Classroom Communication and the Teaching of Chinese in Canada:
A Case Study

by

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ABSTRACT

A few reasons taken together have led to the undertaking of this study: an urgent need to examine classroom teaching in the drastically growing teaching-Chinese-as-a-second/foreign-language (TCSL/TCFL) industry; a personal interest in probing a cross-cultural Chinese teacher’s treatment of communication in teaching; and the implications from theories of teacher beliefs and practice.

Thus, this study investigated how a TCFL teacher posits her teaching beliefs and practice in light of her communicative habits when facing a variety of tensions (e.g., those from culture, ideology, educational tradition, curricular prescription, and pedagogical trend). This qualitative case study was triangulated with multiple data sources: interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, with an experienced teacher in Canada who has taught in both China and Canada.

The findings of the study supported the literature on teacher beliefs and practice, and on the implementation of communicative language teaching (CLT). The majority of this teacher’s practices were based on the premise that they corresponded to the actualization of her beliefs. Meanwhile, there existed a few minor gaps between her educational beliefs and practices. This teacher demonstrated adaptability in tailoring her teaching to be most suitable in meeting her educational needs and beliefs. This study first provides insights to TCFL classroom teaching and program development in North America with CLT implementation in this area. In addition, the results of the study have implications for the
evolving process of teachers’ belief systems and patterns of practice and future research into this field.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Presently, about 40 million foreigners are learning Chinese in the world. China’s National Office for Teaching Chinese estimated that this figure will reach 100 million by 2010 (Wei, 2006). As a consequence, designing and planning the curriculum for the teaching of Chinese as a second/foreign language (TCSL/TCFL) has been receiving worldwide attention. The *China Youth Daily* reported that 2,500 higher-education institutions from over 100 countries are running TCSL/TCFL programs (“The teaching of Chinese,” 2006).

However, compared to the rapid emergence of TCSL/TCFL programs, overall research concerning the status quo of classroom teaching in existing curricula is far behind. As a former TCSL/TCFL teacher myself\(^1\), I pay extra heed to teacher thinking and its implementation in classroom teaching across cultures. This research focuses on a Chinese teacher who has transferred her teaching from the Chinese context, i.e., Mainland China, to the Western context, specifically, Canada, where “Chinese has become the second most important language except in [French speaking] Quebec” (B. Li, 2004, p. 75). Hence, this study not only responds to the dramatically increasing demand for TCSL/TCFL teachers in the world\(^2\) and the corresponding attention-getting teacher

\(^1\) I have taught for three years in total as both a full-time and part-time Chinese instructor at the post-secondary level in Mainland China and one year as a full-time Chinese teacher at the high-school level in Hong Kong.

\(^2\) According to China’s National Office for Teaching Chinese, there will be a demand for approximately 500,000 TCSL/TCFL teachers by 2010 in a ratio of 1:20 between teacher and student (“Five hundred million foreigners”, 2006).
education industry, but also answers my personal and professional concerns as being one of the actors in this field.

Purpose

This study aimed to uncover the complexity an experienced TCFL teacher faced in shaping her beliefs, gaining the knowledge, and sharing her practices in the communicative orientation of her TCFL undertaking in Canada. Three specific objectives were addressed:

1. To identify and present the teacher’s beliefs and knowledge about her communicative teaching orientation.
2. To describe her instructional practices for this aspect.
3. To understand the impact of her cross-cultural experience on her beliefs, knowledge, and practices about the communicative orientation in teaching.

This study, aligned with its precursors, namely the large body of research examining teachers’ beliefs, sought to provide a particular account of a TCFL teacher to other teachers and teacher candidates, and expected that they could gain an understanding about their own teaching at both instructional and conceptual levels, while implementing it effectively in their teaching contexts. The teacher who participated in this study was mostly looked at for her second/foreign language (L2/FL) pedagogical thinking and actions from an experiential and cultural perspective. For instance, how were her beliefs and practices shaped or reshaped? What factors affected her holding certain teaching beliefs and carrying out certain practices in class? What beliefs and practices of hers were particularly shaped by the Chinese culture? What beliefs and practices of hers were
especially influenced by the Canadian culture? What strategies did she use to meet the expectations and needs of Canadian students? How did what she had retained from her Chinese heritage work for her non-Chinese students in Canada? Via conducting this study, I was able to find answers to these questions from the particular account provided by my participant teacher.

Definition of Terms

“Teacher beliefs and practice” is a difficult set of concepts to define. From the 1970s to today, there has been a growing body of literature (e.g. Connelly, 1972; Elbaz, 1981, 1983; Pajares, 1992; Richards, 1996; Skowron, 2006) dealing with this area. As a result, various labels and models have been created in order to interpret the notion of teacher beliefs and practices. However, Pajares declared in a meta-analysis of the literature that these titles and interpretations simply suggested the same or similar meanings. Overall, it is widely accepted by previous literature that “teacher beliefs” represent those principles and perceptions held by teachers that are generated through their dynamic cognitive system to comprehend and approach their teaching. “Teacher practice” indicates the behaviours and actions teachers perform in their actual teaching, which are usually practically reflections of the teachers’ cognitive thinking.

“TCSL” identifies the teaching of the target language (i.e., Mandarin Chinese) that happens in a community where Chinese is used as the official language, e.g., Mainland China. “TCFL” identifies the teaching of Chinese that happens in a community where Chinese is not used as the official language, e.g., Canada (D. Li, 1998).
“Communicative Language Teaching” (usually abbreviated as “CLT”) “is a broad approach to teaching that resulted from a focus on communication as the organizing principle for teaching rather than a focus on mastery of the grammatical system of the language” (Richards, 2001, p. 36). Its goal is to develop learners’ communicative competence which consists of grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociocultural competence, and strategic competence ((D. Li, 1998; Savignon, 2001).

Rationale

I have taught Chinese to non-native speakers of Chinese in a variety of Chinese settings and an American setting in and out of China. I noticed a difference between the pedagogical approaches adopted in the two contexts that I was exposed to. Evidence from relevant research (e.g., Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Li, 1998; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999) identified that teachers in more communicative contexts (such as Canada) were inclined to embrace a CLT (Canale & Swain, 1980) philosophy in modifying their teaching beliefs and practices while teachers in less communicative contexts (such as China) tended to use a mixture of the audiolingual and grammar-translation methods and educational traditions developed in the local society. In light of this observation, I chose to examine what communicative teaching orientation a teacher was likely to adopt if she had been successively exposed to two or more contexts that widely differed in the way of implementing communication into the teaching approach. Meanwhile, in order to recognize how a teacher’s practices regarding a communicative orientation had been formed, I had to resort to the conceptual framework of teacher beliefs and practice. The reason was that, according to Elbaz (1983), “teachers hold a complex, practically-
oriented set of understandings which they use actively to shape and direct their teaching” (p. 3). Thus, I decided to embark on a study about how a cross-cultural TCFL teacher posited her teaching beliefs and practices of using a communicative orientation to face a variety of tensions (i.e., including culture, ideology, educational tradition, curricular prescription, and pedagogical trend) in Canada. This study called for theoretical and experimental support from the literature in four areas: the pedagogical traditions in Chinese and Western contexts, the implementation of CLT, teachers’ beliefs and practices, and the use of COLT.

Overview of the Thesis

This thesis includes six chapters. To set the stage for this investigation, the first chapter begins with a brief introduction to the study and details its purpose and objectives. In the second chapter, I sketch a rationale underpinning the current research; then I review the literature in four areas: pedagogical traditions in Chinese and Western contexts, teacher beliefs and practice, implementation of the communicative approach and the CLT, and the use of Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT, Spada & Fröhlich, 1995) scheme.

The third chapter outlines the research approach and methods adopted in this study, followed by a description of data collection procedures and analysis techniques. In the fourth chapter, I present a detailed account of the analysis results for interviews, classroom observations, and teaching documents. I then discuss the analysis results obtained from the current study with a comparison with the relevant literature. Lastly, I
close with conclusions from the present study and some limitations and implications for future studies.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Pedagogical Traditions in Chinese and Western Contexts

Several studies (e.g., Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Connelly, Clandinin, & He, 1997; Guo, 2002; Wang, 2005) have documented the distinct features and differences regarding educational ideologies and practices between China and Western countries, especially with respect to the treatment of communication in language teaching. For instance, traditional Chinese educational ideologies and practice emphasized intra-personal skills such as memorization, self-study, and introspection (Burnaby & Sun; Wang). More than two thousand years ago, Confucius, the first public educationalist in Chinese history, set his educational goal as cultivating the learner to be a “man of honour” (Guo). Confucius proposed that the uppermost guideline of being a “man of honour” should be “training oneself to gain high-standard morality, knowledge, and talent before one can serve others” (Guo, p. 83). To attain this goal, Confucius believed that a “man of honour” should equip himself with many virtues. These virtues may lie in various aspects, such as cultivating oneself to become a “whole person,” shaping one’s appropriate way of treating others in society, developing a way to ease communication with others, and nurturing one’s learning habits. Confucius identified five qualities for becoming a whole person: gentleness, good-heartedness, respectfulness, absence of materialism, and modesty. At the same time, when one is developing a relationship with others, one should possess three characteristics: when people are looking at the person, they would
be aware that he is dignified and correspondingly hold him in great reverence; when people are approaching him, they would be aware that he is in fact an honest and kind person; when people are listening to the person’s speech, they would be aware that he has a serious attitude when doing things and therefore he holds high standards for himself and others. Confucius also suggested an appropriate manner of communicating with others: being responsible for one’s behaviour and being cautious of what to be said. Meanwhile, the exemplary learning habits possessed by such a person should include: mostly, sometimes solely, relying on one’s own ability and competence to realize learning goals; and only attaining these goals through personal efforts. A person with such qualities should be worthy of honour (Guo, 2002).

These education philosophies and principles had been afterwards held up as the canon in Chinese society. People, especially men, were expected or even required to be the “man of honour.” There was no exception for educators and their pupils who were assumed to represent the highest intellectual and moral standards at the time. In fact, Confucius’ standards for educating people to become the “man of honour” originated from his theoretical construction and educational practice in teaching his three thousand pupils (Guo, 2002). To Confucius and the thousands upon thousands of educators in subsequent ancient Chinese society, the transmission of knowledge to pupils was no doubt extremely important to enlighten pupils’ minds; nevertheless, the moral aspect was perceived to be even more basic in forming a whole person. In order to fulfill these two

3 The reason for the use of “he” other than “he/she” here is that the “man of honour” Confucius conceived, only identified men in ancient China.
major missions, educators firmly believed that pupils’ learning could only benefit by enhancing their internal learning ability and self-reflection.

Another prestigious educator in ancient China, Xun Kuang, subsequently posited the even more detailed expectations for an educator who primarily ought to become a “man of honour” himself while shouldering the responsibility to educate his pupils to become such a person as well. He provided four conditions for teachers to become worthy of that designation. First, the teacher must have dignity and be respectable; second, he should have great authority and be very knowledgeable about his subject-matter and teaching skills; third, he should be capable of logically and systematically transmitting knowledge to pupils while not speaking against classic doctrines that were set by previous education masters; and fourth, he should include the most subtle aspects in teaching and be able to give clear instructions.

Over the past two to three thousand years, the Chinese educational system has followed such a practice: the teaching of the Chinese language became a fundamental subject matter in the holistic educational system. That is to say, it served as the origin and basis of many other subjects such as philosophy, history and historiography, politics, religion studies, etiquette and custom studies, textual research, ethics, fine arts, and so on (Wang, 2005). For example, in children’s early school years, they had to learn how to read and write Chinese characters, read and recite essays from the textbook, and write paragraphs and compositions (“The development of ancient Chinese education,” 2007). At the same time, or shortly after, pupils had to be introduced to concepts and notions of other subject matters, such as Chinese history, philosophy, and moral training, through
the fundamental subject, the Chinese language. Rather than being separated from the learning of Chinese language and literacy, these subjects were integrated into Chinese studies which displayed an interdisciplinary character.

In summary, Confucius’ criteria in defining a “man of honour,” and the ancient Chinese education system provoked a better grasp of the Chinese pedagogical conventions and traditions over thousands of years. Specifically, both the teacher and learners should make efforts to become exemplary persons and intellectuals who could be qualified as the “man of honour.” They should possess high self-awareness, a good sense of responsibility, personal ethics, self-esteem, confidence, self-discipline, individual problem solving skills, critical thinking skills, etc. Learners especially need to forge their intra-personal skills rather than to seek frequent interaction and assistance from others. The training and mastery of such skills were not only judged as necessary but also favoured by generations of learners and their educators in China including teachers and learners today.

At the same time, it was assumed that the teacher should display a rigid, professional, and authoritative attitude in front of all his pupils which is likely to help pupils achieve the best learning results. (Clandinin, & He, 1997; Guo, 2002; Wang, 2005). Most importantly, the teaching and learning of the Chinese language has been treated as a core subject in the Chinese educational system. Thus, this field of teaching was considered to be a typical reflection of traditional educational concepts and pedagogies, i.e. the notion that teachers are the source of knowledge in the Chinese classroom, the tradition of studying grammar, literature and carrying out in-depth analyses of literary texts, the
favouring of teacher-centered methods, and structured curricula (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Connelly, Clandinin, & He, 1997).

On the other hand, in the Western context, the “communicative approach” mushroomed in the 1970s. At this time, educators and linguists grew dissatisfied with the audiolingual and grammar-translation methods of foreign language instruction, and felt that students should know how to engage in real communication with one another by using appropriate social language, gestures, or expressions. The connection between language learning and interaction has been greatly developed since- “[language] is [an] interpersonal activity and has a clear relationship with society” (Galloway, 1993, p. 1). Hence, the CLT approach (e.g., Galloway; Li, 1998; Richards, 2001; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999) has been pushed to centre stage. According to Mangubhai, Marland, Dashwood and Son (2004), “CLT is not a rigidly circumscribed method of foreign language teaching but rather an approach, based on an amalgam of affiliated strategies, that seeks to develop communicative competence in students and requires a commitment to using foreign language as a medium for classroom communication as much as possible” (p. 292). It highlights making use of real-life situations and meaning-based tasks that necessitate communication and it suggests a classroom model of communicative competence including four components- grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociocultural competence⁴, and strategic competence (Savignon, 2001).

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⁴ Canale and Swain (1980) suggested “sociolinguistic competence” instead of “sociocultural competence.”
Teacher Beliefs and Practice

Since some researchers (e.g., Connelly, 1972; Hunt, 1976; Reid & Walker, 1975) made the shift in the 1970s to view teachers as persons who display an “autonomous decision-making function” (Elbaz, 1981, p. 44) to generate their personal conceptions of meaning (Hunt), research in teacher thinking has become “abundant and thriving” (Pajares, 1992, p. 307). However, at the same time Pajares pointed out that since beliefs had been studied in diverse fields, as a result there were a variety of interpretations for meaning-making. For instance, “attitudes, values, judgements, axioms, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, preconceptions, dispositions…” (p. 309), perspectives (Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1984), and personal practical knowledge (PPK) (Elbaz, 1981, 1983) all became the “alias” of belief constructs. Pajares criticized this “messy” situation as “new jargon, old meaning” (1992, p. 315).

Although some authors acknowledge that different interpretations have been assigned to beliefs and belief structures, others insist that it is “simply different words meaning the same thing” (Pajares, 1992, p. 309). There has at least been a general assumption in the field that “teacher beliefs” refer to different forms of teacher thinking, which are the best indicators of the decisions they make throughout their teaching (Pajares). This common understanding can be elaborated by the following statements: Teacher beliefs are teachers’ mental images, thoughts, maxims, principles and process to understand and approach their own teaching, which appear to reflect cultural factors, belief systems, experience, and training. The beliefs teachers hold influence their perceptions and judgments, which, in turn, affect the behaviours they adopt in practical
teaching. Understanding the belief structures of teachers and teacher candidates is essential to improve their professional preparation and teaching practices. (Goodman, 1988; Pajares; Richards, 1996).

How indeed are teacher beliefs formed and how do they evolve? Pajares’ (1992) review of many anthropological studies concluded that beliefs are created through a process of enculturation and social construction. This “cultural transmission has three components: enculturation, education, and schooling” (p. 316). For illustration, according to McAlpine, Eriks-Brophy, and Crago (1996), childhood experiences have a profound influence on developing educational beliefs. Schooling experiences and teacher education experiences also have an impact on teachers’ teaching beliefs, while the effect of schooling experiences has been posited for some time to outweigh teacher education experiences. In addition, informal learning such as interactions with significant others (e.g., parents) is also influential in creating educational beliefs. Thus, not only educational experiences but also factors beyond their profession, such as ethical identity and personality constructs, play significant roles in creating teachers’ educational beliefs.

As well as teacher beliefs, this study also includes another construct: knowledge. According to Pajares (1992), belief and knowledge are “inextricably intertwined” (p. 325) to become one “complex interpretative construct” which makes sense of, influences, and filters “all classroom actions, curricular decisions, and methodological concepts” (Medgyes, 1997, p. 403). Meanwhile, it is also accepted by other researchers that there is an artificial distinction between belief and knowledge: “Belief is based on evaluation and judgment; knowledge is based on objective fact” (Pajares, p. 313). Woods (1996) defined
“knowledge” as proven and conventionally accepted facts, while “belief” is seen as something non-demonstrable and non-consensual (Medgyes). In addition, one can differentiate “belief” from “knowledge” by looking at its affective nature (Nespor, 1987), episodic nature (Goodman, 1988; Nespor), experiential nature (Calderhead & Robson, 1991), nonconsensuality, and its influence on determining how individuals organize and define behaviours (Nespor). As we see, many criteria can be used to make a distinction between belief construct and knowledge construct; yet, it is often arduous and insignificant for teachers themselves to separate the two, much less for researchers who act as “outsiders” trying to look in on teachers’ mental activities. Lewis (1990) suggested that the “origin of all knowledge is rooted in belief, that ways of knowing are basically ways of choosing values” (as cited in Pajares, p. 313). After knowledge featured with specific values has been acquired, it will very likely be turned back to beliefs to influence them thus entailing their further evolvement or adjustment. As Pajares has argued: beliefs and knowledge are so inextricably intertwined, it becomes not always true, nor necessary, that teachers can explicitly identify the components of their thinking (i.e., knowledge, beliefs, and even image, principle, perception, etc.) and demonstrate the structure of their belief system.

In recent studies researchers, for example, Skowron (2006) in his study moved away from teacher thinking and concentrated on “intuitive teaching” as a final step in teaching expertise. Skowron referred to intuitive teaching as “the quick effortless, competent action observed in exceptional teachers” (p. 3). Before achieving the “intuitive teaching” level, teachers must go through three layers of painstaking development, i.e., a mental
schema for teaching (indicating an amalgam of all the information, concepts, skills, processes, attitudes, values, and beliefs teachers hold regarding teaching) at the core, interaction of metacognition, reflection, practices, and experience a further layer, and automaticity (indicating mental or physical behaviours developed through a multitude of repetitions) at the outermost layer. The three layers do not happen in a linear manner but rather as a three-dimensional sphere. That is to say, hidden from our view, schemata for teaching, metacognition, and automaticity change and impact each other at any time and in any order. On the surface, “teachers constantly assess the teaching-learning process, know when it is going well, know when to change something, and have a vast repertoire of automatic responses that may be brought into play” (Skowron, p. 3). The “intuitive teaching” level is eventually reached over time and is unique to each teacher. My participant teacher who has been involved in TCSL/TCFL across the Chinese and Canadian contexts for over two decades is no exception.

The Communicative Approach

*Communicative Competence*

In 1971, Hymes started with the claim that there was a clear distinction between linguistic competence and communicative competence. Hymes defined linguistic competence as knowledge of the rules of grammar, and communicative competence as knowledge of the rules of language use (Hymes). Since the theory of communicative competence was proposed, immediately, a fever for a communicative approach in language teaching was engendered, particularly in North America and in Great Britain
Richards (2001) commented that “the 1970s was a period when everyone was ‘going communicative’ ” (p. 36). Subsequently, Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983), Savignon (2001), etc., modified the concept of communicative competence and defined its structure. For example, Savignon mentioned that her earlier work in 1972 had described “communicative competence” as a feature to characterize language learners’ ability to interact with others in order to interpret, express, and negotiate meaning. At that time, she proposed the use of “coping strategies” (p. 16) in foreign language learning. That is to say, learners should be encouraged to “ask for information, to seek clarification, to use circumlocution and whatever other linguistic and nonlinguistic resources they could muster to negotiate meaning and stick to the communicative task at hand” (p. 16). Meanwhile, she suggested teachers lead learners to take risks in the use of their target language rather than simply practicing memorized patterns.

According to Savignon’s review of her previous work in 1972, the notion of coping strategies had been adopted and elaborated on by Canale and Swain (1980). Canale and Swain (1980) proposed a three-component framework for communicative competence, namely, grammatical competence, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence. Their communicative competence was measured in terms of fluency, comprehensibility, effort, and amount of communication in spontaneous oral communicative tasks. The results showed that learners who had practiced communication instead of laboratory pattern drills surpassed those who had no such practice. Meanwhile, learners who had been exposed to communicative tasks performed with no less accuracy on discrete-point tests
of grammatical structure than their counterparts who were exposed to traditional pattern drills.

Later on, Savignon (2001) modified the communicative competence model provided by Canale and Swain (1980). She divided it into four components: grammatical competence, discourse competence, socio-cultural competence and strategic competence. She further proposed a set of definitions for the four components: (a) “Grammatical competence refers to sentence-level grammatical forms, the ability to recognize the lexical, morphological, syntactic, and phonological feature of a language and to make use of these features to interpret and form words and sentences”; (b) “Discourse competence is concerned not with isolated words or phrases but with the interconnectedness of a series of utterances, written words, and/or phrases to form a text, a meaningful whole”; (c) “Sociocultural competence extends well beyond linguistic forms and is an interdisciplinary field of inquiry having to do with the social rules of language use”; and (d) Strategic competence indicates “the coping strategies that we use in unfamiliar contexts, with constraints due to imperfect knowledge or rules or limiting factors in their application such as fatigue or distraction” (p. 17-18).

Savignon suggested an “inverted pyramid” (p. 17) classroom model that showed how learners gradually expanded their communicative competence, through practices and experience in an increasingly wide range of communicative contexts and events. She considered that the four component competences were interrelated- an increase in one component interacted with other components to produce a corresponding increase in overall communicative competence rather than them being developed or measured in
isolation and being improved in sequence (for example, the progress of grammatical competence consequently advancing discourse competence is not likely to happen) (also see Canale, 1983).

Meanwhile, the concept of communicative competence was adopted in the educational system in many countries, such as Japan and Taiwan, no sooner than its theoretical base had been established (Savignon, 2001). Within these school systems, teaching materials, course descriptions, and curriculum guidelines all proclaimed a goal of communicative competence.

Communicative Language Teaching

CLT is a defined method with its essence stemming from the elements of communicative competence. It is the most representative method/approach of teaching language through communication in a communicative way (Richards, 2001). According to the review of Spada and Fröhlich (1995), CLT reached its peak in the early 1980s. Within the last few decades, a considerable number of conference papers, articles and books have supported and promoted CLT. Professional meetings have been centered around presentations on designing communicative curricula or programs and methods of evaluating communicative programs. Many efforts have been dedicated to the development of communicative activities in language classrooms. More interestingly, even textbooks and applied linguistics books have been filled with the word “communicative.”
The second language acquisition (SLA) area also provided enormous support to this theory in its early stages of development. One particularly strong advocate for a communicative approach in the SLA area was Stephen Krashen. He argued that if L2 learners were exposed to a L1-like learning environment and were provided with opportunities to focus on meaning and messages rather than language form and accuracy, they would be more likely to acquire their L2 as L1 learners. Thus, he argued that efforts should be made to create environments in L2 classrooms which more closely approximate the conditions of L1 acquisition (Krashen, 1985).

In the development and evolution of CLT, academics struggled to give a thorough description of CLT characteristics. Mangubhai et al. (2004) gave a comparatively complete account of the significant features of CLT as follows:

An emphasis on language use rather than language knowledge; greater emphasis on fluency and appropriateness in the use of the target language than structural correctness; minimal focus on form with corresponding low emphasis on error correction and explicit instruction on language rules or grammar; classroom tasks and exercises that depend on spontaneity and student trial-and-error and that encourage negotiation of meaning between students and students and teachers; use of authentic materials; an environment that is interactive, not excessively formal, encourages risk-taking and promotes students’ autonomy; teachers serving more as facilitators and participants than in the traditional didactic role; and students being actively involved in interpretation, expression and negotiation of meaning. (p. 292)

This complete set of characteristics accurately depicts CLT practice. In addition, this set of features can be used to differentiate teachers’ instructions that identify a CLT approach from those that have a focus on linguistic forms which are usually defined to be traditional teaching practice.
Although CLT was widely described and discussed by theorists, inconsistent explanations still existed with respect to how CLT might be successfully and practically implemented in language classrooms. These interpretations were mainly seen in applied linguistic theory, research and pedagogy. According to Spada & Fröhlich (1995), many models and frameworks were proposed regarding the implementation of the concept of CLT in L2 classrooms. Some of them supported the movement away from a focus on form and suggested an exclusively meaning-based instruction while others suggested including attention to both form and meaning. For example, Eskey (1981) proposed a balance of meaning and form by achieving three basic principles: first, basic language forms in the target language must be introduced systematically; second, these basic language forms must be introduced in communicative contexts; and third, clear expectations should be set for students to produce both appropriate discourse and well-formed sentences. Similarly, research conducted by Savignon in 1972 provided evidence that a combination of form and meaning was beneficial.

How then is CLT conducted in authentic teaching contexts and perceived among the teaching “practitioners”- teachers? To answer this question, we need to prepare a context in which CLT is called for. As we have mentioned earlier, Western countries have a fairly long history and an interest in using CLT in L2/FL classrooms. Burnaby and Sun pointed out in 1989 that “English-speaking countries value communicative language teaching [CLT] so highly that they not only use it widely domestically but also strongly encourage countries like China to adopt it as well” (p. 231). Their CLT implementation study provided a thoughtful comparison between the settings of ESL (English as a
second language) in Canada and EFL (English as a foreign language) in China: Canada has a lenient system for evaluating learners while China has rigid gatekeeping systems of examinations; the Canadian central administration has decided to emphasize egalitarian approaches to education while the Chinese central administration is emphasizing elitist approaches; as an immediate consequence, Canadians are not as greatly pressed to learn foreign languages as Chinese learners are; Canada has access to more resources than China toward CLT such as English-native-speaker instructors, teaching aids, small classes, availability of authentic English materials, and professional development for teachers (Burnaby & Sun). Obviously, Canada is in a favoured context to put CLT into action. Within this context, L2/FL teachers literally own the freedom of choosing whatever teaching approaches (most likely CLT for its more-frequent exposure to teachers) they prefer to implement in their own classrooms and receive support from various sources. Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) identified that the prominent theoretical and practical achievements of CLT would likely affect teachers’ beliefs and practices in the Western context.

In contrast, along with the differences observed by Burnaby and Sun (1989) on the CLT settings between Canada and China discussed above, it also indicated that the contemporary Chinese educational ideology and practices had been following a tradition distinct from that in Canada, i.e., a mixture of traditional Chinese scholarly teaching (e.g., characterized by teacher-centeredness and intra-personal educational strategies) and traditional Western form-focused pedagogical practices (e.g., characterized by the academic study of grammar, literature, and in-depth analysis of literary texts) (Burnaby
& Sun; Wang, 2005). CLT had not been introduced to the area of EFL in China until the past decade or two, and even later in the area of TCSL (Burnaby & Sun; Wang & Zhang, 2000). Similarly, in some other non-Western settings (e.g., D. Li’s study on ESL in Korea carried out in 1989, Sakui’s study on ESL in Japan carried out in 2004), research has found that although CLT is prescribed as the official language teaching approach to FL teaching, its implementation has encountered a variety of difficulties in these “less-communicative” countries. They are the difficulties caused by the teacher (e.g., discrepancy between the teachers’ “weak-version” definition of CLT and the situated understanding of CLT, lack of training and retraining in CLT, misconceptions about CLT, and little time and expertise for developing communicative materials), difficulties caused by the educational system (e.g., large classes, grammar-based examinations, insufficient funding, and lack of professional, administrative and collegial support), and those caused by CLT itself (e.g., inadequate account of FL teaching and the lack of effective and efficient assessment instruments in CLT). Sato and Kleinsasser’s (1999) study of a group of Japanese teachers in Australia also suggested that the teachers’ views and actions dealt little with the academic literature pertaining to CLT or their education in learning about CLT; rather, they resorted to their personal ideas and experiences, solidifying their notions of L2/FL teaching in further pursuing their evolving conceptions of CLT.

Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching

As noted earlier, given that there were different interpretations regarding the concept and implementation of CLT, different teachers, although sharing the same understanding
of it, used different ways to implement it. The COLT observation scheme was devised at such a time to provide a tool for researchers and teachers to evaluate the communicative nature of their classrooms.

The observation scheme of the Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT), initially developed by Fröhlich, Spada, and Allen (1985) and revised by Spada & Fröhlich (1995), was generated in response to the need for such a scheme which “could capture differences in the communicative orientation of L2 instruction and to examine their effects on learning outcomes” (Spada & Fröhlich, p. 4).

Until today, COLT has been widely adopted by researchers and educators in many process-product research studies either as a tool to provide objective detailed accounts of classroom activities or to record the communicative components and elements in language classrooms. In the book published by Spada and Fröhlich in 1995, the authors gave many examples of COLT being used and adapted by various researchers and educators alike to meet the demands of their research purposes. The authors noted that a researcher at the University of Ottawa was able to use the activity level portion (Part A of COLT) to collect data from a French immersion class to determine whether or not pedagogical differences reflected either a more communicative/experiential or a more analytical approach to the teaching of French language arts. Similarly, another researcher, reported by the authors, conducted a study in Australia, using both parts of COLT (Part B is helpful at the level of classroom utterances and teacher-student interactions) to assess whether different degrees of communicative orientation make a difference to learner
achievement in French. (For a detailed description and use of COLT, see Chapter 3: Method, p. 37)

*Application of the Theoretical Framework*

The participant in my study was still facing, when this research was conducted, a complicated cross-cultural situation, i.e., having moved from Mainland China to Canada where communication in L2/FL teaching has been very differently understood and implemented. Earlier I argued that the beliefs and knowledge shape, and are shaped by a nonlinear configuration of teachers’ lived experiences. This previous TCSL teacher and current TCFL teacher was looked at for her way of knowing and perceiving communication in her teaching, her corresponding practices in the classroom, and their relationship within her decades of cross-cultural experience. According to Elbaz (1981), teacher beliefs and knowledge can be assigned to five categories of content: “knowledge [PPK] of subject matter, curriculum, instruction, self, and the milieu of schooling” (p. 48). Taking Elbaz’s taxonomy as a framework, I tried to uncover the teacher’s beliefs and knowledge and her classroom practices in all these five categories. As we pointed out earlier, teachers, especially exceptional teachers, carry out teaching in an intuitive manner. Thus, I aimed to probe into the teacher’s cognitive world looking for the logic of her instructional behaviours while allowing certain unaccountable conducts which might be discovered by the adoption of the COLT (Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching) scheme (Spada & Fröhlich, 1995) as the classroom observation protocol.
CHAPTER 3

METHOD

This chapter discusses the qualitative methods I employed to collect and analyse my data. I begin by defining the nature of the study and the specific research design. Next, I report the process I went through to select my participant and the characteristics of this teacher. I then describe the methods I used to collect data. Lastly, I give a description of the research context and the techniques of my data analysis.

The Nature of the Study

I aimed to provide an insider’s perspective, an “emic perspective” (Borg, 1998, p. 10), on the current topic. As stated earlier, this study intended to look at a Chinese teacher who had previously taught in China and was currently teaching in Canada, regarding her beliefs and practices in the communicative orientation of her classrooms. Similarly to this participant, I, as the researcher conducting this specific study, have been professionally trained in the TCSL/TCFL field and have taught Chinese in both Chinese settings and Western settings. Also, I share the same cultural and language backgrounds with the participant chosen in this study. I understand and can comparatively easily interpret the meaning, implications, and ethnic psychological messages contained in utterances and acts produced by a native speaker of Chinese, e.g., my participant. This similarity between my participant and I entitled me to look through a lens very similar to hers and therefore granted me an advantage in looking into such a case with insights which can likely only be provided by “insiders.”
Moreover, this study is characterized as descriptive and naturalistic. My primary goal was to present a portrayal of my participant teacher’s beliefs, knowledge, and classroom practices. Instead of verifying theory, i.e., setting out to test a prior hypothesis, I intended to provide an “idiographic conceptual framework…which focuses on the meaning of particular events” (Borg, 1998, p. 11). Furthermore, this study is interpretive and exploratory. Following Patton (2002), in viewing the social world as socially, politically, and psychologically constructed, I presumed that my participant would have to make a specific case within a particular context. Specifically, the unique experiences and background she would have, would be likely to “affect what [she] understands and how [she] acts in the world, including acts of inquiry” (p. 547). By interpreting the case activities, I expected to develop an exploration of how this teacher deals with communication in her teaching of Chinese and an understanding of the reasons behind her instructional decisions.

The Design of the Study

Stake (2005) indicated that “case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied” (p. 443). My primary interest was the case, i.e., the particular manner in which a native speaker of Mandarin Chinese who had been engaged in both the TCSL and the TCFL for years constructed his/her belief system and action pattern towards a communicative orientation in his/her teaching. A qualitative case study would best serve this goal.

Specifically, I intended to triangulate my study with multiple data sources: interviews, observations, and document analysis. Patton (2002) stated that using a
singular method was more vulnerable to errors than using multiple methods because different types of data were able to “provide cross-data consistency checks” (p. 556). Stake (2005) further confirmed the credibility of triangulation of data: “Through observation, enumeration, and talk, the researcher can personally come to perceive the nature of the case. When the researcher can see and inquire about the case personally, with or without scales and rubrics, that researcher can come to understand the case in the most expected and respected ways.” (p. 455).

Through interviews, I expected to obtain my participant teacher’s explicitly-stated perspectives about his/her communicative orientation in the teaching of Chinese. Through observing the teacher’s lessons, I expected to collect a set of observable instructional behaviours, especially those related to a communicative classroom orientation. I decided to employ the COLT\(^5\) scheme to conduct classroom observations. In this light, six parameters for recording classroom events (Activity, Participant Organization, Content, Content Control, Student Modality, and Materials) were to be examined and six features gauging teacher utterances (Information Gap, Pertinence to Form/Message, Use of Target Language, Content, Incorporation of Student Utterances, and Sustained Speech) were to be categorized. These parameters and features would be used to measure “the extent to which an instructional treatment may be characterized as communicatively oriented” (Fröhlich, Spada, & Allen, 1985, p. 29). As well, the course outlines, syllabi, and other teaching materials that the teacher prescribed for the classes to

\(^5\) I have obtained the permission from Dr. Nina Spada to use the COLT scheme as my classroom observation protocol, and to adapt it for my purposes (personal communication, February 20, 2008).
be observed would be accumulated as document evidence. Although these data sources may or may not be totally consistent, Patton (2002) pointed out that “[either] consistency in overall patterns of data from different sources or reasonable explanations for differences in data from divergent sources can contribute significantly to the overall credibility of findings” (p. 560). Also, the inconsistency (if there would be any) among the interview data, observational data, and document data might become one source of evidence to examine the existence of “intuitive teaching” in exceptional teaching.

**Sampling for a Participant**

I used purposeful sampling to select my participant teacher (Patton, 2002). As one would be mostly looked at for his/her TCFL pedagogical thinking and actions from a cultural perspective, he/she should be someone who had transferred his/her teaching context from one culture to another, for example, from the Chinese context to the Canadian context. He/she should be an experienced teacher who had been exposed to both contexts at equivalent levels (i.e., both at the high-school level or university level. I preferred the university level in this study since the TCSL industry in China had been mainly developed at this level) for a significant period of time so as to ensure an information-rich account for this study.

Moreover, as we stated earlier, this study would concentrate on a teacher’s communicative orientation in his/her teaching. Although this would be the case, the study was aimed at exploring how educational and teaching exposures from two or more cultural contexts, in which the extents to implementing CLT widely differed, possibly had an influence on one’s conceptual and practical communicative teaching orientation.
That was to say, the participant teacher might or might not hold an intention to implementing communicative language teaching in his/her current teaching, neither did the degree of inclination towards communicative teaching become an issue for selecting the participant.

Participant Selection

Toward the end of 2006, I started to volunteer in a Chinese program at a renowned university in Ontario, Canada. In this program, there was one Chinese teacher who taught all three levels (Introductory level I, Introductory level II, and Intermediate level) and also took charge of all cultural activities and extracurricular activities. I first served as a helper in her Chinese New Year party planning committee. Successively, I was assigned responsibilities to occasionally mark students’ assignments, co-lead the Conversational Club, and plan other festival-related ceremonial activities. I met the Chinese teacher roughly once or twice a month while I fulfilled my responsibilities.

During the course of my volunteering, I gradually became convinced that this Chinese teacher would be able to provide an information-rich case for my proposed study both by her teaching status and her unique perception of TCFL in a North American context. For instance, I noticed that when she was planning extracurricular activities, she resorted to many media resources such as audio-visual means, the internet, and computer software. She also engaged students to become members of the activity planning committee and encouraged all students to converse freely during the activities. At the same time, I found her assignments/tests for students to have a significant focus on
language form, namely, practice of the Pinyin\textsuperscript{6}, Chinese characters and vocabulary, and with applications for the learning of grammar points and sentence structures. Relating this to my own teaching experiences back in Mainland China and Hong Kong, I was enlightened by the fact that both this Chinese teacher and I were simultaneously employing our traditional Chinese pedagogies and the influence of modern Western teaching philosophies in our teaching of language. In Mainland China, lessons were often planned to strictly follow the textbook with materials addressing examination content so that language form became the primary focus in the TCSL classroom. In Hong Kong, lessons were planned to follow both the textbook and a variety of real-life materials and students were granted many opportunities for unstructured conversations and non-text activities. Based on this awareness, I further developed my focus on exploring the actual scenario when a TCFL teacher was facing a cross-cultural situation and finding the underlying reasons.

I decided to look into this specific case. In August 2007, I talked to this teacher on the phone about my research and invited her to be a participant for such a case study. First she hesitated, because she was worried about the conflict between the timing of my proposed interviews and classroom observations and her mid-term and final exams. Instead, she recommended another Chinese teacher from a heritage school located in the same area. I further explained to her why she would make an ideal participant for my research: I aimed to look at a teacher who had taught in China and was currently teaching

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in Canada at a comparable level/institute. The teacher from the Chinese heritage school apparently would not have met this criterion. I also made accommodations to make my data collection dates extremely flexible for her in order to avoid any conflicts with her own teaching. She then agreed. Later, the teacher was presented a Letter of Information for the Teacher detailing my research purposes and methods and was asked to sign a Consent Form for the Teacher. She was aware that she could withdraw from the study at any time if she wished. I ensured confidentiality by assigning pseudonyms that would be used throughout the study.

Description of the Site and the Participant

I have assigned pseudonyms to my participant and the university where she was teaching when this research was conducted. I have called the teacher Su and the university Alma University. Alma University is located in a small city in Ontario. It has a non-degree TCFL program offering credits for students towards the completion of an International Studies Certificate. This program offered courses at three levels and at the time of the study had some 100 students enrolled. This program was administered through another language department. There was no prescription from the Department for the course materials and teaching approaches for Chinese courses at any of the three levels.

At the time of the study, Su as a 53-year-old female had previously earned a baccalaureate degree in Chinese Language and Literature in a top-10 Chinese university. Upon graduation, she became an editor responsible for the development of TCFL textbooks and teaching kits in a prestigious publishing house in Beijing, China for two
years. Before she and her own family immigrated to Canada in the early 1990s, she had taught Chinese as a second language at a post-secondary institute in Beijing for six years. After landing in Canada, she taught in a summer program at a university located in Central Canada continuously for more than ten years. Early in 1995, she moved to her current city of residency and created the Chinese program for Alma University. However, she regularly flew back to the university located in Central Canada each summer to be involved in their summer program. It was not until 2003 that she stopped working in the summer program. At the date of this study, Su had been teaching at Alma University for 13 years and had been the only Chinese teacher there. Recently, she was promoted to the rank of Associate Professor.

In the opinion of the researcher, Su is a passionate teacher. She was very enthusiastic about teaching and knowledgeable about all of her students. She called all the students by their Chinese names and made efforts to suggest Chinese names for those students who did not already have one, based on the meaning and pronunciation of their English names.

**Data Collection**

All the data collection procedures were conducted within a two and a half month period: from mid-November, 2007 to early February, 2008. I completed my data collection and analysis in a cyclical rather than a linear manner (Borg, 1998). According to Borg, a linear approach to data collection and analysis meant to collect all the data before beginning to analyze them. However, the cyclical approach that I adopted for my study enabled my data collection and analysis to be conducted iteratively throughout my
fieldwork, “with each successive stage of data collection being influenced by the analysis of the data already collected” (Borg, p. 12). Thus, interview data from an earlier stage were used to enlighten the behavioural records that were collected at a later stage. Similarly, behavioural records were augmented and elaborated upon by post-observation interview data collected even later. Thus, my understanding of one data set was informed by the analysis of subsequent data and vice versa, meaning that the data gathered at different stages could be used to achieve a comprehensive account of the teacher’s beliefs and practices.

Building Rapport

The participant, Su, and I knew each other for about one year before the study began, since I had been a volunteer assistant in her program. Due to this relationship, I felt it was especially important for me to share with her, in as much detailed as possible, the purpose of my proposed study. I set up a time with her to share my background and reassure her about the naturalistic nature of the study, and explain both the objective and non-obtrusive stance I would use in this research. This was the preliminary process that I engaged in, building rapport and trust between Su and I, as qualitative researcher and participant. Through this conversation, I intended to show my empathy and tell her that I would respect and value without judgment whatever knowledge, experiences, attitudes, and feelings she would share with me (Patton, 2002). I also assured her that I would conduct the interviews with her in either her office or the classroom: wherever she felt most comfortable. I also explained that the two field observations would be conducted in a natural setting, that is to say, her classrooms.
Interviews

Guided by cyclical data collection and analysis process, I first conducted a two-hour-long interview framed by an interview guide (Patton, 2002). Using the PPK framework by Elbaz (1981), this interview was designed to ask a set of open-ended questions organized by six categories of content: the participant’s educational background and its impact on her current teaching with an emphasis on dealing with communication in language teaching; the professional training she had received and its impact on her current teaching with an emphasis on dealing with communication in her teaching; her previous teaching experience/cultural experience/transfer of teaching contexts, her current classroom teaching with an emphasis on dealing with communication in teaching, and the course design and teaching environment. This interview was to elicit from the teacher in “as open-minded a manner as possible” (Borg, p. 12) the meaning she assigned to educational and professional experiences in dealing with communication in foreign language teaching. In order to enhance the flow of my participant’s thinking so as to uncover her ideas and views regarding the field of TCFL and the communicative orientation in her teaching, to the fullest, I used a semi-structured conversation (Kvale, 1996) but had a question/topic guideline to ensure I addressed the relevant topics. (Appendix A contains a sample question guideline).

Due to Su’s busy teaching schedule, I conducted two semi-structured interviews based on previous classroom observations over the phone, each lasting about twenty minutes. The interview questions (Appendix B contains a sample question guideline) were grounded on the observational results using the COLT scheme. This action was
intended to gain access to the participant’s elaboration, explanation, thoughts, and reflection on her previous instructional behaviours and the particular classroom events. Su participated in the phone interviews from her office during working hours. I took detailed notes during the phone calls and organized the answers immediately after the conversations.

All the interviews were conducted in Chinese, audio-taped, transcribed verbatim, and then translated into English by the author. The interview transcripts in the original Chinese version were returned to the participant teacher for a review to enhance validity. That was to say, “The participant [was] asked to modify any information from the interview data for accuracy… [in order to enable] the data obtained from each interview [to be] analyzed for a comprehensive integration of findings.” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 326). Glesne (1999) also commented on the creative use of “member checking” and said it might verify whether the data had properly reflected the respondent’s perspectives and help the researcher to develop new ideas and interpretations. In addition, I took field notes partially in English and the rest in Chinese during all the interviews and observations. All the notes in Chinese were translated into English at a later point. A bilingual colleague was asked to verify all the translations for accuracy and lack of bias.

*Classroom Observations*

Before setting out for the classroom observations, I observed two lessons of the teacher’s intermediate level class as pilot classroom observations at the end of the fall semester in 2007. Su had asked the students to prepare oral presentations with assigned
topics in relation to certain aspects of Chinese culture in groups of two or three. These presentations would be graded and included as a partial requirement for completion of this course. During the lessons, the students were the main actors and Su was mostly observing and occasionally giving out verbal comments regarding students’ actions. A teaching assistant was also present during students’ presentations in order to record and evaluate students’ performances. I sat in the corner of the classroom and took field notes during and after the observations.

A month later, I set the stage by collecting data about the participant’s instructional practices and procedures during two formal classroom observations as a non-participant observer (Patton, 2002). I first observed a lesson with the Introductory II class and then a lesson with the Introductory I class. Each observation was carried out during a regular class period which was fifty minutes in length. During the observations I obtained a detailed account of classroom events and teacher/student talks through qualitative field notes, audio recordings (Borg, 1998; Fröhlich, Spada, & Allen, 1985), and post-observation coding. I adopted the revised version of the COLT scheme (Spada & Fröhlich, 1995) as the observational tool. This scheme included two parts: Part A for describing classroom events at the level of episode and activity (e.g., drill, dialogue, game, and conversation) by checking off the appropriate boxes under each of the other five major headings: Participant Organization, Content, Content Control, Student Modality, and Materials (Spada & Fröhlich); and Part B for analyzing “the communicative features of verbal exchanges between teachers and students…as they occur[red] within each episode or activity” (Spada & Fröhlich, p. 13). During the
observations, Part A was partially considered in real time by taking field notes (e.g. describing classroom activities and events, identifying the focus on language along teacher utterances, etc.) while Part B was not considered in real time.

On the days of my two classroom observations, I went into the classroom approximately ten minutes earlier than the classes began. I handed out one copy of the Letter of Information for Students and two copies of Consent Form for Students to each of the students. I explained the purpose briefly to several groups of students when they were settling down in their seats. I asked them to return one copy of the consent form with their signature if they agreed to be present in my study without participation (my observational target was their teacher and that my principal goal was to collect and report an account of their teacher’s practice). The majority of students returned one copy of the consent form with signature before classes began and the rest returned it signed to me after classes ended.

I sat in the corner of the classrooms and audio-taped the two lessons. I also took field notes during and after each observational session. McMillan & Schumacher (1997) stated that “concrete, precise descriptions from field notes and interview elaborations are the hallmarks of qualitative research and the principal method for identifying patterns in the data” (p. 325). I made efforts to record precise, literal, and detailed descriptions of the teacher/students and situations going on in the classrooms which contained classroom events, the teacher’s practices, student behaviours, classroom climate, and teacher/student expressions and emotional reactions. These notes were used as supplementary evidence to uncover themes in addition to the analysis of results obtained.
through COLT in order to gain a full picture of the teacher’s communicative orientation in the Teaching of Chinese as a Foreign Language.

Document Collection

After each classroom observation, I collected one textbook, one lesson plan, and a set of exercise sheets from Su. Those materials included both the ones she used during classroom teaching and laboratory sessions. When I asked Su for the course outlines, her statement of teaching, and other course-design information regarding the two observed lessons, she gave me the URL for the course website. The website became an important source of document data. Document analysis, according to Patton (2002), “provides a behind-the-scenes look” (p. 307) at the individual/site that may not be directly observable and about whom/which the researcher might not ask appropriate questions without the leads provided through documents. This part of the procedure will increase the validity of the study by compensating for the weakness of the other two approaches (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

Data Analysis

Inductive analysis and deductive analysis were used in complementary ways throughout the data analysis process in order to make it holistic (Patton, 2002). At the early stage of the analysis, I used inductive analysis to “[discover] patterns, themes, and

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7 According to Patton (2002), “inductive analysis” indicates the process of generating categories or dimensions of analysis from open-coded observations “as the inquirer comes to understand patterns that exist in the phenomenon being investigated” (p. 56). This contrasts with the “deductive approach” which requires “the specification of main variables and the statement of specific research hypotheses before data collection begins” (Patton, p. 56).
categories” (Patton, p.453). The first step was “open coding” (Patton, p. 453) of the verbatim transcript of the pre-observation interview in order to develop a manageable classification or coding scheme. Efforts were made to reduce the redundancy of all text spoken by the teacher, unitizing, identifying, coding, categorizing, classifying, and to label the primary patterns in the data at this stage (Mangubhai et al., 2004; Patton). At the same time research field notes were also examined to identify possible themes.

I began by reading through the interview raw data, namely the transcript of the pre-observation interview. According to Patton (2002), I made “comments in the margins or even attach[ed] pieces of paper or Post-it notes that contain[ed] my notions about what I can do with the different parts of the data” (p. 463). I then set off coding each line of the responses of my participant. As categories emerged, I wrote them down on over-sized presentation sheets and underlined the lines within the same category from the interview by coloured pencils. A variety of colors were used to differentiate categories and sub-categories. For instance, within a major theme “Su’s Preparedness to Teach,” I identified two categories “Educational background” and “Professional development.” Under “Educational background,” I used the color pink to code “Language learning and teaching” and blue for “Ethical expectations for students,” etc. Thus, “We were taught Pinyin at the very beginning stage of studying Chinese in elementary school. Aside from that, we did a lot of textbook reading” (T10L18) was labelled as a descriptor for “Language learning and teaching” and was underlined in pink; “I remember very clearly

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8 T10L1: I have coded all pre-observation interview quotes using this alpha-numeric sequence. “T” is a shorthand code for “teacher,” meaning the participant teacher’s responses. “10” indicates the number of the turn regarding teacher (Footnote continued on next page)
that my teacher of the time always told us to ‘be serious about those things that are supposed to be treated seriously while being flexible enough to be lively when necessary’” (T30L2-3) was labelled as “Ethical expectations” and therefore was underlined in blue.

Secondly, after the themes and categories were identified in the interview, I started to analyze the observational data collected from the first lesson. I typed the field notes into the computer and compared them to previous interview results for consistency and inconsistency. Furthermore, I uploaded the sound file of the recording to the computer and transcribed all teacher utterances (student utterances were transcribed only for reference but not for analysis) during the lesson. I used the COLT scheme as a basic structure. In Part A, I calculated the length of time (in seconds) for each activity and episode and sorted them according to their characteristics using a checklist. The class time allocation to each category was calculated based on the results. Yet, one activity/episode might correspond to more than one category within a parameter. For example, the episode “Whole class/individual students reading dictation sentences after the teacher” contained practices of students’ speaking, listening, and reading. As a result, it was necessary to check off the categories “Speaking,” “Listening,” and “Reading” within the parameter “Student Modality.” Meanwhile, “Speaking” and “Listening” were the two primary focuses or predominant features in this episode and “Reading” was comparatively not in that category. According to Spada & Fröhlich (1995), circles would

utterances during the interview. “L” means “lines consisting of the teacher’s turns.” “1” tells the number of the line in current speech turn that is quoted. Thus, “T10L1” identifies the first line from the tenth turn of the teacher utterances.
be drawn around the check marks under “Speaking” and “Listening”, and the length of time towards this episode was marked in the categories of “Speaking” and “Listening” but not “Reading.” Then I summed up the time for each Part A parameter and calculated its percentage compared to the whole period of class time.

In part B, I added one column entitled “Turn of teacher utterances” prior to all the features measuring the classroom communicative orientation. I also adapted the COLT scheme (Spada & Fröhlich, 1995) to better meet some particular needs for my case study. I added one extra feature, “Content (Text/Non-text)” relating to the content of teacher utterances, and adjusted one feature “Reaction to Code/Message” to “Pertinence to Form/Message” with two categories “Initiation to form/message” and “Reaction to form/message”. I listed all teacher utterances with their lengths of time (in seconds) and matched them to those categories to which they were attached. Then I summed up the total time each feature or category covered and calculated their percentages for the whole period of class time.

Successively, I reviewed the results of the time percentage calculation for the first classroom observation and discovered some patterns of my participant’s instructional behaviours. I integrated those patterns with the existing themes generated by the interview analysis and created new themes if they did not already exist. I expected to discover similarities or differences between my findings regarding the teacher’s practices and her previous statements concerning her beliefs and knowledge in the area of TCFL. This process of consolidating/revising existing themes and categories, and developing new ones was considered to be deductive. This step was very important to complete the
“theorizing” of the analysis process by “testing and affirming the authenticity and appropriateness of the inductive content analysis, including carefully examining deviate…data that don’t fit the categories developed” (Patton, 2002, p. 454).

Finally, I framed the post-observation interview questions by using the themes and categories already generated from the previous interview and observation field notes from the lesson. The interview field notes were either categorized to fit those existing themes and patterns or used to create new themes. This analysis cycle was also used for the second round of classroom observation and post-observation interviews. After I finished both post-observation interviews, I reduced the data to one interview sheet and titled it “Post-observation Interview Sheet” for the sake of convenience. Meanwhile, document data including course outlines, lesson plans, textbooks, and classroom handouts were carefully read and also classified into the categories that emerged and developed for future arguments.
CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA

Themes from the Interviews

Su received all of her formal education, i.e. from elementary school to post-secondary, in China. She accumulated eight years of experience working in TCSL programs in China and 17 years of experience in TCFL programs in Canada. During both the pre-observation interview and post-observation interviews, she narrated her stories and shared incidents about her own educational and professional experiences, and thoroughly described her principles/reflection/knowledge about both TCSL and TCFL. Through analysis of the data from our conversations, I discovered two main themes reflecting Su’s belief system about her teaching at the linguistic\(^9\) level: her preparedness to teach, and her reflections on the TCFL. I also identified two major patterns that mirror Su as a person and a teacher at the meta-linguistic level, namely her thoughtfulness, and her confidence. In addition, I found many sub-themes and subtle categories under the major themes and patterns. All themes and categories are organized in Figure 1 as follows.

\(^9\) Here I use “linguistic level” to indicate characteristics having to do with language. Later on, I use “meta-linguistic level” to indicate characteristics going beyond language. (check different definition of “meta-linguistic” in the Crystal dictionary)
Figure 1 Themes and categories derived from interviews
Su’s Preparedness to Teach

Su’s Educational Experience

Curriculum.

Su went to elementary school in the early 1960s, but her education was interrupted by the Cultural Revolution\textsuperscript{10} not long after. When she was in Grade 4, all schools in China were closed for three years. After she returned to school, she did not continue to study at her elementary school level for long before she went to middle school. Successively, she finished her education at the middle school and High School levels. Then, as her peers of the same age across the country, she was sent to a rural area by the government for labour in accordance with the policy at that time that advocated “urban young intellectuals should accept re-education in the rural area” (Zhao, 2001, p. 43) for three years. It was not until 1977, when the National Matriculation Examination resumed, that Su had the opportunity to study Chinese Language and Literature at a prestigious Chinese university in Northern China (T6, T7, T8, T9).

Aside from allowing me to track down her general process of schooling, Su named some supplementary activities she had been involved in at elementary school in addition to the regular curriculum. For example,

\textsuperscript{10} The “Cultural Revolution” is usually used to indicate a period of time from May 1966 to October 1976, during which time P.R. China Chairman Mao Tse-Tung initiated a political movement across the whole country (Chen, 1990).
“At that time, we had study groups with a main focus on Mathematics. The main purpose was to help those students whose studies lagged behind. As well, we had ‘morning self-study sessions.’ When I was little, I went to elementary school in Beijing. We always had ‘morning self-study sessions.’ All students needed to be there before class and one student leader gave out Mathematics problems (to the rest of the class). I was the person who gave out the exercises” (T13L2-5).

“…[We had] study groups to help peers. We were also involved in some social activities and community service. Back then, we had a school-wide radio station. Every morning I went to school to do a broadcast. I read essays during that time. I also took part in many ‘Interests Organizations’” (T31L12-14).

Furthermore, Su pointed out some codes of conduct that were set for students by the school and the society at the time. For instance, her elementary school teacher kept reminding students of the Chinese saying “[one should] be serious when conditions require seriousness and [one could] be flexible and lively in other circumstances” (T30L2-3). Su explained: “That means students should be serious about their learning when they are attending class. They should listen [to the teacher] quietly when they are supposed to do so. However, when they are out of class, they should be playful. At that time, we were extraordinarily [docile]…. [You had to be cognizant] of what you should do and what you should not do, and when you should do what. This was a canon. It was

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11 Interests Organizations: Extra-curricular activities such as the choir, volleyball team, science corner, etc.
like the teacher had set up a rule for me” (T30L3-5). She then gave out an example of herself regarding this.

“I was only a little girl when I went to Grade 1. I was hyper-active in and out of class. I didn’t know about it though. Later, the teacher told my parents that ‘Your kid is always playing.’ I was surprised, ‘Did I play?’ I now figured that back then I was too young to realize that my behaviour was actually inappropriate [in class]. But who knew! I was just a little kid who couldn’t control herself well. I played, fidgeted, and muttered in class. It was not until I was scolded by my parents that I started to become aware of my problem. Since then I changed into a good student. Once the class began…. Do you recall that we were supposed to place our hands and arms ‘at ease’ when we were pupils? My classmates and I were expected to listen attentively to the teacher without movement. That was the first lesson I was taught to have self-control” (T31L2-7).

Su has completed her education sequentially, namely from elementary school, to middle school, to high school, and to university, although this process was interrupted once for political reasons. Within the school curricula, Su has been involved in many school-wide and out-of-school social activities. She even became a leader in some of the activities and organizations. Throughout, Su presented a consistent focus on the standards that were set for students by the school system and the society at the time regarding how to be a “good student.” All in all, Su seemed to be a well-adapted person, a student who

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12 The “at ease” position: Chinese pupils are sometimes required to place their hands and arms behind their back, which is similar to the positioning of the arms of soldiers standing at ease, except the pupils are sitting.
studied well, and a leader for some curricular and extra-curricular activities in the school arena.

Language learning and teaching.

Su gave me a thorough description of her language learning experiences and her previous language teachers’ classroom teaching. I have classified this part of content into two categories: What was Su taught and what did she learn from those language classes? And how did the teaching proceed?

Primarily, I found that Su’s language learning experiences had included the learning of her mother tongue, i.e. Chinese, and three foreign languages, i.e. English, Russian, and Uigur. In her Chinese classes, Su was taught how to use the Pinyin system, how to write Chinese characters, how to read texts, and how to write essays; she also gained linguistic knowledge, and the skills required to interpret historical Chinese essays (T10, T11, T15, T19, T20L1). In terms of her three foreign language classes, she recollected similar memories to the way she studied Chinese. For instance, Su read and recited dialogues and texts through all of the three classes, she acquired vocabulary and recited the words in English and Russian classes, and she had pronunciation practice as a major focus in the Uigur program (T47, T51, T53).

In order to answer the second question, I sorted out five sub-categories regarding the teaching methods that Su’s language teachers had used. They are: teaching activities, exercises/assignments, teacher-student interactional patterns, teaching aids, and the
professional and emotional influences Su received from her previous language learning experiences.

First, when I asked Su to list some typical classroom activities that her own language teachers used for instruction, she answered very briefly: “What I can recall is just learning and reciting words, reading and reciting texts. In fact, it was mostly about reading and memorizing” (T19L1-2). She thought that there was no distinct difference between the activities her teachers used in the Chinese classes and other foreign language classes (T19, T47, T51, T52).

Secondly, Su recalled some exercises and homework that were assigned to her in previous language classes. For example, she was asked by the teacher to practise writing the Chinese characters and the Pinyin in her exercise books. “We practised the characters by strokes and radicals. We practised one character over and over again. We used to use that kind of exercise book in which you could write the Pinyin on the top of a line and the characters on the bottom” (T15L2-4). Besides, she recalled being frequently asked to do “sentence-building exercises” (T19L5) and “workbook exercises” (T20L2-3). Usually, she had to work on those assignments individually and then hand them in to the teacher for corrective feedback.

Thirdly, when I asked Su if her previous language classes often had any form of interaction and communication, either among the students or between the teacher and students, her answer was initially negative. “There was none in elementary school”

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13 Uigur: A language spoken by a minority nation, i.e. Uigur, residing in a Northwest province called Xin Jiang in China.
“It was not until I went to university that the teacher occasionally asked students questions and expected responses from them. However, this sort of interaction was mainly restricted to the written form but not so much orally” (T47L2-4). She also elaborated on this idea about teacher-student interaction in written form: “After you finished your assignments, you would hand them in; and then the teacher would give you feedback. This was called a form of ‘interaction’…. Once you take a look [at the mistakes you made on the assignments], you would know where you did wrong and where you did right. This [was] a form of interaction, I think” (T29L4-5).

Furthermore, Su told me that in her previous language classes, it was mainly the teacher giving out instructions and students listening to the teacher. The teacher and students usually maintained a relationship simply as the teacher and the student. She admitted that it did not exclude the case that some students had been able to maintain a very good relationship with the teacher. However, “this [relationship] could not reach the level of friendship, like a friend to another friend. They were still a teacher and a student” (T24). She affirmed that it was the teacher who took the dominant role in the classroom (T25).

Fourth, Su laughed when I asked her what types of teaching aids her previous language teachers had used in their classes. “No, as far as I recall, there was nothing. There were no pictures, no PowerPoint and stuff like that. It seemed like just writing on the blackboard and that’s it” (T21).

Last, Su expressed her positive feelings about her previous Chinese classes and foreign language classes. She believed that the teaching methods her teachers had used
were suitable for her. However, when I inquired if she thought there had been any influences on her own teaching nowadays from her previous teachers’ teaching, she admitted that she had never thought about this. Upon reflection, Su claimed that her teaching of Chinese as a foreign language was very different from the teaching of Chinese as a first language (here abbreviated as CL1) and the teaching of other foreign languages. In order to teach Chinese as a second/foreign language (CSL/CFL), she would need to “re-think and re-practise” (T55L2) the teaching of Chinese to a population composed of a foreign audience.

In summary, I obtained a set of results within the topic “Su’s previous language learning experiences and her language teachers’ teaching practices.” According to Su, the major activities taking place in Su’s previous language classes included reading and writing, memorizing, and drills and exercises in the linguistic area. Regarding the teaching methods that Su’s language teachers had used, I found that: their classroom activities were limited to reading and reciting; the exercises/assignments were mainly about practising pronunciation of syllables/writing characters, and using vocabulary words in sentences; the classroom interaction and communication between the teacher and students and among students were rarely seen in their classrooms (except teachers’ corrective feedback for students’ written works); the teacher had the dominant role in the classroom; teaching aids were hardly ever used in classes. In addition, Su had a positive feeling about her own experiences as a learner in language classes but, on reflection, thought that the instructional strategies for CFL should be distinct and separate from the CL1.
**Professional Development**

Within this theme, I found three categories: the types of professional development sessions that Su has ever attended, their content, and her perceived influence of professional development on her teaching beliefs and practices.

*The types of Su’s professional development.*

Su told me that she had been involved in many academic conferences, meetings, symposiums, seminars, and workshops on a variety of topics related to language education. During our conversations, she highlighted some of the professional development activities that she took part in during her teaching in China. “When I was teaching at XXX University in Beijing, we had quite a number of discussions and meetings with other TCSL teachers going on school-wide. Other than that, we used to have that kind of…which shouldn’t be called ‘training course.’ Let’s call it ‘special-topic seminar’…that kind of thing” (T58L1-4).

Su agreed that she had not received formal professional training in the area of TCSL/TCFL. Although that was the case, she admitted that she had learned a great deal from senior teachers in her previous workplace, namely XXX University located in Beijing. She thought that she had especially benefited from the “mentor” assigned by the university when she first started to teach. She thought this form of professional development was intended to “impart experience” to future teachers (T59L2), i.e., senior teachers passing on their knowledge and skills about teaching to the novices. On top of
those mentorships, Su told me that she had frequently carried out “self-training” by reading books related to the area of TCSL/TCFL.

The content of the professional development activities.

Su’s professional development experiences were mostly from two sources: second-hand experiences and hands-on experiences. Primarily, she and her colleagues at XXX University made significant efforts discussing and exploring teaching approaches, methods, and pedagogies suitable for the TCSL. They also paid considerable attention to historical and prevalent-at-the-time Western teaching approaches/methods that were possibly able to be adaptable to the teaching of Chinese to foreigners. She explained why: “Because the TCSL was a brand-new subject matter when we first started it in the 1980s. At that time, it was a ‘marginal academic subject,’ and it was not yet a well-founded and well-recognized subject in academia. In other words, it was only at the ‘stage of discovery.’ Therefore, we frequently spent time discussing teaching methods, especially various pedagogies” (T58L4-7).

Secondly, Su believed that she had been able to gain many hands-on experiences in the TCSL through observing the senior teacher’s classroom teaching. She gave me an example in detail:

“Look! When I newly started to teach Chinese at XXX University in China, their routine for teacher’s professional training was ‘the senior leading the junior.’ That meant senior teachers should be responsible to prepare new teachers to teach in the field. They asked new teachers to step in the senior teacher’s classroom and to observe how the class was conducted. I went to my mentor’s classes to observe his teaching as soon as I started
to work at that university. I still have memories about those sessions that I had observed: I was sitting there listening to my mentor’s instructions, just to observe how he had gone through the whole lesson period. Since the first lesson that I had ever observed was Listening and Speaking in which teachers usually adopted fairly new teaching methods, my earliest contact with the field was all about those new ways of teaching and that sort of lesson planning” (T59). Su considered her mentor’s Listening and Speaking classes quite “interactional” as he used various classroom activities such as student presentations, and various kinds of drills and exercises. She attributed this more interactional style (compared to other traditional course types in the TCSL, such as reading, writing, and comprehensive classes) to the nature of this specific course type: Listening and Speaking. “What Listening and Speaking class aims at is to encourage students to speak up but not the teacher. The teacher shouldn’t just stand up there and talk about his/her teaching content. This course type is, in fact, not a traditional ‘you listen and I teach’ type of class. It is more of a language training class. The teacher is supposed to lead the students to practice [to use the language], and everybody is supposed to get in a group and discuss, for example, how to clarify a sentence [its structure] or a [linguistic] problem, and then practice [what they have learned]. It is supposed to be a class like this. As soon as I stepped into my mentor’s Listening and Speaking class, I learned that I should use these sorts of pedagogies in my own teaching” (T60).

Su considered her mentor to be a leader and supervisor in the classroom. She described a “leader” as “a person who leads the students to practice [the language skills], not merely someone who only gives instructions in front of the whole class. He/she
should greatly engage students and make students enthusiastic about their learning. Under his/her lead, the students would be willing to take part in many kinds of activities. This person in fact is a leader” (T62).

*The influences of Su’s professional development on her own teaching.*

Su was convinced that her own teaching had been greatly affected by the many kinds of professional development activities that she had been involved with. She considered her mentor back in China to be a profound influence on her own teaching later on: “Of course [my mentor affected my own teaching very much]!14 He was actually my mentor. It (indicating her understanding about the TCSL) all started with this senior teacher leading a new teacher, which is me, to the field. I have learned a lot from observing his class” (T61). When I asked her which language teaching trend, approach or method had impressed her most from what she had learned from her professional development practices, she named “communicative language teaching (CLT).” There, she gave some illustration on her understanding of CLT: “Since Listening and Speaking is the course type that I have taught at the starting point of my teaching career, I pay a lot of attention to the communication aspect. That is to say, there must be interactions [in the classroom]. Hmm, of course interactions do not only exist in language classes. There should be interactions in every subject matter and for every single lesson. Other classes [other than language classes] can also have interactions for understanding different cultures and

14 She responded like this when I asked her “Do you think the ‘teaching model’ that this senior teacher presented to you had any effect on your own teaching later on in any matter” (M61)?
exchanging ideas; however, a major aspect of language classes should be oral interactions. That means students have to speak up. This is what we called ‘the student’s speaking rate’” (T63L1-6).

To summarize, Su believed that she had received great influences from various professional development sources. The most significant one was from her mentor back in China when she started her career in the TCSL. Furthermore, her perception of CLT corresponded to a high rate of oral interaction within the classroom. Su also confirmed that those professional development practices had an impact on the coming together of her own teaching style in the TCSL/TCFL.

Su’s Reflections on Her Teaching

The Different Considerations

Su reported that, during her 23-year-long teaching experience, she had taught a wide range of student groups. Those students varied in age, backgrounds, personalities and qualities, as well as in their goals for learning Chinese as a second/foreign language.

Students’ age.

Su has been teaching at the post-secondary level both in China and Canada. She said that all of her students were adults. The only difference is that the students she was currently teaching at Alma University were mostly young adults while the average age of those she used to teach in China were older. All in all, “they are all adults, unlike children that you ought to teach how to learn. Adults have their own ways of learning”
She reinforced this idea in our post-observation interview when I asked if she thought it was necessary to correct a beginner student’s grammatical mistake:

“**My students are not children. Children have very good memories. As long as you provide enough repetition [of the knowledge that they need to master] and keep the conversation going, they will remember [the knowledge] anyway. However, adults, such as university students, have critical thinking abilities and are able to think rationally. They would think ‘where should I put this word and where does the other one go’ when they are learning a foreign language. This is the difference between language acquisition and language learning**” \(\text{P8L8-13}^{15}\).

Here, she considered children’s learning of the foreign language to be the process of “language acquisition” and adults’ learning to be the process of “language learning”. She then confirmed in the post-interviews that students’ “age” greatly affected teachers’ decisions regarding what to teach, how to teach, what goals to achieve through teaching, and what expectations should be set for students’ learning results \(\text{P9}\).

**Students’ backgrounds.**

Su compared her current students in Canada to those she used to have in China. She talked about the ethnic characteristics of the two student bodies, and their attitudes towards language learning. Specifically, she told me that the students she had taught in China about 20 years ago were all foreigners who had no Chinese background at all.

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\(15\) P8L8-13: This alpha-numeric sequence is used to code the combined post-observation interview. “P” is a shorthand code for “post-observation interview,” representing the teacher’s responses. “8” indicates the number of the turn regarding teacher utterances during the interview. “L” means “lines consisting of the teacher’s turns.” “8-13” tells the number of the line in the current speech turn that is quoted.
However, she found that there had been quite a blend of ethnic groups within the student bodies during her past 17 years’ teaching practices in Canada: foreigners who had no Chinese background; Chinese descendants with a Cantonese-speaking background; and, Chinese descendants with a Mandarin-speaking background.

Identifying in the students’ previous knowledge of Chinese is very important in Su’s opinion. This affects the teacher’s decisions about how to place students into classes at the suitable level, how to take care of various levels of learning within one class, how to design materials differentiating in the degree of difficulty, and how to adjust the marking systems accordingly (T88). For example, some of her current students were originally from Hong Kong, “He/she might have gone to the local elementary school in Hong Kong; he/she might have gone to the international school there. This group of students speaks Cantonese, so usually they speak Mandarin with a Cantonese accent. They don’t understand the Pinyin system. They might know some Chinese characters in the traditional form but not the simplified form…. Those students are usually good at reading and writing but poor at listening and speaking…. So when you are distributing materials to students, you need to give this group of students harder reading materials but easier listening materials” (T88). In contrast to that, she had another group of students who had a Mandarin-speaking background. She noted that those students might be good at listening and speaking while poor at reading and writing. As a consequence, she would design harder listening materials and easier reading materials for them.

Besides, Su mentioned that she had a third group of students, especially at the Intermediate level at Alma University: the students whom she had for both the previous
levels, i.e. Introductory I and Introductory II. Those students had been studying Chinese with her from early on. She commented on those students as “having a balanced view regarding the learning of the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing” (T88L1-2).

**Students’ personalities and characteristics.**

In order to find out her current students’ personalities and characteristics regarding their learning of Chinese, Su made some comparisons between them and other student groups. Firstly, she compared her young adult Western students to the Chinese children back to those in her own school: “My current students are very active thinkers and are good at creating things. They also have access to various sources of information. In contrast, the children back at the time when I went to school were very simple and plain; they also never asked as many questions as my current students do in class” (T32L5-6).

She also compared the students at Alma University to her previous TCSL students in China: “I had many Japanese and North Korean students back in XXX University 20 years ago. Since those students were from Eastern countries, their attitude towards learning and readiness to apply themselves was different from that of my students here in North America. My previous students in China tended to have a more serious attitude towards their own studies and were more dedicated, however they were also more reserved and shy in class. They could be active in class too, but in a different way compared to their Western counterparts” (T100L1-4). She thought her previous students in China had better attendance rate in class; they worked harder; they set higher expectations for their own learning; also, they cooperated better with her, the teacher,
than her current students in Canada. Nonetheless, she pointed out some reasons that possibly resulted in this situation. For example, the students back in China all lived on campus while it was not necessarily the same for her current students in Canada; her previous students all majored in the Chinese language while her current students only had the Chinese course as an elective course.

*Students’ goals in studying Chinese.*

Su divided her students into a few types according to their goals for studying Chinese: some wanted to travel in China, some wanted to do business in or with China, some expected to work in China, some wished to adopt a Chinese child or to learn about the adopted child’s own language, i.e. Chinese, and, some of them even hoped to find a Chinese girlfriend. She said these goals all applied to her current students at Alma University. As explained by Su, although a few students in her class had indeed developed much deeper and stronger interests while they were learning Chinese and would like to further their studies towards the academic level, not many other students wanted to learn Chinese as a research language or to conduct research on this language. This situation might have had a consequence: many of her students did not wish to learn the Chinese characters, since they thought “the Chinese characters are too hard to learn…. Most people, especially those beginners, would only be able to speak a little bit of Chinese satisfactorily. They start to learn Chinese simply out of personal interests. What they ask for is just a little ‘fur and hair’¹⁶ about the language” (T34L7-8).

¹⁶ Fur and Hair: A Chinese expression used as a metaphor, which is to describe a superficial type of knowledge.
To sum up, Su has demonstrated a thorough knowledge of her current students with their backgrounds, characteristics and learning goals. She has also compared them to other student groups, e.g. the CSL students she used to have in China about twenty years ago, and the CL1 students in China, and identified their similarities and differences in the way they learned languages.

The Teaching Methods

Teaching Pinyin.

Su believed that the teaching of Pinyin was a significant component in TCSL/TCFL. “Pinyin is very important to the teaching of Chinese to foreigners, especially at the very beginning. Because he/she is going to use this phonetic system in the future to learn this language” (T38L2-4). She confirmed this opinion in the post-observation interviews:

“If you do not have good pronunciation, you will cause misunderstanding when communicating with others. If students do not receive accurate instructions [regarding the Pinyin] in the beginning, it is not easy to improve [their pronunciation] in the future…. It is really hard to rectify their pronunciation when they are halfway through if they are not good enough in the first place. Students also want to have somebody who can be a good role model for pronunciation. It does not have to be perfect, yet close to be perfect. So, it is a very important stage at the beginner’s level, although it is not emphasized as much at the more advanced level as at the beginner’s level. Yet, for those students who are from a Cantonese-speaking background, I pay more attention to their pronunciation regardless of their levels” (P1).
On occasion, according to Su, there were students who preferred to use the Pinyin, instead of the Chinese characters, as the written form of the Chinese language to successfully communicate with others.

Moreover, Su considered that the teaching of Pinyin to foreigners should be conducted differently than the teaching of Pinyin to native Chinese speakers. “Which points need to be emphasized and where students may run into difficulties are two distinctly different aspects to be taken into consideration when either teaching non-Chinese speakers or native Chinese speakers. Native Chinese speakers can already speak before they learn the phonetic forms of the syllables. So they only need to match the initial consonants and the vowels\textsuperscript{17} in the syllables. But for non-Chinese speakers, this is different. They need to learn everything from scratch” (T38L1-5). She then did not continue to explain how her students learned the Chinese phonetic system “from scratch,” but insisted on the importance of learning Pinyin again.

\textit{Teaching the Chinese characters.}

Su also stated the significance of teaching the Chinese characters to CSL/CFL learners. Similar to learning the Pinyin system, “it is the difficulty of learning the characters that makes it extraordinarily important to those who wish to master the language well. Why do so many people quit halfway when they are learning Chinese? The major reason is that they are stuck on the difficulty of the characters, so they have to

\textsuperscript{17} In the Chinese phonetic system, a syllable consists of three parts: shengmu, yunmu, and shengdiao. “Shengmu” means the initial consonant of a Chinese syllable. “Yunmu” means the medial and final of a Chinese syllable, alternatively, the rhyming part of a Chinese syllable, or vowel. “Shengdiao” represents the (Footnote continued on next page)
give up” (T37). Although Su mentioned earlier that a few of her students were able to fully employ the Pinyin to replace the Chinese characters to attain the goal of taking notes in class and communicating in the written form, she did not neglect the fact that they might run into problems communicating with other people from time to time. She gave an example of one of her previous students in Canada,

“He went to China to further his studies once. When he came back, he told me: ‘Teacher, I was all counting on Pinyin [when I was studying in China]. My class notes were all written in Pinyin.’ He wrote Pinyin very fast and skilfully by the way. This student initially had refused to learn the Chinese characters. However, when he came back to Canada from China, he changed his mind and started to learn the characters. Do you know why? It’s because he wanted to work in Beijing and live in China. It would be very inconvenient not being able to recognize the characters. It is also part of the reason that not everybody in China is able to read the Pinyin. It could take them quite some time to decide which character a Pinyin syllable represents so as to figure out the meaning of this character. So he said, ‘Well, I still have to learn the characters.’ This student learned about the value of Chinese characters through this experience” (T39).

In terms of how to teach the Chinese characters, Su made two points: first, it should start with teaching students how to write strokes. In this sense, Su felt that teaching foreigners should be nothing different from teaching Chinese children. Second, Su

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decided to include the teaching of the radicals\footnote{Radical indicates the component that can be used to construct the Chinese characters. In many occasions, radicals imply the meaning of the whole character. Sometimes, a radical can represent a character on its own. For example, “木” represents a character which means “wood;” however, it can also combine with other radicals to be “沐” which means “bath” (Footnote continued on next page)} which imply the meaning of the full form of characters; however, this may not be considered to be an essential component in class as her adult students usually can learn it out of class on their own (T40L1-3).


teaching vocabulary.

Moreover, Su confirmed the importance of learning and teaching vocabulary. She thought that learning vocabulary was the foundation of mastering the whole language, i.e. Chinese. Without the knowledge of words, people could not express their meaning in order to communicate with others. From a TCSL/TCFL teacher’s point of view, Su valued the teaching of vocabulary words very much, because it could be used to elicit grammar points and sentence structures for further illustration. She called this act, or strategy, “kill two birds with one stone” (T66L11).

As noted by Su, she teaches vocabulary words from three aspects: the way to pronounce the word; the way to write the word; and the way to use the word.

“To teach a word, the first thing is to let students know about its accurate pronunciation and how to write its syllables in Pinyin. Secondly, students need to know how to write the strokes in the character and the right stroke orders so as to write words out properly and accurately. However, writing words does not weigh that much in my lesson planning. I usually leave it as homework for students. Students are welcome to bring up questions in class, such as how to write some characters with the correct stroke
order, or how to pronounce some words/characters which contain two or more phonetic forms within different contexts. For example, ‘这’ has two different pronunciations: ‘zhè’ and ‘zhèi.’ This needs to be mentioned” (T66L1-9).

Su greatly emphasized her third point, i.e. to teach students how to use words. She talked about the two parts of teaching content: the activities, and the strategies that she adopted to teach students about applying words. The activities included asking students to use words (single-character words or simpler words) to combine in order to make compound words or more complicated words. She explained why: “One Chinese character may be able to form a bunch of words [with other characters], although the means of combining words might be different. For illustration, some of them follow the rule of ‘1+1’ to combine into more complicated words, but others do not follow this rule. Let’s take the word ‘火车’ as an example: this word doesn’t simply mean what it expresses by combining ‘火’ and ‘车’ together. It creates a brand-new meaning19” (T66L16-18). Another activity that she used in her classes was asking students to apply words in sentences. Similarly to English, some Chinese words can only be used as verbs, but some can be used both as a verb and a noun. She pointed out this phenomenon and suggested it as a problem-solving strategy to “give students some examples” (T66L20).

In addition to showing examples to students, Su mentioned two other strategies that she often used to teach students how to use words. One was to give students a task, e.g.

19火车（huǒ chē）：‘火’ means “fire” and ‘车’ means “vehicle.” However, “火车” does not mean “fire (Footnote continued on next page)
asking them to make a sentence with a newly-learned word. The other one was to allow students to learn from their own mistakes. “When students are using new words in sentences, they often make one type of mistake or another. They might understand what a word means, but they build a wrong sentence anyway. Then this becomes an opportunity for us…. You should [use this opportunity to] tell him/her how to correct the mistake, how to use the word correctly, and what problems might be caused by using the word incorrectly” (T66L20-28).

Teaching grammar.

When I asked Su what proportion of grammar instruction was included in her teaching in general, she responded “less than a third” (T111). However, she believed that it should depend on the learning stage that students were at when one decided how much strength and emphasis would be put on the teaching of grammar. For example, at the Introductory I level where students were all beginners, she would only include a small proportion of grammar teaching in her lesson planning. “It (the teaching at the Introductory I level) cannot totally focus on grammar, but it has to somehow involve necessary grammar points. This is because introducing some basic sentence structures would likely lay a good foundation for students’ future learning” (T110L1-2). At the Introductory II level which was the “transitional level” (T110L4) according to Su, she would put much more emphasis on grammar teaching. “When students attain such a stage, they have usually accumulated a certain quantity of vocabulary and a relevant

vehicle.” Instead, it means “train” in Chinese.
understanding of the language. Accordingly, their comprehension of grammar should be upgraded to a higher level” (T112L2-3). Instead, Su considered that the teaching of grammar at the Intermediate level which was labelled as the “discourse level” (T112L6) by her, would not necessarily need to be emphasized as much. “He/she (indicating the student) has laid a foundation [of grammar knowledge]…. So I would only present those relatively complicated or unusual grammatical phenomena to students” (T112L5-8).

Su also talked about the strategies that she usually used in teaching grammar in class. First, she figured the idea of eliciting certain grammar points through learning vocabulary words was very practical and convenient to use. That is to say, she would engage students in sentence-making exercises so as to draw out a relevant grammar point. Second, she believed that students’ mistakes could also be used to teach grammar. She listed several typical grammatical mistakes that students often made, such as “translating directly from English,” “misusing dictionary entries” and “using words incorrectly to make sentences” (T113L4-6). Third, Su noted that chances were that students were able to recognize every single word in a sentence while not getting hold of what the whole sentence meant. In that case, she thought that dialogues and discourses in the textbook could be another good source to teach grammar. In summary, Su suggested to mix the teaching of vocabulary and the teaching of grammar in order to make teaching and learning “less boring” (T113L11).

Teaching pragmatics.

Su placed significant emphasis on the concept of using language elements properly (T69). She thought it was important to include pragmatics in her language teaching.
“Chances are that you might have said a grammatically perfect sentence; however, it is totally improper to use in a given context. This [question] falls into the category of pragmatics. Generally speaking, I pay quite a lot of attention while they study a text and when they complete the subsequent situational exercises” (T69T3-6).

In summary, Su talked about her teaching methods in terms of five contents, from the most fundamental phonetic system to the pragmatic aspect of using the Chinese language. Basically, she perceived none of the components should be neglected. She explained the rationale of why and how each component weighs heavily in the planning of her teaching. Further, she also described the means and strategies that she used to organize her teaching regarding each component.

**The Program Design**

Since Su created her own TCFL program at Alma University, she had generated and had been developing many thoughts towards designing a language program/course. From her descriptions, I have learned about the process and the program from four perspectives: the nature of the course, the design of the course, lesson planning, and the use of materials.

**The nature of the course.**

Su stated that there were no official curriculum guidelines set for the TCFL courses in Canada, or, say, North America. “Every university has its own program. Since the textbooks, the class hours, the levels arranged by the university, and their student resources all differentiate from each other, those Chinese programs are very different”
Su compared these TCFL programs to the ESL programs in North America that she had learned about from some “second-hand sources” such as reading educational articles and attending conferences. She made it clear that she did not have a thorough knowledge of the ESL programs here in North America; however, she was very sure about their “pursuit of a suitable teaching method and best ways of designing courses.” She said that the North American ESL program often set up more than one course, such as Oral (listening and speaking), Reading, Writing, etc. However, most TCFL programs in North America had not been developed as much, except for some bigger programs at a few universities in the US. Meanwhile, she compared the TCFL programs here in Canada to the TCSL industry in China about their course settings. She found that the TCSL program in China usually involved many more courses such as Chinese Culture, Geography of China, and even Travel in China. On the contrary, her current courses at each level were solely the Comprehensive Course which intended to integrate the training of four language skills (i.e. speaking, listening, reading, and writing) and other language/culture related issues.

**The course design.**

In order to set up Comprehensive Courses for her current TCFL program at Alma University, Su admitted that she would have to consider both covering as much knowledge and skill-using as possible at the appropriate level while placing necessary emphases on significant language points and aspects within one course. “For example, now I need to teach one chapter [in the textbook]. What I need to consider includes: How many lessons should I allocate to this chapter in order to complete the teaching of its
content? In which lesson should I emphasize vocabulary, and in which lesson should I emphasize oral skills, etc? And when should I summarize one aspect or another, you know, different parts of the content” (T70L11-14)?

As we know, Su taught Chinese at three levels when this study was conducted. According to her introduction, there were three periods of lessons and one hour’s laboratory session per week for each level. She claimed that her course design varied at each level in accordance with its particular content. She took the Introductory I level course design as an example. “In the very beginning, I solely focus on the teaching of phonetic system. In this part of teaching, I consider about the following questions: How many lessons should I use to cover its content? How many initial consonants and how many vowels should I teach in each lesson period? How many exercises should I plan for each lesson? Which vocabulary words and dialogues should be taken into account when designing the exercises? It works like that. Finishing off the teaching of phonetic system, there will be a series of chapters which contain texts, words, exercises, characters, etc. Then I will allocate the teaching-load to each lesson according to the quantity of words each chapter has and the difficulty of the texts” (T74).

Later on, during the second post-observation interview, Su elaborated on her thinking upon how to design the course at the Introductory II level. “Usually it takes us three to four sessions to finish a chapter [at this level]. The lesson you have observed was in the middle of a semester, when we were halfway through learning Chapter 9. Thus this lesson contained many aspects: word practices, reading texts, reviewing and learning
grammar. I placed my focus on pronunciation practices, text reading, and sentence-making exercises” (P11L2-6).

In addition to regular classroom lessons, during the lab sessions at the two Introductory levels, Su said that she basically focused on students’ speaking and listening. She considered that students would need time to practise, especially orally practise what they had learned from the regular classes. In the case of designing the Intermediate course, Su said that she would mostly pay attention to reading and writing in regular classroom lessons while listening and reading for the laboratory sessions (T71).

In general, Su’s philosophy for adopting such a manner in designing her courses can be found in the following statement: “My goal is to let students go home with some gain (of knowledge or language skills from the class). Students would not feel that they have learned nothing. In this sense, my courses are challenging” (P11L7-8).

Lesson planning.

In order to plan efficient lessons, Su believed that as a teacher, one should prepare himself/herself with three aspects of knowledge: the knowledge about his/her own students’ characteristics, the knowledge about the content he/she was going to teach, and the knowledge about the teaching methods that he/she was going to use (T64L15-17). Su kept emphasizing the concept of “efficiency” (T64L11, L12, L17) in planning and organizing lessons. “How to organize the several sections that one lesson would contain in the form of the most concise and efficient? How long should each section last? What to
include and emphasize in one section? How to engage students to this section? How many students would participate? Which students would possibly participate in this section and which students in the next? Those are all the questions that you should think about before you plan a lesson” (T64L12-15).

Moreover, Su insisted that in every lesson, there should be some difficult points for students to try to handle and some content to review and consolidate. Thus, “after each lesson, students would be able to make somewhat achievement in their learning. If a student is absent to one lesson, he/she would lose the opportunity to learn things from this lesson. If he/she is absent to even more lessons, he/she would have trouble catching up his/her peers. The pace of my teaching is usually quite fast” (P11L8-14).

The use of materials.

Su told me that she had three sources of materials for her teaching: textbooks, exercise sheets, and other sources. She said she mainly used one textbook at each level. The reason that she preferred to use the textbook as the main source of teaching material was that this would allow students to have access to review and preview their learning content, even when they are out of class (T75L1-2, P2, P5). However, she mentioned that she was not quite satisfied with the textbooks that she was currently using at all three levels because of various reasons. For instance, the Introductory I textbook was fairly current; however the student workbook and the content of the teacher book were very inconsistent when compared to the textbook. The introductory II textbook was much older and contained many dialogues on out-dated topics. She envisioned the ideal
textbook being “practical and fun” (P6L3). She thought the textbook at the Introductory I level was more suitable for use according to this criterion.

Besides, Su designed her own exercise sheets based on the textbook content, including the content of the dialogues, language aspects (the characters, vocabulary words, pronunciation, and stories), and the function (P2L3-5). “I basically re-design and re-organize the exercises from the textbook. There is some adding and removing; also there are changes [to the original exercises]. I design some on my own too” (T76). She stated that she mostly used these exercises during the time in the lab. Lastly, Su did not take time to elaborate on what other sources she also used to develop the teaching materials.

Su’s Teaching Philosophies

During our conversations, Su explained some ideas and concepts that she had adopted in her teaching. For instance, she talked about the ideal teacher-student relationship at various times during our conversations; she discussed the cultural influences that her Chinese origin potentially brought to her teaching; she also elaborated on her thinking about communication in her teaching practice.

The teacher-student relationship.

Su used a famous Chinese idiom that was originally from Xue Ji (The Subject of Education), a chapter of the ancient book Li Ji (The Book of Rites), “Teaching and learning help each other.” Thus, first of all, Su thought that an ideal relationship between a teacher and his/her students should be about both parties helping each other, learning
from each other, and showing consideration and tolerance to each other. “A teacher-student relationship includes a very complicated human relation, not just “I teach and you learn” which is impossible” (T35L8-9); “My students and I are somewhere in between being teacher and students on the one-hand and friends on the other” (T109L6). She gave an example of how she had learned so much from her students: “Just take a most convenient example: I have picked up so many computer techniques and skills from my students. My students have a lot of good ideas when I ask them to do computer presentations. For example, they present new-learned vocabulary words in many creative ways. Yes, they are really creative. They have tons of good ideas. It is really wonderful” (T108)!

Su also thought that a good teacher-student relationship should be built on trust. The degree of trust from students to teacher, according to Su, was very important. “Once he/she (indicating the student) trusts you, he/she would love to learn, and he/she would think ‘Yes, this is what it is supposed to be.’ However, if he/she does not trust you, because you are always standing up there and criticising ‘It should be like this and it should be like that,’ it would definitely affect your classroom environment and the impact of your teaching. So you’d better have a solid foundation in order to build a [good] relationship with your students” (T64L7-10).

However, a healthy teacher-student relationship, based on Su’s understanding, should allow the teacher and students to have a “boundary” between each other. That was to say, “You need to get a strong feeling of respect and admiration from your students. A teacher needs to be respected by students. Sometimes the students do not know how to
deal with this relationship properly, and this is when your leadership should be brought into play. It is very necessary to have it (i.e. the students’ respect). That means the teacher should have a harmonious relationship with his/her students; meanwhile, he/she has to have a certain authority in the classroom, otherwise he/she wouldn’t be able to manage the whole class. In my case, with more than forty students in the classroom…it would all be a mess” (T108L9-13). This belief was from an ancient Chinese ideology “Respect the teacher and revere the doctrine” (Fan, 400~500). She confessed that this particular belief had been greatly influenced by traditional Chinese culture to hold in high esteem both “teacher” and “knowledge”. I will write on her thinking regarding this aspect in the section entitled “the cultural influences on Su from her Chinese origin” later on.

Meanwhile, when Su was trying to explain her strategies for teaching Chinese characters and coping with different student learning styles, we uncovered one of her principles: giving students freedom and room to allow self-discovery in terms of their ways of learning. Like she said, she always first asked students to learn characters using their own method. “Some students have to write in order to memorize [the characters]; some have to read and listen before writing; some purely recite them; some break the whole character down into parts. Everybody has his/her own strategy…. Some students even use pictures to memorize the form of characters. Say, “发” in “头发” looks like the hair flying in the wind; and this is how this character is remembered” (T40L4-7). Instead

20 “发” means “hair” in the word “头发” (“头发” literally means “head hair;” however, it can be translated as “hair.”)
of telling students what to do to start with, Su preferred to give them instructions after they faced difficulties and then let them try out different ways.

In order to build a good teacher-student relationship, Su noted that having a good “warm-up activity” (T64L5) at the beginning of class was key. “If he/she is an experienced teacher, it will only take him/her a short time to break the ice and become part of the class/group. This is where you start to build up mutual trust between you and your students” (T64L5-7).

*The cultural influences on Su from her Chinese origin.*

As we know, Su reported that some of her teaching philosophies had been greatly influenced by her Chinese origin. Primarily, in constructing her ideal type of teacher-student relationship, she adopted the following concepts: “teaching and learning help each other” and “respect the teacher and revere the doctrine” from the ancient Chinese educational ideology. Although she commented on her current relationship with her students as “half friendship and half teacher/student rapport,” Su admitted that she would expect great respect from students and a boundary between her and her students. “If students especially respect the teacher, it makes the teacher feel well. If some students…though very rarely…speak or misbehave…of course he/she does not necessarily disrespect you, he/she is just used to behaving that way. However, you may not be used to it. Anyhow, the Chinese culture advocates respecting the teacher and revering the knowledge that is passed on by the teacher” (T109L15).

In addition, Su believed that she had followed the ideology of “teach[ing] students in accordance with their aptitude” initiated by Confucius. As we know, Su reported earlier
that she had treated students with different language levels differently. For instance, for
students whose language levels vary within the same class, she would love to design
different instructional materials and assignments, and set up different marking systems
for them. Relating to her experience of teaching to diverse groups of audience, she further
explained how she had adopted this ideology in practice. “I have taught classes with a
pure Cantonese-speaking background; I have taught students who would only like to
learn the Pinyin but not the Chinese characters; I have taught classes with only one or two
students; I have also taught classes with over forty students…. Thus, your teaching
method should vary accordingly. It should be very flexible…at any time and
anywhere…today and tomorrow, this year and next year. It could be totally different [as
the situation changes]. Since you are facing a different audience, you will have to be
ready to make changes at any minute” (T101).

Moreover, Su upheld the opinion that “there is no shortcut for learning” (T37L4). She
described her experience of teaching students how to learn Chinese characters: “If
you want to learn Chinese characters, regardless of you being a Chinese child or a
foreigner, you will have to start from scratch, which means learning from the strokes…. There
is no shortcut, except if you have an ‘electronic head’ with which you can
memorize characters at first sight” (T36L2-4).

Lastly, after collecting some information reported by Su as regards her work
schedule, I found that she was dedicated to her work and did not set a clear boundary
between her work time and spare time. Su was supposed to be responsible for teaching
nine hours at all three levels and tutoring three hours in the language laboratory per week,
plus four office hours to be available to students. In fact, however, she worked from early morning till sunset or even later everyday and for five days per week. Sometime she even worked on the weekend. She told me that any time during her work hours (the period of time she stayed in her office) could become the “office hour” for students: “Students may walk in my office anytime; and I would just stop my work and help them out” (T123L1-2).

Su’s Understanding of Treating Communication in Her Teaching

Su stated that she had learned about the communicative approach in language teaching from her professional development activities. “I was mostly impressed by the communicative approach among the various teaching approaches and methods that I had ever heard about” (T63L1-2). I have summarized her understanding regarding the communicative approach according to four aspects: Su’s general ideas about CLT, how Su perceived function and structure in language teaching, how she perceived meaning and form, and her use of first language (L1) and second language (L2).

Su’s general ideas about CLT.

Primarily, Su perceived TCFL as a “communicative” enterprise. She perceived the learning of a L2 is to “learn a tool to communicate with” (T33L3) although “the communication [that learners can urge] is usually restricted” (T33L4). Su thought this was very different from teaching Chinese as a first language, “which is characterized to be a knowledge transmission” (T33L1). She viewed her ultimate teaching goal as to “introduce the Chinese culture and language,” to “stimulate students’ continuous interests
in learning Chinese” and to “make them (students) happy when they are learning” (T128).

In addition, Su further illustrated how she perceived the communicative approach from two aspects: students’ “speaking rate” compared to the teacher, and emotions in the classroom. First, Su thought that her earliest experiences in teaching Listening and Speaking had opened a door for her to communicative language teaching and gave her noteworthy exposures to the latest TCFL pedagogies at that time. Su believed that the Listening and Speaking course was supposed to contain a big portion of aural and oral activities and therefore should be labelled as a course which had much potential to be communicative. However, whether a class should or should not be labelled as “communicative” would have to depend on “the student’s speaking rate” (T63L5). Su insisted that in the language class, students should be encouraged to practice the target language orally. As regards how to get students to speak up, she briefly mentioned that one should use the most concise and simple language to create a desire in students to speak, regardless of whether they expressed themselves well or poorly. Second, as we know, Su emphasized how healthy a learning environment one would establish in class if one were able to appeal to students’ emotions. Based on this thought, Su believed that classroom communication was not restricted to oral language only; it also had to be appealing to emotions (T64).

Su’s perceptions of function and structure.

Su thought ideally language teaching should pay attention to both function and structure. She viewed Structuralism in language teaching as being too rigid. In order to
illustrate this idea, she envisioned a scenario of teaching the Chinese language with a sole emphasis on the structure: “In this case, it would be too [dry]. Sometimes it is even nonsense. If you just tell the students ‘this is X, this is Y, and this is Z’,21 this wouldn’t make much sense to them” (T63L13-14). However, she did not support the idea of pursuing language function while ignoring structures either, for this “would not enable students to see the language rules which they could employ on their own in the future” (T63L15). Thus, she believed that abstract language structures and concrete examples containing language functions should be united in the teaching of language so as to achieve the best teaching effects.

*Su’s perceptions of meaning and form.*

Su believed that one could not compare the significance of meaning and form in language teaching and learning without a given context. “If you are teaching vocabulary words, or sentence structures, you will have to give him/her [students] an accurate [form]. You cannot simply say ‘It’s wrong’ and then let it go. But when the same mistake is made in a [conversational situation]…in fact he/she has already expressed what he/she wants to express, that is to say, it is comprehensible, and then it would be okay. Thus, I think some mistakes can be ignored during conversational practices, because he/she has already expressed himself/herself clearly and the listener has also understood him/her. However, when teaching vocabulary/sentence structure, this (indicating the accurate language form) is a must. You are obliged to tell him/her the correct form when he/she is

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21 “X,” “Y” and “Z” indicate various linguistic terminologies and the language used to delimit structures.
learning; also, it’s to prevent the same mistakes from being made in the future” (T68L1-7).

Su expressed the same idea in the post-observation interviews (P8). In fact, she perceived that her action of providing corrective feedback to students on many occasions had a great value in improving students’ ability to negotiate meaning in communication. “Can you communicate without the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary words? No, you can’t. With the knowledge of grammar, you will know how to combine words in the right order so that others can understand you. With the knowledge of necessary vocabulary words, you will know what to say when you express a certain meaning” (P8L2-7).

There are occasions, according to Su, when even accurate forms and ‘comprehensible’ meanings could not make a language utterance completely correct and appropriate in a given context. “This would involve the knowledge of pragmatics. It’s very possible that your sentence is perfectly formed, but it’s inappropriate to say it in this situation. In an effort to enhance students’ comprehension of pragmatics, I provide many situational exercises for my students after each chapter” (T69).

Su’s perceptions of L1 and L2.

Su reported her language use situations back in China about twenty years ago and here in Canada nowadays. She said in China, the Chinese language was the only language used in the classroom, for most students majored in Chinese and their L1s varied. “Although students might run into difficulties by the teacher only using the target language in L2 classes…the teachers back in XXX University were really marvellous in
using Chinese as the only language in the classroom for the students had no problem understanding them” (T106)! In contrast, Su reported that she used both English, i.e. most of her students’ L1, and Chinese, i.e. the L2, as the two teaching languages in class. Across the three levels that she was teaching, the use of L1 decreased while the use of L2 increased with the level. “When you are reaching the Intermediate level, which is our highest level in this program, you will want to use as much Chinese as you can. Students also want to get more exposure to Chinese” (T104L2-3).

Su’s Views about Her Teaching Environment

Su had 43 students in her Introductory I class, 27 students in the Introductory II class, and 19 students in the Intermediate class. She compared her current class sizes to those she had back in China about twenty years ago: “There is certainly a big difference! My current classes are too big. One language class shouldn’t involve so many students—twenty students would be the maximum” (T92).

Besides, Su talked about issues related to the teaching assistants (TA). She had two TAs at that time. One had a major in the Chinese language and literature at the undergraduate level, and the other one majored in English Education at the PhD level. The TAs’ main responsibilities included leading students to do exercises in the language lab, and marking assignments and tests. Su said that she, other than the TAs, usually prepared all the materials for the use of lab sessions. The TAs did not necessarily mark

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22 Su’s students across the three levels consisted of Caucasian Canadians, Chinese Canadians, Canadians who came from different ethnic backgrounds, and a few international students from countries such as Japan. English is the mother language of Su’s students (Footnote continued on next page)
all assignments and tests, especially when on occasion they lacked a certain professional knowledge to be able to give the best corrections to students’ mistakes.

Su commented on the equipment and technological support provided for her by the University: she was basically satisfied with these supplies such as the computers, office supplies, the photocopier, etc. However, she pointed out that the “biggest inconvenience” for her teaching is the program “not having a real language laboratory with a personal computer for each student” (T125L2). Therefore, she declared one of the consequences was that “students cannot use the various online learning software, nor can they do the oral exercises/tests during their lab times” (T125L3-5). In addition, she did not much approve the classroom arrangement for her classes, for one of the classrooms was very narrow and small. There was no extra space for the teacher to use which caused much inconvenience for students to conduct group activities and discussions. Some classroom activities could not take place, such as “PowerPoint presentations and role play.”

Su’s Thoughtfulness

During my interviews with Su, I found that she tried to give as much information as possible to answer many of my questions. When she had problems understanding my inquiries, she requested some clarification of the intention behind the questions. I have identified five aspects regarding Su’s thoughtfulness and her ways of expressing her thoughts. They are: Su’s frequent need for precision in answering questions, her supplementing information regarding previous answers that she had given, her use of tongue for the majority of these students with a few exceptions.
listing/categorizing/numbering the content of her answers, her in-depth explanation, and her hesitation in answering certain questions.

**Need for Precision in Answering Questions**

This characteristic of Su had two sides to it: first, she sometimes asked for clarification if she was not 100% sure what my questions meant exactly. For example, when I asked her about her educational background, she asked me “When should I start from” (T3)? Second, she intended to situate her answers in certain contexts instead of giving out the general information. For example, when she talked about the significance of teaching Chinese characters, she affirmed that “the teaching of characters is very important if it is included in the course outline” (T37L1). Similarly, when being asked what activities she would like to include in a communication-oriented class, she started with “this is in accordance with the content of the lesson you are going to teach” (T65L1) before further illustration.

**Supplementing Information Regarding Previous Answers**

There were a few times when Su went back to a previous statement she had made when she was already a few utterances away, in order to complement what she had said at an earlier moment. For instance, she added “the school was closed for three years” (T6L2) when she had passed this part of topic and begun to talk about her subsequent education after this period of time.
Listing/Categorizing/Numbering the Content

When Su was giving out a complicated answer or an answer containing more than one layer of content, she tended to either make a list, or categorize what she was trying to express, or use ordinal numbers to indicate the types of things she wanted to include in her answer and the order of importance of the few categories.

For example, Su was reluctant to generalize learners’ objective of learning Chinese as a second/foreign language. Thus, she categorized her own students’ learning objectives into six types which was mentioned in the previous sub-theme “Students’ goals of studying Chinese” (T34). Again, she listed the number of reasons that might cause mistakes in students’ language use when she was weighing accuracy and negotiation of meaning (T68).

Providing In-depth Explanation

Upon providing an answer to a question that I asked, Su rarely gave out only a summary of her thoughts. Instead, she intended to explain her thinking in great detail and sometimes even supply the rationale of her thinking behind the scenes. For instance, when I asked her if she had a good understanding of her students’ learning styles, she not only said yes, but also expanded on the reason why she had to have such a knowledge about her students: “Since adult learners (such as Su’s students) have well established ways of learning, you have to find out what their styles are in order to provide effective instruction and make appropriate suggestions” (T41).
Hesitation to Provide Answers

A few times, Su did not continue with her habit of answering some of my questions. Rather, she used a hesitant intonation and a slower pace. She seemed to be put off by those questions which required some thinking. Once, when I asked her if she figured that her previous language teachers’ teaching methods were worth being referred to as regards her current teaching or ought to be improved upon somehow, she hesitated: “I have never…never thought about this” (T55L1). She then gave the reason: It was because her current teaching of CFL was a matter different from both CL1 and the teaching of other foreign languages. When I continued to inquire about her thoughts regarding the difference between her previous teachers’ pedagogies in terms of the CL1 and the teaching of other foreign languages pedagogies, Su was unsure again: “They seemed to be like…very similar to one another? There shouldn’t be much difference” (T56).

Su’s Confidence

Most of the time, Su showed great confidence in demonstrating and elaborating on her thoughts for me. When I was curious about certain facts about her teaching or her relevant attitudes/beliefs, Su usually gave me a brief answer with a positive intonation at the beginning of her response. For instance, when I asked her what the teacher-student relationship was like back in her time, she said in a firm manner: “Simply a relationship between the teacher and students” (T23). Likewise, when I asked her how she felt about her previous Chinese classes at school, she said: “I enjoyed them a lot” (T26)! Another typical instance is: when I asked her what she would do if a student made a mistake
related to language forms, she quickly and resolutely claimed: “I will definitely correct it” (T67)!

Meanwhile, Su made strong denials if she disagreed on certain things or when she tried to express her own ideas that took a different direction from others’. For example, she strongly believed that “there is no shortcut” to learn how to write Chinese characters (T36L3); also, she powerfully claimed that “it’s not fine” if a teacher had no authority in class, and “it’s not okay” if students were defiant to the teacher so that the class would be in a mess (T109).

In addition, Su did not shy away from telling about her past accomplishments. For example, she believed that she honoured her school by demonstrating leadership in curricular and extra-curricular aspects (T10, T13, T31). Also, she was very proud of her previous employer, i.e. a publishing house in Beijing, for its being the pioneer for preparing and publishing TCSL/TCFL textbooks and teaching materials. She also mentioned that she was much valued by her employer when she was about to quit her job there (T78).

Furthermore, Su was very confident about her professional knowledge. As mentioned earlier, Su believed that she had a thorough knowledge of her students’ learning styles and their characteristics as persons even (T34, T41). In addition, she also adopted a decisive and proficient manner when she was illustrating her teaching methods and strategies (T64, T66, etc.).

Lastly, Su frequently used the form of Q & A to make a statement. For instance, in T66, she used a set of questions and answers to imitate those students who only know
how to write the Chinese characters but do not know how to use them: “You only know
how to write [the characters]. You keep strokes in the correct order and write them well.
However, if I ask you ‘What does it mean?’ [You said] I don’t know. ‘How do you use
it?’ ‘I don’t know.’ Then you are in trouble, right? Yeah, so…” (T66L14-15). There she
made the statement about “knowing how to use characters being as important as knowing
how to write them.” Similarly, when she was explaining what strategies she used to elicit
the grammar points in her teaching, she said: “The teaching of vocabulary can be used to
elicit grammar points. Why? Because- if you use a vocabulary word, how would you use
it? You have to use it in a sentence, right? How do you use this word? You need to make
a sentence. This will elicit a grammar point” (T113L1-2).

Results of Classroom Observations

I observed two of Su’s lessons, i.e. one at the Introductory I level and the other at the
Introductory II level. I analyzed the two classroom observation sessions mainly according
to the revised version of COLT (Spada & Fröhlich, 1995). Meanwhile, I made some
changes to it in order to allow the use of COLT to better suit the goals of my current
study. The changes and the rationale behind them are addressed as followed:

First, I adopted all the seven main features in my data analyses in Part A, namely
*Time, Activities and Episodes, Participant Organisation, Content, Content Control,
Student Modality,* and *Materials.* I retained all categories belonging to those features
except a slight change regarding *Participant Organization.* Within *Participant
Organization,* I eliminated the sub-categories *Same task* and *Different tasks* under the two
categories Group and Individual, since the two lessons I have observed only involved the same task during group work and individual work but not different tasks.

In Part B, I used four criteria for teacher utterance analyses. They are: Use of Target Language, Information Gap, Sustained Speech, and Incorporation of Students/Teacher Utterances. I adapted the fifth main feature Pertinence to Form or Message from the original feature Reaction to Form or Message. Since my participant teacher not only reacted to student utterances with an emphasis on either form or message, but also initiated utterances with an emphasis on either form or message, I added a category Initiation with two sub-categories Form and Message paralleled to Reaction to Form or Message within this feature. Moreover, in order to differentiate whether my participant’s instructional intention is pointing at the text content or the non-text content, I created the sixth feature Content (Text/Non-text). This feature is based on the assumption that in order for genuine communication to occur, the content featured as “non-text-related” which often comes along with the use of authentic materials must be included.

Second, Spada & Fröhlich (1995) designed COLT to collect both instructional and learner data so as to investigate relationships between the two. My research aims to find out my participant teacher’s characteristics in terms of her teaching rather than examine a relationship between “instructional input and learning outcomes” (p. 113). Therefore, during my data analyses, I mainly focused on the teacher’s instructional input in order to discover her intention/behaviours in orientating communication in her language classes. To serve this objective, I transcribed all teacher utterances by “turns” (Spada & Fröhlich,
p. 62) but not student utterances. Spada & Fröhlich defined a turn as “any (and all) speech which is produced by a speaker until another person begins speaking. Therefore, a turn can include as little speech as one word or as much as several sentences in extended discourse” (p. 62).

Third, in Part A, I kept the coding convention of assigning check marks to appropriate categories and calculated the total time within each category had been marked. I mostly found the observed classroom activities/episodes to fit in situations featured as either “exclusive focus” or “primary focus” and occasional situations featured as “equal focus.” I added up the total time for those activities/episodes which have only one check mark (in the case of exclusive focus) or one circled check mark (in the case of primary focus). In respect to those cases of equal focus, I placed two check marks under the appropriate categories and added up the total time for each category. In Part B, however, I changed its coding convention. In the original design of COLT (Spada & Fröhlich, 1995), “the basic unit for coding and for later analysis [in Part B] is the teacher and student turn. Within each turn, the coder places check marks in the appropriate columns whenever any of the categories occur… Each category of Part B is calculated as a proportion of its main feature…. To calculate a proportion, the usual procedure is to count the number of check marks in a particular category and divide by the total number of check marks under that particular feature” (p. 120-121). Instead of using the teacher

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23 According to Spada & Fröhlich (1995), “Those cases in which one category only is checked are referred to as exclusive focus. Those instances where more than one category is checked are referred to as combinations…. [Within combinations], a primary focus is when most of the time is spent on a particular category. An equal focus is when (Footnote continued on next page)
turn, I used sentence as the basic unit in order to be more accurate. That is to say, within each sentence, I placed check marks in the appropriate columns whenever any of the categories occur. Upon calculating the proportion, I summed up the total duration of time in a particular category and divided it by the total class time. The reason to conduct the procedure this way was to make the weight proportion of each communicative feature in a whole lesson period obvious and clear. All the time durations have been calculated in seconds.

Thus, based on the revised version of COLT (Spada & Fröhlich, 1995) and the changes I made as mentioned above, I analyzed the two observed lessons and organised the results of the analyses into four sections: Part A and Part B for the Introductory I lesson, and Part A and Part B for the Introductory II lesson. The duration of time and the percentage that each category is featured will be presented in tables later on.

It is noteworthy that the percentage of some sub-categories within one feature may or may not sum up to be 100%. There are a few reasons that have caused this result. First, in Part A, some features fit in the case of “equal focus,” which means more than one check mark has been placed under various categories under them. Certainly, the proportions under the categories within such a feature would sum up to be over 100% due to those activities that had more than one focus. For example, the activity “Sentence Structure Exercise” observed in the Introductory II lesson includes both Teacher to student/class and Individual work, thus its sum of percentages within feature Participant Organization

approximately the same amount of time and emphasis is spent on more than one category” (p. 31).
is more than 100%. At the same time, there could be cases when the sum of percentages within one feature reveals to be less than 100%. For instance, in the Introductory II lesson, the four categories *Minimal, Extended, Audio,* and *Visual* under *Materials* sum up to be 99.99% due to the error for rounding off to 2 decimal places. Nonetheless, when one feature defines the characteristic of a classroom activity/episode, that is to say, one and only one category has to occur to feature an activity or an episode, the sum of percentages within this feature will be equal to 100%. A typical example is the binary categories *Narrow* and *Broad* under the feature *Other Topics.* So, if a classroom activity is not related to the text content which would be labelled as *Narrow,* it will be classified as *Broad.*

Second, in Part B, all the proportions were calculated based on the total class time (which means the starting time of the lesson through to the end including times of silence and students group/individual work time). However, only teacher utterances were calculated for their durations. As a result, the proportions of the communicative features were based on the total duration of class time. For example, the proportions of *Form* and *Message* within *Pertinence to Form/Message* is less than 100%.

Third, also in Part B, not necessarily every teacher utterance can be assigned to appropriate categories. For instance, under the feature *Information Gap,* there are two categories *Genuine request* and *Pseudo request.* Those two categories only occur when a request for information is made. In reality, there are certainly statements that are irrelevant to requests for information and responses to requests. Therefore, a sum of those percentages within one feature is not equal to 100%.
Below I present the four tables of results using an adaptation of COLT (Spada & Fröhlich, 1995) with a specific analysis for each of them.
Table 1 Colt Results for Introductory I Classroom Observation- Part A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT ORGANIZATION</th>
<th>TOTAL CLASS TIME</th>
<th>CONTENT</th>
<th>CONTENT CONTROL</th>
<th>STUDENT MODALITY</th>
<th>MATERIALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class Group Individual</td>
<td>T&lt;-&gt;S/C S&lt;-&gt;S/C Choral</td>
<td>Teacher/Text Teacher/Text/Student Student Speaking Listening Reading Writing Other</td>
<td>Minimal Extended Audio Visual L2-NNS L2-NS L2-NSA Student-made</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time (seconds)</td>
<td>2784</td>
<td>2784</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>2216</td>
<td>1793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>12.28%</td>
<td>1.00%</td>
<td>64.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time (seconds)</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>70.19%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.18%</td>
<td>10.78%</td>
<td>21.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time (seconds)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2211</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>79.42%</td>
<td>5.78%</td>
<td>13.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time (seconds)</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2612</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>13.72%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>93.82%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time (seconds)</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2170</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>11.60%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>77.95%</td>
<td>81.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time (seconds)</td>
<td>1113</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>39.98%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>71.62%</td>
<td>14.40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The total class time for the lesson at the Introductory I level was 2784 seconds which equals 46 minutes and 24 seconds. The proportion of each category in this table was calculated based on this amount of time. First, let us take a look at the feature *Participant Organization*. As stated by Spada & Fröhlich (1995), “*Participant Organisation* was developed to describe distinctions between teacher-centered and group-work interactions in L2 classrooms” (p. 15). Spada & Fröhlich considered *Group work* to be “essential in the development of communicative competence” for students are “encouraged to ‘negotiate meaning,’ to use a greater variety of linguistic forms and functions and to develop overall fluency skills” (p. 15). In her class, Su spent 70.19% of her time on *Teacher to students/class* activities, such as “Teacher conducting Pinyin dictation to the class,” and “Teacher reading Text 2 and leading students to read.” Su used 13.72% of her class time on *Choral* activities which were all shown in “Students singing songs to prepare for the Chinese New Year party.” Both types of activities belong to *Class* activities.

Meanwhile, Su used 11.60% of her class time on *Group work* in which she asked her students to combine in pairs to read sentences that she had dictated to them earlier and let students orally practise sentences from the exercise sheet that she had designed for her lesson. Students were also asked to spend 39.98% of their class time on *Individual work*, such as “Writing dictation sentences in Pinyin” on their own and “Getting familiar with the substitution drills” before beginning to work on them.

Second, the feature *Content* is an attention-getting element in this table. This feature was defined by Spada & Fröhlich (1995) as referring to “the subject matter/theme of activities; that is, what the teacher and students are talking, reading or writing about or
what they are listening to” (p. 16). It has to do with whether the primary focus of L2 learning and teaching should be on form or meaning. It was once believed by some CLT supporters that a meaning-based instructional pattern would ideally enhance L2 learning, though recently some researchers newly argued that a combination of meaning and form might be more useful to improve learning (Spada & Fröhlich). This feature contains three categories: Management, Focus on language, and Other topics. Among those three categories, the teacher’s Focus on language is considered to be primary to capture the characteristics about whether the teacher adopts the communicative approach or not and if she does, how. This category is divided to four elements: focus on Form, Function, Discourse, or Sociolinguistics. As shown in Table 1, Su spent 79.42% of her class time focusing on language form but has not paid attention to the other three elements.

In addition, Other topics is used to describe the number of topics that are involved in classroom discourse. The two categories Narrow and Broad were originally differentiated by the criterion as to whether the topic referred to the classroom and the students’ immediate environment/experiences or a broader context. I have made a change to this criterion according to my specific study: Narrow indicates text-related topics and Broad refers to non-text topics. Thus, Su had devoted 85.60% of her class time on Narrow topics while 14.40% were spent on Broad ones (which were mainly referring to the class singing activities).

Third, about 79.60% of Su’s class time was under the control of Teacher/Text. That means that the topic or task going on in the classroom was determined by Su and/or the text. Meanwhile, for 10.78% of class time Su/Text and her students jointly selected the topic or task; for 5.78% of the time her students selected their topic by themselves. In the
last case, one student suggested a new way to sing the song that the whole class was
practising. This suggestion was immediately adopted by Su and the rest of the class. Later
on, the whole class tried on the new way to sing the same song.

Fourth, the feature Student Modality was designed to find out how the four language
skills were developed in language classes. According to Spada & Fröhlich (1995), the
traditional L2 instruction “isolated” (p. 18) the practice of language skills, e.g. separate
learning activities from speaking activities, while one of the arguments of CLT believed
that “students should be encouraged to integrate their skills practice to reflect a more
authentic use of language” (p. 18). As shown in Table 1 above, the Speaking activities
occupied 93.82% of Su’s class time, while for Listening we have 77.95%, for Reading
71.62%, for Writing 35.49%, and for Other 13.72% (refers to singing). In her class, Su
has engaged her students in reading dictation sentences along with her, reading texts after
her, and asking students to answer text-related questions which were all featured as
Speaking activities. Listening activities mostly came along with speaking. Reading
activities largely consisted of reading texts and exercise sheets or reading sentences from
the blackboard after the dictation task. Writing activities were mainly seen in students
completing a dictation and working on exercise sheets.

Lastly, Su’s Materials included two types: Text and Audio. Specifically, Su has used
Minimal text which refers to the type of written texts that are mostly “captions, isolated
sentences, word lists etc” (Spada & Fröhlich, 1995, p. 19) for 64.40% of her class time.
She has used 21.88% of the class time dealing with Extended text which refers to written
text such as “stories, dialogues, connected sentences, paragraphs etc” (Spada & Fröhlich,
p. 19). Also, she has used Audio materials during 13.72% of her class time while not
using any *visual* materials. The sources of her teaching materials were categorized into two types: 81.75% of the class time was assigned to texts and exercises which were “specifically designed for second language teaching” (Spada & Fröhlich, p. 19), and 14.40% of the time was assigned to authentic materials designed for native speakers of Chinese, in this case, two Chinese songs.
Table 2 COLT Results for Introductory I Classroom Observation- Part B.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENT (TEXT/NON-TEXT)</th>
<th>INFORMATION GAP</th>
<th>PERTINENCE TO FORM/MESSAGE</th>
<th>USE OF TARGET LANGUAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Requesting Information</td>
<td>Giving Information</td>
<td>Initiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pseudo</td>
<td>Genuine</td>
<td>Predictable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Time (seconds)</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of the Class Time</td>
<td>22.95%</td>
<td>2.87%</td>
<td>0.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Non-text (seconds)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage (None-text : Total Time)</td>
<td>6.10%</td>
<td>3.75%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Text (seconds)</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage (Text : Total Time)</td>
<td>93.90%</td>
<td>96.25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENT (TEXT/NON-TEXT)</th>
<th>INCORPORATION OF STUDENT UTTERANCES</th>
<th>SUSTAINED SPEECH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correction</td>
<td>Repetition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Time (seconds)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of the Class Time</td>
<td>1.54%</td>
<td>9.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Non-text (seconds)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage (None-text : Total Time)</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Text (seconds)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage (Text : Total Time)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>92.86%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 mainly presents three proportions: the proportion of each category based on total class time, namely the “Percentage of Class Time;” the proportion of Non-text Content that occurs in each category; and the proportion of Text Content that occurs in each category. First, under the feature Information Gap, there are two categories: Requesting information and Giving information. Requesting information is either featured as Pseudo (communication) or Genuine(communication). Based on the theory and research regarding the nature of authentic communication, natural discourse occurs with a high degree of unpredictability (Spada & Fröhlich, 1995). That is to say, “Speakers do not typically ask each other questions to which they already know the answer, nor do they provide each other with information that is easily anticipated or known in advance” (Spada & Fröhlich, p. 21). However, it is true that teachers, not only L2 teachers, often ask students questions for which they already know the answer.

In the current study, Su spent 22.95% of her class time asking Pseudo questions which implies that the answer was known by her in advance and is easily anticipated. For example, when the class was learning the new text, there was a sentence “从地铁站出来 (which means “Come out from the subway station” in English).” Su asked her students a question: “‘出来’(which means “come out” in English) means…? [Do you] remember?” Obviously, Su has known what the word “出来” meant before she requested the answer. Therefore, this request was labelled to be Pseudo. Meanwhile, Su has asked some questions such as “Do you understand this question?” “Do you get it?” and so on. When she asked those questions, Su was unsure about her students’ responses. She did not know in advance if her students would respond “Yes I understand what you mean.” Or
“No I don’t get it.” Thus, those utterances were labelled as Genuine. Su has used 2.87% of the total class time in asking this type of question.

Since Su’s teaching content was either related to the text or irrelevant to the text. I have also differentiated Pseudo and Genuine questions to characterize those two content types, namely Text and Non-text. As seen in Table 2, within the amount of time that Su has spent on asking her students Pseudo questions, she had 6.10% of it irrelevant to the text content while 93.90% of it related to the text content. Similarly, she has spent 3.75% of the time asking non-text Genuine questions while 96.25% on text-related Genuine questions.

Under the same feature Information Gap, there is another category Giving information which looks at features as either Predictable or Unpredictable. This part also encompasses reactions to requests of information: if the information supplied to a request is easily predicted and is known to the questioner, then it is labelled to be Predictable. Let us take a look at an excerpt from the conversation between Su and her class when they were talking about the weather at the beginning of this lesson (the English translations are included in brackets):

Su: 你们好！(Hello everyone!)

Students: 您好！(Hello teacher!)

Su: 谢谢！谢谢 for coming, 来上课。因为今天的天气不好。今天的天气怎么了? How to say the…? (Thank you! Thank you for coming to class, because the weather today is severe. What do you say about today’s weather? How to say the…?)

Student A: Snow? Snow! 雪? (Snow? Snow! Snow?)

Su: Yes, 下雪，下雪了，今天下雪了。(Yes, it snowed. It snowed today.)
As we notice, Student A briefly went through a stage processing her vocabulary knowledge about the English word “snow” in responding “Snow? Snow! 雪?” to Su’s previous question. Su answered later on, mainly reacting to the Chinese translation of “snow,” i.e. “雪,” from Student A. I categorized Su’s answer under Predictable within the category Giving information, since the questioner, i.e. Student A, had already known the Chinese meaning for this English word “snow.” Meanwhile, she apparently realized that her teacher, Su, also knew the correct answer. In this case, Student A was able to easily predict a “Yes” from Su for her request for confirmation. Except for this example, there were not many cases of the teacher giving Predictable information in the current lesson. As a result, Su has only spent 0.72% of her class time giving Predictable information while no time allotment was made to give Unpredictable information.

Second, under the feature Pertinence to Form/Message, both Su’s acts of Initiation and Reaction to form or message have been examined. Su has contributed 15.16% of class time in initiating form-related topics and 27.19% in reacting to form-related topics, while she has used 9.16% of her time in initiating message-related topics and 3.41% in reacting to message-related topics. When Su put a focus on form in class, no matter when she initiated utterances or when she reacted to previous utterances, the content of her utterances was mostly related to text other than non-text topics: 96.45% and 3.60% for Initiation on form-related utterances, while 91.41% and 8.59% for Reaction to form-related utterances.

Third, in terms of the Use of Target Language, I have, firstly, summed up the total time that Su has spent in speaking English, i.e. students’ L1, and Chinese, i.e. students’ L2. Secondly, I calculated the proportion of each language based on Su’s total
instructional time. During this lesson, it is easily seen that Su has used slightly more Chinese, 58.72% of class time, than English, 41.28% of class time.

Fourth, the feature *Incorporation of Student Utterances* involves the many ways in which the teacher reacts to students’ utterances. It was designed to measure how much effort the teacher had made upon expanding, developing and elaborating on students’ utterances which was suggested to enhance L2 development (Spada & Fröhlich, 1995). In the current lesson, Su was correcting students’ mistakes (100% text-related) during 1.54% of class time. For example, during the text-reading activity, one student pronounced “地铁站离汽车站远不远” as “Dìtiě zhàn lí qìchē zhàn ruǎn bù ruǎn” (which means “Is it far from the subway station to the bus station?” in English, however with a bad pronunciation regarding “远不远”). Su immediately corrected this student: “Yuǎn bù yuǎn! Not ‘ruǎn bù ruǎn’ (which means ‘[‘远不远’ should be pronounced as] yuǎn bù yuǎn, not ‘ruǎn bù ruǎn’). Similar cases were often observed in Su’s class.

At the same time, Su spent 9.55% of class time repeating students’ previous utterances. For example, when a student read “坐两站 (which means “get off at the third stop [when taking a bus/the subway/train])” from the text, Su repeated “坐两站” to both confirm this student’s correct answer and to present a standard speech model of this phrase to the whole class. Su, sometimes, not only repeated students’ correct answers to her questions, but also *Paraphrased* students’ utterances if she perceived them as insufficient. For example, Su supplemented “Gate…or entrance” to a students’ answer “Gate” regarding her previous question “[What does] 门口 [mean]? (which means “What does ‘gate/entrance’ mean” in English).” This part of her action had occupied 1.87% of class time. Frequently, Su’s *Repetition* and *Paraphrase* are followed by a comment.
Usually it was “很好！ (which means “very good” in English)” or “good/very good.” As a result, Su has used 11.39% of her class time commenting on her students’ performances.

Furthermore, Su was expanding on students’ utterances during 6.47% of her class time, while requesting for clarification for 1.36% of the time and requesting for elaboration upon students’ previous utterances for 1.04% of her class time. In general, these actions were mostly observed in the text-related context rather than the non-text context.

Lastly, let us give some attention to the feature Sustained Speech. As the figures show on Table 2, for 31.72% of class time Su’s turns were featured as Sustained while for 19.47% of the time as Minimal. The difference between a Sustained teacher turn and a Minimal teacher turn lies in their lengths, according to the standards set by Spada & Fröhlich (1995). I have found that Su’s turns were many times speech chunks longer than three main clauses which ought to be labelled as Sustained, although there were much bigger chances that they were said in a text-related context rather than a non-text situation.
### Table 3: COLT Results for Introductory II Classroom Observation- Part A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL CLASS TIME</th>
<th>PARTICIPANT ORGANIZATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T&lt;-&gt;S/C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time (seconds)</td>
<td>2877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENT</th>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Focus on Language</th>
<th>Other Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time (seconds)</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>3.89%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>70.52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENT CONTROL</th>
<th>STUDENT MODALITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher/Text</td>
<td>Teacher/Text /Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time (seconds)</td>
<td>2349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>81.65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MATERIALS</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Extended</td>
<td>Audio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>1064</td>
<td>1461</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>36.98%</td>
<td>50.78%</td>
<td>12.23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The total class time for the lesson at the Introductory II level was 2877 seconds which equals 47 minutes and 57 seconds. The proportion of each category in this table was calculated based on this amount of time. First of all, under the feature Participant Organization, Su spent the majority of her class time doing Class work. Specifically, 81.61% of class time was spent on doing Teacher to student/class activities such as conducting a Q & A session involving the whole class on Text 1 in Chapter 9 that they had learned in the previous lesson. 11.12% of class time was used on Student to student/class activities and 1.11% on Choral activities which both were only carried out in the singing activities for the coming Chinese New Year party. Besides, Su has assigned her students to Group work for 6.15% of the class time and Individual work for 9.28%. From the record of field notes and the transcription, the only Group work in this class was “Students reading Text 2 in a group of two” and the Individual work was “Students completing the exercise sheet on their own.”

Second, as shown in Content and its sub-column Focus on language, the focus on Form in this class was dominant, i.e. 70.52% of class time. The attention that Su assigned to the aspect of Discourse occupied 9.28% of her class time while neither element of Function and Sociolinguistic was attended to. An example of Su giving instructions under the Discourse element of language can be found in an activity when Su was leading the class to read Text 3.

Student B: (Reading a line from Text 3) 没什么，如果需要什么你就告诉我。(No problem. If you need anything just let me know.)

Su: Yeah, 如果需要什么，你就告诉我。There is a pause after “什么。” 如果需要什么，你就告诉我。Ahh, 如果……就。(Yeah, if you need anything, then just let me
know. There is a pause after “anything.” If you need anything, then just let me know. 
Ahh, if…then.)

Spada & Fröhlich (1995) defined the Discourse element as referring to “the way in 
which sentences combine into cohesive and coherent sequences” (p. 17). As we can see 
in the excerpt above, Su’s action of pointing out the missing of a “pause” in Student B’s 
sentence fell into this category. Later on, Su’s elaboration on the sentence structure 
“if…then…” about the cohesion between the two clauses also allowed me to have an 
insight into how Su implemented the Discourse element in her instructions.

In addition, under the category Other topics, Su restricted her topics to the text 
spectrum during 85.96% of her class time which fell in the category Narrow. She 
expanded the topic range to be broader for the remaining 14.04% of the time which only 
comprised the singing activities in the class.

Third, in terms of the Content Control, Su and her text content dominated during 
81.65% of the class time while both she and her students controlled the learning content 
during the remaining 18.80% of class time. The singing activities were the only time 
where students’ authority in controlling class content could be observed. Besides, when 
the class was learning Text 2, there was a session set for students to ask the teacher 
questions regarding text content.

Fourth, as seen in Table 3, students were respectively engaged in Speaking activities 
in this class for 63.02% of class time, Listening activities for 50.09% of the time, Writing 
activities for 27.70% of the time, and Other which referred to singing for 9.28% of the 
time.
Lastly, the situation of using Materials in this class can be described by the following figures: the Minimal written text which was mainly adopted in the “sentence structure exercises” and the “dictation” used up 36.98% of class time. The Extended written text which was used in many text-reading activities and Q & A sessions covered 50.78% of class time. The Audio materials which referred to the two songs that were sung by the class towards the end of the lesson involved the remaining 12.23% of class time. In addition, the materials used in this class were mainly from two sources: during 85.96% of class time Su was using materials that were specifically designed for L2 teaching such as the textbook and her self-designed exercise sheets; during 12.23% of class time Su was using materials that were originally intended for native speakers of Chinese, e.g. the two Chinese songs.
### Table 4 COLT Results for Introductory II Classroom Observation- Part B.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENT (TEXT/NON-TEXT)</th>
<th>INFORMATION GAP</th>
<th>PERTINENCE TO FORM/MESSAGE</th>
<th>USE OF TARGET LANGUAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Requesting Information</td>
<td>Giving Information</td>
<td>Initiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pseudo</td>
<td>Genuine</td>
<td>Predictable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Time (seconds)</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Percentage</td>
<td>15.12%</td>
<td>3.68%</td>
<td>0.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Non-text (seconds)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage (None-text/Total Time)</td>
<td>0.92%</td>
<td>39.62%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Text (seconds)</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage (Text/Total Time)</td>
<td>99.08%</td>
<td>60.38%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENT (TEXT/NON-TEXT)</th>
<th>INCORPORATION OF STUDENT UTTERANCES</th>
<th>SUSTAINED SPEECH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correction</td>
<td>Repetition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Time (seconds)</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Percentage</td>
<td>8.83%</td>
<td>13.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Non-text (seconds)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage (None-text/Total Time)</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Text (seconds)</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage (Text/Total Time)</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>99.50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 represents the percentage that each communicative feature in Part B occupies based on the whole class period and the proportion of each feature within Text Content and Non-text Content. Primarily, in terms of Su’s instructional manner of Requesting information upon filling up the Information Gap, her Pseudo information requests have occupied more class time than Genuine information requests, i.e. 15.12% versus 3.68%. Within both categories of Pseudo and Genuine, the requests related to Text content have used the majority of the time while Non-text content has used comparatively much less class time.

In the meantime, when Su was Giving information to students, she used 0.56% of her class time giving out Predictable information while 7.65% for Unpredictable information. In general, the class did not ask Su many questions in order to request information from her. In most cases when students did ask questions, they requested information that they had not known before. Thus, Su’s answers regarding these requests were characterised to be Unpredictable information. One typical example from this lesson has lasted for 142 seconds and goes as follows:

Su: XXX (student name), YYY (student name), 有没有问题？ Ahh, ZZZ 有问题！
（XXX and YYY, do you have any questions? Oh, ZZZ has a question now!）

Student C: Hmm, “你得的是什么病？你得的是急性肠炎。” 得……？(Hmm, “What disease have you got? You have got acute enteritis.” [I am not sure about the meaning of] “dé.”)

Su: “你得的……得！” Remember we [were] talking about “dé” last time? “Dé” has a few different pronunciations. “Dé” here is “you get” or “you fall.” And the other “dé”
As we know, Student C put forth a question about the word “dé.” Although she did not verbally finish her question, she obviously intended to ask “What does this word mean?” or “What are the few pronunciations and usages of this word as I am confused about these situations?” At the time when Student C asked this question, she did not know the answer for her question; neither did she know what Su was going to tell her about this word. As a result, Su gave detailed and unpredictable information regarding Student C’s question about “dé.” Thus, this teacher turn was featured as giving *Unpredictable* information.

Second, under the feature *Pertinence to Form/Message*, Su has spent 9.35% of class time to initiate an utterance related to form while 33.23% of the time was spent to react to utterances related to form. She has also respectively spent 10.64% and 7.09% of her class time in initiating and reacting to message-related utterances. Regardless of form or message, the major content of her utterances pertained to *Text content*.

Third, compared to the first lesson I observed, Su has used less L1, i.e. English, only for 22.09% of the total instructional time, and more L2, i.e. Chinese, in a proportion of 77.91% of the instructional time, in this lesson at this more advanced language level.

Fourth, in order to report Su’s *Incorporation of Student Utterances*, I respectively calculated the proportion of time that Su has spent in her class on the following seven
aspects: Su corrected her students’ mistake for 8.83% of class time, repeated and paraphrased her students’ previous utterances for 13.83% and 8.31% of the time, commented on students’ language performances for 14.70% of the time, expanded on students’ previous topics for 16.61% of the time, requested students’ clarification on their previous utterances for 0.10% of the class time, and requested students’ elaboration for 2.09% of the total class time. All Su’s seven actions as listed above were mainly about the Text Content rather than the Non-text Content.

Lastly, similarly to what happened in the first lesson, Su had a tendency to sustain her speech longer in one teacher turn. Referring to the figure, Su’s longer speech turns occupied 47.51% of class time and shorter ones only occupied 11.12% of her class time.

Results of Document Analysis

Based on the documents that Su had supplied, I conducted a series of analyses, specifically, on the course outlines, textbooks, lesson plans, word lists, and exercise sheets. In the following paragraphs, I aim to present what I found in these instructional documents in connection to the lessons that I observed, namely, the lesson at the Introductory I level and the one at the Introductory II level.

Introductory I

I have collected a pack of documents at this level: the course outline, the textbook “Contemporary Chinese,” one lesson plan, three word sheets, one character exercise sheet, one exercise sheet, and one listening exercise sheet.
The Course Outline

The introductory I course was designed for students who had “very little or no knowledge of Chinese,” according to Su’s course outline published on the website at Alma University. The main focus of the course lay in oral communication and aural comprehension. Thus, Su included several objectives for this course: the teaching of Chinese phonetics (the Pinyin), characters, most useful words and idiomatic expressions, basic sentence patterns and their functional usage. She also claimed that “in-class activities will involve repetitions, pattern substitutions, and re-creations of life-like situational dialogues, group conversations, and role plays and so on” (Su, 2008). Those contents and actions, based on Su’s statement, were intended to help students obtain “general communication skills” (Su, 2008).

The Textbook

Su used the first edition of “Contemporary Chinese” as the textbook at the Introductory I level. It was published by Sinolingua in China in 2003. As stated in the introduction, this textbook is designed for students whose native language is English. Its ultimate goal is to “develop the student’s ability to comprehend and communicate in the Chinese language. Specifically, it provides training in the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing Chinese” (Wu, 2003, p. I).

According to the description at the beginning of the book, “This text book is concise, practical, authentic, and topical; adaptable to the varied needs of different students; [it] gives equal attention to listening, speaking, reading, and writing; [and it] guides your learning step by step” (Wu, 2003, p. I). After working through this book, students will
have a “good command of 325 Chinese words and expressions, 244 Chinese characters, 22 grammar items and 23 communicative function items, and thus have a basic command of Chinese” (Contemporary Chinese, p. I).

This textbook contains two major parts: Preparation and Texts. The Preparation part has a sole focus on the teaching of Pinyin: it introduces the structure of Chinese syllables, the initial consonants, vowels/finals, tones, and brief pronunciation rules and oral practices.

In the Text part, each chapter starts with a few most useful sentences marked with the Pinyin and their English translations. It follows a list of words and phrases, and two texts (usually dialogues) in three versions, i.e. Chinese characters, the Pinyin, and English. Successively, it introduces phonetic and grammatical rules revealed in the two texts. It ends with several cultural notes, i.e. how Chinese people’s names are composed.

This book employs many means in order to give out clear introductions and illustrations. For instance, it includes the Pinyin, Chinese characters, and English for all texts and English translation for all vocabulary words and grammar points in Chinese. This aims at enabling learners to gain a comprehension of both the pronunciation and written form of the Chinese content as well as its meaning. Meanwhile, it uses many pictures and comic strips to demonstrate language points (e.g. drawings of clocks for demonstrating the time and the convention of expressing time in Chinese) and grammatical rules (e.g. illustrating direction verbs). In some chapters, it also includes a small section entitled Classroom Speech (e.g. “Open your book and turn to page 3, please.”) with English translations. In addition, coloured illustrations depicting historical
artefacts, activities of daily life, and prominent landmarks and scenery in China, e.g., ancient China and the Terracotta Army are also represented. Although this is a textbook for the purpose of teaching simplified Chinese characters, it does not ignore the traditional Chinese character form by displaying the major texts with their traditional Chinese counterparts in each chapter.

At the end of this book, there are two folk songs with musical notes, Chinese lyrics, the Pinyin, and English translations, and three indexes (regarding vocabulary, grammatical items, and functional items) with the number given where relevant items are to be found in a chapter.

Lesson Eight “附近有没有银行？”(Is there a bank nearby?) was taught to students during the lesson that I observed at this level. This lesson contains 29 new words, two texts, two grammar points (location words and place expressions, and “在” sentence and “有” sentence24), and some cultural notes explaining the transportation choices in China.

The Lesson Plan and Other Materials

In Su’s lesson plan, she briefly noted the few sections that she was going to cover in this lesson and the activities that she was going to adopt during each section. Besides, she especially wrote down the sentences she planned to include in the dictation exercise. She underlined the key words that she would point out in class.

On the three word sheets, Su split all the new compound words into characters and marked the Pinyin to their right side. She not only made frequently-used words using

24 Both sentences denote location or existence.
those characters, but also made the effort to find similar characters that contained the same radicals to the ones in the lesson.

In the character exercise sheet, Su designed six exercises focusing on different aspects of characters to enhance students’ learning of characters: the written form of characters (e.g. supplying missing strokes to incomplete characters, and writing out characters containing the same radicals/components), the use of characters (e.g. forming words, and figuring out the meaning of sentences made up by previously-known characters), and the match between characters and their phonetic forms (e.g. giving the Pinyin to characters or writing characters according to the Pinyin that has been given). In addition, Su included two language points relevant to some new characters that were going to be taught in the chapter under consideration.

Moreover, there was an exercise sheet that Su had partially used in the lesson that I observed. It included a substitution drill, a word selection exercise, and an oral exercise for directional words.

There was also a listening exercise sheet that Su used during the lab time for teaching items in this chapter. This sheet had a pronunciation drill (i.e. differentiating similar phonetic units in syllables), a listening comprehension practice, a reading exercise, and a designated dialogue design task.

Introductory II

I collected several documents regarding the lesson I observed at this level: the course outline, the textbook “Meeting China,” one lesson plan, two character exercise sheets, two exercise sheets, and one listening comprehension exercise sheet.
The Course Outline

Su stated that this course was designed for those who had “some knowledge of Cantonese or Mandarin” (Su, 2008). Its goal was not only continuously set at “improving their (students’) communicative competence,” but also was broadened to help students to “acquire appropriate levels of reading and writing skills” (Su). Thus, Su intended to involve the teaching/drills of Pinyin, Chinese characters, essential Chinese grammar, and some aspects of Chinese culture. Typical language practices included “oral practices, pattern substitutions, functional item drilling, grammatical analysis and various types of multiple-purpose exercises” (Su).

The Textbook

The textbook for this level Meeting China (Zhang, Zhao, Guo, & Huang, 1997) was published by Beijing University Publishing House in 1997. It states to be suitable for learners who have a basic vocabulary (about 200 words) and grammatical knowledge. It has 15 chapters in total with over 400 vocabulary words.

In every chapter, it follows the structure Vocabulary—Text—Notes (optional)—Language Points—Exercises. In the text part, are included both Chinese characters and the Pinyin for the content. The notes introduce typical living activities in China, e.g. transportation, and contemporary conditions and living situations in China, e.g. the weather in different areas of China. The Language Points part includes brief English translations for grammatical rules. The Exercises part covers a variety of questions relevant to both the content of the text and the structures/form drills. Since this textbook is designed for foreigners who are studying in China, its content sometimes is specifically
about living in China for students’ convenience. This book also has a significant emphasis on structure/form illustration. This is found in its Language Points explanations and exercises/drills.

In Chapter 9 “你哪儿不舒服？” (What is wrong with your health?), the lesson I observed, there are 27 new words, three texts with simple sentences and brief dialogues. The notes talk about the procedures when seeing a doctor in China. The language points include four items: the reduplication of measure words, the affirmative-negative question, a sentence structure “只要 A 就 B” (as long as A…then B), and the affirmative-negative question with 是不是 (be or be not). Among the nine exercises, four are focused on drilling four previous language points; three are questions related to the text content, one is asking students to talk and write their own story on the current topic, and the last one provides a doctor’s prescription and an analysis report and asks students to read and comprehend them.

The Lesson Plan and Other Materials

This lesson plan is consistent with the previous one: it was mainly a brief list of all the activities that Su was going to cover in this lesson. Regarding the character exercise sheets, Su has adopted a similar pattern as for their counterparts from the first observed lesson. On the cover page of those worksheets, there is a series of words marked with the

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25 In Chinese, measure words and some nouns can be repeated, indicating each, every. Such as 个个, 天天。
26 This is a question formed by putting the affirmative and negative forms of the predicate together, e.g. “你爱不爱吃水果?” which means “Do you love eating fruits?”
27 It expresses the idea that a certain result is produced (or certain situation appears) under a certain condition.
28 This is a question used to confirm what the speaker already believes, e.g. “你是不是生气了？” which means (Footnote continued on next page)
Pinyin on the top and a character/Pinyin practice grid below them (a sample worksheet is attached as Appendix C). On the following pages, those words are separated to single characters and are marked with English translations. A list of most useful compound words combined by those single characters is also displayed on the side.

The other exercise sheets and the listening exercise sheet contain comparable exercises as used in the Introductory I lesson that was observed. Specifically, there are stroke exercises, radical/component recognition practices, word comprehension exercises, sentence structure comprehension and drills, and reading comprehension exercises.

Summary

In her lesson planning, Su paid a considerable amount of attention to her students’ pronunciation, comprehension and application of words and appropriate use of sentence structures. She had declared these ways of teaching clearly in the course outline. She also claimed that all these actions aimed at cultivating students’ communication skills and language comprehension in Chinese.

From the textbooks and other teaching materials that I collected at these two levels, I noticed that Su had laid significant emphases on both the phonetic form and written form of the Chinese language. One of her criteria in selecting the textbook was to find both the Pinyin and Chinese characters on it for both Introductory levels. Moreover, Su mainly included drills and practices related to language form on her various types of exercise worksheets. Nonetheless, a small quantity of exercises that pertained to the comprehension of discourse elements or passages also existed in her design.

“Are you mad or not?”
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the beliefs and to uncover the practices of an experienced Chinese teacher regarding her communicative orientation in the TCFL classes in Canada. By conducting this research project, I expected to improve my own understanding of the complexity which such a cross-cultural teacher may face in carrying out the teaching of Chinese in a North American context.

The participant in this research, Su, was a language teacher and a university professor. In previous chapters, I discussed Su’s teaching beliefs and instructional practices. In this chapter I aim to present her belief system and patterns of practice while discussing relevant issues. I start with presenting Su’s beliefs and practices in regard to the communicative orientation that she held for her TCFL enterprise in Canada. Then I uncover a potential relationship between these “mental” and “physical” realities and her previous educational, professional, and cultural exposures. Next, I compare the consistencies and inconsistencies between Su’s teaching beliefs and instructional practices. Further, I discuss the use of COLT. I close with the contributions of this study to relevant research.

Teaching Beliefs in the TCFL

In this section, I begin by depicting the belief system that Su held with respect to the teaching of Chinese to Western students in Canada. In order to present a full-scale panorama of her thinking, I focus on many aspects, as follows: Su’s beliefs about subject
matter in teaching, namely, the phonetic system named “Pinyin,” the Chinese characters, vocabulary, grammar, and pragmatics; her beliefs about the amount of communication in her teaching; and, beliefs in terms of other factors that might influence her teaching. After presenting Su’s teaching beliefs on each aspect, I follow with the exploration of a potential relationship between these beliefs and relevant experiences in her past.

Regarding the Subject Matters

Su’s Beliefs

Su believed that the teaching of Pinyin laid the foundation for cultivating high communicative capacities and good communication skills, since high accuracy in pronunciation would decrease the possibility to cause misunderstanding during communication. It seemed even more important to non-native speakers of Chinese because, according to Su, the alphabetic Pinyin system built a bridge between pronouncing the “abstruse” ideographic Chinese characters and the students’ mother tongue, English (T38). In order to build a solid foundation for foreign learners’ Chinese pronunciation, she believed that they could only “learn from scratch” (T38L5), namely, studying from the consonants and vowels, basic rules of constructing Chinese syllables, etc.

Yet, her emphasis on the Pinyin did not mean that Su weighed the significance of teaching the Chinese characters less. She acknowledged that it was very difficult to learn how to write and use Chinese characters, particularly for her foreign students. It was just the great difficulty, however, that made teaching and learning of this part of content especially important if one aimed at pursuing the mastery of the Chinese language as a
whole. Su cited an extreme example of a previous student to prove that the teaching of
characters had a noteworthy position in enhancing communication in real-life contexts
(T39). She held the belief that non-native speakers of Chinese should pick up characters
exactly as Chinese children, i.e. from writing strokes, learning about stroke order, and
optionally getting familiar with radicals/components representing meanings.

Moreover, Su thought that learning vocabulary also constituted the foundation for
mastering the whole language. In order to express and negotiate meaning with others, one
had to be equipped with a certain amount of vocabulary words. Likewise, Su believed
that basic sentence structures were absolutely necessary to promote efficient
communications.

Upon the teaching of vocabulary and grammar, Su considered that the two could be
combined. This was because, first, the learning of words, especially the usage of words,
should be practiced in bigger chunks of language, i.e. sentences and phrases. In this
sense, the teaching of vocabulary could elicit relevant grammar points and sentence
structures. Second, the two being intertwined could prevent the lesson from being dry and
compensate for lack of change in tasks. As well, student errors and textbooks were
viewed to be good sources to teach both vocabulary and grammar points by Su.

Nonetheless, Su did not approve of the idea of stopping at framing “grammatically
perfect sentences” (T69) while ignoring the appropriateness of using them in given
contexts. In this sense, Su supported the proper use of language as much as she did
structural accuracy. She admitted that she was willing to pay a considerable amount of
attention to students’ usage of language fragments and chunks through many exercises and classroom discourses (T69).

In summary, Su attended to the teaching of each component, namely, from the pronunciation of syllables to the pragmatic use of language, and thought they all weighed greatly for smooth and high quality communication, in and out of class for her students. In order to have a good impact on student learning, Su chose to adopt a thorough and step-by-step approach to teaching with emphasis on both language form and the use of the target language.

*How were these teaching beliefs formed?*

As we know, Su was taught the Pinyin, Chinese characters, vocabulary, linguistic knowledge including grammar points and sentence structures, and the appropriate use of language in given contexts throughout her Chinese and foreign language classes when she attended school (T10, T11, T15, T19, T20, T47, T51, T53). In her learning practices, Su was told by her teachers to accomplish tasks such as drilling the writing of phonetic syllables and characters (only for Chinese), reading texts, reciting words and texts, translation, etc (T15, T19, T20). Basically, she learned everything “from scratch” (T36, T38). Correspondingly, Su adopted the same principles to teach her own students, for example, to teach the Pinyin from the consonants and vowels, to teach the characters from the strokes and stroke orders, to teach the most useful words, and to teach the basic sentence structures. Su might also have gained strength from another source, i.e. a Chinese educational doctrine “there is no shortcut to learning” (T37L4) to firmly hold this belief. This doctrine seemed to have a deep influence on her many teaching decisions.
mentioned above. Thus, from her own description of the role played by her former language teachers in shaping her own approach and her comment “I enjoyed them (these previous classes) a lot” (T26), her confession about the impact of the Chinese doctrine on her teaching, we may gain a sense of why Su believed that these ways of teaching would be the foundation for her own language teaching.

By teaching the components of the Chinese language from scratch, Su believed that a good foundation to enhance future communication would be laid. Although Su perceived her elementary school and secondary school language classes had no oral “interaction and communication” (T16), and only her university language teachers occasionally conducted a Q & A interaction with students, she later learned from subsequent professional development activities that the teaching of a foreign language was an enterprise aimed at communicating. Here, Su comprehended “classroom communication” to be both the negotiation of meaning in the target language particularly going on in the classroom and “general communication” which represented a much broader type of communication, i.e. communication integrating ideas, culture, and emotion between people from different language backgrounds. Also, she equated Q & A and any other activities involving speaking in class to “communication.” I will discuss Su’s understanding of “communication” in more detail at a later point.

In addition to the influences due to Su’s previous language learning experiences, I assume that her idea coming from conducting a class at elementary school also had had an impact on her teaching. Su mentioned that her elementary school teacher had emphasized the notion of “[one should] be serious when conditions require seriousness
and [one could] be flexible and lively in other circumstances” (T30L2-3) which was held up high as a “canon” (T30L5) by her. If Su considered her teaching career to be a “serious” enterprise, then she was likely to have a traditional approach in her undertaking. Thus, it was surprising that Su developed a step-by-step and “frequent consolidation” (P11) attitude in designing courses and lessons and in her supervision of students’ language learning.

Furthermore, we know that Su strongly believed in seeing to students’ proper use of the target language. From her explanation, I was only able to find out part of the reason: she used to be frequently exposed to “language elements forming activities” when attending school, e.g. forming words with single Chinese characters, forming clauses and sentences with words, and combining sentences to be discourses (T66, P8). She thought that knowledge about language rules could only be acquired in language use. However, I failed to discover the reason why Su considered language use at the pragmatic level so important, i.e. she thought it was unacceptable to speak a grammatically perfect sentence on an inappropriate occasion (T69).

*Regarding the Treatment of Communication*

*Su’s Beliefs*

Su confessed that communicative language teaching was the most impressive language teaching approach to her among the many that she had ever heard of (T63). She believed that her present teaching beliefs had been greatly influenced by her exposure to CLT. In general, she believed that the idea of promoting communication through CLT aligned well with the goal of the TCFL enterprise, i.e. teaching the Chinese language to
learners as a tool to communicate with others (T33). She thought CLT could be implemented and examined via two means: a high “speaking rate” by students, and positive communication at an emotional level in class. The teacher could make a high “speaking rate” happen in class by providing concise and efficient lesson planning, initiating active teacher-student oral interactions, and saving instructional time to manoeuvre students to speak up to the maximum possible (T63). Communication at an emotional level, based on Su’s sense, should be fostered from the very beginning of the program. Only a mutual trust between the teacher and students would allow students to express their ideas and communicate with others freely (T64).

Su’s perceptions regarding CLT can be discussed in detail on the basis of the list of CLT features provided by Mangubhai et al. (2004). First, regarding the emphasis on fluency/appropriateness in the use of the target language or structural correctness, Su thought both were fairly important (T63). She would not approve of solely teaching the dry structural rules without giving practical examples of language use. As I mentioned earlier, she paid much attention to appropriateness in language use. Meanwhile, Su believed that the use of language should always come after the introduction of how to use it. Thus, in her view, only the combination of structure and function could achieve the best learning results for students.

Second, regarding the focus on form or meaning, Su held a dichotomous position. She thought it should depend on the goal of a particular instructional activity: if it were an activity introducing and reinforcing language rules, then students’ errors had to be corrected; if it were a conversational activity, then the flow of meaning meant more than
accuracy of language form. Moreover, although she thought that grammar was not necessarily the primary focus at each level, she spent a great deal of time giving explicit grammar instructions.

Third, regarding classroom environment and student autonomy, Su believed an interactive one would potentially lead to the best teaching and learning results. Many kinds of classroom activities, such as Q & A between the teacher and students, could be used to create an interactional learning environment (T63). Meanwhile, Su perceived that if students were given enough freedom and room to develop their own learning styles instead of being told by the teacher, they were more likely to find suitable means to learn and to gain self confidence and trust the teacher (T40).

Fourth, in terms of the teacher’s role in the classroom, Su believed that the ideal teacher should be a leader, a supervisor, and a helper to enhance students’ learning (T62, T123). Yet, she was not against the idea that the teacher might learn and receive help from students while being friends with students in some sense (T108, T109).

Lastly, as regards the use of materials, Su insisted on the importance of using the textbook. She thought that the textbook was not only a good source to find out about grammar points but also a main resource to support and help with students’ learning, especially when they were out of class. Other exercise worksheets that were designed or re-designed by her according to the text content were perceived to be a good tool to help students consolidate their learning (T76, T113). Besides, she mentioned that other sources from real life beyond the textbook and textbook-based worksheets should also be used for supplementing the teaching materials (T76).
How were these teaching beliefs formed?

Earlier, Su differentiated between TCFL and CL1: TCFL was characterized as introducing a tool, i.e. the target language, to enhance communications, while CL1 was a “knowledge transmission” (T33L1). She defined her undertaking in teaching Chinese to foreigners as a communicative enterprise. However, I did not find a difference in the approaches reported by Su on her previous Chinese and foreign language classes. That is to say, Su confessed she used the same types of teaching routines, methods, activities, and assignments in both types of language classes. This raises the question of how Su evolved her thinking of TCFL as being a communicative undertaking which was different from CL1.

The answer might be found in the professional development experiences that Su had accumulated over years. Several times, she emphasized the significance of the standards set by her original mentor at XXX University for her own future teaching. It was both the nature of the course ‘Listening and Speaking’, i.e. her first contact to the TCFL field, and her mentor’s use of new teaching methods, that made her realize that the teaching of Chinese to non-native speakers of Chinese was actually a subject distinct from the teaching of Chinese to native speakers of Chinese. As a consequence, she thought it was necessary to “re-think and re-practise” (T55L2) the TCFL undertaking.

However, as presented earlier, Su had mixed the idea of negotiating meaning in the use of the target language in class by engaging students in “oral interactional” activities.
She believed that a high speaking rate by students\textsuperscript{29} was very likely to feature a classroom as communicatively oriented. In this sense, many activities and tasks although directed at expanding on lesson content, e.g. Q & A, performances and presentations by students, and various kinds of oral drills and exercises, could be considered to be communicative (T60). This notion of communicative, however, was not completely consistent with the one from CLT. The communication suggested in CLT not only emphasizes the format i.e. oral interactions, but also contains a deeper sense for encouraging idea exchanges within free conversational situations. The many text-related drills and exercises, although in an oral form, should not be categorized as CLT activities.

\textit{Regarding Factors Affecting Teaching}

\textit{Su’s Beliefs}

In this section, I aim to present Su’s beliefs about two main factors that she thought had an influence on her decision making: characteristics of the student groups, and the milieu in which she was teaching.

First, Su believed that students’ age was a very influential factor in her course design. Since adult learners such as her current students had critical thinking skills and mature learning styles, she defined their learning as “language learning” (P8L13) which was different from children’s “language acquisition” (P8L13) type of learning. Based on this belief, Su expected her students to use their skills in analyzing language rules and structures in order to apply them freely in practices and perform analogical reasoning on

\textsuperscript{29} A high speaking rate by students indicates that students are engaged in using the language as much as possible.
similar cases. In other words, she would like to put a focus on language form and set higher expectations on students’ academic performances (P9).

Students’ language and cultural backgrounds were also seen as factors by Su in making instructional decisions. For instance, she thought that students at different language levels should be assigned materials with various degrees of difficulty; students from different language backgrounds should be helped in different areas where they were weak.

Su also believed that the course design should align with the majority of students’ in terms of their learning goals. In order to accommodate as many students’ interests as possible, she concluded that a universal way of teaching which involved teaching the “accurate language form” (P9L2) with “basic grammar and structures” (P9L3) should be most suitable and practical.

Second, Su thought that her ideas to design a TCFL program/curriculum were circumscribed by many factors: the number of course levels prescribed by the University, the intellectual and financial capacity within the program, the class size, the physical classroom restrictions and assignments, and the time slot for assignments (T71, T92, T125). She believed that her teaching would be able to achieve even better results by suitable changes or upgrades being made to any or all these aspects of the teaching environment.

How were these teaching beliefs formed?

This set of teaching beliefs mainly came from Su’s experiences dealing with different student groups and various teaching environments. For instance, Su was a
believer that students could also give the teacher certain knowledge and skills (T108, T109). From her point of view, this was mainly because her students were adults who had critical thinking skills and creativity. Her relevant experiences, e.g. knowing that students were capable of finding rules and tips to memorize various shapes of Chinese characters (T40) and discovering their most suitable ways of learning, led her to believe that her adult students could use these strengths to learn the Chinese language. Likewise, her years of practice in the field had allowed her to be exposed to many types of student groups; therefore, she had learned to treat differently students with different language backgrounds, different language capacities, and different learning goals (P8, P9). Also, the Confucian ideology “teaching students in accordance with their aptitude” cannot either be overlooked when talking about Su’s respect of this principle. In this light, it was both Su’s previous practices in dealing with diversity and the influence from her Chinese educational tenets that helped form her beliefs on how to cope with similar situations at a later date.

Teaching Practices in TCFL

*Regarding the Subject Matter*

*Su’s Practices*

During the two lessons that I observed at the Introductory I and II levels, Su adopted a similar pattern of instructional practice aiming at teaching the few components: the Pinyin, the characters, the vocabulary, the grammar, and the pragmatics. In this section, I mainly referred to my field notes and the audio tapes from the observed lessons to report
on Su’s teaching. Below are listed some characteristics that I found in her patterns of practice.

First, Su focused on more than one component when carrying out a task/activity in class. For instance, during both lessons, she had a dictation task for students. In the Introductory I lesson, she dictated a complete dialogue by asking students to write down sentences on their sheets. After reading each sentence to the class, she asked one student to spell out the Pinyin for each character in the corresponding sentence. Students spelled consonants and vowels first and added tones to each syllable afterwards. She then picked out key words within the sentence and asked students what they meant and how they could be used in another sentence. Lastly, she extracted a few sentence structures from the dialogue for students to review. Thus, Su included the teaching and reviewing of almost all components in this single task, i.e. the spelling in Pinyin and the pronunciation of syllables, character writing, vocabulary interpretation and usage, the application to sentence structure, and discursive skills. Su also used many text-reading activities to teach or allow students to review various language elements.

Second, in treating students’ errors, especially as regards pronunciation, Su used several situations as follows: a few times, when Su asked students to spell out the syllable that a pronunciation represented, she intentionally pronounced the incorrect syllable that students provided to her. She did this in a natural way in order to urge students to become aware of their errors rather than by embarrassing them. Usually the whole class including the student who provided the wrong answer laughed when they heard these incorrect sounds and made corrections immediately. Sometimes, she correctly pronounced the
syllables that students were confused about more than one time until they stopped hesitating but were able to figure out the right way to spell them. Most often, however, she corrected her students’ errors by herself as soon as she heard the wrong answers. Throughout the lessons, Su rarely let go of any mistake that her students had made. Students all accepted the correct answer supplied by Su and amended their answer right away.

Third, Su employed many other strategies in her teaching. For example, she frequently repeated students’ utterances either in order to reinforce the correct answers provided by students or to elicit further information which was supposed to follow students’ previous utterances. She had an inclination to complement students’ incomplete answers in responding to her questions. Also, she regularly commented on her students’ performances, generally very positively.

Fourth, Su had the intention to make all utterances created in class as authentic as possible. As all L2 learners, Su’s students often made grammatically perfect sentences that were not necessarily corresponding to a given situation. Su paid much attention to supply an appropriate context for those isolated sentences to make them less like an inter-language and more authentic to native speakers of Chinese. A typical example can be seen in the following excerpt:

Su: “整天，” 你记不记得是什么意思? Do you remember “zhěngtiān?”
(“Zhěngtiān,” do you remember what it means? Do you remember “zhěngtiān?”)

Student D: All day.

Su: All day, yeah. How to make a sentence with “zhěngtiān?”

Student D: Hmm, “我整天都学习汉语。” (Hmm, “I study Chinese all day.”)
Su: 哦，“我整天都学习汉语。”Yeah, good! 很好啊！“我整天都学习汉语。”

Which day? Today or everyday? (Oh, “I study Chinese all day.” Yeah, good! Very good!
“I study Chinese all day.” Which day? Today or everyday?)

Student D: You mean like all day in some day?

Su: 因为“all day”这个不清楚啊。你可以说“我昨天整天都学习汉语。”or “我上个星期每天......。”如果是一个 period of time, 你要说“everyday;” “within one day”就说“整天。” (Because this “all day” is not very clear in terms of which day it indicates.
You may say “I studied Chinese all day yesterday.” or “I studied Chinese all day in every
day last week.” If within a period of time, you need to say “everyday;” if “within one
day,” then you should say “all day.”)

Student D: “我每天……” (“I…everyday”)

Su: 哦，“每天。”(Oh, “everyday.”)

Student D: Everyday…, “我每天整天……” (Everyday…, “I…all day everyday.”)

Su: Sure! “我每天整天都学习汉语。”那你要说一下“我每一天。” 要 emphasize
“everyday,” “every single day.” “我每一天整天都学汉语。” 可以啊，good! 谢谢你。
(Sure! “I study Chinese all day everyday.” Then you’d better say “I…every single day.”
You should emphasize the idea of “everyday” by using “every single day.” “I study
Chinese all day every single day.” This is okay. Good! Thank you.)

As is shown above, when Student D made a grammatically correct sentence “I study
Chinese all day” with “zhěngtiān” (which means “all day long”), Su first of all gave
positive feedback and commented on Student D’s performance. Then, Su pointed out the
potential problem of using this sentence in a real-life conversational situation: people would be confused about which day the speaker was trying to specify. Thus, Su gave some pragmatic instructions on how to use “zhēngtiān” and how to differentiate “zhēngtiān” from “měitiān” (which means “everyday”) to Student D and the rest of the class. Further, Su was not so satisfied with the fact that the sentence “我每天整天都学习汉语” (which means “I study Chinese all day long everyday”) amended by Student D still did not sound very genuine. She ended up telling the class to use “mēiyitiān” (which means “every single day”) instead of “měitiān” (which means “everyday”) in order to emphasize the idea of “every single day” and to make it sound as a genuine sentence spoken by a native speaker of Chinese.

_How were these practices related to Su’s previous experiences?_

From the report about Su’s instructional practices above, we may be able to gain a clear picture of how Su’s four major instructional characteristics had been formed. A variety of classroom activities, such as reading texts, writing characters, spelling in Pinyin, forming words, and making sentences, etc., which Su used in her classes could obviously have found their counterparts in her previous language classes. At the same time, some of Su’s teaching methods and strategies also reflected some that had been collected from her mentor back in XXX University in China about twenty years ago.

_Regarding observational results by using COLT_

In this section, I intend to present a few practice patterns of Su’s at both the activity level (referring to Part A features and categories) and the teacher-student interaction level
(referring to Part B features and categories) according to the analysis of results by using COLT. I also explore whether there was a relationship between Su’s practices reported by the COLT scheme and relevant exposures to teaching from her past.

*Actual practices observed (Part A)*

In each lesson that I observed, I found very consistent trends and styles regarding Su’s instructional practices. Specifically, the majority of Su’s classroom activities were organized in the form of “whole class” (including three categories $T\leftrightarrow S/C$, $S\leftrightarrow S/C$, and *Choral* under the feature *Participation Organization* in the COLT scheme). Typical activities included a dictation, a text-reading activity, Q & A within the text content, etc. Group work was not often used, except each time for both lessons when Su asked students to combine in groups to read texts.

Moreover, Su demonstrated an explicit focus on language form rather than other areas such as function, discourse, and sociolinguistic aspects of the language. This characteristic of Su’s practice was reflected by many text-related activities in class. For example, sometimes Su asked her students to read texts they had previously learned. She usually paid attention to students’ pronunciation of the characters and asked students to recall the meaning of some key words and further requested students to use those words in sentences. When Su was carrying out these tasks with students, she mainly focused on their speaking accuracy and language use rather than the content of students’ utterances. Yet, she sometimes requested information from students about the content of texts. Su’s classroom activities were dominated by text-related content.
Also, Su decided the direction and selection of topics in most of her class time. She and her students occasionally determined some components of lesson content together, which was mainly seen in non-text activities such as preparing songs for the Chinese New Year party. Students rarely initiated topics.

Furthermore, Su’s classes engaged students in many speaking, listening, and reading activities while few writing activities were observed. Most of these activities were undertaken based on text-related content, although there were also some singing activities in both classes. In general, Su’s classroom activities demonstrated such a trend: text-related activities were clearly separated from the other activities which adopted an extra-curricular format. That is to say, Su used both the type of activities that were purely based on text content and those that were completely irrelevant to text content. There was no combination or blend with a transition between the two types.

Lastly, Su generally used the textbook and text-related materials for both lessons. These materials were all purposely designed for non-native speakers of Chinese. A few non-text materials that were originally designed for native speakers of Chinese were also used.

*Practices observed at the teacher-student interaction level (Part B)*

The lesson observed at the Introductory I level and the one at the Introductory II level basically showed Su’s similar patterns of practice except for some slight differences. First, when Su was requesting information from students, she had a tendency to ask close-ended questions for which she had known the answers in advance. Thus, students’ answers usually comprised short speech fragments and repetitions in response
to Su’s corrections on their previous language errors. More to the point, her delivery of
information based on students’ requests was limited since in general students did not ask
Su so many questions. Referring to the results shown in Part A, they were due to the fact
that Su’s classroom tasks were mostly distributed by the teacher. The drills and exercises
that Su gave out to the class usually had fixed answers which could be found in the
instructional materials that were passed to students. Although Su had reserved some time
for students to ask questions freely, students did not frequently use the time to appeal for
assistance since on most occasions the situation had been very clear or confusions had
already been clarified.

Second, Su for a large part typically both initiated and reacted to form-related
utterances. Her message-related utterances were mostly instructions regarding class
procedures and some conversations based on the content of the texts the class was
studying.

Third, the two lessons demonstrated different trends in using the target language and
students’ L1, i.e. English. The Introductory I lesson employed much more L1 than L2,
while the Introductory II lesson used significantly more L2 in a proportion very close to
the use of L1 in this lesson.

Finally, Su demonstrated a tendency to correct students’ errors immediately
following students’ utterances, to repeat students’ previous utterances, to paraphrase
incomplete utterances by students, and to comment on students’ language performances.
Meanwhile, Su did not allocate much time for students to expand on their current speech
turns to further conversations on either the level of language use or expression of ideas.
Su herself did elaborate on and expand on some current speech turns either made by her or her students, in order to give explicit language rules to the class.

Regarding Factors Affecting Teaching

This part of Su’s teaching practice was accumulated from the field notes that I recorded in her classes and my daily observation of her teaching environment. First, I present the account of the characteristics of the two student groups. During the lesson at the Introductory I level, 29 young adult university students with a mix of student ethnic origins, i.e. Chinese, Canadian, other ethnic groups, were present. The Introductory II lesson had 21 students in the class. There were more students from a Chinese-background than a pure Western background. One student was from Japan and was also older than the rest of the class.

All students from both levels were very well behaved in class. They cooperated exceptionally well with Su on all activities and tasks that involved the class. Everybody was attentive to the teacher since the classroom task frequently changed and each student could be requested to contribute to a task at any moment. In general, both lessons were going on in a well mannered surrounding. Occasionally, the classes burst out laughing for various mistakes made by the students or funny stories told by Su. At the beginning and end of both classes, during the singing activities, students showed tremendous passion and interest in performing these tasks.

Second, I report on the physical conditions of Su’s teaching surroundings. The Introductory I classroom was very bright and spacious. There was a big blackboard covering the whole front wall of the classroom. In contrast, the Introductory II classroom
was very narrow. There were only four rows of seats in which students were just able to fit. There was a thin isle between the first row of students’ seats and the blackboard.

A complicating factor was that, Su’s Chinese courses shared the same language laboratory with three other language programs. Therefore she had comparatively limited authority to use the language laboratory. The laboratory contained six to seven rows of seats which had the capacity for fifty students to be present in class at the same time. In the far left corner in the front of the lab, there was a computer, a projector, and a teacher-use panel to control audio-visual tasks in class. On each desk there was a student-use panel to receive a teacher’s command.

**Several Significant Trends Observed in Su’s Teaching**

*Teacherese*

“Teacherese” is also called “teacher talk” or “caretaker speech” (Omaggio-Hadley, 2001, p. 190). It is a concept that referred to a phenomenon occurring in second language learning settings similar to the “caretaker speech” that occurs in natural settings where children learn language (Omaggio-Hadley). According to Krashen, Terrell, Ehrman, Herzog (1984), and Omaggio-Hadley, “teacherese” features simplified codes, slower delivery, and attempts to ensure comprehension via careful articulation, restatements, paraphrase, and nonverbal aids like pictures or gestures.

Su demonstrated a tendency to use teacher talk throughout her lessons. She articulated each syllable very clearly. When making a long utterance, she tried to avoid liaison and fast pace. She only used vocabulary and sentence structures that were familiar
to students. She also tended to highlight key words (such as verbs and major adjectives) within a speech chunk by accenting those words, inserting pauses after them, or repeating them. However, during the two lessons, not many nonverbal aids such as pictures or gestures were observed. Yet, Su resorted to writing on the blackboard when confronting complicated concepts or when students were experiencing confusion in trying to understand the items taught.

Omaggio-Hadley (2001) also mentioned that “‘teacher talk’ can sound quite authentic since it is generally not planned or scripted. Rather, it flows naturally as the teacher develops a given theme or topic and often involves interactive exchanges with students. These exchanges, when not contrived or overly structured, have the flavour of a real conversation” (p. 190). Su’s classroom conversations with students, were mostly structured in advance, e.g. the dictation exercise, the text reading activities, the Q & A section based on text-related content. In this sense, Su’s teacher talks in class adopted the outer form of the “teacherese” defined by Omaggio-Hadley (2001) while not necessarily following the unstructured pattern.

Focus on the Textbook

From my observations of Su’s two lessons, her course outlines and all other teaching materials, I found that the textbook was her principal source for lesson planning and instruction. As I mentioned earlier, Su usually included a few different sections in each lesson. Except for the extra-curricular-like activities at the beginning and end of classes, all other teaching activities which occupied the majority of class time were based on the textbook or textbook-related exercises and drills. The homework that Su assigned to
students consisted primarily of completing worksheets for the practice of language form and comprehension exercises requesting the application of language elements and rules.

**Focus on Form**

Long (1991) used the term “focus on form” to refer to the attention that teachers assigned to form in their language teaching. He also argued that it promoted language acquisition because it enabled learners to notice linguistic elements, e.g. pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and discourse features. Long listed some “pervasive classroom practices” (p. 181) that a “focus on form” teacher would use in his/her classroom: “grammar and vocabulary explanations, display questions, fill-in-the blanks exercises, dialogue memorization, drills and error correction…” (Long, p. 181).

Su typically employed many activities that embodied a concept of “focus on form.” For instance, Su often asked students to perform tasks such as pronouncing syllables and words, and reading fixed dialogues from the textbook. Su adopted a typical teacher-student-interaction pattern where the teacher may first present an accurate model of formed speech (e.g. a syllable, a character, a word, a sentence) or request information from students, then students would follow up with repetitions or provide responses to the teacher’s request. This type of interaction would allow the instructor to examine students’ immediate learning results, and to reinforce students’ accurate language habits/concepts, if good student performances were displayed, or to rectify their incorrect habits/concepts, if bad student demonstrations were at play. Thus, corrective feedback was a necessary product in this pattern of practices. This further reinforced my description of Su’s teaching practices earlier, “Su rarely let go of any student error in class.”
Comparing Su’s Teaching Beliefs and Practices

Regarding the Subject Matter

I found a high consistency between Su’s beliefs held for the subject matter within her TCFL undertaking and her practices in this area. Specifically, Su supported the idea that students should learn from scratch regarding every single language aspect in order to lay a good foundation for their mastery of the whole language and she carried out this conviction in the classroom. She taught the Chinese phonetic system starting with the consonants, vowels, tones, and the combination rules. During the two lessons observed, she especially emphasized the usage of tones since this was considered by her to be the biggest obstacle for her Western students. As well, Su implemented her belief in teaching characters from the most basic strokes, stroke orders, and radicals and components of characters.

Moreover, regarding the teaching of vocabulary and grammar, Su also held a set of principles which she applied in her classroom teaching. First, she thought that it was a convenient and productive method to intertwine the teaching of vocabulary and the teaching of grammar. In practice, she realized this by dictating vocabulary words to bring out grammar points either for review or giving out new instructions. Second, she believed that students’ errors were good sources for the teaching of vocabulary and grammar. Regarding her practices in the Introductory I lesson, Su took advantage of the opportunity when a student made a mistake in pronouncing the phrase “远不远” (which means “far or not far”) to bring out the grammar point “affirmative- negative questions”. During the same class, she elaborated on the different pronunciations and usages of the Arabic
number “1” in Chinese after one student misused it in a sentence. Similar cases were very easy to find in both observed lessons. Third, Su was determined to use the textbook as another source to teach vocabulary and grammar. As we know, Su basically designed her lessons and classroom tasks in accordance with the layout of the textbook. She made efforts to cover all vocabulary words and grammar points supplied in the textbook. Thus, the tie between Su’s belief in terms of using the textbook and her actual practices was obviously seen from her overall lesson planning to her concrete instructions in class.

Furthermore, Su’s belief of cultivating students’ pragmatic awareness in the use of Chinese was consistent with her practice in assigning appropriate contexts to isolated student utterances and complementing student utterances so as to make them sound as authentic and genuine as possible.

Lastly, Su’s practices of frequently commenting on students’ good language performances were corresponding to her belief of giving students enough room for the growth of self-confidence in their learning. In addition, such practice of Su’s reflected the way she felt about showing respect to students and building a good rapport with them in class.

*Regarding the Treatment of Communication*

Earlier, I discussed Su’s particular understanding of communicative language teaching and how to treat communication in her classroom, and the difference between her own beliefs and CLT as defined in the literature (Canale and Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983; Savignon, 2001; Mangubhai et al., 2004). Later, after reviewing this set of beliefs held by Su, I found there were both consistencies and inconsistencies in her actual
practices regarding the implementation of her self-defined CLT and her implementation in classes.

To start with, Su embraced the thought that high students’ speaking rate and a positive emotional climate in class were features of a communicatively oriented classroom. Indeed, she obtained a comparatively high speaking participation of students in class, although it usually was generated within a text-related content. Students’ speaking acts were mostly to respond to the teacher’s questions and requests for repeating language elements; alternatively, students were asked to read texts or practice dialogues between peers. A positive emotional climate was also apparent when the class was carrying out extra-curricular activities (such as singing) and when the content of either student utterances or teacher utterances was relatively entertaining. However, when the class was engaged in more “serious business,” i.e. text-learning activities, interaction was not charged with emotion and communication was usually not seen.

Next, Su carried out her belief of placing emphasis on both language structure and function in her teaching. That is to say, she balanced giving out instructions of language rules and presenting practical examples to students in order to demonstrate the use of rules or consolidate students’ language knowledge. Nevertheless, the examples that Su gave to illustrate the use of language structures were often short and simplified language chunks. Students were not provided many opportunities to practice the use of relevant language structures in longer discourse or free conversations.

Moreover, Su’s dichotomy regarding placing the focus on language form or meaning in her mind was partially found in her ways of treating students’ errors. During the two lessons that I had formally observed, she pursued students’ accuracy of language form to
the maximum within a classroom setting that dictated it. She asked students to imitate the teacher’s perfect or close-to-perfect pronunciation, to repeat the accurate language models that the teacher provided, and to rectify their errors immediately if there were any. However, in the two pilot lessons that I observed at the Intermediate level, I uncovered a different situation. Since the classroom activities in those two lessons were student presentations regarding Chinese cultural issues, Su did not bother to interrupt students’ presentations and flow of ideas; instead, she let go of student errors during their presentations and encouraged their expression of ideas and language fluency regardless of the accuracy of form.

Furthermore, Su envisioned the ideal TCFL teacher to be a leader, a supervisor and a helper for students. From her classroom practices, I observed her as a natural leader who dominated the classroom teaching and learning processes in a directive way, and witnessed her extremely responsible supervision of students’ learning. Also, she took the time to walk around helping students out when they were experiencing problems during group works.

Lastly, I perceived a inconsistency between Su’s thinking about her teaching objectives and the high standards that she had set for herself and her students in the real classroom context. Su claimed her teaching goals were to introduce the Chinese language and culture, and provide students with a relaxing and enjoyable learning experience. Yet, in practice, she exerted a considerable amount of effort in order to design a rigorous course. She tried to take care of every single aspect of the Chinese language and of many areas of Chinese culture. At the same time, she had very high standards for her students.
so they could develop a comprehensive language competency in Chinese. Thus, there was a lack of consistency between the teacher’s general blueprint and the actual process she used to embody her thoughts in the details of her practice.

Regarding Factors Affecting Teaching

Su showed a high level of consistency in her mental representations and the physical implementation corresponding to the characteristics of her student groups. She fully followed through in her practice with her belief that “adult university students had critical thinking skills”. She engaged students in analyzing language structures, conducting reasoning to apply language rules and to elicit more complicated rules, generating language rules and regulations from existing examples of authentic language, and so on. She consequently set comparatively high standards for students to know not only how to use the language, but also why it was used in certain way.

A Comparison with the Relevant Literature

In the preceding sections, I described and discussed how an experienced TCFL teacher constructed her beliefs in teaching the Chinese language to her Western students, especially in respect to her dealing with communication in her teaching, and how she implemented her thinking or not fully put into action her beliefs in her language classrooms. This teacher, Su, presented a complex reality to us about how teachers’ beliefs and their actions may interact and interplay. In this section, I aim to compare the current research to its previous counterparts, i.e. literature concerning teacher beliefs and teacher practices (e.g. Pajares, 1992), teacher cognition and teacher actions (e.g. Van den
Branden, 2006), personal practical knowledge (e.g. Elbaz, 1981, 1983), and intuitive teaching (e.g. Skowron, 2006).

Borg (2003) in meta-analysis of the literature regarding teacher cognition in language teaching described teachers as “active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs” (p. 81). With this definition, Borg implied various factors that might affect the formation of teacher cognition, such as teachers’ general schooling experience and language learning experience in particular, professional coursework, contextual factors (e.g., student bodies, curriculum, language learning, physical settings), and classroom practice (Borg; Van den Branden, 2006). In the present study, my participant teacher, Su, described her experiences with and exposure to regarding all these four factors in detail. Upon the demonstration of Su’s teaching beliefs and observation of her teaching practices, I uncovered a connection between her teaching beliefs and her experiences prior to her current teaching practice; also, I was able to make a comparison between the teaching beliefs that she claimed to be hers and her actual instructional actions in her classrooms. Through this specific case study, I have found evidence that concurs with previous research outcomes.

First, as widely believed, teacher actions are “the result of continuous and intense mental activity” (Van den Branden, 2006, p. 218). That is to say, teachers take an instructional action for a reason. For example, during the first observed lesson at the Introductory I level, my participant teacher Su started the lesson with a “prologue”. In the excerpt of a conversation between Su and Student A (please refer to the excerpt under
Table 2 data analysis), Su brought out the topic of the severe weather that day and thanked the students for their attendance in class. If we put this action to analysis, we will be able to find a few sources that might be conducive to its actualization: Su used the weather topic that was tightly connected to students’ real life to start the lesson as a warm-up strategy; she expressed her gratitude to students for their coming to the class in order to build teacher-student rapport and communication at an emotional level that she had been greatly emphasizing; she might also have had the idea of reviewing the previously-learned word “雪” (which means “snow” in English) by taking advantage of this ice-breaker activity; and there might be even more behind-the-scenes reasons that drove her to such an action in class.

If we take Su’s action pattern “focus on form” as another example, it might help us to gain a better sense of how a series of actions can be led by teachers’ cognitive processes. As we have found out, Su had developed her classroom teaching practices with a focus on linguistic form largely from her own educational experiences, especially in the way she had been exposed to a form-based learning environment in her previous language classrooms. Meanwhile, she might also have received influences from her mentor back in Beijing who professionally tutored her about twenty years ago and supervised her to develop her own teaching style. No one can deny, although Su may or may not realize it, that she had also possibly been affected by the widely-adopted ancient saying “the journey of a thousand miles starts from one step” and the Chinese educational ideology telling learners that knowledge can only be acquired through a rigid discipline and frequent self-improvement. These Chinese ideologies have been common doctrines in the Chinese education arena for thousands of years (Wang, 2005). The traditional CL1
education that Su received since she was a little girl was inextricably soaked in such a stance. Thus, these doctrines were very likely to be transmitted to pupils’ belief and knowledge structures and to become a part of them accompanying their growth in future undertakings.

Second, although teacher cognition on many occasions is a strong backup to teacher actions, teachers do not know, neither do researchers know for sure, which factor and to what extent it would result in the creation of a certain belief belonging to one teacher. Woods (1996) and Van den Branden (2006) thought it was because components of teacher knowledge, beliefs, perceptions and intuitions were inextricably intertwined. Once again, let us use our former example, i.e. Su’s focus on form in her teaching. Although we have suspected in previous paragraphs that this action had been affected by many sources, Su’s insistence on adopting this practice might have benefited from her positive view of this pattern and process of language teaching and learning. There existed a possibility that Su in fact reflected on her own language learning progression and figured that sticking to the learning of form was the most efficient way for her to learn. Thus it had to be the most suitable way to help her students to achieve success in their learning. Based on this scenario, it was Su’s own learning style that determined her action to put an emphasis on linguistic form rather than simply amalgamating facts from her previous language learning experiences. Yet, one can never define the magnitude of this possible power on Su’s action, as one cannot describe how influential the many traditional doctrines related to teaching and learning may be in determining a teacher’s practical performances.
In addition, teachers were not necessarily able to differentiate characteristics between different learners; neither could they tell which contextual variable affected their cognition related to education in which way. According to Van den Branden (2006), these factors might seem “blurry at best” (p. 219). In this sense, teachers’ actual teaching on many occasions is characterised as “intuitive” (Skowron, 2006).

Third, Basturkmen, Loewen, & Ellis (2004) reported that what teachers acted out in the classroom was not always consistent with what they believed should be done or could be done. Van den Branden (2006) concluded a number of factors that might be able to explain the inconsistencies between teacher beliefs and practices. For instance, contextual constraints such as time limits, spatial constraints, lack of appropriate teaching aids, oversized classrooms, etc., may contribute to interfering with teachers’ carrying out the plans in their minds. My participant Su confessed that she had especially suffered from insufficient technological support for language laboratory sessions with the consequence that students were not granted the opportunity to benefit from many online interactive Chinese-learning programs. She also thought that her oversized class, particularly at the Introductory I level, inhibited her implementation of some classroom activities.

Moreover, Van den Branden (2006) suggested that it was inevitable that teachers might hold beliefs that were contradictory to each other. For example, even if teachers theoretically approved the idea that learners should be granted many opportunities to learn speaking through various speaking activities and group work, they might also hold the idea that too many speaking tasks, especially free-conversation-like tasks, and group discussions might cause much noise and irrelevant conversations or conversations in languages other than the target language in the classroom which would not necessarily be
conducive to language learning. In this sense, teachers can hold many dilemmas and contradictory intentions; however, only a compromise between their conflicting beliefs can create a balance in their classroom practice.

To continue, the other factor that might also create inconsistencies between teacher beliefs and practices was “conflicts between beliefs and skills” (Van den Branden, 2006, p. 221). On many occasions, teachers may be convinced by a theory or pedagogy at its theoretical level while lacking the knowledge or skills to put it into practice. In this case study, Su acknowledged that she embraced the CLT approach; however, her explicitly-stated understanding regarding CLT was very unlike the CLT in literature and the concepts adopted by many in-service CLT programs. During our conversations, Su did not mention if she had particularly attended CLT-related professional development activities or read such materials. She did not talk about CLT in details upon my inquiries a few times and as well did not convey to me an understanding of the widely-acknowledged CLT approach by researchers and teachers who were employed in current CLT programs. Thus, the reason that Su’s practices did not reveal a strong intention and pertinence to be CLT-like might lie in her inadequate knowledge about the prevalent CLT approach.

Alternatively, relating to the previous factor that Van den Branden (2006) assumed to cause inconsistencies between teacher beliefs and practices, it might be the case that Su did not approve the CLT scheme acknowledged by academia and the field of applied linguistics in the first place, since this was contradictory to her inherited concept from her primary school teacher about holding the classroom undertaking as a serious business and
only serious learning practices and student behaviours should exist. Based on Van den Branden, “teachers will not adopt let alone integrate new practice if they do not believe in or have clear understanding of the rationale behind these new practices” (p. 234). Similar cases were found in the study of teachers of Japanese as a foreign language by Sato & & Kleinsasser (1999) and a group of ESL teachers in Korea by D. Li (1998). They were reported to either have inadequate input of the CLT knowledge and skills or have uncertainties (e.g. considering CLT activities as time-consuming) about the practical implementation of CLT.

Fourth, as stated by Van den Branden (2006), maintaining classroom control is crucial to many teachers within the category of traditional pedagogies. “From a psychological point of view a pedagogical approach in which the teacher first presents certain linguistic features in a predetermined and logical order, and then evaluates whether exercises performed by the learners are correct according to clearly defined criteria, gives the teacher a high degree of control.” (p. 230). Thus when teachers are presented with the CLT approach, which requires negotiation of meaning through many free conversational activities, they may feel that they are struggling with uncertainties in the classroom and then sense the partial or complete loss of control over the situation. Su did not explicitly express similar feelings; however I have evidence that would suggest that Su may have the same fear as other teachers. For instance, she clearly separated “serious business”, such as classroom learning, and “light-hearted doings”, such as extracurricular activities. Furthermore, Su maintained highly ordered classrooms in which students were well behaved. She also believed that students should respect teachers and the elderly. In terms of this ancient doctrine, there is a profound Chinese
cultural influence. For example, the Chinese culture forbade juniors from raising their voices in front of their seniors; seniors should always be shown courtesy by juniors and juniors should always maintain a humble attitude in the presence of seniors. Although Su considered herself half as teacher and half as friend to the students, she admitted that she expected students to behave according to traditional Chinese etiquette. By being given students’ respect, the students showing the proper attitude towards “serious business” and a rigid planning of classroom activities, Su was able to manage the entire process. This was also one of the reasons that guided her specific teaching style and approach.

Lastly, although Su told me that she had been exposed to the CLT approach through many professional development programs and self-directed learning, I did not find evidence that Su had integrated the CLT ideas, stated by researchers and applied linguists. She also affirmed that since her teaching methods had been formed in the field of TCSL back in China about 20 years ago, she did not perceive any major changes in her teaching styles and methods, even after she moved to Canada where the pedagogical conventions were very different from China. In this respect, Van den Branden (2006) pointed out that many teachers were inclined to be resistant to “external intrusion: to take professional decisions they primarily rely on their own experiences in the classroom either as a learner or as a teacher” (p. 221-222). Much previous literature, e.g. Sato and Kleinsasser (1999), B, Li (1998), Elbaz (1981, 1983), and Burnaby and Sun (1989), showed similar research results: teachers resorted to their personal ideas and experiences, constructed their practical personal knowledge, and attached their own personal interpretations to theories that they had been introduced to.
It is evident that certain aspects of Su’s teaching are well supported by previous research. During my year-long volunteer-ship in Su’s program, I was privileged to anecdotal evidence from her students that positively supported her teaching. Some students thought that Su created a firm foundation for learning and a balanced program with four language skills; she instructed clearly; she provided complete and objective learning materials; and they believed her to be a caring and responsible person as a teacher and as a personal mentor. There is a Chinese proverb, “From a strict teacher come capable pupils”. Every language has its own uniqueness, plus its own culture would heavily influence the formation of its language and the specific language learning and teaching processes. Maybe the strong emphasis on form is necessary for the teaching of Chinese. However, linguistic evidence showed that Chinese is a “discourse-oriented language” (Wang, Lillo-Martin, Best, & Levitt, 1992, p. 225) thus in the initial learning of Chinese the classroom should naturally become a communicative environment. According to second language acquisition theorists, when children acquire a language their primary objective is to use the language to convey a message, which are usually language fragments without a subject. Theorists (e.g. Krashen 1985) also suggested that second language acquisition should recreate an environment similar to the learning environment of children. Unlike English, in Chinese the subject can often be eliminated, and Wang et al. have found that young English-speaking children use language fragments without a subject in a similar manner as Chinese-speaking adults. This implies that Chinese, when taught as a second language, is a language well suited to be taught in a communicative learning environment for children because it is a language that primarily focuses on the conveyance of messages regardless of form.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

This qualitative case study does not aim to judge the teaching of my participant. It only reports on the findings stemming from the interviews, using the COLT measure, and the analysis of classroom documents. COLT was used to focus my observation rather than to quantify my data. No causal relationships can be implied. This chapter intends to conclude the research by reviewing the main findings about my participant, Su’s educational beliefs in terms of the treatment of communication in her classrooms, her actual practices in this respect, and the gaps between her beliefs and practices. Further, I report the limitations of the present study and the implications for future studies in this field.

Findings

A TCFL teacher, Su, held a set of beliefs regarding her teaching of Chinese in Canada: the learning of Chinese is a serious business that requires a solid foundation for all linguistic elements; a focus on linguistic forms is necessary to generate students’ language accuracy and in response to the learning style of adult learners who are capable of applying critical thinking skills; communication can only happen with the groundwork of linguistic knowledge and skills; the application of the CLT approach implies a high speaking rate by students and a positive emotional interaction between the teacher and students; the teacher should supervise, guide and help students’ learning while students at the same time have autonomy in their learning; materials that are specifically designed for L2 learners are most suitable to the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language; the
TCFL aims to give learners a happy learning experience yet generates limited communicative capability.

Meanwhile, in the classroom, Su had a primary focus on teaching linguistic forms. She put emphasis on students’ achieving language accuracy and genuineness rather than fluency. Su took charge of the topic selection for classroom activities rather than her students. She greatly relied on the textbook and text-related teaching materials. Her use of the target language increased when students’ language level improved. In addition, Su adopted a number of classroom activities such as reading, dictation, asking questions, grammatical exercises and drills, and planned extra-curricular activities. It is interesting to note that during regular lessons, Su mostly followed a form-focused approach to giving well-structured instructions to classes, while during extra-curricular activities such as conversation club meetings, Su’s approach reflected an approach containing many communicative features.

In general, this TCFL teacher’s beliefs highly conformed to her classroom practices. The majority of her beliefs played out in her actualization of corresponding practices. However, there existed a few minor gaps between her educational beliefs and practices: she was willing to assign students autonomy in their own learning but in reality highly controlled their learning process. She did it through keeping her teaching quick-paced and assigning uniform or quasi-uniform tasks to students in and out of class. She also had a conflict between her ultimate goals of introducing the Chinese language to non-native speakers of Chinese by making it entertaining and her intense course design and rigid discipline in and out of class.
This teacher possessed a high degree of pedagogical content knowledge. She made sense of her teaching mostly through her own L2 learning and teaching experiences, partially from her cultural awareness-raising and practices that she had experienced over years. It appears that she reached a balance between developing language accuracy and a certain level of fluency as I observed: in class she was giving structured lessons with an emphasis on linguistic forms whereas her students were communicating in Chinese freely during extra-curricular activities. She believed that the approach she used was the most suitable, deviating in some circumstances from the ideal representation of the communicative approach, which indeed Spada and Fröhlich (1995) see as being applied differently according to a given situation. Therefore, Su had tailored her teaching to best serve her educational needs and tenets in the teaching of Chinese in Canada.

Limitations and Implications to Future Studies

The primary limitation is that, a fairly limited number of previous investigations upon TCSL/TCFL teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and their experience in the actual classroom teaching have been carried out, in both the Chinese and Canadian contexts. Further studies need to continue articulating and examining teacher beliefs, knowledge, and practice in cross-cultural contexts, but also in more particular contexts such as individual schools and diverse types of classroom. This lack of similar studies made it difficult to cross-reference my methods and findings.

Second, due to time constraints because of the unavailability of the participant, I was only able to conduct three interviews (including both pre-observation and post-
observation ones) and two formal classroom observations. This resulted in a comparatively small set of data. The issue of teachers’ beliefs, knowledge and practice is very complex. It requires considerable time and patience to discover the nuances and subtleties involved. Further inquiries should be made by investing more time in interviews and classroom observations.

Since this is a qualitative case study, I have mainly made a description and offered my own personal interpretation of my participant’s account of her educational beliefs and practices. I have refrained from making any generalizations based on the evidence presented in this case study, so that readers may have the freedom to construct their own generalizations based on cases that they also have access to.
REFERENCES


Appendix A
Pre-observation Interview Sample Questions

1. Please tell me about your education background?

2. I would like to know how you were taught your mother tongue, Chinese, through your schooling experience.

1) What methods did your teachers use in teaching Chinese to you?

2) What activities did you have in class for your Chinese lessons when you went to school?

3) Was there much communication and interaction in your Chinese classrooms when you were a student? In what ways were communications demonstrated?

4) What exercises and assignments did your teacher give you?

5) What teaching equipment did your teacher have?

6) What was the classroom environment like?

7) Did you enjoy learning Chinese in general? Why or why not?

8) Do you think in any sense your previous Chinese teachers had any impact on your current teaching of Chinese as a foreign language?

9) From your experience of teaching Chinese to foreigners and your second-hand experience (being exposed in the Chinese-as-a-first-language class as a student for years) about teaching Chinese to native Chinese, do you perceive there is anything in common or difference between the two?

10) Anything that you think the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language could possibly borrow from the teaching of Chinese as a first language? Have you transferred any strategies from the teaching of Chinese as a first language to it as a second language?
Appendix B
Post-observation Interview Sample Questions

1. I have noticed that you greatly emphasized the accuracy of students’ pronunciation in your lesson. Why did you do that?
2. I also noticed that the content of your lesson was tightly attached to the texts. In what aspects do you think this will contribute to students’ learning?
3. Where do you collect these exercises worksheets from?
4. Do you give the whole exercise binder to students at the very beginning?
5. Then what do you think of the benefits for assigning a lot of attention to the textbook?
6. Could you please criticize about the current textbooks that you are using for your three levels of class?
7. Do you think an emphasis on teaching vocabulary and grammar is very important to improve students’ communicative skills/competences? Why or why not?
8. In that case, do you think it is necessary to correct an Introductory I student if he/she makes a mistake in grammar?
9. When you were teaching in your Introductory I class, you had a dialogue dictation at the beginning of the lesson. Why did not you do word dictations instead?
10. So do you think it is all about age? It is the age that makes the learning styles different, or more specifically, your teaching style towards university students (adults) focusing on accuracy of language?
11. What do you think of your students’ learning results?
12. Can you please comment on your teaching performances and teaching effects during the lesson that I have just observed?
Appendix C
Sample Character & Pinyin Worksheet