chinese speaking Asian, Chinese language is changing from mainly a heritage language to a world language.

Traditional classification of CAL learners divides the learners into two groups: learners of Chinese as a heritage language and learners of Chinese as a foreign language. He (2006) defines Chinese heritage learner as "a language student who is raised in a home where Chinese is spoken and who speaks or at least understands the language and is to some degree bilingual in Chinese and English" (p. 1). He employs the ability to speak one variety of Chinese languages as the criterion to classify Chinese language learners. However, this definition of Chinese heritage learners fails to include those who

are from a Chinese family background but can no longer speak any Chinese language. As we know, Chinese immigrants in North America have already had more than 100 years of history. Loss of Chinese language is common among the second or later generations, but Chinese cultural practices and perceptions may still be maintained in these families.

I will illustrate this with a story. Once I volunteered as a teaching assistant in a Grade One English-Mandarin bilingual classroom in Canada. In that class, there were students who were the third or fourth generation of Chinese families. The students and their parents spoke only English at home because the parents could no longer speak any Chinese. One day, the classroom teacher, who was also the Mandarin language teacher, got a written “self-criticism” note from a student who did not behave properly in her class the day before. This note was written by the student at home after the parents were notified about his misbehaviour at school. On the note, the student wrote “I am sorry. I will not do this again.” ten times. The parents asked the boy to write this note at home, bring it to the teacher the next day and apologize to the teacher face-to-face. This “self-criticism” note is called “检讨书” (jiǎntǎoshū) in Chinese. When a child did something wrong at home or at school, the parents or the teachers would ask the child to write down what they did wrong and promise in writing that they would not repeat the misbehavior in the future. This has always been a common practice among parents and teachers in China as a means of punishment and at the same time, a chance of self-reflection for the child. In this case, the child wrote the “self-criticism” note in English because he did not know enough Chinese characters to do it in Chinese. However, the parents’ way of teaching was typical Chinese.

We can say children growing up in such families still retain traces of Chinese culture and value system. Thus, when they come to learn CAL, they should be considered as heritage learners as well even though they do not speak any Chinese language. Students' linguistic background and their historical and cultural experiences are all important factors to consider when we define Chinese heritage learners. As a matter of fact, one major reason why these students are in the Chinese bilingual classrooms in the public schools is that the parents have lost their Chinese language but hope the children could pick it up again and carry on the family tradition.

In his article "*Who and What are 'Chinese' Students?*", Luke (2016) reminds us of "the complex 'difference within difference' and heterogeneity of Chinese communities and lived experience" of Chinese in North America (p. xiv). When we use terms such as "Chinese", "Chinese-heritage", or "Chinese-Canadian", it is necessary that we take into account "the actual diversity in Chinese socioeconomic and migration background, first- and second-language and dialect resources, spatial/geographic displacement, and everyday educational experience" (Luke, 2016, p. xvi). In other words, there is no singular and definite description of who and what the Chinese heritage students are. The study of Chinese heritage language learners should always begin with an understanding of the specific context in which these learners are situated, including their historical, cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds.

In a similar vein, non-heritage learners of Chinese are not of a homogeneous group. They can be a mixture of students from different countries and with various ethnic backgrounds. They may encounter various difficulties and may interpret Chinese cultural aspects from different perspectives based on their own experience and cultural

background. The fact that many Chinese language classrooms in North America consist of both heritage and non-heritage students adds another layer of complexity to the teaching and learning of CAL. Students not only come from different cultural backgrounds, but are at different starting points in terms of their Chinese language proficiency. The majority of the non-heritage students are beginning learners with little knowledge about the Chinese language and culture, while many heritage students come to the classroom with some background knowledge from their previous experiences such as going to the weekend Chinese schools.

It is also worth noting that there exists huge difference among the heritage students in terms of their Chinese language ability. Situations can be but not limited to the following: some are able to speak one variety of Chinese languages fluently because they use it at home but cannot read and write any Chinese; some can only understand a little bit of a Chinese language but cannot speak, read or write in that language; some have learned to read and write in the traditional Chinese but have never learned the simplified Chinese. Moreover, the kind of Chinese language that the students know also makes a big difference. For example, a student who speaks a dialect of Mandarin is at a more advantageous position than one who speaks Cantonese because Cantonese differs greatly from Mandarin, especially in pronunciation. For Cantonese speakers, learning Mandarin means learning a totally different pronunciation system as well as some different vocabulary and sentence structures.

In a CAL classroom which consists of both heritage learners and non-heritage learners with various Chinese language starting levels, how to meet the needs of all the

students and create a fair learning environment remains a major challenge for the language teachers.

1.4 Key Issues in TCAL

Li et al.'s report confirms that Chinese language in North American institutions attracts more and more learners from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Their survey shows that the Chinese language enrollment number in the 2014 survey is the largest enrollment ever. Regardless of all the different reasons for enrollment, once the students sit in a Chinese language classroom, they all face the challenges of how to learn the language in an efficient and engaging way.

1.4.1 An example—PG's Chinese language learning experience

Lantolf and Genung (2002) provides a case study of a graduate student's Chinese language learning experience during an intensive summer course at a North American university, which may well serve as a starting point of this research. In this study, PG, an adult graduate student, enrolled in an intensive summer Chinese language course because her PhD program required completion of six credits in a non-European language. PG had learned several foreign languages such as French, Latin, Russian, and German before she took Chinese. She had also lived in several European countries where she spoke the languages she learned. PG perceived her previous language learning experience pleasant and successful. Moreover, she specialized in applied linguistics and was especially interested in second language learning process. PG had long been interested in Chinese, but her main purpose of taking the Chinese course was to fulfill the degree's language requirement.

PG's Chinese language class was made up of 16 students, a mixture of heritage and non-heritage students. As a result, the learner's Chinese language level varied. Some had already had experience of learning and using the language, while others were beginners like PG. The course lasted for nine weeks, with five days a week for seven hours each day. The main teaching method was audio-lingual drills. The focus of the drill session was accuracy—correct pronunciation and grammar. Meanings of the sentences were irrelevant and disregarded.

The three instructors for the drill session were all native speakers (NS) of Chinese from Taiwan or Mainland China. Grammar rules, vocabulary, and the writing system were explained in a separate session in English by another instructor who was a non-native speaker (NNS) of Chinese. The writing system taught in the course was traditional Chinese characters which generally speaking, contained more strokes than the simplified scripts. Students were required not only to recognize the characters, but also to be able to produce them correctly by hand. Cultural elements for the course included Chinese language films with English subtitles every Friday afternoon in the first four weeks and Chinese calligraphy in the remaining five weeks.

The data of the case study were PG's diary journal and her written retrospective commentary immediately after the completion of the course. PG described how she went through the stages of feeling dissonant and disappointed with the instructors' teaching styles and methodology, to challenging the classroom structure and interactional rules, and finally to becoming submissive to the power of the instructors. In PG's words, she started as a passionate and highly-motivated learner of Chinese, but ended up being a "dutiful and compliant student" (p. 189) whose only goal was to pass the course.

Although in the end PG was able to obtain a satisfactory grade to fulfill the degree requirement, Lantolf and Genung comment that PG can be called “a successful student”, but not “a successful language learner” (p. 175). In other words, PG got good marks for the course but did not learn much about the language. In fact, she had to give up her expectation of developing “an ability to converse and read in Chinese” (p. 188) and adjusted to a short-term goal of passing the course.

After PG made the shift to a short-term goal, she still studied diligently, but in a different way. She worked hard to rehearse dialogues and English-to-Chinese translation exercises that she knew she would be called upon to recite or to provide in class. She got so accustomed with the drill practice that towards the end of the course, she even “resented” any communicative attempts in class because they took her away from “the comfortable routine of drill” (p. 15). For PG, learning Chinese became nothing but a learning task to accomplish. Once the course was over, the learning task was finished and cast aside.

Although PG had long been interested in the Chinese language, once she was actually learning it, Chinese lost its attraction to her. From PG’s grade, one may still say that she passed the course and thus was successful in learning Chinese, but a deeper examination into the case makes it clear that we actually lost a learner of Chinese.

1.4.2 Reasons for PG’s change of attitudes towards learning Chinese

There are three main reasons that contribute to PG’s change of attitude towards learning Chinese. The first is the audio-lingual teaching method which PG called “the drill and kill” (p. 184) teaching method. The classroom time in the drill lessons was

wholly devoted to repetitive practice of certain syntactic patterns. The instructors did not explain or clarify students' questions during the drill practice. PG did try to discuss this with the director of the program, who was the non-native speaker instructor. The director replied by saying that communicative teaching method was not effective in teaching Chinese because Chinese was a language "so different from the languages already familiar to most learners, largely from Indo-European backgrounds" (p. 184). This response was not convincing to PG because she had already had successful experience in learning other foreign languages with the communicative approach. Although later on PG found ways to cope with the drill practice and managed to pass the exam successfully, the failure in getting the teaching method she desired drained her of her enthusiasm in learning Chinese.

The second reason for PG's failure in engaging with Chinese is about the course itself. Firstly, PG had questions about the fairness of the grading of the course because the students' starting levels of Chinese varied greatly. While PG and some students were absolutely beginners, other students already had a certain level of proficiency in Chinese. Secondly, PG found that practicing and memorizing the traditional characters instead of the simplified characters frustrating and time-consuming. She had great difficulty in producing accurately the full-form characters. The situation got to the worst when 11 out of 12 points deducted in a test were due to her failure to produce the characters accurately. This directly resulted in her resistance in learning the characters and her negative attitude towards the language.

The third reason, which is also the main focus of Lantolf and Genung's article, is what PG thought as the unequal power distribution between the students and the

instructors. In the article, power is defined as “the capacity (and privilege) to project and impose one’s perspective on others without taking account of others’ perspective” (p. 178). According to PG, the instructors and the program director had absolute power in deciding almost everything from what to teach to how to teach with little consideration about the students’ learning styles and feelings.

PG gave quite a few examples to illustrate what she thought was the absolute power of the instructors. For instance, the Chinese NS instructor “snapped” at a student in Chinese “不好(bù hǎo, which means ‘Not good’!)” (p. 187) when she was not satisfied with the student’s recitation, and the instructor made a student repeat a sentence six times before explaining why the recitation was not good. In another case, an instructor asked a student to stand in the front of the classroom to answer questions from his classmates and made the whole class feel embarrassed. PG specifically described how she was wronged by an instructor who thought she did not prepare for the lesson. Because it happened in front of all her classmates in class and the instructor was firm in insisting that it was PG’s fault, PG felt humiliated and took it as an open attack and “an affront to her integrity as a person” (p. 186).

The unpleasant experience in the class as well as her fruitless fight against the teaching practice resulted in PG’s shift from a long-term engagement with the language to a short-term goal of fulfilling her obligation and obtaining a satisfactory grade from the course. Her negative, or rather, hostile attitude towards learning Chinese can be seen in the vocabulary she used in describing what happened in the class and her feelings. She used words such as “snap”, “command”, “attack”, and “intimidate” to describe the native-speaker instructors’ behavior in class, and words like “frustrated”, “embarrassed”,

“furious”, “humiliated”, “hostility”, “distasteful”, “resentment”, “verbally abused”, and “beat up” to describe her and her classmates’ feelings in the class. The classroom became a battle field of power suppression and power submission for PG.

1.4.3 What is an effective teaching method?

One of the reasons why PG found her experience of learning Chinese unpleasant was the repetitive and boring audio-lingual teaching method. Although she went to see the program director several times to discuss the possibility of changing to the communicative method which had worked well in her previous foreign language learning experience, the director refused to do so because he thought that the Chinese language was so different from the European languages that the communicative teaching method would not be as effective. Neither PG nor the program director went further to explain how Chinese was different and how that difference made the communicative teaching method less effective.

Undoubtedly, Chinese is one of the most challenging languages for western learners. According to a report by Jackson and Malone (2010), an intensive course for US State Department employees with the aim of achieving professional competence in a western European language such as French or Spanish requires 600 hours (almost 6 months on a daily instruction basis), while the same type of intensive course for Chinese requires 2 years, more than three times longer than the former one. Because of this, there tends to be a strong reliance on native speakers’ experience of learning and teaching Chinese in the discussion of the effective teaching methods for CAL learners. However, we all know that learning one’s first language is different from learning a second or

foreign language. If we explore further how Chinese native speakers learn Chinese and why they learn it in such a way, we may come up with a different answer to the question.

To begin with, when students in China start to learn Mandarin in the primary school, the focus is literacy because they can already speak Mandarin fluently. Thus, learning Mandarin involves a lot of rote memorization because remembering the correct strokes of a character requires a lot of repetitive hand-copying of the character. However, the widespread of computers and cell phones as well as the invention of Pinyin input software for Hànzì have greatly reduced the need of writing Hànzì by hand in daily-life communications. Thus, although being able to produce a character correctly from memory by hand is still considered an important skill for first language learners, it may not be the equally important for CAL learners, especially for CAL beginners.

In addition, viewed from the broad perspective of education itself, Chinese people believe in the power of wisdom from their thousands of years of history in the development of children's personality. One way to learn from the wisdom is to memorize classical literatures such as ancient poems or saying from the classics such as quotes from the *Analects of Confucius*. Therefore, it has always been a common practice among parents and teachers to encourage children to memorize these things at an early age. Although children may not understand the meanings in the poems or classical sayings, what they memorize in their early age would stay in their mind, and later on when they grow up and have life experience, they will realize and appreciate the deep and rich meanings and wisdom in those classic pieces and make use of the knowledge for their own good. All these factors make learning Mandarin in the Chinese language arts classes in China involve a lot of repetition and rote memorization.

However, in the case of TCAL, the learners, the learning context, and the purpose of learning Chinese are all different, so what works in China's classrooms does not necessarily mean that it will work in the CAL situation. In Chinese language classrooms in North America, the students come from different cultural backgrounds with different learning styles, and they need to develop all the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing rather than literacy only. All these should be taken into consideration when discussing the effective teaching methods. Emphasis on language difference and native speakers' learning strategies may not help finding the appropriate teaching methods for CAL learners. As Halliday (2014) says, "Every language is unique, but none is 'more unique' than any other. Many languages have one or two exotic, or 'extreme', features, but the overall picture is that each language is some particular combination of a set of very general properties" (p. 5). Instead of emphasizing that "Chinese is different", it is more important to understand how Chinese is different and difficult in the eyes of CAL learners and how to find effective teaching practices that meet the CAL learners' learning needs in specific contexts.

1.4.4 The teaching of Chinese characters (Hànzi)

As explained before, learning Hànzi is an indispensable part of learning Chinese. However, because Hànzi are combination of strokes rather than alphabetic letters, while some CAL learners find them fascinating with esthetic beauty, many still regard this orthography system one of the biggest challenges in the learning of Chinese, especially if they have to produce Hànzi correctly from memory by hand (Everson 1998; Allen, 2008). It requires lots of time and repetitive practice to remember the correct strokes of a

character. In PG's case, failure to produce correct characters by hand in tests led directly to her resistance in learning Chinese.

There are two major issues concerning the teaching of Hànzì: when to teach them and how to teach them. To be more specific, the first issue concerns the question of whether to teach Hànzì from the beginning stage or to allow students a certain period of time to learn Pīnyīn first and then add Hànzì. The second issue covers a wider range of topics such as which character orthography to teach, the simplified or the traditional; strategies to teach Hànzì; and whether it is still important to learn to write Hànzì by hand or focus should be shifted to developing students' ability to recognize Hànzì as using Pīnyīn input software to type Hànzì has replaced handwriting of Hànzì to be the dominant "writing" method (Allen, 2008; Sung & Wu, 2011; Shen, 2013; Everson, 2011).

For the question of when to teach Hànzì, the famous linguist, M.A.K. Halliday, when reflecting on his own experience of learning Chinese and later teaching Chinese, suggests that Hànzì be introduced at a later stage, preferably till the end of the first year of learning because once the learners are well acquainted with the Chinese language and have achieved certain degree of fluency via the Romanized orthography such as Pīnyīn (in Halliday's case, it is the Gwoyue Romatzyh, a system designed by the great Chinese linguist Chao Yuen Ren in the 1920s), they can learn Hànzì faster and more easily (Halliday, 2014). What Halliday proposed is supported by an empirical research done by Packard (1990). In this one-year's study, Packard compared two groups of beginning learners of Mandarin at the University of Pennsylvania on the effects of time lag in introducing Hànzì. The finding shows that students who were given a three-week time lag prior to the introduction of Hànzì did better in discriminating phonetic sounds,

transcribing unfamiliar Mandarin syllables, and were more fluent in spoken Mandarin than the no-lag group. Moreover, no consistent differences were found in reading or writing between the two groups over the time. As we can see, the major benefit of providing such a grace period is in the oral skills because it allows students to concentrate on the phonetic part of the language and develop better phonological inferencing skills. Packard further contended that the initial focus on character orthography may “inhibit rather than facilitate” the pronunciation of oral speech” (p. 174).

However, in reality, most of the Chinese programs in North America still introduce Chinese characters at the beginning of the program. Ye’s (2013) survey on 914 students and 192 instructors in American post-secondary Chinese language programs indicates that over three quarters of the participants reported that Hànzì was introduced at the very beginning of the course. Furthermore, over 70% of the instructors and students believed that Hànzì should be introduced at the beginning of the course. Even when they were presented with reasons that supported the delay of teaching Hànzì, there were still over 60% of the participants holding onto this perception. The main reasons for this high advocate of learning Hànzì from the very beginning include that Hànzì is an important part of the language, that earlier familiarization with Hànzì will make it much easier to learn Hànzì in the long run, and also a fear of over-reliance on Pinyin.

What we can see from the debate is the fact that Hànzì is a major challenge for CAL learners. People who support the delay of introducing Hànzì believe that Hànzì is likely to inhibit the development of the phonological aspects of Chinese because it is an unfamiliar and difficult orthography to learners whose first language has an alphabetic writing system, while those who think Hànzì should be introduced at the beginning stage

hold the same reason that Hànzì is difficult to learn. It is exactly because it is difficult to learn that it should be introduced at the beginning stage so that the students have more time to get familiar with it. Thus, having effective strategies to help students learn Hànzì remains a key factor in the successful learning of CAL.

Over the years, educators and teachers have accumulated rich experience in teaching Hànzì to Chinese native speaker students. One popular method is the character-centered approach. This method lays great emphasis on the explanation of the structures of Hànzì to help the students understand and remember specific characters. As early as in Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220), XU Shen (许慎), a great scholar in Confucianism classics and a philologist, classified Hànzì into 6 categories based on how the character was created and used in his influential book *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* (《说文解字》) which is also the first Chinese dictionary. The six categories are: pictograms, simple ideograms, compound ideograms, phono-semantic compounds, borrowed characters, and derived cognates. The first four categories explain how the characters were created while the last two explain methods of applying the characters. For example, both the characters 考 (kǎo) and 老(lǎo) mean senior people, but due to the accents in different regions, people adopted different characters to mean the same thing. This is called borrowed characters. Today, Xu's classification, especially the first four categories, is still widely used in the teaching and learning of Hànzì. Of the over 9,000 Hànzì collected in *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* (《说文解字》), 364 (3.89%) are pictograms, 125 (1.34%) are simple ideograms, 1167 (12.48%) are compound ideograms, and 7697 (82.3%) are phono-semantic compounds.

In modern Chinese language, phono-semantic components are still the dominant formation of Hànzì, accounting for over 80% of the total characters (周健, 2007).

The character-centered approach is also widely adopted in CAL teaching, especially to adult learners because they tend to have strong interests in exploring why Hànzì is written in such ways, and they are cognitively mature enough to understand the rationales behind the formation of Hànzì, i.e., the historical origins and changes of Hànzì, and use such knowledge to help them recognize and remember Hànzì (Shen & Ke, 2007). For example, 日(rì, the sun), 月(yuè, the moon), 鸟(niǎo, bird) are pictograms based on ancient Chinese people's observation of the objects. By showing the original writings of such characters—“日”, “月”, and “鳥” (the traditional Chinese character for 鸟 is 鳥 which is still used in Taiwan and Hong Kong), students can relate the characters to images of the objects they refer to, which may help them recognize and remember the meaning of the characters. Simple and compound ideograms were created for more abstract ideas and concepts, usually by combining two or more pictograms or adding some strokes to a pictogram to highlight key features of a concept. For instance, “刃”(rèn) means the sharp edge of a knife. It is evolved from the simple ideogram of “刃” which is a combination of the pictograph “刀” which means “knife” (刀, dāo) and the stroke “丩” which refers to the sharp edge of a knife. “鸣”(míng) means “to chirp” or “the chirping of birds” and is evolved from the compound ideogram of “鸣”, a combination of two pictographs—“鳥” for “bird” and “口” for “mouth” (in modern Hànzì, “口”, kǒu).

As for the phono-semantic compounds, each character under this category consists of two components, one indicating the pronunciation and the other the meaning of the character. The semantic component is usually the radical of a character, although in some cases, the radical could be the phonetic part of a character. Take “晴” for example. “晴” means “clear and fine weather” and is pronounced as “qíng”. “日”, meaning “the sun”, is the semantic component because the key criterion for clear and fine weather is the sun. “日” itself is a separate character, but in “晴” it is treated as a radical. “青”, pronounced as “qīng”, also an individual character, is the phonetic component of “晴”. Based on this combinative feature, educators and teachers have developed one of the most important and popular strategy in teaching Hànzì—putting characters with the same component together and teach them as a group. For instance, “晴”, “清”, and “情” share the same phonetic component and are pronounced as “qíng”, “qīng”, and “qíng” separately, only slightly different in the tones. “晴” means “clear and fine weather” because it has the meaning component of “日”, “the sun”. “清” means “clear water” because “氵” is the radical for “water”. “氵” itself is not a character, but a radical derived from the character “水” (shuǐ, water). It is vividly described as “three drops of water” in Chinese. The third one “情” means “feeling”, “passion”, or “affection” because “忄” is the radical for “heart” (“心” for the character, xīn).

Studies on CAL learners’ character learning strategies and radical awareness (Shen, 2005; Shen & Ke, 2007) reveal that learners at different levels all find knowledge of radicals helpful in learning Hànzì. Radical awareness starts early at the beginning stage and continues to develop throughout the learning, although it takes several years’ time for

the learners to accumulate the knowledge and to be skillful at applying the knowledge to the learning of new characters. Because of the importance of orthographic and radical knowledge in learning Hànzì, there has been a pedagogical shift from word-based instruction in which Hànzì is learned as a whole without radical analysis and character structure discussion, to orthographic-based instruction in which learners analyze Hànzì using their orthographic knowledge (Shen, 2013).

Another popular method in teaching Hànzì is called the meaning-centered approach. It emphasizes the importance of meaningful texts in the learning of Hànzì. According to Lam (2011), teachers who use this approach believe that students will learn the characters naturally if they are taught in meaningful contexts. The advantage of this approach is that it can help to clarify the meanings and usage of individual characters. For example, “打” (dǎ), meaning “to hit”, has different meanings in different contexts. “打球” (dǎ qiú) means “to play ball games”; “打电话” (dǎ diànhuà) means “to make a phone call”; “打人” (dǎ rén) means to “beat somebody”; while “打车” (dǎ chē) means “to grab a taxi”. This approach also works better with the communicative teaching method because both emphasize meaningful contexts in language learning.

The approaches and strategies discussed above are all adopted from the teaching and learning experience of Chinese native speakers. However, there are also methods developed by non-native speakers of Chinese through their own experience of learning Hànzì. One example is the book *Remembering Simplified Hanzi: How not to Forget the Meaning and Writing of Chinese Characters* written by James W. Heisig and Timothy W. Richardson (2009). In this book, the authors argued that native speakers of Chinese

did not have the same experience of learning Hànzì as non-native speakers and thus may not be in the position to offer the best solution to effective learning of Hànzì. Drawing on their own experience of learning Hànzì, Heisig and Richardson arranged Hànzì in their book in this way: each lesson introduces several what they call “primitive elements” and 10-15 characters that have these elements. The “primitive elements” could be characters that also functions as components in more complicated characters or simply an “element” that is not a character itself but a component of many characters. In this way, the “primitive elements” are connected with the various characters they construct, which helps with memorizing both the basic elements and the more complicated characters.

The most unique feature of Heisig and Richardson’s method is the employment of imaginary stories in relation to the structure of a primitive element or a character to help with the memorization of it. Traditional method relies on the etymology of a character to reveal its historical origin and changes in structure and meaning. However, not all the characters can be explained by etymology. Moreover, some characters have changed so much in structure or/and meaning that etymology does not help much with the memorization of them. Thus, while still using etymology to explain some of the characters, for the majority of the primitive elements and characters in their book, Heisig and Richardson came up with imaginary stories which have nothing to do with the etymology of the characters but are more directly connected with their structures, which they believe is a better way to memorize. Below is an example from the book:

叶

The Chinese are famous for taking a leaf and turning it into medicine. In this character, there are no less than *ten* different types of leaves that go into the concoction that the herbal doctor is stuffing into your mouth. The problem is, she didn't take the trouble to grind them up with her mortar and pestle, but is shoveling them into your *mouth* just as they came off the tree. Look at the character and you can see how the *ten* leaves are way too much for the one small *mouth* to handle. [5]

口 叶

(Figure 1.1 An Example of Character Recognition in Heisig & Richardson, 2009, p. 26)

After introducing the primitive elements of “口” (kǒu, “mouth”) and “十” (shí, “ten”), the authors came up with a story for the character “叶” (yè, leaf): the herbal doctor tried to stuff ten different types of whole leaves into your mouth. This story is not only interesting and creative, which helps to stick the character to the learners’ memory, but also directs the learners’ attention to the appropriate proportion of each component in the character—a small mouth for a big bulk of ten leaves.

Heisig and Richardson’s method focuses solely on the recognition of Hànzì.

There is no Pīnyīn to indicate the pronunciation of each character in the book because the authors believe that learners can learn the meaning of a character without knowing its pronunciation. However, research does show that there is a strong relationship between being able to pronounce a character and to recognize it and understand its meaning, i.e., the ability to pronounce a character enhances the ability to recognize it and understanding its meaning (Everson, 1998). In spite of this, I have to admit that as a native speaker of

Chinese, I went through years of hard training to learn Hànzì via traditional methods such as rote memorization and recognition of radicals and components, but it has never occurred to me to create stories for each character so as to remember it. Heisig and Richardson are right in saying that the difficulties that CAL learners face in learning Hànzì are different from those of Chinese native speakers, and thus different methods are needed to tackle the special difficulties of CAL learners. Although there is no empirical research to investigate the effectiveness of Heisig and Richardson's method yet, their attempt opens up possibilities of exploring innovative approaches to teaching Hànzì which cater to the specific needs and learning styles of CAL learners.

1.4.5 Can we teach language without culture?

Another issue arising from PG's learning experience is the relationship between language and culture in TCAL. Structuralist linguistic research views language as a structural system which can be analyzed as a set of grammar rules and vocabulary. This prescriptive and structural view of language has led to classroom teaching practices which equate the learning of a language with the mastering of grammar rules and vocabulary, paying little attention to the actual meanings and usage of the language. The audio-lingual method used in PG's case is an example of such an influence. Drawing upon the research on behaviorist psychology which views language learning as a process of habit formation, the audio-lingual method was designed to present and practice the target language patterns through dialogue and drills. It is believed that repetitive practice of language patterns will lead to the memorization of them, and in the end, acquisition of the language (Richards & Theodore, 2001).

While we acknowledge the importance of grammatical knowledge in learning a second language, especially for adult learners who can understand and benefit from systematic analysis of sentence structures and patterns, we should also be aware that language is not simply a fixed set of linguistic code. Rather, each language represents the life of a community. It carries with it the stories of the community accumulated from generation to generation, and keeps enriching and renewing itself with each new generation. Like what Aoki (2004) warns us, to teach a second language “as an objectified tool of communication, as a language code, or as a linguistic structure... reduces human beings into things” (p. 238). That could explain why PG called the audio-lingual method “the drill and kill” method because it is emptied of the real-life content of a language—its history, culture, and stories.

Besides the teaching method, what PG described as “the abusive power” of the native speaker instructors can also be understood from the perspective of cultural differences. As mentioned earlier, Chinese education values greatly the ancient knowledge and wisdom from their thousands of years of history and cultural tradition. Teachers, viewed as the significant passers of knowledge, have always enjoyed an authoritative position in China. They are expected to be expert at what they teach and impart the knowledge to students in a skillful and efficient way. In return, students are expected to respect the teachers’ authority and follow their requirements unconditionally. In class, the teacher has the absolute power to decide how to teach a lesson, what tasks or assignments to complete, or to criticize a student if he or she does something wrong. Students are supposed to remain respectful and obedient and not to challenge the teachers’ authority. One example would be that students should not talk in class, and if

they have questions or if they want to answer the teacher's questions, they must raise their hands first and wait for the teacher to call their name to speak up. Speaking without the teacher's permission is considered disturbance to the teacher's teaching as well as the learning of other students. Thus, from the viewpoint of a native speaker who has gone through the educational system in China, what PG described as "intimidating" or "distasteful" confrontations with the native speaker instructors would be quite common interactions between teachers and students in China's classrooms, especially in primary and high schools.

However, it is also understandable that PG would take the native speaker instructors' behaviors as personal attack and humiliation. PG was an American beginning learner of Chinese who used to serve as a high-ranking officer in American military. Her understanding of hierarchical relationship was that those who were in a higher rank and had power should "treat all people, and especially subordinates, with respect and fairness" (p. 187). When encountering a totally different demonstration of hierarchical power in the Chinese language classroom, PG comprehended and reacted to it from her own cultural background and perspectives, only to end up with a hostile relationship between her and her instructors. While PG attributed this to the "abusive power" of the instructors, I see it the result of a failure in engaging in meaningful communications on cultural differences between the class and the instructors. PG did not explain why, but based on her account in the article, she did not discuss her feelings with any of the native speaker instructors face-to-face, and thus, had no chance to hear from them why they taught in that way. As a matter of fact, the unpleasant feelings that PG and her classmates had in class could have opened up interesting discussions on different interpretations on

teachers' authority, teachers' responsibility, and society's respect and expectations on teachers in different cultures. It can be argued that a key factor that impeded PG's successful engagement in learning Chinese was the lack of awareness of the significant role culture plays in a second language classroom.

1.4.6 How to interpret and teach culture in a TCAL classroom?

Cultural factors in a second language classroom include not only cultural contents in language teaching, be it the small c culture of everyday life, or the big C culture of literature and the arts (Kramersch, 2013), but also the cultural experiences and cultural understandings that occur in the classroom through the interaction between the teachers and the students. As shown in PG's case, what struck her most in the Chinese language learning experience was not the instructors' knowledge about the Chinese language, but how they presented themselves as teachers in the classroom, which could be traced back to traditional classroom teaching practices in China as well as Chinese people's perceptions on the role of a teacher. In other words, even in the worst case of having no cultural content in the curriculum, culture would still be present in a second language classroom because both the teachers and the students are living embodiment of the culture they are from. We cannot separate the dancer from the dance (Kramersch, 2002).

One unique feature of a CAL classroom is that there will always be different cultural aspects present, such as the culture from the target language, the culture brought by the students, the culture brought by the instructors, be they native or non-native speakers of Chinese, as well as the cultural understandings arising as the result of the encounter of these different cultural factors. Thus, in a CAL classroom, how shall we

present the Chinese culture, and how shall we interpret and handle the different understandings on and reactions to the culture?

Let's first examine an example in PG's case. PG mentioned a daily practice in the Chinese language classroom which required the students to rise and greet the teacher in Chinese with "Good morning Old Master" and repeat the same behavior before the class ends with "Old Master, Thank you". PG found the practice "juvenile and demeaning" while the program director thought that it would help the students get familiar with a Chinese classroom atmosphere if they were to go to China to study (p. 185). Firstly, it needs to be noted that students rising to greet and to say goodbye to the teachers is a common practice in primary and high schools in China, but not at universities. Adult learners are most likely to study Chinese in a university rather than a school if they go to China, so the rising and greeting practice is not only unnecessary, but even worse, tends to stereotype Chinese classrooms. An alternative way could be to explain this practice to the students in words or by showing a video clip of how Chinese students do this as an example of respect for teachers in China. Secondly, from the program director's response, it seems that the program laid great emphasis on providing students with real Chinese classroom learning experience. In other words, the program tried to create a learning environment as similar to classrooms in China as possible, believing that it would be beneficial to students' learning of Chinese. However, the good intention was not well received by the students. Rather, it irritated the students and discouraged their desire to learn Chinese.

This leads to the questions of how we understand the authenticity of the Chinese culture in relation to the CAL learners, and how we present the culture in a way that suits

the learning styles and needs of the CAL learners. Apparently, adult CAL beginning learners in a North American language classroom are totally different from young children in a primary school classroom in China. Adult beginning learners have developed their own analytical way of thinking and their own value system. When learning a new language, their previous knowledge and life experience are automatically applied to the learning process. They are more likely to have specific purposes for learning the language, to be aware of their own learning styles, to develop learning strategies that fit their learning styles, and to form their own interpretation and judgment on the cultural aspects of the target language. Thus, although linguistically speaking, adult learners have to learn Chinese from scratch, the way to present and teach Chinese must take into consideration their maturity in thinking and learning so that they feel intellectually challenged, emotionally inspired, and above all, equally respected as adults.

1.5 Research Questions

Teaching and learning CAL is a highly complex process. Various factors including the teachers, the students, the administrators as well as the curriculum and the learning environment are interwoven to affect the teaching and learning process. Although it is impossible to equally cover all aspects of TCAL in one study, using one aspect as the starting point for the research will naturally lead to the involvement of other aspects, and thus contribute to the understanding of TCAL in general. The literature review and analysis in this chapter point to the importance of understanding the needs and learning styles of CAL learners, especially in situation where the majority of the CAL teachers are native speakers of Chinese with experience of learning and/or teaching Chinese as their first language (Li et al., 2014).

As we know, teachers' perceptions and teaching styles tend to be influenced by the way they were taught (Pajares, 1992). In the case of TCAL, the native speaker teachers need to be aware of the different learning contexts as well as the different learners in CAL classrooms and adapt their teaching methods and teaching style accordingly. Otherwise, their previous learning and/or teaching experience in China may become an obstacle rather than an asset in their TCAL profession. As McDonald (2011b) contends:

There are a number of barriers to foreign students becoming functional users of Chinese, barriers that are unconsciously created by Chinese language teachers, incorporated into the design of Chinese language textbooks, and reflected in many of the academic and popular understandings of the nature of the Chinese language itself. (p. 1)

In TCAL, it is imperative that both program developers and language instructors view Chinese language from the eyes of CAL learners and reflect critically on the experiences and perceptions developed from teaching and learning Chinese as a native language. Research on CAL learners' learning experience will shed light on the understandings of both the CAL learners and the factors that affect their engagement in learning Chinese.

As an emerging research field, some research has been conducted on CAL learners' learning experience in recent years. The book *Learning Chinese: Linguistic, sociocultural, and narrative perspectives* by Duff, Anderson, Ilnyckjy, Lester, Wang and Yates (2013) investigates issues in teaching, learning, and use of Chinese from both structural and interpretive perspectives based on the CAL learning experiences of five

Anglo-Canadians who are also authors of the book. It deals with issues in CAL education such as oral Chinese development and production, everyday Chinese literacy development, and identity negotiation. McDonald (2011b), a native English speaker from Australia, also a learner and teacher of CAL, draws on his own experience of and observation on CAL education and contests that learning Chinese is to become “linguistic and cultural hybrids”, a process of what he calls “turning Chinese” (p. 2). He critiques aspects of TCAL which unconsciously create and maintain barriers for CAL learners to engage with the language such as the “foreign” contents in some Chinese textbooks which are designed for CAL learners but are not what actually used by native speakers, and what he calls “character fetishisation” (p.81)—the exaggerated status ascribed to Hànzì. He also uses examples from Chinese magazines and other real life written materials to illustrate the importance of the knowledge of Chinese culture and specific context in understanding a text. Both books employ the authors’ learning experience to discuss TCAL from linguistic, social, and cultural perspectives, but they do not focus on learning CAL in a classroom environment.

Other research tries to understand CAL learners’ learning experience from the motivation perspective. Weger-Guntharp’s (2006) study on 25 heritage and non-heritage Chinese learners in an American university reveals that all the heritage learners cited exploring their heritage status and identity as a major reason for learning Chinese while non-heritage learners tended to think that learning Chinese was “more fun” than learning other languages such as Spanish because “it’s so different” (p. 36). Other reasons for learning Chinese among heritage learners include tapping their heritage as a resource for economic and/or academic purposes and satisfying the wishes of their parents to learn or

broaden their learning of Chinese. Xie's (2014) survey on Chinese elementary-level learners in 6 American universities investigates the participants motivation under Dornyei's (2005) second language (L2) motivational self system. The results show that family influence and the ought-to L2 self are two distinct factors shaping heritage learners' motivation while the ideal L2 self is a significant motivation for non-heritage learners. The research further points out the importance of valuing heritage learners' home background, nurturing the cultural interests of both groups of learners, strengthening connections between the learners and the Chinese-speaking communities, as well as providing visions for employment related to the Chinese language proficiency. Lastly, Wang, Kong, and Farren (2014) investigated the impact of classroom learning environment on the L2 motivation of a group of middle grade, non-heritage Chinese language learners in an American school. The findings based on focus group interviews indicate that students favored learning activities that they could actively participate in and practice what they have learned. They also liked competitive activities with visual and additional resources and hoped for more content for daily life purposes and more opportunities to learn vocabulary and Chinese culture.

Not much literature is available on empirical research on adult CAL beginning learners' learning experience in the Canadian post-secondary classroom context. PG's experience of learning CAL was published in 2002, and it took place in an American classroom. In more than 10 years' time, many things may have changed in North American's CAL classrooms such as teaching materials and teaching practices. Thus, this research is designed to investigate adult CAL beginning learners' learning experience in

Canadian post-secondary classrooms, in the hope to shed light on understandings of current situation of TCAL. The following two questions guide the research:

- 1) Who are the Chinese language students in the CAL classrooms? Why do they want to learn Chinese?
- 2) How do they describe their experience of learning Chinese in terms of the teaching method, the content, and the overall learning environment?

CHAPTER 2: A COMPLEXITY APPROACH TO STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN SECOND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

2.1 A Brief Review on Student Engagement Research

Student engagement is a research field closely related to students' learning experience. It investigates students' learning experience at school or university and look for ways to enhance learning and teaching so as to attract and retain students.

Etymologically speaking, the word “engage” has its origin from old French “engagier” which meant “to bind by promise or oath, to pledge”. This implied serious commitments but also a risk of offering oneself as a guarantor of something promised. Later the word evolved into the meaning of “to attract and occupy the attention of”, with engagement being the condition or act of being so occupied (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2015). This is very close to the meaning of “engage” today, as defined by the Collins English-Chinese Bilingual Dictionary: “If you engage with something or with a group of people, you get involved with that thing or group and feel that you are connected with it or have real contact with it.” In student engagement research, it is commonly acknowledged that student engagement is a dynamic and multi-dimensional construct. It is difficult to define, but we know it when we see it (Zyngier, 2007). In what follows, I review literature on student engagement from behavioral, psychological, and socio-cultural perspectives.

It is believed that Astin's student involvement research in the 1980s directly contributes to the development of modern student engagement research (Axelson & Flick, 2011). Astin (1984) defines student involvement as “the quantity and quality of the physical and psychological energy that students invest in the college experience” (p. 528). He suggests that student's learning and personal development is achieved in

proportion to the student's involvement and that an effective educational policy or practice should be able to increase student involvement. Astin's definition of student involvement lays great emphasis on students' behavioral aspects as manifestation of their involvement. While admitting that students' motivation is an important aspect of involvement, Astin personally preferred the term "involvement" to "motivation" because motivation indicates only a psychological state while involvement is the actual demonstration of that state. As he explains: "It is not so much what the individual thinks or feels, but what the individual does, how he or she behaves, that defines and identifies involvement" (p. 519).

The meaning of Astin's term "student involvement" is, to a great extent, the same as that of the term "student engagement" used by Kuh and colleagues in their influential student engagement survey. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and its two-year college counterpart, The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) are probably among the most widely used annual surveys of undergraduates in North America (Kuh, 2006; Trowler, 2010; Pascarella, Seifert, & Blaich, 2010).). The surveys were developed and put into use in 1999 to meet the demand of "helping postsecondary institutions demonstrate accountability by providing accessible, understandable, and comparable information about the effective educational practices they engage in and the learning outcomes they generate" (Pascarella et al., 2010, p. 18). In ten years, the NSSE survey has generated responses from almost 1.5 million students at nearly 1,200 colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada (Pascarella et al., 2010).

George Kuh, the former NSSE director, once defines student engagement as undergraduate students' participation in "empirically derived good educational practices

and what they gain from their college experience” (2009, p. 7). Similar to Astin’s student involvement theory, this definition emphasizes the observable behavior of the students, which is believed to be informative to institutions about effective educational programs and practices they provide and areas that they can improve. One of the major assumptions of the NSSE is that students’ engagement in educationally effective practices is highly correlated with their cognitive and personal development outcomes of college (Axelson & Flick, 2011; Pascarella et al. 2010). There are five Benchmarks of Effective Education Practice under the NSSE: the level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences, and supportive campus environment.

The NSSE has a strong impact in the field of student engagement research in North America because of its nation-wide use for more than a decade. Kuh (2009) contends that the NSSE questionnaire is empirically and conceptually derived with good psychometric properties and that it is reliable measurement of student engagement and a valid indicator of student and institutional performance. He claims that NSSE and CCSSE “provide high-quality behaviorally oriented data about aspects of the student experience that are related to student success” (p. 14).

Undoubtedly, a behavioral approach to student engagement has its merits in that it provides accessible, understandable, and comparable information based on scaled measurement that covers a wide range of observable student behavioral aspects. However, it is impossible for a 15-20 minutes survey across various faculties and institutions to capture the dynamic and contextual feature of engagement and may lead to misinterpretation of student engagement. For example, a student majoring in maths may

spend less time reading or write less, but it does not necessarily mean that this student is less engaged than a student who major in English literature and does more reading and writing. Besides, the survey does not give voice to individual participants and may exclude a wide range of other variables such as student disposition and motivation, and their expectations and emotions. A student who prefers to study by himself or herself and does not actively participate in classroom discussion can still be very engaged in what he or she learns, but this will not be reflected in the survey because it provides no space for individual participants to explain why they do not participate in classroom activities (Axelson & Flick, 2011; Kahu, 2013).

Other researchers took broader and more holistic approaches to theorize and study student engagement. For example, the psychological approach adds dimensions of learners' personal growth indicators such as cognitive development, motivation and identity formation. Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004) view engagement as the dynamic interwoven of three components: behavior, emotion, and cognition. Besides the behavior dimension, the emotional dimension examines students' affective reactions such as interest, value, enjoyment, and a sense of belonging, and the cognition dimension examines students' investment in learning, self-regulation, and strategic learning. Fredrick et al. point out that as a dynamic and multi-dimensional construct on student engagement, it is difficult to draw a fine line between each component because in reality, all the three components are dynamically interrelated and work together to contribute to student engagement. Examining engagement from the psychological perspective enables a richer understanding of students' learning experience than the behavioral perspective.

The social-cultural approach to student engagement concentrates on how the broader social context affects student experience. Mann (2001) examines students' experience of alienation in higher education and identifies contextual factors that could lead to students' disconnection with their higher education such as power relation, the nature of discourse within the educational and teaching-learning process, the loss of the capacity of play and creativity within learning, and students' identity formation. Quaye and Harper's (2014) edited volume on student engagement in American higher educational institutes focuses on the challenges to engage marginalized students and strategies to increase the ways to get them more involved on campus in meaningful ways. Their book covers a rich diversity of student populations such as students in color, white students, multiracial students, international students, homosexual, bisexual and transgender students, religious minority students, low-income students, returning adult students, student veterans, and graduate and professional students.

A broad social-cultural perspective also takes the social-political context into consideration. Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy places at its central place the development of learners' critical thinking by engaging them in reflection of their own living situations. Learners' lives and daily concerns are incorporated into the content of literacy instruction so that the learning of literacy is also critical self-reflection for the learners. Following this tradition, Zyngier's (2007) action research at an Australian state high school claims that an authentic student engagement should be based on "a pedagogical practice that connects to the real life of the students...in particular for those from disadvantaged and minority backgrounds" (Zyngier, 2007, p. 1766). From the social justice perspective, Zyngier raises the question of engagement for whom, in what, for

what purpose and to what end and contends that power, equity, and engagement with difference should be properly addressed in school education to improve learning outcomes.

The socio-cultural perspective provides a more critical approach to understanding student engagement by examining the social, cultural, and political context that the students are situated in. It includes students' voice in understanding their engagement or alienation in their learning experience and is important in exploring the deep reasons of "why" students become engaged or alienated at university.

A holistic approach to student engagement pulls together the diverse strands of theory and research on student engagement. For example, incorporating the research on student engagement from the behavioral perspective, the social-cognitive perspective and the learner autonomy theory, Bryson and Hand (2007) suggest that student engagement be viewed as a continuum from being disengaged to being engaged and that a student may exhibit different degrees of engagement in different learning tasks and learning context. Zepke, Leach, and Butler (2010) develop a conceptual organiser of student engagement from a number of engagement research approaches. Their conceptual organiser has six key lenses: student motivation and agency; student transactional engagement with teachers; student transactional engagement with their peers; institutional support; active citizenship; and non-institutional support from family and friends.

Research in student engagement has been conducted in both student engagement theories as well as empirical research to gain understandings on the different factors that

affect student engagement. However, most research was done on a relatively broad range at the university or school level. As Axelson and Flick (2011) point out, more research is needed to investigate student engagement in specific learning process, i.e., engagement questions needs to be refined to include “specific learning goals, learning contexts, types of students, and the processes through which they become engaged” (p. 4). This research was an attempt to address the gap by investigating a specific group of students’ engagement in the specific context of learning CAL in Canadian post-secondary classrooms from the construct of student engagement proposed by Willms, Friesen and Milton (2009).

2.2 Willms, Friesen and Milton’s (2009) Construct of Student Engagement

In the longitudinal research that involved the school boards, the classroom teachers, and students, Willms, Friesen and Milton (2009) developed a three-dimensional framework on student engagement. The framework locates student engagement within the domain of teaching and learning and investigates how students are engaged in school learning from three constructs: social engagement, academic engagement and intellectual engagement. Social engagement examines students’ sense of belonging and participation in school life such as participation in sports and school clubs; academic engagement measures students’ participation in the formal requirements of schools in terms of their attendance; and intellectual engagement investigates students’ involvement in the learning process.

Intellectual engagement is a unique and significant construct in Willms et al.’s theoretical framework. It is defined as “a serious emotional and cognitive investment in learning, using higher order thinking skills (such as analysis and evaluation) to increase

understanding, solve complex problems, or construct new knowledge” (p. 9). The construct of intellectual engagement has its origin in Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) theory of “flow state”, a state which is characterized by deep intrinsic motivation and intense emotional and intellectual excitement. Csikszentmihalyi claims that people learn best in the flow state because they do things so challenging and interesting that they lose track of time. Intellectual engagement provides a lens through which effective teaching can be examined and understood from the perspective of learners’ learning experiences.

Willms et al.’s research identifies four key principles in engaging students and achieving satisfying learning results (Friesen, 2009a & 2009b). These principles point to the importance of the learning tasks, the assessments, and students’ relationship building during the learning process. To begin with, the learning activities need to be academically and intellectually engaging. This can be achieved by connecting the subject area with students’ lives and the world so that they not only deepen students’ understanding but also open possibilities for genuine inquiry. When students are absorbed into the learning process, they will actively contemplate, interpret, make meanings, understand, and critique. They are willing to invest their time and efforts in the learning task because the work itself is highly engaging and contributes to their personal intellectual growth. In other words, engaging learning tasks need to be “relevant, meaningful and authentic” (Friesen, 2009a, p. 3).

Accordingly, assessments are not simply about grades. They need to be incorporated into the learning process in such a way that students can reflect on their own learning and figure out the road map for their next steps. When students are engaged in the learning activities, they take assessment as a necessary part of the learning process

and actively create the assessment criteria to guide their own learning and construct new knowledge. Lastly, relationship building in the learning process involves all sorts of relationships such as students' relationship with their teachers, with their work, with each other and with their community. Research has shown that students desire for stronger relationships in the learning process as this contributes to their growth into caring, confident, and mindful human beings (Friesen, 2009a).

Willms et al.'s three-dimensional framework on student engagement, especially the construct of intellectual engagement, fits well the purpose of this research because it emphasizes students' active involvement in the learning process to construct meaningful knowledge for their intellectual growth, and to build various interdependent relationships within the learning environment that foster their self-growth as valuable human beings. The principles of meaningful learning tasks, reflective assessments, and strong relationships provide the lens through which the relationship between learning experience and student engagement in a specific learning context can be examined and interpreted.

2.3 Language Ecology and Complexity Theory in Second Language Learning

This section details the theoretical framework chosen for the study—complexity theory (Larsen-Freeman, 1997) and language ecology (Kramsch, 2012; Van Lier, 2004). I chose complexity theory and language ecology towards second language acquisition for this research because both theories view language and language learning as an open, dynamic, interactive, and emergent process in which language learners actively and creatively incorporate their previous knowledge and experience into the learning of a new language and develop not only new linguistic skills but also new understandings and perspectives on themselves and the world. This approach towards second language

education aligns with Willms et al.'s construct of student engagement in that it also emphasizes learner agency and students' active role in the learning process.

Originated in physical sciences, complexity theory was first introduced to the second language acquisition (SLA) research in the US by Diane Larsen-Freeman in her article *Chaos / Complexity Science and Second Language Acquisition* (1997) as an alternative to the traditional approach to SLA which viewed language learning as being linear and simplistic input-output information processing and language learners as defective and passive receivers of the target language. Complexity theory, together with the ecological perspectives on language learning (Kramsch, 2002, 2008; Van Lier 2002, 2004), tries to bring together the different domains of SLA and strives for “a comprehensive and unified field of research that can study language acquisition from a cognitive, social, cultural, historical and even aesthetic perspective and emancipate language learners from the reduced personalities they have been given in traditional SLA research” (Kramsch, 2012, p. 10).

2.3.1 Key principles of language ecology and complexity theory

Larsen-Freeman (1997) identified ten features of complex systems. They are dynamic, complex, nonlinear, chaotic, unpredictable, sensitive to initial conditions, open, self-organizing, feedback sensitive, and adaptive. In a similar vein, Kramsch defined language ecology as below:

The ecology metaphor is a convenient shorthand for the poststructuralist realization that learning is a nonlinear, relational human activities, co-constructed between humans and their environment, contingent upon their

position in space and history, and a site of struggle for the control of social power and cultural memory. (Kramersch, 2002, p. 5)

Both the complexity perspective and language ecology view language and language learning as a complex system which have the following features:

Open and dynamic

Complex systems such as the economic systems and human learning change with time and have no distinct boundaries. They are open to their environment and respond to environmental or contextual changes, and thus do not posit an initial and an end state. Moreover, complex systems are usually composed of many components and each component interacts with other components. It is the interaction among the components as well as the interaction between the components and their environment that contributes to the behavior of complex systems (Larsen-Freeman, 1997). In other words, complex systems are not a static sum of all the individual components but are constantly susceptible to change as the components interact and react in different ways. As a result, the study of complex systems is a study of “process rather than state, of becoming rather than being” (Gleick, 1987, p. 5).

Nonlinear and unpredictable

The term “nonlinear” in complexity theory refers to a disproportional relationship between cause and effect. This means that a nonlinear system does not always have distinct cause-effect relationship in which a cause of a particular strength results in an effect of equal strength. Like what depicted in the widely known butterfly effect, the flapping of a butterfly’s wings in South America could cause a tornado thousands of

miles away three weeks later (Online Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). Similarly, in second language education, there is no linear cause-effect relationship between what a teacher teaches and what a student learns because a student's learning is the result of the interaction of many factors rather than one specific factor.

The nonlinear feature of a complex system makes predictability particularly difficult. We may, through research, come up with a list of factors that contribute to students' learning, but it is difficult to predict which factor(s) will be the key player(s) in a student's learning in a specific context. One major reason for this unpredictability is the interdependence of all the components in a complex system, especially the sensitive dependence on initial conditions. As the butterfly effect indicates, a slight change in initial conditions could lead to significant change in future behavior. That's why complexity theory "does not deal with prediction, but with explanation" (Nelson, 2011, p. 94).

Self-organizing and emergent

The biologist Sandra Mitchell (2003) defines self-organization as "any set of processes in which order emerges from the interaction of the components of system without direction from external factors and without a plan of the order embedded in an individual component" (p. 6). A complex system has the ability to respond actively to both the positive and negative feedback from its environment and form orders and patterns through the interaction of its components. An example of self-organization is the evolution of species in nature. Species evolve slowly but steadily over long periods of time through different responses to positive and negative feedback from their

environment. This enables them to adapt to the change of environment and survive. Complex systems in biology are capable of learning: “the process of learning—testing a model against reality and then modifying it to suit—occurs at different time scales throughout biology” (Berreby, 1994, p. 26, cited in Larsen-Freeman, 1997, p. 145).

The orders or patterns in a complex system are emergent, i.e., they arise as a result of the interaction of various components in the system. Moreover, the interaction and order/pattern formation involves chance selection from a range of possibilities, which makes it impossible to determine or predict the future of the system prior to its emergence (Osberg & Biesta, 2007). In ecological linguistics, language is viewed as patterns and systems that connect and change over time and space, and language learning as emergence:

Emergence happens when relatively simple elements combine together to form a higher-order system. The whole is not only more than the sum of its parts, it is of a different nature than the parts. The new system is on a different scale, and has different meanings and patterns of functioning than the simpler ingredients had from which it emerged. In language, grammar emerges from lexis, symbols emerge from tools, learning emerges from participation. Language proficiency emerges from all these transformations. (van Lier, 2004, p. 5).

Relational and contextual

In complex systems, components do not exist individually and separately, but in constant and active relationship with other components and their environment. The

behavior of complex systems emerges from the interaction of its components, rather than any one particular component. Accordingly, the environment, or the context in which a complex system is situated, is not something that separates from the complex system but an integral part of the system. Understood in this way, language becomes a manifestation of people's relationship with the world, and language learning a way to enhance such relationships. The context—the social-cultural environment of the language and language learners—“is not a backdrop to learning the language, it is the very object of learning” (Kramersch, 2012, p. 13).

2.3.2 Language as a complex and ecological system

Language can be understood as a complex and dynamic system. As we know, modern linguistics divides language into fairly standard elements such as phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics which can be studied separately. However, it is also obvious that a person who has a good command of all elements of a language is not necessarily a competent user of that language in actual life situations because language is not a simple add-up of different linguistic components. The dynamic feature of language means that it is always in a process of becoming, of changing and growing, which is realized through the actual use of the language in specific social and cultural environment. The relationship between language and its social-cultural environment is that of constructing and being constructed. Language keeps changing and renewing to represent the reality while at the same time, our world view is constructed and constrained by the language we speak. The interdependence relationship between language and its social environment is well captured in Gadamer's words:

Language has no independent life apart from the world that comes to language within it. Not only is the world “world” only insofar as it comes into language but language, too, has its real being only in the fact that the world is represented within it. (Gadamer, 1989, p. 440)

We can find many examples of language changing as a result of the change of society. For example, we constantly create new words and expressions to represent and explain inventions in technology or new phenomena in society. In Mandarin, the word “电脑” (diànnǎo) was created as the name for “computer” when computer was invented. “电脑” literally means “electronic brain” in Mandarin, which vividly describes the function of a computer. Another type of language change is the change of meaning in existing words and expressions. Take the Chinese word 土豪 (“tǔháo”) for example. In the 1940s and 1950s, 土豪 referred to rich landowners who were the exploiting class and were under attack by the Chinese Communist Party. It was a term with a distinctively derogative meaning. However, in recent years, the word has been given the new meaning of rich people who squander money and show off their wealth but lack a good taste. This group of people is a new phenomenon of China’s market economy. On the one hand, they are rich and lead a luxurious life, which is the dream of many people; on the other hand, they lack good education and personal cultivation, like what a popular saying in China goes, people who have nothing but money. The term 土豪 was adopted to refer to this newly emerging group of rich people in China because it well captures society’s mixed feeling towards them: admiration and jealousy over their wealth while at the same time, disdain and derision, or even resentment towards their behavior and personal quality.

In addition, the change and growth of language is self-organizing and organic. Language rules and patterns are formed through use of the language. Some of them become popular and stabilized, but the language system itself is never static (Larsen-Freeman, 2012). As Gleick (1978) put it, “the act of playing the game has a way of changing the rules” (p. 24). When people use language, they seek all the language resources they have to achieve the communicative purposes. This actual use of language changes language, as is shown in the change of the meaning of the word 土豪. It first appeared in a joke on the Internet, but soon gained nationwide popularity and led to the creation of other new words like 土豪金 (tǔháo golden color) which specifically refers to the golden color of iPhone because iPhone is expensive in China and people like to hold it in public as a way of showing off. This example shows how accumulation of local interactions may lead to changes in the behavior of the whole system. It also points to the fact that new forms and lexical items are emergent and impossible to predict. The best we can do is to explain the change after it occurs.

2.3.3 Second language acquisition as a complex and ecological system

The learning of a second language can be understood as a dynamic and complex process as well. Research in SLA has identified many factors that affect the trajectory of the development of a second language such as the source language, the target language, the input and feedback, the learning environment, as well as learner’s age, aptitude, socio-cultural background, motivation, personality, cognitive style and learning strategies. However, it is the interaction of different factors rather than any single factor that have a profound impact on the L2 development (Larsen-Freeman, 1997). In addition, the learning of linguistic items does not follow a linear pattern of mastering one item and

then moving to the next. It is commonly acknowledged that in learning and teaching a second language, both grammar rules and vocabulary need to be constantly reviewed and practiced in order to really master them.

In terms of the language of the L2 learners, Selinker (1972) coined the term “interlanguage” to refer to the language used by L2 learners in the learning process. Interlanguage itself is dynamic because as learners progress in their L2 learning, their interlanguage changes as well. However, the interlanguage theory assumes that there is a final goal of the target language and that the learning of a L2 is a process of learners’ moving from zero competence to native speakers’ competence. Thus, although interlanguage itself is viewed as dynamic, it fails to acknowledge that the target language is also an open and ever-changing system. As Larsen-Freeman (1997) contends, “the very phrase ‘target language’ is misleading because there is no endpoint to which the acquisition can be directed. The target is always moving” (p. 151). Moreover, using native speakers’ competence as the criterion to judge L2 learners’ language proficiency puts L2 learners in a deficit model as most of them will be trapped in a perpetual situation of trying to achieve the native speaker status but never getting there (Cook, 2010).

The complexity and ecological perspective offers an alternative to traditional SLA research in that it views the language of L2 learners and the learning process as an open and self-organizing system. As Kramsch (2009) argues, “an ecological approach to language education does not seek dialectical unity, or bounded analyses of discrete events, but on the contrary open-endedness and unfinalizability” (p. 247). This approach to SLA can be understood from the concept of “translanguaging”. First appeared as a pedagogical practice of planned and systematic use of two languages in one lesson

(Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012), García (2009) extended the notion of translanguaging as “multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual world” (p. 45). Translanguaging stresses the space that L2 language learners created where they strategically use their unique linguistic and semiotic repertoire to achieve effective communication. It believes that L2 language learning is a dynamic process in which language learners are active and creative bilingual/multilingual users and that they integrate new linguistic knowledge through meaning making by using all of their language resources.

An example cited in Li (2011) well illustrates how well bilingual speakers of English and Chinese integrated their knowledge of both languages and used it creatively to make meanings of their life. When asked about their future plan after graduating from university, the three speakers responded:

Chris: 以后工作就当“白领狗”，给人公司打工！

In future (I will) work as a “white-collar dog”, working for someone’s company.

Lawson and Roland both laugh.

Roland: You are already *bilingual*!

Lawson: Good one.

Chris: That’s what I mean.

(Li, 2011, p. 1226)

In this example, Chris made a creative pun based on the similar pronunciation of “bilingual” and “白领狗” as in Mandarin, “白领狗” is pronounced as “báilǐnggǒu”. In the meantime, the meaning of “白领狗” in English is “white-collar dog”, which indicates how the speaker viewed himself in terms of his socio-economic position. The way that Roland and Lawson responded shows that both of them understood well the pun because they had shared linguistic repertoire and life experiences. Such creative use of language can only happen among bilingual or multilingual speakers because it requires knowledge of at least two languages. These speakers choose elements from different languages and use them creatively to make meanings of their life as bilinguals or multilinguals. New forms and expressions emerge on the basis of source languages, and at the same time, change the source languages. As is shown in the example of “白领狗” (white-collar dog), this new term changes, or rather, enriches the source language of Mandarin.

The concept of translanguaging also points to the significance of socio-cultural context in SLA. As quoted earlier, Kramsch believes that socio-cultural context is not simply the background of L2 learning, but itself an indispensable part of the learning because learning takes place in meaning making which requires studying the context in relation to the linguistic items. Pennycook (2010) argues that languages is not a pre-defined entity that can be taken up and employed for communicative purposes in different contexts, but rather is “a product of the deeply social and cultural activities in which people engage” (p. 1). Further, he makes a distinction between language use and language practice in that the notion of use implies that language is a prior existing tool out there in the world and ready to be put to use, while language practice emphasizes

language as doing, as part of diverse social and cultural activity from which language emerges.

That language is the result of people's endeavours to make meaning of their life and the world points to the importance of relating language to its speakers, cultures, histories, places and ideologies. This is what Pennycook (2010) calls the locality of language practice:

The local is not so much a context in which language changes but rather a constituent part of language practice (p. 9)...To take the notion of locality seriously...is to engage with ideas of place and space that in turn require us to examine time, movement and interaction. To think in terms of practices is to make social activity central, to ask how it is we do things as we do, how activities are established, regulated and changed. Practices are not just things we do, but rather bundles of activities that are the central organization of social life (pp. 1-2).

Take again the term “白领狗” (white-collar dog) for example. In Chinese culture, “狗”, the dog, has derogative meaning when used to describe a person. For example, “走狗” (zǒugǒu), literally meaning “running dog”, is the name for traitors and collaborators such as those Chinese who betrayed their country and served the Japanese army during Japan's invasion to China from 1937 to 1945. Other terms such as “狼心狗肺” (lángxīngǒufèi, literally meaning “wolf's heart and dog's lung”, is used to condemn those who are brutal and cold-blooded), “狐朋狗友” (húpénggǒuyǒu, literally meaning “fox's friends and dog's friends, refers to “evil associates or disreputable gang”), and “狗仗人

势” (gǒuzhàngǎnrénshì, literally meaning “a dog relies on a person’s power”, is used when someone, especially a flunkey, who bullies others under the protection of the master) are all derogative terms with obviously strong detestation and despise. Because of this, Chinese people do not use the word “狗” (dog) to refer to a person unless they really disdain that person. However, the word “dog” in English is usually associated with positive feelings such as “a lucky dog”, “an old dog”, “Every dog has its day”, and “Love me, love my dog”. Thus, in the case of “白领狗” (white-collar dog), we need to take into consideration who the speaker is, where he is located and what his education and family background are in order to understand why he would use the word “dog” to refer to himself and properly interpret the meaning of the term “白领狗” to the speaker.

In his article, Li (2011) gives detailed background information about the three speakers. All of them were male and first-year undergraduate students in a college in London. Both Chris and Lawson were born in London with Chinese family background. They spoke different varieties of Chinese languages at home, but English was the major language of communication among them and their friends. Roland came to Britain at the age of 15, fluent in Mandarin, Cantonese, and English. Chris wanted to work in banking and financing and thus would be a “white-collar”. He was also aware that he would have to work very hard and thus used “dog” to describe his situation, as the English idiom goes: “work like a dog”. This idiom implies no derogative meaning like in Chinese. Chris drew on his linguistic resources in both English and Mandarin (“bilingual” and “báilǐngǒu”) as well as his cultural knowledge on the word “dog” to refer to someone who works very hard to create the pun of “白领狗” (white-collar dog). Although growing

up in a Chinese background family, the dominant ideology that Chris had was from English and the local culture and living environment. Thus, he would not feel uncomfortable to use the word “狗” (dog) to refer to himself because for him, the word “dog” only had the implication of “a hard-working person”.

The complexity perspective of language breaks the boundaries of languages and restores language to its open, dynamic and relational status, a status of becoming rather than of a fixed and pre-defined entity. Bilingualism or multilingualism is thus not a simple add-up of several separate and bounded linguistic systems but rather a mixed, hybrid and creative flow of language use in which new forms, structures, and meanings emerge as a product of embodied social, cultural and historical practices. This view of language and language learning places the language learners in the center of the learning process as active participants in the making of language and new meanings rather than passive receivers of pre-existing language knowledge.

2.3.4 Language learners' agency, identity and translanguaging competence

Structuralism view of language in second language education has been that languages are bounded, discrete and distinguishable systems that exist outside communicative acts and can be studied and learned in separate components. For example, in the 1960s, Chomsky developed the notion of an innate, genetically determined universal grammar in human brain that is ready to be drawn on by language learners. Viewed from this perspective, learning a second language equals to acquiring a set of clearly defined, pre-existing grammatical, lexical, and cultural knowledge. Language learners only need to follow the teaching procedure step by step to master the language. If their language proficiency is not satisfying, what they need to do is to learn more

grammatical rules, to memorize more vocabulary, and to learn more cultural facts. As Kroskrity (2004) pointed out, such a monolingual perspective turns language learners into “hosts for language” rather than active agents of meaning making:

Modern linguistics, since Saussure, has been interested only in the inner logic of the systems of signs itself, taken...independently of the meaning that gives signs to their content...Speakers were neither part of the language nor capable of being agents of linguistic change. Rather than being viewed as partially aware or as potentially agentive, speakers—in Chomskyan models—were merely hosts for language. (p. 499)

Furthermore, Makoni and Pennycook (2006) criticized the monolingual view towards language from a social-historical perspective. They argued that the notion of languages being linked to a geographic space and treated as isolated, enumerable objects separated from their environment were inventions of colonial and nationalist ideology as a measure to control variety and difference. They believed that like the constructs of tradition, history or ethnicity, the invention of languages as autonomous and systematic entities is the result of “a very specific ideological apparatus” (p. 9) which led to the development of metalinguistic concepts such as monolingualism as well as the view of bilingualism and multilingualism as a pluralization of monolingualism.

This monolingual perspective has profound impacts on second language education. As Larsen-Freeman (2012) contends, in the field of second language acquisition, the general trend over the past 50 years has been towards increasing empowerment of the learner in terms of cognition, affection, as well as social, cultural, and historical competence, but the monolingual perspective of language being a bounded

and pre-defined system remains the obstacle to fully emancipate the learners. If learners confine themselves in the deficit model and set “native speakers’ proficiency” as their goal, they will view any use of the language that is not like native speakers as being errors or problems that need to be dealt with, such as their accent, unique forms and expressions. In such a mindset, they are not able to draw on their linguistic and cultural repertoire as valuable resources in learning a new language, and thus unable to fully realize their agency as active and creative language learners.

The translanguaging turn in second language education, based on the notion of language being an open and dynamic system constructed socially, discursively, historically and politically in local environment, sheds new lights on the understanding of second language learners and their learning activities. While rejecting the monolingual view of language, García (2006) raises the questions of “what would language education look like if we no longer posited the existence of separate languages?” and “how would we teach bilingually in ways that reflect people’s use of language and not simply people as language users?” (p. xiii).

The notion of “people as language users” implies that there is a language out there readily available to acquire and to use, while “people’s use of language” focuses on the actual and contingent use of language in certain time and space for certain communicative purposes. This shift of focus places learners and the learning environment in the central place and requires close examination of issues like who the learners are, why they learn the language, and how they use the language. Understanding of these issues is the basis for sound pedagogical practices, and learning activities need to be designed in such a way that allows learners to bring all their linguistic and cultural

resources to make meanings and develop their competence as bilinguals or multilinguals. This approach to language learners and language learning accepts mixed use of language as norm and fully respects learners as “whole persons with hearts, bodies, and minds, with memories, fantasies, loyalties, identities” (Kramsch, 2006, p. 251).

To enable learners to make full use of their multiple language norms and semiotic resources, we need to create a learning environment in which their previous knowledge and experiences are valued and their agency of using whatever resources available to express themselves is recognized and encouraged. When learners develop their competence in translanguaging practices, their confidence increases and their agency is enhanced. This in return, contributes to effective learning of the language.

Canagarajah (2012) terms the competence in translanguaging practice as “performative competence” and defines it in the following way:

This type of knowledge is developed in and through practice, shaping both cognition and form in terms of one’s ongoing experiences. The dynamic and reciprocal strategies translanguals adopt, based on their knowledge of how, motivate them to respond strategically to unexpected interlocutors and spaces with diverse norms in contact zones. (p. 174)

Canagarajah’s definition of performative competence is based on the view of language learners as autonomous persons taking full responsibility for their learning. It emphasizes learner agency and social practices in producing meaning. For instance, such learners would constantly monitor and adjust their language and negotiate strategies to suit the needs of the interlocutors and the communication contexts; they connect learning with

use of language in the interactions so that they could keep expanding their repertoire—“the way in which the different language resources constitute an integrated and ever-widening competence” (p. 177); and they are open to diversity, adaptive to contingent communication situations, and cooperative in constructing meanings with their interlocutors on equal terms.

Further, Li (2011) maintains that creativity and criticality are two fundamental principles that make translanguaging practice possible. Creativity refers to the learner’s ability to make choices between following and breaking the existing rules or norms of language, to push and break the boundaries between the old and the new, the acceptable and the challenging. Learners create their own space and demonstrate their autonomy through creative use of all the resources they have, including linguistic knowledge, cognitive ability, as well as personal histories, experiences, and ideologies. Criticality then refers to the learner’s ability to use their knowledge and experience appropriately to respond to social, cultural, and linguistic phenomena, to question established ideas and perceptions, and to express their own views with proper reasoning. Learning a new language involves encountering different or even conflicting ideologies, values, and worldviews. It is through active response and critical reflection that learners gain new insights and make new meanings of their learning experience and their life in general. It is in this sense that Gadamer (1989) speaks of “fusion of horizons” as a being-and-becoming mode in which “the old and the new are always combining into something of living value, without either being explicitly foregrounded from the other” (p. 305).

The process of developing performative competence in translanguaging practice can also be transformative. Learners bring their linguistic, cognitive and communicative

skills, their social, historical, cultural and political knowledge and beliefs into the learning of a new language, which in return, develops and transforms their skills, knowledge, beliefs, and experience, and creates a new identity (Li & Zhu, 2013). Like the notion of language being a dynamic and complex system, language learner' identity, in this sense, is viewed as being "fluid, context-dependent, and context-producing in particular historical and cultural circumstances" (Norton & Toohey, 2011). As Aoki (2004) explains, in a dialectic circle of the learner venturing out to encounter the new language and coming back to themselves with deeper insights and fuller understandings on their own nature and situation, the learners are like travellers who return home with a transformed being:

If, by entering into foreign linguistic world, we overcome the prejudices and limitations of our previous experience of the world, this does not mean that we leave and negate our own world. As travellers we return home with new experiences. (Gadamer, 1989, p. 445)

Lastly, the development of learner agency and tranlanguaging competence is intertwined with the cultivation of transcultural competence. In a world characterized by the intense economic, political and cultural exchanges that take place within and across borders on a daily basis, we do not need to travel far to feel the transcultural impacts. We experience it in our local communities every day as we interact with people from different social, historical, and cultural backgrounds. As Slimbach (2005) claims, "transculturalism is deeply rooted in the quest to define shared interests and common values across cultural and national borders...Competence of a transcultural kind must exhibit the attitudes and abilities that facilitate open and ethical interaction with people

across cultures.” (p. 206). To develop transcultural competence requires that we step outside of our own world, open ourselves up to the different perspectives and ways of living of people from various cultures, examine our own cultural assumptions and judgments critically from other people’s perspectives, and gradually develop broader and more inclusive understandings about ourselves and the world.

Slimbach sees foreign language proficiency as an important part of transcultural competence. For him, it is necessary that a transcultural person have “a threshold-level facility in the spoken, non-verbal, and written communication system used by members of at least one other culture”. This foreign language ability opens up the possibilities for people from different countries to communicate directly with each other and to learn from each other. It contributes to the cultivation of an inclusive, empathetic, and reflective disposition that characterizes a transcultural person. In this sense, the transcultural journey is also a journey of self-transformation:

Truth is often bigger than any one person’s ability to grasp it. By recognizing the particularity of all our knowing, we are free to look for wisdom in opposing opinions without compromising what is valuable in our own. As we begin to love people in another culture, we can begin to identify with them and see the truth they understand. As we make their truth our own, we become new people, formed by synthesis of two cultures (Adeney, 1995, p. 165)

2.3.5 Challenges with the complex approach to second language education

In spite of all the positive prospects about the complex and translanguaging turn of second language education, its application in the actual classroom context is not

without challenges. The first challenge is the pressure imposed by educational institutions and corporate imperatives to standardize the criteria of performance in discriminating and selecting individuals. This leads to more intense competition among learners whose goal is to compete and outdo others in terms of scores or rankings in various tests and assessments rather than to concentrate on their personal agency and creativity. An example of this is the worldwide standardized English language tests such as IELTS (International English Language Testing System) and TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). The results of these tests are recognized by higher educational institutions and immigration departments in English-speaking countries such as the USA, the UK, Canada, and Australia. In order to meet the language proficiency requirement as indicated by the result of such a test, many people concentrate on doing exercises and learning test strategies that help them to achieve a satisfying score in the test. In China, English language training centers or schools providing specific programs which aim to help students improve their test scores in IELTS and TOEFL has become a nationwide industry. Designed under the monolingual view of “one state-one language”, these tests not only reduce language to a set of linguistic structures, but even worse, serve to monitor and control language learners rather than emancipate them.

Another challenge comes from the actual teaching practice. Translanguaging pedagogy allows for creation of new meanings from mixed use of various linguistic and sociocultural resources, and this leads to the tasks of how to distinguish between errors and innovations, and how to respond to the creative use of language in such a way that both the convention and the creativity are acknowledged and respected. In a monolingual view, any deviation of language use from the norms of the pre-defined and idealized

system is considered errors. However, in translanguaging teaching practice, some of these errors may turn out to be learners' creative use of diverse linguistic resources to convey meanings that they are not able to express by conforming to the norms. Canagarajah (2012) cites an example of how a student came up with the new model form of "can able to" to emphasize individual agency in resisting external constraints and achieving their purpose. Although in her home language, "can" and "be able to" have the same meaning, the student found that "can" had an additional meaning of "have permission to" in English and thus used the form "can able to" intentionally to imply "ability from the perspective of the external circumstances" (p. 189).

What we need to keep in mind is that language learners always bring their cultural beliefs, ideologies, and past experiences into the learning of a second language. What they strive to express in the new language is closely related to who they are, what they believe, how they feel, and what they have experienced. In this sense, a translingual's use of the language is quite different from the use of a native speaker of that language. As language teachers and educators, we need to constantly ask the question of why when a new structure or a new lexical item appears in the student's work. Rather than arbitrarily decide that it is an error, we can take it as a teaching moment by exploring further why the student uses it in this way and what he/she wants to express. Comments and suggestions on other alternative forms and expressions can then be presented and discussed on the basis of meaning negotiations. Thus, in translanguaging pedagogy, both the students and the teachers are practitioners of translanguaging. Learning occurs in mutual understanding and respect among the students and the teachers in a language classroom.

CHAPTER 3: INTERPRETIVE CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY

The literature review on student engagement as well as the discussion of the complex and ecological approach towards second language education all point to the fact that students' engagement in learning a second language is an open, dynamic, and interactive process. Thus, an adequate research methodology towards investigating students' learning experience with the purpose of gaining insights into their engagement in learning CAL would be the interpretive case study methodology. An interpretive approach to the research emphasizes the importance of examining and interpreting students' feelings, thoughts, and actual learning activities in the learning process, and a case study in applied linguistics focuses on the knowledge, development, and performance of individual language learners and teachers to generate detailed descriptions of the processes, outcomes, and factors associated with language learning and use (Duff, 2008). Hence, the interpretive case study methodology well suits the purpose of this research.

3.1 Interpretive Case Study

Interpretive research in general does not aim to test theories, measure performance, or compare results. Rather, interpretive researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they make sense of their world, and what meanings they attribute to their experiences. This is because interpretive research views knowledge as being constructed through people's experiences and interactions with each other in specific historical, social, and cultural situations. As Willis (2007) claims, "interpretivists hold that human beings have social agency and act on their own initiative, and that social phenomena are best studied by scrutinising one situation in

a particular context” (p. 192). In other words, people develop subjective meanings of things around them through their work and life, which lead to multiple and diversified interpretations of life and world. Thus, from an interpretive perspective, there is no one single, observable truth, but multiple realities and interpretations of a single event. What interpretive researchers set out to do is to immerse themselves in the context of research and bring in all their past experiences and knowledge to reach understandings on the complexity of research events

Case studies in applied linguistics are usually associated with interpretive qualitative research (Duff, 2008). The case study methodology aims to understand a particular context. Merriam (2014) defines case study as “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p. 40). A more detailed definition can be found in Cresswell (2007):

Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a *case*) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving *multiple sources of information* (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case *description* and case-based themes” (p. 73, emphasis in original).

Both definitions point out that the object of a case study is a bounded system—“a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries”, be it “a single person who is a case example of some phenomenon, a program, a group, an institution, a community, or a specific policy” (Merriam, 2014, p. 40). Further, Willis (2007) distinguished two types of

case studies: descriptive case study and interpretive case study. The purpose of descriptive case study is to provide a rich and detailed description of the case, while the interpretive case study employs the descriptive data to understand “the intricacies of a particular situation, setting, organizations, culture, or individual”, which “may be related to prevailing theories or models” (p. 243).

Case studies have the following features: particularistic, naturalistic, descriptive, and heuristic. Case studies are particularistic because they focus on a particular context such as a program, an event, or a social group. They give voice to people in that particular context and strive to reveal meanings about the phenomenon. What naturalistic means is that case studies investigate real people and situations, and most of the data are collected in real environments such as classrooms or participants’ home. The third feature of case studies is descriptive. This refers to the rich and detailed data collected for a thick description of the phenomenon. As indicated in Cresswell’s definition, the data of a case study can be from a variety of sources including observations, interviews, journal or diary writings, narratives, audiovisual materials, documents and reports. Lastly, case studies are heuristic in that they confirm what is known, or expand understandings of the phenomenon. Relationships and insights emerge from case studies could also lead to new understandings (Merriam, 2014; Willis, 2007).

Case study methodology is employed when researchers are interested in the “how” and “why” of a particular situation such as how well a system works, how students like a curriculum, or why a program is engaging or not engaging (Yin, 2008). It is suitable for research which aims at a holistic understanding of human activities in authentic real-life contexts. This research fits the criteria of case studies as it was carried

out in a particular Mandarin language program with the purpose of collecting rich and naturalistic data to gain understandings and insights on a specific group of people—adult beginning learners of MAL.

3.2 Research Context and Participants

This research was based on a Chinese program in a Canadian post-secondary institution which offered Chinese language courses as well as courses on Chinese literature, Chinese history, and Chinese culture to students who major in East Asian Language Studies or minor in Chinese. Students who were in other degree programs could also take the Chinese courses to fulfill their program requirements. The courses on Chinese literature, Chinese history, and Chinese culture were taught in English by English-Chinese bilingual instructors, and the Chinese language courses taught Mandarin in the form of Pinyin and simplified Chinese characters.

The Chinese language courses started to use the textbooks called *Integrated Chinese* 《中文听说读写》 three years ago. According to Li et al.'s (2014) survey, *Integrated Chinese* is the most popular Chinese textbook among North America post-secondary institutions. It consists of four levels, with one textbook for each level: *Integrated Chinese Level 1, Part 1*; *Integrated Chinese Level 1, Part 2*; *Integrated Chinese Level 2, Part 1*; and *Integrated Chinese Level 2, Part 2*. Each textbook has 10 units. Students learn 5 units each semester, and each semester is 14 weeks long. Since this research focused on beginning learners of MAL, I recruited student participants from two classes, one using *Integrated Chinese Level 1 Part 1* and the other using *Integrated Chinese Level 1 Part 2*.

All the students who are interested in taking the Chinese language courses need to go through an assessment so that they could be placed at the appropriate course level according to their Chinese language proficiency. Students who have no or little knowledge about the Chinese language are placed into the beginning level course. However, it is not easy to define “little knowledge”. A typical beginners’ Chinese language class is composed of both students who have absolutely no knowledge about Chinese and who already know something about Pinyin or the Chinese characters. For those who have some knowledge about the Chinese language before coming to the class, they also vary greatly in semesters of how they learned Chinese. Take the student participants in this research for example. Some were absolute new beginners with no Chinese cultural background and Chinese language knowledge; some had no Chinese family background, but took Chinese courses at high school or learned Chinese by themselves through books, online courses, or Chinese learning software; while others are Chinese heritage language (CHL) learners who can speak one or another variety of Chinese languages but had not learned how to read or write Chinese characters.

Altogether 22 students participated in the research, 13 from the class of Level1 Part1 and 9 from the class of Level 1 Part 2. All of them agreed to participate in the classroom observation and provided their two written assignments; 12 students participated in the focus group conversations, 6 from each class; and 3 students from the class of Level 1 Part 1 participated in the one-on-one interview. Of the 12 student participants in the focus group conversations, 7 were female and 5 were male; and 7 were non-CHL learners and 5 were CHL learners. Table 3.1 shows the student participants’ demographic information.

Besides the student participants, two instructors who taught Mandarin in the Chinese program participated in the one-on-one interviews. The two instructors were female native speakers of Mandarin. One was a professor with tenure position and the other was a sessional instructor. Both have been teaching Mandarin at this university for more than 10 years. Each interview lasted for about one hour.

Table 3.1 Student participants of focus group conversations and one-on-one interviews

#	Pseudonym	Gender	CHL / Non-CHL Learners	Age	Languages Spoken at Home	Status in Canada	Mandarin Level	Participated in
1	Jenny	F	HL	20-29	English, Cantonese	Canadian citizenship	L1P1	Focus group
2	Amy	F	HL	20-29	English, Cantonese	Canadian citizenship	L1P1	Focus group
3	Daisy	F	HL	17-20	English, Teochew	Canadian citizenship	L1P1	Focus group
4	Laura	F	NHL	20-29	English, Tamil	Canadian citizenship	L1P1	Focus group
5	Andy	M	NHL	17-20	English	Canadian citizenship	L1P1	Focus group
6	Nelson	M	NHL	20-29	French	Exchange student	L1P1	Focus group
7	John	M	NHL	17-20	English	Canadian citizenship	L1P1	One-on-one interview
8	Jessica	F	HL	20-29	English, Wuhan dialect	Canadian citizenship	L1P1	One-on-one interview
9	Katie	F	HL	17-20	English, Cantonese	Canadian citizenship	L1P1	One-on-one interview
10	Tom	M	NHL	20-29	English	Canadian citizenship	L1P2	Focus group
11	Jamal	M	NHL	30-39	English, French	Canadian citizenship	L1P2	Focus group
12	Jason	M	NHL	20-29	English	Canadian citizenship	L1P2	Focus group
13	Mona	F	HL	40+	English, Cantonese, Malaysian	Canadian citizenship	L1P2	Focus group
14	Kathy	F	HL	17-20	Mandarin	Canadian citizenship	L1P2	Focus group
15	Fanny	F	NHL	17-20	German, Russian	Canadian citizenship	L1P2	Focus group

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Multiple methods were employed to collect data for this research, including classroom observations, focus group conversations, one-on-one interviews, and participants' written compositions. Data were collected in two MAL language classes in a Canadian post-secondary institution. One class was in the second semester of the Chinese language courses, and the other in the fourth semester. In order to recruit participants for the research, I went to each class to explain what the research was about, the methodology used, and the expectations on the participants. Consent forms were distributed and collected on site. There were three separate consent forms: one for classroom observation and collection of written assignments, one for individual conversation, and one for group conversation. Students could choose to participate in one, two, or all of the three research activities. The instructors also signed the consent forms for classroom observation.

3.3.1 Classroom observations

Unlike routine observations in our daily life, observation as a research tool is systematic, and it addresses a specific research question. It usually takes place in the setting where the phenomenon of interest naturally occurs, thus represents a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest. It is an important research method in case studies because it provides the researcher with direct experience of the research context which can serve as reference points for subsequent interviews. Observation can also be used to support other research methods such as interviews and document analysis to substantiate the findings (Merriam, 2014).

Classroom observations were used in this research to obtain first-hand information about the actual teaching and learning activities in Canadian post-secondary MAL classrooms. It also turned out to be a good opportunity to build up rapport with the instructors and the student participants. The classroom observations lasted for one semester. I went to each class once a week and took notes of the teaching procedure, the teaching content, the teacher's teaching style and methods, and student participants' learning activities. I also learned about general information such as the size of the class and the textbooks used. Field notes were taken in the form of brief notations for future elaboration (Thorp & Holt, 2008). The notes were also used to develop specific questions for group conversations and one-on-one interviews. Another aspect of classroom observation, as mentioned in the consent form, is to collect participants' writing samples. With the help of the instructors, I was able to collect two writing samples from each participant from their composition assignments.

3.3.2 Focus group conversations

A special feature of the focus group conversations in this research is that it was reciprocal. As the researcher and organizer of the focus groups, I intentionally made it not just an opportunity for me to collect research data, but also an opportunity for the participants to practice Mandarin. During the conversation, I would ask some questions in Mandarin and encourage the participants to respond in Mandarin. This turned out to be a strong incentive for the participants to persist in attending the conversations as they valued the opportunities to use Mandarin outside the classroom.

The focus group conversations in this research were conducted in groups of 3-4 student participants once a week for five weeks. Altogether 12 students participated in

group conversations and were divided into 4 groups. Students from the same class were put into the same groups because of their shared availability and shared learning experience in one class. The student participants were a mixture of heritage and non-heritage MAL learners. All the heritage student participants claimed speaking or understanding at least one variety of Chinese language. As some participants were not available in some weeks, I was actually able to organize and record 15 group conversations, with each conversation lasting for 50 to 60 minutes.

The advantages of having focus group conversations for this research are obvious. First of all, the participants in each group were classmates. They knew each other, although they may not have much contact with each other after class. This made the overall conversation atmosphere natural and relaxing. Secondly, each time the focus group discussed only one or two questions related to their MAL learning experience. This allowed them enough time and opportunities to express their opinions, share their experiences, and respond to others' ideas. As Patton (2002) explains:

In a focus group participants get to hear each other's responses and to make additional comments beyond their own original responses as they hear what other people have to say...The object is to get high-quality data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others. (p. 386)

Thirdly, in a focus group, the researcher acts as the facilitator to keep the conversation going and make sure that the conversation sticks to the topic (Robin & Robin, 2012). Data collected in this way tends to be more detailed and deeper. Lastly, focus groups

foster a closer relationship between the researcher and the participants, as well as between the participants themselves. As it turned out in this research, some student participants in the focus groups started to organize a Chinese Culture and Conversation Club after the research, as a way to continue to practice Mandarin.

3.3.3 *One-on-one interviews*

Considering that focus group conversation could be time-consuming for some students, a one-on-one interview was designed for those who were willing to share their learning experience but preferred a conversation in the form of individual interview that would last for about one hour. Some follow-up individual conversations were also made with focus group members when some interesting issue came up with that specific participant and further exploration was needed. Altogether I conducted ten one-on-one interviews for this research. Each interview lasted 40 to 60 minutes and was transcribed for data analysis purpose.

According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), research questions are different from questions in ordinary conversation as they focus on a certain topic and are designed to search for more in-depth details about a certain phenomenon. A qualitative interview contains three types of questions: main questions, follow-up questions, and probes. Main questions define each separate part of the research question; follow-up questions clarify concepts and seek detailed information based on the interviewee's response; and probes are used to manage the conversation, keep the interview on target, and sometimes ask for examples and evidence (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, pp. 116-119). For the purpose of this research, different aspects of learning MAL were discussed in the focus group conversations and one-on-one interviews to gain insights into participants' MAL learning

experience. These aspects include reasons to learn Mandarin, grammar, Chinese character, teaching methods and teaching styles, assessments, and the role of culture in learning MAL.

Besides student participants, teachers were also interviewed to discuss the different MAL aspects from the teaching perspective. Because of the limited number of teachers available in the program, I interviewed only two teachers. The teachers were interviewed after all the focus group conversations and interviews with student participants had been done. It was arranged in this way so that the findings from the student participants' perspectives could be integrated into the interviews with the teachers.

3.4 Main Aspects Covered in the Conversations and Interviews

The questions in individual interviews and in focus group conversations were similar. The exception with focus group conversations was that the participants were given a narrative taken from Duff et al.'s (2013) book and asked to comment on the story. The narrative chosen was Roma's narrative (pp. 264-283). In this narrative, Roma described her experiences of learning Mandarin in Canada and China and gave examples of how she struggled in her learning process. The purpose of using the learning experience of an adult MAL learner who had been learning and using Chinese for more than 10 years was to add one more perspective to the participants' reflection on their own learning experience by comparing it to someone who was at a much more advanced level than them.

The discussion topics covered in the focus group conversations and one-on-one interviews with student participants were divided into two parts. One was general questions concerning MAL learning such as why and when they started to learn Mandarin, where they learned Mandarin, how they enjoyed learning Mandarin, and what were their future plans for learning and using Mandarin. The other part focused on specific aspects of MAL learning such as grammar, Chinese characters, teaching methods, and cultural content in class.

3.4.1 General questions related to participants' learning of MAL

The purpose of the general questions about student participants' experience in learning Mandarin was to understand who were the students and how they perceived themselves as MAL learners. Complexity thinking reminds us that every individual learner is unique. Although students in one classroom may be at more or less the same level in semesters of language proficiency, their attitudes towards learning the language and how the language learning experience impacts them could vary greatly depending on their family background, sociocultural situation, and past life experiences. For example, heritage MAL learners and non-heritage MAL learners could have different reasons for learning Mandarin, different resources in helping with the learning of Mandarin, and different expectations on the language proficiency they should achieve and the role of the language in their life. As discussed in chapter two, good understandings of the students and their needs are the foundation to effective teaching, so the general questions in relation to students' MAL learning experience are an important part of this research.

3.4.2 Grammar and teaching methods

For second language learners, especially for adult learners who have developed mature cognitive skills to understand abstract concepts, grammar knowledge is an indispensable part of the learning process because it provides systematic analysis on the structures of the language and contributes to more effective learning of the language (Halliday, 2014). Moreover, in the case of learning MAL in Canadian classrooms, students' exposure to the language happens mainly in class. Outside the classroom, they are in an English speaking world. What this means is that the students lack a real-life environment to practice the language and learn from the actual use of the language. In this case, explicit knowledge about grammar rules and word usage becomes extremely important as they replace the role of learning the language in real-life environment through repetition by explaining to the learners the correct ways of using the language.

However, learning grammar rules and doing grammar exercises without contexts can be very boring, time-consuming, and ineffective. As PG's case shows, a major issue that PG had when learning Mandarin was the audio-lingual method used by the instructors. She did not mention how important she thought grammatical knowledge was, but she definitely expressed her preference for the communicative teaching method. Considering that grammar is a major part of the MAL teaching content, it is necessary to find out from both the students and the teachers what they think of the proportion of grammar knowledge in the class as well as the way grammar should be taught.

3.4.3 *Chinese character (Hànzi)*

Hànzi in teaching and learning MAL can be summarized as being unique, irreplaceable, and difficult to learn. As discussed in chapter one, it is unique because the writing system is based on combination of strokes rather than alphabets. It is

irreplaceable because in spite of the creation of Pinyin, the romanized writing system for the indication of pronunciation, Hànzì remains to be the prevalent writing system in Chinese speaking communities such as in the newspapers, magazines, books, the Internet, or text messages. Finally, that it is difficult to learn has already been widely accepted as a reality by MAL learners, teachers and researchers (Allen, 2008; Jackson and Malone, 2010). It requires lots of time and repetitive practice to remember the correct strokes of a character. Moreover, many characters look quite similar. One more or less stroke makes a different character such as “午” (wǔ, meaning “noon”) and “牛” (niú, meaning “cattle”). In PG’s case, failure to produce correct written characters in tests led directly to her frustration in learning Mandarin.

As a special feature of Chinese language and a major challenge claimed by MAL learners, especially learners with an alphabetic writing system background, Hànzì definitely deserve a place in this research. There are many questions related to the teaching and learning of Hànzì such as how Hànzì are taught in class, how the students like the way Hànzì are taught, what are the strategies the students take to learn Hànzì, and what the students’ preference is between the traditional Chinese characters and the simplified Chinese characters.

3.4.4 The role of culture in learning MAL

In second language education, especially when the language is considered being foreign in semesters of lack of environment to actually use the language in learners’ daily life, how to incorporate culture into the language classroom has been a hot research topic (Kramsch, 1993, 2013; Byram & Kramsch, 2008; Freedman, 2014). A prevalent practice in curriculum design nowadays is to have separate courses on language, literature,

history, and culture, with language courses concentrating on linguistic structures and communicative functions (Kramsch, 2008). The perception that only language should be taught in a language class is also popular among foreign language learners. Mangan, Murphy, and Sahakyan's (2014) survey among college-level foreign language learners in the U.S. shows that direct communication (especially oral interaction) with speakers of the target language is the predominant goal of learning a foreign language among the students in their first two years of foreign language study. They also report that no student thinks that culture should be the main concern of language learning. Similarly, Li and Zhu's (2014) interview with learners of Mandarin as a foreign language in the UK shows that some students prefer to concentrate the classroom time on learning basic language skills and leave the matter of culture to self-study by reading books or going to China to have a "more authentic" (p. 333) feeling about Chinese culture.

There is no doubt that the primary purpose of using a language is to communicate with others. However, we also need to acknowledge that language is not simply a set of linguistic symbols and forms. Rather, it contains meanings in its linguistic forms. For example, for someone who is brought up in Calgary, Canada, the word "Christmas" would most likely remind him/her of snow, whiteness, Christmas tree decorated with colorful lights, balls, and stars, beautifully packed gifts, and peaceful family get-together, while for someone who is brought up in Shanghai, China, the same word would probably just mean another great shopping day for discounted merchandise and lots of parties with friends. We need to realize that language is part of our life and that it survives and thrives in specific social and cultural contexts. To learn a language without understanding of the meanings behind its forms is partial and incomplete.

In the case of MAL, we all know that China has had thousands of years of culture and history. As a result, the Chinese language has evolved throughout the history and been deeply interwoven with all aspects of Chinese people's life and history. Many Chinese characters contain cultural meanings in their formation as well as the terms they form. For example, a simple character like 火 ("huǒ", meaning fire), was originally written as . It is an image of flame. Later, it was written as  which was quite similar to the current form of 火. Demonstration of the original form of 火 and its evolvement is what we call etymology. In many cases, if time in class allows, explaining the etymology of such characters could help learners understand the meaning of the characters, why they are written in such a way and thus remember them better than simply copying the characters stroke by stroke.

Moreover, there are connections that can be made from one character to another. For example, there are compound characters employing 火 as either semantic component or phonetic component, such as 伙 (huǒ), 烟 (yān), 炎 (yán), 焰 (yàn), 热 (rè), 烹 (pēng), 煮 (zhǔ). For the last three characters, 火 is changed into four dots at the bottom of the characters as the radical form of 火. When 火 is used as a semantic components, all the characters have meanings related to fire or feelings about fire. For example, 烟 means "smoke"; 炎 means "extremely hot" as it has two flames; 焰 means "blaze"; 热 means "hot"; 烹 means "to cook", and 煮 means "to boil". The last two characters 烹 and 煮 have the four dots below to indicate that traditionally all food was cooked on top of a fire. When MAL students have learned certain amount of characters, making connections in this way could help them remember the characters more effectively.

Besides, individual characters form different words, and these words also contain cultural meanings. For example, Chinese people like red (红, hóng) because it is the color of flames. In ancient times, fire was important to the survival of human beings, so even today, there are still words formed by 红 (hóng) or 火 (huǒ) that indicate happiness or prosperity. For instance, when a baby is born, the family would give 红蛋 (hóngdàn, meaning “red eggs” which are boiled eggs with shells dyed red) to their neighbours and friends to share the happiness. When a new store is open, people would wish the owner’s business 红火 (hónghuǒ, literally meaning “red fire” which implies “being prosperous”). During Chinese Spring Festival, adults would give children 红包 (hóngbāo). 红包 is a red paper bag with a small amount of money inside as 压岁钱 (yāsuìqián), luck money that is thought to drive away evil spirits and bring peace and luck to the children. In recent years, 红包 develops a new meaning of “bribery money” because money that is used as bribery is usually put in a bag, although it may not necessarily be red. In a MAL class, explaining the cultural meanings behind the words could help students understand the words and make learning more interesting.

This example indicates that it is not enough to treat Chinese language as a separate, self-contained linguistic system in MAL education. However, it is impossible and not necessary to teach all the cultural aspects of a character in one lesson. Thus, it is worth exploring to what extent and in which ways can the cultural content be integrated into the Mandarin language teaching curriculum. That is why part of this research is devoted to observing cultural content in the MAL class and eliciting what the students and instructors suggest about the role of culture in learning Mandarin.

3.5 A Philosophical Hermeneutic Approach to Interpretive Research

The final section of this chapter will discuss briefly the impacts of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics on this research. As Gadamer (1989) claimed, his philosophical hermeneutics was an attempt to "understand what the human sciences truly are, beyond their methodological self-consciousness, and what connects them with the totality of our experience of world" (p. xxii). What Gadamer tried to answer in his philosophical thinking was the fundamental question of "how is understanding possible" (p. xxvii) for our life and experience in the world as a whole. It is a matter of how to tune our mind in such a way that we can use our resources—knowledge, experience, methods and other tools—appropriately to interpret the world around us and reach an understanding. As an interpretive research, the following principles from Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics support the research process and the data analysis.

3.5.1 Truth as an on-going and participated event

Gadamer (1989) viewed the truth in human world as a deep and rich sense of hermeneutic truth which cannot be verified by any scientific method or be reduced to a set of rules, but is nonetheless philosophically legitimate. The hermeneutic truth has two distinct features. The first is that it is an on-going event, and the second is that it is a participated event. Truth as an on-going event, or a happening, indicates that it is something that already happened, is still happening, and will continue to move on. In other words, the hermeneutic truth is something larger than and beyond ourselves. It exists no matter whether we realize it or not. Its power does not diminish upon our recognition of it; nor can we ever grasp it in full and put it under our control. In our attempt to understand the human world, we are actually "drawn into an event of truth and

arrive, as it were, too late, if we want to know what we are supposed to believe” (Gadamer, 1989, p. 484). Take teaching for example. Teaching as an educational practice has thousands of years of history, yet the truth about teaching has never been exhausted or fully grasped by human beings. When new teachers enter the classroom for the first time, they start a new career in life. However, this also means that they join in the event of teaching that has already had thousands of years of history. They would need to make meanings of teaching from what happened in the field, and contribute to new meanings in teaching through their own practice.

Hermeneutic truth is also a participated event because it emphasizes the active involvement of human beings in obtaining understandings on the human world. Opposite to modern scientific way of obtaining truth in a distanced and disengaged manner, hermeneutic truth requires human beings’ full engagement from the very beginning. As Gadamer (1989) contested, “Understanding begins...when something addresses us” (p. 298). Being addressed means that something catches us off guard, demands full attention from us, and makes us pause and listen to what it says. It brings to our attention things that we tend to take for granted, motivates us to look deeper into the meanings behind what we see superficially, and leads us to new understandings through a dialectic procedure of question and answer. The active participation and engagement in an event is a state of being fully absorbed into and led by the course of the event, in which we are drawn away from our subjectivity and discover meanings of truth which is “over and above our wanting and doing” (Gadamer, 1989, p. xxvi).

Gadamer’s claim of truth as hermeneutic understandings of human beings in the real-life world is a strong grounding to interpretive research from the philosophical

perspective. One common critique on interpretive research is that it lacks generalizability and validity as seen from the perspective of natural sciences. However, if we view truth as something that keeps renewing itself and generating new facets of meanings in different contexts, then the criteria of generalizability and validity do not really apply to the interpretive research which seeks to enrich our understanding on the human world in specific contexts. Rather, as researchers doing interpretive research, we should acknowledge the complexity of human activities and remain attentive to the interwoven factors related to a research topic so as to achieve meaningful interpretations on a specific human event.

3.5.2 Experience as the result of participation

In Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, experience refers to something one undergoes, especially an event of meanings that one is drawn to and in which one overcomes their subjectivity (Gadamer, 1989, p. xiii). It is through experience that we discover new perceptions and realize that something is not what we supposed it to be. This is what Gadamer (1989) called "experience of negation" (p. 349). It leads to new knowledge surpassing the old one, as well as a more experienced self with new self-understanding. In this sense, experience has to be acquired through one's direct participation. It cannot be passed down like knowledge from books.

Moreover, an experienced person is not someone who "already knows everything and knows better than anyone else", but "someone who is radically undogmatic; who, because of the many experiences he has had and the knowledge he has drawn from them, is particularly well equipped to have new experiences and to learn from them" (Gadamer, 1989, p. 350). Being experienced thus implies a positive cycle towards future: the more

experienced a person is, the more open he/she is to new experiences and thus the more knowledgeable he/she will become. Like in teaching, an experienced teacher does not know what exactly will happen in his/her next class, but he/she is always ready to handle a new situation based on previous experiences. A successful handling of a new situation in return adds onto his/her experience and makes him/her more experienced.

The concept of experience as participation has direct implication to the learning of MAL, especially in the active participation of the language learners. In other words, language cannot be learned by simply memorizing grammar and vocabulary from books. It must be learned from MAL learners' active participation in all kinds of learning activities because these activities provide them with "experience of negation". It is through practice that the MAL learners discover what they do not know or misunderstood and then make study plans based on this. Moreover, the more practice the MAL learners have, the more experienced they will become in identifying their strengths and weakness and developing appropriate strategies to overcome the difficulties in the learning process.

3.5.3 Hermeneutic situatedness and fusion of horizon

Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics emphasizes that every human being is socially, culturally, and historically situated. We must be aware that whatever we think, we always think in a way that is already conditioned by our historicity. The belief that we can achieve absolute objectivity in historical thinking through methodical procedure is nothing but the "naivete of so-called historicism" (Gadamer, 1989, p. 299) because nobody can escape the predetermining effects of his historically situatedness. However, our historical conditionedness does not limit the freedom of knowledge. On the contrary, it provides the standpoint from which we can see and expand our understanding.

The standpoint from which we understand is our horizon—“the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point” (Gadamer, 1989, p. 301). The social, cultural, and historical backgrounds that we are embedded in provide us with the horizon from which we understand the world and ourselves. We are able to see and understand things because we have a horizon composed of our fore-perceptions. In the meantime, horizon also means that there is a limit to what we can possibly envision. If horizons are understood as being fixed, closed, and separately existing by themselves, we are then entrapped in our own horizons.

Gadamer contended that horizons are open and dynamic. He maintained that our horizon keeps moving, changing, and expanding as we acquire more knowledge and become more experienced. “The horizon is...something into which we move and that moves with us. Horizons change for a person who is moving. Thus the horizon of the past...which exists in the form of tradition, is always in motion” (Gadamer, 1989, p. 303). Our horizon is always in the process of being formed because we keep encountering other horizons. Through the confrontation of the unfamiliar, our fore-perceptions are put under test and new understandings and insights are achieved. Thus “*understanding is always the fusion of these horizons*” (Gadamer, 1989, p. 305, emphasis in origin).

The concept of fusion of horizon provides a new perspective in examining MAL learners’ language learning experience. Learning a new language is like to bring one’s current horizon into contact with a new and different horizon of the foreign language. As a result, learning a new language is not a simple addition to one’s mother tongue. Rather, new meanings and new understandings arise from the encounter of the world of one’s

mother tongue and the world the new language brings. Aoki (2004) calls this “a point of contact” (p. 242) where the new world speaks into our home world through its linguistic text and strikes us as something new, different, but at the same time familiar. We enter into a conversation between the two worlds in which “we overcome the prejudices and limitations of our previous experience of the world...Like travellers we return home with new experiences” (Gadamer, 1989, p. 445).

3.5.4 Good teaching practice begins with good understandings

Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics defends truth and validity of the humanities and social sciences by emphasizing that the central concern of the humanities and social sciences is the whole human heritage that has been and will continue to be handed down from generation to generation. Truth in the humanities and social sciences, grounded on the very reality of finite and limit individuals against the timeless, all-embracing, and continuous flow of human tradition, begins with the acknowledgement that what we can see and understand is always partial, incomplete, and open for challenges and amendments. According to Gadamer, it is nothing but illusion that we can grasp truth in its full and final state because truth is always on its way to truth. All that we can do is to participate in what is already at play, obtain understandings, and contribute to the meanings of humans being in the world. In other words, to participate and to obtain understandings are the prerequisites of making contributions to a field in human sciences.

Wendell Berry, a great writer and environmental activist, when asked in an interview (October, 2013) what people could do with the serious environmental damage caused by irresponsible exploitation of the natural resources, replied that the proper way to face the big problems is not to “impose” big answers by saying that “this is what I

want and this is what I expect from you”. Instead, using the example of doing his own farming, he illustrates the importance of patience—taking time to listen to the land and understand “what it is that you are asking of me”, and then doing the right thing accordingly. He further points out that as individuals, we should not expect a quick and once-for-all solution to the problem. Berry tells us:

[T]o learn everything you can about that place to make common cause with that place and then resigning yourself, becoming patient enough to work with it over a long time. And then what you do is *increase the possibility that you will make a good example and what we’re looking for in this is good examples*. (Moyers & Company, 2013, Full Show: Wendell Berry, Poet & Prophet, emphasis added)

What Berry says about ecological farming bears the same truth for second language education. To ask “what it is that you are asking of me” rather than to impose what we assume to be the right thing to do is the very spirit of a true dialogue—being humble, open, and ready to listen, aiming for a true understanding about the situation we are in. In teaching Mandarin as an additional language, we need, on one hand, to bear in mind how Chinese has been taught as a native language as well as the five thousand years of Chinese history and culture in which the Chinese language is rooted; and on the other hand, be aware of the specific context of teaching Mandarin in Canadian language classrooms. We need to begin with a good understanding of the teaching and learning environment we are situated in.

CHAPTER 4: UNDERSTAND ENGAGEMENT FROM THE LEARNERS’ PERSPECTIVE

In this chapter, I present findings related to student participants’ overall experience in learning Mandarin as an additional language, based on questions discussed during the focus group conversations and one-on-one interviews such as why and when they started to learn Mandarin, where they learned Mandarin, how they have enjoyed learning Mandarin, and what were their future plans for learning and using Mandarin. Since the findings reveal significant differences between the responses from the heritage and non-heritage learners, I will discuss each group in a separate section below.

4.1 Chinese Heritage Language Learners

As explained in chapter one, Chinese heritage learners refer to students who have Chinese family background and may or may not speak a Chinese language. In this research, there were 5 heritage students in the focus group conversations and 2 in the one-on-one interviews. Of the 5 heritage students in the focus groups, 3 were from the class of Level 1 Part 1 and 2 from the class of Level 1 Part 2. All heritage student participants were female, and they could speak one or another variety of Chinese languages such as Cantonese, Teochew, and Wuhan dialect. In addition, four of them were born in Canada; two were born in China and came to Canada at the age of three and five respectively; and one was born in Malaysia and came to Canada at the age of seven.

4.1.1 Family influence

Family influence is a distinct feature among heritage learners. It plays an important role in heritage student participants’ learning of Mandarin in several aspects. For these students, growing up in a Chinese family means that Chinese language and

Chinese culture have always been part of their life. For example, 5 participants mentioned that their parents sent them to weekend Chinese schools to learn Mandarin, although they did not really enjoy the learning experiences and the learning result was not satisfactory. The other two participants did not go to weekend Chinese schools because they grew up in small towns that had no such schools available. Moreover, some participants mentioned that although they may speak English with their siblings at home, the family language remained to be Chinese because their parents spoke only Chinese with them. As Jenny said, “My parents yelled at us because we spoke English at the dinner table...They just want us to speak Cantonese. They speak Cantonese with us all the time.”

When the parents tried hard to keep the Chinese language at home, it is understandable that they would also keep Chinese traditions, and their way of thinking would also impact the children. Amy described her family as below:

I think our life style is pretty Chinese. I really appreciate my parents because my Mom she always cooks the dishes herself. We don't usually eat at English restaurants, and we always celebrate those occasions together such as the Spring Festival and the Moon Festival. ...They do try to preserve our Asian culture. They use Chinese calendar. We have never been back to China, but they always teach us about China's history...They are like you don't know how to be thankful for what you have. They always talk about when they were at university, how they had only congee. It is always hard to grasp. I am thankful for everything they have

done. I really want to expose myself to that kind of situation...I look forward to going back to China as a family.

Chinese calendar is a lunisolar calendar which indicates dates for Chinese traditional festivals and events. We can see from Amy's words how her parents' way of keeping Chinese traditions at home and their remarks about their life back in China made her appreciative of her parents and the life she has in Canada. This is also a key reason why she took the Chinese language courses.

The second aspect of family influence comes from the student participants' desire to strengthen the family relationship by communicating with other family members in Mandarin. For example, Katie told me that her mother spoke Mandarin and liked watching TV shows in Mandarin. However, she knew only Cantonese, and she learned it mainly by watching TV. She did not know how to read or write, and she had never learned Mandarin before the Chinese language courses. One of the reasons for her to learn Mandarin was to have another language to communicate with and understand her mother better because she thought that she and her mother had "some cultural difference at home". It was her hope that she could understand the Mandarin TV shows that her mother watched so that they could watch them together, discuss the contents, and share their feelings. Similarly, another participant, Jessica, explained how she was worried that she might lose connection with her relatives back in China because she could not speak Mandarin:

I guess I am older now, my parents are older. I haven't seen my family in China for many years, and I really lose touch with them. I don't speak the

language. I don't read or write the language...Some of my cousins can speak a bit English, but then with my other family members, the older relatives, there is a huge language barrier. Now I am older, I start to think it more important to maintain that with family back home.

The last aspect is the support of the parents to the learning of Mandarin. Although the heritage students themselves were limited in their Mandarin language proficiency and their knowledge about the Chinese culture, some of the parents had Mandarin as the first language and were home to Chinese culture. They were great resources for the heritage students. For example, Jenny said that her best resources were her parents because she could practice Mandarin with them at home. Her mother would explain the meaning of the Chinese words and correct her pronunciation and grammatical mistakes. She also talked about how the whole family drove for more than 3 hours to cheer for her in a provincial Chinese speech contest. Learning Chinese was not just her own business, but involved the whole family. Another participant, Daisy, recalled how happy she was when her father praised her for the progress she made in Mandarin:

I actually moved to many different Chinese weekend schools... The kids weren't learning there. They didn't care. Back then and I'm learning now, it's a huge difference. Before I came into this class, I was like, can I really do this? Is it really that possible? I don't think I can even get the tones right. I don't think I can remember everything or character. It turned out I can remember most of them now. I learned so much and my Dad praises me for it. I was very happy.

4.1.2 *Career development*

China's rise in the economic and political power at the international stage has attracted people all over the world to learn Mandarin. In Canada, the increasing number of immigrants from Mainland China has also created more positions that favor applicants who can communicate in Mandarin. In this research, career development is a recurring reason why the heritage student participants chose to learn Mandarin. Because of their relatively close relationship to the Chinese language and culture, the heritage students tended to see more clearly the career prospects associated with the ability to communicate in Mandarin. For example, Amy talked about how her elder sister got a job in a lawyer's office because she could speak Mandarin:

I think being able to speak Mandarin will be an asset in finding a job, especially like big cities such as Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary. Even just knowing a few words, it helps you attract many people and can help you like network. My older sister works at a lawyers' office in Edmonton. Her Mandarin is ok because she was born in China and then she came here. Even her lawyers, they speak Cantonese, they don't know Mandarin. They saw her resume. You speak Mandarin, like we want to work with these people, but there is a language barrier.

As explained earlier, Cantonese and Mandarin are two distinct varieties of Chinese languages, especially in spoken forms. That is why Amy's sister got the job at a lawyers' office where the lawyers spoke Cantonese but were not able to communicate in Mandarin. The fact that Amy's sister could speak not only Cantonese, but also Mandarin gave her the competitive edge to get the position.

Other heritage student participants expressed similar opinions towards learning Mandarin. Daisy believed that being able to speak the language would not only help with building network with people, but also impress people because it was not easy to learn a second language:

I think like because China is becoming more prominent, more people are coming over, it's good to have that language. Sometimes there are businesses and if you know how to speak Chinese, you get some connections too. ...I just think actually just to have a second language, being bilingual is really good for future because when they look at your resume, they see that you speak another language, it takes a lot of work and effort and it's about talent too, people like that.

Another participant, Katie, talked about her experience of working in retail. She noticed more and more people came to the store and asked her in Mandarin if she was Chinese or if she spoke Chinese. Before she took the Mandarin courses, she had to say that she spoke only Cantonese, but now she started to pick up some words in Mandarin like the numbers and could manage to have some basic conversations with the customers. She commented, "It's very useful for me, especially since I look like Chinese. I know people would come up to me and ask me."

For most of the heritage student participants, their career development plan was to find employment within Canada. Thus, they did not aim at full proficiency in Mandarin because they thought it would still be an advantage for them if they could just have a "half decent" mastery of the language:

I've done some counselling here for students. I often see job postings through organizations looking for Mandarin speakers and it'll be posted quite often and repeatedly, so I guess even if I'm not fully proficient, I might just be like sort of the only half decent Mandarin speaker which they might take over someone who doesn't speak Mandarin. (Jessica)

Another role that the Mandarin language courses played in heritage students' career development was related to the credits or points they contributed to the students' overall Grade Point Average (GPA). Under the current educational system, GPA plays a decisive role in many aspects including scholarships, awards, and the majors that students can choose. In the case of Mandarin language courses, some heritage students chose to take the courses partly because they thought it would be easier for them to get high marks at these courses because they already had some background knowledge about the Chinese language. As Katie explained to me, "I try to transfer to nursing. It needs really high GPA. So I just think this one might be something I'm interested in while help me with doing well."

Katie thought that taking the Mandarin language courses combined her interest in the language and her purpose of achieving a high GPA for the nursing program, which was quite understandable. However, since the program placed heritage students like Katie at the beginner's level with other non-heritage students, there had always been the issue of fairness as it was unavoidable to have heritage students who took the courses just for easy credits. I will discuss more about the placement in the next chapter.

4.1.3 "I am Chinese. I have no excuse for not knowing Mandarin."

Some heritage student participants like Jenny, Amy, Katie, and Daisy had never been to China, but they all identified themselves as being Chinese because they looked Chinese physically and had Chinese cultural influence from home and Chinese communities. However, in the case of learning Mandarin, some of them felt the pressure of looking like Chinese but not speaking Mandarin fluently. Like what Daisy said, “I think because I don’t look like I’m foreign, like people say you should learn this already. You should know this already. I don’t really have the excuse to say that I don’t know Chinese.” Similarly, Jenny expressed her fear of speaking in front of native Mandarin speakers because she was afraid of saying something wrong and being judged from a native Mandarin speaker’s perspective:

The fact that I’m Chinese. If they do hear something and I like, say it wrong and it does mean something bad, and they are like, oh, she’s Chinese, she probably meant it. I don’t have the appearance of a foreigner. It’s less lenient if I say something wrong. It is what I am scared of.

This self-consciousness of being Chinese but not proficient in Mandarin added pressure to some heritage student participants when they attempted to speak Mandarin with native speakers outside their family. For example, Amy admitted that she felt nervous speaking Mandarin in front of people other than her parents because she was very afraid of saying something wrong, even making small mistakes like wrong tones. For her, this pressure was a barrier between her and the Chinese culture:

Like my dad said, oh, so many patients at the clinic, you can practice your Mandarin with them. It’s just so embarrassing. I say “thank you” or “bye”

something like that, and because I was so nervous that even those two words are off. ...Getting over that barrier will really help, like embracing Chinese culture.

In addition, although heritage learners may identify themselves as being Chinese, their understanding of “being Chinese” can be quite different from that of the Chinese who grow up in China and speak Mandarin as the first language. When we interpret their Chineseness, we must take into consideration the sociocultural environment they grow up such as their Canadian education, their value systems and world views informed by their education and upbringing, and also the fact that English is their dominant language of communication. Amy’s experience with her aunt from China serves as a good illustration:

A few months ago, my mother’s old sister came here. She lives in China. Her manner and even like the volume of her voice, the speed of her talking is completely different. She talks super fast, and kind of quiet. I noticed she’s like thank-you wasn’t really a thing. It’s just so natural to hear that here, thank you for this, thank you for that. It was a pretty big thing for me. It’s kind of hard to get pass that. I wasn’t used to it. Sometimes it’s just like being appreciated. It’s such an unconscious thing. Usually it just happens. I don’t really expect it, but when it doesn’t come around, it’s like something kind of off. It’s just something I never really thought about...I just feel that Chinese is fast paced and get straight to the point....It takes time for me to accept it. What people think if you keep saying thank you, thank you in China.

Growing up in Canada, Amy was used to people saying “thank you” all the time, even at home. However, when her aunt came to visit her family from China, she noticed that her aunt did not say “thank you” to her and other family members. The absence of “thank you” on her aunt’s part made her realize the cultural difference that she had never thought before, and she started to wonder what it meant to be polite in Chinese culture. What we can see from Amy’s example is that in spite of their Chinese physical appearance and the fact that they may have easier access to Chinese language and culture than non-heritage students, heritage students still face many challenges and conflicts in the learning of Mandarin and Chinese culture because the Canadian social and cultural influence has been deeply rooted in their way of thinking. The way they approach Mandarin and Chinese culture is based on their past knowledge and experiences, so is their Chineseness.

What’s more, even among the heritage students, the meaning of learning Mandarin and being Chinese varies, depending on individual student’s own life experience. One of the heritage student participants, Mona, was different from the other participants in that she was not an undergraduate student studying for a degree. She was in her 40s, a housewife, and she took only the Chinese language courses for her personal interest. Mona was born in Malaysia, grew up in Canada, and had a Caucasian husband. She spoke English, Cantonese, and Malaysian. When her husband was relocated to work in Shenzhen, China several years ago, she went with him and lived in Shenzhen for two years. During that time, she had a Mandarin tutor and made great progress in the language. Obviously, Mona enjoyed learning Mandarin and found it helpful when communicating with her Taiwanese friends at church in Canada. However, when asked

what kinds of friends she had when she lived in China, she said that most of her friends were foreigners and that even when she had Chinese friends, they were all Chinese with overseas experiences. Although she kept saying that Chinese were nice and that she loved them, she admitted that she could not make friends with local Chinese who did not speak English and had no experience with the western culture. For her, it is much easier to make friends with westerners or people with western experiences. When asked how she identified herself, Mona used the word “mix” to describe her situation:

很多人对我说，你长得中国人，可是你不会说中文，为什么？我告诉他们我在加拿大长大，我从马来西亚来的，originally，所以我们自己的 culture 很 mixed，马来西亚的 culture 很 mixed。我的父母他们都不会说标准的中文，很复杂，很复杂的问题。。。我的 appearance 是中国人，里面，我的心里，不知道，I struggle。。。I am lost。。。我是 East and West, 东和西，mix。。。50%50%, Western and Chinese...This is the most I identify with, mix.

(Many people said to me, you look like Chinese, but you cannot speak Chinese, why? I told them I grew up in Canada. Originally, I came from Malaysia, so our own culture is very mixed. Malaysia's culture is very mixed. My parents cannot speak standard Chinese, a very complex, very complex question...My appearance is Chinese, inside, in my heart, I don't know. I struggle...I am lost...I am East and West, East and West, mix...50%50%, Western and Chinese...This is the most I identify with, mix.)

Mona identified herself with the status of being mixed in languages, cultures, and ways of thinking. I asked her if she felt she was Chinese when she lived in Shenzhen, and she answered, “No. 我觉得华人。” (No, I felt like overseas Chinese.). The term “overseas Chinese” itself indicates a mixture: while acknowledging the Chinese heritage of both the physical appearance and cultural upbringing, it also emphasizes the change of place from China to another country and thus the change of sociocultural backgrounds.

4.2 Non-Chinese Heritage Language Learners

Altogether 8 non-heritage learners participated in the focus group conversations and one-on-one interviews, with 7 in the focus group conversations and 1 in the one-on-one interview. Four participants were from the class of Level 1 Part 1, and they were all in the focus group conversations. The other four participants were from the class of Level 1 Part 2, with 3 in the focus group conversations and 1 in the one-on-one interview. Of the 8 participants, 6 were male and 2 were female.

4.2.1 Family influence

Unlike the heritage students, family influence is not a key factor in the non-heritage students' learning of Mandarin. This is understandable because the term “non-heritage” already implies that these students do not have Chinese-speaking parents or Chinese cultural influence in the family. The only participant who mentioned family influence was Andy, and the influence was on his general perception of learning a second language rather than specifically on the learning of Mandarin. Andy moved to Netherland with his family for 9 months when he was 13. He attended a local international school there and was required to learn Dutch as well as one of French, Spanish or German. He was

surprised to see that in Europe “almost everyone was like multilingual”. This experience opened his eyes as he realized that “the whole world doesn’t speak English”. He said,

Before that just being in Canada, I was like oh, yeah, English will get me by. Who cares. And after that I realized there is a little bit more out there. It’s kind of almost naïve to not try to learn another language.

The fact that English is the dominant world language very often makes its native speakers rely too much on it and have no incentive to learn other languages. As Crystal (2003) points out, having a global language like English would make mother-tongue English speakers lazy about learning other languages because they tend to assume that everyone in the world speaks English and thus lack the motivation to learn other languages. In Andy’s case, because he had the opportunity to live in Netherland and witnessed how people in a non-English speaking country were bilinguals or multilinguals, he realized the narrow-mindedness in the English-only perception and started to appreciate other languages. As a matter of fact, he turned out to be very good at learning languages. He not only took Chinese language courses, but was also learning Japanese and Spanish when he participated in the focus group conversations in this research.

4.2.2 Sense of achievement from learning Mandarin and the attraction of Chinese culture

When talking about why they took the Mandarin language courses and how they liked learning Mandarin, several non-heritage student participants mentioned the challenge of the language and the attraction of Chinese culture. One interesting finding among non-heritage student participants was that because Mandarin was considered a

very difficult language to learn, they took pleasure in every small progress they made during the learning of the language. Actually, these small progresses became their incentive to continue to learn Mandarin, as we can see from the quotes below:

I get so excited if I can read just one post in the blog. It's a long paragraph and I can read like three characters and I am so glad about myself. It's quite exciting if I can read a character. (Laura)

I mean not many people here who don't have a Chinese background learn Chinese. Our history professor said we are brainwashed to think that it's impossible to learn Chinese. Here you see someone who's not Chinese learning Chinese, you go wow, you must be amazing! So that feels good. You feel you are doing something special and difficult. (Andy)

When I came to university, that is the first time I study Chinese and Japanese, so something like the writing system, it is really hard, pronunciation. I feel like it's not boring. It's really something I want to do, want to learn perfectly, that I probably won't be. Yeah, it's really like an achievement. (Fanny)

The popular notion that Chinese is one of the most difficult languages to learn, especially for western learners, actually enhanced the sense of achievement and success among the participants as they felt that they were doing something really challenging and that they made it happen. Another participant, Jason, started his learning of Mandarin in Taiwan. He described how the fact that he spent a whole day without saying any English led to his long-term engagement with learning Mandarin:

It's not easy to learn another language. It's even more difficult to learn a language that is so different from your native form. You have the tones, the writing, and more. You have to change how you wire your brain, how you think. Every step you make when you can order dumplings or whatever, you are like, yes, I did it. That was awesome! Like my story about buying a movie ticket, after talking to my friend and she said that, the whole next day I was so happy because I bought a movie ticket, I talked to some kids, it's silly to think about, like if I told that story to anyone who wasn't studying Chinese, it's like who cares? It's such a dumb day. But for me it was a big deal and that was probably my first real stepping stone into, ok, I'm going to continue studying Chinese seriously. I really want to do it. I'll make this happen.

Besides the language factor, the Chinese culture is also an attraction to some non-heritage student participants. Tom was a participant from the Department of Music. He took Mandarin because he played erhu, a traditional Chinese musical instrument. As a matter of fact, erhu was one of the two main instruments he majored in. Another participant, John, took part in the one-on-one interview because he was a quiet person and did not like to talk to people he was not familiar with. However, he said that he really enjoyed learning Mandarin, especially writing and recognizing characters. He was fascinated about the meanings behind the radicals and characters. He gave the example of the Chinese character 家 (jiā, meaning "home"), saying that it was his favorite character. He explained, "it's roof and pig...I really like the way the radical for pig looks...I don't know why." The character 家 is made up of two parts, the radical "宀" which stands for

the roof of a house and the pictographic part of “豕” which refers to a pig, originally written as “豕” . What John found interesting in learning Mandarin was the esthetic beauty and cultural meanings behind the characters.

4.2.3 Career development

Both the heritage and non-heritage student participants believed that Mandarin would be an asset in their future career development. Some non-heritage students expressed clear intentions on their future career development. For example, Tom mentioned that he wanted to further his study at a university in China concentrating on Chinese musical instruments and that he hoped to teach non-Chinese erhu enthusiasts in Canada. Fanny would have 6 languages when she graduated, and she made it her goal to work and to live in Asia:

Because I want to work in Asia, I want to live in Asia. Like what I'm hoping is to find some government or company job so that I can use, cause when I graduate, I will have 6 languages, so I hope I will be able to use them. When learning a language, you can do translation, you can work in a company that deals with another country.

Other participants did not know for sure how they wanted to use the language, but they did see the potential that proficiency in Mandarin could bring for their future development. For instance, Andy compared western countries with China in terms of economic growth and claimed the possibility of Chinese taking over English as the world dominant language:

I think it's going to be more important in the very near future for people in the West to learn Chinese because China's economy is growing. The US is sort of stopping growing. English wasn't always the world's dominant language, so it makes sense that won't be forever, right? Probably going to be Chinese eventually.

China's economic growth and its increased impact on world economy and politics mean that there would be more demand on people who can communicate in Mandarin in the labor market, like what Jamal said:

Yeah, you always hear stories about that. Oh, this person learned Chinese. They were just buying a Subway sandwich and they got hired by this dynamic company, now they are the CEO, just because they learned Chinese! You always hear stories like that. You like, wow, maybe that could happen to me.

In addition, participants found inspiration from people they knew that had benefited from learning Mandarin. Sometimes the Chinese program would invite former students who used Mandarin in their work. In one of the focus group conversations, the participants told me about a guest speaker in an event organized by the Chinese program. This guest had been a former non-heritage student in the Chinese language program, and he was then the vice-principal of a local public high school. He was invited to give a talk to current students in the program about his experience of learning and using Mandarin. One thing that impressed the participants was how his proficiency in Mandarin enabled him to get a teaching position and then helped him get promotion at work. Jason said:

因为他是老师，在这里，老师很多，很难找老师的工作。他有面试，面试的 lady 问他 blabla，啊，你会说中文吗？ok, 给他...他是美国人，每一次有特别的工作，他说我会说中文，promoted, promoted, 很有意思。

(Because he's a teacher, here we have many teachers. It's difficult to find a teaching job. He had an interview, and the lady in the interview asked him blabla, ah, can you speak Chinese? Ok, give it to him...He's American. Every time when there was a special job, he would say I could speak Chinese. Promoted. Promoted. It's very interesting.)

Another example cited by the participants was Dashan (大山), a Canadian who has been the most famous western Caucasian in China's media industry for more than 20 years. Dashan's English name is Mark Rowswell, but in China, people know him by his Chinese name Dashan. Although few people in Canada know about Dashan, he has enjoyed nation-wide popularity in China because of his performance in skit, crosstalk, and various TV programs he hosts, all in Mandarin. In recent years, he has been working actively as a cultural ambassador between China and the West and has been playing a key role in international events such as the Shanghai 2010 World Expo and Canadian Prime Minister's official visit to China in 2012. Some of his programs can be found on Youtube. That's how the participants knew about him. For example, Andy once shared a joke from Dashan about learning Mandarin:

What you mean the Chinese education system isn't very encouraging.

Chinese people are very encouraging. You just say 你好 (nǐhǎo, meaning 'hello'), and they'll say oh, your Chinese is so good!

For the non-heritage student participants, successful stories like the vice-principle and Dashan portray a positive message about learning Mandarin, like what Andy said about Dashan:

I enjoy watching his programs. What I see from him is that it is absolutely possible for westerners to learn Mandarin well, although I may not necessarily want to do the same things as he does.”

4.2.4 *“I will always be a Canadian, although I want to become maybe more Chinese.”*

Of the 8 non-heritage student participants, 3 of them had the experience of learning Mandarin in Taiwan or Mainland China. Jason lived in Taiwan for one year and took his first Mandarin course there. He studied Mandarin for 5 months in Taiwan. Tom got the scholarship to study Mandarin at a university in Taiwan for 2 months, and right after that, he attended an exchange program and studied Mandarin at a university in Beijing for 4 months. Fanny studied Mandarin at a university in Beijing for 1 month. These three participants happened to be in the same focus group, so I was able to hear them share their learning experiences in Taiwan or Beijing and learn more about how they viewed the Chinese people and the Chinese culture in relation to their own learning experiences and their own cultural identity.

The Chinese programs they attended in Mainland China or Taiwan varied greatly in terms of the cultural content. For example, Jason said that the program he took in

Taiwan had cultural trips once a month. He was able to visit different parts of Taiwan, talk to local people, and experience some unique cultural activities such as making special paper umbrellas. For Tom, most of his time in Taiwan and Beijing was spent on campus, learning Mandarin in class. There were no cultural trips arranged by the programs, although he did visit some interesting places with his classmates. Similarly, Fanny mentioned that she did not have many chances to get in touch with the local people or the Chinese students of the university when she was in Beijing. However, because the program was arranged in small classes of 6 students, she got more practice opportunities in class and had closer relationship with her classmates and her teachers. Sometimes they would go out to eat or go shopping together. These were the occasions when she got a glimpse of local people's life.

When talking about cultural differences or cultural shock, the participants noticed different things. Sometimes they felt strange or uncomfortable with certain behaviors, but overall, they were able to accept them with an open mind. Moreover, the cultural influence they felt varied depending on their personality, their interests, and their past experiences. For example, Fanny mentioned small things like putting the tray back in fast food restaurants, holding doors for people, or saying "thank you" in various occasions:

Small things like 在快（快餐店）like KFC, McDonald, 他们给你一个 tray, 可是中国人不拿 like take them away, 中国人他们看见我, why is she doing that, 所以我的朋友说, 不能, 不能, 可是我不舒服, 我想（放回去）, 所以我说谢谢很多, 他们 didn't do that. 所有, 啊, holding the door open. I always always, you can stand there for 20

minutes, and people just come come, no 谢谢 or anything. It's ok, it's culture, but I just wasn't used to it. 在商店我买了东西，所以他们给我 change, 我说谢谢，他们不说， they didn't say anything.

(Small things like in the fast-food restaurants like KFC, McDonald, they gave you a tray, but Chinese people did not take, like take them away. They saw me, why is she doing that, so my friend told me, don't, don't, but I was not comfortable. I want (to put it back). So I said "thank you" a lot, but they didn't do that. All the things, ah, holding the door open. I always, always, you can stand there for 20 minutes, and people just come come, no "thank you" or anything. It's ok, it's culture, but I just wasn't used to it. I bought things in a store, and they gave me the change. I said "thank you". They didn't. They didn't say anything.)

Relating to her past experience of having lived in three different countries, Fanny explained her open attitude towards cultural difference:

I lived in three different countries. I don't really have one specific culture, so I feel like even before learning Mandarin, it was easier to accept different things. Maybe for people who are not well-travelling, learning a new language may open their mind a bit, be more open-minded to different things, especially because Mandarin is so different from everything else. Every day we kind of hear French, Spanish, but Mandarin is a bit hard.

As for Jason, he really enjoyed his stay in Taiwan because he made friends with local people, enjoyed talking with them, and appreciated their friendliness and their attitudes towards life. He said:

Yeah, 我很喜欢台湾文化“没关系”。 It's much less stressful...加拿大人常常 complain, 可是, 我不知道, 也许, 在台湾, 我的朋友常常说, 啊, 为什么, 你常常(complain)? 啊, 真的吗? 我不知道, 我回加拿大, 我知道。 (*Yeah, I really like Taiwanese culture of "that's all right". It's much less stressful... Canadians often complain, but I didn't know, maybe. In Taiwan, my friends often said, ah, why, you often (complain)? Ah, really? I didn't know. I came back to Canada, then I knew.*) When I came back, then I understood. I was like, oh yeah, Canadians complain a lot. Because I was away from it for so long, when I came back, I saw how much people complain every day, I couldn't believe it. I was like, oh, my God, it's unbelievable.

Cultural differences help us notice things that we tend to take for granted and reflect on our own culture. After seeing how people in Taiwan accepted things such as working long hours without much complaint, Jason started to reflect on how often Canadians complain. He also began to appreciate the culture of “没关系” (That's all right.) as a less stressful attitude towards life. We can say that Jason liked Taiwanese culture because he learned positive things from it. However, there was one time when Jason did feel uncomfortable about cultural conflict:

Once, 我坐船的时候, 有一个家, 一个 family, 那个爸爸很凶, 可是我不知道, 在加拿大, 爸爸打 (小孩), 不好, 不可以, 可是在台湾, 我不知道, 所以我看他打他的女孩, 不舒服, 我要 (去说), 可是我的朋友 (不让), 因为我很大, 所以很多人常常觉得我很凶。The only time, I never had the other problems. Just that once.

(Once, when I was taking a boat, there was a family. The father was very fierce, but I didn't know. In Canada, father beats kids, not good, not allowed, but in Taiwan, I didn't know, so I saw him beat his daughter, I felt uncomfortable. I was going to (talk to him), but my friends would not (let me), because I was big, so many people often felt I was fierce. The only time, I never had the other problems. Just that once.)

Tom's reaction to cultural difference was different. He described himself as an introverted type of person. Most of the time, he concentrated on his own study. He commented a lot about the different teaching methods he experienced in Taiwan and Beijing, but his cultural interest was mainly around Chinese traditional musical instruments, especially erhu. When asked about cultural shock, he said:

When I went over to Taiwan or China, I did not experience cultural shock. I don't see it as some exotic place, just same kind of world, but just different ways of speaking.

Unlike heritage learners who felt more or less bound to the Chinese culture, non-heritage students' attitude towards the Chinese culture tends to vary. The extent to which they embrace the Chinese culture while learning Mandarin depends on their purposes of

learning the language, their personality, and their past experiences. As mentioned in chapter two, I gave the focus group participants Roma's narrative to read. In the narrative, Roma described how local people in China stared at her and called her “老外” (lǎowài, meaning “foreigners”). When asked if they would find it uncomfortable to be called “老外”, most of the participants said they would be ok with that. For them, their prior identity would always be Canadian. Maybe Andy's reply could serve as a typical response of non-heritage students' attitudes towards “being Chineseness”:

I would be ok with being called a foreigner or an outsider whatever cause I do like Canada so much. I do feel a strong attachment to it. Yeah, I'm from Canada. That's home. I don't want to become Chinese. I'll still always be a Canadian. I want to become maybe more Chinese.

For non-heritage students like Andy, Canada is home, and being Canadian is their most important identity. They are not interested in becoming Chinese in the sense of local Chinese in China, and they know they will never be like that. For them, becoming Chinese is more like being a Canadian who can communicate in Mandarin and understand Chinese culture. As Andy explained in one of his email communications with me:

Perhaps the best way to describe it is that I am interested in the culture of China, and the way that China views the world, human beings, life, family, work, time, conflict, education, etc. I want to continue learning about China (modern and ancient) so that I can better understand another

culture, and the way that it sees life. And in learning about the Chinese worldview, perhaps my own worldview will change.

But I also love Canada. Every time I travel to another country I am always so glad to come back home. My family has now been living in Canada for four generations (which is a long time by Canadian standards), and the cultural values and world views of Canadians have profoundly shaped me, in the way that I think about issues and the way that I act. At this point in my life I don't think I will ever lose them, no matter how much I travel, I will always be thinking about things in a Canadian way.

4.3 Understand Student Engagement from the Learners' Perspective

As discussed in chapter two, student engagement has been studied from different approaches such as the behavioral approach, the psychological approach, the sociocultural approach, and the holistic approach. Viewed from a dynamic and complex perspective, the components discussed in different approaches overlap rather than stand separately. For example, student motivation is a key element in student engagement research. Research on motivation has been conducted mainly from a psychological perspective, as is shown in Fredricks et al.'s (2004) construct of student engagement. However, motivation can also be influenced by socio-cultural factors such as students' family and employment opportunities. In what follows, I will discuss the findings from two aspects: learners' motivation and learners' identity.

4.3.1 Learners' motivation in learning MAL

4.3.1.1 Instrumental motivation

The concept of instrumental motivation was proposed by Gardner (1985), which refers to learners' goal of learning a language for functional purposes such as exam grades or employment opportunities. In this research, both the heritage and non-heritage CAL students mentioned that they learned Mandarin for pragmatic purposes. For example, Katie said that she took the Mandarin courses because she wanted to boost her GPA so that she could enter the nursing program. With her Cantonese language background, she thought it would be easier for her to get high marks in the Mandarin courses than in other courses. As for employment opportunities, the majority of the student participants expressed the opinion that having Mandarin language skills would be an asset in their future career development either in Canada or overseas due to China's growing economic and political impacts worldwide. For instance, Jessica noticed job postings in her counselling field which specifically request applicants to be able to communicate in Mandarin. This gave her an immediate incentive to learn Mandarin as she already had some background knowledge of a Chinese language.

The functional purposes can have direct and instant impacts on students' motivation in learning a second language. However, the instrumental motivation tends to wear off once the students achieve their purposes and cease making any effort to learn, especially when the purpose is a short-term one such as obtaining high marks or meeting the requirements of one's major. This is one of the reasons why some students in the Chinese language program take only one or two Mandarin courses and do not continue. As Katie told me in the interview, she would not continue to take the Mandarin courses once she was admitted into the nursing program.

4.3.1.2 Integrative motivation

The second category in Gardner's motivation theory is integrative motivation. Gardner (2005) explains that integration motive does not mean that "one wanted to become a member of the other cultural community, but rather an individual's openness to taking on characteristics of another cultural/linguistic group" (p. 7). He proposed that a person's cultural background, family upbringing and early home experiences affect their openness and attitudes towards other ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groups which then influence their motivation in learning other languages. Individuals who are interested in other cultures and communities tend to be high in integrativeness and thus have high motivation in learning other languages.

In this research, heritage and non-heritage students demonstrated different orientations towards integrative motivation. For heritage students, all the participants somewhat identified themselves with being Chinese. They spoke a Chinese language at home, had Chinese food, and celebrated Chinese traditional festivals. Their parents gave them direct or indirect support in learning Mandarin such as helping them practice Mandarin or praising them for their progress in learning Mandarin. Their integrative motivation is not to discover a new language and a new culture, but rather to explore their identity of being Chinese. As for the non-heritage students, participants like Jason and Andy demonstrated strong integrative motivation and great interest in learning Mandarin. Jason really enjoyed living in Taiwan and found himself attached to the local culture, while Andy found learning Mandarin provided him with another perspective of understanding the world and himself. Both of them benefited from learning Mandarin because they saw the value of Chinese culture and embraced the impacts on their worldviews brought by the learning of Mandarin. As it turns out, both Jason and Andy

have been persistent in learning Mandarin till now. This is consistent with what Masgoret and Gardner (2003) claimed that integrative motivation, in general, is a much stronger predictor of language achievement than instrumental motivation. As for the heritage learners, Comanaru and Noels' (2009) study on learners of Chinese also confirms that heritage learners who felt a connection with the Chinese community tended to be more engaged in the learning process.

4.3.1.3 Intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy

The fact that student participants derived pleasure and enjoyed a sense of achievement from the progress they had made in learning Mandarin indicates that they were also driven by an intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). *Intrinsic motivation* is the motivation that leads a person to pursue an 'activity in the absence of a reward contingency or control' (Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 34), based solely on interest and pleasure in that particular activity. Learners with strong intrinsic motivation tend to pursue the learning process with enthusiasm and creativity. As the findings show, both the heritage and non-heritage students felt a sense of achievement when they were able to read and write some Chinese characters. Actually, because Chinese is considered as one of the most difficult languages to learn for western learners, the very fact that they were learning Mandarin gave these students a feeling of satisfaction because they thought it was a cool thing to take up a challenge that was like a mission impossible in many people's eyes. Accordingly, every small progress they made in learning Mandarin brought joy and a sense of achievement to them, which in turn encouraged them to learn more about Mandarin.

An example of deeper intrinsic motivation can be seen in one of the heritage learners, Jenny. She said:

I am already very passionate about learning Mandarin... It's more of if you want it, you'll find it. Teachers can give you anything, but if you are not interested, you look the other way, obviously it's not going to be in your sight, right. But if you wanna it, you'll have it.

We see in Jenny's words that she took a proactive approach towards learning Mandarin because she had a strong interest in it. The passion and desire to have the language was her driving force to find all possible ways to learn Mandarin well.

Intrinsic motivation can result in a positive cycle in the language learning process. The more satisfaction the learners get from learning Mandarin, the more motivated they will become and the more active they will be in learning Mandarin. Moreover, the sense of achievement will enhance learners' confidence in their ability to accomplish difficult learning tasks. This in turn contributes to long-term engagement with the learning of Mandarin. The belief in one's own competence is learners' self-efficacy. The higher self-efficacy learners have, the more motivated and invested they will be during the learning process. As we see in Jason, that he was able to spend a whole day in Taiwan without speaking any English was such an encouragement for him that he made up his mind to learn Mandarin well because he believed that he could "make it happen".

Learners' self-efficacy can be enhanced by positive role models. Bandura (1997) observed that "seeing or visualising people similar to oneself perform successfully typically raises efficacy beliefs in observers that they themselves possess the capabilities

to master comparable activities” (p. 87). In the findings, there were two role models that served as positive examples for the Mandarin learners: the guest speaker who was the vice-principal of a public school, and Dashan, the famous Canadian TV host in China. Both of them have achieved success in learning Mandarin and have made good use of this competency in their career development. As we can see from the students’ quotes, these two role models’ experience with Mandarin raised their hope for the future and motivated them to pursue similar excellence. The aspiration from positive role models can stimulate an “ideal L2 self” (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 12) in the language learners, a vision about a future self which sustains the long-term engagement in learning Mandarin.

4.3.1.4 Motivation in context and its relationship with student engagement

In theory, motivation can be classified into different categories and discussed separately as what I did above. However, if we examine motivation in individual learners, we will find that motivation becomes a dynamic and complex phenomenon because first of all, learners are usually driven by a variety of motivational factors at the same time, and secondly, the impacts of the motivational factors vary in different learners and contexts. Thus, Ushioda (2009) proposes “a person-in-context relational view of language motivation” which views motivation as being “emergent from relations between real persons, with particular social identities, and the unfolding cultural context of activity” (p. 215).

In this research, most of the student participants were driven by a combination of different motivational factors. For example, family influence or personal interest in Chinese language and culture could contribute to integrative motivation and intrinsic motivation, while meeting the major requirement and the prospect of future employment

belonged to instrumental motivation. Moreover, the motivational factors played different roles in different learners. For example, both Katie and Jenny were heritage learners, and they both demonstrated integrative motivation in terms of wanting to know more about the Chinese culture and have closer connections with family members and relatives. However, Katie was more driven by an instrumental motivation because she needed a high score in her Chinese courses to enter the nursing program, while Jenny was more driven by an intrinsic motivation because she had a strong interest in Mandarin.

Viewed from this perspective, it is impossible to establish a direct cause-effect relationship between motivational differences and student engagement. However, the findings do provide some insights into understanding student engagement from the motivational perspective. First, students driven by different motivational factors may exhibit the same degree of engagement in terms of the time and efforts they invested when they were learning Mandarin. For example, both Katie and Jenny were engaged in learning Mandarin and worked hard for high marks in the Mandarin courses. However, for Katie, the marks decided whether she could enter the nursing program or not, while for Jenny, high marks would give her a better chance to win scholarship, which is a common incentive among university students, but more importantly, they were an achievement which further stimulated her passion for Mandarin.

Second, students driven by different motivational factors may demonstrate different degrees of engagement in terms of the length of time they were engaged with Mandarin. For those who have a short-term goal of getting high scores or meeting the major requirement, they are less likely to take more Mandarin courses once their purpose is met. However, if students are mainly driven by integrative motivation or intrinsic

motivation, they tend to be engaged with Mandarin for a longer term. In this study, students like Andy, Jason, and Jenny not only persisted in studying Mandarin, but were active in organizing or participating in events related to Chinese and Chinese culture. As mentioned earlier, Jason and Jenny took the initiative to set up the Chinese Conversation and Culture Club after the focus group conversation. Jason has been the chair of the club ever since. They were also active participants in other activities organized by the Chinese program such as the speech contest or the singing contest.

Lastly, positive learning results may change students' motivation pattern and accordingly, change students' engagement with Mandarin. Take Jason for example. He first took up Mandarin in Taiwan for no specific purposes. He even felt frustrated when he did not see much progress. However, after the day when he bought a movie ticket and spoke to some kids in Mandarin without using any English, he became so inspired by his achievement that he made learning Mandarin one of his long-term goals. He enrolled in Mandarin courses when he came back to Canada, organized a Chinese and Chinese culture club on campus, participated in Mandarin speech and singing contests, and later went to Beijing for a Mandarin learning program to further his study. He was willing to invest both time and money to learn Mandarin because he enjoyed the learning process.

This research did not employ Norton's (1995) investment theory to understand MAL students' motivation because Norton's theory emphasizes the unequal power relationship between language learners and native English speakers in the social context of English as a second language. Considering that this research investigates MAL students' learning experiences in the Canadian classroom context, a more general

approach was taken to capture the various factors that affect learners' motivation in learning Mandarin.

4.3.2 *Learners' identification with Chineseness*

According to Grosjean (2010), being bilingual does not necessarily mean being bicultural as in many cases, bilinguals or multilinguals do not need to interact with two cultures and combine aspects of each in one's daily communication. However, learning a second language does have impacts on the learners' perceptions of the world and themselves because as we learn a language, we are also exposed to the ideologies, clichés, judgements, and inspirations that language conveys. Thus, Aoki argues that learning a second language enriches and extends the learners' relationship to the world through the world of the foreign language:

A person learns a new language and, as we say, gets a new soul...he becomes in that sense a different individual. You cannot convey a language as a pure abstraction; you inevitably, in some degree, convey also the life that lies behind it. (Mead, 1934, p. 156, quoted in Aoki, 2004, p. 240)

It is in this sense of enrichment and extension that I will interpret the term "Chineseness" as revealed among the student participants.

To begin with, it is impossible to give the term "Chineseness" a clear and specific definition because it means different things to different people. For heritage students, being Chinese is more like an inherent part of their identity, although the meaning of Chineseness is something they need to explore themselves. It could be related to their

physical appearance, the Chinese food they eat at home, the Chinese festivals they celebrate, the Chinese values they learned from their parents and relatives, the Chinese schools they went to, the Chinese programs they watch or listen to, the Chinese languages they speak, and more. In this research, all the heritage student participants more or less identified themselves with being Chinese. Several of them specifically mentioned their physical appearance and the influence of family members and family traditions. Mona, who identified herself with a mix of western and Chinese culture, described her experience of attending a Chinese weekend school when she and her family moved to Vancouver:

我听懂广东话，马来西亚的广东话，8岁到12岁每个星期去中文学校，一个星期一天，在温哥华，我们学繁体字，学普通话，我不知道我老师，她是很老的，她从哪里来，我记得第一句话是，ok, this is it, 站起来，鞠躬，坐下，我是中国人，我爱中国。课文，我还记得。现在都没有，很 patriotic.

(I understood Cantonese, Malaysian Cantonese. I went to a Chinese school from age 8 to 12, one day every week, in Vancouver. We learned traditional characters and Mandarin. I did not know my teacher, she was very old, where she was from. I remembered the first sentence was, ok, this is it, stand up, bow to the teacher, sit down. I am Chinese. I love China. Text. I still remember. They don't have it now. It was very patriotic.)

Mona's description of her Mandarin learning experience in the Vancouver Chinese weekend school shows a strong connection between learning Chinese and keeping the identity of being Chinese. Although the Chinese weekend schools nowadays may not be as patriotic as the old time, the connection between Chinese language and Chinese identity remains. In other words, learning Chinese would, to a certain degree, enhance students' identification with Chineseness. Jacques (2012) observes that overseas Chinese communities, regardless of which country they are in, have had the tradition of sparing no effort to preserve their Chinese identity—"a sense of Chineseness" (p. 331). He sees it as "a cohesive tie of Chinese identity" that connects Chinese in China and overseas Chinese from a cultural and civilizational perspective. This also explains why family influence plays an important role in heritage students' learning of Mandarin.

On the other hand, this research also reveals that the sense of Chineseness, especially the tendency to connect Chineseness with the ability to speak the Chinese language, Mandarin in particular, exerts pressure on the heritage learners. Li and Zhu's (2010) study on overseas Chinese people's perceptions on the relationship between being Chinese and being able to speak Chinese language reveals that all the interviewees believed that knowing Chinese was an integral part of being Chinese. To be more specific, the interviewees believed that to know Chinese meant to be able to speak and understand Mandarin, and to read and write Chinese characters. In this research, several heritage students such as Jenny, Amy, and Daisy expressed similar opinions. We can see this from their concern that they would be judged on their limited proficiency in Mandarin from a native speaker's perspective. For them, being Chinese, even though they were born and grew up in Canada, they should be able to communicate in Chinese,

or more specifically, in Mandarin. Because of this, they were very conscious about the mistakes in tones and the use of expressions. They also felt shy and intimidated when they had to speak in front of native speakers of Mandarin.

In her book *On Not Speaking Chinese*, Ang (2001) discussed her personal experience of looking Chinese but not speaking any Chinese. Drawing on Homi Bhabha's (1994) notion of the third space and the space of hybridity between Asia and the West, Ang proposed that Chineseness for overseas Chinese be viewed from a dynamic and contextualized perspective. The concept of third space and hybridity emphasizes multiplicity, complexity, uncertainty and ambivalence, in which the meanings of Chineseness "are not fixed and pregiven, but constantly renegotiated and rearticulated, both inside and outside China" (Ang, 2001, p. 25). Thus, rather than using China and native speakers of Mandarin as the norm to measure the Chineseness of the overseas Chinese, the meaning of Chineseness for diaspora Chinese should be constantly renegotiated and rearticulated based on their specific historical and sociocultural environments. The identity of the overseas ethnic Chinese should also be constructed in dialectical junction with the diverse local conditions. In the context of heritage students' learning MAL, this open and dynamic approach towards Chineseness and identity construction is essential because it liberates the learners from the burden and unfair judgement from the conventional expectation of Chineseness and opens up space for them to construct their own meanings of Chineseness.

As for the non-heritage students, they do not have to face the same pressure as the heritage students. We see from the students' quotes that they viewed cultural difference as being unavoidable and were ready to accept it. Most of the non-heritage students

expressed the opinion that they did not mind being viewed as foreigners. In terms of language achievement, they did not feel the obligation to achieve high proficiency in Mandarin. Rather, if they made progress in Mandarin, they would expect to receive praises and admirations from people around them. Even the Chinese people themselves believe that learning Chinese is a very challenging task for non-Chinese, especially for westerners. Thus, the meaning of Chineseness for non-heritage learners is mainly related to their ability to use the language and the impact of the Chinese language and culture on their perceptions of self and the world. As Andy explained, he wanted to be more Chinese in terms of knowing how Chinese people view the world, human beings, life, family, work, time, conflict, and education. He acknowledged that learning about the Chinese worldview may change his own world view, but in the bottom of his heart, being Canadian is and will always be his first and prior identity. In an email correspondence, he cited examples of the Chinese perceptions on contradiction and time to illustrate why he found learning Mandarin interesting:

I find it so interesting how it seems that "the Chinese mind" has no problem whatsoever with contradiction, which is something the Western/European Canadian mind absolutely cannot stand. I find it interesting how in Chinese the past is "forward" and the future is "behind", which is the opposite of how they are seen in the English language, but the Chinese conceptualization makes more sense to me; as we can look to the past, but only guess about the future.

While Andy's understanding of Chineseness is an enrichment of his worldview, McDonald (2011a) made one step further by claiming that "learning Chinese should

inevitably involve, to a greater or lesser degree, a process of turning Chinese” (p. 2).

Reflecting on his own experience of learning and using Mandarin, McDonald contends that by “turning Chinese”, the Chinese language learners would have their own “Chinese voice”:

As a potential sinophone, you yourself must develop your own Chinese ‘voice’, quite literally in terms of mastering the sounds and wordings of the language, but also in the sense of finding an identity for yourself, of establishing a reference point for yourself in the sinophone world.... You will assert yourself as a sinophone, to intervene in the dialogue, to put forward your own point of view, and to take issues with other points of view. (McDonald, 2011b, p. 2)

What McDonald proposes is an ideal position for both heritage and non-heritage learners of MAL. To turn Chinese in the sense of having one’s own Chinese voice requires that the MAL learners apply their own knowledge and perspectives to the understanding of the Chinese language and culture and express their opinions in Chinese in an appropriate way. As discussed in chapter two, language is not a single combination of words and grammar rules, but more importantly, a representation of the life and value system of the people who use it. When learning MAL, the students may encounter ideologies and cultural practices different from their own and would bring their previous knowledge and experiences into the interpretation of the new encounter. This is an opportunity to examine and reflect on their ideologies and cultural practices. It may also lead to new understandings and perceptions, expansion of the world views, and formation of a new identity. Thus, for the MAL learners, having a Chinese voice is not only about

mastering a different linguistic system, but also expressing their ideas and thoughts from their own perspectives in Chinese. This is what Gadamer calls the “fusion of horizons”. Our perceptions and understandings are our horizon which is constantly moving and changing. When we encounter other horizons, we bring our current perceptions and understandings into the interpretation of the new horizon, which in turn gives us a chance to reflect on our perceptions and understandings and thus expand our own horizon. Learning MAL can be understood as a process of fusion of horizons as it opens up a space for students to explore possibilities of creating new meanings about self and the world.

Having a Chinese voice is also an indication of intellectual engagement in the learning process because it is only when students are deeply interested in and challenged by what they learn in Mandarin that they would be motivated to think proactively and relate what they learn to their own knowledge and experience. According to Willms et al.’s construct of student engagement, intellectual engagement is the result of deep intrinsic motivation and intense emotional and intellectual excitement. Students are absorbed into the learning process because what they learn is not only intellectually challenging, but also conducive to their personal growth. In the case of learning MAL, being able to use Mandarin to express their own thoughts and ideas can be both challenging and rewarding for the students. This is the incentive for intellectual engagement, which in turn leads to the development of MAL students’ own Chinese voice.

Finally, having a Chinese voice is a demonstration of learner agency in the MAL learning process. In Larsen-Freeman’s application of the complexity theory to the second

language education, language learning is understood as an emergency, which means that the language learners have the agency to actively test and modify their language for learning and meaning making purposes. Hence, the learning result cannot be predicted, but instead emerges from learners' active participation in the learning process. In a similar vein, translanguaging practice based on the view of language as an open and dynamic system emphasizes learners' ability to use their linguistic and cultural resources creatively and critically in making meanings. For MAL learners, they need to think critically and creatively about the Chinese language and culture so as to assert their own viewpoints.

To sum up, to cultivate a Chinese voices requires a learning environment which involves learners' active participation in the learning process, encourages the encounter of ideas and perceptions from different cultures, and promotes critical reflection and free expression of thoughts and ideas from the learners' own stance. This is also what Mann (2001) emphasizes on enabling students to gain a sense of self in order to engage them in the learning process.

The possibility of enriching one's identity and forming new understandings about life and self is the unique attraction that learning a new language could bring to the learners. This is also the key to sustainable and long-term engagement with learning a new language. As we know, learning a new language is a long and arduous process, and it would be difficult to persist if learners do not find real joy in it. In the next chapter, I will present the second part of the findings and explore student engagement from the perspective of actual classroom teaching and learning practice.

CHAPTER 5: CLASSROOM TEACHING AND LEARNING OF MAL

This chapter presents findings related to the actual Mandarin language teaching and learning practices in a Canadian university classroom context. The data include focus group conversations, one-on-one interviews with students and instructors, and classroom observations. Major aspects such as the learning materials, the teaching methods, the Chinese characters, the role of culture, and the assessments are discussed and analyzed.

5.1 The Learning Materials

As mentioned in chapter three, the textbooks used for the Chinese language courses are *Integrated Chinese* 《中文听说读写》 (3rd ed.), which was published by Cheng and Tsui Company in 2009. The textbook editors claim that this series of textbooks is communication-oriented and adopt a task-based teaching approach. The dialogues and narratives in the lessons are compiled based on the stories of a group of university students which include both native speakers of Mandarin and learners of MAL. The topics are related to daily issues such as family, hobbies, friendship, school life, shopping, and transportation. The vocabulary and expressions are chosen for the communicative needs of the students. Grammar and language practices are also contextualized in real-life situations in an interactive way. Moreover, all the dialogues and narratives are made into an audio CD accompanied by a cultural minute for each chapter. A workbook and a character book are also available for each level.

Before the Chinese program changed to the *Integrated Chinese* three years ago, they used the textbook *Practical Chinese Reader*, a most popular textbook in North America in the 1980s. According to an instructor interviewee, a key feature of *Practical Chinese Reader* was that it was “grammar oriented”, that is, the texts were written based

on the development of grammatical points. For example, the English verb “to be” has several meanings in Chinese such as “是” and “在”. “I am a student” is “我是一个学生”; while “I am here” is “我在这里”. In *Practical Chinese Reader*, the two different usages of “to be” are explained in two different lessons in great details so that the teachers can focus on one usage each time and the students are less likely to be confused. While in the *Integrated Chinese*, the lessons are “topic oriented”, which results in “scattered” grammar points. Both usages of “to be” could appear in the same lesson depending on the meanings to be expressed in the text. In my interview with an instructor, she mentioned that in the beginning, she was concerned that students using *Integrated Chinese* may not have a solid foundation of grammatical knowledge, but later she found that students could accept the mixed arrangement of grammar points and had no issues with it.

From the students’ perspective, they find the *Integrated Chinese* quite appealing. There are some design and layout features that they like. The first is the colorful pages. The whole textbook is printed in color, with different colors indicating different components of a lesson. For example, grammar points are in red colors (See Figure 5.1). The words and expressions in the text that are related to the grammar points of the lesson are printed in red. In the grammar section, all the titles of the grammar points are also printed in red. This makes it easier for the users to spot the grammar points in the text and locate the corresponding explanations in the grammar section. The second feature is the cartoon images and pictures which not only make the textbook more vivid and lively, but also better illustrate the content of the text. For example, in the dialogues, a cartoon image representing the speaker is used instead of the name of the speaker in Chinese characters. Moreover, real pictures are used to illustrate some content. In a dialogue about

Chinese food and American food, a picture of a table of Chinese food is inserted to illustrate a typical Chinese meal such as dumplings, tofu, cold dishes, and green vegetables (See Figure 5.1). These cartoon drawings and pictures well complement the texts. The third feature is the layout of Chinese characters and Pinyin of the text. In *Integrated Chinese*, the text is first in characters and then followed by a Pinyin version of the whole text. For individual sentences, Pinyin is put below the characters rather than on top of them. Some student participants specifically pointed out the benefit of such a layout. For example, Daisy mentioned that the textbook she used at the Chinese weekend schools was arranged with Pinyin on top of each character. She said, “When I was doing the character and Pinyin together, I wasn’t able to learn the characters. I don’t remember them.” Tom expressed the same opinion when comparing *Integrated Chinese* with the textbooks he used in China:

The textbooks I used in China had Pinyin on top of the characters, which was quite annoying. I wanted to focus on the characters, but it was hard to cover the Pinyin when it is on the top of the characters. The textbook we use now have Pinyin under the character. It works much better with me as I can easily cover the Pinyin and learn the characters if I want.

Putting Pinyin on top of each character is the standard format in China. As a native speaker of Mandarin, I have never thought that this would be an issue in learning the characters. However, in the situation of MAL, this format turns out to be a problem for the students because they are so familiar with the alphabetic writing system that they tend to look at Pinyin to read and understand the text, which is not helpful for the learning of the characters.

<p>你好^①!</p> <p>你好!</p> <p>请问^②, 你^③贵姓?</p> <p>我姓^①李。你呢^②?</p> <p>我姓王。李小姐^④, 你叫^③什么名字?</p> <p>我叫李友。王先生, 你叫什么名字?</p> <p>我叫王朋。</p>	<p>LANGUAGE NOTES</p> <p>① 你好! (Nǐ hǎo!) is a common form of greeting. It can be used to address strangers upon first introduction or between old acquaintances. To respond, simply repeat the same greeting.</p> <p>② 请问 (qǐng wèn) is a polite formula to be used to get someone's attention before asking a question or making an inquiry, similar to "excuse me, may I please ask..." in English.</p> <p>③ You can replace 你 (nǐ) with its honorific form, 您 (nín), if you wish to be more polite and respectful. See Lesson 6, Dialogue 1, Language Note 1.</p> <p>④ 小姐 (xiǎojiě) is a word with two third tone syllables. The tone sandhi rule applies, thus making the first third tone 小 (xiǎo) a second tone. The second syllable 姐 (jiě) can also be pronounced in the neutral tone.</p>
<p>Nǐ hǎo^①!</p> <p>Nǐ hǎo!</p> <p>Qǐng wèn^②, nǐ^③ guì xìng?</p> <p>Wǒ xìng^① Lǐ. Nǐ ne^②?</p> <p>Wǒ xìng Wáng. Lǐ xiǎojiě^④, nǐ jiào^③ shénme míngzi?</p> <p>Wǒ jiào Lǐ Yǒu. Wáng xiānsheng, nǐ jiào shénme míngzi?</p> <p>Wǒ jiào Wáng Péng.</p>	 <p>今天吃中国菜还是美国菜? Jīntiān chī Zhōngguó cài háishì Měiguó cài?</p>

Figure 5.1 Examples from *Integrated Chinese Level 1 Part 1*

Besides the design and layout of the textbook, the student participants also liked how the dialogues and narratives were centered on the stories of a group of students in a North American university context. The dialogues, narratives, and language practice exercises in the lessons are related to their study, their life, and their friendship. Participants thought such content made them “more engaged in the examples”. The

classroom observation also showed that the students enjoyed watching the audio CD of the dialogues and narratives, which usually made them laugh. Other aspects that the students liked include the daily life topics, the explanation of grammar in English, and the appropriate amount of grammatical points in each lesson.

In the meantime, some participants felt that some of the vocabulary in the textbook is “not as useful”. For example, Jason said that for words like “逛街 (windowshopping)” and “寒假(winter vacation)”, he “will never use any of those unless it’s context based.” As a result, he forgot these words in a short time. In addition, Tom commented that the content and homework in each lesson were “overwhelming”. In *Integrated Chinese Level 1 Part 1*, one lesson is composed of two parts, each part dealing with one dialogue or narrative. The number of vocabulary increases from around 30 in the first lesson to about 50 in the final lesson, and each lesson covers 5 to 7 grammar points. According to the lesson plan, students learn one lesson in about eight teaching periods, with each period lasting 50 minutes. Besides, they also need to finish all the exercises in the workbook in their spare time. As Tom said, “I would prefer to have more time learning Mandarin on my own rather than having to finish this or that task in the textbook and workbook.”

As the findings show, the textbook was the primary learning resource for the students. In fact, some participants mentioned that it was the only resource they used in learning Mandarin because firstly, the textbook had much content for them to study and review, which took up most of the time they spent learning Mandarin after class; and secondly, there was a lack of appropriate supplementary learning materials suitable for

beginning MAL learners. Students found that relatively speaking, the textbook was convenient to use because it had explanations of new vocabulary and grammar points, while lots of extra learning materials such as storybooks did not. Katie shared her experience of trying to read a children's storybook in Chinese:

I tried reading a storybook. I only understood part of it because it was talking about a frog and I didn't even know the word for frog. I had to look up all the new words myself, and it was not convenient. I gave up in the end. Those storybooks are not designed for beginners like us. It was not fun reading such books.

It is obvious that textbooks, no matter how good they are, are far from being enough for the mastering of an additional language. Extensive reading is always an important part in language learning. Fortunately, modern technology has somewhat made up for the lack of extra reading materials. Students mentioned several electronic applications that they used in learning Mandarin, especially in learning Chinese characters. For example, there is one application called Pleco. It is free to download to one's cell phone. The learners can either write a character, or to use the participants' words, "draw" the character on the screen or enter the Pinyin of the character, and the character will show up with Pinyin and meanings. The learner can also enter English meanings to find the corresponding Chinese characters or words. Another application, Skritter, has the whole list of vocabulary of *Integrated Chinese* available to download at a reasonable price. Learners can use the exercises and quizzes in Skritter to learn the vocabulary and test their knowledge of characters specifically for *Integrated Chinese*.

These applications turn out to be the most useful resources for the MAL beginning learners in addition to their textbook and workbook.

5.2 The Teaching Methods

The dominant teaching style used in the Chinese language classes that I observed was a teacher-centered lecturing style. Explanation of grammar and vocabulary occupied most of the class time. Generally speaking, about 80% of the class time was devoted to teacher's explanation of vocabulary and grammar, with the rest of the time for language practice in different forms such as translation or pair dialogue. In a language class, explicit explanation of the usage of words, expressions, and grammar points plays a very important role in helping the students understand the language and use it correctly. For instance, in Mandarin, it is important to explain the different parts of a character, especially if it is a compound character. Take the character 妈 (mā, meaning "mother") for example. "女" is the semantic part which is also the radical, meaning "female", and "马" is the phonetic part indicating the pronunciation. Explanation of the formation of the character helps the students to remember not only this character, but also other characters with the same radical such as 姐 (jiě, meaning "elder sister"), 妹 (mèi, meaning "younger sister"), 她 (tā, meaning "she" or "her").

Grammar was the major part of the teaching in the class. Usually in one lesson period, the teacher would explain 1-2 grammar points with examples and then ask students to do some exercises such as dialogue or translation. Most of the student participants acknowledged the importance of learning grammar in class. For example, Fanny said that she wanted to learn a lot of grammar because if she went to Mainland

China or Taiwan, she could pick up vocabulary from local people, but it would be difficult for native speakers to explain grammar rules to her:

If I go there, it's always easier to learn the words instead of having the Chinese people explain to you the grammar that they just said in their sentence. It's a bit hard for people that's not, they just learn it naturally, especially the grammar, cause they know it naturally. So it's harder for them to explain the grammar than what is this word. If we have a strong background in grammar, even if we forget some of it, if you can and you hear it, it's easier to understand.

However, most participants also felt that learning vocabulary and grammar took up too much class time. They hoped that the teacher would make the class more interactive and provide more opportunities for the students to speak Mandarin in class because in Canada, students did not get many opportunities to practice Mandarin outside the classroom. For instance, Amy said, "We already don't have that much time to practice speaking outside the class, so it would be nice if we can talk a lot in class. We are in Canada, not in China." Other participants expressed similar ideas:

You get the chances, but I'd say it's not the most interactive. We have certain classes where all day we'd be doing practices, but that's only after we learn the vocab. I feel we can spend less time on vocabulary and more time talking to each other, just to use the stuff. (Jenny)

We haven't spoken in class for about three weeks, I mean outside like 2 minutes the other day, right, like we don't speak in class. We don't have a lot of chances any more cause there is just not enough time. So you have to practice. Personally 我觉得上课我要练习说中文，因为他们都说中文，学生一起说中文，所以，看书，ok, at home, 可是上课我不要看书，我要说话。

(I feel I need to practice speaking Mandarin in class, because they all speak Mandarin, students speak Mandarin together. So, reading the textbook, ok, at home, but in class I don't want to read the textbook. I want to speak.) (Jason)

Like here, we have this picture. The teacher makes us do partner work. 我觉得 we have to do it out loud. I want to say it out loud so that she can correct us. That kind of thing. I don't like, 我们学汉字的时候，我不喜欢 that we take 很长的时间，我可以在家自己学。Sometimes we just spent the whole 50 minutes just learning characters. I don't think that's necessary. ...We had that interview. 老师问我怎么 improve 中文课，我说，问我问题，请问我，因为我想说。

(Like here, we have this picture. The teacher makes us do partner work. I think we have to do it out loud. I want to say it out loud so that she can correct us. That kind of thing. I don't like, when we learn the characters, I

don't like that we take very long time. I can learn them at home myself. Sometimes we just spent the whole 50 minutes just learning characters. I don't think that's necessary. ... We had that interview. My teacher asked me how to improve the Chinese course. I said, ask me questions, please ask me, because I want to speak.) (Fanny)

Having more opportunities to practice Mandarin is the most consistent request from the student participants. From the teacher's perspective, to allocate more time for practice meant that students would need to spend time preparing for the class such as reading the text and grammar points at home. This should not be a problem for students who were really interested in learning Mandarin and wanted to learn it well, but in a class of 15 to 25 students, there would always be students who came to class unprepared and relied on the teacher to teach them everything. Thus, the teacher had to decide how to allocate the class time and arrange activities so that both the demand for knowledge and for practice could be met.

Besides the desire for more opportunities to speak Mandarin in class, the student participants also hoped that the teacher would speak more Mandarin so that they could hear more Mandarin and practice their listening comprehension ability. To be more specific, they preferred grammar rules and usage of words explained in English so that they could understand them well, but they wanted the teachers to use more Mandarin when asking questions or talking to the students. For example, Tom said that he found the language course in Taiwan was the most effective because it had a Mandarin-only learning environment. Because the students in that class came from different countries such as Japan, Korea, Vietnam, America, Canada, and European countries and some of

them did not speak English, the only language they had in common was Mandarin. Even though they were all beginning learners, the teacher managed to use Mandarin most of the time in class. It was only when students found it difficult to understand a grammar rule in Mandarin that the teacher would shift to English. Tom described the learning environment in Taiwan as “one giant conversation” in which everyone participated actively. He said, “No one during class time speaks English. It was definitely good cause it forced you to think what you’ve learnt....Although it was just a couple of months, in the end everyone could carry out small conversations in Chinese. It was very helpful.”

All the language teachers in the Chinese language program were Mandarin-English bilinguals with Mandarin as their mother tongue. In the Canadian classroom context, the students all speak English. In a beginners’ class, the teacher has the tendency to use mainly English for explanation and instruction because it is easier and faster for the students to comprehend. Using Mandarin requires that the teacher adapt the language in terms of both using low level vocabulary and speaking slowly so that the students can possibly understand. This can be time-consuming, and the teacher may not be able to cover the required teaching content. Thus, it is up to the teacher to make a balance between using English to scaffold the learning of Mandarin and providing as many opportunities as possible for students to be immersed in a Mandarin learning environment.

5.3 The Chinese Characters

Chinese characters are a distinctive feature of the Chinese language. The Chinese program in this research introduces the simplified Chinese characters at the very beginning of the course. Although the textbook includes the dialogues and narratives in

the traditional Chinese characters at the end of the book, the traditional characters serves only as a reference. The students are required to learn the simplified Chinese only and are tested in the simplified writing system. For student participants who began with the simplified Chinese characters and had been learning them all the time, they were happy with the simplified version. Some of them found the traditional too complicated:

Maybe if we were to study the traditional characters from the start, it would be easier. Now that I have got used to the simplified, I just like look at traditional characters and I'm like oh I don't wanna dig with that cause there are so many lines, strokes, it just looks complicated. (Fanny)

Jenny compared the two writing systems from the practical perspective and favored learning the simplified version:

Traditional has more meaning, I understand that, but now in the modern world, we always look for shortcuts and more efficient productivity. I heard that even airports were changing to simplified. So it's like if you can't beat them, join them. You have to change sometimes, even if you don't like it. You can learn traditional words on your own, but simplified is just more practical. And knowing simplified can aid in knowing traditional anyway.

However, in this research, two participants who had learned traditional Chinese characters in Taiwan favored the traditional writing system. Tom said, "In Taiwan, we learned in traditional, and I do prefer traditional over simplified...Once you go traditional, you do not want to go back to simplified." One major reason for their

preference of traditional characters was that the traditional characters contain more meaning than the simplified ones and were thus easier to remember. One example would be the character for “vehicle”. The traditional character for “vehicle” is “車” while the simplified is “车”. The original meaning of “車” is a two-wheel cart, as indicated in the early bronze character “𨋖”. The traditional character “車” still keeps the shape of a wheel in it, which makes a good reference to the meaning of the character, while the simplified character “车” leaves no room for the imagination of a wheeled cart. As Jason said, “I do forget simplified more often because it does not make sense. You cannot guess its meaning.”

Moreover, both Tom and Jason did not think the extra strokes in traditional characters a problem. Rather, they found that complicated strokes helped them to remember the characters better. Jason said:

The number of strokes doesn't bother me. It's I don't remember the content. And maybe because they are harder, you'll remember them better, such as the character “餐”. It has so many strokes and such a complicated structure that I can't possibly forget it, although I may have problem producing it correctly by hand.

Producing Chinese characters by hand is not important nowadays because people can “type” the characters on computers and cell phones. The Chinese input software is designed in such a way that people only need to enter the Pinyin of a character and then choose the right one from a list of characters that share the same Pinyin. Even the tones are not a problem because the Chinese input software does not require the correct tone.

As long as the spelling of the Pinyin is correct, it will come up with a list of characters that have the same Pinyin but different tones for people to select. All that the students need is to know the spelling of the Pinyin and to be able to recognize the character.

Modern technology such as the Chinese input software and the Chinese learning applications have been of great help to MAL learners, especially in learning the characters and reducing the burden of hand-producing characters from memory. However, in the classroom learning context, students are still required to memorize certain amount of characters and are tested on their ability to produce them correctly by hand. To memorize the characters in terms of both recognizing them and producing them by hand remains one major obstacle for students to move up the levels in the Chinese language courses. Some student participants said that they could have short-term memory of the characters for the quiz or test, but they would forget them soon after the quiz or test.

During the classroom observation, I noticed that the teachers employed etymology and radical explanation to help the students understand the meaning of characters. As explained in chapter one, certain characters still retain traces of its original pictogram form such as 日(rì, “☉”, sun), 月(yuè, “☾”, moon), 鸟(niǎo, “🐦”, bird), and explaining the etymology of such characters may help students memorize these characters. The findings of this research reveal that most of the student participants found etymology knowledge not only interesting, but also helpful in learning the characters, as can be seen from the following quotes:

I love those. When she talks about radicals like what was the original meaning of this word and how we got to use it in a certain setting and then how it was used today, like how it was transferred over to be used in the way it does today...It helps me remember.

(Laura)

I really like learning the etymology of the words and how they came about. That helps me understand more like the context where they derive that word. (Daisy)

However, it needs to be noted that not all characters can be explained etymologically.

The majority of the characters, especially in their simplified versions, have totally different forms and meanings from the original. To explain such characters can be time-consuming and does not help much with the memorization of the characters.

The most popular method used in teaching characters was the explanation of radicals. The teachers found it effective because radicals not only indicate the meanings of characters but also help to build relations among characters with the same radical. It is more effective for students to memorize groups of characters under the same radical than individual characters. One example given previously is the character “女”, meaning “female”, which is also the radical for many characters related to the meaning of female such as 妈 (mā, mother), 姐 (jiě, elder sister), 妹 (mèi, younger sister), 她 (tā, she or her), 奶 (nǎi, grandma), 姑 (gū, aunt), 嫁 (jià, a woman marrying to a man), 娶 (qǔ, a man marrying a woman), and more. However, the limitation of this method with beginners is that they do not have enough vocabulary to form large groups of characters. They still often have to struggle with memorizing individual, unrelated characters.

5.4 Role of Culture

Generally speaking, the cultural content in the beginners' classrooms was quite limited because the main focus in class was linguistic knowledge such as vocabulary and grammar. The main cultural contents in the Chinese language courses I observed included the "Culture Highlights" in the textbook, the etymology of some Chinese characters, cultural meanings of some Chinese words, and cultural talk on daily practices and customs.

There is a section called "Culture Highlights" in each unit of the textbook which provides snapshots of Chinese culture related to the topic of the unit. For example, the first unit is about greeting, so the Cultural Highlights explains Chinese family names and the proper use of family names and given names. The Cultural Highlight is explained in English, with some specific terms or key words in both Chinese characters and Pinyin. Instructors usually do not go over the Cultural Highlights in class. Since it is written in English, it is assumed that students could read it by themselves in their spare time if they want to.

As mentioned earlier, most of the student participants found etymology interesting and helpful to their learning of the characters. They also liked the explanation of the meanings behind the characters and words. For example, Katie mentioned that the teacher once explained the word "年糕" (niángāo), a kind of Chinese rice cake that people eat specifically during the Chinese New Year, saying that "糕" (gāo, rice cake) was of the same pronunciation of "高" (gāo, high), so "年糕" (literally "year rice cake") in its pronunciation could also be understood as "年高" (literally "year high"), which

implied people's wish that their life would be more and more prosperous every year.

Although as a heritage learner, Katie was familiar with the food “年糕”, she said it was her first time to learn about the implied wish in the name of the rice cake, which was “cool” to her.

The cultural discussion on daily practice and customs usually took place at the beginning of each unit. For example, the topic of Unit 4 is hobbies, so the questions at the beginning of the unit ask about people's favorite pastimes and what people usually do on weekends. In class, the teacher shared some common pastimes among Chinese people such as board games or playing mah-jong or cards and discussed with the class how it was culturally different from the popular pastimes in Canada. Other cultural discussion topics in *Integrated Chinese Level 1 Part 1* include questions like how people introduce themselves on the phone, how people negotiate price when shopping, and how to get a taxi in China.

The time spent on cultural talk was very limited in class. Sometimes there was no cultural discussion in a whole lesson, and when there was, it would be brief, just for several minutes. The interviews and conversations with the student participants revealed that students had different attitudes towards learning culture in the Chinese language classes: some were in favor of cultural knowledge, finding it interesting and helpful, and the others were more practically oriented, thinking that at the beginning stage, it was more useful to focus on daily language and grammar, as is shown in the following quotes:

I think culture is very important because when you're speaking to people who are native Chinese speakers, they might throw in idioms. They might

throw in some cultural references that we wouldn't understand.... Like in English, when you are in a bad situation and something good happens, you just say, oh, this is a Cinderella story. You need to know the story about Cinderella to understand its meaning.” (Andy)

With me, what practical is to learn the language. I don't have the time to learn culture. I have too many things on the go. It doesn't necessarily help remember. We have only 40 or 30 minutes, administrative stuff, quiz, that takes up time. I just need to know what we're doing for the quiz tomorrow. I think you'll have happier students if you just stick to the practical side. I just think a lot of people are in the course for their mark and for an easy course. They are just to learn the language not necessarily the culture because of your staying in Canada, might not need to know necessarily the culture in China. (Jessica)

Jessica was a heritage student. She spoke Wuhan dialect, a variety of Chinese language which is relatively close to Mandarin, at home. She also knew about Pinyin and was able to write emails in Chinese. Because of her background knowledge in Mandarin, she started from the second half of *Integrated Chinese Level 1 Part I*, but she had to spend time of her own learning the first half of the textbook. That was why she was busy with the learning tasks and claimed that she did not care much about learning culture in class. Another reason was that she had the resources at home to learn Chinese culture, and for her, that was a better way to learn Chinese culture. She said:

I'm learning culture through my parents, through experiences...My grandparents and other relatives are all in China. That's how I learn

Chinese culture... We are in class. We learn little things. That's not learning Chinese culture... You're learning the words and how to put them together. Occasionally you'll learn little things about you know how to address people, how to write letters, that to me isn't getting towards all of Chinese culture. It'll take a lot to teach that through a Mandarin course. Some people may not be interested in it though.

Comparatively speaking, heritage students tend to have the advantage of being closer to Chinese culture than the non-heritage students, especially in terms of the culture of daily life such as how to address people or how to behave appropriately. Kathy and Mona, two heritage students, even challenged the content of the textbook when they discussed a lesson they had just learned:

Like the one we just watched about the airport thing, Li You and Wang Peng. They were there and it's pretty stereotyped. 爸爸妈妈问你怎么样，累不累，好，咱们就走了。When you are really at the airport and your parents come to pick you up, it's not really like that. It's like 咱们现在去哪儿啊，你们飞机什么时候下来的，几点到的，等了多长时间，还有什么行李要拿， It's very different.

(Like the one we just watched about the airport thing, Li You and Wang Peng. They were there and it's pretty stereotyped. Your parents asked how you were, if you were tired, then ok, let's go. When you are really at the airport and your parents come to pick you up, it's not really like that. It's like where are we going now, when did your plane land, when did you

arrive, how long have you waited, what other luggage you need to get. It's very different.) (Kathy)

Of course, cultural content is much deeper than daily life communications. Things like the implied meaning of “being more and more prosperous every year” in the food “年糕” are more likely to be learned in class than in daily conversations. In the focus group conversations, Daisy and Andy mentioned specifically how they benefited from a Chinese history course they took. Not only did they learn Chinese words that they were later able to apply to their Mandarin course, but they also enriched their knowledge about Chinese history and Chinese culture that they could never have learned in the Chinese language courses. Daisy and Andy also reflected on how much more knowledge they had missed because of the Eurocentric curriculum they had from K-12:

We are bored of European history because we learned it repetitively in public school...I've learned about Chinese history because I'm learning the language that I wouldn't have learned otherwise, which is very interesting. You learn so much more things like you learn a lot more people than you would in European history. (Daisy)

I learned very little about Chinese history except for maybe the Great Wall of China, the massacre, Tiananmen Square, the Cultural Revolution. We learned only about the bad parts...Our history prof. talks about how everyone nowadays is talking about the rise of China, China becoming a global superpower as if this was a new thing. He said no, it's not new. It's returning to how things used to be, Tang Dynasty, Han Dynasty. But

because we only learned the bad parts of Chinese history, this surprises us.
(Andy)

Daisy and Andy's experience of learning Chinese history shows how culture can impact language learning. A positive impression on the cultural aspects of a country can motivate people to learn the language of that country. From the sharp contrast of the contents of the history lessons that the students took in K-12 and at university, we see how important it is for the Chinese history course to be comprehensive rather than fragmented and biased. Just like positive experience with Chinese history can stimulate people's desire to learn the Chinese language, negative impression on Chinese history could turn people away from learning the language.

5.5 The Assessments

Students taking the Chinese language courses receive a credit for each course which contributes to the total number of credits required for their major or minor, so assessment is an important component of the learning process. The assessment of the Chinese language courses is composed of several parts. The first part is the quizzes which the students take in class 2 to 3 times a week. The quiz is usually a dictation of some characters and words taught on the previous day. The second part is a test at the end of each unit, which includes listening comprehension, dictation of characters and words, translation, and answering questions based on the vocabulary and grammar points of the specific unit. Both the quizzes and the tests are taken in class. The third part of the assessment is a series of written and oral assignments including compositions, workbook, individual and group presentations, and a one-on-one interview between the teacher and each student. There is no mid-term exam or final exam. The final mark is based on the

performance of all quizzes, tests, and assignments. According to the instructors, the assessment is designed in this way so that no single test counts too heavily in the final mark because language learning requires students' continuous investment and efforts on a daily basis. If the students want to get a good mark at the end of the term, they will need to spend time learning Chinese almost every day.

Student participants' responses to the assessment system varied. Most of them thought tests were important and helpful. The first reason was that the quizzes and tests enabled them to see how well they were progressing in their study, as Andy said, "It helps because you can see the progress you are making so much easier, which is encouraging." The second reason was that quizzes and tests pushed the students to study Chinese in their spare time and thus helped them to remember the vocabulary and grammar rules. It is a common phenomenon nowadays that university students are busy because many of them not only take several courses in a term, but also work part-time. Laura said specifically that quizzes and tests were important because "if I wasn't getting tested on something, I would not study it." It was the same with the assignments. Several participants described how they had to spend time preparing for the assignments, which turned out to be good practices of Mandarin when they reflected on what they had done. The last reason mentioned by the participants was that good marks were rewards for their hard work, especially considering the fact that high marks were directly related to their GPA. Jenny said, "You need the mark to learn more...That is very motivating." However, other participants thought that tests were not important because they believed that they could monitor their progress themselves. For example, Fanny said, "Tests did

not really show how much you know about Mandarin or how well you speak it, so you should not rely on it to measure your knowledge of the language.”

One challenge related to the assessment on a Chinese language class with both heritage students and non-heritage students is how to be fair to all the students. As mentioned earlier, heritage students who spoke varieties of Chinese languages other than Mandarin but could not read or write in Chinese were placed at the same beginners’ class with beginning non-heritage learners. In spite of the fact that Chinese languages vary greatly, heritage students who had Chinese language background still enjoyed advantages over the non-heritage students. For example, Katie spoke Cantonese at home. She found that her Cantonese language background was helpful in learning both the grammar and vocabulary:

Definitely I find that when it comes to grammar. It helps. There are some differences with the words, like some words we don’t use like 很. We never use 很, we use 好 all the time. Almost every word I can sort of see what it is in Cantonese and it helps me a lot in grammar....And also pronunciation. It’s different, but at the same time I can remember. For example, like 跳舞, I think for English native speaker, they can’t refer, have a point of reference, for me it’s like “tioumu”. It’s like there is an easy reference.

Although Cantonese and Mandarin vary greatly, heritage students can still use their knowledge of Cantonese as a useful reference for learning Mandarin. Katie gave an example of the pronunciation of 跳舞 (meaning “to dance”). In Cantonese, it is

pronounced as “tiǒumú” while in Mandarin it is “tiàowǔ”. In spite of the difference, knowing the pronunciation of “tiǒumú” and its meaning in Chinese definitely gave her certain advantage over non-heritage students. Because of this, sometimes the non-heritage students felt intimidated by the “good kids” in class, especially when they had to work in pair with such students:

Like the other day, we had partnered up. Lǎoshī (the Pīnyīn for “teacher”) just wanted us to read the dialogue. I was having a hard time just reading it, then she will prompt to me, and I’m like let me take my time, and she was just like going through it like crazy. I just thought am I that bad at reading. Some of those people in class are really so good. (Laura)

Of course, even if some heritage students had the advantage of Chinese language background, they still had to work hard to achieve good marks. Besides, they did feel the pressure of being a heritage student:

We put in the effort to put in a composition because our Pinyin is so good and we do try hard in class. I feel like sometimes they think we’re just one of those people who are taking this class and we know Chinese already, we just wanna it as a grade perspective, but we are actually working very hard. The only thing we know is Pinyin. None of the characters, we know nothing. (Amy)

What Amy mentioned about taking the course for easy credit has always been a challenge faced by the Chinese language program. The key to this issue is the placement test and interview. All the students applying for the Chinese language program need to go

through a one-on-one placement test and interview. The placement teacher has to be very experienced in dealing with all kinds of situations and find out the student's real Chinese language proficiency. However, there would always be situations when the student was not honest when taking the placement test and then turned out to be too good for the class:

就是说他是不是诚实地写，这个很难，而且他可能知道，但是确实忘了，可是那个忘，是说一个礼拜就可以回来了，可是他给你写成什么都不会....每次抱怨的信啊，一大堆，还有家长来抱怨的，这是没有办法克服的事情。因为写的是他，他愿意怎么写怎么写，他就告诉我全忘了，然后两个礼拜以后就说，我都记起来了，那你也没办法呀。这是我们很困难的一部分。

(It's a matter of whether he was honest or not. This is difficult to tell. Also he may know it, but really forgot it. However, even if he forgot it in the test, he could remember it again in one week, but in the test, the result showed that he knew nothing....Every time we received complaint letters, a lot, some even from the parents. There is no way to solve this problem, because it is the student who wrote the test. He would write whatever he wanted. He could tell you that he forgot everything, then in two weeks, he remembered them all. You could do nothing. This is a very difficult part of our work.) (A teacher interviewee)

This kind of students is a challenge for the Chinese program because once they are placed into a class, the teacher has to assess them using the same standard, which leads to the issue of fairness. It also causes a dilemma for the teacher.:

他们不是来了得 A+, 而是来之前就已经是 A+了。这是一个职业道德, 你也不能说他/她每次考 100 分, 你也不给他/她呀。

(They got A+ not because they learned from the class, but because they were already A+ before coming to the class. However, this is professional ethics. You cannot say that every time they got 100% correct and you do not give them 100.)

What's more, these students tend to be absent from class because they know they will get a satisfying mark at the end of the course. It is also possible that since they already have the knowledge, the teaching content would not be interesting or challenging enough to attract them to the class. This has a negative impact on the whole classroom learning environment. How to handle this group of students remains a challenge for classes with both heritage and non-heritage students.

5.6 Student Engagement in Classroom Learning Environment

In general, students who participated in the focus group conversations and the individual interviews were satisfied with their learning experience at the Chinese language program. There were no serious conflicts or unpleasant experiences like what PG described in her Chinese language course in chapter one. My classroom observations show that the learning environment was friendly, relaxing, and pleasant. The teacher treated the students as adult learners and never behaved in a humiliating or intimidating

manner. They were quick in responding to students' questions, and the interaction between the teachers and the students was natural and respectful. Obviously, unlike PG's case, the relationship between the teachers and the students in this research contributed to student engagement in a positive way.

In terms of student engagement in the actual classroom teaching and learning practice, the prominent issue revealed by the findings is the importance of the relevance of the activities to students' own intellectual development and life experience. This is consistent with what Willms et al. (2009) emphasize in their construct of student engagement. To stimulate a deep intellectual engagement during the learning process, both the learning tasks and the assessments should involve students' active participation by connecting the learning subjects with students' lives and experiences. In what follows, I will discuss MAL students' engagement from three aspects which all emphasize the importance of relating the learning to the learners: opportunities to practise, relevance of the learning content, and assessments.

5.6.1 Opportunities to practise Mandarin in class

To have more opportunities to practise Mandarin in class is a consistent request from all the student participants. While many participants acknowledged the importance of grammar and vocabulary, they still hoped for more opportunities to practise in class by speaking more Mandarin themselves or hearing more Mandarin input from the teachers. This is quite understandable as anyone who has the experience of learning an additional language would not deny the importance of practising the language, especially considering the fact that Mandarin is a foreign language in the Canadian context and that students rarely have opportunities to practise Mandarin outside the class. Moreover,

Mandarin is a tonal language, and getting the right tone has always been one of the major challenges for the MAL learners. Many student participants said that they were shy in speaking Mandarin because they were not good at tones and were afraid of being ridiculed. Thus, listening and speaking practice in the classroom becomes even more important in learning Mandarin because it requires a lot more practice in a safe environment for students to get familiar with the different tones and build their confidence to speak Mandarin in front of others.

Besides, practising Mandarin is not only more interesting than learning grammar and vocabulary, but more importantly, provides the students with the chances to learn from their mistakes. No matter how much the teacher teaches, it is only when the students actually practice the language that they would realize the mistakes they make and learn to improve through the teacher's correction. The current PPP teaching approach (presentation, practice, and production) employed in the Chinese language classes started with teachers' explanation of the learning content such as vocabulary and grammar, and then was followed by students' practice. However, if students could make some preparation by reading the grammar explanation and vocabulary at home before class, the teacher would then be able to focus more on practice in class. For adult beginning learners, this could be a viable alternative because the textbook provides clear explanation of vocabulary and grammar which can be understood by an adult learner without much difficulty. In this way, the class can begin with students' practice, and then the teacher provides feedback based on the students' performance. The feedback provided in this way would be more helpful because it would be more specific and more directly related to what the students need to improve.

Practice is also a more engaging way of learning Mandarin because when students practise Mandarin, no matter whether it is listening, speaking, reading, or writing, they all need to think actively and make use of their previous knowledge about Mandarin to complete the tasks. They tend to be more actively involved in the classroom learning activities and have a stronger cognitive investment in the learning process than receiving knowledge passively from the textbook and the teacher. In addition, during practice, students see their learning results right away. They would either be encouraged by a good performance or realize what they need to improve if the results are not satisfying. Thus, practice could make learning Mandarin more relevant to individual students and encourage them to take more responsibilities for their own learning.

Moreover, viewed from the perspective of competence in translinguaging practice, practice is the key to developing MAL learners' knowledge and skills in responding strategically to various communicative situations. It is through practice that the learners monitor and adjust their language and negotiation strategies to achieve successful communication with their interlocutors. Practice also plays a significant role in expanding the learners' linguistic and cultural repertoire and enhancing their confidence in using Mandarin.

Finally, the nonlinear feature of complexity theory indicates that there is no direct cause-effect relationship between what a teacher teaches and what a student actually absorbs. In other words, what students actually learn in class cannot be predicated or assumed by the amount of teaching done in the class. To make the teaching content more pertinent to the students' needs, it is important that teachers use students' performance as

reference to decide the adequate teaching content. In this sense, practice is not only beneficial to the students, but also make teaching more effective.

5.6.2 Relevance of the learning content

Research in student engagement has shown the importance of having topics relevant to students' real life so that they can reflect on their own experiences and expand their knowledge about the real world (Friesen, 2009a). In the MAL classroom teaching and learning context, the relevance of the learning content is mainly manifested in the cultural content.

To begin with, as shown in the findings, student participants' comments on Chinese characters indicate that relating the Chinese characters to their cultural meanings helps with the learning of the characters. For example, both Laura and Daisy expressed the opinion that knowing the etymology of a character was not only interesting but also helpful because it enabled them to understand the context in which the character was created and evolved. Even Tom and Jason's favoring of the traditional Chinese characters over the simplified ones was due to the fact that the traditional characters contain more meanings in their complicated strokes. As Jason specifically pointed out, the traditional characters made more sense to him and enabled him to guess the meanings. Obviously, the cultural content in the characters makes the characters more relevant to the meanings they represent.

Besides etymology, explanation of the cultural meaning of Chinese words or expressions has also shown to be an effective way of engaging the students. For instance, Katie was impressed by the cultural meaning of the word 年糕, a rice cake that Chinese

people eat during the Spring Festival according to the tradition, because she had eaten 年糕 many times but had never heard of its implied meaning of a good wish for more prosperity every year. However, what needs to be pointed out here is the fact that Katie was a heritage learner and that she had eaten the rice cake before. While it was easy for her to make the connection between the word, the food, and the cultural meaning, it may not necessarily be the case with non-heritage students who have never had the rice cake before. This can be shown in my conversation with Katie about the word 土豪金 (tǔháo golden color). It is a popular term in Chinese nowadays. However, when I explained its meaning and its implication on the change of Chinese people's perception towards money and material wealth, Katie commented:

I think learning such words would be important if I were to go to China, or to work there, or to study there. Definitely it would be important and it would enrich my experience being there. In Canada though, if I am only exposed to it once in a while, helping people, helping patients, I don't think it'll be as important because it's just a tool, a language for us to hear and understand each other. It depends on what you use it for.

What Katie said about the term 土豪金 well illustrates the importance of making cultural content relevant to students' life and experience. Relevance serves as an important reference point for MAL learners to connect what they learn about Mandarin and the Chinese culture with their own culture and experience. It helps the learners to make meanings of what they learn and expand their horizon through the encounter of

their own culture and the Chinese culture. Maybe what Jason said below can better illustrate what cultural relevance means in a second language classroom:

In TW, they say, and in HK too, they say 公主病 (gōngzhǔbìn), a girl has princess sickness, so she acts in a certain way. There are examples in my Taiwanese book. This girl, she's like, ah, 爸爸, 请买我 ... (Dad, please buy me...). she's like buy me things and stuff like that. She's crying because she got the wrong color car for her birthday. The question at the end was "what illness does she suffer from?" 公主病, and I was like, oh, ok, that's a cultural thing that I didn't understand. I am looking at it and I was like, she's being a brat, I don't know, but they have a word for it in Taiwan. I laughed pretty hard when someone explained it to me. It's good. It explains something. It's interesting. It's fun, and you still get the meaning. And I learned a new phrase called 公主病.

The phenomenon of girls being spoiled is popular in both Taiwan and Canada, so it is not difficult to understand what a spoiled girl is like. The term "公主病" vividly describes how a girl is treated like a princess, but at the same time, she is a spoiled brat. Jason learned the term 公主病 from this cultural talk and remembered it well because he could apply this to the social phenomenon around him, and he even found a popular Mandarin song called 公主病 that he enjoyed listening to.

When discussing the concept of the locality of language practice, Pennycook points out that language is not a pre-defined entity which can be applied to any

communicative contexts. Rather, it is the result of people's social and cultural activities. The notion of locality emphasizes the importance of relating language to its speakers, cultures, histories, places and ideologies. In other words, language as the medium of people's endeavours to make meanings of their life and the world is always associated with a specific group people, place and times. What this means for MAL education is that when teaching Mandarin in the Canadian context, we should always keep the learners' socio-cultural background in mind and connect the teaching content to their knowledge and life experience. In this way, students would find that learning Mandarin is more than learning vocabulary and grammar, but an enrichment of their understanding through the similarities and differences revealed in the learning content. For example, the cultural meaning of 年糕, rice cake, added to Katie's knowledge about the food; the term of 公主病, princess sickness, provided Jason with a perspective to view similar phenomenon in Canada; and the difference in Chinese people's attitudes towards contradiction and time prompted Andy to reflect on Canadian perceptions and expand his viewpoints.

The importance of cultural relevance can also be understood from research on students' attitude towards cultural content in learning a foreign language. For example, a recent survey conducted by Magnan, Murphy, and Sahakyan (2014) among the US college-level students shows that no student thinks that culture should be the main concern of language learning. Li and Zhu's (2014) interview with learners of Mandarin as a foreign language in the UK shows that some students prefer to concentrate the classroom time on learning basic language skills and leave the matter of culture to self-study by reading books or going to China to have a "more authentic" (p. 333) feeling about Chinese culture. What we can learn from these two studies is that if the cultural

content in a second language classroom is mainly about cultural facts that students can learn from other sources such as books or the Internet, then it will lose its attraction to the students. In their article, Li and Zhu present examples of cultural facts about China such as Kung Fu, Tai Chi, fan dance, Chinese food, as well as the must-know facts of China like the Terracotta Army, the Great Wall, and pandas. They criticize the view of culture primarily as customs and practices, that is, the four Fs—food, fairs, folklore, and statistical facts in foreign language teaching and argue that there is a lack of adequate cultural content in the Chinese language classrooms.

In addition, this research reveals another critique on the cultural content in the textbook from some heritage student participants. As is shown in the previous quotes, some heritage student participants, especially those who had lived in China for several years such as Mona or had the chance to go back to China and stay with relatives such as Kathy, challenged the cultural content in the textbook being stereotypes. For this group of students, their knowledge of Chinese culture, especially daily aspects such as shopping or travelling, was from their own life experience, which was more real and more personal than what the textbook described. Like what Kathy commented, her own experience of airport conversations with her parents was “very different” from that in the textbook. As a result, they did not find the cultural content in the textbook interesting or useful. This finding again points to the importance of cultural relevance in MAL education.

In general, student participants in this research acknowledged that culture was an important part of learning MAL. However, they would not find learning culture engaging or important unless the cultural content spoke to their own life experiences. The significance of making the cultural content relevant to the MAL students is that they can

see themselves in what they learn and build up meanings based on their own experiences and understandings. Following the complexity approach to second language teaching and the locality of language practice, culture should be viewed as being complex, dynamic and local. The cultural content taught in class should be based on students' socio-cultural backgrounds and personal interests.

5.6.3 Assessments

Assessment is an indispensable part of classroom teaching. It is the tool to evaluate how well the students have mastered the learning content. As Willms et al. (2009) point out in their construct of student engagement, assessments should not be just about grades. When students are actively engaged in the learning process, they would take more responsibility for their own learning. Therefore, assessments are not only about marks, but also a way of self-evaluation and self-reflection. Students would use the assessments to monitor their progress, find out their weak points, and develop strategies for the next learning step. For example, Andy, who was very engaged in learning MAL, mentioned that assessments enabled him to see the progress he had made and the improvement he should focus on.

Overall, the findings in this research show that the majority of the student participants believed that assessments contribute positively to their learning of MAL. As we know, one unique feature about learning a second language is that it requires a lot of repetition and practice on a daily basis. The quizzes designed in the Mandarin courses are effective in pushing the students to review Mandarin at home every day. Because the quizzes are frequent (2-3 times a week) and take only about 5 minutes at the beginning of a lesson, students need to review what they learn almost on a daily basis, but not for too

long, possibly half an hour. This could help the students develop a habit of learning a little bit of Mandarin every day. The effectiveness of the quizzes can be seen in what Laura said, “If I wasn’t getting tested on something, I would not study it.”

Moreover, assessments can be motivating for students, especially when they get good marks. For example, Jenny believed that good marks were rewards for her hard work and stimulated her to learn more. In modern educational system, students’ marks are directly associated with scholarships, rewards, and many other opportunities related to their future career development, like what we see in Katie’s case. She worked hard to get high marks in her Mandarin courses in order to enter the nursing program. Thus, getting good marks has become a key incentive for many university students.

However, we need to be aware that pragmatic goals can be motivating, but not without problems. As Kramsch (2012) contends, educational institutions have been placing excessive emphasis on individual performance and competition through standardized criteria in the name of freedom and democracy. The direct association of individual performance and competition with marks, in the long run, alienates students rather than engage them because they tend to focus more on achieving satisfying marks rather than on what they actually learn in the learning process. As is shown in this research, one prominent challenge related to assessments was the issue of fairness in terms of marks. The complaints on unfair marks came from both the heritage students and non-heritage students. For the non-heritage students, their complaints were mainly about the unfairness in the final marks due to the unequal starting points between them and the heritage students, especially when they saw some heritage students got high marks without much effort; while for the heritage students, some complained that they

should get even higher marks based on their performance. These heritage students could be further divided into two types: one was those who came for easy credits but did not get the desired marks; the other was those who really studied hard and believed that they should be given higher marks. As for the teachers, they faced the dilemma that on one hand, they had to set up and follow the standard assessment criteria to assess all the students as a way to demonstrate fairness; and on the other hand, they struggled with the thought of whether to take into consideration the actual progress the students had made, and if yes, how to include this part in the final marks.

The common practice of demonstrating fairness through standard criteria ignores the fact that all students are different. In an MAL classroom that consists of both heritage and non-heritage students, there are always differences among students not only in their language proficiency, but also in their background, personal interests, and majors. Moreover, their learning styles could be different too. Some may prefer to learn by listening to and speaking the language, while others may prefer to learn by reading and writing the actual words. As is discussed earlier, students tend to be more engaged in the learning process if they can relate what they learn to their own experiences and have more control of their learning results. In other words, they would find learning Mandarin more engaging if they are given the opportunities and the space to explore things in Mandarin that are related to their interests, or to make progress at their own pace. However, the enforcement of standard criteria in the name of treating all students equally leaves little choice to both the teachers and the students on what should be taught and learnt. They have to devote their limited time in learning Mandarin to following the curriculum and meeting the rubrics.

When meeting program requirements and enhancing individual competitiveness by getting high marks become the primary goal of learning Mandarin, there would be two detrimental impacts on student engagement. One is that students are most likely to stop learning Mandarin once they obtain their pragmatic goals. The other is that students may be discouraged by the low marks they get from the Mandarin courses and decide not to continue to learn it. They rely on the marks rather than their own progress to judge their ability to learn Mandarin. In this research, there were students saying that marks were not the only thing to measure one's knowledge of Mandarin, but this was a voice from the minority, and it was from students who were already quite engaged in learning Mandarin such as Jason and Fanny. How to effectively engage students in the reality of over-emphasis on individual performance and competition remains one of the major challenges for the MAL program.

CHAPTER 6: IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research investigated the learning experience of a group of heritage and non-heritage MAL beginning learners in Canadian post-secondary classrooms based on the following two questions:

- 1) Who are the Chinese language students in the CAL classrooms? Why do they want to learn Chinese?
- 2) How do they describe their experience of learning Chinese in terms of the teaching method, the content, and the overall learning environment?

Research findings were presented in chapter four and chapter five from the perspectives of learners' motivation, identity of Chineseness, and classroom teaching and learning practices. Discussion on learners' motivation points to the importance of integrative and intrinsic motivation in developing students' long-term engagement in learning Mandarin. As for learners' identification of being Chineseness, all heritage student participants identified themselves with being Chinese but the meaning of Chineseness emerges from a mix of western and Chinese influence and must be understood in the learners' particular socio-cultural contexts. Non-heritage learners' identification with Chineseness was more an enrichment of their Canadian identity by expanding their viewpoints through the learning of Mandarin and Chinese culture. The complexity of Chineseness indicates that heritage and non-heritage MAL learners should be encouraged to develop their own "Chinese voice" as manifestation of learner agency and engagement. Findings on classroom teaching and learning practice highlight that to promote students' long-term engagement in learning MAL, it is important for the curriculum designers to allocate more time for students to practice Mandarin, make the teaching content more relevant to

students' knowledge and experiences, and develop an assessment system that values learner difference while remaining fair to both heritage and non-heritage students. In what follows, I will discuss the research implications from two aspects: MAL curriculum development which includes learning materials, teaching method and teaching content, and assessment; and teacher training.

6.1 Research Implications

6.1.1 MAL learning materials

In a broad sense, learning materials refer to all the Mandarin materials that students have access to including what the students use for the Mandarin courses such as the textbook and the supplementary workbook, and the extra learning materials such as storybooks and newspapers, the Chinese language learning websites and other Internet resources, and the Apps for learning Chinese. In this research, the main learning material was the textbook *Integrated Chinese* and the supplementary workbook. Another resource mentioned by the student participants was the Apps for the learning of Chinese characters such as Pleco and Skritter.

For an MAL curriculum, it is necessary to have a set of textbooks as the guideline for the teaching content. The series of textbook *Integrated Chinese* is the most popular Chinese textbook among North American institutions because of its communicative approach, colorful texts and pictures, and appealing layout. Besides, the textbook contains detailed explanation on vocabulary and grammar, which is convenient for students to prepare for and review the lessons. Students in this research reported that in general, they liked this textbook. However, the content of a textbook is fixed and limited, which means that on one hand, some content may not be applicable to students' needs

and interests; and on the other hand, what students are interested in may not be included in the textbook. For example, when talking about hobbies, the textbook introduces words like 唱歌 (singing) and 跳舞 (dancing). However, if we put the learning context in a Canadian classroom where many students have hobbies related to winter sports such as hockey, skating, skiing, and snowshoeing, then we would find what the textbook offers is not applicable. Thus, it would be desirable if curriculum designers could be selective of the content in the textbook and add teaching content from other resources based on the specific socio-cultural context of the MAL students.

Modern technology, especially the Internet and the Apps on smart phones, has made it much easier and faster for students to have access to learning materials other than the textbooks. Moreover, it has added variety to the ways that students learn Mandarin. For example, they can listen to Chinese language learning podcasts, watch Chinese language learning videos, Chinese films and TV series on YouTube, chat with language exchange partners on Skype or WeChat, learn Chinese characters on Apps, or play games designed for learning Chinese. Students can choose the content according to their interest and learn it anytime they want to. With the wide spread of computers and smart phones, it is important to make good use of the new learning methods as well as the huge amount of learning materials available outside the class when designing the MAL curriculum.

Adopting learning materials from the Internet and the Apps can also improve the cultural content in the textbook. Although Integrated Chinese has the positive features as mentioned, its cultural content remains mainly what Li and Zhu (2014) call the “cultural facts”. In each unit, there is a cultural section called “Culture Highlights”. For example, Unit One is about greeting, and students learn how to ask each other’s name in the

dialogue. The Cultural Highlights in this unit introduce different Chinese family names, the origin of the family names, the book called 《百家姓》 which records most common Chinese family names, and the proper use of family names and given names. Except for the last part of proper use of the names, the other content is simply cultural knowledge with little relevance to students' own lives. It would be more helpful if the cultural content is about how people address each other in different situations such as at school, at work, at doctor's place, and between neighbours. Students can then compare the different ways of greeting in China and Canada, which may further stimulate their interest in exploring why there is such a difference. Such cultural content can be found on the Internet either in written forms or as video clips and added to the curriculum.

6.1.2 Teaching method and teaching content

As discussed in chapter five, the most consistent request from the student participants was more opportunities to practise Mandarin in class. One way to increase the practice opportunities is to adopt a more learner-centered approach to teaching. Instead of allocating most of the time to teacher's explanation of vocabulary and grammar, students could be asked to prepare for the lesson by reading the new words, text, and grammar points. In this way, the teacher can start a lesson with activities such as oral translation to see how well the students have understood the required learning content by themselves. Then, the teacher provides feedback on the students' performance and focuses the explanation on what the students do not master. After that, the teacher can use more activities to strengthen what the students have just learned. This method makes teaching more specific to the students' needs and reduces the teaching time. As a result, students get more time to practice in class.

Another important aspect related to practice opportunities is teacher's language. The language that teachers use in class is not just for instructional purposes, but also a good learning source for the students. The Mandarin used by the teacher can be a good listening comprehension practice for the students. It is also a good model of pronunciation and tones for students to imitate. While it is true that beginning learners have limited vocabulary and rely heavily on explanation of new words and grammar points in English, the teacher can still add Mandarin input in their language when appropriate. For example, teachers can intentionally add in their talk words and expressions that students have learned in previous lessons as a way of reviewing the learning content. They can also use Mandarin for common classroom expressions such as 同学们，早上好。我们开始上课。(Good morning, class. Let's begin our lesson.) or 请大家看第 10 页 (Please look at page 10). These classroom expressions contain new vocabulary, but if the teacher explains the meaning when using it for the first time and keeps using it in class, students would have no problem understanding it. This is also an effective way to add useful expressions to students' vocabulary as the classroom expressions contain many high-frequency words which may not be covered by the textbook.

In addition to practice opportunities, the teaching content can also be modified to better meet the students' needs. For beginning learners, their focus is basic communicative skills, especially listening and speaking skills (Magnan et. al, 2014). However, the Mandarin courses in this research are comprehensive courses which cover all the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Students are taught both Pinyin and the Chinese characters from the beginning. This means that they have to face

the two biggest challenges of learning MAL at the same time: the tones and the characters. Considering the limited time they have in learning Mandarin, the result is usually that they do not achieve satisfying results on either. Thus, if the beginners' courses such as Level 1 Part 1 can focus more on students' pronunciation and their ability to converse in simple dialogues, it will not only reduce students' workload and enable them to spend more time on listening and speaking, but also make learning Mandarin more interesting and engaging. As we know, a major fun of learning a foreign language is to actually speak it. Moreover, a good command of pronunciation also helps with the learning of characters, as is shown in Halliday's (2014) reflection on his own experience of learning Mandarin:

Characters were not introduced until very late in the first year of the course, which meant that when we did start to study them we learnt them rather quickly, and without too much difficulty, because by that time we were already well acquainted with the language and had reached some measure of fluency. (p. 1)

Teachers play an important role in adapting the teaching content according to students' interests and learning needs. They need to be mindful and flexible on what to teach and how to connect the teaching content with students' interests and experiences. For example, simplified Chinese characters have become the dominant written script taught in the Chinese language programs in North America, but the traditional version contains more meaning, as was commented by some student participants in this research. Thus, teachers could consider using the traditional version to explain the etymology and

the evolution of a character when necessary because it may help students remember the character.

Furthermore, in terms of cultural content, teachers can relate words and expressions to current cultural phenomena in China, or provide students with vocabulary related to the cultural activities in Canada such as Thanksgiving or Christmas. I can illustrate this with one of my own teaching experiences. Once I was teaching the character 帅 (shuài, meaning handsome). I knew that the students already learned the character 高 (gāo, meaning tall), so I wrote both 高 and 帅 on the board and left one character's space in between. I told the class that these were two of the most popular criteria for an ideal boyfriend in China, but there was one criterion missing. I asked them to guess, and one student gave me the answer of 黑 (hēi, meaning dark skin). This then led to an interesting discussion on the different criteria between cultures. In the West, dark skin means a person has a lot of leisure time to get tanned; while in Chinese culture, dark skin implies low social classes such as peasants or farmers because these people tend to have dark skin due to hard work under the sun for long hours. Besides, I told the students that women in China, or in East Asia such as Japan and Korea, are passionate about keeping their face skin white, but men with white face skin are considered feminine. After the discussion, I told them the correct answer was 富 (fù, meaning rich). Students found such content engaging because it offered them a different perspective to view things and at the same time, enhanced their memory of the characters.

6.1.3 Assessment

Assessment is an important tool to evaluate students' progress in the learning process. It can take different forms. The Chinese language program in this study demonstrated a good example of using a combination of assessment forms to avoid weighing too heavily on one test when giving the final marks. The assessment forms included daily quizzes, tests of each unit, written compositions, individual and group oral performance. They were spread throughout a term, assessing students' progress at each stage. As each assessment accounted for only a small percentage of the final mark, students could still make it up if they did not do well in one quiz or test. This was an effective way to push students to learn Mandarin on a daily basis while at the same time, releasing them from the pressure of one big final exam. Besides, assessment could serve as an effective way to motivate students, especially for them to see the progress they have made.

In the meantime, we have also learned from this study that too much emphasis on standard criteria and marks tended to discourage or even alienate students. One prominent issue in this study was fairness. Because of limited enrollment numbers, it was impossible to split the heritage and non-heritage students into different classes. When the same assessment standard was used for a class with both heritage and non-heritage students who had different starting levels, the issue of fairness became unavoidable. Moreover, standard assessment exerted pressure on students who progressed slowly and needed more time to grasp the learning content. Both cases would lead to students' dissatisfaction on the learning result and discourage them from continuing to learn Mandarin. Thus, in MAL education, it is important to strike a balance between maintaining fairness under the current educational system, valuing students' differences,

and promoting their agency in monitoring their own progress and developing learning strategies for their own learning styles. This is an issue that is worth further exploration.

6.1.4 Teacher training

In the MAL teaching field, the ratio of Mandarin native speaker teachers to non-native speaker teachers is 9:1 (Orton, 2014). Similarly, the language teachers in the Chinese program in this study were all native speakers of Mandarin. The predominant number of native speaker teachers means that a primary task of MAL teacher training is to help these teachers develop a mindset of viewing Chinese language learning from the perspective of foreign language learners. Native speaker teachers have the experience of learning Mandarin as the first language; some of them may also have the experience of teaching Mandarin as the first language. However, the situation in a Canadian MAL classroom is totally different. The students are from different cultural backgrounds; their purposes of learning Mandarin are different; and their learning styles are different as well. If native speaker teachers rely mainly on their own Mandarin learning and teaching experience to teach MAL, the result would not be satisfactory. This is what McDonald (2011b) critiques that Chinese language teachers have unconsciously created a number of barriers to foreign students becoming functional users of Chinese due to the understandings of the nature of the Chinese language from native speakers' perspectives. Thus, it is important to raise the awareness among native speaker teachers about the importance of understanding their students in the MAL learning context and viewing Mandarin from the perspective of a foreign language.

In addition, teacher training needs to take into consideration the huge amount of Mandarin language resources that students have been using outside class. Teachers

should be equipped with the knowledge of popular learning resources and be trained on how to adapt them for classroom teaching purposes. For example, students in this study all used Apps like Pleco and Skritter to learn Chinese characters. Hence, teacher training should include information about these Apps and train teachers to use them on their own smart phones. This not only helps teachers stay on top of the technology development related to learning Mandarin, but also provides them with more teaching resources to use. Another example would be the book mentioned in chapter one on how to remember the meaning and writing of Chinese characters written by James W. Heisig and Timothy W. Richardson. Based on their own experience of learning MAL, the authors created stories to help remember the characters. This is a popular book among MAL learners, but it may not be heard by many native speaker teachers. Such books should be included in teacher training as well. Teachers should be encouraged to add this method to the traditional methods such as etymology and the analysis of phonetic and semantic parts of a character.

6.2 Limitations of the Research

There are three major limitations in this research. The first is the type of student participants recruited for this research. As the conversations and interviews show, all the student participants could be categorized as engaging students, especially those who participated in the focused group conversations. To attract the MAL students to participate in this research, I offered the incentive of practising Mandarin every other week during the focused group conversation. Thus, this research mainly revealed findings related to why and how students were engaged in learning MAL, but it did not provide insights into why students were not engaged in learning MAL. It would add to the

understanding of MAL students' engagement if there were findings from the perspective of non-engaging students.

The second is that due to limited number of teacher participants, the findings and analysis focus mainly on students' perspectives. While it is important to listen to what the students think about the curriculum and the learning content, teachers' voice is also important for a more holistic view on the teaching and learning process. Student participants stated their views on CAL teaching from their own learning experiences, which may not be all correct or applicable from teachers' perspectives. As this research had only two teacher participants, it lacks sufficient representation of teachers' voice.

Lastly, in this research, I did not find examples of translanguaging practices. Translanguaging practice refers to bilinguals and multilinguals' "merging of linguistic repertoires" to effectively represent their identities and objectives (Canagarajah, 2012, p. 2). In second language classrooms, translanguaging is the result of students' active participation in learning activities and their creative use of various linguistic resources to exert their thoughts and achieve communicative purposes. It was a pity that in this study, I did not find examples of translanguaging performance in the classroom and the students' written compositions. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, the student participants were beginning learners of Mandarin and had limited vocabulary and understanding of the language. This constrained their ability to use Mandarin creatively and critically to express their ideas. For example, *Integrated Chinese Level 1 Part 1* has about 300 new words. Students would not remember all of them, and for those they do remember, they may not be able to use them fluently because of lack of practice. This can be seen from the quotes in this research. I spoke in Mandarin as much as I could during

the focus group conversations, and I encouraged the student participants to use Mandarin. However, the students still relied very heavily on English to express their meanings. The second reason is that much emphasis was laid on the accuracy of the language as teacher's explanation on vocabulary and grammar accounted for more than 80% of the class time. The limited practice time in class was also mainly devoted to enhancing students' understanding of the vocabulary and grammar points. The strong emphasis on language knowledge and accuracy left little room for translanguaging practice in class.

6.3 Future Research

Many more studies need to be done on student engagement in learning MAL to enrich understandings on this topic. Research can be conducted on different groups of adult learners such as higher level MAL students and students who are not engaged in learning Mandarin. Research on higher level MAL students' learning experience could focus on the reasons why they persist in learning Mandarin, the challenges they face, and the strategies they adopt to make steady progress in the learning process. In addition, as mentioned earlier, studies on students who failed to engage in learning MAL could also provide valuable insights into factors that lead to negative impacts on students' learning experience.

Another research area is effective approach to teaching and learning MAL. This includes studies on different aspects in curriculum such as teaching and learning materials, teaching methods, and assessment. In teaching and learning material development, research can be done on how to effectively integrate cultural content into the learning materials. As discussed earlier, although *Integrated Chinese* is the most popular textbook in North America, its cultural content still needs to be improved from

general cultural facts to contents more relevant to MAL learners' own culture and life experiences. Research is also needed on development of graded supplementary reading materials to meet the needs of MAL learners with different language proficiency. Student participants in this study mentioned specifically the difficulty in finding suitable reading materials such as storybooks that were both interesting and easy to read.

In terms of teaching methods, more research is needed to investigate the meaning of learner-centeredness in the specific context of MAL education from perspectives such as students' expectations and teacher-student relationships. In the meantime, cases of effective teaching practice should be documented and analyzed to serve as useful references for teacher training. As we know, teaching is basically a practice. Effective teaching methods can only come from actual classrooms. The success stories of experienced MAL teachers can be both revealing and inspiring. Finally, research on assessment can focus on the roles of different assessment forms and strategies of using assessment effectively to both motivate students and evaluate their performance.

6.4 Towards a Translanguaging and Transcultural Practice

From the perspective of translanguaging teaching practice, students' creative and critical use of an additional language is based on relatively fluent use and good understandings of the language in relation to their own life so that they can appropriate it when situations come up. While students' knowledge of MAL can be accumulated with time, their ability to think critically and creatively and to have their own voice in Chinese needs to be encouraged and developed from the beginning of the learning process. This requires a paradigm shift from a monolingual view of language towards a complexity and ecological understanding of language. Besides, the teaching of an additional language

should also shift its focus from isolated linguistic forms to contextualized teaching. When learning a new language, students not only acquire a new linguistic system, but more importantly, making meanings of the living world represented by the language. They bring into the interpretation of the additional language their own worldview and all their past experiences. Through the encounter of the two worldviews, or the two horizons as in Gadamer's term, new meanings emerge. As bilinguals or multilinguals, learners develop a transcultural ability of moving between different horizons at ease and employing all their linguistic and cultural resources to behave and express themselves appropriately in different situations.

The paradigm shift to translanguaging and transculturalism is key to student engagement in second language education. As researchers and educators move towards a more open and dynamic mindset, we will expect to see more possibilities open up in classroom teaching practices that cater to the real needs of the learners. Finally, I want to use a short story, *Yes and No* by Amy Tan (2004), to conclude this thesis. It begins with a conversation with Amy's mother, who left China in the 1940s and lived in the US ever since, and Amy's aunt (Sau-sau, 嫂嫂, meaning "brother's wife") who went to visit the family from China:

She reached across the table to offer my elderly aunt from Beijing the last scallop...

Sau-sau scowled. "B'yao, zhen b'yao!" (I don't want it, really I don't!) she cried, patting her plump stomach.

"Take it! Take it!" scolded my mother in Chinese.

“Full, I’m already full,” Sau-sau protested weakly, eyeing the beloved scallop.

“Ai!” exclaimed my mother, completely exasperated. “Nobody else wants it. If you don’t take it, it will only rot!”

At this point, Sau-sau sighed, acting as if she were doing my mother a big favor by taking the wretched scrap off her hands.

My mother turned to her brother, a high-ranking communist official who was visiting her in California for the first time: “In America a Chinese person could starve to death. If you say you don’t want it, they won’t ask you again forever.”

Amy Tan describes vividly the Chinese way of hosts being hospitable and guests being polite. In the conversation, “b’yao” does not really mean “I don’t want it”, and “being exasperated” does not really mean being angry with the guest. It is through this “act” of repetitive protesting from the guest and persistent request from the host that the Chinese way of hospitality and politeness is achieved. Much is unsaid in the words, and the actual intention needs to be interpreted by the interlocutors. That’s why Amy’s mother claimed that if the Chinese way of “yes” and “no” was taken at its superficial level, “a Chinese person could starve to death” in America. For Amy, an American born Chinese, this was a real-life experience to interact with and be more experienced with the Chinese culture. In the end of the story, she described how she was able to intermingle with her uncle and aunt’s way of politeness and be a good host:

On their last night, I announced that I wanted to take them out to dinner.

“Are you hungry?” I asked in Chinese.

“Not hungry,” said my uncle promptly, the same response he once gave me ten minutes before he suffered a low-blood-sugar attack.

“Not too hungry,” said my aunt. “Perhaps you are hungry?”

“A little,” I admitted.

“We can eat, we can eat then,” they both consented.

“What kind of food?” I asked.

“Oh, doesn’t matter. Anything will do. Nothing fancy, just some simple food is fine.”

“Do you like Japanese food? We haven’t had that yet,” I suggested.

They looked at each other.

“We can eat it,” said my uncle bravely, this survivor of the Long March.

“We have eaten it before,” added my aunt. “Raw fish.”

“Oh, you don’t like it?” I said. “Don’t be polite. We can go somewhere else.”

“We are not being polite. We can eat it,” my aunt insisted.

So I drove them to Japantown and we walked past several restaurants featuring colorful plastic displays of sushi.

“Not this one, not this one either,” I continued to say, as if searching for a Japanese restaurant similar to the last. “Here it is,” I finally said, turning into a restaurant famous for its Chinese fish dishes from Shandong Province.

“Oh, Chinese food!” cried my aunt, obviously relieved.

My uncle patted my arm. “You think like a Chinese.”

“It’s your last night here in America,” I said. “So don’t be polite. Act like an American.”

And that night we ate a banquet.

I quoted in length the conversation between Amy and her uncle and aunt because it is an excellent example of how Amy was successfully interacting between her American culture and Chinese culture to be a good host for her Chinese guests. We see from the conversation how Amy’s uncle and aunt behaved politely in the Chinese way: not to accept the host’s offer for dinner because it would cost her money to do so (when Amy asked them if they were hungry and they said “no”) and try to accommodate the host’s desire (they agreed to go for dinner when Amy said that she was a bit hungry, and they unwillingly accepted the suggestion of Japanese food because they thought Amy wanted it). Amy’s respond was more direct like the American way, but she was able to grasp the real meaning behind her uncle and aunt’s words and took them to a Japanese restaurant famous for Chinese fish dishes, an adequate place for dinner, also an indication of well-balanced hybridity for a happy ending.

In the situation of teaching Chinese as an additional language, we can imagine how frustrated our students would be if they could not interpret the language properly in situations like what Amy Tan describes in her story, or what a great achievement they would feel if they could. The latter is what we should strive to achieve in order to successfully engage our learners.

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Appendix 1 Consent Form for Focus Group Conversation

Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:

Xueqin Wu, PhD Candidate, Werklund School of Education, 587-707-6558,
xuwu@ucalgary

Title of Project:

A Hermeneutic Understanding of Learners' Engagement in Learning Chinese as an Additional Language

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Purpose of the Study

This study explores adult learners' engagement in learning Chinese as an additional language (CAL). The objectives are two-fold: (a) to understand learners' perception on their learning of Mandarin as an additional language; and (b) to examine how their perceptions of CAL affect their own living experiences.

What Will I Be Asked To Do?

You will be invited to participate in bi-weekly group conversations. Each conversation will last for about one hour. You will be asked to reflect on your CAL learning experiences, including aspects of Mandarin that you find interesting or most difficult to learn, moments that intrigue you or frustrate you during your learning of the language, and teaching practice that you enjoy. You can also take this as a good opportunity to ask any questions about Chinese language or cultural understanding of the language.

Participation is completely voluntary, that the individual may refuse to participate altogether, may refuse to participate in parts of the study, may decline to answer any and all questions, and may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

The course instructor is not involved in the research and the research is not connected to your course grades.

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?

No personal identifying information will be collected in this study, and all participants shall remain anonymous.

The conversations will be audio-recorded. Part of them will be transcribed by the researcher. All the research data are kept in a password-protected computer only accessible by the researcher. The recordings will not ever be shown in public. The anonymous data will be stored for three years on a computer disk, at which time, it will be permanently erased. The recordings will be also destroyed by the end of the three years, at the end of year 2018.

There are several options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. You can choose all, some, or none of them. Please review each of these options and choose Yes or No:

I wish to remain anonymous: Yes: ___ No: ___

I wish to remain anonymous, but you may refer to me by a pseudonym:

Yes: ___ No: ___

The pseudonym I choose for myself is:

You may quote me and use my name: Yes: ___ No: ___

Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?

There will be minimal risk for you to participate in the study. The benefit could be that you get the chance to practice your Mandarin and to know more about Chinese culture during the group conversations.

What Happens to the Information I Provide?

The researcher and her supervisor will have access to the information collected. Pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity.

Participation is completely voluntary, anonymous and confidential. You are free to discontinue participation at any time during the study. In the case that a participant withdraws from a study, all data the participant contributed to the study will be destroyed.

No one except the researcher and her supervisor will be allowed to see the data or hear the recordings. Absolute confidentiality and anonymity cannot be guaranteed for group conversations, since participants may know one another's identities and, though the researcher may ask participants to keep the discussion confidential, she cannot control what is said outside the group. The anonymous data will be stored for three years on a computer disk, at which time, it will be permanently erased.

Signatures

Your signature on this form indicates that 1) you understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) you agree to participate in the research project.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name: (please print)

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

Xueqin Wu
PhD Candidate
Werklund School of Education
University of Calgary
2500 University Drive, NW
Calgary, AB, Canada, T2N 1N4
Tel: 587-707-6558
Email: xuwu@ucalgary.ca

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Analyst, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at (403) 210-9863; email cfreb@ucalgary.ca.

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

Appendix 2 Consent Form for Individual Interview

Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:

Xueqin Wu, PhD Candidate, Werklund School of Education, 587-707-6558,
xuwu@ucalgary

Title of Project:

A Hermeneutic Understanding of Learners' Engagement in Learning Chinese as an Additional Language

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Purpose of the Study

This study explores adult learners' engagement in learning Chinese as an additional language (CAL). The objectives are two-fold: (a) to understand learners' perception on their learning of Mandarin as an additional language; and (b) to examine how their perceptions of CAL affect their own living experiences.

What Will I Be Asked To Do?

You will be invited to have individual conversations with the researcher. The focus of the individual conversation will be: 1) to discuss in more depth some topics related to learners' engagement in learning CAL; 2) to reflect on your CAL learning experiences, especially the engaging moments in the learning. You can also take this as a good opportunity to ask any questions about Chinese language or cultural understanding of the language.

Participation is completely voluntary, that the individual may refuse to participate altogether, may refuse to participate in parts of the study, may decline to answer any and all questions, and may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

The course instructor is not involved in the research and the research is not connected to your course grades.

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?

No personal identifying information will be collected in this study, and all participants shall remain anonymous.

The conversations will be audio-recorded. Part of them will be transcribed by the researcher. All the research data are kept in a password-protected computer only accessible by the researcher. The recordings will not ever be shown in public. The anonymous data will be stored for three years on a computer disk, at which time, it will be permanently erased. The recordings will be also destroyed by the end of the three years, at the end of year 2018.

There are several options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. You can choose all, some, or none of them. Please review each of these options and choose Yes or No:

I wish to remain anonymous: Yes: ___ No: ___

I wish to remain anonymous, but you may refer to me by a pseudonym:

Yes: ___ No: ___

The pseudonym I choose for myself is:

You may quote me and use my name: Yes: ___ No: ___

Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?

There will be minimal risk for you to participate in the study. The benefit could be that you get the chance to practice your Mandarin and to know more about Chinese culture during the conversations.

What Happens to the Information I Provide?

The researcher and her supervisor will have access to the information collected. Pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity.

Participation is completely voluntary, anonymous and confidential. You are free to discontinue participation at any time during the study. In the case that a participant withdraws from a study, all data the participant contributed to the study will be destroyed.

No one except the researcher and her supervisor will be allowed to see the data or hear the recordings. Absolute confidentiality and anonymity cannot be guaranteed for group conversations, since participants may know one another's identities and, though the researcher may ask participants to keep the discussion confidential, she cannot control what is said outside the group. The anonymous data will be stored for three years on a computer disk, at which time, it will be permanently erased.

Signatures

Your signature on this form indicates that 1) you understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) you agree to participate in the research project.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name: (please print)

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

Xueqin Wu
PhD Candidate
Werklund School of Education
University of Calgary
2500 University Drive, NW
Calgary, AB, Canada, T2N 1N4
Tel: 587-707-6558
Email: xuwu@ucalgary.ca

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Analyst, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at (403) 210-9863; email cfreb@ucalgary.ca.

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

Appendix 3 Consent Form for Classroom Observation

Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:

Xueqin Wu, PhD Candidate, Werklund School of Education, 587-707-6558,
xuwu@ucalgary

Title of Project:

A Hermeneutic Understanding of Learners' Engagement in Learning Chinese as an Additional Language

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Purpose of the Study

This study explores adult learners' engagement in learning Chinese as an additional language (CAL). The objectives are two-fold: (a) to understand learners' perception on their learning of Mandarin as an additional language; and (b) to examine how their perceptions of CAL affect their own living experiences.

What Will I Be Asked To Do?

You do not need to do anything particular for the purpose of this research. The researcher will observe your learning activities once a week.

Participation is completely voluntary, that the individual may refuse to participate altogether, may refuse to participate in parts of the study, may decline to answer any and all questions, and may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

The course instructor is not involved in the research and the research is not connected to your course grades.

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?

No personal identifying information will be collected in this study, and all participants shall remain anonymous.

During the classroom observation, I will take notes on classroom activities. I will also collect some writing samples from you such as your power point presentations or written assignments. Your name on these written samples will be removed and replaced with

pseudonyms. These written samples are kept in a locked cabinet and electronic research data are kept in a password-protected computer only accessible by the researcher. The original notes and collected materials will not ever be shown in public. The anonymous data will be stored for three years on a computer disk, at which time, it will be permanently erased. The data will be also destroyed by the end of the three years, that is, at the end of year 2018.

There are several options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. You can choose all, some, or none of them. Please review each of these options and choose Yes or No:

I wish to remain anonymous: Yes: ___ No: ___

I wish to remain anonymous, but you may refer to me by a pseudonym:

Yes: ___ No: ___

The pseudonym I choose for myself is:

You may quote me and use my name: Yes: ___ No: ___

Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?

There will be minimal risk for you to participate in the study.

What Happens to the Information I Provide?

The researcher and her supervisor will have access to the information collected. Pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity.

Participation is completely voluntary, anonymous and confidential. You are free to discontinue participation at any time during the study. In the case that a participant withdraws from a study, all data the participant contributed to the study will be destroyed.

No one except the researcher and her supervisor will be allowed to see the data or hear the recordings. Absolute confidentiality and anonymity cannot be guaranteed for group conversations, since participants may know one another's identities and, though the researcher may ask participants to keep the discussion confidential, she cannot control what is said outside the group. The anonymous data will be stored for three years on a computer disk, at which time, it will be permanently erased.

Signatures

Your signature on this form indicates that 1) you understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) you agree to participate in the research project.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name: (please print)

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

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If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Analyst, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at (403) 210-9863; email cfreb@ucalgary.ca.

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

Appendix 4 Guided Questions for Focus Group Conversation and Individual Interview

1. Can you tell me when you started to learn Mandarin and how?
2. Can you tell me your family and cultural background?
3. What aspects of Mandarin do you find most interesting, grammar, Chinese characters, culture, or other things?
4. How important do you think grammar is in learning Mandarin? Do you think it is necessary to explain grammar points clearly in class?
5. Do you like the way grammar is taught in your class? Is there any improvement the teacher can make in teaching grammatical knowledge?
6. How would you describe the teacher's teaching style in class? Do you think it is an effective teaching style for you?
7. Do you like learning Chinese characters? Do you think it is important to be able to read and write Chinese characters by hand?
8. Do you think Pinyin is helpful in learning Chinese characters? If yes, in which ways? Do you think Pinyin can replace Chinese characters in learning Chinese?
9. Do you think etymology helps you learn Chinese characters? If yes, in which ways?
10. How do you understand culture in learning a new language? Do you think it is necessary to spend class time learning Chinese culture?
11. There is a popular word in China nowadays—"土豪金". It is actually a golden color with a descriptive term "土豪". In the 1950s, 土豪 was a derogative term referring to the exploring class of landlord. But in today's China, it becomes a

token of social status. How do you perceive the change of this term? Do you think it is important for you to know the evolvement of such terms when learning Mandarin? Why or why not?

12. How do you enjoy the experience of learning Mandarin so far?
13. Can you describe one or two experiences in your learning of Mandarin in which you were fully engaged? What do you think makes you fully engaged in those experiences?
14. Do you think learning Mandarin has impact on your understanding of yourself and your life? If yes, in which ways?
15. Are you considering taking Chinese as a minor degree? Why or why not?