Diversity and Challenges

Education in the Asia Pacific Region

Aasif Ali

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Introduction – Changing Perspectives in Asia Pacific Education Research

PHILIP WING KEUNG CHAN and JOHN PARDY

Any research undertaking is at times a solitary experience for those who take the decision to pursue such a course of action. This is especially the case in doctoral research. Settling upon an area for investigation and making the necessary choices in getting the study off the ground inevitably involves the researcher making an intervention into an established research terrain. The chapters that make up this edited collection of recent education research contain knowledge useful for thinking about and understanding education issues in the Asia Pacific. Each of the chapters is about education and its institutional manifestations in countries across the Asia Pacific.

The chapters that make up this collection are from emerging and experienced researchers who have all sought to travel uncharted waters in the seas of education knowledge. All of the contributors in this collection have undertaken the production of knowledge through their doctoral studies in the field of study of education. Education as a field of study is embedded in ideas, yet is more importantly known through the practices that shape teaching, learning, assessment and schooling experiences. Education has changed throughout history and continues to be the cause of changes through its implementation and impact. No one leaves education, however, successful or unsuccessful, unchanged, and this is highlighted by the pursuits of education research that are featured in this book.

The contributors to this collected volume of education insights and ideas have travelled to distant places and through a myriad of knowledge traditions to make a contribution to education knowledge anchored in the Asia Pacific. The contributors are from Australia, Bangladesh, Belarus, China, Hong Kong, Nepal, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Their collective work includes education knowledge produced in Australia by drawing upon empirical contexts from countries in the Asia Pacific. The knowledge and ideas contained in the chapters in this book illuminate the interactions between local and global conditions that make education and the production of knowledge about education possible both nationally and internationally.

The Asia Pacific is home to over 60 per cent of the world's population and the chapters in this book provide invaluable insights and evidence of education practices as institutionalised and experienced by these populations. This

collection of education research from Asia Pacific education researchers is organised around five core themes. These themes – subject teaching, child education, language and literacy, education policy and systems, and identity and social equity – provide the platform for a rich research conversation about how education is currently working in the Asia Pacific. The focus of all of the contributors focus is on well-defined education situations in specific national contexts that generate education knowledge as it is known and experienced in various parts of the Asia Pacific.

Part One focuses on teacher practice. Rahman explores education reforms in Bangladesh, Tutwisoot examines language learning in Thailand, while Tan's contribution reveals insights into student attitudes about technology use in mathematics in Singapore.

The focus on early childhood in Part Two includes a study of Hong Kong parents' experiences of negotiating schooling for their children in Australia by Wong. Phan's chapter looks at the role of the curriculum in mediating changes to early childhood education in Vietnam, while in the final chapter in this part, Li makes an important case about the influence of parent interaction and participation in the context of bilingual language acquisition.

Language and literacy, as Sharma argues, is central to a socially cohesive and successful multicultural Australia, and this argument forms the first chapter in Part Three, which addresses language and literacy. Tour provides another insight into Australian multiculturalism and diversity through her exploration of critical literacy and internet use among international students studying in Australian tertiary institutions. Sarkhar's chapter extends the theme of literacy by considering scientific literacy and the impact and influence of science textbooks. This chapter draws on empirical data from Bangladesh. Nguyen continues the interest in language and literacy through her chapter on the writing skills and the language abilities of students and professionals using business English in Vietnam.

Part Four, dealing with systems and policies, begins with Chan's chapter on the changes in ownership of schools in China. Using a case study involving schools in the Shenzhen Municipality in Southern China, Chan examines systemic education change. At a more local and indeed personal level, Nguyen considers constructions of contemporary Vietnamese identity in the context of global cultural flows.

In Part Five, Zhang examines issues of education equity as they play out in China, especially as they relate to class differences. Sanders considers the issue of heteronormativity and the discourses inherent in adolescent girls'

friendships. in the final chapter in this part, Yang looks at weekend Chinese school in Victoria, Australia, and explores students' experiences in Huawen School, a community language school operating in Melbourne.

This edited volume of education research brings together education knowledge originally created through the solitary agenda of doctoral research. Doing such investigative research and reporting it through writing involves the exchange, sharing and dissemination of ideas. What began as an individual initiative has for many of these 16 researchers become a series of textured conversations about the abundant issues that make up the real world of education in the Asia Pacific. The contributors to this collection of education research knowledge in the Asia Pacific have travelled from their countries of origin in the Asia Pacific to an Australian university to realise these contributions to knowledge. These researchers, through their work at Monash University, were engaged and continue to be involved in intercultural, cross-cultural and intellectual exchanges that are now a routine and everyday experience for them as researchers. These efforts in knowledge production in the field of education will continue to influence and shape the experiences of education for millions of people who live and learn across the Asia Pacific.

Education in Asia Pacific countries has been impacted upon by globalisation and the ubiquity of market economy. Most economies within the heterogeneous Asia Pacific region have flourished as a result of increased flows of capital, trade and other forms of economic and political interaction. The Asia Pacific has rich and unique traditions, where the tensions of cultural differences and common interests and challenges both shape and underline obstacles such as language and geographical separation.

As a response and reaction to the predominant presence of social theories rooted in the West, there is a growing recognition of and movement towards understanding theories through the wide range of diverse contextual and cultural perspectives that have emanated from the East. Chen (2010), a Taiwanese cultural theorist and author of *Asia as Method*, recommends that scholars from former colonies and ex-imperial countries in Asia rethink and re-examine their own colonial and imperialist histories. He urges Asian scholars to do this in order to take up the challenge to contribute to the growing fields of cultural studies or Asian studies in Asia. By encouraging Asian scholars to engage in dialogue with each other rather than with academics in America or Europe, Chen seeks to shift the analytical terrain of postcolonial and cultural studies to pose different sets of questions in world

history. Chen's request inspires this collection, as all of the contributors seek to produce the analytic resources and tools with the power to contribute valuable insights that move some way towards premised upon critical decolonisation and deimperialisation perspectives as they relate to education in Asia Pacific.

This collection is the beginning of a conversation that responds to Chen's challenge. It does this in three ways. Firstly, the chapters in this volume speak to and about education issues in countries in Asia Pacific. Secondly, the contributors are involved in the production and exchange of ideas, insights and knowledge dialogically in and against the dominance of Western academic discourses. This production is premised upon the interaction between ideas emerging from the East in relation to and in contestation with ideas formed in the West. Thirdly, this collection emerges from the research by the contributors that as the world changes the nation-states that constitute the Asia Pacific change as well and have been 'internally pluralized, or multicultured' (Bauman 1999). As suggested by Bauman, 'Culture as multiculture encourages traffic; culture as community suggests closure and hostility'. The traffic or, as is the case in this collection of Asia Pacific education research, the production and exchange of knowledge, emerges out of mixed cultural spaces that are multiply layered. The researchers in this collection are speaking from specific cultural spaces about particular cultural issues of education, into, across and against different cultures. In this sense the collection seeks to respond to Chen's challenge of a dialogue from the East to West.

The emerging researchers in this collection are positioned in Monash University in Australia. Monash is a transnational university with campuses in the Asia Pacific (Malaysia – Sunway) and in Africa (South Africa – Johannesburg) and Australia, a former British colonial settlement.

The purpose of this book is to make an intervention into the current debate on education reform in Asia Pacific countries with fresh-minded researchers, who are currently researching on this region. Anyone wanting to understand current problems, challenges and changes in education in the Asia Pacific region and different approaches to them will benefit from this book. The findings in this book bring together original and up-to-date research results in the field that will be valuable for academic reference and teaching purposes.

This book has been published to support and encourage education research in the Asia Pacific region. This region has many education issues that have

not yet been explored. This book considers current perspectives on education diversity, challenges and changes for the Asia Pacific region. It has a major focus on a new era of Asia Pacific education, and how this relates to education reform towards inclusive and broader education around the world.

Part One: Subject Teaching

Introduction
The Challenges of Subject Teaching

JOHN LOUGHRAN

This part of the book introduces research into subject teaching across three different countries (Bangladesh, Thailand and Singapore) and three different subject areas (science, English and mathematics). Each of the contributors offers insights into the issues and concerns they have in regard to their research of their subject area in their country. Together they offer an interesting lens for viewing some of the major challenges and important developments germane to education in these particular countries.

In Chapter 2, S M Hafizur Rahman examines science teaching and learning in Bangladesh. Two major issues drive the research in this chapter. The first is Rahman's concern for quality science teaching and learning in high schools in Bangladesh, and the second is that of a desire to lead change through developing communities of practice.

Rahman's developing understanding of constructivism catalysed his interest in science teaching and learning. As a consequence, it emboldened him to teach his colleagues about teaching in ways that challenged the status quo of science teaching in Bangladesh, which was characterised by the transmission of propositional knowledge. Rahman developed a professional development program that he used to test out whether or not science teachers would be impacted by such teaching approaches in ways similar to that which he experienced himself. Because he made the professional development program a focus of his research, he not only determined that it was valuable to other teachers but it also created a parallel journey into teachers' professional knowledge, based on the notion of communities of practice along lines similar to those of DuFour and Eaker (1998).

Through his research Rahman has come to not only find ways of helping to enhance approaches to science teaching and learning in Bangladesh, but he has also introduced new ways of conceptualising professional learning through communities of practice. His research clearly illustrates that the shift from mandated professional development to teacher-led professional learning makes a difference in terms of supporting the development of teachers' professional knowledge of practice. His research empowered his participating teachers to take more control of their teaching and to focus more seriously on their students' learning.

Chapter 3, by Worawoot Tutwisoot, follows on very well from the previous chapter as it draws attention to learner autonomy in English learning in Thailand. Tutwisoot brings the reader into the study through a clear and helpful explanation of the context of English language teaching in Thailand. The study draws attention to a teaching approach (not dissimilar to that described in the previous chapter) in which the 'grammar translation method is the staple of many English classes'. The synergies between this study and Rahman's extend even further, as it is through Lave and Wenger's (1991) articulation of participation in activities within communities of practice driving the notion of learner autonomy that forms the basis of this research project.

Tutwisoot explains how the very notion of learner autonomy 'is a foreign idea in Thai classrooms and as such may be misinterpreted'. However, computer-assisted language learning (CALL) offers ways of better accessing and understanding how to address issues of learner autonomy. Tutwisoot (like Rahman) draws on constructivist approaches to learning as a catalyst for change.

Tutwisoot uses three dimensions of learner autonomy to create informed analysis for the study: freedom, motivation and ability. Within each there are particular challenges and issues that, when recognised and addressed, offer new possibilities for development and change. An abiding concern is that, although these three are important ingredients, they 'are not easily achieved in the context of Thailand, where learners have strongly held beliefs about their roles as learners and the roles they expect of their teachers'. This challenge also resonates in the work of Rahman, and suggests that helping teachers come to better understand diversity of learning styles is a key to educational change.

Chapter 4 is by Hazel Tan, whose research opens the way to better understand Singaporean secondary mathematics students' attitudes towards engagement with graphic calculators. Tan approaches this topic in an interesting way. She draws attention to the fact that, although the use of graphic calculators has been mandated in mathematics examinations since 2007, there has been limited research as to the impact of their use on engagement with, and competencies in, mathematics.

Tan's analysis is based on the use of four interesting metaphors: technology as Master, Servant, Partner, and Extension of Self. This framework immediately captures the reader's attention as the metaphors (drawn from the work of Goos et al. 2000) invite a consideration of the relationships between students' perceptions about graphic calculators and mathematics in terms of how they might actually use them. The very language of the metaphors invokes a sense of identification that encourages the reader to speculate on possibilities about not only the research approach but also the likely outcomes.

The use of the metaphors and the outcomes offer interesting insights for one to ponder. Among a myriad of mathematics, attitude and competency links and relationships explained in the chapter, the outcome that caused me to ponder most was that 'graphic calculator as Master is moderately negatively correlated with graphic calculator attitudes, whereas graphic calculator as Collaborator is strongly positively correlated with graphic calculator attitudes. [And that] graphic calculator as Servant is high across the different graphic calculator competencies'. I wonder what preconceptions about mathematics attitudes and abilities you will bring to your reading of Tan's study. Reconsidering those preconceptions might cause you to think again about aspects of mathematics teaching and learning through an examination of evidence in the very way Tan has used it in this study.

I invite you to delve into each of these chapters and to develop your own links and build your own understandings of the ways in which each of the contributors has grasped the opportunity to research interesting aspects of teaching and learning. I have enjoyed that opportunity. I hope you will come to the same conclusion.

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1

The Influence of Professional Learning on Secondary Science Teachers' Ways of Improving their Subject Teaching in Bangladesh

S M HAFIZUR RAHMAN

SUMMARY While the current reform efforts in Bangladesh require a substantive change in how science is taught, an equally substantive change is needed in the culture of professional practice. This chapter investigates how an intervention helps teachers to observe, critique and use a new teaching approach, Predict–Observe–Explain (POE), and engage themselves in professional learning through observing, sharing and challenging each other's teaching practices. Teachers work towards forming a professional learning community within and across schools. The chapter examines teachers' reflections after their classroom teaching and subsequent workshop discussions, and how participating teachers transformed their learning from their discussions into action in their practice. Data have been drawn from 14 voluntary participant science teachers who were formed into seven peer pairs, from seven schools in Bangladesh. Each pair of teachers was located at the same school. The findings here have implications for understanding the nature of change in science teachers' teaching perceptions regarding content knowledge, pedagogy and the classroom as a learning environment, as well as the culture of teachers' professional practice.

2.1 Introduction

Professional learning (PL) has emerged as an important educational descriptor, which is indicative of a shift in ways of understanding the development of teachers and teaching (Loughran 2008). With increasing recognition of teaching as complex work (Goodson and Hargreaves 1996; Loughran 2010; Loughran et al. 2006), professional learning has recently emerged as an issue of concern, because, as a construct it differs from that of traditional views of professional development. Professional learning deals with 'what professionals do [to] learn about their own knowledge of practice' (Berry et al. 2007, xiii) and is concerned with supporting teachers in directing their own knowledge growth (Loughran 2010). In most cases, issues in PL are not obvious or expected. PL encourages teachers to respond to the inherent contradictions between their intentions for teaching and their actual practice (Loughran and Northfield 1996; Loughran et al. 2006).

According to Michael Fullan (1993), changes in teaching practice require major changes in school culture. PL offers a new way of understanding those changes (Berry et al. 2007). It encourages the development of knowledge of practice that is insightful, challenging, thought provoking and helpful. It provides opportunities to extend knowledge of practice beyond the individual and to share it with other professionals within their learning community. Professional learning communities (PLCs) then emerge as a collective framework for PL within the context of a cohesive group that focuses on collective knowledge of inquiry (DuFour et al. 2008; Stoll and Louis 2007). PLCs then work to improve the practice of particular groups of teachers through job-embedded learning.

2.2 School context and its influence on science teaching

In secondary schools in Bangladesh, the majority of science teachers are not trained in the use of the new science curriculum or textbooks. In particular, most of them are not fully acquainted with the content and concepts introduced in the textbook (Tapan 2010). Most are not confident about using teaching strategies other than a transmission approach in their science teaching (Maleque et al. 2004) and are very reluctant to use new methods of teaching due to a lack of motivation, interest and proper training and follow-up (Tapan 2010). The availability of suitable teaching aids is another concern for teachers in their science classes in Bangladesh. Most schools do not have adequate teaching aids and teachers do not know where they can collect or produce them. This situation impacts students and encourages them to memorise textbook material rather than understand the science concepts or develop any kind of personal knowledge construction (Asian Development Bank 1998; Tapan 2010). This makes the classroom learning environment very likely to be dominated by a teacher-centred approach, thus minimising the likelihood that students' interest in learning science will be aroused (Hossain 1994). Moreover, in most cases, teachers are not cognisant of the need to take into account students' prior knowledge in terms of influencing their practice. It is also very rare to find teachers sharing ideas with each other to improve their practice.

2.3 Purpose of the study

I have been driven by the question: 'How can I help teachers to change their perceptions of the nature of teaching and the culture of their professional practice?' I have been looking for suitable strategies that might help teachers to address different aspects of science teaching and also create a collaborative

culture that that might allow them to share their understandings of their practice. The idea about constructivist teaching approaches and professional learning through professional learning communities triggered my thinking to link the enthusiasm of science teachers to improve their practice through the theoretical aspects of a PLC. Richard Gunstone (1995) argued the importance of genuine collaboration (teacher with teacher, teacher with researchers) in the development and use of constructivist teaching approaches. Based on this idea, I found myself becoming more focused and guided in ways that supported my thinking and my plans for action. This research is therefore designed according to two questions: (1) How does learning about constructivist teaching approaches influence science teachers' thinking about their practice and their students' learning of science in Bangladesh? and (2) How can establishing a professional learning community influence the ways in which these teachers learn about, and develop, their practice?

2.4 Literature review

2.4.1 Constructivist views of science teaching and learning

A constructivist view of knowledge and learning has led to changes in teaching approaches in science education. These ideas have had a major influence on the thinking of science educators over the last two decades (Fensham et al. 1994). Students come to class with their existing ideas, from which they make sense of their world. Science teaching needs to lead students to interact with these ideas by making them explicit and then promoting consideration of whether or not other ideas make better sense (Carr et al. 1994). From a constructivist teaching point of view, the main concern in teaching science is 'how to organize the physical and social experiences in a science classroom so as to encourage development or change in learners' conceptions from their informal ideas to those of accepted school science' (Scott et al. 1994, 201). Constructivist teaching involves 'judgments about how much and what form of guidance is best for any topic and any group of learners, and when to provide it' (Fensham et al. 1994, 6). The teaching procedure Prediction–Observation–Explanation is one such approach.

2.4.2 Prediction–Observation–Explanation (POE)

Prediction–Observation–Explanation (POE) is a constructivist teaching strategy developed by Richard White and Richard Gunstone (1992). The POE strategy is often used in science teaching. It requires three tasks to be carried out. First, this strategy helps to uncover individual students' *predictions*, and

their reasons for making these about a specific event. Second, students describe what they see in the demonstration – *observation*. Third, students must reconcile any conflict between their prediction and observation – *explanation*. POEs can therefore be used to explore students' ideas at the beginning of a topic, or to develop ideas during a topic, or to enhance understanding at the end of a topic (Gunstone and Mitchell 1998). Through this teaching procedure, students are assisted in attempting to apply their learning to a real context. It is not about telling students the right answer at the end (Loughran 2010). Moreover, this strategy focuses on linking students' existing ideas and beliefs relevant to a situation and exploring the appropriateness of these ideas and beliefs (Gunstone 1995).

2.4.3 Professional learning communities

Professional learning communities (PLCs) in general focus on the process of learning for improvement and change in schools (Alberta Education 2006; Kruse et al. 1994). A PLC consists of a group of people who take 'an active, reflective, collaborative, learning-oriented and growth-promoting approach towards both the mysteries and the problems of teaching and learning' (Mitchell and Sackney 2001, 2). A PLC is also defined in terms of an 'educator's commitment to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve' (DuFour et al. 2008, 14). In essence, a PLC is explicitly a place where caring, responsible people nourish others' learning in the context of authentic interactions (Manzaro 2003; Miller 2000). In most cases, participants involved in a PLC become more intellectually mature and responsible for their learning. They like to develop the capacity to care about the learning of their peers and are focused on collegiality and professionalism (Manzaro 2003).

2.4.4 Attributes that characterise professional learning communities

There have been a number of publications explicating the attributes that characterise PLCs. Among them, much of the literature is centred on Shirley Hord's (1997) research-based characteristics of PLCs and the work of Richard Dufour and Robert Eaker (1998). At the same time, the literature has also been influenced by Peter Senge's (1990) notion of learning organisation and culture. Other significant contributions about PLCs are presented by Kruse et al. (1994), Berlinger-Gastafson (2004), and Patterson and Rolheiser (2004). The Annenberg Institute for School Reform (2003) and Alberta Education (2006) have also worked for system-wide reform and change initiatives based on PLCs.

2.4.4.1 Supportive and shared leadership capacity

Supportive and shared leadership capacity is one of the most important attributes that characterises PLCs (Annenberg Institute for School Reform 2003; Berlinger-Gustafson 2004; DuFour and Eaker 1998; Hord 1997; Kruse et al. 1994; Patterson et al. 2004; Senge 2000). Shirley Hord (1997) emphasised shared leadership structures in which participants in PLCs have access to questions, and investigate and seek solutions for school improvement. According to Peter Senge (2000), supportive and shared leadership capacity articulates a coherent image of personal vision for expanding personal capacity.

2.4.4.2 Shared mission, vision and values

Shared mission, vision and values are also a concern for the collective focus on student learning (Eaker et al. 2002; Kruse et al. 1994) in PLCs. In this case, teachers work towards high levels of student achievement. Within a strong professional learning community, shared goals regarding student achievement are an obligation for teachers. In essence, respect, trust and a shared wisdom of devotion among participants builds their professional commitment, ultimately committing to change and reculturing, together with choosing a meaningful focus (Patterson et al. 2004).

2.4.4.3 Collective learning and its application

Collective learning is the 'process of aligning and developing the capacities of a team to create the results its members truly desire' (Senge 2000, 236). Group interactions can work to transform collective thinking and learning for mobilising an individual's idea and action to achieve a common goal (DuFour and Eaker 1998; Senge 2000). The purpose of teaching, then, is to promote those types of collective learning that encourage students to continue to learn both from inside and outside the classroom (Jalongo 1991). In essence, teachers expect that all students can learn at reasonably high levels.

2.4.4.4 Shared personal practice

Shared personal practice is one of the attributes that contributes to developing such a setting for teachers' professional learning (Hord 1997; Pickering et al. 2007). Members of the community discuss situations and specific challenges they face in their daily academic activities through reviewing each other's practice (Hord 2004; Kruse et al. 1994) and teaching behaviours (Hord 1997, 2004; Kruse et al. 1994). Teachers conduct this review through visiting each other's classrooms on a regular basis to observe, take notes and discuss their observations with visiting peers, and through staff meetings and specifically

designed planning sessions (Hord 1997, 2004; Patterson et al. 2004). This focus on 'peers helping peers' (Hord 2004, 11) enables teachers to act as change facilitators for themselves and for community improvement (Hall et al. 1987; Hord 2004; Patterson and Rolheiser. 2004; Roberts and Pruitt 2003). This ultimately helps to develop a basis for collective action and helps to develop teachers' abilities to reflect in and on action (Hord 1997 2004; Kruse et al. 1994; Senge 2000).

2.4.4.5 Focus on improvement

School improvement is part of the overall culture of all school beliefs, values and practice (Alberta Education 2006). In essence, it emphasises the role of collecting data that establishes a basis for decision making, problem solving and inquiry. Two factors are considered important in school improvement. These are internal support from other members of the community (Kruse et al. 1994; Louis and Kruse 1995) and documenting evidence for commitment within the community (Annenberg Institute for School Reform 2003; Morrissey 2000).

2.4.4.6 Supportive conditions

Supportive conditions determine 'when, where, and how the staff regularly come together as a unit to do the learning, decision making, problem solving, and creative work that characterise a professional learning community' (Hord 2004, 10). Kruse, Louis and Bryk (1994), Boyd (1992) and Berlinger-Gustafson (2004) worked to identify several conditions that must be met in order for a professional learning community to be effective. These categories can be grouped in two overarching categories: structural or physical conditions, and human or social conditions. The necessary conditions for physical and structural factors as mentioned by Kruse, Louis and Bryk (1994) are time to meet and talk, physical proximity, independent teaching roles, communication structures, and teacher power and empowerment. The significance of the relational factors and human capacities, which are considered social resources in a productive learning community, is that they address teachers' enthusiasm to acknowledge feedback and work for improvement (Boyd 1992).

2.5 Methodology

This study followed a mixed method research design with a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. A mixed research design allows a better understanding of a research problem than either qualitative or quantitative data alone (Creswell 2008; Plano Clark and Cresswell 2010).

To address Research Question 1 (RQ1) of the study, I used a series of interventions. The interventions combined the following items sequentially.

1. Using a new constructivist teaching approach Predict–Observe–Explain (POE)
2. Observing colleagues' teaching practice
3. Reflecting on classroom observation schedule
4. Attending a post-teaching discussion
5. Attending a professional workshop

The intervention began from a peer classroom observation when two science teachers from the same school were formed into a peer pair for classroom observation purposes. Seven such peer pairs from seven nearby schools in one district of Bangladesh worked in this intervention implementing process. Within each pair, one teacher conducted the teaching using the POE approach (i), as above, while the other teacher observed the peer's full lesson and made notes according to a predetermined schedule (ii). (For example, in Pair A, Teacher 1 taught while Teacher 2 observed the lesson.) After that, both the teacher observer and the teacher reviewed their notes individually after the teaching session using the same classroom observation schedule (iii). These individual reflections formed the basis of discussion between both teachers in which they shared experiences, provided feedback, and critiqued and challenged each other's observations (iv). When all of the peer pairs completed the classroom 'Teaching Session One', they came to 'Professional Workshop One' (v). Issues raised through their post-teaching discussions about which they were undecided or that were notable for some reason, either by them, or by me, as a participant observer during class and post-teaching discussion time for all pairs, were brought to the workshop for further clarification. Teachers discussed these issues together with me with an aim to improve their teaching practice.

After this, participant teachers then went back to a further round of classroom teaching and observation, 'Teaching Session Two', with a swap of responsibilities within each individual pair; items (i)–(ii). After this, they reflected on their notes using the same classroom observation schedule and then joined the subsequent post-teaching discussion; items (iii)–(iv). Here teachers found scope to apply their learning from the discussions and workshop activities they had experienced. They also started to construct new meanings for the intervention process they were using in collaboration with their colleagues.

Participant teachers met again for 'Professional Workshop Two' (v), to discuss once again issues about which they were undecided or were notable for some important reason as recorded from 'Teaching Session Two'. In this workshop, I also provided them with opportunities to refine their ideas regarding their practice that guided change in their teaching perceptions and the culture of their professional practice. In all, this process (stages i–v and its repetition with a swap of responsibilities within each pair) constituted a cycle. In this research, I conducted this cycle twice, in order to better understand the intervention and possible changes to teachers' practice in deeper ways.

2.5.1 Sampling

I used convenience sampling from those who volunteered to be involved in the study. The consideration was based on the availability, easy recruitment and willingness to participate in the study (Mertens 2010; Robson 2002). The nature of the intervention demanded participants from nearby school within a local area. To fulfil that purpose, I selected seven nearby schools from Ashuganj Upazilla of the Brahmanbaria district of Bangladesh in order to make involvement easy for participants, in particular, attending the follow-up professional workshops. The reasons for selecting schools in Ashuganj was that schools there are very close to each other, as it is a densely populated suburb and transport is easily available for teachers to attend the professional workshops. One peer pair of participant science teachers was formed in each selected secondary school and data were collected from seven schools. Each individual peer pair was then followed up by me through classroom observations, post-teaching discussion and professional workshops to see how ideas from different components of the intervention influenced their science teaching practices.

2.5.2 Data analysis

In analysing the classroom observation schedule, I used a framework named ARLA: Activity–Reflection–Learning–Action. This framework is derived from the work of Roberts and Pruitt (2009) for the analysis of learning through classroom observation. For this study, I analysed how activities in the classroom and workshops prompted participant teachers to learn through reconstruction of their subjective meanings about the interventions. These activities also guided change in their teaching perceptions in collaboration with their colleagues. The analysis then followed to what extent participant teachers transformed their learning from the intervention process into action. The accompanying field notes were transcribed and analysed using NVivo 8.

2.6 Results

2.6.1 Changes in science teachers' perceptions after the interventions

The teacher observer in each class recorded their responses to the teaching on the observation schedule. (See Table 2.1 for observation schedule and summary of observer responses for all pairs.)

2.6.1.1 Resources

In terms of resources, 22 out of a total of 28 teaching sessions were recorded by the peer observers as completed 'very well' (WE) for the use of teaching aids in classes. Also, 20 sessions were recorded as teachers using teaching materials that had a clear purpose (see Table 2.1). These findings suggest that the POE approach encouraged teachers to use teaching aids while also maintaining a clear purpose for using those materials.

2.6.1.2 Content knowledge and its organisation

In terms of information in presenting the session, 11 teaching sessions (out of 28) did not depend solely on the textbook information in presenting the session. When teachers do not depend only on the textbook it usually means that they tend to find information from other reference sources. However, only 13 teaching sessions had recommendations for 'more emphasis' (RE), and nine sessions did 'not emphasise' (NE) the inclusion of current ideas or references for their sessions (see Table 2.1). In terms of explaining ideas with more clarity, there were 14 teaching sessions where the observers recommended 'more emphasis' (RE) on teaching for understanding rather than only recalling and recognising facts and 18 sessions had recommendations for 'more emphasis' (RE). In terms of linking with real-life situations, there were 13 teaching sessions where teachers used real-life examples of the concept being studied 'very well' (WE). However, 14 teaching sessions did not draw or 'not emphasise' (NE) students' involvement for this purpose.

The above data therefore suggest that in some cases teachers did not depend only on textbook information for presenting the lesson content, even though in most cases they did not seem inclined to include current ideas or other references as much as they might have. Teachers also did not appear to face any obvious confusion in terms of their subject matter. However, they needed to pay attention to make the subject matter more understandable to their students. Moreover, the data suggest that even though the teachers were conscious of the need to relate science concepts to real life, they did not commonly seem to

emphasise it sufficiently to encourage their students to find real-life examples for themselves.

2.6.1.3 Pedagogy

As far as the sequence in presenting the sessions was concerned, 13 sessions were found where teachers did not follow the textbook sequence in presenting the lecture while using the POE approach. A similar result was found for maintaining a logical sequence, with 13 teaching sessions accomplished 'very well' (WE) and a further 15 sessions having recommendations for 'more emphasis' (RE) (Table 2.1). In terms of statement of the purpose, there were 15 teaching sessions where the observers indicated that teachers made a clear statement about the purpose of the lesson. In terms of linking, there were 19 teaching sessions recorded in which there was a demonstrated link between the selected teaching strategies and the particular topics. At the same time, 15 teaching sessions recommended 'more emphasis' (RE) in using multiple strategies to make the lesson more effective. An important advantage of the POE teaching approach is that it allows teachers to check on students' prior knowledge. In accomplishing that aim, 13 teaching sessions did 'very well' (WE), whereas 11 others recommended giving 'more emphasis' (RE). A similar picture was observed when in 15 teaching sessions teachers encouraged students to discuss their different views.

The data therefore suggest that the intervention helped teachers maintain to uphold the purpose by maintaining an appropriate sequence as an important aspect of their pedagogy. The data also suggest that the intervention supported participant teachers in considering students' prior knowledge rather than ignoring students' own views about a science concept.

2.6.1.4 Classroom learning environment

Regarding the learning environment in the class while using the POE approach, students appeared to be interested and enthusiastic, as 23 teaching sessions were accomplished 'very well' (WE) in this respect. A similar case was found in terms of stimulating students' thinking, with 19 teaching sessions accomplishing this 'very well' (WE). The teaching approach encouraged students to be reflective about their learning, as 19 sessions were recorded as accomplished this 'very well' (WE). However, in relation to providing opportunities for students to mention their problems/concerns in the class, only nine sessions did 'very well' (WE). The above data suggest that, despite providing opportunities for students to raise their problems, students were still enthusiastic and interested in their learning.

2.6.2 Learning to change teachers' teaching conception

Both teachers and observers were given the opportunity to consider whether they wished to change or reconsider their view of any item from the checklist after the subsequent post-teaching discussion. The learning that took place, therefore, was basically developing understanding of teachers when they came to realise the need to improve or emphasise any specific items from the checklist in their teaching. Learning also occurred when teachers found that their colleague had indicated that they had performed 'very well' (WE) in any specific area of teaching (or any item from the checklist), and then they could continue to emphasise that in their own practice. Each teacher, therefore, found scope to learn from their colleague through discussion after every session. Ultimately it was intended that this kind of discussion and reflection would help to stimulate in teachers a need for changes in their conception of teaching and classroom practice. (Table 2.2 reflects the learning of teachers in all peer pairs.)

2.6.3 Action accomplished after using learning

Teachers were able to draw on their learning in their subsequent teaching cycles. The 'actions' of all teachers from all seven peers is summarised in Table 2.2. The results of the actions have been presented in terms of the number of times teachers accomplished an action rather than who accomplished them. The results indicate that teachers were mostly focused on 'not to follow the textbook sequence'. This action was accomplished 11 times – or put another way, those 11 participating teachers demonstrated that they did not follow only the textbook sequence. Seven teachers accomplished their action for learning through maintaining a logical sequence in their presentation. Six teachers demonstrated the actions of focusing on learning to encourage students to discuss their views, providing real-life examples of the science concepts, and not depending only on the students' textbook for information. Five teachers carried out actions concerning the use of teaching aids, acknowledgement of students' responses and concern for understanding rather than recall and recognition of facts.

2.6.4 Working with others

Teachers reported that they felt different in discussions with their colleagues in different teaching sessions. In most cases, teachers initially felt shy and hesitant and took longer in starting discussions and reflecting with their colleagues during the first teaching cycle. As Teacher 6 reported, 'I do not know how I can

go; I am not used to discussing anything face to face with my colleagues.' Such were their worries as they were not used to discussing issues with each other, or in such a prescribed way.

However, teachers' responses were different even from the second teaching cycle. According to Teacher 5, there was a sense of feeling more relaxed: 'Today I feel more relaxed as I know what we have to do.' Teacher 9, during the third teaching cycle, explained, 'I feel more comfortable than the first day. I understood that the discussion helps us a lot to clarify our ideas about teaching, so I like to share my mistakes and failures with my colleagues openly.' These quotations reflect that as time went by the teachers became more comfortable and relaxed in sharing and discussing successes or failures of their teaching with their colleagues.

In terms of working with their colleagues during the post-teaching discussions, teachers found that they agreed with some of the claims of their colleagues. Issues of agreement related to content, pedagogy, resources and learning environment for different discussion sessions. For example, Teacher 6 claimed that the information in the textbook for 'Class 7' was not sufficient to explain the concept of 'partial pressure', and teachers needed to search references to make the concept clearer. Teacher 5 agreed with him that he needed to search for more references to make the concept of partial pressure clearer for his students.

However, not all discussions were in agreement. Participants disagreed with certain claims or observations of their colleagues during the discussion. For example, Teacher 7 disagreed with the claim of Teacher 8 that he did not provide any real-life examples during the third teaching session for the refraction of light. He reminded Teacher 8 that he was discussing how accidents can happen when a person gets into a pool. He explained that usually people find the step under the water in a pool a little bit higher than what they expect. So when a person goes to make a step under the water, they sometimes fall down because they do not see the position properly, because of the way light is refracted. Teacher 8 then noted that he had missed that point in his teaching.

Teachers also found the discussion sessions offered a way of resolving their confusion about observations made during the class. For instance, Teacher 10, when explaining about how partial pressure impacts a jet of water coming out from a bottle during the first teaching cycle, was recorded by Teacher 9 as giving a confusing explanation. Teacher 10 then explained it again during the discussion with additional examples, which helped to clarify the idea further for both teachers.

2.6.5 Developing a learning community

The professional workshops were designed to encourage teachers to collaboratively raise and discuss issues related to science teaching and learning, and become more informed about their practice. Participating teachers from the seven different schools attended the workshops after completing each teaching cycle. The teachers were committed to attending all of the workshops. By attending the workshops teachers were able to learn about how other peer pairs from different schools conducted the same type of teaching, as well as the kinds of issues, difficulties and successes that they encountered. The workshops were structured so that there was sufficient time for teachers to discuss their own problems regarding their practice with teacher pairs from the other schools. Importantly, through discussion together, the teachers came to build a professional learning community, as they developed a language and structure to discuss their practice.

2.7 Discussion

In addressing the first research question, I found that the POE teaching approach influenced participant teachers' thinking about how to change their teaching perceptions.

Firstly, the POE teaching approach encouraged these teachers to use teaching aids as purposeful tools in their teaching and created a sense of purpose and motivation for learning the topic. Moreover, the POE strategy stimulated their enthusiasm to make use of the local environment and helped these teachers to realise that if they wished to use teaching aids for their teaching they were in fact capable of developing and collecting their own.

Secondly, the constructivist teaching approach (through use of the POE) guided participant teachers not to depend only on the textbook material, and helped these teachers to overcome their tendency to conceive of science knowledge in narrow ways. The POE teaching approach also influenced participant teachers in terms of developing their understanding of science content with their students rather than the simple recall and recognition of facts. The POE teaching approach also motivated participant teachers to find ways to look for the relevance of science within real-life situations.

Thirdly, the use of this approach also helped teachers overcome a reliance on rote learning and theoretical exercises to transmit science as information, which is a very common practice in Bangladesh. In a similar way, the POE teaching approach helped teachers to maintain a logical sequence in their teaching and to make personal sense of the ways in which knowledge claims are generated and

validated in science. The POE teaching approach developed their awareness of the need to work with students' prior knowledge in order to identify alternative conceptions in science. Lastly, the POE teaching approach encouraged students' interest and enthusiasm towards the learning process and led to a change in the classroom learning environment.

In addressing the second research question, I found that the establishment of professional learning communities influenced teachers' learning about a constructivist teaching approach. The intervention process guided participant teachers to develop the capacity for building shared leadership through sharing their teaching practices. The process increased teachers' confidence with collaborative activities, which they found created supportive ways of addressing improvements in their teaching practices. Moreover, it appears that participants also felt more comfortable in exploring their own problems and needs regarding their practice through this process of job-embedded learning.

Through collaborative work with their colleagues, teachers felt supported in establishing their commitment to their students' learning. They became committed to finding the gaps or mismatches between their teaching and their students' learning, and making decisions about the challenges they faced regarding their practice.

Participant teachers also found themselves accountable for identifying issues to discuss with their colleagues. The process motivated and created a results-oriented approach that gave them direction in terms of building a collective commitment to a shared vision, which in turn fostered their shared mission as science educators. These processes encouraged collective learning and working together to overcome difficulties in explaining subject matter, and organising and structuring content appropriately through examining and questioning their existing practice. The intervention then helped them to realise that they could look towards themselves for their own professional enhancement rather than waiting for, or depending on, others.

The participant teachers found that documenting their evidence of changed practice as a part of their commitment to continuous improvement was important. The learning processes encouraged participants in terms of systematic responses to improving practices that ensured better support for their students' learning. They found the intervention provided an opportunity to reduce the state of isolation among them (which is a common complaint for teachers in Bangladesh). The structure of collaboration appeared to help teachers come together as a unit to develop a collegial attitude and relationship in their learning, to support decision making and problem solving, and creatively work in ways that characterise a professional learning community.

2.8 Conclusion

Our quest as science educators and researchers is always to help students towards better science learning. Improving teachers' practice through engaging them in their professional learning is one approach. The findings of this study reveal a positive outcome regarding improving science teachers' practice. If science teachers follow a constructivist teaching approach, it could bring a tremendous change in the teaching and learning situation in secondary science in Bangladesh. Such an approach can guide teachers in terms of changing their teaching perceptions of effective practice that can better address students' learning. The idea of PLCs can break through the culture of isolation in professional practice. The PLC idea can support teachers' professional learning in a way that enables them to understand their own practice and deliver more effective lessons for improved student learning. The outcomes of this research can help to guide and empower science teachers to take more control of their teaching and to place a more serious focus on their students' learning.

Items	Peer A			Peer B			Peer C			Peer D			Peer E			Peer F			Peer G			Total		
	NE	RE	WE	NE	RE	WE	NE	RE	WE	NE	RE	WE	NE	RE	WE	NE	RE	WE	NE	RE	WE	NE	RE	WE
Use of teaching aids		1	3		1	3			4			4		3	1		1	3			4		6	22
Clear purpose of teaching aids		1	3		2	2		1	3			4		1	3		1	3		2	2		8	20
Follow only student textbook information	1	1	2	1		3	2		2	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	3		1	2	1	9	8	11
Concern only on recall, recognition of facts	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	3		1	3		7	14	7
Explained ideas with clarity		3	1		2	2		3	1	1	1	2		4			4		1	1	2	2	18	8
Application of science concept	1	2	1		1	3		3	1		2	2			4	1	3			2	2	2	13	13
Real-life examples by teachers	1	1	2		1	3		2	2		1	3	1	2	1	2	1	1		3	1	4	11	13
Real-life examples by students	4				3	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	3		3	1		2	2		14	11	3
Include current ideas or reference	3	1		1	2	1	2	1	1		2	2		3	1	1	2	1	2	2		9	13	6
Confusion about science idea			4			4			4			4			4			4			4			28
Follow only textbook sequence	1	2	1	1		3	2	1	1	1	1	2	1		3		2	2	2	1	1	8	7	13
Clear statement of purpose of lesson		2	2		2	2	1	1	2		1	3		1	3		2	2		3	1	1	12	15
Consider students' prior knowledge	1	1	2		1	3	1	2	1		2	2		2	2	2	2		1	3		4	11	13
Encourage students to discuss	2		2			4	1		3		3	1		1	3	1	1	2	1	3		5	8	15
Linkage of teaching strategy with topics		3	1		1	3		2	2			4			4		3	1		2	2		9	19
Use of multiple strategies		2	2		2	2	1	1	2		2	2		2	2		2	2		4		1	15	12
Logical sequence of lectures		2	2		1	3	1	1	2		2	2		2	2		2	2		3	1		15	13
Selected strategies encourage students		1	3	3	1		2	1	1		2	2		1	3		1	3		2	2	2	11	15
Teacher acknowledgement for students	2		2	3	1		1	2	1			4		2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	6	10	12
Problem of time			4			4			4			4	2		2			4			4		2	26
Students were reflective		3	1		3	1			4		1	3			4		3	1	1		3	1	8	19
Interested and enthusiastic		1	3		2	2			4		1	3			4		1	3			4		5	23
Opportunities for students participation	1	2	1		2	2		2	2	3	1			2	2		2	2	3	1		7	17	9
Lecture stimulated students' thinking	1	1	2		2	2		1	3			4			4		1	3		1	3	1	7	20

Table 2.1 Summary of teachers' reflection

Note: NE – Did not emphasise; RE – Recommended more emphasis; WE –Well emphasised – accomplished well & 1, 2, 3, & 4 for one, two, three and four teaching sessions respectively.

Items	Learning from 1st class (Times)	Action at 2nd class * (Times)	Learning from 2nd class (Times)	Action at 3rd class ** (Times)	Learning from 3rd class (Times)	Action at 4th class *** (Times)	Learning from 4th class (Times)	Total learning (Times)	Total action (Times)
Use of teaching aids	4	1	1	3		1		5	5
Clear purpose of teaching aids			2		1	1	2	5	1
Follow only student textbook information	5	1	5	2	3	3	5	18	6
Concern only on recall, recognition of facts	6	1	7	1	5	2	2	20	4
Explained ideas with clarity	1		4	1	2		4	11	1
Application of science concept	3	1	1	1	3	1		7	3
Real-life examples by teachers	5	3		1	3	2	3	11	6
Real-life examples by students	6		5	1	5	1	4	20	2
Include current ideas or reference	3		3	1	3		4	13	0
Confusion about science idea	2	1			2	2		4	4
Follow only textbook sequence	7		6	4	4	6	3	20	11
Clear statement of purpose of lesson	1	1	2	1			1	4	2
Consider students' prior knowledge	5	1	5		2		2	14	1
Encouraged students to discuss	5		6	2	7	4	6	23	6
Linkage of teaching strategy with topics			3		1	1		4	1
Use of multiple strategies	3	2	1	1	2	1	4	10	4

Table 2.2 Turning learning into action by participant science teachers

* By Teacher 2 from learning from first class as observe.

** By Teacher 1 from first and second class learning both as conductor and observer.

*** By Teacher 2 from first, second and third class learning both as conductor and observer.

Items	Learning from 1st class (Times)	Action at 2nd class * (Times)	Learning from 2nd class (Times)	Action at 3rd class ** (Times)	Learning from 3rd class (Times)	Action at 4th class *** (Times)	Learning from 4th class (Times)	Total learning (Times)	Total action (Times)
Logical sequence of lectures	3	3	3		4	1	3	13	7
Selected strategies encourage students	4	1	2	1	2	1	1	9	3
Teacher acknowledgement for students	3		2	3	4	4	2	11	5
Problem of time	1		1	1			1	3	1
Students were reflective	3	1	1	1	3	2	1	8	4
Interested and enthusiastic					1		1	2	0
Opportunities for students participation	4	1	6	2	4	1	3	17	4
Lecture stimulated students' thinking	2		1	2	2	1		5	3

Table 2.2 (continued) Turning learning into action by participant science teachers

* By Teacher 2 from learning from first class as observe.

** By Teacher 1 from first and second class learning both as conductor and observer.

*** By Teacher 2 from first, second and third class learning both as conductor and observer.

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2

Learner Autonomy and Learning English in CALL Environments in Thailand

WORAWOOT TUTWISOOT

SUMMARY The main objective of this chapter is to examine the issue of learner autonomy in English learning in Thailand. The chapter begins with the overview of English learning and teaching in Thailand and why the concept of learner autonomy is important in this context. The chapter then discusses the challenges and the possibilities of introducing the concept of learner autonomy in the context by considering three important dimensions: freedom, motivation and ability to take charge of one's own learning. The chapter also examines how the Internet, as a new learning environment, may impact on and facilitate the development of learner autonomy and the learning of English.

3.1 English language learning and teaching in Thailand

Although Thai is the national language and there is no official second language in Thailand, English is regarded as the most important foreign language. It is a requirement of the national curriculum that English is taught at all levels from primary level through to tertiary level. One group of Thai learners begins their English lessons from their kindergarten level. Another group starts at Pratom 5 (Grade 5) level, which means that by the end of high school all Thai learners will have learned English for at least eight years, and some for up to 12 years. This does not necessarily mean that Thai learners graduate from high school as competent users of English.

The main goal of learning a new language is to communicate, but this aspect is often neglected. A lack of opportunities to use the target language may be one of the most important factors that can explain why some learners who learn the language for a long period of time show low levels of proficiency. Thailand is classified as an 'expanding circle' country (Kachru 1998), which means that English is regarded by Thais as a foreign language and that English is not an immediate need in daily lives of Thais. English is mostly only used as 'a language of trade and tourism' (Baker 2008, 132). For many Thais, English is perceived as just a school subject that they are required to study and learn for purposes of entry into tertiary level studies and career advancement (Foley 2005), not as a medium of communication. Consequently, beyond the classroom, many Thai learners tend not to engage in activities requiring the

use of English. Even in the English language classroom, English is not the major language used by teachers of English and their learners. Although the communicative approach has attracted many teachers, the grammar translation method remains the staple of many English classes in Thailand.

In order to enhance the opportunity to be exposed to English, facilities such as self-access centres have been established to provide material-rich environments for learning English. These centres are important but may not be adequate to improve the level of proficiency because effective learning is sustained and supported by the pedagogical activities that take place in those environments. Learning a new language is different from learning other school subjects. By its very nature, learning a language is a communicative activity requiring learners to practise by interacting with other people, particularly with native speakers, teachers or other language learners. However, Benson and Toogood (2002, 5) has argued that 'many self-access centres have been established without clear pedagogical goals or rationales'. Consequently, a proportion of Thai learners view these self-access centres as no more than another kind of library, perceiving them as offering little opportunity to improve their English outside their English classroom.

Advances in computer technologies, especially the development of the Internet, open up new communicative possibilities by providing authentic materials, communication tools and communicative contexts with English speakers from all around the world. Therefore, the Internet may be metaphorically similar to a big self-access centre, equipped with innumerable materials and tools for communication. However, the presence of both physical and virtual resource centres per se may not guarantee that all learners are motivated and able to learn from the available resources.

Beyond the classroom, the Internet can be viewed as being made up of innumerable online communities; indeed, English speaking communities where learners have the opportunity to be authentically exposed to the target language. After class, successful language learners tend to engage in activities that require them to be exposed to and use the target language. However, not all language learners benefit from this opportunity. I argue that 'living' in the target language community cannot guarantee the acquisition of a new language. Learners have to 'participate' in activities in 'communities of practice' (Lave and Wenger 1991).

While there is potential for the Internet to be influential in learning English, it is not necessarily the case that English language learning is made more accessible, or of greater value, and that Thais will independently embrace the opportunity to communicate in, and to learn English. In other words,

material-rich or CALL (computer-assisted language learning) environments per se may not bring about language improvement (Arievitch 2007; Kern and Warschauer 2000).

The next sections investigate the challenges and possibilities of introducing the concept of learner autonomy into the context of Thailand by considering three dimensions of autonomy: freedom, motivation and ability.

3.2 Why learner autonomy?

English language learning and teaching in Thailand has been facing challenges. From a teacher's perspective, teaching activities are sometimes constrained by external factors, identified by Benson (2000) as including: policy constraints, institutional constraints, conceptions of language, and language teaching methodologies. From a learner's perspective, the learning activities in the classroom are often controlled by the teacher. After class, many learners are constrained by internal factors such as motivation and the ability to learn autonomously from available resources.

The main focus of fostering learner autonomy, from a pedagogical perspective, is to help learners to be aware of their freedom, to be motivated, and to develop their ability to control their own learning, especially when facing internal and external constraints.

However, introducing the concept of autonomy in English language learning into the context of Thailand may not be easy. In Thailand, the term 'autonomy' has not been used widely in language learning or even in general education. The concept that learners take charge of their own learning is a foreign idea in many Thai classrooms and may therefore be misinterpreted. Little (1991) proposed five misconceptions about learner autonomy. Firstly, learner autonomy is not learning without a teacher. Secondly, in the classroom, the teacher's role is still important. Thirdly, it is not another teaching method. Fourthly, it is not 'a single, easily described behaviour'. Finally, it is not 'a steady state achieved by certain learners'.

3.3 Learner autonomy

The notion of learner autonomy has attracted many researchers who have focused on and discussed this notion for decades, using different terminologies and in different fields (see Benson 2001, 2006 for historical background). The concept was introduced into language teaching through

the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project and its outcome: the establishment of the Centre de Recherches et d'Applications Pédagogiques en Langues (CRAPEL) (Benson 2001). Following on from there, many definitions of learner autonomy have been proposed by scholars in different contexts. Although a definition that includes all aspects of learner autonomy has not been yet settled on, the most frequently cited is the one by Holec (1981, 3): 'the ability to take charge of one's own learning', and 'the capacity to take control of one's own learning' (Benson 2001, 47). However, this broad definition needs to be tailored to suit the specific context. Benson and Voller (1997) contended that the term autonomy has been used in at least five ways in language education:

1. For *situations* in which learners study entirely on their own
2. For a set of *skills* which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning
3. For an inborn capacity that is suppressed by institutional education
4. For the exercise of learners' responsibility for their own learning
5. For the right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning

(Benson and Voller 1997, 1–2)

Working within these various conceptual frameworks, researchers and practitioners have attempted to promote learner autonomy in their own contexts.

Amid the various applications of the concept of learner autonomy, Benson (1997) proposed that there were at least three versions of autonomy in language learning: *technical*, *psychological*, and *political*. The technical version of learner autonomy is defined as 'the act of learning a language outside the framework of an educational institution and without the intervention of a teacher' (Benson 1997, 19). Preparing learners with skills and techniques for this situation was the main issue. In the psychological version, learner autonomy is defined as 'a capacity – a construct of attitudes and abilities – which allows learners to take more responsibility for their own learning' (Benson 1997, 19). In the political version, learner autonomy is defined as 'the concept in terms of control over the processes and content of learning' (Benson 1997, 19). Later, Benson (2001) defined learner autonomy as 'the capacity to take control of one's own learning' and further proposed three interdependent levels of control over learning: learning management (learning behaviour), cognitive processes (psychology of learning), and learning content (learning situations).

3.4 Fostering learner autonomy in CALL environments

With the spread of computer technologies, the opportunity to access the Internet is not restricted to people in developed countries. Advanced technologies have brought educational changes and are increasingly becoming one of the most popular educational tools both inside and outside classrooms. Developments in the use of technology in language learning are referred to as computer-assisted language learning (CALL). Egbert (2005) has pointed out that CALL is not limited to personal computers but applies to any kind of computer technologies, for example, mobile phones, iPod, computer games and movie DVDs, because they can be applied, both explicitly and implicitly, in language learning. However, in this chapter, CALL is used to refer specifically to the integration of the Internet with English learning.

The Internet is regarded as a powerful tool for language learning and teaching, a resource for authentic target language materials and a communication tool. Knowledge, especially in English language learning, can be acquired not only from teachers and the materials they choose but also from engagement in language learning activities outside the classroom. Although English is the most important foreign language in Thailand, authentic target language materials such as songs, movies and books may not be affordable for all English language learners. Fortunately, the availability of the Internet access in most universities provides students with the opportunity to be exposed to English outside the classroom. There are countless online materials that can be used for learning English, both explicitly and implicitly.

Apart from online materials, the Internet provides new modes of communication regardless of time and place. This kind of interaction was once difficult to provide in many parts of the world, especially in English as a foreign language countries where English native speakers are not generally met on a daily basis. Fortunately, the advance and spread of the Internet can, nowadays, facilitate the interaction between people from all over the world through computer-mediated communication (CMC).

In order to encourage learners to be more autonomous, we may need to consider the pedagogical perspectives especially when CALL is integrated in learning and teaching activities. Table 3.1 shows that CALL can be applied differently depending on the pedagogical perspective. For example, the Internet may be used merely as online grammatical exercises without real communicative activities. Moreover, the notion of autonomy can be also interpreted differently in both CALL and non-CALL environments.

Perspectives	Traditional classroom activities		Autonomous learning activities	
	Non-CALL	CALL	Non-CALL	CALL
Behaviourism	Grammatical rules explanation, drill and practice exercises	Computer as a new way of presentation	Self-access centre	CALL program, online exercises
Communicative approach	Communicative-based activities e.g. information gap	Computer as resources of teaching materials	Finding opportunity to communicate with native and non-native speakers of English	Educational games, CMC
Constructivism	Non-meaningful group projects with limited resources	Non-meaningful group projects with online resources	Meaningful group project with limited resources	Meaningful project with online resources

Table 3.1 Pedagogical perspectives, CALL and learner autonomy

Computer technologies have been integrated into Thai education for decades and have become more popular because of their increased capacity and affordability for teachers and students. However, despite the potential advantage of the integration of computers into the English language classroom, it does not occur frequently in Thai education. One reason for this is that not all teachers are convinced that simply using computers will result in effective language learning. The misconception that the CALL means replacing teachers with computers can still be found among some teachers, especially those who are not, what Prensky (2001) called, 'digital natives'. Some teachers who are familiar with technology tend to use the Internet outside of class time merely as a resource for class preparation and locating teaching materials. The full potential of the Internet as a learning tool has not been applied in many classrooms in Thailand.

In my study, I attempted to introduce the concept of autonomy in language learning in CALL environments, based on the perspective of constructivism (see Table 3.1), by recruiting 12 Thai learners studying in an English language teacher education program at a university in north-eastern Thailand. This was a 12-week intervention designed to foster autonomy in English learning by having

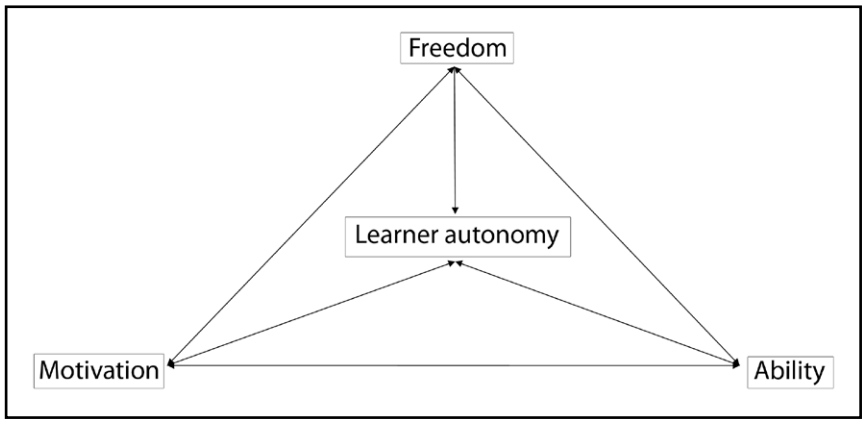

Figure 3.1 Three interdependent dimensions of learner autonomy

participants conduct a project collaboratively using the Internet as a resource. The intervention itself was a more autonomous way of learning than the traditional one described earlier. The participants took charge of the learning process, under a broad structure, in completing the project such as choosing topic, materials and working process. The data were collected using three individual interviews with each participant: before the intervention to acquire the background of the participants; after the intervention to gauge the impact of the intervention; and a follow-up to see whether they could apply the concept of autonomy in their own lives as a language learner, and in their own classrooms as an English language teacher.

The challenges and possibilities of applying the concept of learner autonomy in the Thai context can be examined according to three dimensions: freedom, motivation and ability. These three constructs have been considered related to learner autonomy. Learner autonomy involves the freedom, the motivation and the ability to take charge of one's own learning (see Figure 3.1).

3.4.1.1 Challenges

Since the idea of learner autonomy originated from Western contexts, the cultural issue concerning whether autonomy is universal for all learners regardless of ethnicity, gender, and cultural background is controversial (see Palfreyman and Smith 2003 for a collection of papers). In many parts of Thailand, learner autonomy may be perceived as a foreign idea which, in some ways, is different from the traditional classroom. However, it cannot be concluded that the concept of learner autonomy is not suitable for the context of Thailand.

Learning situation or learning teaching approach can be viewed as both an external constraint and support depending on the balance of freedom and control in the classroom. For example, Littlewood (1999) proposed two types of autonomy: *proactive* and *reactive*. Proactive autonomy means the learners create and set up their own directions. On the other hand, in reactive autonomy, 'once a direction has been initiated', learners 'organize their resources autonomously in order to reach their goal'. Later, Ribé (2003) proposed the degree of political dimension by classifying learner autonomy into three pedagogical perspectives: *convergence*, *divergence–convergence*, and *convergence–divergence*. In the convergence position, the autonomous learning process may be possible but contained by 'pre-established curriculum or course of action'. In divergence–convergence position, it allows the learners to make their own decision on important parts of the learning process. In the convergence–divergence position, the learning process is more open-ended, which allows for greater creativity and more autonomy. Although all can be found in the context of Thailand, the proactive and the convergence–divergence position are not the majority.

In Thailand, like many other places, teachers are accorded a high level of respect. Learners pay respect to their teachers as they do to their parents. The teacher's role is viewed as very important in the classroom. It is believed that teachers are educated people who are suitable to make all the decisions and to take control of the learning and teaching activities. Good learners, in the perception of many teachers, are those who obey and do what they are told to do. As a result, some Thai learners are passive and teacher-dependent. Those who express their disagreement with their teachers might be considered to be aggressive learners.

Fostering learner autonomy in the freedom dimension requires the understanding of all stakeholders in the pedagogical context. Learners should be free, to an appropriate degree, to take charge of their own learning. In the traditional classroom, learners are used to being told what to do. When faced with a new learning situation that provides for more freedom, some learners may be confused and need some structures to follow. It is not that learners do not value the freedom; they are simply not familiar with the freedom to make decisions about how they will learn. This is consistent with the data from my study. For example, during the training program, I encouraged the participants to learn from the Internet. One of my participants asked me 'Which exact websites do you want me to visit?' When I asked about her previous experience of the integration of the Internet with language learning, she explained, 'My

teacher provided us with addresses of a few websites she wanted us to visit. We just did what she assigned.'

Teachers should be free, to an appropriate degree, from external constraints to make their own decisions about the learning activities in the classroom. This is generally influenced by factors such as the national curriculum, institution policy, individual beliefs and cultural practices. For example, the expectancy to prepare learners to do well in the examination may not allow teachers to manage communicative activities because the focus of many examination papers is on grammatical points and reading comprehension.

Philosophically speaking, all learners are free to live their own lives. Learners may choose to be either dependent or independent if it is the most appropriate way for them, at the specific time and situation. The responsibility of teachers is to raise the awareness of possibilities in terms of alternative resources and ways of learning, and to allow learners to choose. In some classrooms where the freedom of choice is limited, learners are able to learn autonomously from available resources outside the classroom. However, freedom per se may not be enough for learners to keep taking charge of their own learning. Hence, the psychological element is a factor in how people engage with their learning opportunities.

3.4.2 Motivation

A general question of studies in motivation is: 'What moves a person to make certain choices, to engage in action, to expend effort and persist in action?' (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2011, 3). It has been observed that apart from freedom, motivation is also important for learners if they are to take charge of their own learning (Littlewood 1996, Schunk and Zimmerman 2008, Ushioda 1996, 2007).

Self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci and Ryan 1985), investigating intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in human behaviour, provides a useful framework with which to understand why some learners are motivated to take charge of their own learning while others are not. To be autonomous from an SDT perspective refers to the motivation of human behaviours, including learning, that 'must come from within' (Deci and Flaste 1995, 10) and is not controlled by external factors. Such intrinsic motivation is regarded as an important factor in self-regulated learning because it is 'self-initiated, volitional', and 'self-endorsed regulation' (Reeve et al. 2008, 224).

3.4.2.1 Challenges

Thai learners have different reasons and types of motivation to learn English. From SDT perspective, intrinsic motivation, defined as the inherent

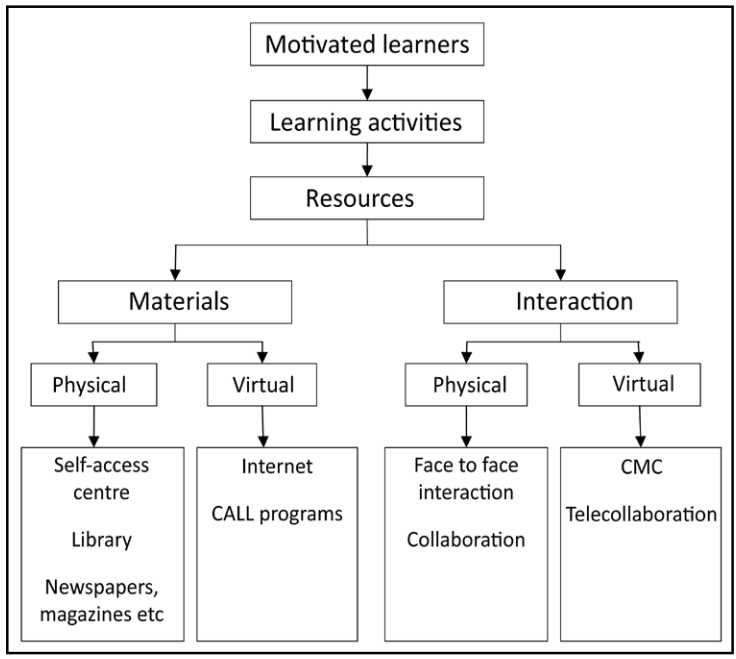

Figure 3.2 Motivated language learners

satisfaction of doing the activity (Ryan and Deci 2000) is important for learning. Motivated learners tend to continue taking charge of their own learning by engaging actively in activities that provide them with the opportunity to be exposed to authentic target language resources both physical and virtual (see Figure 3.2).

Not all learners are intrinsically motivated to learn English. With a lack of intrinsic motivation, most participants tended not to learn English willingly by engaging in activities that require using the English language from the available resources. When doing so, activities such as listening to English songs and watching American movies were done for entertainment purposes rather than to learn English.

Only one participant in my study showed high intrinsic motivation in learning English autonomously outside the classroom. In the first interview, before the intervention, Somchai described his experience as follows:

> I have a cable TV at home. I like to watch TV programs in English like news, documentary, etc. I do not mind whether or not I understand it. I just want to get familiar with the language. I do it every day. Nobody forces me. I just want to understand English.

For most of the participants in my study, their future identity as a teacher of English extrinsically motivated them, in some ways, to learn English. This type of extrinsic motivation, called 'identification' by SDT, refers to when a person regulates their behaviour because they have identified with the value of the activity (Ryan and Deci 2000).

However, some participants admitted that they were not motivated to learn English, even given the fact that they were supposed to be English language teachers after graduation. One of the reasons was that being a teacher of English was not their goal. They were encouraged by their parents and teachers because it is a secure job in Thailand. This type of extrinsic motivation is classified by SDT as 'external regulation' (Ryan and Deci 2000). This kind of motivation is controlled by external factors, so it is not autonomous from an SDT perspective.

An important question is how teachers could help both higher- and lower-motivated learners to be willing to take charge of their own learning. From an SDT perspective, external factors, including parents, teachers and friends, can provide both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The results of my study showed that the key features of the training program, such as freedom of choice, interesting multimedia materials, the availability and variety of learning resources, and collaborative learning, tended to motivate all participants, especially the more highly motivated participants who benefited most from them. Somchai made an interesting point concerning these factors when he said:

> For me, the variety of resources is very important. It motivates me to learn more. It arouses my curiosity. I want to try many by different ways and from different resources so that I can decide which one would suit me.

In conclusion, it seems that motivation is an important element for successful autonomous learners. There is a relationship between autonomy, motivation and collaborative learning. Therefore, teachers play an important role in providing autonomy and support, as opposed to controlling environments so as to increase intrinsic motivation (Reeve et al. 2008). Motivation is 'socially mediated' (Ushioda 2007, 9) through the process of 'cognitive and motivational scaffolding' (Ushioda 2007, 15).

Although both freedom and motivation are crucial in autonomous learning, it is sometimes found that a highly motivated learner with the freedom to choose may not be able to take charge of their own learning.

3.4.3 Ability

This dimension may refer to learning management, including the ability to use tools to search for the information, to choose the content critically, and to manage the learning process such as goal setting, planning, choosing appropriate materials, and self-evaluation. In other words, to encourage them to use the Internet as a resource for learning autonomously may require learner training to equip the learners with strategies essential to take charge of their own learning.

3.4.3.1 Challenges

Traditionally, a teacher is regarded as the only source of knowledge for many learners in Thailand. Those who are interested in learning English may not find learning in some classrooms interesting because of the teaching and learning activities, materials, content or even the atmosphere of the classroom, including the personality of teacher. However, with a lack of ability, they have no choice but to depend on their teacher and the learning activities presented by the teacher in the classroom.

In an attempt to develop participants' ability to use the Internet as a learning resource, I found some evidence of the relationship between the ability and the development of learner autonomy. Somchai, the only highly motivated participant, was a good example. He was motivated to learn English from the resources available to him such as cable TV. However, surprisingly, before the training program, he did not use the Internet as a learning resource because he did not know how to use it to learn English. He stated: 'Before that, I knew very little about online resources. After I knew that there were a lot that I could get access to and learn from, I realised that I could learn by myself after class.'

A lack of facilities such as computers and Internet connection may be one of the most important problems to be considered in encouraging the use of the Internet as a learning resource. The investment for such facilities requires financial support. However, the success of language learning cannot be assured through this environment because well-designed learning activities are also crucial. Otherwise, the computer room would possibly face the same criticism as the traditional language laboratory and self-access centre.

The findings from my research study showed that the access to the Internet was not the main problem. All participants had access to the Internet through university computer rooms and some through their own computers. One problem was that they were not motivated to learn. The Internet was used by participants

mainly for entertaining purposes. Therefore, the online activities were mostly in Thai. Although they sometimes used the Internet for academic purposes, such as to complete their assignments, it was not used as a tool for real learning.

According to their responses, all participants realised the importance of the Internet in learning English. Unfortunately, they did not have the practical knowledge of how to use it as a learning resource. Although most of them know how to search using Google, they found it difficult to find appropriate keywords. A lack of skills and abilities may be one of the reasons they do not benefit from the Internet.

3.4.4 Possibilities

Basically, introducing a new concept into the context may face many challenges as discussed above. Consequently, we should consider each dimension in order to avoid internal and external constraints and find ways to support learner autonomy (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 shows the freedom required by students to make their own decisions about their learning. External constraints, from the learner's perspective, may be other people, including friends, parents and teachers. Therefore, a clear understanding of the concept of autonomy from all stakeholders is vital.

With the motivation dimension, it may be difficult, if possible, to improve learners' motivation in learning English. However, from pedagogical perspective, it is our responsibility to increase learning motivation by creating interesting, challenging and enjoyable learning activities. Moreover, meaningful tasks that relate to their real lives and require and allow them to discover new source of knowledge may influence learners' motivation.

Finally, learner training designed to equip learners with the ability to manage their own learning is also a good idea. Essential abilities include searching and choosing information, planning and self-evaluating.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter examines what it means to be a learner of the English language in the context of Thailand. It also reflects on the influence of pervasive teaching methods that provide little support for learner autonomy. Where there is a lack of exposure to the target language, the Internet may be viewed as a new learning environment equipped with authentic target language materials, and as an opportunity to communicate with native and non-native English speakers from all over the world. Whether the potential of the Internet is applied to

Dimensions	Constraints		Fostering autonomy
	Internal	External	
Freedom	Learner's belief	Others' belief	Awareness Appropriate degree of freedom Appropriate learning and teaching methods
Motivation	Lack of intrinsic motivation	Lack of extrinsic motivation	Intrinsic motivation – Interesting and meaningful task – Resources (availability, variety, accessibility, authentic, interesting materials) – Interaction with peers, teachers, others, authentic audiences (encouragement, scaffolding) Extrinsic motivation – Goal – Identity
Ability	Lack of skills Lack of knowledge Lack of learning strategies	Availability Variety Accessibility Lack of training	Learner training – using tools to search for information – choosing the content critically – setting goals – planning – choosing appropriate materials – self-evaluation

Table 3.2 Fostering learner autonomy

language learning depends on the learner's pedagogical perspective and sense of themselves as free agents in regulating and managing their own learning. However, beyond the classroom not all learners benefit from the opportunities provided by access to the Internet, and each learner's sense of autonomy is critical to how they engage with the possibilities provided beyond the walls of the traditional classroom.

Freedom, motivation, and ability are important ingredients in promoting autonomy in language learning, but these are not easily achieved in the context of Thailand, where learners have strongly held beliefs about their roles as learners and the roles they expect of their teachers. This can be applied to practice in terms of the factors to consider in fostering autonomy. While we need to be aware of the unique constraints in each context, it is also important to understand that a powerful tool like the Internet, if appropriately used, can facilitate and support more independent learning by helping to remove constraints on learners' perceptions of what it means to be a learner in particular cultural and social context.

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3

Senior Secondary Mathematics Students in Singapore: Attitudes towards and Engagement with the Graphics Calculator

HAZEL TAN

SUMMARY In this chapter the attitudes of senior secondary students in Singapore towards graphics calculator use as well as their self-reported engagement with the graphics calculators for learning mathematics are examined. The graphics calculator as a technology for learning is increasingly becoming an integral part of the mathematics education system around the world. Changes in the Singapore senior secondary curriculum mandated the use of graphics calculators in mathematics examinations from 2007. Since implementation of the new curriculum, there has been no large-scale research on the impact of using graphics calculators. The aims of this study are to investigate students' engagement with graphics calculators with respect to their self-reported calculator and mathematics competencies.

In this study, a theoretical framework of technology use based on prior research has been adopted. The framework consists of four metaphors of the relationship between the user and the technology: technology as Master, Servant, Partner, and Extension of Self. A survey instrument was developed based on the examples of students' statements in an Australian research study and was piloted with a group of 178 senior secondary students in Singapore. In this chapter, the findings from the administration of the instrument in the main study of 964 Singaporean students are reported, and the patterns of engagement with the calculator are described.

4.1 Introduction

In recent decades, the technological revolution in education has brought about many changes globally. In mathematics classrooms around the world, calculator and computer use are being promoted (e.g. Ruthven 1996; Trouche 2005; Wong 2003).

The graphics or graphing calculator (GC) is part of a progression of hand-held technologies used in mathematics education. According to Trouche (2005), desk calculators appeared in 1975, scientific and programmable calculators in 1980, graphics calculators in 1985, and symbolic calculators with computer algebra systems (CAS calculators) in 1995.

The investigation into the impact of graphics and CAS calculators is important because of the sheer number of students using these technologies in their

curriculum. For example, in Singapore where more than 90 per cent of the pre-university students take mathematics (Wong and Lee 2009), there were 13,053 students who took the new national examinations in 2007 when GC use was first mandated (Ministry of Education 2008), followed by 14,463 students in 2008, and 14,212 students in 2009 (Ministry of Education 2010). It is estimated that Texas Instruments, a leading calculator company globally, 'sells between 3 and 4 million graphing calculators per year and has nearly 13 million calculators of all kinds currently in use in schools' (Trotter 2007, 1) in the United States and worldwide.

There have been many research studies conducted on students' use of technology in mathematics education, in particular GCs. Findings from earlier studies in which students' use of calculators have been investigated tend to be on whether technology helps or hinders learning, to make a case for integrating calculators into education. Penglase and Arnold (1996) critiqued these early studies, advocating the need to 'distinguish carefully between the use of the tool and the context of use' (p. 82). They also maintained that 'claims regarding the relative effectiveness of the tool are frequently based upon assessment procedures which equate "student learning" and "achievement" with performance upon tradition tests, and fail decisively to account for important influences upon attitudes and conceptual understanding' (p. 82).

In more recent research studies, Penglase and Arnold's critiques were heeded. The classroom context and other student factors such as attitudes and cognition were taken into account. The studies broadly fall into two types: qualitative studies focusing on the interactions between students, calculators, and teachers within the classroom context; and quantitative studies focusing on implementation factors related to the integration of GCs within a school or a program context. Few large-scale GC studies are conducted in which student factors are investigated within the macro level of a national or regional context. It is hoped that this study can fill this gap, enriching the existing discussions about students' engagement with the GC.

In the next sections, a review of the literature on students' attitude towards and engagement with the GC is presented. This is followed by a description of the Singapore mathematics education system and relevant research studies. The methods, analysis and findings of the current study are then discussed.

4.2 Research on students' attitude towards GC Use

Research reveals that students' attitudes and beliefs about themselves and their learning of mathematics affect their behaviour and performance (Leder and Forgasz 2006; Schoenfeld 1989), and that 'in general positive attitudes and

beliefs and intrinsic motivation are reflected in increased effort in learning and greater persistence' (Pierce et al. 2007, 286).

There are various overlapping and interrelated definitions of the terms used by different researchers in describing affective variables, such as beliefs, attitudes, feelings, emotions (Leder and Forgasz 2006). They are generally related to how a person feels, thinks, and behaves about a particular subject or issue. A broad meaning of attitude encompassing affective variables will be used in this chapter. In the following, specific studies on students' attitudes about the use of graphics and CAS calculators are described.

Zhou and Lyublinskaya (2008) reported on a study of 110 high school students in the classes of five mathematics and science teachers. The teachers had an attended intensive five-day course run by Texas Instruments (TI) on GCs and related hand-held technologies (data probes, interfaces, and wireless learning systems). It was found that, 'the more often and appropriate these technologies were used in the classroom, the more confident students were in using them at more sophisticated levels for problem solving and real-life applications' (p. 4387).

Ellington (2006) conducted a meta-analysis on 42 experimental studies involving treatment groups with GC use, and control groups without GC use. In the majority of the studies, the participants were mixed-ability high school or college students taking algebra or pre-calculus courses. The results revealed that the GC 'has a positive effect on students' attitudes towards mathematics' (p. 23), and that 'students who have access to graphing calculators like using them while learning mathematics' (p. 23).

Pierce et al. (2007) surveyed 350 grade 8–10 students from six schools in Victoria, Australia, focusing on five affective variables: mathematics confidence, confidence with technology, attitude to learning mathematics with technology, affective and behavioural engagement in learning mathematics. It was found that for boys, the attitude to learning mathematics with technology 'is correlated only with confidence in using technology, but for girls the only relationship found was a negative correlation with mathematics confidence' (p. 285). The findings are not GC specific since the study included the computer, GCs and CAS calculators as technologies.

In general, students' attitudes towards calculator use are found to be positive (see e.g. Ellington 2006; Penglase and Arnold 1996). Their attitudes towards GCs are associated with the frequency and intensity of their engagement with the GC in pedagogically sound activities. There is also evidence that attitudes towards learning mathematics using technology are also influenced by students' gender, and their confidence with technology and with mathematics.

4.3 Research on how students use GCs

There is a significant body of research on how students use the GC (e.g. Penglase and Arnold 1996; Ruthven 1996). For the purposes of this chapter, only meta-analyses, reviews of studies, or those studies that are situated in a national or regional curriculum programs are discussed.

In a series of analysis of students' scripts for the Year 12 Calculus Tertiary Entrance Examination (TEE) in Western Australia spanning 1995 to 2000, Forster and Mueller (2001a, 2001b, 2002) found that there were difficulties for students in 'interpreting graphics calculator outputs and knowing when use of graphics calculators is appropriate or possible' (Forster and Mueller 2001b, 37). However, based on the meta-analysis conducted by Ellington (2006) reported earlier, it was found that 'when calculators were included in testing and instruction, the procedural, conceptual, and overall achievement skills of students improved' (p. 16).

Burrill et al. (2002) reviewed 43 studies of hand-held technologies and concluded that students tend to use methods that are preferred by their teachers. They also concluded that 'most researchers found students used hand-held calculators as a computational tool' and in some cases, 'students used the technology to investigate and explore, but on tasks that did not require graphing, their use of hand-held calculator was minimal' (pp. iv–v). Additionally, there was some evidence of over-reliance by students on calculators, and that some students were unsure of how to use the calculator.

Using the research questions posed by Burrill et al. (2002) in their meta-analysis, Sabra and Trouche (2008) summarised a review of French research reports about the integration of calculators in mathematics teaching. They conclude that students widely use calculators for simple tasks, but they depended on teachers' scaffolding to achieve higher levels of engagement such as mathematical exploration using calculators.

To summarise, there are few large-scale studies that examine situations where GCs are fully integrated into the national or regional curriculum. Hence, reviews and meta-analysis of studies are included in the discussion. Although the findings in these studies similarly reveal that students are able to use calculators for computation and procedural tasks, the research results are inconsistent as to the extent of the complexity in which students engage with the calculator. Burrill et al. (2002) recommended that research is needed in the area of student beliefs, understandings, and characteristics, such as an investigation into students' attitudes and beliefs about the use of hand-held graphing technology, and how these affect their use of the tool. The aims of the present study address these identified research needs.

The Singaporean mathematics education senior secondary context is now described briefly, along with relevant research.

4.4 Singaporean mathematics education context and relevant research

Singapore's mainstream education system comprises six years of compulsory primary schooling, and four or five years of secondary schooling. Post-secondary education includes two or three years of pre-university schooling at a junior college or centralised institute, followed by university education, or tertiary education in a polytechnic or vocational institution (Ministry of Education 2006).

Wong and Lee (2009) provided a comprehensive overview of the Singaporean mathematics education system, including the education system landscape, major initiatives, mathematics curriculum and resources.

Following an extensive review of the pre-university and upper-secondary curriculum in 2002, the review committee called for a broader and more flexible curriculum, and a more diverse education landscape (Tan et al. 2008). In revising the pre-university curriculum (also called Advanced Level, or A-Level curriculum), the GC was introduced in all A-Level mathematics examinations from 2007. In the diversified education landscape, there are schools with mixed levels spanning secondary to pre-university, offering integrated programs that start at various entry points at the secondary level (e.g. Year 7 or 9 equivalent) and continue up to A-Level (Ministry of Education 2010).

Most Singaporean junior colleges run on a lecture–tutorial system. Students attend lectures for the various subjects in lecture theatres as a large group, and attend tutorials in classes of about 23 (Wong and Lee 2009). Since mathematics subjects are prerequisites for a number of university courses, most students take mathematics at one of the two levels offered:

- Higher 1 Mathematics, for students pursuing business and social sciences degrees
- Higher 2 Mathematics, for students pursuing engineering and sciences degrees.

There are no textbooks at pre-university level; students rely on lecture notes provided by teachers and reference books.

Since the GC has only recently been introduced to the A-Level examinations, there is a scarcity of research about their use. Prior to the implementation, pre-

university mathematics teachers were unfamiliar with the tool and uncertain about its usefulness (Tan and Forgasz 2006). They were also concerned about the changes in the types of examination questions used, and the impact of the GC on teaching and learning (Lam and Kho 2002).

Ng (2006) conducted a study in 2003 on the use of the GC by pre-university students taking Further Mathematics (FM) (a higher-level mathematics subject under the old curriculum aimed at preparing students for engineering and mathematics courses in university). The GC was permitted in the FM A-Level examinations in 2001 and the questions were GC-neutral. Ng surveyed 190 students on three occasions, and the results suggested that students using the GC performed better academically than those not using the GC. Ng (2006) contended that students' competency with the GC could be influenced by factors such as accessibility to the calculator, familiarity with its functions, and the extent of exposure to its use, the latter being dependent on the teaching and learning environment.

Tan (2009) developed a survey instrument on the ways students use GC, using the framework of four metaphors conceptualised by Goos et al. (2000). The four metaphors are: technology as Master, as Servant, as Partner, and as Extension of Self. The instrument was piloted with a group of 178 Singaporean pre-university students. A factor analysis of the data revealed only three factors: technology (GC) as Master, Servant, and a combination of Partner and Extension of Self. It was also found that male students scored significantly higher than female students on the technology as Partner and Extension of Self scores. No gender differences were found for the other two categories of technology use.

In summary, there is a paucity of research on the use of GC in the Singaporean pre-university context. The few studies conducted before its introduction showed that teachers were unsure of the usefulness and impact of the GC, and that students can benefit from its use.

4.5 The current study

The aim of the research was to determine if there were any relationships between students' self-perceptions towards the GC and towards mathematics, and how they use the tool. An online anonymous survey was used to collect data, which were analysed by examining Pearson correlations and line graphs of mean scores.

In 2009, six out of the 17 established junior colleges in Singapore offering the A-Level curriculum (Ministry of Education 2005) were invited to participate in the study. Four schools indicated interest. Students were then invited to participate in the survey.

Survey sections	Items	Response format (five-point Likert-type)
Self-perceptions of competencies	Mathematics competency self-rating (MSR) Graphics calculator competency self-rating (GCSR)	'Weak', 'Below average', 'Average', 'Good', 'Excellent'
GC attitudes	Graphics calculator enjoyment (GCEnj) Graphics calculator confidence (GCConf)	'Strongly disagree', 'Disagree', 'Neutral', 'Agree', 'Strongly agree'
GC use	12-item instrument on how students use graphics calculators: GC as Master (GCMa), as Servant (GCSe) and as Collaborator (GCCo) (Tan 2009)	'Strongly disagree', 'Disagree', 'Neutral', 'Agree', 'Strongly agree'

Table 4.1 Summary of sections of the survey

4.5.1 The questionnaire

The survey consisted of sets of questions derived from different areas of the literature. Of interest in this chapter were items and subscales related to students' attitudes and beliefs about GCs and how they use the GC. A summary of the relevant sections of the survey discussed in this chapter is presented in Table 4.1.

Since there is no common assessment across schools other than the final A-Level examinations, items tapping students' self-perceptions of their mathematics and GC competencies were used.

The first four items and their codes listed in Table 4.1 were:

Currently for maths I consider myself. (MSR)
In terms of GC skills, I consider myself. (GCSR)
I enjoy using calculators to learn maths. (GCEnj)
I feel confident doing maths using calculators. (GCConf)

The 12-item instrument developed on students' engagement with the GC and piloted by Tan (2009) was used. The factor analysis of the data in this main study was totally consistent with that found in the pilot study. Using principal component analysis with Varimax rotation, three factors were found explaining 59.0 per cent of the variance. The Cronbach's alpha values from reliability tests for each subscale were: 0.714 (technology/GC as Master),

Abbreviations	Metaphor	Description
GCMa	Technology as Master	The student is subservient to the technology and might be reduced to blind consumption of whatever output is generated, irrespective of its accuracy or worth.
GCSe	Technology as Servant	Technology is used as a reliable timesaving replacement for mental, or pen and paper computations. Students 'instruct' the technology as an obedient but 'dumb' assistant.
GCCo (GC as Collaborator)	Technology as Partner	Students often appear to interact directly with the technology, treating it almost as a human partner that responds to their commands –for example, with error messages that demand investigation. The calculator acts as a surrogate partner as students verbalise their thinking in process of locating and correcting such errors.
	Technology as Extension of Self	Students incorporate technological expertise as an integral part of their mathematical repertoire. Technology is used to support mathematical argumentation as naturally as intellectual resources.

Table 4.2 Four metaphors of engagement with technology and their abbreviations
Adapted from Geiger (2005, 371).

0.699 (technology/GC as Servant), and 0.819 (technology/GC as Partner and Extension of Self). As the last two metaphors were combined to form a single subscale, a new shorter label, 'Technology/GC as Collaborator', has been used in the study. A description of the four metaphors of technology use described by Geiger (2005), and the terms and abbreviations used in the present study are shown in the Table 4.2.

4.5.2 Research question

The research question addressed in the present study was:

> What are the relationships between the students' engagement with GCs, their attitudes towards GCs, and their self-ratings of mathematics and GC competencies?

4.6 Data analysis

The sample comprised 964 students (606 females, 358 males); 847 were from the two-year junior college program (Years 11 and 12 equivalent) and 117 from the integrated program (Years 10 to 12 equivalent). The data were analysed using SPSS 17.0 for Windows.

		MSR	GCComp	GCEnj	GCConf	GCMa	GCSe	GCCo
N	Valid	963	962	938	937	932	934	920
	Missing	1	2	26	27	32	30	44
Mean $\bar{x}$		2.90*	2.94	3.36*	3.20*	3.19*	3.78*	3.03
Std. Deviation		1.097	0.863	0.950	1.003	0.801	0.659	0.733

Table 4.3 Descriptive statistics for variables used

* Mean score significantly different from 3 ($p < 0.01$) using one sample t-tests.

Following conventions, the responses from the five-point Likert-type scales in Table 4.1 were assumed to represent equal interval data, enabling means and standard deviations to be calculated. The summary of the descriptive statistics of the mathematics competency self-rating (MSR), GC competency self-rating (GCSR), GC enjoyment (GCEnj), GC confidence (GCConf), and the engagement with GC variables (GC as Master, Servant and Collaborator) items/subscales are shown in Table 4.3.

Since '3' is the mid-point neutral value of the five-point scales used, it can be seen in Table 4.3 that on average, the pre-university students surveyed rated themselves as low in mathematics ($\bar{x}$ = 2.90) and average in GC ($\bar{x}$ = 2.94) competencies. They also generally agreed (but not strongly) that they enjoy using the GC ($\bar{x}$ = 3.36) and feel confident in using GC ($\bar{x}$ = 3.20). On average, they slightly agreed about using GC as Master ($\bar{x}$ = 3.19), and were neutral to using GC as Collaborator ($\bar{x}$ = 3.03); however, they tended to agree more strongly to using GC as Servant ($\bar{x}$ = 3.78).

Figure 4.1 shows the percentages of the students who reported the various levels of self-ratings for mathematics (MSR) and graphics calculator (GCSR) competencies. It can be seen that a higher percentage of students rated themselves as average in GCSR (55 per cent) compared to those that rated themselves as average in MSR (35 per cent). This could be because students were new to GC; most students were introduced to GC only during first year pre-university.

While 14 per cent (N = 135) of the students rated themselves as weak in MSR, there are only 5 per cent (N = 46) who rated themselves as excellent. In order to compare students of different mathematics competencies (based on their self-ratings), the categories were collapsed into three groups labelled 'high', 'average' and 'low' mathematics competency self-rating (MSR) as shown in Table 4.4. Approximately equal numbers of students were found in each group.

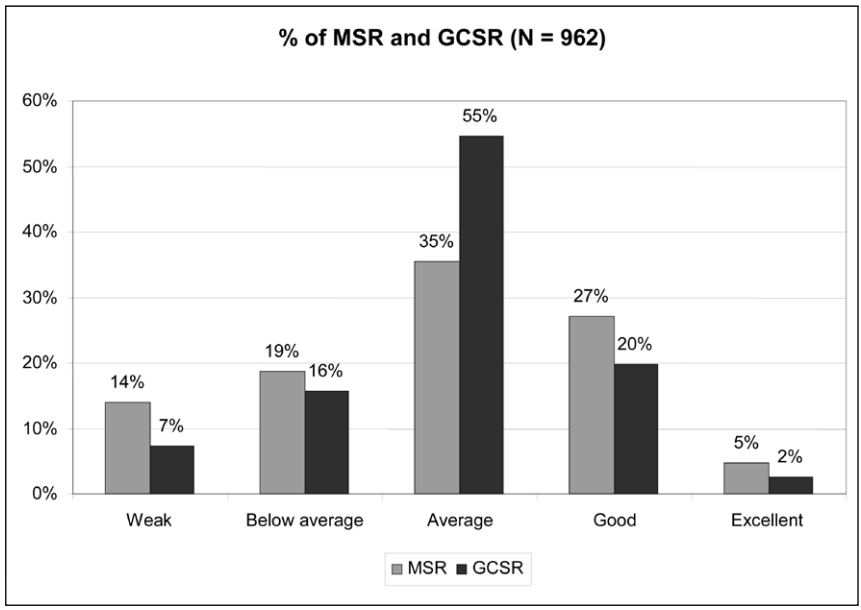

Figure 4.1 Percentages of MSR and GCSR responses

Original MSR	Collapsed MSR	Number of students	Total (N = 963, 1 missing)
Weak	Low	136	315
Below average		179	
Average	Average	341	341
Good	High	261	307
Excellent		46	

Table 4.4 Collapsing the responses for MSR

4.6.1 Correlations between mathematics and GC competencies, attitudes towards and engagement with GC

To investigate the relationships as stated in the research question, bi-variate Pearson product–moment correlation coefficients were computed, based on 1 per cent level of significance (two-tailed test). Shown in Table 4.5 are the correlations of overall scores for the entire sample, as well as the correlations based on the three groups of high, average and low MSR.

Considering the overall group, it can be seen in Table 4.5 that there is a moderate positive correlation between MSR and GCSR ($r = 0.434$), and weak

			Attitudes towards GC		Engagement with GC		
		GCSR	GCEnj	GCConf	GCMa	GCSe	GCCo
Mathematics competency self-rating (MSR) (original five-point scale)	**Overall**	**0.434****	**0.106****	**0.176****	**−0.154****	**−0.107****	**0.241****
GC Competency self-rating (GCSR)	**Overall**		**0.404****	**0.521****	**−0.354****	**0.109****	**.0425****
	Low MSR		0.404**	0.492**	−0.363**	0.185**	0.321**
	Average MSR		0.393**	0.525**	−0.346**	0.145**	0.458**
	High MSR		0.414**	0.506**	−0.265**	0.175**	0.378**
GC Enjoyment (GCEnj)	**Overall**			**0.693****	**−0.310****	**0.263****	**0.545****
	Low MSR			0.710**	−0.317**	0.267**	0.489**
	Average MSR			0.661**	−0.348**	0.204**	0.541**
	High MSR			0.704**	−0.241**	0.379**	0.595**
GC Confidence (GCConf)	**Overall**				**−0.365****	**0.238****	**0.530****
	Low MSR				−0.302**	0.275**	0.458**
	Average MSR				−0.424**	0.236**	0.567**
	High MSR				−0.319**	0.279**	0.524**
GC as Master (GCMa)	**Overall**					**0.041**	**−0.231****
	Low MSR					0.036	−0.179**
	Average MSR					0.015	−0.275**
	High MSR					0.025	−0.170**
GC as Servant (GCSe)	**Overall**						**0.210****
	Low MSR						0.220**
	Average MSR						0.240**
	High MSR						0.288**
GC as Collaborator (GCCo)	**Overall**						
	Low MSR						
	Average MSR						
	High MSR						

Table 4.5 Bi-variate correlations between mathematics and GC competencies, GC attitudes and engagement with GC

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

correlations between MSR and the other GC variables. This implies that students who said that they were good in mathematics were more likely to also be high in GC competency and vice versa. However, students who said that they were good at mathematics were no more likely to report high GC enjoyment or GC confidence than students who said that they were weak in mathematics. The association between mathematics competency self-rating and reported engagement with GC is also very weak, and thus not educationally meaningful.

4.6.2 GC self-rating and attitudes

There were moderate positive associations between GCSR and GC attitudes (with GCEnj, $r = 0.404$; with GCConf, $r = 0.521$). This suggests that students who indicated high GC competence were more likely to also have corresponding high GC confidence and enjoyment scores, and vice versa. Additionally, GCEnj and GCConf (GC attitude variables) correlate strongly with each other ($r = 0.693$).

4.6.3 How GCs are used

There were weak to moderate negative correlations between GCMa and the other GC variables (competency, enjoyment and confidence). The negative correlations between GCMa and GCSR ($r = –0.354$), GCMa and GCEnj ($r = –0.310$), and GCMa and GCConf ($r = –0.365$) imply that students who agreed strongly to engaging with the GC as Master were more likely to be those who rated themselves low in GC skills, did not enjoy using GC, and did not feel confident in using GC.

Furthermore, there were moderately strong associations between GCCo and the other GC variables. The positive correlations between GCCo and GCSR ($r = 0.425$), GCCo and GCEnj ($r = 0.545$), and GCCo and GCConf ($r = 0.530$) imply that students who agreed strongly to engaging with the GC as Collaborator were more likely to be those who rated themselves high in GC skills, agreed strongly that they enjoy using GC and felt confident in using GC.

It is not surprising then that there was a negative correlation between GCMa and GCCo ($r = –0.231$), however the association was fairly weak.

An examination of the correlation matrix for the three MSR groups revealed little or no difference in the strength and direction of the relationships between the various variables for each of the three groups. The associations among the GC variables discussed above were consistent for students who rated themselves high, average or low in mathematics competency.

The relationships found between engagement with the GC and GC competence self-ratings for students with high, average, and low mathematics self-ratings are examined in the next section.

4.6.2 Relationships between engagement with GC and GC competency for students with different mathematics self-ratings

The graphs in Figures 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 illustrate the mean scores for GC as Master (GCMa), GC as Servant (GCSe) and GC as Collaborator (GCCo) respectively against increasing GC competency (GCSR) for each of the three MSR groups (high, average, and low).

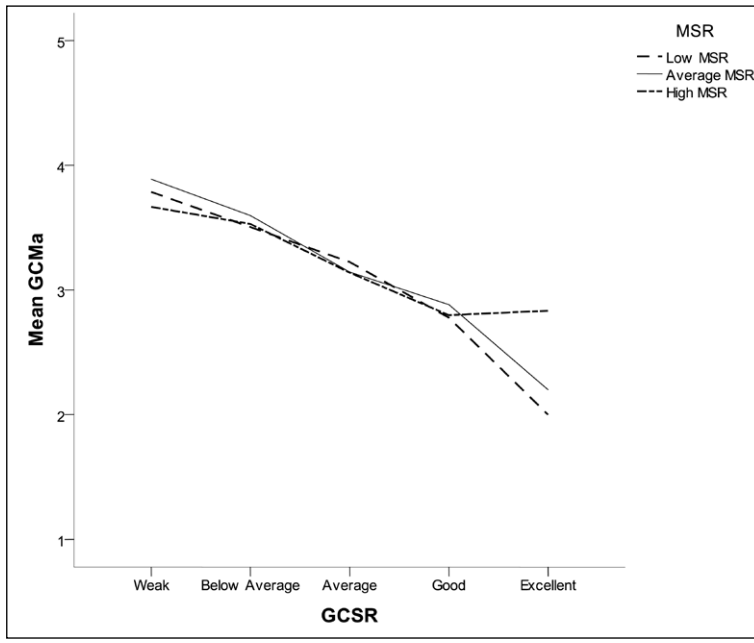

Figure 4.2 GC as Master by GC competency and MSR groups

Figure 4.2 shows the negative correlation between GCSR and GCMa, and Figure 4.4 the positive correlation between GCSR and GCCo described earlier. As GCSR increases, the mean scores for GCMa decrease and those for GCCo increase. The pattern is similar across the three MSR groups. This can be interpreted as students who reported higher competency with the GC being more likely to also have lower scores on engagement with GC as Master compared to students reporting lower competency with the GC. This makes logical sense because students with lower competency with the GC are more likely to be using GC at a lower level (i.e. to have a higher GCMa score).

Figure 4.3 shows that all students, irrespective of GC competency, tend to rate themselves high on GC as Servant items; that is, all the mean scores in the line chart are greater than the neutral value of 3. An inspection of the three mean score lines shows that students with low MSR tend to have slightly higher mean scores than those with high MSR. This suggests that, although students generally agreed that they engage with GC as Servant, students who said that they were weaker at mathematics were more likely to agree strongly to engaging with the GC as Servant (reliable timesaving replacement to pen–paper calculations) than students who said that they are better at mathematics. This could imply a slightly greater reliance on

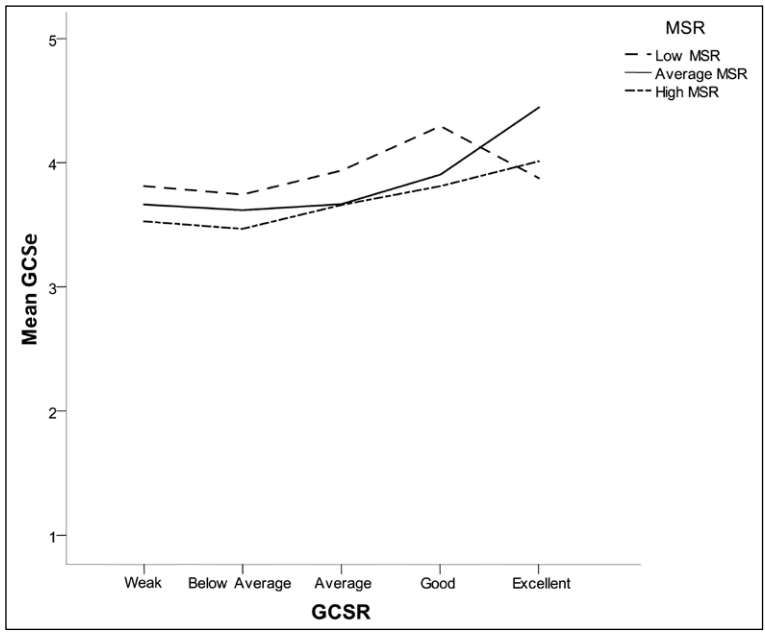

Figure 4.3 GC as Servant by GC competency and MSR groups

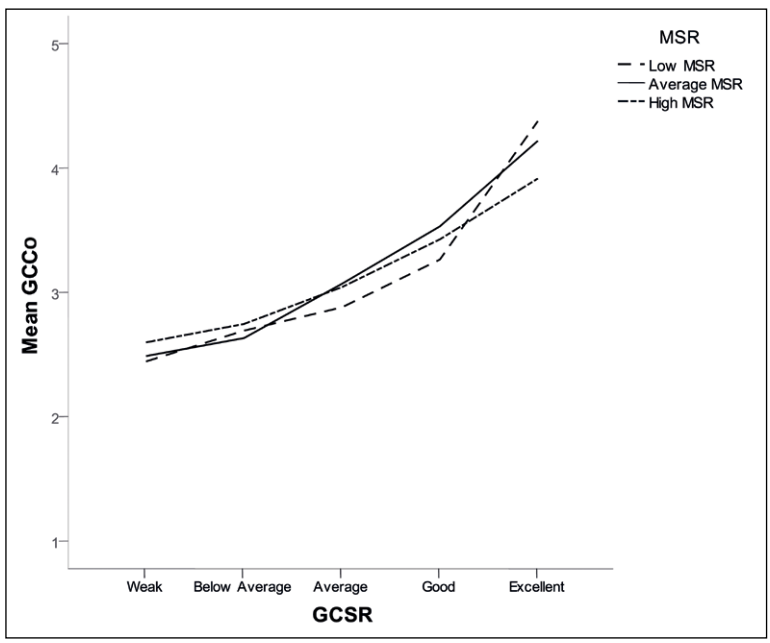

Figure 4.4 GC as Collaborator by GC competency and MSR groups

the speed and accuracy of the GC for menial and tedious computations by students who were weaker at mathematics. Overall, however, there was little variation in the GCSe mean scores by GCSR and MSR. This explains the lack of significant non-zero correlations between GC as Servant scores and MSR and GCSR (see Table 4.5).

In summary, the data indicate that students who said that they were weaker in GC competency tended to have higher scores for GC as Servant and GC as Master, and those who indicated that they were stronger in GC skills tended to score higher for GC as Collaborator, and also had high scores for GC as Servant.

4.7 Discussion

Although the theoretical model postulated by Goos et al. (2000) suggests four metaphors relating to the roles of technology, only three factors were identified in the empirical study in the Singaporean pre-university context. The last two metaphors, technology as Partner and technology as Extension of Self were loaded onto the same factor, which was renamed GC as Collaborator. Perhaps in the short time of one to two years of learning how to use the GC, Singaporean students have not quite reached the highest level of sophistication with respect to engagement with the technology (i.e. GC as Extension of Self) in order for the factor analysis to show it as a separate factor. Or perhaps more items and examples are needed to sharpen the content validity of the instrument for this last metaphor.

The finding that students who rated themselves high in GC competency tended to have high GC as Collaborator as well as GC as Servant scores supports Geiger's proviso that, although the metaphors are hierarchical in complexity of technology usage, 'the demonstration of more sophisticated usage indicates the expansion of a technological repertoire where an individual has a wider range of modes of operation available to engage with a specific task' (Geiger 2005, 370). Geiger gave an example that a student who is able to engage with GC at the most sophisticated level might also use GC as a Servant if a particular mathematics task is mundane. The instrument used in this study measures students' self-reported use of GC in learning mathematics, that is, not specific to any mathematics task or topic. To a certain extent the data reflect students' self awareness of how they use the GC – a snapshot of their technological repertoire. Hence the finding here seems to be consistent with the example mentioned above. The finding suggests that students' technological repertoire seems to have expanded from engaging with GC as Master and

GC Competency	GC Enjoyment	GC Confidence	GC as Master	GC as Servant	GC as Collaborator
High	High	High	Low	High	High
Low	Low	Low	High	High	Low

Table 4.6 Associations between the GC variables

GC as Servant, to engaging with GC as Collaborator and GC as Servant, as students' GC competency becomes higher.

The analysis of the mean scores and correlation matrix suggested certain associations of student enjoyment, confidence, and how they use the GC related to their reported GC competency, shown in Table 4.6.

High GC competency is associated with high GC enjoyment and confidence, low scores for GC as Master, and high scores with GC as Servant and GC as Collaborator. Low GC competency is associated with low GC enjoyment and confidence, high scores for GC as Master and GC as Servant, and low scores for GC as Collaborator.

4.8 Conclusion

There have been a lot of comparative and experimental studies in which differences have been examined between groups of students with and without the use of GC. However, there have been few large-scale studies in which student attitudes and the students' ways to engage with GC have been examined within a context in which the use of GC in high-stakes examination is mandated.

The findings in this study were as follows:

- Students' mathematics skills are associated with their GC skills. Students who rated themselves better at mathematics tend to rate themselves better in GC, and vice versa.
- Students' GC skills are associated with their attitudes towards GC (enjoyment and confidence). Students who rated themselves better in GC tend to score higher in enjoyment and confidence with the GC, and vice versa.
- Students' ways of using GC are only weakly correlated to their mathematics competency self-ratings, and moderately correlated to their GC competency self-ratings. GC as Master is moderately negatively correlated with GC attitudes, whereas GC as Collaborator is

strongly positively correlated with GC attitudes. GC as Servant is high across the different GC competencies.

- Certain associations between the variables emerged (see Table 4.6).

In conclusion, the different ways of engagement with the GC are associated with GC competency but not with self-reported mathematics competency. The implication for teaching and learning is that teachers cannot assume that students with high mathematics competency will be more likely to engage with the GC at a high level of sophistication. Instead, teachers should understand students' personal profiles of GC behaviour and their skills with GC in order to plan and carry out learning activities to help students engage with the GC at a deeper level.

Table 4.6 shows the pattern of associations between the different GC variables. It would be interesting to see if there are similar or different patterns of student engagement with the GCs in other curriculum contexts and cultures, and also if the pattern might change in time as students become familiar with tool.

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Part Two: Early Childhood Education

Introduction
Cultural–Historical Perspectives

JOCE NUTTALL

The chapters here reflect several important realities about the reach of Western practices into the education of young children in the Asia Pacific: first, that many doctoral candidates in childhood education in Australian universities are from Asia; second, that these candidates are skilfully examining Asian education through the lens of empirical tools developed alongside Western researchers; and, third, that these candidates are emerging as important generators and critics of knowledge about the challenges facing childhood education in the Asia Pacific region. The three chapters in this part of the book have very different topics – Australian–Hong Kong parents' expectations (Wong), curriculum development in Vietnam (Phan), and bilingualism in Chinese–Australian children (Li) – but their orientation to knowledge generation and critique shows more similarities than differences.

One similarity is the way in which each chapter presents what is essentially the same dilemma, that of the struggle to define and maintain an 'Asian' worldview in increasingly Westernised contexts. These chapters show this struggle being played out through the core cultural forms of family, formalised education, and the state, with each of these cultural forms existing in a dialectical relationship with the day-to-day cultural experiences of children, families and educators. As individuals change and develop, so do cultural forms, in an ongoing dance of development and co-evolution. These chapters also show how the long cycles of history are felt at the everyday level of life as it is experienced in homes and educational institutions. In Phan's chapter, for example, we see the ways in which the longstanding influence of Confucianism and the more recent traces of the Soviet era continue to play out in educators' dilemmas over how to implement the new early childhood curriculum. Phan argues that this historical moment – in effect, a developmental crisis for childhood education in Vietnam – is further complicated by the global flow of ideas about what constitutes effective individual and national development.

A second and obvious similarity between the three chapters is that each draws upon the legacy of Russian development psychologist Lev Seminovich Vygotsky. The work of Vygotsky and his colleagues in Russia in the 1920s and 1930s has been extended in a number of directions, each emphasising a different aspect or scale implied by Vygotsky's insights. All of these directions

nevertheless share common ideas about the development of culture and cognition across time, whether moment-to-moment or in long historical epochs, and the fundamentally social nature of cognition, motivation, and change. The co-evolution of individuals and institutions, noted above, is one such commonality. In Li's chapter, we see an example of the cultural–historical theoretical thread, as she describes the intimate collaboration between children and parents in role play and how this collaboration supports young children's acquisition of multiple languages. Phan's chapter, by contrast, adopts what she terms a socio-historical analysis, in order to examine the dialectical relationship between curriculum formation and the long sweep of Vietnamese history. Yet each of the three chapters takes into account what Wong, in her chapter, describes as 'the interrelated roles and mutuality of the individual and the social world in successive time frames'.

One limitation of relying on the Russian tradition in developmental psychology, despite its derivation from Marxist dialectic, is the tendency to overlook concepts more familiar to readers of the Western Marxist tradition such as oppression, class, labour (both physical and intellectual), and collective consciousness. Despite this, each of these chapters points to a wider grasp of what it means for cognition to be distributed across people in social contexts. For example, although Li and Wong each focus primarily on parent–child dyads, there is nevertheless a strong sense of more distributed understandings, such as the influence of traditional expectations of academic performance in Hong Kong (Wong) and the way different contexts support acquisition of different languages (Li). The broader concepts found within Marxist dialectics are most evident in Phan's chapter, where she invokes 1000 years of shared awareness of Confucianism as a real and present context for curriculum construction in Vietnamese preschools.

Finally, all three chapters reflect complex notions of culture, seeking to problematise ready-made frameworks such as ethnic heritage, membership of nation-states, or stereotypical descriptions of doing and being 'Asian' in the world. As Wong argues in her chapter, we need to avoid understandings of culture that:

> … tend to homogenise and essentialise the Asian/Chinese immigrant groups without taking the diversities within and among the ethnic groups into consideration. This tendency results in making 'research' findings and explanations, in a macro sense, rather uniform, and in presenting all Chinese families as similar in their educational practices, strategies and pathways …

Each of the contributors has chosen to inhabit a research context where the tendency to essentialise family and educational practices as 'Asian' or 'Western' has been deeply disrupted by the flow of people and ideas. Both Li and Wong examine the possibilities of the new cultural tools offered to Asian families who have migrated to Australia, and Phan considers the implications of increasing knowledge about Western concepts of early childhood education among Vietnamese educators. Central to these complex contexts is the role of language as the pre-eminent cultural tool in all social settings. Language is not only used to represent the domain-specific concepts necessary to everyday life – particularly literacy and numeracy – but to convey the history and values of people, places and things. Thus the importance Lin's family (in the chapter by Li) places on Lin learning Mandarin, the importance Phan places on consciousness-raising about early childhood pedagogy among Vietnamese teachers, and the close study Wong has made of how parents explain the way they convey values and expectations to their children through day-to-day interaction.

Early childhood education internationally is a small but rapidly strengthening field of scholarship. These three chapters alert us to the developing dialogue between Western researchers and researchers in the Asia Pacific region, and the ways in which Asian researchers are reconceptualising long-established Western ideas about play, learning and curriculum. I confidently predict that dilemmas such as those examined in these chapters will be a rich and dynamic source of theorising for childhood education internationally in the coming decades.

4

Hong Kong–Australian Parents' Development of Values, Expectations and Practices for their Children's Education: A Dialectical Process

PUI LING WONG

SUMMARY Parental values influence children's education and development. Different parental values shape differently the expectations, practices and demands in relation to their children's education and provide different conditions and possibilities for their children's development. These values are themselves shaped by many factors, including the parents' prior experiences. This chapter explores the parental values, expectations, demands and practices in relation to the education of children from a Hong Kong immigrant family in Australia. A cultural–historical approach and dialectical-interactive methodology are adopted to inform this qualitative case study. The findings reveal how societal, cultural and historical contexts as well as the personal life experiences of parents play an important role in the formation and alteration of their values related to academic performance and career aspiration for their children. This chapter illustrates the complex dialectical process of the shaping and reshaping of values occurring in a family, reminding us of the importance of looking beyond often reified cultural explanations.

5.1 Introduction

The Hong Kong community has been recognised as a model community in Australia (BIMPR 1995; Zhao 2000). One of the distinct characteristics of this group is the high proportion of its members entering higher education in relation to the general Australian population (DEST 2005). Moreover, many Hong Kong born domestic students and their offspring enter into highly competitive universities and faculties and graduate as professionals (DIAC 2006; Wong 2007). Despite the fact that there is little literature about the Hong Kong community in Australia, a number of studies indicate that its educational and economic successes are related to the high value immigrant parents place on education and their high expectations of their children's academic performance and career pathways (Chu 2003; Pe-Pua et al. 1996; Wong 1997).

A review of the literature regarding immigrant communities reveals that in most relevant studies Hong Kong has been subsumed into the Chinese or Asian groups. The topic of high educational achievement and career

success of Asian and Chinese immigrant students has attracted scholarly attention since the late 1960s in the US (Nozaki and Inokuchi 2007). This has gradually spread to other Western countries such as the UK, Canada and Australia (e.g. Francis and Archer 2005; Li 2004; Matthews 2002). Taking a sociological view, many of the related studies concur that Asian and Chinese immigrant parents value education highly and have the strong belief that a good education qualification will greatly increase the chances of their children having prosperous futures, being successful in their careers, earning high incomes and achieving upward social mobility (Cheng 1998; Li 2004; Louie 2001; Mak and Chan 1995). These studies have also confirmed that the high parental expectations and characteristic practices associated with their children's education and upbringing are linked to the Asian and Chinese immigrant students' high educational achievement and career success (Francis and Archer 2005; Li 2004; Louie 2001; Matthews 2002; Pearce 2006).

The sociological view holds that cultural and structural explanations provide two important frameworks for understanding Chinese immigrant educational experiences. These frameworks help to explain how cultural and structural factors shape parental education values and consequently what these values bring to their related practices and strategies. Thus, cultural and social structural theories have been called on to explain the high educational expectations and achievements and career successes of Chinese immigrant communities (Francis and Archer 2005; Louie 2001; Nozaki and Inokuchi 2007; Pearce 2006). The cultural explanation focuses on the cultural resources, such as educational expectations, parental values and involvement, and family practices that Chinese parents bring to their children's high educational outcomes (Louie 2001; Nozaki and Inokuchi 2007). The structural explanation stresses the ways society, the economy and the opportunity structure of the host country foster Chinese immigrants' educational achievements (Li 2004; Pearce 2006). It argues that particular social structural factors, such as middle-class status, immigration and government policies, and employment opportunities support and lead to achievement (Francis and Archer 2005; Louie 2001).

While acknowledging the explanatory power of the sociological view, Li (2004), Louie (2001) and Pearce (2006) have also criticised the cultural and structural explanations that have been applied in many recent studies, arguing that they tend to homogenise and essentialise Asian/Chinese immigrant groups without taking the diversities within and among the ethnic groups into consideration. This tendency results in making 'research'

findings and explanations, in a macro sense, rather uniform, and in presenting all Chinese families as similar in their educational practices, strategies and pathways, regardless of changes over time (Francis and Archer 2005; Li 2004; Pearce 2006). Nasir and Hand (2006, 450) point out that numerous studies have considered culture as 'a set of rituals, beliefs and fixed traits'. They often provide stereotyped perceptions and are unable to address individual differences within groups influenced by the same culture, falsely assuming, as Rogoff (2003, 7) argues, that 'human development everywhere functions in the same ways'.

In addition, criticisms have been directed at the failure to take sufficient account of the historical context. Louie (2001) and Pearce (2006) contend that cultural and structural approaches do not reflect historical and political changes. They argue that academic success is a contemporary issue for Chinese immigrants, and culture and structure alone cannot explain the low educational achievement of this group before the 1960s. Nozaki and Inokuchi (2007) indicate that the influences from the social and political systems and the historical circumstances of unequal social stratification of the host country for a particular ethnic group, that is the socio-historical conditions of the group, are also important factors that shape parental values for their children's education. However, few studies have investigated the influence of these factors in the family context in a holistic and interwoven way.

The problems identified above suggest that it is important to gain deeper knowledge about individual families. To take account of the ways parental values are shaped over time and by contextual cultural and societal factors, this chapter uses a cultural–historical perspective to explore the parental expectations, demands and practices related to children's education of one Hong Kong immigrant family in Australia. It pays particular attention to the dialectical relationships between parental values and their life experiences. The focus on a single family permits a detailed and nuanced account of the shaping of values and practices. It does not address the question of whether other Hong Kong immigrant families (or indeed those from other Chinese groups) hold the same values; rather, it seeks to demonstrate the complex process of value development over time and location.

5.2 Theoretical perspective

To overcome the problems of homogenisation and overgeneralisation that have been found in many related studies using traditional research approaches and to capture a more comprehensive view of child development, the study

on which this chapter is based has adopted a cultural–historical perspective originating from the works of Vygotsky. Cultural–historical theory takes into consideration the social, cultural and historical influences in the process of human development (Daniels 2001; John-Steiner and Mahn 1996). It contributes 'a conceptual framework that overcomes many limitations of other attempts to represent the relationships between the social and the individual in psychological development' (Minick 1987, 34) and 'offers frameworks for the conceptualisation of multiple factors, processes, and levels of analysis' (Nasir and Hand 2006, 450).

A cultural–historical view of child development focuses simultaneously on different dimensions of the children's world, and emphasises the interrelated roles and mutuality of the individual and the social world in successive time frames (Nasir and Hand 2006; Rogoff 1995). Vygotsky (1978) argues that human individuals should be understood in terms of the relevant historically developing process, from which a dynamic display of the main points making up the processes can be reconstructed, and thus development can be traced from its source. Vygotsky's theorisation has been elaborated and expanded by Mariane Hedegaard. Hedegaard's (2009) model of children's learning and development is anchored in concrete historical settings to facilitate an understanding of the process of child development. The model focuses 'on societal conditions, institutional practices and motives and intention of children in everyday activities' (Hedegaard and Fleer 2008, p. 7). In addition, Hedegaard's model scrutinises Vygotsky's (1998) concept of the social situation of development, identifying and analysing everyday activities in which children participate in different institutions, such as family and school. Hedegaard (2009) argues that in order to obtain a holistic view on child development, we need to take into account the societal, institutional and individual perspectives. The societal perspective informs the culturally and historically developed context, for a society depicts the conditions for institutional value positions and provides the overall social environment for the child. The institutional perspective concerns the everyday practices in institutions in which the child participates, and depicts the institutional demands and goals towards the child. The individual perspective captures the child's motives and competences in everyday institutional practices. It constructs a holistic view of the child in context, noting the dialectical relationships among diverse and sometimes conflicting aspects of the people and institutions in the sociocultural–historical contexts, to see how they mutually shape the development and progression of the child. Fleer (2010) extends Hedegaard's work by further elucidating the dynamic relationships and interconnections between crisis, new self-awareness and development in the

process of child development. Fleer's insight provides a further illumination of the importance of the conditions for development afforded by parental and family values and practices.

The cultural–historical theorisations of Vygotsky (1998), Hedegaard (2009) and Fleer (2010) provide a concrete, relevant and holistic approach to studying child development, and are drawn upon as the theoretical perspective to guide the overall study. The broader study from which this chapter is drawn focuses on the ways children from Hong Kong immigrant families develop in relation to their family practices in Australia. It seeks to understand their ways of engaging in education and learning and how these are influenced by contextual factors and by their subjectivities. This chapter focuses on one 'piece' of the puzzle. Parental values and expectations are an important aspect of the environment within which children's education is situated. They affect the ways children perceive and 'do' learning. Given the influence they may exert, it is important to understand how they are developed, since this will also shed light on what education- or development-related practices and priorities are deemed important in a family. This chapter aims to trace the ways two parents' values and expectations were shaped by their life experiences in family and society and the cultural contexts in which they have lived. It looks into how they have changed over time and with new experiences and all these elements interact dialectically to create the conditions and family practices for the development of their children in their immigrant family. The cultural–historical theoretical frame is used to investigate the formation and alteration of parental values, expectations and practices in relation to their children's educational performance and future careers. It does not explain in detail how they and other institutional factors beyond the family institution impact on the children's development; these are presented in other papers with relevant data.

This chapter focuses on the family as one of the most important institutions or contexts within which children develop, and on parents' values and expectations since they influence family practices. Because much of the literature oversimplifies and homogenises parents' expectations along cultural lines, this chapter identifies the influences shaping two parents' expectations of their children through a more detailed social, cultural and historical analysis. It identifies the ways their expectations, demands and practices have been shaped by the complex interplay of the parents' own life histories, the influence of significant others, and the values and practices of the cultures and societies where they lived in the past and present.

5.3 Research design

The study on which this chapter is based has followed the cultural–historical paradigm and employed a qualitative case study research approach. The study explores the dialectical relationship between parents' education values and developmental pathways of children from Hong Kong immigrant families in Australia. The research participants of the study were three Hong Kong immigrant families living in Melbourne, Australia, and comprised six parents and seven children aged between newborn and 11 years. One of these families, the Chan family, is the focus of this chapter. The focus on a single family permits a detailed and nuanced exploration of the influences of culture, history and individual experience on the formation of values and expectations.

The Chan family includes a father, Ivan, and a mother, Flora, in their late 30s who migrated to Australia in late 1990s. Their children were born in Melbourne and at the time of initial data collection, the daughter Jessica and the son Vincent were six and nine years old respectively. Pseudonyms were used to protect the privacy of the participants. Jessica and Vincent were studying in a local government primary school located within a five-minute drive or a 15-minute walk from their home.

Data were gathered over a period of 12 months through video observations of the children's participation in their everyday activities, interviews with the children and parents, and photos and video clips provided by both the child and parent participants. The data were collected from a total of 22 field visits to the Chan family, including around 35 hours of video observation footage and seven hours of audio recording.

Data analysis sought to reveal the development of parental values, expectations, demands and practices in relation to children's education, learning and development. This chapter focuses particularly on the formation and alteration of parental values regarding academic performance and career aspiration and the ways these contributed to formation of parental expectations, demands and practices towards their children. The completed set of data collected from the Chan family was used for analysis. The categories identified for analysis were parental values, expectations, demands, practices and the dialectical relationships among these. Video and audio recordings were viewed several times. Relevant data were examined within and across observations and interviews in relation to the identified categories and the theoretical perspective discussed in the previous section.

5.4 Parental expectations, demands and practices

Different parental value positions shape parents' expectations, demands and practices towards their children differently, and these in turn provide different possibilities for their children's development (Hedegaard 2009). The findings indicate that the parents of the Chan family implicitly place a high value on their children's academic performance, which is consistent with the outcomes of many related studies (e.g. Louie 2001; Pe-Pua et al. 1996; Wong 2007). However, the Chan parents do not hold a specific career aspiration for their children as do those reported in other studies (e.g. Francis and Archer 2005; Li 2004; Pearce 2006). Findings also show that the Chan family emphasise the importance of nurturing their children with Chinese virtues, Christian moral standards, life skills and self-care ability, and multifaceted development, which few studies have reported. This chapter focuses mainly on addressing the two influences commonly reported in the literature, which are the ways parental values on academic performance and career aspiration can shape their expectations, demands and practices towards their children.

5.4.1 Academic performance

Although the mother, Flora, and the father, Ivan, of the Chan family indicated that they did not emphasise the academic performance of their children Jessica and Vincent, as illustrated in the video observations and interviews, they were unconsciously highly concerned and invested much time and effort in Jessica and Vincent's education. For instance, when picking up Jessica and Vincent from school, Flora checked their schoolbags to see if Vincent had his homework and Jessica had her take-home reading, asking them what they had learnt at school during their walk back home. Flora asked Jessica and Vincent to take their books out for reading immediately after they had arrived home and used M&M chocolates to encourage them to finish their take-home reading promptly. Neither Flora nor Ivan explicitly expressed the desire for Jessica and Vincent to be excellent in academic performance, but implicitly they expected them to be top-tier students in their classes at school. They expected Jessica and Vincent not to forget their school work, including homework and dictation, and to complete tasks successfully and promptly. They expected them to receive 'good' or full marks for their school work, and to demonstrate high competence in numeracy and literacy. For the Chan family as well as the other two families in the study, it was the mother who generally monitored and supported the children's study practices. The father's role in this respect was less prominent. Excerpts 1 and 2 (dialogues during video observation)

below reveal Flora's desire for her children to achieve outstanding academic performance.

Excerpt 1

Flora: (Looking at her daughter's spelling book with satisfaction) Ha very smart, 10 out of 10 again, very smart of you, aren't you?

Researcher: What's that? 10 out of 10?

Flora: It's spelling. Every week she has a spelling test for ten new words.

Researcher: Uh, she does it at school?

Flora: Yes, at school … every time, she gets full marks (speaking with a happy and proud expression), very good, clever girl.

Excerpt 2

Flora was helping Vincent to show the researcher what he had for his homework.

Flora: He also has spelling every week. The kids in the class are classified into different levels. (Looking at her son) What's your level?

Vincent: Level 16.

Flora: In the class, not every kid is in the same level. Some kids are in the easier levels. (Looking at her son) He is in the highest level. How many kids are in the same level as you?

Vincent: I don't know. I haven't counted.

With these expectations, Vincent and Jessica were required to finish their homework and all school work carefully and tell their parents what they had done at school. They were required to do extra homework and exercises on spelling, reading comprehension and calculation, in the parents' professed belief

that more practice would yield better competence and thus better academic performance. Flora reported to the researcher that to ensure that Ivan's and her expectations and demands on her children's education could be met, she often asked her children what they had learnt at school and checked what homework and school work they had brought from school. She also monitored and assisted them in doing their homework. Flora believed that it was necessary to ask Vincent the content of the book he was reading, but not every day, to make sure he had understood correctly. She accompanied and guided Jessica to read books and complete other tasks and activities, hoping to lead her to do things in the 'standard and correct ways'. She reported having done the same with Vincent when he was young, until he could manage to do things independently. Flora also from time to time gave extra homework and exercises to Vincent and Jessica so they could practise and enhance their competency in literacy and numeracy. She also created an incentive reward system linked to free time and the children's desires to motivate Vincent and Jessica to complete their tasks automatically without prompting. Analysis shows this incentive system was effective and helped Vincent to develop a learning motive (details are shown in Wong and Fleer 2012).

5.4.2 Career aspiration

Apart from academic performance, career aspiration is another aspect that many studies highlighted. Numerous studies have suggested that Chinese immigrant families want their children to pursue science-related careers or professional jobs, putting pressure on them and drilling them from early years to work towards these goals (Cheng 1998; Francis and Archer 2005; Li 2004; Mak and Chan 1995). However, this was not found in the Chan family. Indeed, the parents did not have a specific expectation for their children's occupations. Although Flora and Ivan did demand that Vincent and Jessica make efforts to achieve good academic performance, they did not link this with paving the way for their children to enter into particular professions. Both Ivan and Flora believed that it was most important for Vincent and Jessica to work in jobs in which they would feel happy. Excerpt 3 shows the attitude of Flora and Ivan towards Vincent's and Jessica's future careers.

Excerpt 3

> While the researcher and the research assistant were filming Jessica and Vincent doing activities at home, the researcher talked to the family

regarding the careers/occupations that Flora and Ivan would like Vincent and Jessica to pursue.

Researcher: Have you thought of what they will do when they grow up?

Flora: Haven't thought of what they will do, but I have asked my son this question. And he said he wanted to be an inventor …

Ivan: Invent something …

Flora: An inventor.

Researcher: Uh ha … he wants to be an inventor.

Flora: (Turning to Vincent) What do you want to be when you grow up?

Vincent: Inventor.

Flora: (Turning to Jessica) What do you want to be?

Jessica: Cook.

Flora: Uh, you want to be a cook.

…

Researcher: So one of them would like to be an inventor and the other a chef?

Flora: Yeah.

Researcher: Uh ha.

Flora: But they may change quickly. Previously I have asked Jessica what she would like to be, and she said she wanted to be a teacher. Now she has changed.

Researcher: Uh. Do you want them to work in any particular occupation?

Flora: I don't. (Turning to Ivan) Do you?

Ivan: Um. I think what's important is they do a job that they are happy with.

Ivan: No matter what job you do, if you don't like it, it's meaningless.

…

Researcher: It doesn't matter [what career they pursue]?

Flora: Indeed, it really doesn't matter.

Ivan: In fact, every career has its good and bad. It's for them to decide. We are not telling them what to become. They are not going to work for us. They will be working for themselves.

The analysis above reveals the parental values of academic performance and career aspiration, and the associated expectations, demands and practices of the Chan family. How have these been affected by the contexts in which they themselves have lived? While the literature on Hong Kong immigrant families often identifies cultural and social factors, it does not show how these change over time. The tenet of cultural–historical theory indicates that the world we live in is not static or unidimensional; rather it is multifaceted, dynamic and interrelated (Fleer 2010; Hedegaard 2009; Vygotsky 1998). Therefore, investigation and analysis needs to be able to reveal the complexity, dynamics and interrelatedness of influences to obtain a holistic understanding, lest it diminish the validity and reliability of the findings.

5.5 Dialectical relationships

Central to the cultural–historical approach as applied to understanding child development is the concept of dialectical relationship (Fleer 2010; Hedegaard 2009; Vygotsky 1998). A dialectical relationship is a dynamic process in which disparate frames and ideas come into contact, either conflicting with or complementing each other, but always seeking a synthesis. This synthesis is not a simple sum of parts but in fact a new concept that can be considered more sophisticated than either of its parts. The examination of this process in the Chan family revealed that rather than broadly conceived cultural

presuppositions, it is the parents' life experiences and their interpretations in relation to these experiences that have played the most important role in shaping their values, expectations, demands and practices relating to their children's education and development (Wong and Fleer 2012). From the parents' accounts of their life experiences, we can see how the societal, cultural, historical contexts and the parents' own family background have influenced and might continue to influence their values and expectations in the future.

5.5.1 Changing values regarding academic performance

It was noted earlier that the parents were unconsciously highly concerned about their children achieving good academic performance, and this can be understood when traced back to the parents' life experiences. Both Flora and Ivan were brought up and lived in Hong Kong from the1970s to the 1990s. They appropriated certain Chinese values and the way of life of Hong Kong relevant to that particular time period.

Before July 1997, Hong Kong was governed by the British government for a century. Although the British brought in certain aspects of Western culture to Hong Kong, the majority of the population originated from China and engaged in a way of life influenced by Chinese values, cultures and traditions (Wong 2007). An elite system was employed in the Hong Kong society; an examination system akin to the Chinese imperial civil service examination was used to select government officials and appropriate candidates for institutions according to their results in the examinations (Cheng 1998), allowing the top talents to reach the top tier of the society and thus creating social stratification. These practices have prevailed until the present. Under the resulting elite system, schools, institutions, families and individuals orient themselves to aspire to higher status within the system. The majority of schools in Hong Kong have dictation, tests and examinations all the year round and several homework assignments per day for students to do. They aim to drill their students and to allow the school to achieve good academic results, and thus high grading and status in the educational system (Cheng 1998; Pe-Pau et al. 1996). Many institutions like universities, organisations and businesses also set their recruitment and promotion system according to examination results and qualifications. Academic achievement and attainment are viewed as important steps for social mobility and prosperity (Cheng 1998; Mak and Chan 1995; Pe-Pau et al. 1996). The majority of Hong Kong parents therefore drill their children to work hard to obtain good academic performance from an early age (Chu 2003; Wong 1997; Pe-Pau et al. 1996). Children from their

early years have to spend most of their waking life completing homework and practising exercises, doing revision for tests and examinations, and participating in examinations and competitions to fulfil their parents', school's and society's demands for academic success, preparing themselves for their future career.

Both Ivan and Flora were influenced greatly by the elite system while they were living in Hong Kong. According to Flora, the influences on her values and expectations regarding her children were mainly related to her parents' child-rearing practices, the education and elite system in Hong Kong, and her subsequent experience of being a tertiary student and later an immigrant in Melbourne. All these experiences were dialectically related, uniting and synthesising contradictory experiences to form her own values towards her children's academic performance and career aspirations. In this dynamic process, the values she had formed earlier were ready to change with her new experiences and interpretations. Excerpt 4 shows Flora's account of this process of value shaping. It is one of many similar accounts provided throughout the data set illustrating the dialectical relationship between her values and her life experiences.

Excerpt 4

Flora: In Hong Kong I believed that I was the type of person that was incapable of study at tertiary level. But when I came here, I discovered that because of the teaching method here, or the system that allows you to learn and develop, it turned out that I was actually performing very well. Therefore, I found that it was actually the education system of Hong Kong that was problematic; it was actually not my own problem … But for so many years I did think it was my problem. Moreover, my family was one with Chinese traditions. My parents would never praise me. I never knew what strengths I had. I was only able to know what I was not capable of. So under these conditions I grew up with a lack of confidence in myself and became very passive. Having come here, now it is my turn to teach my children, and I always let them know what strengths they have. Because I had this type of education for so long, I completely buried myself. In fact, I knew that I did have something strong but my parents had never praised me, never gave

me an opportunity to unleash my strengths. Now that I'm looking after my own children, I do my best to find out their strengths and tell them what they are good at. I believe this is the most significant influence.

Ivan's values and his life experiences regarding academic performance are similar to those of Flora. His parents were also very strict with him and had high expectations of his academic performance, yet he could not go further with his study in Hong Kong. Sharing the same views as his wife, he found the Hong Kong education system problematic and he favoured the Australian education system and the overall society, as shown in Excerpt 5. This excerpt was taken from an interview regarding the parents' view on their children's education.

Excerpt 5

Ivan: Regarding their education, I think, as I have studied here, I am in total agreement that it depends on yourself. You don't have to be elite …

Flora: Don't have to only concentrate on study.

Ivan: [In Hong Kong] If you failed to do well academically, you would end up failing in everything. I don't think this is very good.

Researcher: You mean there are opportunities here. On the contrary, there aren't many opportunities in Hong Kong?

Flora: Restricted [by academic results and qualifications].

Although Flora and Ivan were not happy with the intense and single focus of the Hong Kong education system, they had been drilled in it, were familiar with the style and with the positive outcome of this elite system. This helps to explain why they mentioned to the researcher that they did not emphasise their children's academic performance, yet in fact behaved as if they were highly concerned about Jessica and Vincent's performance by ensuring they completed their school tasks satisfactorily and by giving extra homework to their children. From a dialectical perspective, the parents' act of giving extra

homework and concern can be regarded as balancing the comparatively relaxed Australian education system. The creative abrasion of the differences in the Hong Kong and Australian education/learning systems is evident in this dialectical 'balancing'. In this family, aspects of the two diverse systems are synthesised to produce the parents' new pedagogy: an appropriate amount of homework is given with parents' monitoring and guidance, but without over-critical parental interference. As a result, a qualitative change in their performance may provide Vincent and Jessica with the opportunity to acquire their own motives and competences to complete their school and homework tasks efficiently on their own. Excerpt 6 (conversation during video observation) shows the homework arrangement for Vincent and Jessica.

Excerpt 6

Researcher: Do they have a lot of homework every day?

Flora: Just from this book. [Vincent has a few pages of maths and English exercises from a workbook he brings from school every week.]

Researcher: Uh ha, only this one.

Flora: I give them homework myself, sometimes spelling, sometimes calculation.

Researcher: Do they do homework every day?

Flora: I don't give them homework myself every day, but every day they bring a book from school; they have to do reading every day.

5.5.2 Changing values regarding career aspiration

The Chan family did not have any specific career aspirations for their children. Ivan emphasised several times that it was most important that the occupation matched his children's characters and they were happy with the jobs. This would be sufficient to satisfy his aspirations. This finding is different from what the research literature has reported. The finding can be understood by looking at the dialectical relationships between parental values related to career aspiration

and the parents' life experience. These are shown in Excerpts 7 and 8 (from interviews) below.

Excerpt 7

Ivan: In fact, I very much enjoyed studying mechanical engineering [at a Technical Institute in Hong Kong], but my dad … uh somehow I was forced to study marketing [in Melbourne, Australia].

Flora: It was his dad's choice.

Ivan: I felt it did not suit my character. I think when one chooses an occupation it has to be suitable to one's own character.

After finishing his course, he went back to Hong Kong and had taken a marketing job stationed in China for a year. He then found it really 'not his cup of tea' and finally quit the marketing job. He went back to Hong Kong working as a secondary school teacher. After a while, he and Flora migrated to Melbourne. He had not done any marketing jobs since then, nor had he done any mechanical engineering types of jobs. He had been doing different types of work in which no special skills were required in Melbourne, but he was happy with the jobs. Flora had witnessed Ivan's ups and downs in his career pathways and shared his values.

Excerpt 8

Ivan: Yeah, here, although I am not doing what I have studied, I am quite happy.

Researcher: Uh uh.

Ivan: But previously with my marketing job in Hong Kong, I was really unhappy.

Researcher: Has this affected your expectations of your children? As long as they are happy, you don't expect other things?

Ivan: (Thought for a while) Yeah.

Researcher: This experience [his career experience] has affected you?

Ivan: Yeah. If they are lawyers or doctors, they are dealing with clients or patients … If they are doing something that they don't like, I don't think they will be happy. They may live in a big house, drive a prestigious car, but they may not be happy.

The value the family placed on their children's future career was shaped by the parents' life experiences. Ivan and Flora believed that Vincent and Jessica should choose the occupations that match their characters and in which they are happy working. These values result from the synthesis of many influences: Ivan's following of his father's expectations; the Hong Kong societal norm that a marketing degree qualification at that time was a popular qualification associated with a good job; his actual experience with the marketing job in China; his working experiences in Australia, and Ivan's as well as Flora's interpretations of these experiences.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has traced the ways cultural and societal norms interact dynamically with life experiences to shape and change the values, expectations and practices parents apply in relation to their children's academic performance and their career aspirations for them. The findings indicate that the parents' life experiences and career paths showed they were affected by strong cultural and societal norms. Their own families' beliefs and practices, influenced by cultural and societal values, have certainly contributed to what they do with their children. In dynamic interaction with such values, their diverse experiences over time have also shaped their values, in turn shaping the practices that they have created for their children.

As illustrated in this chapter, simply examining the culture and social structure of a group of people in order to understand their values is not sufficient, since it will provide a simplified result and contribute to essentialising interpretations. There is not a single, set way of behaving or thinking in any society, especially over time. The environment in which we live is complicated and diverse, hence there are varieties and contradictions in values and beliefs. To remain unaware of these dynamic influences may cause misunderstanding and adverse outcomes. In this chapter, a cultural–historical study has shown the complex and dialectical process of values development that occurs in a

family. Expectations and demands are not static; this chapter shows the parents' values and practices have changed and will continue to change and moderate as their social realities change over time. This is true of parental values related to academic performance and career aspirations for their children.

This chapter traces the productive dialectical process the Chan family parents experience as they negotiate different values and practices to develop supports for their children's education and development as they live in different contexts. It adds nuanced knowledge to the literature about Hong Kong immigrant families' parental values, expectations, demands and practices. It also reveals the power of a cultural–historical research approach to trace complex and holistic understandings of individual families and their development across cultures and over time.

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5

Current Curriculum and Pedagogy Reform in Vietnamese Early Childhood Education: A Socio-Historical Interpretation

PHAN THI THU HIEN

SUMMARY The last few decades have seen educators' increasing interests in societal and cultural influences on education. This chapter analyses how the specific economic, political, and cultural contexts of Vietnam have been shaping the country's early childhood education (ECE) development and producing radical curriculum and pedagogy shifts in the last decade. It is argued that the Vietnamese sociocultural context contributes greatly to emerging opportunities as well as challenges for Vietnamese ECE. Thus, failing to identify and address culture-related challenges would minimise the success of current ECE reforms in Vietnam. Perspectives in this chapter draw on research evidence (extremely limited in Vietnam for many reasons), official reports, conference papers, and author's reflection on her 10 years close experience in the profession.

6.1 Introduction

The last decade has been marked with radical curriculum and pedagogy reforms in Vietnam's early childhood education (ECE) as a response to enormous transformations in the country's socioeconomic context. Taking up socio-historical perspectives, this chapter analyses how the specific economic, political, and cultural contexts of Vietnam have been shaping the country's ECE development and producing major curriculum shifts. Further, the author argues that the Vietnamese sociocultural context greatly contributes to emerging opportunities as well as challenges for Vietnam's ECE. The point is that failing to identify and address sociocultural factors related challenges would minimise the success of current ECE reforms in Vietnam. What is now going on in Vietnamese practice may facilitate international understanding and debate on key issues such as diversity and change, dilemmas of globalisation, and quality and effectiveness in ECE. To the author's best knowledge, so far, Vietnamese ECE's profile appears to be almost a missing link in international literature and this chapter is an effort to fill in the void.

This chapter begins with a brief overview of socio-historical perspectives on education followed by a description of data sources. Then the chapter examines how recent socioeconomic transformations in Vietnam have urged the country's ECE to embark on radical curriculum and pedagogy reforms. The chapter then investigates the nature of these curriculum and pedagogy shifts as responses to

Vietnam's changing societal context. Based on analysis of the historical cultural roots of Vietnam's traditional ECE practice, the author speculates on culture-related challenges for further development of Vietnamese ECE.

6.2 Socio-historical perspectives on education

The last few decades have seen educators' increasing interests in societal and cultural influences on education. This attention seems to be inspired by the introduction of Vygotskian perspectives into international educational scholarship in 1970s. Some authors suggest that the idea about culture-situated human development could be traced back to Dewey's works, but the Russian version of socio-historical theory has had prominent influence in the West during last several decades (Wertsch et al. 1995). At the core of socio-historical theory is the view of human mind as of socio-originated, culturally mediated, and historically specific nature. Vygotsky's stress on the role of context strongly contests long existing positivist traditions in educational research, which seem to emphasise relationship between input and outcome and simplify such complex social practice as teaching and learning. The Vygotskian perspective has been increasingly considered as a powerful methodological tool for understanding child development, teaching and learning, and beyond. The power of societal contexts over education manifests in different ways, and certain aspects of influences attract educators' attention, while others are overlooked by them. One group of scholars focuses on the culturally mediated nature of children's learning and development (Hedegaard 2008; Rogoff 2003; Wells 1999). The attention of another group is directed to how curriculum and pedagogy should respond to increasing cultural diversity in schools and societies (Hyun 1998; Kendall 1996). However, how school curriculum and pedagogy is formed by socioeconomic contexts in general and ideology in particular has been under-explored and under-focused by scholars (Apple 2004). Apple argues for a more profound approach to analysing educational issues which takes into account their socio-historical context:

> A truly critical study of education needs to deal with more than the technical issues of how to teach efficiently and effectively – too often the dominant or only questions educators ask. It must think critically about education's relationship to economic, political, and cultural power (Apple 2004 p.vii).

Echoing Apple's approach in analysing current educational reforms in Vietnam, Duggan claims: 'this development is best examined historically' (2001,

195). Vietnam's turbulent and complicated modern historical developments inevitably hold immediate effects on the ECE practice. All these theoretical and practical considerations highlight the need for placing Vietnam's current ECE curriculum and pedagogy reforms in the country's wider societal context, as discussed later in this chapter.

6.3 Data sources

Perspectives in this chapter draw on research evidence, although limited in Vietnam for many reasons, official reports, conference papers, and author's reflection on her 10 years intense experience in the profession. Data on historical developments of Vietnam's ECE were taken mainly from official reports and legitimated documents from the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). Empirical data on challenges confront Vietnam's ECE in the process of enacting the reforms draw primarily from the author's case study investigating the process of translating the first version of new ECE curriculum into classroom practice.

The primary aim of the study was to explore how Vietnamese teachers perceive the new curriculum and how they translate it into classroom practice. However, examining the process of enacting new ECE model points out certain contextual factors that affect success of the new curriculum. Claims about the impacts of context on ECE made in this study can be regarded as grounded theory, emerging from the investigation into implementation of ECE curriculum reform. Participants of the case study included four classrooms of 5–6-year-olds at different preschool settings in Ho Chi Minh City. Teachers in the four classrooms were interviewed for their perceptions of the new curriculum. In each classroom, three-hour observations of different teaching and learning episodes were observed and recorded, and teaching plans and records were examined. Four head teachers of the sample settings and five early childhood experts were interviewed to seek their reflections on the implementation of the new ECE model. Head teachers' and experts' perspectives were triangulated with the teachers' accounts. Based on the data sources, socio-historical analysis of current ECE curriculum and pedagogy reform as response to context is presented in the following pages.

6.4 Recent societal transformations and imperatives for Vietnam's ECE to change

The enormous changes in Vietnamese societal context in the last two decades but nothing other have brought about the emergence of new ECE practice. In 1975,

30 years of war finally ended in Vietnam with the reunification of the North and the South into the socialistic Republic of Vietnam. However, the following decade was characterised by deep economic crisis and deficit. The Vietnamese government believed that the crisis came from lack of market-driven power in the economy and the country's isolation from the wider world. In order to lift the nation out of this situation, since 1986, Vietnam's governing Communist Party had committed itself to an economic reform '*doi moi*' (innovation) policy with transition from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented economy. In parallel, Vietnam announced a '*mo cua*' (open-door) policy as an attempt to become politically, economically and culturally integrated into the wider world (Beresford 2008). The reform policies have resulted in the country's economic revival and enormous social changes (United Nations in Vietnam 2009). What has been happening in Vietnamese ECE in the last two decades suggests that the socioeconomic transformations have had enormous effects on every aspect of ECE, including funding resources and school ownership, creating both challenges and opportunities for the profession (Dinh-Hong-Thai 2008; Le-Minh-Ha 2006). However, detailed discussion of all the impacts of societal changes is beyond the scope of this chapter, where my primary focus is on how the socioeconomic transformations have led to curriculum and pedagogy reforms in Vietnamese ECE.

Vietnam's shift from a government-subsidised economy to a market economy and integration into the global economic network highlights the necessity to improve the competitiveness of the country's labour force. Moreover, human resources are seen by both the Vietnamese government and international development advisory bodies as a key factor for the country's economic survival and sustainable development. However, the new socioeconomic situation reveals significant weaknesses of Vietnamese education. Its graduates are identified by both educators and employers as having insufficient initiative at work and weak practical, organisational and social skills (Hoang-Tuy 2004, 2005). Vietnamese scholars have identified roots of the problems in unbalanced school curriculums overwhelmed with theoretical knowledge as well as a transmissive style of teaching and learning, and urged the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) to take radical actions (Hoang-Tuy 2005; Ho-Ngoc-Dai 2010). In 2002, Nguyen Minh Hien – then Minister of MOET recognised that: 'the quality of the whole educational system in general and schools in particular is very concerning at the present moment. We are facing an urgent need for reform in both content and methods of teaching' (Vietnamnet 2002).

The societal pressure has resulted in a series of nation-wide curriculum and pedagogy reforms at all levels of the school system, launched by MOET since

the 1990s. The reform projects intend to create a shift from teacher-directed practice to student-centred active teaching and learning to foster learners' thinking skills, independence, and creativity. The reforms also aim at promoting more practical curriculums with better connections between school and real life to address the perceived shortcomings of the conventional version of curriculum and meet demands of new working and living context (MOET 2010; Vietnam Government 2001). In this context, Vietnamese ECE, sharing all the problems encountered by other levels of schooling, also faces imperative for change to address the longstanding weaknesses of the traditional ECE model and meet the demands of rapidly changing societal context. Before examining the nature and challenges of the ongoing reforms as a response to changing economic and societal context, it is helpful to look briefly at the strengths and weaknesses of Vietnamese traditional ECE practices and their historical cultural roots.

6.5 Problems in Vietnam's ECE practice and their historical cultural roots

It is worth noting certain positive impacts of the political and sociocultural context on education and care for young children. In North Vietnam before 1975 and the whole country after that, ECE has seen relatively fast expansion compared to other similarly economically disadvantaged countries. For instance, preschool provision was established as an indispensable part of the educational system more than 60 years ago, as soon as Vietnam gained independence from France. Then, national preschool curriculums were developed by MOET. An ECE research centre, the *Journal of Early Childhood Education* and ECE teacher training courses at bachelor and postgraduate levels have been operating for decades (Dinh-Hong-Thai 2008; Le-Minh-Ha 2006). This growth seems to be at odds with the country's turbulent socioeconomic context of 30 years of war and decades of deep economic crisis. Stimulators for the fast expansion of ECE in Vietnam includes parents' traditional high respect for education and dedication to children's future, the government's strong commitment to education, and the communist tenet 'Giving the best to young children'. This positive influence of the sociocultural context on ECE is noted by both Vietnamese and international scholars (Hamano n.d.; Le-Minh-Ha 2006). For instance, Hamano noted:

> Vietnam has achieved very high enrolment ratios not only in early childhood education but also in primary education, the literacy rate being extremely high in comparison with other countries at approximately the same economic level. This is attributed to a general enthusiasm

> about education among Vietnamese people and a cultural tradition that emphasizes education and schools (2008, 4).

Other social facts such as high birth rate and majority of Vietnamese women are working have also acted as contributors to the extensive ECE development.

Under the light of the societal changes, a number of problems recently identified in conventional ECE practice have urged MOET to initiate curriculum and pedagogy reforms. The first problem is the conventional top-down and unitary approach to curriculum design and implementation. Until very recently, the Program of Care and Education for Preschool Children (the Old Program – OP), was the only ECE program in Vietnam to which all preschool settings in Vietnam had to conform. Under the OP, learning activities and didactics were predetermined in detail on a weekly basis for all settings across the country. What teachers and children had to do was to follow the clearly set-out agenda. Now Vietnamese ECE professionals have come to realise that this top-down and rigid approach to curriculum design and implementation offers teachers very little room for flexibility, initiative, and decision making based on children's interests and needs (MOET 2002a, b).

Despite Vietnamese ECE beliefs about the uniqueness of learning and development in the early years, the OP was very much like a school curriculum, with each lesson scheduled to focus exclusively on one learning area, for instance, arts or maths. Teachers paid overwhelming attention to lessons, while other kinds of activities (play, child-initiated activities) were overlooked. This fragmented and unbalanced curriculum is now considered as developmentally inappropriate and ineffective for promoting a high quality of ECE as the new world of work demands.

In the light of new work and life contexts in Vietnam, the OP's weakness was identified as failing to achieve children's all-round development. The OP practice had been paying overwhelming attention to cognitive aspects, while other domains, especially children's self-confidence, independence, and social and life skills, were overlooked. A close examination of OP classrooms suggested that even in a single cognitive aspect there was heavy focus on learning outcomes, memorising factual knowledge and drilling skills rather than on promoting children's thinking skills, critical mind, and creativity (MOET 2002a, b). Also, teaching and learning was seen to aim at discipline rather than promoting social skills and preparing children practically for life and work in the future. Another shortcoming of the OP was its teacher-centred transmissive teaching style. Learning was highly teacher-directed; in the majority of cases teachers explained, gave instructions and showed examples,

and children executed the tasks (MOE 1986). There was an excessive emphasis on *what* to learn over *how* to learn. In addition, under the OP, assessment of learning was rigid. Children's work was expected to be the same as a one-for-all model. Their answers were supposed to be in line with adults' opinions. The rigid discipline and authoritarian atmosphere under OP seemed to be far different from the typical cosy and informal preschool classrooms in many other countries. Today, ECE professionals recognise that this pedagogical style makes learning tiresome and ineffective. Also, the adult-centred pedagogy fails to provide children with opportunities to be autonomous in their learning, to learn from firsthand experiences, to question and think critically, and to show initiative (MOET 2002a, b). At the same time, the newly established market-oriented economy has highlighted the need to improve the creativity and initiative of the country's prospective labour force, as discussed earlier.

It is clear that the conventional ECE practice in many aspects is incompatible with the new world of work. However, it is important to uncover the roots of the longstanding problems before discussing the changes. A search for roots of the problems in the ECE practice needs to expand beyond the system itself to wider socio-historical contexts. The sociocultural theory holds that children's learning is context-situated and culture-mediated (Rogoff 2003; Wells 1999). However, what happens in school settings is more than the process of learning itself. How the general educational process works and is managed is also very important. Several authors have attempted to explore political, economic and cultural contexts' roles in school curriculum and pedagogy functioning. Apple (2004), for instance, argued for the existence of a 'hidden curriculum' shaped by ideology and political–economic structures alongside official documented versions of curriculum. In countries with Confucian cultural heritage, curriculum is even more truly 'a historical being', as its every aspect 'is soaked by values and moral elements' (Zhang and Zhong 2003, 256). This chapter argues that thousands of years of Confucian traditions, more than 60 years of Soviet influence, and newly arrived internationalisation and globalisation have been strongly shaping the problems in Vietnamese ECE practice.

Confucian traditions have defined the way Vietnamese children are treated at preschool settings and at home. On the one hand, Vietnamese adults tend to excessively indulge children, not requiring them to be independent and responsible. On the other hand, children do not have as much freedom, autonomy, and respect. Confucian extreme adult-centredness expects from young children absolute respect for and submission to adults (McLeod 2001). A good child is one who does what adults tell him/her to do and follows rules set by adults. This excessive adult-centredness merging with Confucian high respect for teachers

has made teachers the 'centres' in classrooms. What teachers say is supposed to be 'right' and accepted by children without questioning. Teachers assume that their responsibility is to know everything, summarise all necessary knowledge, and 'feed' it to pupils. Thus, learning has been conventionally established as a one-way process in which children are passive recipients of teachers' knowledge and information. Also, Vietnamese deeply rooted respect for education seems to be a double-edged sword, a stimulating, but at the same time, constraining factor. In a society where parents', teachers', and pupils' first priority is academic success, it is not surprising that all-round development has been overlooked in school curriculums, even at preschool level.

Vietnam in general, and its education in particular, were under strong Soviet influence in the second half of the 20th century. Throughout the 1970s to the end of the 1980s, hundreds of ECE specialists were sent to Soviet universities to train in ECE at undergraduate and doctoral levels. Later they became ECE policy makers, managers, researchers and program developers, and teacher educators in Vietnam. Both the Vietnamese ECE curriculum and teacher training syllabus were taken from Soviet models, which were very formal, broad, theoretical knowledge-focused, and ideology ridden (Taratukhina et al. 2006). The shortcomings of Vietnamese ECE model were evident in the picture of Russian ECE practice from the early 1990s and earlier as described by both Russian and Western educators (see Ispa 2002; Taratukhina et al. 2006). The top-down approach to curriculum development and assessment in Vietnam seems to be an exact reflection of the Soviet centrally planned educational model. The uniform curriculum, which overlooked cultural and individual differences, was most probably a result of the Soviet focus on collectivism. Also, the Soviet authoritarian ethos seemed to work very well with Confucian adult-centredness, making control of preschool classrooms lie in the hands of teachers. The Soviet's rigid pedagogical model with step-by-step methodical instructions strongly resonated with the Vietnamese traditional transmissive teaching style, making teaching and learning even more one-way. As the result of resonance of the Vietnamese traditions and Soviet ethos, conventional Vietnamese preschool classrooms can be characterised by 'the focus on order and control, the academic emphasis, the earnestness and perseverance of teachers and students, the patriotic content of the curriculum, the attention given to health and hygiene, and the group ethos' (Tobin et al. 1989, 122). Unfortunately, there is no official research into historical cultural influences on Vietnamese ECE practice. However, the description of Chinese preschool classrooms by American educators is the exact picture of Vietnamese conventional ECE practice. These authors' findings strongly indicate how Confucian values and

communist ethos shaped Chinese preschool practice, making it far different from Japanese and American ECE practices. Other curriculum studies in China also point to strong influences of Confucian and Soviet curriculum perspectives on Chinese curriculum at all levels of schooling (Zhang and Zhong 2003). As China shares with Vietnam similar cultural and historical contexts, the findings support my argument that Vietnamese ECE practice, to a large extent, has been shaped by political and cultural contexts.

For decades the approaches to ECE represented by the OP were seen as appropriate and effective. However, the end of the 'cold war' and the start of the 'open-door policy' in Vietnam in the late 1980s and the country's integration into the global network created opportunities for Vietnamese early childhood professionals to observe alternative ECE models in different countries. Newly seen practices seemed to be strong counterparts to conventional preschool models in many terms, which made Vietnamese ECE professionals re-examine the existing preschool model. At the same time, the Vietnam government's policy of '*xa hoi hoa giao duc*' (socialising education) brought about diversity in ECE practice, with the emergence of private and international kindergartens, which usually employed international curriculums. To some extent, this diversity has created opportunities for comparison and subsequently brought to light weak aspects of Vietnam traditional ECE practice. In parallel, following the open-door policy, there have been enormous changes in Vietnam's wider societal context. Ashwill and Thai (2005) call Vietnam today a nation at the crossroads, a hybrid of three cultural threads of thousands years of Confucian traditions, more than half a century of communist ethos, and newly arrived Western values. This openness to different cultural values seems to have created a favourable climate for accepting new ECE perspectives. The pressure from a transforming economy and the openness and integration of political and social contexts have brought about curriculum and pedagogy reforms in Vietnamese ECE starting from 1998 and ongoing. The changes initiated by MOET aim to address the perceived weaknesses of the subject-based, adult-led ECE practice and enhance the quality of preschool provision in response to the demands of the new socioeconomic context.

6.6 Curriculum and pedagogy reform as a response to new socioeconomic context

The changing socioeconomic context led to the first attempt at ECE curriculum innovation in 1998. A new preschool program with innovative forms of organising activities, referred to in Vietnam as the Innovative Program (IP),

was piloted in a small number of kindergartens, and from there has increasingly replaced the OP in a large number of kindergartens throughout Vietnam.

The IP's aim is to 'address the shortcomings of traditional preschool practice', promoting innovative approaches to teaching and learning compared to the OP (MOET 2002a, b). First, the IP calls for integrated and thematic teaching to replace subject-based curriculum. So, the IP encourages teachers to let children learn in a holistic way: 'children's learning should be mixed with their natural everyday activities'. Second, child-centred and active approaches to teaching and learning are also introduced by the new program. The IP now stresses that teachers need to design learning activities based on children's interests, give children autonomy in learning, and create opportunities for learning through firsthand experiences. These philosophies of teaching and learning are new perspectives for Vietnamese ECE practitioners, given the OP practice described earlier. These new ECE philosophies indicate that IP has been adopted from international, mainly Western, practices, although the IP developers do not make official acknowledgement of this.

Despite its prominent innovations, the IP can be considered only as a halfway reform, suitable for the transition period from the OP to progressive ECE models. Although there are certain elements of child-centred, integrated and active approaches to teaching and learning in the IP as described above, these principles are not fully expressed in both the IP documented version and classroom practice. For example, flexible and child-centred teaching is limited by the fact that learning topics, their content, length and sequence of implementation are in details predetermined for all settings under IP. As a step forward to refine the IP, from 2005 the second version of new national curriculum, the New Preschool Education Program, was developed and piloted in a number of preschool settings, which is referred to in Vietnam as New Program (NP).

Keeping the reform platform, the NP promotes a more radical version of child-centred, integrated, active approaches to teaching and learning. The NP's most prominent innovation compared to the IP is that the new program offers teachers and children a higher degree of autonomy and flexibility in teaching and learning. What topics to choose, their content and length is matter for teachers to decide (Le 2009a, b; MOET 2009). The NP also encourages children's involvement in planning classroom activities. This totally new idea for Vietnamese ECE can be considered as a big step towards active learning and child-centredness. After four years of piloting, in July 2009, the refined version of the NP became the official national curriculum, and is expected to gradually replace the older ones (OP and IP). The NP itself is anticipated to be revised and improved further.

These developments indicate that Vietnamese ECE has actively responded to the changing life context and demands of a new world of work. The profession has managed to seize the opportunities offered by a more open society and international expertise to initiate changes for improvement. Evidence suggests that the two new versions of preschool curriculums with innovative approaches to teaching and learning have created certain changes for the better in Vietnamese ECE. These include a more relaxed classroom atmosphere, appreciation of children's interests, elements of integrated teaching, and holistic learning (Le 2009a, b; Phan 2005). Children also have more opportunities to be active and learn from firsthand experiences. There is increasing acceptance of variation and diversity in curriculum and pedagogy, especially in big cities, which are pioneers in innovation. This evidence indicates that transformations in Vietnam's wider societal context have created enormous opportunities for the ECE.

It is necessary to note that Vietnam is not the only nation embarking on the platform of ECE curriculum and pedagogy reforms. The same changes have been observed in countries with similar contemporary historical contexts. Russian ECE, which used to be a model for Vietnam in terms of ideology and ECE philosophy, has been democraticising since the early 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Ispa 2002). At the same time, China, which shares with Vietnam both contemporary ideology and cultural traditions, has also initiated shifts from teacher-centred and transmissive teaching to children-centred and active classrooms (Zhu and Zhang 2008). In the 1990s, a similar conversion in pedagogy was also taking place in other Confucian heritage cultures like Taiwan (Lee and Tseng 2008) and Hong Kong (Yuen 2008). In theory, Vietnam's shift from rigid, adult-led pedagogy and school-like curriculum to holistic and process-oriented preschool practice seems to be an appropriate choice given that worldwide research and practice evidence strongly supports the progressive ECE models (Darling 1994; Fisher 2008). However, the question is how successfully the new ECE approaches, taken from other cultures, work in the specific Vietnamese context.

6.7 Competing cultural threads and challenges for the reforms

It is obvious that educational reforms are very complex processes, and challenges facing Vietnamese ECE reform may be linked to many factors. For all times and contexts, educational changes may confront its stakeholders' resistance and burden of habits (Fullan 2007; Hargreaves 1998; Latham 2006). Big classroom size, high child–teacher ratios, inadequate facilities, and ECE

professionals' inefficient expertise have obstructed the implementation of new ECE philosophies inspired by the reforms. This problem is very common for developing countries. However, studies into implementation of the IP and NP (Le 2009; Phan 2005; Tran 2009), my own personal close observation of classroom practice and discussions with ECE teachers in in-service training courses suggest that one of the most enormous kinds of challenge for child-centredness and active learning is the conflict between Vietnamese traditions and new ECE philosophies.

In my study into implementation of the IP (Phan 2005), teachers are often observed to overemphasise achieving their planned-in-advance goals, while ignoring children's interests. Also, it seems difficult for teachers to reconcile 'usefulness in adults' eyes' with the new 'child-centredness'. Teachers are uncertain how children's freedom and autonomy can be brought together with the traditional image of a good child as a disciplined and obedient one (Phan 2005). Many explanations can be suggested here; for instance the way new ECE principles are explained in curriculum documents, or teachers' pedagogical skills to translate the ideas into practice. However, the evidence suggests that conflict between teachers' cultural beliefs and values and new professional thinking and practice contributes to the problematic reflection to child-centredness and active learning in classrooms. The reversion of an habitual emphasis on academic knowledge and teachers' absolute authority in the classroom indicates that learning to respect children's interests and autonomy in learning appear to be difficult for teachers, given the long tradition of adult authoritarianism. Consequently, the new curriculum developers' objectives and intentions are not fully understood, and are sometimes mistakenly interpreted in the translation into classroom practice (Le 2009a, b; Phan 2005; Tran 2009). Le (2009a worries about the burden from the past: ECE teachers can still not abandon the old way of teaching (p. 19). Tran states the same concern: 'Habit is the first and foremost obstacle in enacting the new ECE curriculum (p. 83). Research from other similar cultures such as Taiwan and China also points to conflicts between Confucian values and child-centred and active learning (Lee and Tseng 2008; Zhu and Zhang 2008).

Most Vietnamese parents still treat and educate their young children in the spirit of the old values. Raised living standards and a sharp decrease in the number of children in each family have increased the traditional habit of over-pampering children; while the new ECE models encourage children to be responsible and independent. The contrast between educational approaches at home and at school may diminish the reform success. In addition, Confucian high respect for education in Vietnamese society seems to be a stimulating and at the same time

constraining factor in a certain sense. In a society where children's academic success is seen as paramount, parents focus on the amount of knowledge and the number of academic skills children have gained in preschool settings, but not on their dispositions for learning or social skills. Teachers are under pressure to meet parents' expectations, which may be incompatible with the new teaching practice. The experiences I have had with Vietnamese preschool teachers suggest that they are facing great difficulties in reconciling their new teaching strategies with parents' requirements. Thus, the challenge for Vietnam ECE is how to bridge reformed school practice with old family practice.

The conflicts presented above are basically contradictions between adopted Western ECE philosophies and Vietnamese cultural values; between global and local perspectives; between requirements of modern life and traditions. Thus, from my perspective, to thoroughly resolve the cultural conflicts Vietnamese ECE needs to find answers to the following questions: How can new approaches to early childhood education, taken from other cultures, be made locally appropriate? How can Vietnamese ECE bring modern values and traditional values together? How can ECE reconcile global and local dilemmas? According to the Vietnamese government, Vietnam should be integrated into the wider world while not becoming 'dissolved' in the process of globalisation. It is impossible, unnecessary and unwise for preschool education in Vietnam to Westernise its children. However, it is proving to be a difficult task for educators to reconcile the need to nurture in children modern characteristics such as independence, critical thinking and risk taking with traditional perseverance and submission to adults' authority. This is the dilemma between the need for being a part of the global network and at the same time preserving national and local identity, between moving forward and protecting traditional values. These questions are similar to recent experiences of postcolonial Confucian Hong Kong, where 'her search for a curriculum is a search for a compromise between Western ideas and Eastern practice in harmony' (Hau-Fai-Law 2003, 282). The harmony of global and local, modern and traditional may be convincingly argued for in theory, but is not easy to translate into practice. Finding solutions for the cultural conflicts is beyond the scope of this chapter, which aims primarily at speculating on the challenges of current reform in Vietnamese ECE. Nevertheless, the following suggestion may offer a starting point for further discussions:

> It is particularly important to distinguish between the old and valuable and the old and outdated. If we fail to make this distinction, it may happen that some traditional human values may get lost and influence social stability within the country or even beyond (Laanemets 2003, p.298).

6.8 Conclusion

This chapter has sketched out a dynamic picture of Vietnamese ECE during the last decade. The current developments in the profession point to strong influences of the wider societal context on the Vietnamese ECE. Political and economic commands and cultural values have been shaping the ECE professional beliefs and practice in the past and present, and demand the direction for its development in future. The shaping power of societal contexts extended to ECE is multifaceted. On the one hand, changes in society have acted as an impulse for innovations in ECE. On the other hand, the process of reforms seems be subject to certain sociocultural constraints. The author of this chapter believes that success for the curriculum and pedagogy reforms will not be possible until the ECE professionals, including program developers, policy makers and classroom teachers recognise the power of societal context on ECE and adopt timely and effective measures to resolve the culture-related challenges. Further discussion and research into these problems is needed before any effective steps can be undertaken.

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6

Parent–Child Interaction as a Source of Preschooler's Bilingual Heritage Language Development in Role Play

LIANG LI

SUMMARY How do families' play practices support preschoolers' bilingual heritage language development in the home context? This is one of the challenges that Chinese immigrant parents face when raising a child in Australia. This question is explored through the deconstruction of a role-play-based experience that was observed within the home of a researched family. In this study, Vygotsky's (1966) cultural–historical theory on play provides the framework for looking at how Chinese immigrant parents use play activities as a pedagogical tool for supporting preschoolers' bilingual heritage language development. Building on Vygotsky's concepts of play and zone of proximal development (ZPD), Hedegaard's (2008) dialectical–interactive approach is used to analyse the play practices employed within the home. This chapter discusses a four-year-old girl, Lin and her father's play experience in a park in order to examine dialectically the way in which parents contribute to play situations and their young preschoolers' language development at home. The findings show the need for parents to engage in shared interactions with their children in play-based pedagogical experiences. Parent–child interaction as a source supports children's bilingual heritage language development during role play.

7.1 Introduction

Many previous investigations on bilingual preschoolers have focused on the linguistic perspectives of language development, and linguistic theoretical approaches have framed the majority of those studies (Kohnert et al. 2010; Laurent and Martinot 2009; Nicoladis 2006; Wang et al. 2005). Very few studies have used play as a pedagogical approach or as a means to explore children's bilingual development (Li 2012). However, play intervention and pedagogy can facilitate children's language development, and parents can use play as a pedagogical tool to improve their children's language (Tsao 2008). This is a challenge faced by parents when supporting children's language development in play activities (Li 2012). As part of a larger PhD study designed to determine the ways families support preschoolers' bilingual heritage language development, this chapter specifically draws upon cultural–

historical theories of play to investigate the ways parents participate in children's role play in order to contribute to their bilingual development. It also illustrates that parent–child interaction supports children's bilingual heritage language development during role play. An earlier publication (Li 2012) analysing the same data, discusses the importance of imagination and imitation as cultivated by adults' instructions in play within child's zone of proximal development. Most importantly, this chapter defines a new model for children's language development in shared play activity. In this chapter, the theoretical framework orienting the study will be discussed, followed by the study design and findings.

7.2 Theoretical framework

Recent research confirms the connection established by Vygotsky between play and language development. Examples include Vygotsky and agency in language development (Reunamo and Nurmilaakso 2007), oral language and literacy development in play (Bodrova 2008), the role of play in language learning (Kim and Kellogg 2007), and language development in peer play interaction (Branco 2005). However, these studies do not underscore how play, as a leading activity, creates the child's zone of proximal language development. This study considers the role of family pedagogy in shared play activities in the home in supporting preschoolers' bilingual heritage language development, whereby play is understood by parents as a pedagogical tool in language development, and parents offer support for their child's bilingual development within the child's zone of proximal development (ZPD).

7.2.1 The zone of proximal development

The concept of the ZPD was first introduced into the social science world by Vygotsky (1978b), and it is understood that 'what the child is able to do in collaboration today he will be able to do independently tomorrow' (Vygotsky 1987b, 211). Vygotsky particularly stresses how the ZPD works for young children and children with special needs. Holzman (2009) further elucidates on Vygotsky's notion of the ZPD, and considers the ZPD as a 'collective form of working together' and a 'dialectical, tool-and-result activity' in that it requires 'relating to people as capable of doing what they do not yet know how to do and what is, therefore, beyond them' (p. 30). In connection to this study, two aspects of the ZPD are reflected. Firstly, the ZPD is the zone of collective activity in which children and adults interact and share understandings of tasks by using cultural tools such as language. Secondly,

development occurs when children interact with adults or other more capable peers within their ZPD.

However, how does the child make the qualitative change from the ZPD to actual development? Chaiklin (2003) emphasises that the importance of the ZPD is not the competence of the more capable person, but being able to 'understand the meaning of that assistance' in relation to a child's development (p. 43). The process of teaching must be completed in the form of children's collaboration with adults, whereby instruction depends on the immature but maturing process established by the ZPD of the child. That is, instructions have productive functions only when they occur in the ZPD. Furthermore, instructions must be based on the clear understanding of a child's current level of development (Chaiklin 2003). Thus, Vygotsky uses the zones to emphasise the importance of instruction in understanding development (Karpov 2005).

A central feature for the psychological study of instruction is the analysis of children's potential to raise themselves to a higher intellectual level of development through collaboration, to move from what they have to what they do not have through imitation. This is the significance of instruction for development (Vygotsky 1987).

Here, imitation is not simply mindlessly copying actions or words, but 'an active, creative and fundamentally social process that is essential to create the ZPD' (Holzman 2009, 30). The important part of play is that the players intend to imitate adults' social models within cultural events. The players reinterpret real-life situations and act out roles in play by creating new knowledge and imitation. Additionally, Chaiklin (2003) describes a person's ability to imitate as 'the basis for a subjective zone of proximal development' (p. 83), meaning that imitation reveals 'some possibility of moving from what I can do to what I cannot do' (Vygotsky 1987b, 209). Aided by imitation, the child can achieve tasks in collaboration with adults or more capable peers. Holzman (2009) concludes that imitation is a creative process; a type of performance in terms of understanding Vygotsky's analysis of language development in the ZPD. In terms of language learning, this performance is 'a way of taking who we are and creating something new – in this case a newly emerging speaker, on the stage a newly emerging character – through incorporating the other' (p. 31).

More importantly, the collaborative intervention aids development only on the assumption that 'the child could only take advantage of these interventions because the maturing function supports an ability to understand the significance of the support being offered' (Chaiklin 2003, 54). In other words, imitation and collaboration assess the developmental level and the ZPD. In this sense, considering how to help children move to a higher developmental level through

collaboration and imitation, gives meaning to instruction (Vygotsky 1998). Kravtsova's subject positioning theory (2006) gives further insight into adult instruction.

7.2.2 Subject positioning theory

Determining a child's current ZPD, the adult needs to decide what type of assisted performance would be most beneficial (Henderson et al. 2002). The amount and type of help children need from adults is oriented to the size of their ZPD (developmental level), the extent of collaboration and the form of communication. Thus, in order to make adult help truly effective, Kravtsova (2009) proposes dividing adults' participation into different functions in association to the size of the ZPD. Based on her research, Kravtsova illustrates the logic positions adults create for children as the 'greater we', the 'above' position, the 'equal' position, the 'under' and the 'independent' position (see Li 2012).

When children have a 'smaller' ZPD than their peers in play, adults can help them only from the 'under' or 'greater we' position of the child. Likewise, when children have a 'larger' ZPD than their peers in play, adults may put children in the position of 'independent' or 'equal'. The logic positions adults create are determined by the scope of children's ZPD, and the position of children is inversely related to adults' position. Kravtsova's subject positioning theory focuses on adults' instruction to groups of children in a collective activity within the family and school context, which can be applied to this study in analysis of strategies parents use in everyday activities with preschoolers, in relation to bilingual heritage language development. How to use the subject positioning strategies is determined by the child's knowledge limitations and developmental level in the activity.

These are the strategies adults use to help children raise themselves to a higher intellectual level of development within their ZPD, indicating adults' support towards development is significant. This chapter focuses on how families join preschoolers' play to improve their language development within their zone of proximal language development, mainly discussing adults' communicative instructions in play, where play is considered the 'leading activity' in preschool aged children's development.

7.2.3 Play as the leading activity during the preschool period

The concept of a leading activity was first introduced by Vygotsky (1966) when he discussed play and its role in children's mental development. Subsequently,

Leont'ev (1981) developed the idea of a 'leading type of activity', followed by Elkonin, who developed a periodisation of psychic development based on it (Kravtsova 2006). Elkonin argues that 'a leading activity is an activity that is central in the structure and system of activities – that is, their development proceeds under its influence and it enters into them' (cited in Veresov 2006, 18). Development as a dynamic process concerns the changes in the system structure at the given age, and comes into actuality during the 'constant structural reorganisation of the entire system of the child's activities as a living, organic system' (Veresov 2006, 19). Kravtsova (2006) argues that 'a child's transition from one chronological stage to another is marked by a change in leading activity' (p. 8).

Vygotsky also states that play, as the leading activity for preschool children, creates a special social situation where learning activities emerge (Veresov 2006). Vygotsky argues that 'play is not the predominant form of activity, but is, in a certain sense, the leading source of development in preschool years', therefore establishing the social source of development (p. 1). The leading activity during the preschool period concerns imaginative play because it helps children to appropriate a given imagined situation in question and enable them to practise adults' roles for future reference (Göncü 1999).

Furthermore, Vygotsky (1966) analyses that 'play is the source of development and creates the zone of proximal development' (p. 16). In this sense, play, as a leading activity, determines preschoolers' development. Elkonin (2005) considers pretend play to be a result of the social interaction between a child and an adult connected through a social relationship. Adults' play with children as a leading activity in the dynamic process of development not only creates the ZPD, but also promotes children's development from the ZPD to actual development, and helps children make a quality change. As a result, this kind of play guides the transition from interpsychological functioning to the intrapsychological plane. This chapter describes how families participate in preschoolers' play and its contribution to children's bilingual heritage language development. The ways in which to play with children, and how to instruct children in play in order to make a quality change, are the focus.

7.3 Study design

The study on which this chapter is based aims to explore the ways families are involved in their children's development of Mandarin as a bilingual

heritage language. The particular focus of this chapter is on why and how play activities between parents and preschoolers can contribute to children's bilingual heritage language development. In order to answer the research question effectively, a qualitative cultural–historical case study was designed by building upon Hedegaard's (2008) dialectical–interactive approach. Hedegaard (2008) makes a case for the usage of the appropriate methodology when conducting cultural–historical research, whereby the researcher is situated within the activity as a partner with the researched persons whilst researching children's development in everyday activity settings (Li 2012). In the study, I took an active role and engaged with participants while activities were performed, which is different from traditional research. In this way, it is possible to examine how children contribute to interactions with both adults and peers within the family community and other educational settings they are involved in (Li 2012). According to Hedegaard (2008), by taking a cultural–historical activity approach, the research methodology must be able to investigate children's activities within institutional practices, such as family settings, which are influenced by societal traditions and values. By taking a cultural–historical approach to methodology it is possible to understand the process of children's language development in shared play activities in the home.

The data here relate to a four-year-old girl, Lin (pseudonym), who attended a Chinese school program on weekends. Lin went to childcare four days a week between 8 am and 5 pm, which was her English environment. Her parents spoke Mandarin to her most of the time at home and occasionally English, because they believe that the home context is her main Mandarin language setting. The family was recruited through a licensed Chinese school in Melbourne.

Data for the overall PhD study was generated over a nine-month period with three participating Chinese–Australian families through video observations, and photographs taken by the participants and the researcher. The focus children playing at home and doing important family everyday activities were videotaped three times (six hours per family in total), as well as observations of weekend Chinese school twice under study (two hours per focus child), complemented by data provided by the parents, who took photos of their child's activities at home over the first two weeks of the research study. These photos and videos were taken in the natural home context focusing on the activities the parents believed to be important to their child's bilingual development. From the data collected of Lin, photos were printed for the first interview and videos were transcribed and generated into video clips in terms of the research

questions, themes and cultural–historical concepts such as role play, dinner time, and storytelling. Although a complete set of data has been collected from the research participants, this chapter is based on one video clip involving Lin playing with her father in the park after dinner.

This research project received the ethical approval from Monash University before the data were collected. All the participants signed an informed consent form for the research assuring voluntary participation. Permission has also been given to use the participants' images and words in academic publications.

The data analysis draws on the work of Hedegaard (2008) and Fleer (2008). This study identifies categories such as searching for imitation, social interaction patterns, values and motives, the roles of the adult and child in their activity, and language use to frame the analysis of the research data. The activities and practices are noted and coded from different perspectives (the child, the family, and the researcher). This chapter is particularly interested in building upon Vygotsky's concept of the ZPD, the concept of a leading activity, and play, in order to explore the links between instruction and the zone of proximal language development in play in regard to family pedagogy.

7.4 Family play practices at home

The following vignette shows how parent–child play activities can contribute to children's bilingual heritage language development, and the ways in which parents can join play situations and use supportive dialogue to enhance children's vocabulary and language development. As her father mentioned in the first interview, Lin was very interested in pretend play involving restaurants and supermarkets, especially during their daily walk through the park after dinner. Her father believes that these kinds of play helped Lin develop her Mandarin language (Li 2012). Here only part of their play will be discussed. While their conversation was mainly in Chinese, italics indicate words spoken in English. Bold means new Chinese words Lin had learned through this play activity.

7.4.1 Lin's play vignette at the park

While visiting Lin's family for the third observation period, a play situation between Lin and her father naturally occurred. It describes Lin playing with her father in the park after dinner. The common sense interpretation has been discussed in detail (see Li 2012).

Lin started to play under the slide area. She put some tanbark on a small bench.

Father: What are you doing?

Lin: Making a soup.
(She continued putting more tanbark on the bench.)

Father: What are you doing?
(Her father squatted down by the bench to talk to her.)

Lin: Doing some cooking.

Father: Oh. You are cooking. What are you cooking?
(Her father put his hands under his jaw, as if interested in her activity.)

…

Father: What do you have?

Lin: I have juice and fresh ones, and all different kinds of juice.

Father: Okay. I want some juice.
我要喝果汁

…

Father: Okay. You have some bread. I want a sandwich and bread.
你有面包啊 我想要三明治和面包
(Lin put some tanbark on the bench.)

Lin: You have one here. You can eat it if you sit closer.
好 这是给你的 one. 你要坐这里，就可以吃。

…

Father: What about my juice?
那我的果汁呢？

Lin: Your juice will be ready soon. I need to put this … inside.
你的果汁快要好，就放这个 … 插在里面。
(She pretended to put the straw into the cup.)

Father: That is a straw in the juice.
果汁放的是吸管

…

Lin: After I put … after 我弄 … 这个
(She put some sticks on the bench. Also, she tried to think of the right Chinese word to use.)

Father: What is it?
这是什么?

Lin: This is fire.
这是个fire

Father: This is a stove.
是个火炉啊

Lin: Stove.
火炉

…

Father: How much is it?
那要多少钱呢?

Lin: You give me money first.
嗯，嗯 … 你给我钱先。
(This is the wrong grammatical use in Chinese.)

Father: How much?
多少钱呢?
(Lin picked some tanbark to show her father.)

Lin: This is money.
这个钱

Father: How much is it? I will buy a sandwich and juice.
要多少钱? 我要跟你买三明治和果汁, 要多少钱?

Lin: One dollar.
要一块钱

Father: One dollar. Here you are.
噢, 要一块钱啊。好, 给你一块钱
(Father pretended to give her one dollar. Lin pretended to take it.)

Lin: Thank you.
谢谢

…

In the beginning of the play interaction, Lin spontaneously took on the role of a 'restaurant owner' and began to speak to a customer (her father). She initiated the restaurant play, which displayed her motives to cook in a restaurant. Her father consciously responded to her actions in order to extend the play dialogue and enhance the imaginary situation. And under her father's support, Lin was able to act like a restaurant owner. This echoes Elkonin's (2005) argument that children have the desire and motives to act like adults, as shown through their interest in imitating real relationships through play. This is the centre of make-believe play (Bodrova and Leong 2003). On the one hand, in Lin's case, her role as a 'restaurant owner' reflects her observations from everyday life and demonstrates her universal desire to 'act like an adult' (Li 2012). According to her parents' response in the first interview, she was very happy to observe or join in cooking at home and enjoyed restaurant experiences with the family. On the other hand, Lin took on the specific role of a restaurant owner, demonstrating that her reason for doing so was to fulfil a universal desire to 'act like an adult'.

From a Vygotskian perspective, in play 'children operate with meanings severed from objects and action' (Vygotsky 1966, 13). It is theoretically impossible for a preschooler to sever the meaning of a word from an object directly. They must borrow a pivot for severing thoughts from objects by using

substitute objects or actions as symbols to replace and sever the meaning from the real actions. In Lin's restaurant play with her father, Lin started to use tanbark as a substitute object instead of the sandwich, juice, and later rice, vegetables, etc. Under her father's support Lin was able to separate the meanings of different food (sandwiches/juice) from the actual objects and implant those meanings in the substitute object (tanbark) in her restaurant play. That is, Lin used words and signs (food/cooking actions) in a symbolic way in fantasy play. As Vygotsky (1987b) notes, preschoolers are not able to separate objects from the words that label the objects, and therefore, Lin borrowed the substitute objects (tanbark/bench) as a pivot. The tanbark and the bench became cognitive tools, which Lin relied on as mediators to imitate real cooking in a restaurant.

The cognitive changing processes in preschool play are closely intertwined with 'the use of concrete objects as mediators and the enactment of representation actions in the production of meaning' (Duncan and Tarulli 2003, 275). Lin unconsciously made use of the fact that she was able to separate the meaning of 'sandwich' and 'juice' from their actual objects. From this perspective, Vygotsky (1966) argues that 'a child first acts with meanings as with objects and later realises them consciously and begins to think, just as a child, before he has acquired grammatical and written speech, knows how to do things but does not know what he knows' (p. 13). Imitating the actions and words/voice of a restaurant owner in play, Lin was able to learn how to recreate actions and move towards the behaviour of role models (restaurant owner), then practise and internalise the intentional behaviours.

The following conversation shows Lin's language developmental process by imitating her father's words and actions.

Father: What do you want to cook?
要煮什么东西?

Lin: Do you want to cook some vegetables?
你想煮菜吗?

Father: What kind of vegetables?
这是什么菜?

Lin: Vegetables can be eaten.
这是可以吃的

…

Father: Fry, Fry, Fry. Put in some oil.
煮，煮、煮。放油

(He pretended to add some oil and fry it continually.)

Lin: Okay. I can add some oil.
好了 我会放油

(She turned back to her shelf and found the oil.)

Lin: Here is the oil.
油在这里

(She pretended to add some oil like her father.)

…

Father: What about salt?
那有没有盐呢?

Lin: Oh. Here is the salt.
哦，在这里
(She pretended to add some salt onto the vegetables.)

…

Father: Where is the meat?
肉在哪里?

Lin: It should be here.
这里
(She looked for it.)

Father: Oh. This is the meat.
肉在这里啊
(Father picked up some tanbark from her shelf.)

Lin: That is rice.
这是饭

Father: Oh. It is rice. I chose wrongly. I chose wrongly.
哦，这是饭，拿错了，拿错了
(He put the rice back on the shelf.)

Father: Where is your meat?
那你的肉呢?

Lin: The rice is on the ground. Everything is on the ground.
饭也是在地上 饭在地上 都在地上
(Actually, the tanbark is everywhere on the ground.)

Father: Meat? Where is the meat?
肉呢? 肉在哪边?

Lin: Meat, meat.
肉，肉

(She found the meat and put it on the bench.)

Father: Cook the meat. Fry the meat.
炒肉，炒肉
(He pretended to fry the meat.)

Father: Or barbecue?
还是用烤的?

Lin: Barbecue.
用烤的

Father: Barbecue should be okay.
用烤的也可以

…

Father: What else do we need to cook?
那你还要煮什么?

Lin: Rice.
饭

Father: Rice. Cook some rice.
饭。煮饭

…

7.4.2 Lin's imitation within the ZPD

Vygotsky used the concept of imitation to refer to situations when the child is able to engage in interaction with adults or more capable peers around a task the child would not be able to complete individually (Chaiklin 2003). In Lin's play, her father consciously responded to her actions and created a more complex play experience by asking a series of questions and introducing new concepts in Chinese. Consequently, Lin could broaden the play experience and enhance her language use by imitating her father's words and regulating her behaviour. For example, when her father asked for 'meat', she responded in Chinese 'Meat, meat', not only copying the word, but adjusting her behaviour by looking for meat to cook. Under her father's support, Lin was able to expand her understanding of 'restaurant owners' and extend her cooking skills.

Moreover, their play began with Lin's cooking actions, which provided an opportunity for her father to ask her the question, 'What are you doing?' Later, Lin spontaneously imitated her father's words and actions, which shows that she was able to learn Chinese within her zone of proximal language development during play with collaboration. A child is able to imitate adults' models in play activities, which displays the child's maturing mental functions within their zone of proximal development.

Furthermore, from this play experience, it can be seen that English was the language Lin was most comfortable using, as a result of attending an English language childcare centre on weekdays. She was still in the process of learning Mandarin and tried to understand Chinese in a Chinese cooking cultural context, which shows her zone of proximal Chinese language development. For example, she could not say 'fire' in Chinese and used English to express it. This means she was quite capable of using English. In play, she tried to think of the right Chinese word for 'fire', which is shown by her saying '*After* I put … *after* 我弄 … 这个'. Under her father's support, she imitated her father saying 'stove'

in Chinese. At that moment, she had an opportunity to understand 'stove' in the Chinese cooking context.

As a result of imitation, Lin understood the cooking model, mastered Chinese cooking knowledge through social collaboration, and internalised her father's assistance and language. Without her father's support, Lin could not have completed such a complicated play experience. Lin's imitation contributed to her performance, which was determined by the state of her development and her intellectual and language potential, and hence added to her intellectual capabilities and language skills through collaboration.

According to Vygotsky (1987b), the child is able to accept instruction for what they cannot do yet. Linking this to imitation, it can be concluded that 'imitation is the source of instruction's influence on development' (p. 211). In Lin's case, her father used a series of questions as an instructional tool to encourage Lin to extend their play dialogue and broaden the play experience. The supportive instruction within her ZPD was based on Lin's potential to imitate.

How to understand the meaning of adult's help and how to make adults' instructions effective is another significant issue that reflects the importance of the ZPD. This issue is related to how to help children make changes within their ZPD, which is demonstrated by Lin's case.

7.4.3 Lin's father's communicative strategies

Lin's bilingual language developmental process is shown through this play experience with her father. Lin's father consciously used communicative strategies to support the improvement of Lin's language in her zone of proximal language development. This is demonstrated by her father's actions and responses, such as introducing new cooking ideas (making a sandwich or frying vegetables) to their imagined play situation, and developing the cause–effect relationships within a restaurant situation through questioning and negotiating. With regard to the family pedagogy, Lin's father created different logic positions for himself in relation to Lin's language developmental level so as to help her move to the zone of actual development, understand Chinese cooking methods, and learn new Chinese vocabulary for food and cooking (see Kravtsova 2009).

When Lin's father introduced the concept of 'meat' to her, he used the question 'Where is the meat?', placing his position as 'equal' to Lin. They negotiated how to play and jointly share their understanding of Chinese cooking. When Lin's father picked up some tanbark pretending it was meat, she responded, 'It is rice.' At this moment in the role play, Lin and her father stayed at the equal position and co-constructed their play experience. Again, when Lin's father

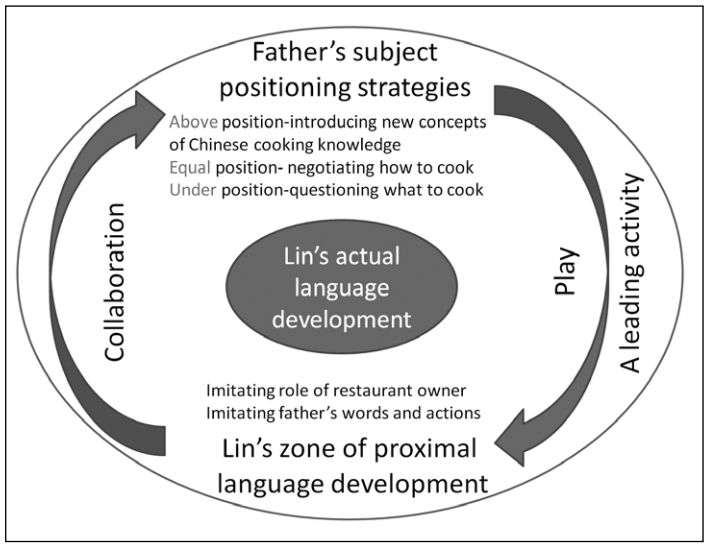

Figure 7.1 Lin's language development in shared play activity

asked her whether they needed to fry the meat or barbecue it, he also took the 'equal' position to negotiate with Lin how to cook the meat. It enhanced Lin's understanding of Chinese cooking methods.

Lin's father also took the position of 'under' in play by asking Lin 'What else do we need to cook?' Lin had a chance to think and share her ideas. In this role play, Lin's father intended to provide Lin with an opportunity to express herself through questioning and negotiating so she could practise her language and enhance her Chinese vocabulary and grammar in use. As a result, Lin was able to develop her language use as well as her understanding of social roles, leading to the internalisation of new Chinese words such as 'stove' and 'straw', and more complex grammar-based language such as, 'You can eat it if you sit closer' and 'Your juice will be ready soon'. Lin's father treated play as a pedagogical tool to develop Lin's cognitive development, and in turn extended her language use.

When Lin's father asked her in Chinese how much the sandwich and juice were, she could not directly answer this 'how much' question, but said, 'This is money.' Her father then took the 'above' position and asked 'How much is it? I will buy sandwich and juice.' He used a descriptive strategy to help Lin understand the 'how much' question in Chinese and the selling and buying situation. As a result, Lin could answer 'One dollar.' Each time Lin's father introduced a new concept in Chinese cooking such as oil, salt, and putting on lids, he put himself in the 'above' position of their play dialogue. Thus, Lin

naturally understood Chinese cooking skills and words under her father's interactive support, demonstrating the acquisition of skills through adult–child pedagogical communication (Vygotsky 1987a).

Finally, using Vygotskian theory, it can be argued that the restaurant play is a leading source of development created in Lin's zone of proximal cognitive and language development in the Chinese cooking field. Lin's father created different positions for himself in relation to Lin's Chinese language capacity so as to help her within her zone of actual development and to master Chinese cooking knowledge and language concepts. He took an 'above' position to introduce new concepts of Chinese cooking knowledge, an 'equal' position to negotiate how to cook, and an 'under' position to question what to cook (Li 2012). Therefore, her father used play as a pedagogical tool to support Lin's play and Chinese language learning. Consequently, Lin imitated her father's cooking actions and language use in play, and internalised her cooking knowledge, Chinese language vocabulary and grammar. Lin could move forward essentially through the play activity with her father, with her play acting as a leading activity. Lin's language development can be seen as a direct result of their play, which acted as the leading activity for Lin and her father's communicative strategies, and which created a zone of proximal language development (see Figure 7.1). Therefore, 'a child's greatest achievements are possible in play' (Vygotsky 1966, 14).

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter argues that using Vygotsky's (1966, 2004) work on the ZPD in play as a leading activity for preschoolers, and Kravtsova's (2009) subject positioning theory on adults' communication with children in play provides a new direction for researching young children's bilingual development. Unlike previous linguistic approaches to bilingual language development, this study focuses on the importance of the ZPD in play in bilingual heritage language development through a cultural–historical framework in relation to family pedagogy. In the case of Lin and her father's play situation in the park, Lin's language development can be seen as the result of their play and her father's communicative subject positioning strategies within her zone of proximal language development. Father–child interaction supports Lin's bilingual heritage language development in the play. It provides the foreground for approaching language development within play situations, and further confirms the connection established by Vygotsky between play and language development. The findings here offer new insights into how adults can contribute to children's play in practice through the utilisation of family pedagogical tools.

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Part Three: Language and Literacy

Introduction
The Complex World of Literacy Practices

ILANA SNYDER

Literacy is not easy to explain. While the word is common in everyday usage, it is understood differently by different people. Traditionally, literacy has been thought of as a cognitive ability. Being literate has been seen as a matter of cracking the alphabetic code, word formation skills, phonics, grammar and comprehension skills. According to this psychological view of literacy, encoding and decoding skills serve as building blocks for doing other things. Once literate, people can then get on with the business of learning.

By contrast, more recent understandings see literacy as social practice. According to this view, reading and writing can be understood and acquired only within the context of the social, cultural, political, economic and historical practices to which they are integral. From a sociocultural perspective, literacy or, rather, literacies, are best understood as the social practices of reading and writing which take place in different settings – not only the classroom, but also in other locations of everyday life. Literacy practices are what people do with literacy.

The chapters in this part of the book examine what people in a diverse range of settings do with literacy: the social activities, the thoughts and meanings behind the activities, and the texts created and used in such activities. The theories of literacy put forward by the contributors imply a certain approach to research, which uses certain research methods and forms of data. To examine the real situations in which people are engaged in literacy practices, the researchers have carried out interviews, observed activities, and collected and analysed documents.

Although the four chapters focus on different aspects of literacy learning, they share an important theoretical understanding: the centrality of context in exploring their research questions. Context here refers to the cultural, social, economic and political ties that connect individuals, institutions and organisations. The contributors recognise that people, groups, institutions, history, and economic and political factors, as well as features of the material environment, all influence behaviours and beliefs. In other words, what individuals say they do can never be understood completely without considering the relationships in which their lives and activities are embedded.

In Chapter 8, Byanjana Sharma considers how people who have recently immigrated to Australia perceive the literacy teaching their children experience

in local schools. Part of a larger study, which also examined mainstream teachers' perspectives on literacy education, the chapter focuses on the views of six newly arrived immigrants on the teachers' approaches to English literacy in the primary school their children attend. The interview data suggested that overall the parents were positive about the approaches. As a result, Sharma questions the belief held by too many mainstream teachers that these parents do not understand local approaches to literacy education and thus cannot support their children's literacy learning. She argues that the parents can readily adapt to the different context that Australia presents. Sharma concludes that this understanding is potentially valuable, as it provides a foundation upon which school–family partnerships designed to enhance the children's literacy capabilities can be built.

Critical literacy and the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the context of ESL education is the focus of Chapter 9. Drawing on a larger qualitative study of four international students from Thailand, China, Saudi Arabia and France, Ekaterina Tour uses a sociocultural approach to literacy to illuminate the challenges the students encountered when they used ICT in their everyday lives. Within this theoretical approach, she employs the term 'technoliteracy' as it captures the notion that literacy practices are enacted in technological environments. Tour argues that for young people to be able to participate in technology-mediated international business, culture, science, and education in meaningful, intelligent and reflective ways, they need to be *au fait* with the critical use of ICT. ESL educators need to address students' difficulties and to rethink their pedagogical practices when ICT are used. However, she is careful to point out that this task may be demanding for teachers and students in Australian educational institutions because of the ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, linguistic and educational diversity integral to most Australian classrooms at all levels of education.

With a focus on scientific literacy, Sarkar examines in Chapter 10 the content and emphasis of science textbooks used widely in Bangladeshi schools. Drawing on previous research that highlights the importance of context in promoting scientific literacy, Sarkar developed an analytical framework to discern the extent to which the textbooks emphasise pure science content or applied science content that takes account of context. His analysis reveals an emphasis in the textbooks on the theoretical aspects of science that are abstract and not connected to real-life contexts. Sarkar argues that this approach to teaching science inevitably limits students' capacity to function effectively in a technological society. Further, it fails to engage students with science at school and is responsible for low enrolment in post-secondary specialised science

courses. Overall, his study highlights the challenges facing Bangladesh in preparing a scientifically literate populace.

Aiming to generate findings that will inform business writing pedagogy in Vietnamese universities in a changing global business context, Chapter 11 focuses on the elements of effective business letter writing. Hai Nguyen compares business letters in English produced by professional and student Vietnamese writers. Nguyen analysed the rhetorical differences between two sets of letters. Those written by the students reflected their writing competence at the end of the English for Special Purposes course, while those written by the business professionals represented the typical language of the contemporary business world and their writing conventions. The findings indicated that in their letters the professionals explored ideas based on established norms and expectations driven by a reader-oriented perspective. They organised a flexible discourse structure with various patterns of expression that suited the specific situation. By contrast, the students demonstrated a more rigid writing style. Nguyen concludes that the incorporation of more authentic models and contexts in business writing pedagogy would enhance the learning outcomes for students.

The concerns of the contributors represented here offer glimpses into the complex world of literacy practices. Literacy is seen as not simply about skills or measurement, but as social practices that vary in different contexts. Whether the focus is ESL parents' concerns about their children's literacy education, promoting a critical approach to digital literacy among ESL students preparing for tertiary education, the development of scientific literacy in Bangladesh, or teaching business writing in Vietnam, reading and writing need to be studied in the context of the social practices of which they are a part.

7

ESL Parents' Perspectives on the Use of Multiliteracies in an Australian Primary School

BYANJANA SHARMA

SUMMARY In multicultural Australia, many classrooms are filled with students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Parents of these children bring highly diverse expectations of how they will learn literacy in those classrooms. Even though these parents are able to understand some areas of literacy teaching in such a new and challenging context, this area has been rarely researched. Using a sociocultural framework, this chapter reports on a study of the evolving perspectives of English as a second language (ESL) parents on literacy teaching and learning in an Australian primary school. Data for this study include focus group and in-depth individual interviews with six ESL parents whose children were in Grades 3 to 6 at a suburban government school in Melbourne. The findings of this study suggest that parents often focus initially on their children's print literacy, but at the same time they start understanding what multiliteracies mean in the context of Australia. The circumstances under which a broader view of literacy as a social practice may be accepted by them are documented in the study.

8.1 Introduction

> In the Philippines they have textbooks and workbooks. They [teachers] teach their children how to score. Different from here, because there is many homework, and then after you have done a work, there's activities in school. After that the teacher checked it. And after that you have a mastery test and then achievement test. And you have to pass it …
>
> (Sharon, Focus group interview 1, p. 5)

In a focus group interview comparing literacy teaching in Australia and the Philippines, this Filipino mother explains how assessment drives pedagogy. Literacy teaching revolves around textbooks, homework and different kinds of tests in the Philippines, which she says is different from literacy teaching in Australia. All these components of literacy teaching are part of print literacy practices. How parents from other countries perceive literacy teaching in an Australian school is the focus of this chapter. Some studies show that mainstream school teachers find English as a second language (ESL) parents have little

understanding of literacy teaching and as a result do not help their children effectively to strengthen their literacy learning (Kwon et al. 2010; Peterson and Ladky 2007). It is argued here that like Sharon, although ESL parents may come from a culture that emphasises textbooks and examinations, they are capable of adapting to literacy teaching in a different context such as Australia. Their opinions are valuable, since they can enhance school–family partnerships to develop children's literacy learning.

8.2 Changing demography in classrooms

Each year, Australia welcomes more than 120,000 migrants (DFAT 2008) from different parts of the world. Migrant families bring their school-age children with them. Among those children, 15 per cent are over five years of age and speak a language other than English (Leeman and Reid 2006). *The ESL Report* (DEECD 2008) indicates that there are 6125 newly arrived students in Victoria who speak approximately 130 languages. This means that there is a substantial number of ESL school-going children in Australia who have diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Those children's parents have diverse perspectives regarding literacy teaching and learning in schools in Australia, yet these parents' voices are not often heard.

This chapter discusses six newly arrived ESL parents' perspectives on English literacy in a primary school in Victoria, Australia. Their children were at a suburban government primary school in Melbourne. Data for the chapter have been collected as part of a broader ongoing doctoral study that explores ESL parents' as well as mainstream teachers' perspectives on English literacy teaching and learning. The chapter discusses what ESL parents think about literacy teaching and learning in English speaking countries, importance of multiliteracies, and the adoption of multiliteracies to examine the data collected for the research.

8.3 Understanding ESL parents' perspectives

There is little research that explores ESL parents' perspectives on literacy teaching (Guo 2007; Huh 2006) in schools in English speaking countries such as Australia, the USA, the UK or Canada. However, the available research studies raise a number of issues of concern to parents from different non-English-speaking backgrounds regarding school literacy in a native English speaking country. These issues include: maintaining the balance between children's first and second language; English-only education for bilingual children; ESL

parents' English proficiency; parent–school communication; teachers' support to individual students; and use of traditional approaches in teaching reading and writing, such as using phonics in early reading.

Some studies (Huh 2006; Worthy 2006) reveal that most ESL parents want their children to learn both languages: their home language and English. Kenu Huh (2006) interviewed six Korean mothers of first-grade ESL children who attended three different elementary schools in the USA. Those mothers emphasised the importance of balancing the first and second languages in a school. Jo Worthy's (2006) study of 16 Latino mothers and fathers similarly shows the parents' preference to balance their children's English and Spanish languages. These parents' children were studying at Grade 5 in a public school in Texas at the time of this research study.

Research shows that while some ESL parents want their children to be bilinguals (Huh 2006; Worthy 2006), other parents think bilingualism hinders their academic progress, and therefore emphasise English literacy practices. For example, Sally Brown and Mariana Souto-Manning's (2008) study indicates that some ESL parents prefer their children to learn only English to succeed in a school in a native English speaking country. Juyoung Song's (2010) study of two groups of Korean mothers confirms this finding. In her study, one group consisted of mothers who were going back to Korea after spending some time in the USA, and another group were immigrants. Even though, for the returning group, maintaining bilingualism was not an issue, for the immigrants it posed a dilemma. Although they were positive about bilingualism, they thought it was difficult to achieve. Therefore they preferred their children to learn English in order to succeed at school as well as in the broader American society.

Whether ESL parents' English proficiency is enough to support their children's literacy practices or to communicate with their children's school/teachers effectively is an issue that has emerged from research studies conducted with ESL parents (Bernhard and Freire 1999; Huh 2006; Walker-Dalhouse and Dalhouse 2009; Worthy 2006). These studies show that most of the parent participants agreed that they had limited English, so they felt they could not support their children's literacy practices properly. In addition, they also indicated that their lack of English proficiency was a hindrance to maintaining effective communication with their children's school or teachers. The study of Glenn Flores, Milagros Abrew and Sandra Tomany-Korman (2005) found out how ESL parents' limited English proficiency (LEP) was associated with their children's health status, access to care and use of health services. It is interesting to note that in their survey 98 per cent of participating parents were from an ESL background, yet only 72 per cent of them had LEP. This shows that 'ESL parents'

is a broad term that does not necessarily signify limited English proficiency. It also shows that English proficiency is related to other characteristics of parents, such as socioeconomic status and level of education.

The available research suggests that if parents are involved in their children's literacy learning, it can foster the children's learning and increase their achievement level as well (Barnard 2004; Ford and Amaral 2006; Rogers et al. 2009). For this, there must also be effective communication between home and school so that parents know about children's school literacy practices. This family-school collaboration is expected in countries like Australia, Canada or the USA. Unfortunately there is often a lack of coordination between families and school (Li 2007). Sometimes parents' lack of fluent English can be a real problem in maintaining a good communication system between parents and teachers (Huh 2006).

8.3.1 Teachers' support to individual students and use of traditional approach in teaching

ESL parents in some studies report that teacher support is lacking in relation to feedback on children's homework and close attention to individual students' whereabouts. For example, one mother in Kenu Huh's (2006) study expressed her feeling about one teacher, 'She does not give any feedback about my son's homework … I wonder if she is concerned about my son' (p. 345). Similarly, parents complained that teachers do not care whether a certain child is present or absent in the class. They aim primarily to adhere to their programs (Bernhard and Freire 1999).

Some studies focus on ESL parents' attitudes to literacy teaching approaches. Guofang Li's (2006) study of 26 Chinese immigrant parents in the USA can be taken as an example. The findings of her study regarding parents' perception of and their involvement in their children's reading show that they preferred a phonic-based, bottom-up approach to reading instruction. Li states that about 81 per cent of the parents believed that a child should learn the pronunciation of the letters of the alphabet before starting reading. Likewise, the Chinese parents' perspectives on writing were in alignment with a bottom-up approach to literacy learning, reflecting a product-oriented writing approach that emphasises well-formed and grammatically correct sentences.

The studies reviewed above reveal some of the issues of concern to ESL parents from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds on literacy teaching in a native English speaking country. But none of the studies talks about parental views on multiliteracies, a significant dimension of contemporary literacy teaching and learning. The following section highlights the importance of multiliteracies.

8.4 Contemporary views on literacy

In a contemporary Western society, literacy is seen as a social practice (Snyder 2008; Street 1993b; Walker-Dalhouse and Dalhouse 2009). According to this view, reading and writing practices of a certain place cannot be understood in isolation. Instead they can be understood and acquired only within a particular context (Snyder 2008). With a view of literacy as a social practice there emerged the concept of 'multiple literacies'.

There are wider forms of learning and making sense of the world (Fullerton et al. 2004). These alternative forms of learning in relation to literacy are captured by the idea of multiliteracies. As the term itself suggests, 'multiliteracies' means different literacies. For instance, according to the New London Group (2000) there are as many as six meaning-making processes, which involve not only spoken and written language but also seeing, listening, using body language, identifying locations and combining all these five modes in the multimodal patterns, meaning can be created while learning literacy (New London Group 2000, 7).

These modes of meaning making are supported by Shirley Brice Heath and Brian Street (2008). According to them, multimodal literacies or multiliteracies mean systems of representation that include written forms, which are combined with oral, visual, or gestural modes. However, it is not always necessary to combine 'written forms' to other modes to make them 'multiliteracies'. For example, if somebody in a new place wants to learn a new culture, then they can also use observation, a visual mode of learning, by watching a film on television, which has no written component. Multiliteracies can be understood more clearly if they are considered as a combination of these broadly mentioned modes of communication (New London Group 2000) along with meaning making and situated practice of literacies (O'Rourke 2005). This means that if in some society print literacy is in practice, then a linguistic mode of communication may be important to make meanings. Therefore multiliteracies mean the diverse forms of literacy practice realised in different social contexts. A particular context refers to an environment where literacy is in practice for a particular purpose (Charles 2008).

The notion of 'multiliteracies' does not point to a single way of learning literacy. For contemporary children, especially in the Western world, only to be able to read a printed text is not enough to be literate. They also have to be able to use a computer, learn social skills and express themselves in oral language. There are many studies that argue for digital literacy, oral literacy, multimodality, life literacy and social literacy. For instance, in the context of

Western society, Marc Prensky (2001) has termed this generation's students 'digital natives': native speakers of the digital language of computers and the Internet. A study conducted in Belgium with parents of primary school children shows that 91.2 per cent of primary school children use the Internet at home (Valcke et al. 2010). Digital literacy is an inseparable part of today's children who have spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers and other digital means such as mobile phones, video games or television (Prensky 2001).

Unlike a traditional view of literacy learning, which emphasises reading and writing printed texts (Street 1993a), the theory of multiliteracies considers speaking as a great source of literacy learning (Street 1993a). In the Victorian curriculum document *Victorian Essential Learning Standards* (DEECD 2005), there are three strands of literacy: reading, writing and speaking. Speaking plays a great role in the lives of ESL students to be accepted as active members of school community (Miller 2003). In fact, orality is always embedded in literacy and cannot be ignored.

Like digital literacy and orality, multimodality plays an important role in children's development of literacy learning. A drama can be considered as an effective multimodal source that helps students excel in their literacy understanding. For example, Maria Varelas et al. (2010) explored how drama activities helped primary grade children to develop their scientific understanding as well as social knowledge and skills. Taking part in the drama activities the children made meaning, not in isolation but in collaboration with other school members through interactions.

Literacy learning is not limited to classrooms only. If children get an opportunity to explore the real world by themselves, it helps them learn many useful lessons that are important for their life, not only for their success in school. Because of this, children's outdoor learning is highly valued in Western countries. Trisha Maynard and Jane Waters (2007) argue that in the outdoor setting children can gather firsthand knowledge and experiences to understand real-life situations. They further state that children's free movement is one of the most natural and powerful modes of learning and outdoor setting of learning can provide children such freedom.

Another dimension of multiliteracies is children's personal and social development. Personal traits and social skills like self-confidence, team work skill or self-control are identified as part of literacy learning. The research studies also show that there is a significant relationship between children's personal characteristics or social behaviour and their literacy achievement (Miles and Stipek 2006). Child self-control is related to academic interactions with peers too (Neitzel 2009).

To sum up, literacy learning does not indicate a single approach in contemporary Western society; instead it is a package of different literacies, including print literacy, digital literacy, oral literacy, multimodality and personal/social/life literacy. These literacies come in the form of multiliteracies, and children must have access to these literacies to be literate members of this society.

8.5 The study

The study was informed by a sociocultural theory of literacy learning, according to which literacy is a social practice, as mentioned earlier. Since sociocultural theory of literacy learning is very broad, only the lens of 'multiliteracies' is considered here and used to analyse the data to explore how newly arrived ESL parents make meaning of literacy teaching and learning in Australia.

The study follows a qualitative research approach (Charmaz 2006; Gay and Airasian 2003; Knobel and Lankshear 1999) to identify parents' opinions on and experiences of literacy teaching. It is based on a case study research design (Brown and Rodgers 2003; Knobel and Lankshear 1999) and involves one primary state school as a single case. The school is located in the South Eastern Region of Melbourne, Victoria, and assigned with the pseudonym, South Eastern Primary School. Six ESL parents whose children were studying in Years 3 to 6 at the time of data collection volunteered as research participants.

South Eastern Primary School was selected as the research site because there were students from diverse linguistic communities. The *Curriculum Information Evening* booklet (SEPS 2009) stated that 65 per cent of its students were from an ESL background. As is usual in a mainstream school, there were students from English speaking and non-English speaking backgrounds in the same classrooms.

Purposive sampling was used in the selection of participants. The selection criteria were (1) their length of residence in Australia was between six months and two years; (2) their children were in Years 3 to 6 and, above all; (3) the participants were able to communicate with the researcher in English. ESL parents whose stay in Australia was not more than two years are termed as 'newly arrived' parents in this study. This group of 'newly arrived' parents was chosen because, being new, they were aware of differences in literacy teaching in Australian schools. Parents of Years 3 to 6 children were selected because

these children were taken to have had adequate exposure to schooling in their home countries. Thus, their parents could make a comparison between literacy teaching in their home countries and Australia.

Two Indonesian, two Indian, one Filipino and one Nepali parents volunteered to be research participants. They chose or were given pseudonyms Lily, Dewita, Nita, Tara, Sharon and Binod. Among them the Indonesian (Lily, Dewita), Filipino (Sharon) and Nepali (Binod) parents could communicate in English and the Indian parents (Nita, Tara) could understand English but were not comfortable speaking English. These Indian parents were chosen purposefully because the researcher could communicate with them in Hindi. This group of parents was educated; they were from postgraduate to Year 12 pass.

Two focus group interviews (three participants in each group) and six individual in-depth semi-structured interviews were used to gather data, each of which lasted for about an hour. These interviews allowed the researcher freedom to ask the participants questions to draw rich data (Patton 2002). Before organising the individual interviews, focus group interviews (Morgan 2004) were organised to capture the participants' broader experiences. In addition, the focus group interview stimulated responses through discussion. The data were collected between November 2009 and February 2010. The data were analysed using thematic analysis.

8.6 How do ESL parents understand multiliteracies in Australia?

At the preliminary stage of data analysis, several findings emerged that align with the theme of 'multiliteracies'. The participants agreed that being literate in the Australian context means more than being able to read and write. In this society, in addition to reading and writing, children need to know many other things, for example, how to use a computer and the Internet, how to report their work orally to other people or how to control their emotions. Interview questions focused on school literacy teaching and learning practices and extracurricular events, particularly production, excursions and camping. Other questions concerned the use of computers and the Internet, watching television and home literacy practices.

Although the parents had experienced 'literacy' as 'mere print-based literacy' practices (Cope and Kalantzis 2000) in their home countries, all of them realised multiliteracies are being practised at their children's school in Australia. For example Binod said:

> When I came here I realised that literacy is not only reading and writing. Something else is there because we are also learning culture here. We're from different culture. We are from another culture! I think if you come here, learn culture. Where is culture? We don't find everything in books. On TV.
>
> (Binod, Focus group interview 2, pp. 14–15)

Before coming to Australia, Binod used to consider literacy as only reading and writing printed texts, as shown in Sharon's interview excerpt in Section 8.1. She emphasised that teachers in the Philippines wanted their students to focus on reading textbooks, doing homework and scoring good marks in the examination. Such literacy activities are parts of print literacy. Binod's initial expectations from the Australian school were also related to his son's learning of print literacy. He said, 'I thought my son will have a lot of textbooks and a lot of homework' (Binod, Individual interview, p. 1). In Australia, Binod gradually started to view literacy differently, as part of a whole culture, which included many media and printed materials. Other parents also realised this. This means that in addition to teachers and students, parents can also see themselves as active participants in social change (Cope and Kalantzis 2000).

As discussed earlier, multiliteracies emphasise different modes of meaning-making processes (New London Group 2000). They can be written or spoken language, viewing, listening, use of gestures, knowledge of location or a combination of all these five modes. The findings of this study suggest that this particular group of ESL parents is aware of the importance of these meaning-making processes. They acknowledged that they found the use of computers and the Internet, speaking skills, watching television, the school play, school excursions and camping all useful for developing their children's literacy learning. These elements, explained below, also involve personal and social development.

All of the six parents realised the importance of computers and the Internet, especially to complete their children's project work. For example, in response to a question, whether the Internet was useful for her daughter, Sharon said:

> Yes. Now, yes, because if they are researching, very helpful. She is the only one (works independently) doing the research about her (project) and I just check it if all the ideas and the facts are there.
>
> (Sharon, Individual interview, pp. 10–11)

This finding aligns with Marc Prensky (2001), who argues that the children of our technological era are closely associated with different kinds of digital devices, such as computers. Immersed in a technology-driven Australian society, the ESL parents realised their children would lack competence without knowledge of computer literacy. The parents agreed that, although their children surfed the Internet at home (Valcke et al. 2010), they felt that its use was indispensable for completing school assignments, especially the project work, as Sharon indicates above.

Even though the parents expressed their view that excessive watching of TV or excessive use of digital games is harmful for their children, all of them agreed that TV could be helpful for their children to develop English literacy. As mentioned above, Binod found watching TV very helpful to learn about Australian culture. Lily added,

> Actually I allow them to watch TV. I know it's also exposure for them to English. So to me that's 'another learning' quotation mark [emphasis]. But I'm afraid they will get addicted to watch TV, and watch TV.
>
> (Lily, Individual interview, p. 13)

Lily's response highlights the fact that, on the one hand, parents were aware of the power of the multimodal quality of TV (New London Group 2000), where their children would be exposed to language, images, different locations, gestures or facial expressions at the same time. Lily saw watching TV as 'another learning', which legitimates it in an important sense. On the other hand, parents were concerned that their children could become addicts of TV or other digital devices (see Prensky 2001).

8.6.2 Speaking: foundation of all other literacy practices

The parents were highly aware of speaking as a part of literacy learning. In a focus group interview, remarkably, Dewita emphasised the importance of speaking ten times. In her experience, speaking is the basis for all other literacy practices such as reading, writing or learning grammar. She expressed her view in this way:

> I said I believe that the way you learn a language, by speaking. It's not going to improve their language if you just read or exercise (writing exercise).
>
> (Dewita, Focus group interview 1, p. 6)

> I taught them to speak English and after that they can learn the grammar. If you hear my kids speaking, their grammar still sometimes messed up [laughter]. But they, they, express themselves using English.
>
> (Dewita, Focus group interview 1, p. 4)

Similarly, Sharon stated that if her daughter does not speak English fluently she cannot succeed in school. She said:

> That's very important – speaking. Because even in school first there is report and you have to speak with your classmate about your report (oral presentation of students' work). Speaking is very important.
>
> (Sharon, Individual interview, p. 7)

As Brian Street (1993) pointed out, speaking is an invaluable source of literacy learning. These parents also realised that without being confident speakers of English their children cannot learn other aspects of literacy, for example, reading, writing or grammar, effectively. This finding also supports Jenny Miller's (2003) argument of the role of speaking in being heard among members of the school family or beyond. None of the parents disagreed with Victorian curriculum document, according to which speaking is also a part of literacy (DEECD 2005).

8.6.3 School play: another source of multimodality

In the third term 2009, the whole school was busy in the preparation of the school play, *Wonderland*, which was going to be performed in the theatre in the fourth term. The production was regarded as a very important event in the school. It was interesting to observe how the participating parents viewed this performance, because their children (except Tara, whose child missed this performance because he went to India at that time) also participated in it. It was found that the parents realised that the production was a useful literacy learning activity. They agreed that it helped their children to broaden their literacy horizon in one way or another. Lily said,

> It's important. It's really influential to make kids specially, they sing song. Every time I mention 'Alice', my daughter says, 'It's not /*elis*/ mum, it's /*ales*/, NOT /*elis*/ – /*ales*/, /*ales*/, /*ales*/.' When girls play together at my home, they hold on the paper 'Alice in the Wonderland' and have

> them practise themselves, practising things just like what they saw because they were not the main characters. So they pretend to be the main characters.
>
> (Lily, Focus group interview 1, pp. 7–8)

Three parents in particular agreed that such a performance would help children to improve their speaking because they have to memorise the dialogues. In addition, according to Binod and Nita, their children learned acting, dancing, singing and how to work in a team. They could feel the growth of self-confidence in their children too. Binod and Nita agreed that their children learned to face an audience in the theatre without fear. Further, they developed their cultural knowledge about costumes. For example, what kind of dress should be chosen for a king or a queen or a joker. Drama can be an effective multimodal source to develop multiliteracies in children (Varelas et al. 2010).

8.6.4 Excursions and camping: sites to develop multiliteracies

The parents found the excursion and camping programs organised by the school very useful in developing their children's literacy learning. Three parents emphasised the importance of excursions in developing their children's speaking ability. They were amazed to hear their children's improved English after they came back from camping. For example, Dewita said:

> One thing I noticed from my son when he came back from camping, the way he said word, it's different like he sounded a native! Maybe if he spends a month and when he comes back, he speaks like a 'bogan'!
>
> (Dewita, Focus group interview 1, p. 10)

Along with the improvement in speaking, Lily realised her son's spatial knowledge, an application of one of the meaning-making processes (New London Group 2000), developed through school excursions. Here, spatial knowledge is related to particular space or location. For example, Lily recounted how her son was able to navigate directions to go to the Rialto Tower in the city.

> One thing that I really love from excursion is that I got impressed when my kid could tell me that he was going there to city and, 'Mum, we went to that

> building. Let me show you that building.' You know city is very crowded that I myself cannot remember! And he could show me, 'This is the way, no, no, after this intersection. Go that way and then the highest and the tallest building we went there.' So they also get spatial intelligence and improvement from excursion.
>
> (Lily, Focus group interview 1, p. 9)

Nita knew how her daughter found out the secret of childbirth when she went to the IMAX (3-D movie theatre) and watched a movie related to childbirth. She said:

> My daughter used to ask, 'How is a baby [born]?' So they [teachers] took her there. I used to hide this secret from her, I had never told her. But the day when she came back after watching that movie, she said, 'Papa! I got the secret!' Directly! 'You people used to hide it from me – how is a baby! Look, finally I found it out!'
>
> (Nita, Focus group interview 2, pp. 20–21)

Binod related his son's learning from excursions or camping to his life skills, how his son learned some important survival skills, how he was able to do certain things that he had never done before without his parents and how he learned to be social with peers as well. He said:

> He learnt to be [pause] that's the first time he remained isolated from his parents. And he learnt how to be alone, how to survive alone, he learnt how to make different food, how to play with friends. He remained with his friends without parents. And he made his own bed, that's the first time. He washed his I mean dishes and kind of things, so he learnt survival act, I mean skills.
>
> (Binod, Focus group interview 2, pp. 24–25)

These responses support Trisha Maynard and Jane Waters (2007), who argue for children's outdoor learning to let them explore the real world themselves and learn different aspects of life in a natural and free environment unlike in restricted classrooms.

8.6.5 Personal traits and social skills: parts of literacy learning

The parents realised that the development of their children's personal qualities was a very important part of literacy development. Lily stated that before coming to Australia her understanding about Australian education system was that not only children's IQ development but their EQ (emotional quotient) is also emphasised in Australia. Thus her expectations from her children's school were that her children would be guided to be more self-confident and more organised.

In the beginning, Lily's son found it difficult to adjust in his new school. He was not happy to go to school and used to cry in class. Lily's initial expectation was realised when she saw how seriously her son's teacher attended to developing her child's personal qualities, such as self-confidence, interpersonal communication and handling his emotions. As a result, to her great satisfaction, Lily saw gradual improvement in her son.

Binod stated that Australian teachers do not consider as literate people those who are only able to read printed books. According to him, teachers judge their students' literacy learning on the basis of:

> Their team work. How do they mix up with friends. And maybe their manners. Their speaking skills. Their, like cleaning tubs, how management, and yeah, such skills. And we never thought that these skills are required to be a good student. Reading, if you excel in reading and writing, nothing else counts in there [his home country].
>
> (Binod, Individual interview, p. 8)

As mentioned earlier, parents identified personal traits and social skills like self-control, self-confidence, team work or organisation skills are related to their children's literacy development and their academic interactions with their friends (Miles and Stipek 2006; Neitzel 2009).

8.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed various means of literacy teaching and learning in an Australian primary school, and the ways in which newly arrived ESL parents perceived these. The findings show that the ESL parents were positive about multiliteracies. They realised that in the context of Australian education,

print literacy alone was not enough for their children to excel in school. Digital literacy, orality, school plays, excursions, personal traits and social skills were equally important means to improve literacy learning.

In the changing academic context of Australia, where many students from ESL backgrounds are enrolled in primary schools every year, ESL parents are now one of the key stakeholders in schools. Their opinions on school literacy practices should therefore also be considered to strengthen school literacy programs. ESL parents are not as ignorant about their children's school literacy practices, as is sometimes assumed by mainstream school teachers. They are also aware of changing contexts in a global world. Their insights can be useful to support and to improve school literacy programs.

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8

Critical Literacy and ICT: Experiences of ESL Students in Australia

EKATERINA TOUR

SUMMARY In the era of globalisation, English as a second language (ESL) speakers frequently engage in technology-mediated international business, culture, science and education. They need to be able to participate in these practices in meaningful, intelligent and reflective ways. This requirement highlights the importance of developing students' critical capabilities in the context of technology use in ESL. However, the development and enhancement of these capabilities may be challenging for teachers and students in Australian educational institutions because of ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, linguistic and educational diversity in almost every classroom. Drawing on a part of a larger qualitative research study of four international students from Thailand, China, Saudi Arabia and France, this chapter discusses ESL students' critical literacy practices in a technological environment. Informed by sociocultural theoretical orientations to understanding literacy and the 3-D Model (Green 1988), it describes the students' challenges with these practices and discusses their nature. The chapter argues that there is a need for ESL educators to address the students' difficulties and rethink pedagogical practices with information and communication technologies (ICT) in ESL education.

9.1 Introduction

Critical literacy has become a popular approach to language teaching, promoted in many countries, including Australia. Engagement in critical literacy practices has the potential to give students the opportunity to understand the complex relationships between language, social practices and power, and to learn how to question social disparity. These capabilities are especially important in the context of the Digital Age, with ICT offering many benefits to consumers, but also some risks. The development of critical capabilities represents a challenge for international students in Australia because they are using English as their second language and using technology in a new context. Teaching critical literacy in the context of ICT to ESL students is also problematic because of the complex factors affecting the teaching environment: different ethnic groups, English language proficiency, experience of and attitude to technology, and socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. These factors have had complex implications for ESL education and, in particular, for technology use in ESL pedagogy.

A number of researchers argue that it is necessary to be vigilant about ICT and to approach technology use with a certain degree of scepticism (Lankshear et al. 2000; Morgan 2001; Murray 2000; Snyder 2008). They emphasise the importance of teaching critical literacy associated with ICT use because these capabilities are not naturally acquired. However, their research has focused on first language learning; the research on critical literacy associated with ICT use in the context of second language is not as extensive. Moreover, often the dominant perspective on the role of ICT in ESL classroom focuses on the improvement of language proficiency. These practices are valuable but insufficient in the technology-driven era for learners who need to participate in technology-mediated international business, culture, science, and education in meaningful, intelligent and reflective ways.

This chapter draws on a qualitative study that involved a class of ESL learners, with a focus on four students and their teacher at Briston University English Language Centre (BUELC), located in Melbourne, Australia. The participants, Kate (Thailand), Ahmad (Saudi Arabia), Chen Lin (China) and Pierre (France), were in their 20s, and all of them intended to start their postgraduate degrees at Briston University upon completion of the English language course. The Computer Study Skills Module was of particular research interest, as the main focus of this module was the development of certain capabilities associated with ICT use for academic purposes. Informed by a constructivist paradigm, the research followed a multiple case-study design (Yin 2003). Employing methods of data generation such as class observations, participants' diaries of ICT use and interviews with the students and their teacher, the study examined (1) how the international students were engaged with ICT use in ESL in their studies and everyday lives, and (2) what challenges they experienced in these practices and why. Critical literacy practices associated with technology use were a part of overall participants' experiences with ICT as suggested by the theoretical framework that informed the study.

9.2 Contemporary perspective: what does it mean to be literate?

The view of literacy has undergone many changes over the last half century within broader epistemological shifts through Marxism, structuralism, and modernism to postmodernism and post-structuralism (Purcell-Gates 2007). New Literacy Studies (NLS) (Barton et al. 2000; Gee 1991; Gee 2000; Hamilton 2002; Lankshear and Knobel 2003; Street 1995; Street 1999; Pahl and Rowsell 2005; Scribner and Cole 1981) has brought about a major shift in the field of

literacy research by challenging and questioning the long-dominant belief in literacy as a decontextualised set of skills, dependent on cognitive ability. These researchers argue that literacy practices are always a part of diverse social, cultural, historical, political and economical contexts. Elaborating on this view, Barton et al. (2000, 12) state that, literacy practices are 'patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others'. This suggests that literacy is not value-free and neutral; its nature is highly 'ideological' (Street 2005, 417). Within this understanding of literacy, the power of language is recognised; texts and associated practices are viewed as being closely linked to purpose, intentions and ideology – they represent some views, values and beliefs and silence others'. This conceptualisation of literacy has brought the critical aspect of literacy into focus when thinking about pedagogy.

The definitions of critical literacy in the academic literature vary because critical literacy refers to a wide range of educational philosophies and practices (Snyder 2008). Nevertheless, these definitions overlap in many ways. For example, Luke and Freebody (1999, 6) view critical literacy as an approach that enables 'teachers, students and communities to explore alternative ways of structuring practices around texts to address new cultural and economic contexts'. Similarly, Luke (2000, 453) defines the focus of critical literacy as 'teaching and learning how texts work, understanding and re-mediating what texts attempt to do in the world and to people, and moving students towards active position-taking with texts to critique and reconstruct the social fields in which they live and work'. Morgan (2001, 36) refers to critical literacy as:

> … the understanding that all users of language aim to persuade their hearers or readers of their viewpoint; and that all texts offer a particular angle on society and human interactions. Moreover, different groups in the society have different access to power, status and wealth; this depends largely on the ways they and their worlds are described and defined through language and the values that are promoted by these means. So the work of critical literacy is to investigate how those forms of knowledge, and the power they bring, are created in language and taken up by those who use such texts. It asks how language might be put to different, more equitable uses, and how texts might be (re)created that would tell a different story of other possibilities for a more just world.

According to Snyder (2008, 78), critical literacy is concerned with 'the politics of meaning: how dominant meanings are maintained, challenged and

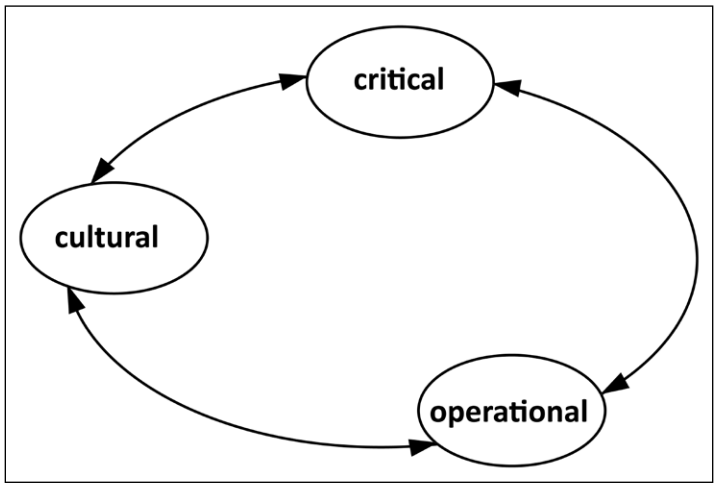

Figure 9.1 3-D model of literacy
Source: Durrant and Green 2001, 152.

changed' and its overall aim is 'development of social awareness and active, responsive citizenship'. Snyder argues that the most extreme aim of critical literacy education is encouragement and preparation of people to take an action for 'radical democratic social transformations' (p. 79).

A number of approaches have been developed by Australian researchers to address the development of these capabilities in the context of literacy education in schools. Two of the most influential are the Four Resources Model (Luke and Freebody 1999) and the 3-D Model (Green 1988). Luke and Freebody's model suggests that the learners need to assume four roles when engaging with a text – code breaker, text participant, text user and text analyst. Green's model (see Figure 9.1) views literacy as comprising three interlocking dimensions – operational, cultural and critical – each of them deals with different aspects of literacy practice and associated capabilities.

Both models argue for critical literacy (e.g. text analysis in the Four Resources Model and the critical dimension in the 3-D Model) as a part of contemporary literacy education. Importantly, the 3-D Model emphasises that words, texts, meanings cannot be separated from the contexts of their use and they require not only 'decoding' or 'encoding', but also interacting, analysing and reflecting their purposes, interests and biases.

Informed by a social perspective that views literacy as a context-situated practice, another significant change in understanding literacy is associated with the development and spread of ICT. Technology use has become an

increasingly important activity in the lives of many people – modern society and many aspects of its life are highly dependent on information and services that are produced, consumed, exchanged and preserved in an electronic form. The texts in a technological environment are dramatically different from print-based – they are multimodal (i.e. meaning may be constructed in linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, spatial and multimodal ways) (New London Group 1996), connected in a non-linear manner, highly dynamic and flexible, and can be situated in a wide range of easily accessible local and global contexts. To be able to deal with these issues imposed by ICT, people need appropriate literacy capabilities. Thus, the definition of literacy and characteristics of a literate person in the 21st century continues to expand (New London Group 1996; Lankshear et al. 2000; Snyder 2008, 2009). Different terms co-exist in the academic literature and mass media to describe and characterise the strategic capabilities of a literate person in the Digital Age – technoliteracy (Lankshear et al. 2000), electronic literacy (Warschauer 1999), digital literacy (Gilster 1997), silicon literacy (Snyder 2002), and multiliteracies (New London Group 1996). The terms vary as their informing theoretical perspectives do. However, they all argue that the concept of literacy is no longer associated with linguistic symbols only and also that literacy associated with the use of ICT is more than an ability to decode and encode with the help of technological devices.

The term 'technoliteracy' was chosen for the study on which this chapter draws because it captures the notion that literacy practices are enacted in a technological environment, and it also conveys a broad understanding of literacy needs in contemporary society. The concept of technoliteracy capabilities is defined as 'being able to decode and encode fluently; using literacy abilities and understandings involved in researching and reporting information; reading and deciding what is relevant; note taking; scanning, and collecting information in a selective way' (Lankshear et al. 2000, 25). Technoliteracy requires traditional skills but also some new capabilities associated with different dimensions of technology. Lankshear et al. (2000) suggest that the 3-D Model, valuable for a holistic understanding of print-based literacy practices, also enables the understanding of the complex nature of technoliteracy practices in the most comprehensive way. It brings all the dimensions (operational, cultural and critical) of literacy as a social practice equally to both language and ICT. The operational dimension refers both to the language and technology aspect (e.g. capabilities to deal with language systems and technological skills). The cultural dimension focuses on meaning – capabilities of understanding and producing meaning in a

context-appropriate way. The critical dimension of literacy deals with social construction of knowledge and developing the ability to critique, evaluate and redesign the resources that mediate these technoliteracy practices. The model facilitates understanding about how these interrelated capabilities make the technoliteracy practice successful. This leads to the conclusion that if individuals experience challenges when using technology, these capabilities, or some of them, may be insufficient or limited. Such a perspective has informed data analysis in the study. However, given the fact that the model has not been used as a research perspective in the context of second language, it guided the analysis, rather than limited it.

To sum up, contemporary conceptualisations of literacy view it as contextual, active and multimodal. They also emphasise the importance of critical literacy in the context of ICT use where multiple, easily accessible services, information and digital texts are ubiquitous. In response to the current debate, following section, through the lens of the 3-D Model, examines ESL students' critical literacy practices with technology. It is argued that these practices are deeply problematic, and thus it is important for ESL educators in Australia to understand why addressing these issues in pedagogy may represent a challenge and what can be done to encourage and enhance critical literacy in the context of technology and ESL use.

9.3 Critical literacy and ICT: challenges for ESL students

The study found that the participants used a wide range of technologies for a variety of purposes – services, information, communication, entertainment and learning – and these practices required the users to be sceptical and critical. However, the participants often did not engage with technology in a critical manner. Their main challenge was limited understanding and knowledge of critical literacy as well as associated capabilities, which are discussed below.

Language proficiency was a significant obstacle for critical engagement with technology, especially in an academic discourse. For example, Kate said that her English language difficulties often prevented her from expressing her ideas in academic writing in an argumentative and persuasive way:

> I have to show my opinion [in writing] … teacher says it makes no sense … I think it's a very big problem for me because if I go to Master [degree] I cannot express my opinion! And nobody can understand me. That's not good.

Ahmad said that his particular concern was with understanding academic articles in online journals. Struggling with 'decoding' the content, he often failed to engage with it critically:

> [T]he writers [academics] … are using academic style and strong vocabulary and I don't know what they are talking about. I don't understand the point of this paragraph because they are using very difficult vocab and very difficult structure.

The participants also said that being unconfident in their ESL capabilities they often relied on technology. For instance, three of them reported that they trusted absolutely the spell check in word processing, although several of them referred to situations when the spell check, and especially the grammar check, were unreliable. As Durrant and Green (2001, 160) argue, 'Practices need to become "meaningful" before they can become "critical".' Critical practice requires access (encoding and decoding in terms of language; navigation in terms of technology) and comprehension in contextually appropriate ways. Lack of confidence and limited ESL proficiency encouraged the participants to rely on technology and associated practices, preventing them from engaging with them critically. The findings suggest that critical literacy capabilities require both linguistic and technological competence, which Lankshear et al. (2000) refer to as 'operational capabilities'.

Another reason for difficulties with critical literacy practices was lack or limited knowledge of the context in which these practices were embedded. During one of the observation sessions at BUELC, I observed the class searching the Internet to answer some questions about Australia as a part of the task. Although the students managed to find the answers about Australian pop singer Kylie Minogue and the Australian men's soccer team, Socceroos, on Google, they could hardly read the names aloud and they did not look confident about their answers. This indicated to me that they were unfamiliar with Australian pop culture and sport, and thus could not evaluate critically the reliability of the information. The problem is that Google is not neutral (Haigh 2006; Dean 2008). Intent on gaining commercial advantage, individuals find ways to improve the search ranking of their websites and place them in Google top search results. These websites are not necessarily the most popular nor the most reliable, but many users are unaware of this fact. Similarly, Ahmad referred to his GPS navigator use and reading online news. He told me that he trusted absolutely the information when he did not have any experience or knowledge about the content and its context. But if he was familiar with it he always questioned what he read or heard:

> It [trusting] depends on the subject. For example, if they are talking about … for example the war in Iraq … what's going on there I always don't trust them … I think I know what's happening in the Middle East. But when they are talking about Australian culture or something about Australia – yeah … I always trust in this subject.

Ahmad recognised that language was not neutral and cold be used to persuade and manipulate people. His background and related perceptions of the world encouraged him to question the information about the Middle East. However, having the capacity to be critical in the native environment does not necessarily mean that the capacity will be evident in a new sociocultural context. Learners cannot think and read critically if they do not have background knowledge (Durrant and Green 2001; Thistlethwaite 1990). Unfamiliar and inexperienced with a new culture and social practices, the participants in the present study tended to accept things. They did not recognise the need and, perhaps, did not have the skills (linguistic or technological) to check the reliability of the information associated with the Australian context. Contextual knowledge and understanding the role of context, as components of the cultural dimension of the 3-D model, represent important capabilities for using technology in ESL critically because technoliteracy practices are meaningful, reflective and thus effective and beneficial if they are performed with context-appropriate awareness and experience.

Critical literacy practices in academic settings were especially challenging for the participants. Although they were explained and introduced, certain terms, strategies and techniques, student capabilities were still insufficient. For example, during an observation session, the students were given a task – to read an article, find arguments, and position themselves within the topic, referring to other articles as well. Many students in the class were confused by the task. Their particular challenge was to assume an 'academic position'. They did not understand what this meant, and what they were supposed to write in this section of the task – the teacher had to explain this several times, even though the issues had been discussed during the last class. Similarly, Kate commented on her knowledge about the reliability of the articles she could use in essays: 'I just heard from teacher that here we have to choose peer-reviewed … but I don't know much about it. How they can become peer-reviewed?' Three out of four participants reported that they were unfamiliar with the critical literacy approach before they started learning at BUELC. Ahmad remembered that back home the lecturers at his university encouraged students to 'go and find some information from online' for academic writing,

but did not emphasise the need for critical awareness and learning relevant strategies. Only Pierre said that a critical approach to technology use was practised at the educational institutions where he studied in France and Spain. The teacher said that most of the students in the class were not critical and seemed to be indifferent to critical literacy practices. They also did not know much about writing strategies and techniques for academically appropriate genres involving critique, analysis and personal opinion.

Overall, critical literacy in the class seemed to focus only on academic practices: searching relevant information in reliable sources; identifying and comparing different academic positions; analysing power of language and its means in different genres; engaging the students with academic discussions and encouraging them to take a stance in these debates; and writing with arguments and evidence. However, the need for a broader critical attitude to technology and technoliteracy practices in and, especially, out of the classroom appeared to be neglected. When the participants referred to absolute trust in some technologies, they were asked why. Kate replied: 'They are machines! They should work well!' Pierre spoke about technology in a similar manner: 'There is always like errors but I think for the use the errors is very low …' One of the ideologies underpinning a range of discourses about ICT is a belief in the positive influence of technology on most human activities (Morgan 2001). This is evident in these examples and helps to explain the nature of absolute trust in technology. Thistlethwaite (1990, 587) also argues that 'a critical reader realises that everything that is read needs to be read critically'. Although at BUELC the participants developed some understanding about critical literacy, they did not seem to acknowledge that they should always question and critique any existing knowledge and stereotypes about any technology considering power relations and ideologies in technoliteracy practices. Furthermore, they needed to develop capabilities to be able to apply critical literacy strategies when using ICT in different contexts. These capabilities constitute the critical dimension of the model.

Personal interests and characteristics, which are not a part of the 3-D Model, were identified in the study as a significant factor influencing individual willingness to assume a critical perspective and take social or political action. Among all the participants, only Chen Lin was interested in critical literacy practices online in and out of class. She appeared to be a critical user of technology who resisted the power of text and participated actively in transforming literacy as a social practice. Chen Lin said that she often participated in online discussions, and as one of the examples she referred to her reaction to the online article that supported restrictions on abortions in Australia. She strongly disagreed with the article, calling it 'a stand in one side' because its main argument was 'abortion

is cruel'. She considered it to be limited and ignoring many other aspects of the problem. Chen Lin posted online her comments with explanation and examples. In contrast, Ahmad said that he hardly commented on any video he watched on YouTube or any article online: 'I don't care about the comments … I just ignore.' As Thistlethwaite (1990) argues, readers are more likely to read critically if they have enough interest in the topic. This suggests that a sufficiently interesting and provoking topic may encourage students to respond and engage in critical literacy practices.

9.4 Conclusion

Being critical is one of the important characteristics of a literate person because of the contemporary complexity and multiplicity of relationship between ICT, social practices and power. As the overview of the research suggests, many researchers and practitioners have done and continue to do excellent work to develop effective theoretical approaches and integrate them in teaching. However, engaging the students, and in particular ESL students, in these practices is challenging and problematic in many ways. The challenges discussed above suggest that ESL learners need more opportunities to increase their awareness about the need to be critical with technology in different contexts, to develop relevant capabilities to be able to use technology and associated products critically, and to be more motivated to engage actively in critical literacy practices in a technological environment.

Looking at technology use in an ESL context through the lens of the NLS and the 3-D Model provides valuable insights into how ESL students participate in these practices and what factors may prevent them from critical engagement with technology. ESL students need a wide range of interrelated operational, cultural and critical capabilities to be able to deal with technology in a profound, thoughtful and intellectual way. The language proficiency of the students may vary significantly. However, this does not suggest neglecting the development of critical skills in the early stages of second language learning. Rather, it emphasises the importance of linguistic support for the students to assist this development. Teaching about technology, its functions and how they work, as well as about the practices and experiences technology offers, is important to encourage engagement in critical literacy practices in different ways in and out of the classroom, and to enhance the development of a sceptical attitude to technologies.

It is essential that the students understand that any technoliteracy practice is always situated in a specific context that shapes it. Being unfamiliar with

new contexts, students need more opportunities to learn how to find out what the texts in a technological environment mean and how to position them as readers or listeners. To address critical technoliteracy in pedagogical practices, educators also need to teach students what concepts, issues, techniques and strategies critical literacy practices may involve. Introduction and explanation is significant because critical literacy may not be a part of the students' previous educational experiences. Critical technoliteracy needs to be applied to a broader context of ICT use, but not limited to an academic one. It is important to facilitate students' understanding that ICT and texts in a technological environment are not neutral and that their use always carries 'hidden' implications, influencing human interests both positively and negatively. Technology supports and improves human life in many ways, but absolute trust in technology is full of risk, whether it is software, a self-service machine in a public place, information from an online resource, or a reliable-looking text message.

Critical technoliteracy in an ESL context has great potential for intellectual and academic learning as well as social activism. Thus, it is important to promote, support and encourage critical literacy with ICT among ESL students in a positive, interesting and stimulating way to engage them in these experiences. This will empower learners to understand how textual practices in a technological environment, shaped by their own biases, influence and change them as members of society and to respond to these changes in an active and questioning manner. The discussion in the chapter draws attention to what it means to be literate and why the critical aspect of technoliteracy practices is so significant for ESL learners and challenging at the same time. If this is understood by educators and appropriate steps are taken towards meeting the ESL learners' needs in these practices, then ESL students will have more opportunities to be prepared and confident to participate actively in a world in which technology-mediated practices are integral.

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9

School Science Textbooks: A Challenge for Promoting Scientific Literacy in Bangladesh

MAHBUB SARKAR

SUMMARY A number of studies reported that in Bangladesh, science teaching is single-textbook oriented and examination based, where items taken from textbooks are used to assess students, and tests often require answers to be copied from the textbook. Such an approach reinforces the need for students and teachers to rely heavily on the recommended textbook, which may also help to promote scientific literacy. This chapter examines the presentation of science content in three General Science textbooks used in the junior secondary education in Bangladesh in an attempt to find out whether or not they have the potential to promote scientific literacy. To achieve this, pure science content and science content applied in context are considered in the analytical framework. It is argued that more emphasis should be given to science content applied in context in a textbook designed to promote scientific literacy. Results show that the analysed textbooks mostly emphasise pure content, which represents the theoretical aspects of science, is abstract in nature and is not connected to real-life context. This approach may restrict students from seeing that the science they learn in school has obvious need to function effectively in a technological society, which provides a challenge for preparing a scientifically literate populace in Bangladesh.

10.1 Introduction

During the 1980s, Fensham's (1985) call for a 'Science for All' was recognised worldwide as a commitment to provide science to all students, not just to the elite. Subsequently, this slogan has now been modified to one of 'scientific literacy' (Law et al. 2000; Wilke and Straits 2005), which is advocated worldwide as a goal of school science education as for example in the USA (American Association for the Advancement of Science 1989,1993; National Research Council 1996), in the UK (Millar and Osborne 1998), in the Netherlands (De Vos and Reiding 1999), and in Australia (Goodrum et al. 2001). As in these countries, junior secondary science education in Bangladesh aims to provide a good foundation in science for all students to enable them to use their science learning in real life (NCTB 1995). This aim is consistent with the aim of a preparation of a scientifically literate citizenry because scientific literacy argues for engaging students with science in everyday lives (Tytler et al. 2008).

Scientific literacy is associated with other forms of literacy, such as reading and mathematical literacy (OECD 2006). As science knowledge is articulated and communicated through text and its associated symbols, diagrams, graphs and mathematical derivations, a reasonable level of reading and mathematical literacy is necessary for scientific literacy (Hodson 2008; OECD 2006). However, an important factor for promoting scientific literacy is how science knowledge is represented and communicated to students so that they can engage with science in their life. This chapter examines the presentation of science knowledge in Bangladeshi school science textbooks in an attempt to find out whether or not they have the potential to prepare scientifically literate citizens.

10.2 Curriculum context in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, the education system consists of two major levels of school education: primary and secondary. Secondary school has three sub-stages: junior secondary (Grade VI–VIII), secondary (Grade IX–X), and higher secondary (Grade XI–XII). From Grade IX, students choose their future study direction from the groups of science, humanities and business studies. At the junior secondary level a single curriculum caters for all students. 'General Science' is a compulsory unit for all at this level, which forms 10 per cent of the total curriculum (NCTB 1995). This General Science subject is integrated in nature, and consists of Physical Science, Life Science and Earth Science.

In the Bangladesh junior secondary curriculum report, it is stated that 'in these days, the importance of acquiring scientific knowledge and skills is important for improving quality of life, solving day-to-day problems and making decisions' (NCTB 1995, 353). In order to provide such knowledge and skills, the General Science course is compulsory for everyone, even though almost 75 per cent of students will choose the non-science group at the secondary level (BANBEIS 2006). So the junior secondary curriculum should provide a good foundation in science for all students, including those who will take further studies in science. The emphasis in the curriculum needs to cater for both of these groups, as the former group will need a solid foundation in science in preparation for being effective citizens, while the latter group will additionally need a good foundation to prepare them for further study in science as well. This emphasis, however, does not always remain in balance in the curriculum, with teachers often emphasising the good foundation for the future science career group more than the first (Sarkar 2009).

In Bangladesh, science teaching is single-textbook oriented (Asian Development Bank 2006). Students are assessed by the items taken from the textbook (Holbrook 2005), and tests often demand answers to be copied from the textbook (Holbrook and Khatun 2004, cited in Siddique 2007). Such an approach reinforces the need for students and teachers to rely heavily on this recommended textbook, which is often considered as 'de facto curriculum' in Bangladesh (Siddique 2008). Consequently, promoting scientific literacy in Bangladesh may be related to the textbooks. Therefore it is important to look at whether textbooks have potential to promote scientific literacy.

10.3 Science knowledge and scientific literacy

No consensus exists for universal acceptance regarding the conceptions of scientific literacy (Jenkins 1990; DeBoer 2000; Roberts 2007; Osborne 2007), and this may be due to the dependence of scientific literacy on context. Roberts (2007) attempts to track the different meanings attached to scientific literacy and categorise the various definitions into two main types, which he calls Vision I and Vision II. In Vision I, the products and processes of science are the starting point of defining scientific literacy. These products and processes of science are then exemplified by the situations or context in which science may have a role. In this manner, context is just used as add-ons to traditional content. On the other hand, Vision II starts with situations or contexts, and then reaches into science to find the relevant content. Vision II aims 'to enculturate students into their local, national, and global communities' (Aikenhead 2008, 1). Vision I places more emphasis on the theoretical science content that is often abstract and is not connected to immediate applications and Vision II focuses on the context in which science is embedded rather than considering the science content in isolation. Roth and Barton (2004) argue that if students are provided with everyday context for learning science, they can continue and sustain this learning for their entire life.

In discussing the implication of these two visions, Aikenhead (2008) points out that Vision I results in decreased enrolments in science along with little or no scientific literacy, while Vision II can promote scientific literacy to a reasonable degree. Because Vision II places more emphasis on context, in a textbook for promoting scientific literacy more emphasis should be given on content applied in context that has relevance to students.

Science content knowledge is important for both intrinsic and instrumental justification, as suggested by Millar (1996). Intrinsic justification refers to cultural aspects, i.e. scientific knowledge can help people to satisfy their curiosity about

the natural world, which is also very important in learning (Howes 2001). On the other hand, instrumental justification refers to the utilitarian aspects; i.e. scientific knowledge is necessary as a foundation for making informed practical decisions about everyday matters, participating in decision making to science-related issues, and working in science- and technology-related jobs (Millar 1996). Both of these justifications are consistent with science content applied in context, because this content may provide learners with the knowledge required in everyday decision making and may satisfy their curiosity about the natural world around them. However, there is still a case to be made for pure science content because there is much science content that is difficult to present as contextualised in students' lives, example (e.g. the structure of an atom), even though content like this may have importance in order to understand other related content.

Thus it is not intended that the pure content disappears, but it is argued that in a curriculum for scientific literacy, more emphasis should be given to content applied in context that has relevance to students' life (Aikenhead 2008). In contrast, more emphasis on theoretical, abstract content often characterises a traditional presentation of science curriculum (Fensham 1985), which may lack potential for promoting promote scientific literacy. Therefore, acknowledging the presence of pure science content, my intention here is to explore whether science content applied in context was given emphasis and how it was emphasised in the textbooks.

10.4 Methodology

The study adopts a structured document analysis approach. Three General Science textbooks used in the junior secondary education in Bangladesh were analysed using an analytical framework, which was developed for the purpose of this study. The textbooks analysed were:

- Shamsuddoha, A K M; Miah, M G R; Wahab, M A; Khan, Z I. 2008. *General Science: For Class VI* [in Bengali]. Refined edn. Dhaka: National Curriculum and Textbook Board.
- Shamsuddoha, A K M; Miah, M G R; Wahab, M A; Khan, Z I; Chowdhury, M H K. 2008. *General Science: For class VII* [in Bengali]. Refined edn. Dhaka: National Curriculum and Textbook Board.
- Shamsuddoha, A K M; Miah, M G R; Wahab, M A; Khan, Z I; Morshed, A K M. 2008. *General Science: For class VIII* [in Bengali]. Refined edn. Dhaka: National Curriculum and Textbook Board.

10.4.1 Analytical framework

Bailey (1978) developed and used a framework to explore the shift in emphasis of chemistry curriculums in Victoria, Australia for the period 1932–1972. Later Corrigan (1999) adapted it to examine the shift in emphasis of chemistry curriculums in the same region for the period 1932–1998. More recently, Siddique (2007) modified this framework and applied it to identify the changes in priorities given in the proposed secondary science curriculum as compared to the existing curriculum in Bangladesh. This framework was considered in developing the analytical framework for purposes of the present research.

In Bailey's framework (1978), the 'product' dimension was referred to as 'the set of assertions or knowledge statements (laws, theories, hypotheses, definitions, facts, etc.) generated by the scientific process' (p. 12). As this dimension is associated with the science content, this dimension is adapted in this research to explore how science content is presented in the textbooks. In this dimension, science content was classified into two components: pure content and socially applied content, which together form opposite ends of a continuum. Again, there were two sub-dimensions of socially applied content in Bailey's original framework – industrial versus domestic application in one dimension, and social ideology in the other. Domestic and industrial application of science referred to how science is linked with the learner's own life and how science is linked with them as a member of the broader community respectively, while the sub-dimension 'social ideology' shows how science is portrayed as interacting with society. Content of industrial application (e.g. production of steel) referred to content relating to industrial production and is related to the 'wider community of the learners' (Bailey 1978, 13), where the 'wider community' may refer to people beyond learners' family and peer groups. On the other hand, content of domestic applications is more directly related to the life of the learners (e.g. hardness of water. In the analytical framework for this research, the Programme for International Student Assessment contexts (OECD 2006) has been adopted and included, replacing both industrial and domestic application of science content for the following reasons.

In the PISA study, contexts are characterised by two aspects: life situations and areas of application of science. Three life situations of learners have been considered: personal life (relating to the self, family and peer groups), social life (relating to the community), and global life (relating to life across the world), which can represent life situations of the learners as self and as a member of the 'wider community'. The PISA contexts cover a wide range of possible areas of application that learners might encounter, such as 'health', 'natural resources',

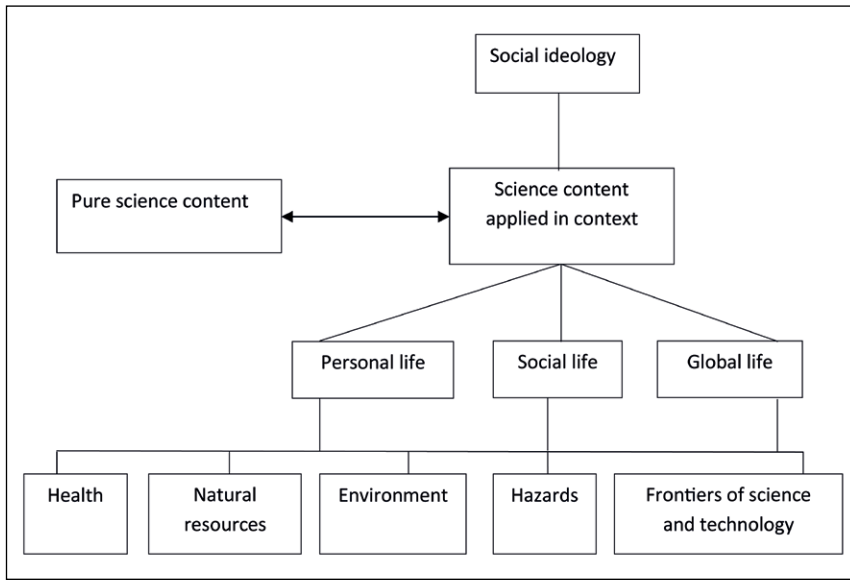

Figure 10.1 The analytical framework

'the environment', 'hazards', and 'the frontiers of science and technology'. These areas of application of science have particular importance to individuals and communities in promoting and sustaining quality of life and in the development of public policy (OECD 2006). So the PISA contexts are broader than just industrial and domestic applications of science and also encompass better representation of the communities within which science operates. I have therefore adopted PISA contexts in the present analytical framework, as in Figure 10.1, replacing Bailey's (1978) industrial and domestic application of science content.

Another sub-dimension of socially applied science content in Bailey's (1978) framework, 'social ideology', is characterised by the effects of science and technology in the society. These effects can be either to improve the quality of human life by solving problems or to decrease the quality by leading to problems. For example, science has saved many lives by inventing effective medicines and treatments against various diseases. This may indicate the positive social ideology of science. On the other hand, chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) is one of the responsible agents for ozone layer depletion, which may cause various health hazards, such as skin cancer, cataracts and eye problems (World Health Organization 2008). Such effects can be regarded as negative social ideology of science. Since science is highly related to society, the sub-

dimension social ideology is significant in this framework and will remain, as shown in Figure 10.1.

10.4.2 Using the analytical framework

This section discusses how the analytical framework described in Section 10.4.1 was used to analyse the junior secondary textbooks in Bangladesh. In particular, Section 10.4.2.1 describes the use of the framework for making judgements about the nature of the content, while Section 10.4.2.2 further extends the understanding of making judgements about the emphases given on content in contexts as represented in the target textbooks in Bangladesh.

10.4.2.1 Making judgement about the representation of content

According to the representation in the textbooks, science content can be classified into three types:

- Type I content (presented as pure science content)
- Type II content (presented as content applied in context)
- Type I–II content (could be presented as applied in context).

Examples of each type of content are illustrated in Table 10.1.

Based on this classification of content, in this analysis, units or chapters in the General Science textbooks were classified into two categories:

- Vision I units (units with emphasis on Type I and/or Type I–II content)
- Vision II units (units with an emphasis on Type II content).

The purpose of this categorisation is to determine the emphasis placed on content in a textbook unit, which will determine the emphasis placed in a whole textbook. Table 10.2 shows how judgements about these categories of the units were made.

10.4.2.2 Making judgement about the emphasis given on content applied in context

In this research, dimensions of the content applied in context (Figure 10.1) are rated following the same scheme that Bailey (1978) used in his research. Bailey rated each of the dimensions except 'social ideology' in his framework on a Likert-type five-point scale: 'very weak', 'weak', 'moderate', 'strong', and 'very strong'. Social ideology was rated on a three-point scale: 'positive', 'neutral', and 'negative'. Almost in a similar way to Bailey, emphasis on each of

Content	Illustrative quote from the textbook	Rationale for judgement
Type I content	The path in a magnetic field along which an isolated and free North Pole travels is called magnetic lines of force. The direction of magnetic lines of force is to the South Pole from the North Pole … Properties of the magnetic lines of force are: 1. Two magnetic lines of force never intersect each other. 2. The intensity of a magnetic field is stronger at points where the lines of force are close to one another. 3. Magnetic lines of force start vertically from the North Pole and meet at the South Pole. (Shamsuddoha et al. 2008a, 114–115)	There is no discussion in the textbook about the purpose or importance of learning this content. Also, this content is abstract in nature and there is no obvious application of this content in learners' (age 12+) life context.
Type II content	We talk and sing by using a microphone. A microphone transforms sound energy into electrical energy. The speaker transforms this electrical energy into sound energy. Thus we can listen to words or music. Magnets are used in the microphone and the speaker for this transformation of energy from one kind to another. (Shamsuddoha et al. 2008a, 116, emphasis added)	Use of magnet for transforming energy from one kind to another is presented in this content. The presentation starts with 'we', which may indicate this knowledge is something related to students' life. Life context has been appeared prior to the presentation of theoretical concepts in this content, and is therefore considered as Type II (applied in context).
Type I–II content	Take a big glass flask. Close it with a cork. Insert a narrow glass tube through the cork. Drop into the tube a few drop of coloured water. You will see that the drops of water go down through the tube a little and come to rest at a point … in the tube. Now rub your hands several times to make your palms hot and hold the flask tightly in your hands. You will observe that the coloured drops of water have gone up to a point … [higher than the previous point]. This is because heat from hands made the air inside the flask hot. As the hot air expands in volume, the drops of water go up to make room for the expanded gas. The expansion of gaseous substance is much higher than the expansion of a solid or liquid for the same amount of increase in temperature. (Shamsuddoha et al. 2008a, 9)	This 'recipe-type' experiment illustrates how an expansion in gases occurs due to the heat. However, no application of this thermal expansion of gases is presented in the textbook, although it could be presented. For example, this content could start with illustrating a scenario that in the very hot summer, tyre pressure of a car is often suggested to be kept less than that of the pressure appeared in the winter, as heated roads in the summer may cause air inside tyres to inflate and there may be a danger of tyre burst. The conception of the higher expansion in gases could thereafter be presented. Further, an application of the higher expansion in gases as compared to solids and liquids could be exemplified through presenting the idea of gas thermometer. Therefore, it may be reasonable to consider this content as Type I–II.

Table 10.1 Representative textbook excerpts corresponding to the judgement made about the content

Vision I unit	The unit 'Magnet' in the Grade VII textbook mostly dealt with pure content, such as magnetic induction, magnetic field, magnetic lines of force and neutral points. An example of such pure content (concept and properties of magnetic lines of force) is illustrated in Table 10.1. However, this unit also included a brief discussion on the uses of magnets in different appliances, such the microphone, speaker and dynamo. Also, uses of these appliances in our life were discussed in the textbook. However, such an application of science is just used as add-ons to the pure content and was represented in only about quarter of a page of this unit of five pages in total. As content of this unit was not guided by the contexts, this unit was therefore judged as Vision I.
Vision II unit	The unit 'Water' in the Grade VI textbook discusses the importance of water in daily life, different sources of water, causes and prevention of water pollution, and natural methods of water purification. The importance of this knowledge to all people was emphasised in the textbook as saying 'the other name of water is life' (Shamsuddoha et al. 2008b, 39), and everyday life contexts were considered in the presentation of content. Therefore, this knowledge was considered as Type II content. Apart from this, the unit discussed water as a compound constituted with hydrogen and oxygen, and methods of decomposing the constituents of water. No relationship of this knowledge with real life was made in the textbook. However, this could be presented through discussing the application of this knowledge in a desalination plant. This particular content, therefore, was considered as Type I–II. However, such Type I–II content was represented in two pages of this unit of six pages in total. Therefore, it was reasonable to consider this unit as Vision II as it placed more emphasis on Type II content than Type I or Type I–II content.

Table 10.2 Making judgement about the categorisation of a textbook unit

the dimensions and their associated components is determined through rough estimations made by:

- counting the number of times aspects are apparent in the textbooks
- determining the time allocation on a particular aspect.

10.4.2.3 Example of how a judgement was made about the content applied in a particular context

Health-related knowledge is presented in at least six units (about 25 per cent) of the Grade VII textbook. Knowledge in these units has been presented to be useful for learners to maintain their personal health. Much of this knowledge has been presented to be used in social and global life. For example, knowledge of controlling dysentery was presented in a Bangladeshi context by emphasising it as a common disease in Bangladesh. Similarly, spread of infectious diseases

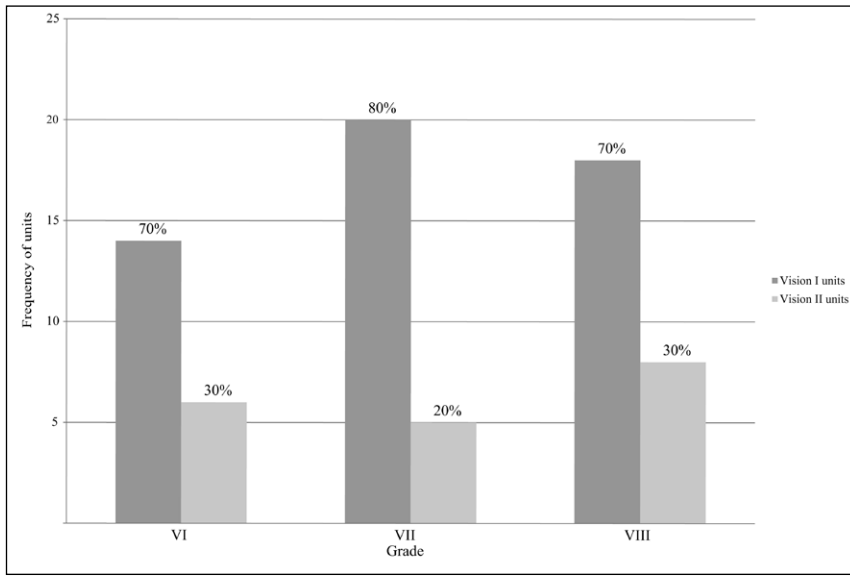

Figure 10.2 Extent of Vision I and Vision II units

like AIDS has been presented as a global issue in the textbook by saying: '*The entire human civilisation* is facing a severe threat because of AIDS – a deadly disease' (Shamsuddoha et al. 2008a, 185, emphasis added). This textbook, therefore, has been judged as having 'very strong' emphasis at all life situations (personal, social and global) in the area of 'health'.

10.5 Findings

According to the purpose of this study, findings have been presented in two sections. The first section examines whether the textbooks in this analysis placed emphasis on content applied in context, while the second section illustrates how content was presented in the analysed textbooks as applied in different life contexts.

10.5.1 Emphasis on pure content versus content applied in context

An examination of the textbooks from Grade VI to VIII elicits the results presented in Figure 10.2.

Figure 10.2 shows that all of the textbooks from Grade VI to VIII included a significant number of Vision I units; in particular, the Grade VII textbook mostly (80 per cent of the total units) included Vision I units. This finding may indicate

that in terms of representation, these textbooks emphasised Type I or Type I–II content, which in turn, minimised the representation of content applied in context (Type II content). As it was argued earlier that in a textbook for scientific literacy more emphasis should be given upon content applied in context, the junior secondary textbooks in this analysis may not be viewed as promoting scientific literacy. However, it is important to know how the content applied in context has been represented in the textbooks, which is presented in the next section.

10.5.2 Exploration of content applied in context

The representation of content applied in context as appeared in the analysed textbooks is illustrated in Table 10.3.

As can be seen in Table 10.3, two application areas of science (health and environment) among the five areas were judged as having strong emphasis in the analysed textbooks. All the textbooks in this analysis included specific units that exclusively presented health- and environment-related content. For example, the Grade VI textbook included three, with one unit in particular exclusively dealing with health and environment-related content respectively. The area 'hazards', on the contrary, was not well considered in any of the analysed textbooks. Although both of the Grade VII and VIII textbooks each included one exclusive unit on hazards, the Grade VI textbook did not include any separate unit on this. Some natural and human induced hazards were just mentioned without having much discussion in Grade VI textbook.

The other application areas of science considered in this research were not well represented in presenting the content. As an application area 'the frontiers of science and technology' did not get much attention in the textbooks, and some of the scientific and technological applications were just mentioned without discussion (e.g. no discussion was found related to music and personal technology, sports and leisure, genetic modification, weapon technology, extinction of species and exploration of space). Knowledge relating to these aspects is applicable to a personal, social and global context (OECD 2006, 27). Similarly, there was insufficient discussion on consumption and conservation of renewable and non-renewable energy – an important aspect of natural resources. Also, in a unit named 'Interdependence of plants and animals' in the Grade VII textbook, conceptual discussions on food chains and food webs were presented but there was no discussion on how a food chain or a food web can be maintained through the conservation of species. This content, therefore, was judged as failing in presenting a comprehensive idea of natural resources that could be applied in learners' personal, social and global life.

Areas of application of science	Grade	Personal life	Social life	Global life	Social ideology
Health	VI	Very strong	Very strong	Very strong	Grade VI – positive Grade VII – positive Grade VIII – positive
	VII	Very strong	Very strong	Very strong	
	VIII	Strong	Strong	Strong	
Natural resources	VI	Weak	Weak–moderate	Weak	
	VII	Moderate	Moderate	Weak–moderate	
	VIII	Moderate–strong	Strong	Moderate–strong	
Environment	VI	Strong	Strong	Strong	
	VII	Strong	Strong	Strong	
	VIII	Strong	Strong	Moderate–strong	
Hazard	VI	Weak	Weak	Very weak–weak	
	VII	Strong	Strong	Moderate	
	VIII	Strong	Strong	Moderate	
Frontiers of science and technology	VI	Weak	Very weak–weak	Very weak–weak	
	VII	Moderate	Very weak–weak	Very weak–weak	
	VIII	Moderate	Weak	Very weak–weak	

Table 10.3 Relative emphasis on science content applied in context

Table 10.3 shows that all of the textbooks in this analysis were rated positively with respect to social ideology. In a number of instances, links between science and society were made so that students would be encouraged to think of science in a positive way. Also, in some cases, the importance of science in a human's life was explicitly stated, for example, in Grade VII textbook: 'many day-to-day problems can be solved by applying scientific knowledge' (Shamsuddoha et al. 2008a, 148). Science is highly related to society, such a portrayal of a positive social ideology in the textbooks may be argued to prepare a scientifically literate populace.

10.6 Conclusion

This chapter explores the representation of science content in the General Science textbooks used in the junior secondary education in Bangladesh. Results show that the analysed textbooks mostly emphasised the pure content, which represented the theoretical aspects of science, was abstract in nature and was not connected to real-life contexts. This Vision I approach may prevent students from seeing that the science they learn in school has obvious need to function effectively in a technological society (Aikenhead 2008). Also, this Vision I approach does not have the capacity to make science important to all students (Aikenhead 2006; Fensham 1985) and results in little or no scientific literacy achieved by the students (Aikenhead 2008). This approach, in turn, is evident to be linked with decline in student interest and enrolment in specialised science courses (Aikenhead 2008; Aikenhead et al. 2006; Fensham 2006; Lyons 2006a; 2006b; Osborne and Collins 2000).

During the last decade, decline in student enrolment in science has been observed in Bangladesh (BANBEIS 2006, Iqbal 2010). As a school student, as an intern school science teacher and a science teacher educator in Bangladesh, I have experienced that in many cases, school students do not find much school science content relevant and important in real life. Based on the findings of the previous research (Osborne and Collins 2000), it may be reasonable to argue that this irrelevance of school science content may reduce the declining enrolment in science.

In this study, five application areas of science (health, natural resources, the environment, hazards, and the frontiers of science and technology) were considered, as these are the areas in which scientific literacy has importance for individuals and communities in enhancing and sustaining the quality of life (OECD 2006). However, this study finds that all of these areas were not well considered in presenting the content. For example, the area 'the frontiers of science and technology' got poor attention in the analysed textbooks; many important aspects of this area were not represented at all. Further, in many cases, content was not presented as applicable to students' life situations (personal, social and global life). These results suggest that the analysed textbooks failed to create a comprehensive picture of science as applicable to students' life contexts.

However, the analysed textbooks were rated positively with respect to social ideology, as links between science and society were made in the textbooks through portraying various applications of science to improve the quality of human life by solving problems. This portrayal could make students think of science in a positive way, which will lead to the improvement on scientific literacy.

As discussed earlier, like many other educational systems (Chiappetta et al. 1991), in Bangladesh, textbooks play a vital role in the teaching and learning of school science. The textbooks often embody the curriculum and set priorities for the classroom teachers. The results from the present study reveal that the emphasis placed in the junior secondary General Science textbooks is often not consistent with the emphasis on promoting scientific literacy. Consequently, promoting scientific literacy remains as a challenge through school science education in Bangladesh.

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10

Business Writing in English: Rhetorical Comparison between Professional and Student Writers in Vietnam

HAI NGUYEN

SUMMARY This chapter presents selective findings from an ongoing study on rhetorical differences in business letters between Vietnamese ESP (English for Specific Purposes) students and business professionals. All use English as a lingua franca. The study aims at determining the elements of effective business letter writing in a changing global business context and addresses implications for the teaching of written business English in Vietnam. Rhetorical analyses are based on two corpora, namely scenario and authentic business letters using two criteria: the notion of 'move', and linguistic features. The findings indicate that professionals explore ideas in authentic letters based on established norms and expectations driven by a reader-oriented perspective. They organise a flexible discourse structure with various patterns of expression that fit the specific situation. However, students demonstrate a more rigid writing style with similar move types and inflexible positioning of sentence constituents. The findings suggest changes to business writing pedagogy to incorporate more authentic models and contexts.

11.1 Introduction

Today, the dominance of English used as a lingua franca in international business contexts is widely recognised. The importance of English writing, especially written genres such as emails, letters and reports that require a certain level of proficiency in written communication, are now taken for granted (Campbell 2002; Nickerson 2005). English writing is significant not only for students' learning achievement but also for their future careers. Schott Karr writes: 'Business writing will continue to be valued by recruiters and hiring professionals, who believe a person's ability to write well can help him or her move up the corporate ladder' (cited in Bacha and Bahous 2008, 76). In the same vein, the importance of writing skills for communicative success is acknowledged by Seshadri and Theye (2000) who suggest that 'business communication professors, to better prepare business students to succeed in the business world, should focus more on developing skills that lead to improved content, organization, and style'.

There is concern that students' English writing proficiency may not be up to the standard required for effective communication (Jackson 2005;

Nickerson 2005). Specifically, employers commonly complain that tertiary institutions do not prepare students well in terms of business communication for their work in the business environment (Fennick et al. 1993; Jackson 2005; Pittenger et al. 2006; Thomas 1994). That is, what schools provide for students may be significantly different from what is required in real communication situations.

In Vietnam, external economic conditions have included the advent of the European Community and the expansion of US commercial relations with Asian countries. With Vietnam's entry into the World Trade Organization, multinational corporations have set up in this country, engaging in international trade. Interest in international business and investment is increasing rapidly accompanied by demand for highly qualified human resources. However, in many business organisations and enterprises in the country, new graduates struggle to cope with the high demands of the working environment, which requires good communicative competence in English. A large number of junior corporate employees have been given on-the-job training or sent to English evening classes for improvement in their communication ability.

As part of global communication, business letters are 'widely used in the world as a main channel of business correspondence in spite of widespread developments in communication technology' (Arvani 2006, 13). The most common goal of business letters is to obtain compliance from the addressee. To achieve that goal, persuasion via the manipulation of rhetorical strategies towards certain readers plays an important role. However, writing patterns that are effective in one culture and language may not be successfully transferable in intercultural communication (see Park et al. 1998). Although business letters are considered a formulaic, ritual and standardised form of communication, they can allow for personal and cultural creativity in discourse as long as this does not violate the established norms and expectations among those who are legitimised members of the business community (Vergaro 2002, 2004). Business students study at tertiary institutions to prepare for their entry into a global business workforce. They are expected to write business letters in English that will be read and judged by readers from different cultural backgrounds. Thus, the writing styles represented by students may not match the expectations of readers. Being aware of the similarities and differences in writing patterns of various cultures may prepare students well for a multicultural workplace. These should therefore underpin pedagogical considerations in any business writing course.

This chapter reports selective findings from an investigation into the factors that contribute to effective business letter writing. It adopts a contrastive approach to investigate the differences between the discursive features of English business letters written by Vietnamese EFL students and those written by business people of different cultural backgrounds. A comparative analysis was thought to be likely to suggest ways of improving the teaching of business writing in Vietnamese universities.

11.2 Theoretical background

11.2.1 Contrastive rhetoric and genre analysis

Historically, the term 'contrastive rhetoric' appeared in 1966 as the result of a study of international students' writing in English conducted by Robert Kaplan (1966), who coined the term in his article 'Cultural thought patterns in intercultural education'. He assumed that different languages had their own specific and culturally embedded conventions of writing. His study emphasised the interference of first language thought and writing patterns on writing in a second language.

Following Kaplan, there have been a large number of research studies on contrastive rhetoric (Leki 1991). One important finding in contrastive rhetoric research is that 'what is rhetorically effective in one culture might not be effective in another, and vice versa' (Park et al. 1998, 329). Even within a single language, different discourse communities have different writing conventions. In business communication in particular, it has been found that cultural elements play an important role in a discourse community characterised by 'ritualistic' and 'formulaic' language (Bell et al. 1995; Dillon 1992, 1993; Hinds 1987; Jenkins and Kong 1998; Maier 1992; Valero-Garcés 1996; Vergaro 2002, 2004; Yeung 1997).

John Swales (1990, 58) provides a useful definition of genre in contrastive rhetoric. He claims that a relationship exists between the purpose realised through the genre and the schematic structure of the genre, the text and the language used. He writes:

> A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognised by the expert members of the parent discourse community and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes

the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style.

This definition indicates that unless the participants in a communicative activity share a common focus, along with similar structure, style, content and intended audience, their communicative activity does not typify a genre.

Similarly, Bhatia (1993) suggests that a communicative activity can only represent a genre if the participants understand its purpose and accept its ruling conventions and the constraints on their form of communication. He argues that combinations of language insights and socio-cognitive and cultural considerations all contribute to genre construction, interpretation and exploitation. Although Bhatia's theoretical framework for genre study primarily draws on Swales's definition and treatment of genre, he attempts to move the focus to analysing genres in their professional contexts (i.e. legal and business situations). Such analysis provides a better understanding of the ways in which various specific genres are structured and operate. He also observes that writers often use conventional moves, and within them they adopt individual strategies, which are creative elements that allow them to enact a particular genre.

As indicated in the abovementioned views, genres are categories of discourse that have shared purposes and similarities pertaining to form, procedure and content of language sufficiently distinguishable to give the discourse a clear identity. Thus, research articles, grant proposals and business letters are different genres. Genre analysis has been considered a supplementary method to discourse analysis in contrastive analysis (see Connor 2004). Swales criticises traditional contrastive rhetoric for not distinguishing among genres. According to him, 'Researchers need to compare texts written for similar purposes in similar contexts.' (cited in Connor 1997, 207)

11.2.2 The business letter genre

According to Swales (1990), texts represent different genres in their sets of communicative purposes, and thus schematic structures are different. It can be argued, however, that in adding the term 'business' to 'letter', a widely agreed set of common goals can be found. Although superficially it might seem that buyers and sellers have different goals (selling at the highest price possible and buying at the lowest price possible), they share an underlying rationale (i.e. the common goal to maintain their optimum business relationship for mutual benefit in the long run). Thus, looking from the perspective of buyer–seller context, a business letter can be deemed as an overarching genre and, as such,

consists of a recurrent schematic structure comprising a subject, an opening salutation, a pre-propositional, a propositional, and a post-propositional section, and a closing salutation (Vergaro 2002).

A concept of genre repertoire, i.e. a group of genres, is identified by Swales (1990) as one of the defining characteristics of a discourse community. Van Nus (1999) is in agreement, explaining that genres may evolve to form genre repertoires because of the exigencies that are associated with a set of recurrent activities. For instance, one or several genres may be employed for business correspondence between firms to accomplish different business tasks and purposes. Thus, within the genre 'business letter' it is possible to distinguish genre repertoires. The classification into genre repertoires rests on the observation that 'cultures can be characterized in terms of their genre repertoires, i.e. the recurrent activities performed through language … The corporate world possesses genres to accomplish commercial aims'. (Van Nus 1999, 184–185)

These genre repertoires include chasing money, requesting, offering, promoting sales and so on, all within the business discourse community. They are identifiable since they are intended to perform a certain social action (Miller 1984).

11.3 The data

The data set in this study consists of two corpora: authentic business letters and scenario business letters.

11.3.1 Authentic business letters

This corpus includes 22 actual business letters within the sales promotion genre provided by 10 corporations in Vietnam. Interviews with the corporate participants indicated that most business correspondence nowadays is by email. Traditional letters sent by post have virtually disappeared and faxes are rare. The authentic letters were selected from emails or email attachments. Therefore, I use the term 'letter' to refer to a genre in which the writer includes a greeting, opening, closing sequence, and sign-off. Each letter, based as it is on a different situation, requires a distinct design of structure and discourse to adapt the message to the intended readers. For business professionals, authentic letters reflect rhetorical choices and patterns that are typical of daily business correspondence and provide a rich set of rhetorical choices for contrastive analysis in business discourse.

11.3.2 Scenario letters written by students

The scenario-based business letter samples were provided by 20 Vietnamese students. Based on the real business letters collected, a writing task with a scenario was designed, namely a sales promotion letter (see Figure 11.1). The task describes a situation from a business environment, which requires each student to write a business letter in order to solve the problems described. For student participants, this type of letter represented a familiar genre taught in the course. The scenario task was designed to give students as much flexibility as possible so that they could be creative in contextualising their writing. There was no requirement for the textual structure of the scenario letter, except that it had to be a sales promotion letter sent to an international recipient. Students were expected to use a range of structures and discourse in the first-contact correspondence.

The situation:
You work in a sales department of a trading company. Recently, your company launched a new product range (for example, computer software, a fashion product, or a household item). You want to target a big foreign buyer to be a regular customer for the product in the near future.

Your task:
Choose a product from the list above (computer software, fashion item, household item). Write a business letter to the foreign customer promoting your goods and related services. Try to persuade them to place a substantial order. Feel free to invent specific details and names.

Figure 11.1 Task description

11.4 Methodology

Move structure analysis was used to analyse the data. A move in a text is a meaningful unit presented in lexical–grammatical form and related to its communicative purposes (Miller 1984; Swales 1990). The function of moves is to help demonstrate the writer's claim. For example, the formal address 'Dear Sir/Madam' can be identified as the opening salutation move in a business letter. The sentence, 'We would like to take this chance to introduce ourselves as one of the leading rice exporters in Vietnam' can be classified into the establishing credentials move in a sales promotion letter.

As pointed out by Swales, if two texts are said to belong to the same genre, they should share the same communicative purpose; and the schematic structure of a given genre is the result of the conventions and activities of the discourse community established and developed in response to recurrent rhetorical needs. For the examination of the schematic structure of a genre, Swales proposes the move structure analysis framework. Applying this, Bhatia (1993) analyses a sales letter from Standard Bank of Singapore in seven moves: establishing credentials, introducing the offer, offering incentives, referring to enclosed documents, inviting further communication, using pressure tactics and ending politely.

Using this tool, rhetorical analysis of texts often includes investigation into both 'text patterning' at the macro level and the linguistic choices at the micro level (see e.g. Valero-Garcés 1996; Vergaro 2002; 2004). These two levels of analysis are interrelated because a particular move is signalled by its semantic and linguistic components. And usually, elaborations of move functions are accompanied by accounts of linguistic realisations. Analysis of sales promotion letters in this chapter covers the number of moves realised, differences in the order of presentation of moves, and differences in the linguistic realisation of moves in terms of reference, mood and modality.

11.5 Contrasting scenario and authentic sales promotion letters

11.5.1 Macro-textual analysis of moves

The following move structure (Vergaro 2004) through which communicative purposes are realised was found the scenario sales letters.

1. Opening salutation
2. Refer to previous correspondence/establish credentials* – move rarely used
3. Introduce the offer
4. Detail the offer
5. Enhance the offer
6. Offer incentive
7. Invite further communication*
8. State hints of future business
9. End politely
10. Closing salutation

The structural interpretation of the authentic letters indicates the following moves:

1. Subject
2. Opening salutation
3. Refer to previous communication/establish credentials
4. Introduce the offer
5. Detail the offer
6. Enhance the offer
7. State enclosures
8. Invite further communication
9. End politely
10. Closing salutation

Table 11.1 specifies the number of letters that have the moves specified above. The move structure as noticed in the scenario and authentic business letters above reveals that, although the two corpora share some moves and have similar frequency of the shared moves, they are different in terms of the number of moves present and, most importantly, the order of presentation of the moves.

Apart from the subject, the two moves almost absent from the scenario letters are 'establish credentials' and 'state enclosures', while these moves are prevalent in the authentic letters. Conversely, two moves – 'offer incentives' and 'state hints of future relationship' are present in the scenario corpus but almost absent from the authentic corpus.

The 'establish credentials' move is supposed to support the benefit of the product or service offered. However, this move is absent from the scenario corpus. Business people may consider this move very important in a sales letter, since it adds to legitimacy and to the letter's persuasiveness through the advantages the business claims to have over other similar companies. Credentials can also be one of the main factors leading to a potential buyer's decision to enquire about the product. However, a student writer has to imagine a successful business with famous brands and reliable customer service. Building a description of a company to persuade potential customers of the good quality of its product may be challenging for students and may force them to skip this particular move.

Another move which is not found in the scenario corpus is 'strategic enclosures'. It is taken for granted that we cannot include everything in a letter. A sales letter, although detailed, may not have all the information the

Move	No. of scenario letters	No. of authentic letters
Subject	0	22
Opening salutation	20	22
Refer to previous communication/ establish credentials	3/2	6/16
Introduce, detail and enhance the offer	20	22
Offer incentives	18	3
State enclosures	2	15
Invite further communication	5	22
State hints of future relationship	17	3
End politely	20	22
Closing salutation	20	22

Table 11.1 Move occurrences in the two corpora

readers need that may support them to make a purchase decision. Therefore, a clever solution for a business person is to attach something to the sales letter as a reference for a potential buyer. In actual business, a relevant document is usually available as a store of information about a certain product (e.g. brochure, catalogue or profile). In many cases, decisions are made based on the information given in the documents enclosed rather than what is stated in the letter. Generally, a business person refers to this useful source when promoting the product. A student as a novice writer may not realise the practical purposes of sending enclosures.

There is a tentative explanation as why there is no 'offer incentives' move in the authentic letters. When the parties are making contact through sales letters, potential buyers will be expected to respond to the letter if they have a genuine interest in buying the product (Pilegaard 1997). For a seller, information about financial incentives can always be discussed in the follow-up discussion once the potential buyer shows a desire for the product. At that time, the seller knows the specific requirements of buyers, so can offer appropriate incentives. While business writers may consider it too early to refer to any incentives in the first contact, for a student, a discount seems to be a very important tool to stimulate sales to whet the buyer's appetite.

For the presence of the 'state hints of future business' move in the student corpus, a tentative explanation relates to Edward Hall's (1976) model of low-context (LC) and high-context (HC) cultures. He points out that cultures can be arranged on a continuum from highly LC to highly HC. HC cultural members

tend to avoid giving too much information in communicating with others, while LC members consider detailed information both thorough and necessary. In HC cultures, slow and indirect messages are appreciated, while in LC cultures fast and direct messages are preferred. In business writing in English, Campbell (1998) notices that HC cultures (Latin or Asian) 'predispose readers to be more interested in long-term relations with reliable people' (p. 8). Thus, scenario letters often include paragraphs that aim to establish common ground and express interest in a future business relationship between the two parties.

In terms of the frequency of moves, scenario letters mostly begin with the introduction about the offer, while in authentic business letters credentials are established at the beginning, followed by the introduction of the offer. Even when the 'establish credentials' move is not there, the first move of authentic letters always realises positive politeness strategies (e.g. expressing the willingness to cooperate and appreciation of the reader) (see Brown and Levinson 1987). This is quite different in the scenario corpus, where student writers prefer negative politeness strategies (e.g. conveying the wish to mitigate imposition on the reader) in the first part of the letter. This discrepancy can be linked to what Pilegaard (1997) writes about text position of positive and negative politeness in business letters. He claims that in 'making contact' letters, positive politeness strategies are mainly located in the extra-propositional section of the letters. What was found in the letters in both corpora supports the above claim. However, one difference was noticed. While positive politeness strategies are used right from the beginning of the authentic letters, they are delayed and concentrated at the end of the scenario business letters.

Arguably, differences in terms of discourse structure between two corpora are associated with the preferences for some specific moves and politeness strategies realised along the moves. The authentic writers prefer using politeness strategies at the beginning of the text to achieve a friendly and cooperative business atmosphere before they present the object for sale. They look for solidarity and closeness early in their communication process. On the contrary, student writers start with negative politeness strategies, making the sequence of the moves at the beginning of the letter different from their authentic counterparts. They also skip some moves in their letters.

11.5.2 Micro-textual analysis of linguistic realisation: Reference, mood and modality

In both corpora, references are mainly pronominal. In the scenario corpus, pronominal reference is mostly through the use of the first person plural pronoun. The frequently used 'we' in scenario letters is considered a vague use of personal

pronouns since it 'applies to specific individuals, but they are not identified, or identifiable, by the speaker' (Kitagawa and Lehrer 1990). References to the writer in the authentic corpus are in some ways more diverse than the scenario corpus, indicating a more balanced combination of 'we' and 'I'.

In the scenario corpus, references to the reader are in all cases formal and deferential, while in the authentic letters the receiver is often referred to with a proper name. It is striking that the familiar register is used in some authentic letters, which identifies the reader by his first name or cites 'Good morning' as the opening salutation. (These might also be associated with regular characteristics of email messages, which is outside the scope of this chapter.) As a sales letter marks the beginning of a relationship, the distance between two sides is usually great and the writer is expected to be formal and deferential to the reader. However, the use of pronominal references in the two corpora acknowledges that business professionals want to create closeness and rapport with their partners as early as possible, while students understandably try not to be casual towards their readers at the start of a relationship. Although the reference patterns in both corpora expose a preference for a reader-oriented perspective, two groups of writers show some differences in the way the reader is addressed. Students are consistent in addressing their readers in a formal way at all times. Business professionals, on the other hand, are more flexible and casual in their address mode, often reflecting a pre-existing relationship.

In the scenario corpus, mood is mostly indicative and in the present tense in addition to infrequent conditionals and imperatives. There are limited ranges of expression of the same mood. Mood and modality in this corpus indicate that negative strategies are employed in the 'introduce the offer' move where the writer expresses conventional indirectness. Positive politeness is also prevalent in the scenario corpus and is heavily used in the sub-move of stating hints of future relationship. Emphasising cooperation is conveyed through the frequent use of modal adjuncts (for example, 'I hope', 'I expect') followed by a sentence in simple future tense.

Mood in the authentic corpus demonstrates a similar pattern, but imperatives and conditionals are mainly located in the 'invite further communication' move, which states a request. When functioning as a request, these structures seem to realise negative politeness strategies of giving the reader freedom of action or mitigating imposition on the reader. Subjunctive mood is absent from the authentic letters and there is infrequent use of deferential expressions. Most of the deferential expressions are discovered in the 'establish credentials' move of a couple of letters in which the writer gives background of the business. There is high degree of lexical and syntactic variation for expression of moods.

Looking from the pragmatic perspective, reference, mood and modality in both corpora contribute to the expression of politeness strategies. Negative politeness strategies are preferred at the beginning of the scenario letters, while they are employed towards the end of the authentic letters to invite further communication. It is the opposite for the positive politeness strategies. Business professionals use them at the beginning of their letters to claim common ground, but novice writers reserve them for the ending of discourse when they talk about the future business relationship.

11.5.3 Discussion of communication competence

Although some typing errors and linguistic errors were found in the authentic letters, for example, 'We are very pleasse to contact', 'We'd like to express our willing to establish', 'Looking forward to hear from you soon', the authentic corpus showed no real communication problems. Business professionals from a range of language and cultural backgrounds displayed pragmatic competence through effective use of formulaic phrases and discourse markers. Short, simple, well-connected structures prevail in the letters, making points clear. Business professionals also tend to use a variety of structures and expressions that are effective for introducing and promoting products and services.

Linguistic errors were also common in scenario letters, and formulaic expressions were sometimes used incorrectly:

> I would like to introduce ourself to you in more details.
> We hope that you will get great pleasure from our latest catalogue.
> With response to our telephone conversation last week, we are pleased to inform you that …
> We would appreciate it if you make any order.

Besides linguistic errors, scenario letters reveal some discourse problems, and there is a more inflexible use of expressions in students' letters, which usually follow a pattern of 'cause' before 'effect'. As a result of this, information is not always coherent or clearly presented, thus impacting on the line of reasoning. The sentence below shows this rigid structure.

> Your company is also well-known for distributing goods globally. Therefore it is our good honour to cooperate with your company.

A number of statements were likely to cause confusion due to the integration of students' own cultural perspectives, for example:

> Moreover, after offering the said product, we have **desired** them **base** on your customers' taste and culture.
>
> Furthermore, **we sure** that our products will meet the demand in such a big holiday like 30th April in your country.
>
> We are proud to say that all those items are made **of** finest and **newest** manufacturing line in the country which makes the products live with the time.

Even if the words in bold were corrected, it would be still difficult to interpret meaning from these sentences. Cultural information given by some students seemed not to be relevant in the context of their writing. The 30th April is a national holiday in Vietnam but not necessarily elsewhere. The phrase 'makes the products live with the time' could be an advertisement slogan from a TV commercial rather than an element of a business letter. As suggested by Vergaro (2004), student writers allow more cultural and personal creativity in their texts, which may violate established norms and conventions of business writing.

Although assessment of linguistic competence of the professional and novice writers of business letters is not the focus of this research, the findings in this section seem to support the argument that these groups of writers have different communicative competences. The above analysis indicates that the pragmatic competence seems to be more problematic for novice writers, in addition to their linguistic errors. Their letters may be less rhetorically effective in intercultural settings.

11.6 Implications for teaching business writing

As indicated in data analysis, the authentic letters exhibit flexible rhetorical choices compared to the scenario letters. The number of moves chosen by business professionals represents a range depending on the subject matter discussed and relationship with the reader. The student writers, on the other hand, seem to cover every conventional move in a standard letter of the genre in question. Their linguistic features demonstrate a rigid style with inflexible positioning of sentence constituents, heavy dependence on formulaic phrases and numerous metadiscourse errors. The professionals express meanings in their letters based on their established norms with a clear focus and reader-oriented perspective. They write with context and audience in mind. However,

students engage in writing in a more emotional and subjective way, tending to judge their readers from their own cultural views. The findings correspond to one of the most important propositions of the contrastive rhetoric field, namely that writers do not often approach writing in a second language in the way expected by the audience speaking that language (e.g. Maier 1992; Park et al. 1998).

The analysis indicates that culturally embedded preferences are not the only factor contributing to rhetorical differences. Rhetorical features as noticed with the students in this study demonstrate a phenomenon of writing according to formulas, a possible result of explicit teaching of genres (Freedman 1994). The rigid rhetorical patterns imply the influence of schooling and writing instruction on English as a second language (L2) writing at university in addition to linguistic and cognitive factors (see Purves 1988). Although investigation into how schooling and writing instruction in business English courses affect students' rhetorical choices is not a focus of this study, the above analysis acknowledges the significant role of language classrooms in helping students to write.

It can be argued that the student writing was influenced by the nature of classroom instruction and practice, while the professional writing was deeply embedded in the workplace practice and cultures (Dias et al. 1999). Since university and workplace writing takes place in two different worlds, a gap between these domains is to be expected. Although there is not a well-researched answer as to how university can best prepare students for their future writing at work, research by Schneider and Andre (2005) suggests that university plays an important role in easing this transition. They point out that classroom instruction can support students through providing a model of conventions of common workplace genres in addition to practice in composing those genres and helpful feedback on their writing. The classroom can also facilitate students' writing competence through making them aware of the complex nature of genres and genre acquisition. In a similar vein, Bremner (2010) suggests, 'While it is not possible to replicate the exact conditions of the workplace, there are nevertheless aspects of this context that students can be made aware of' (p. 130). Mabrito (1999) calls for a pedagogical model that offers 'new ways to expose students to learning experiences that will more realistically prepare them as future communicators in the workplace' (p. 104). Kassim stresses that the inclusion of workplace scenarios throughout the lessons modelling appropriate use of business vocabulary, terminology and social conventions is essential to students.

It should also be noted that the use of English as a global language for business purposes requires accommodation to different kinds of English used by communicators from different national, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The responsibility for successful communication lies with communicators, regardless of their native language, who need to take into account rhetorical preferences of multicultural audiences. Statistics show that about 80 per cent of business partners to Vietnam are from Asian countries (VCCI Vietnam 2010) so most Vietnamese business students are expected to work outside the map of Western business interests. This also means that business English used in Vietnam is not associated with recognised norms established by its native users, but is mainly used by non-native speakers with a variety of norms and levels of appropriateness for their practical business purposes. Business English as lingua franca (BELF) communication (see e.g. Louhiala-Salminen and Charles 2006) tends to be used by participants who do not have a strong command of standard grammar, lexis and pronunciation. According to Wang (2010), a flexibly perceived view of culture and rhetoric with situational factors taken into consideration is crucial for effectiveness in BELF communication.

In the context of globalisation, as Starke-Meyerring claims, 'professional communicators increasingly encounter such pluralised national and cultural identities and the blurred boundaries between them in multiple ways' (p. 477). In view of this, business communicators need to go beyond the traditional approach of adopting the presumed traits and rhetorical features ascribed to national cultures in multicultural settings (Woolever 2001). This is because of shifting and changing boundaries that separate participants of different cultures. There is no longer a clear contrast in terms of rhetorical conventions between low-context and high-context cultures, but hybrid, heterogeneous and complex values are claimed by national groups.

To ease the transition from classroom to workplace writing, a critical pedagogy must bridge explication of genres and exposure to authentic discourse. Such exposure can be made available through provision of authentic readings, case studies and tasks set in a rich discursive context. These will help students interpret the relationship between textual regularities and the underlying rules so that the far more subtle and complicated rules can be internalised, creating a kind of tacit knowledge, while passive reception of teacher instruction tends to produce application of transparent rules. Also, a context reflecting an authentic, complicated interweaving network of relationship, purpose and audience will facilitate acquisition and performance of new genres.

Universities should encourage students to pursue internship or work term options in which they can gain experience in the chosen field. Work terms provide students with practical experience, exposure to the socially situated nature of genres, and opportunities for developing rhetorical and cultural awareness, all facilitating their development as a writer (Schneider and Andre 2005). Anson and Forsberg (1990) and Dias et al. (1999) recommend 'writing internship' courses as a part of an academic program, which can help ease students' transition to workplace writing. Through reflection on their classroom theory and workplace research, students will achieve a better understanding of the social action of writing in the workplace.

In summary, I have provided an analysis of the business writing of students and professionals, showing the contrasts. I have then discussed some ways in which more carefully considered teaching and learning processes can be conducted to assist students in developing their linguistic and cultural competence in intercultural business communication, particularly with regard to the use of English as a global language. For detailed pedagogical strategies, further research can be done based on observation of teaching and learning practices in a business writing classroom, which will help answer the question whether our students develop the intercultural communication skills needed to communicate effectively in a global context.

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Part Four: Education Systems and Policies

Introduction
Asia Pacific Perspective Confronting Western Research Narratives

TERRI SEDDON

Global transformations that accompany the increasingly interconnected global economy are having significant effects in the Asia Pacific. This geographic space is the regional centre of 21st century economic development and the locus of geopolitics as the old 'new world' (the US) eyes off the new 'new world' (Asia, and especially China) to the West, across the Pacific Ocean. But what is 'old' and 'new'? What is 'East' and 'West'? This terminological tangle reveals some of the problems in knowing the world of the Asia Pacific. It highlights the cultural realignments that go hand in hand with economic development and political reordering, and which profoundly disturb this emerging regional reconfiguration.

The chapters in this part offer valuable insights into these disturbed structures, cultures, identities, relationships and representations that constitute the Asia Pacific and its education. The chapters offer perspectives that represent fresh thinking in the critical social science tradition. They draw on concepts and commentaries from Western disciplinary social sciences but, informed by insider perspectives and contextualised understandings that have grown within specific Asia Pacific countries, apply them critically. This meeting of ideas enables the contributors of these chapters to re-read changes and challenges in ways that disturb familiar Western narratives.

In Chapter 12, Philip Chan uses theories of network governance that are developing in the UK and Europe to re-read transformations in Chinese education. He focuses particularly on the way China has moved towards a market economy and the impact this has on state-owned enterprise schools, which have been an important part of China's education system since the mid-twentieth century. Where the West tends to imagine China as strongly centralised and bureaucratically hierarchical, Chan documents the way schooling is being separated from state-owned enterprises and returned to the Ministry of Education. Ironically, where many Western countries are increasing alignment between industry and education, China is separating the production and education functions. He tracks the policy decision to separate from the central government through the layers of bureaucracy and regional authorities to principals and teachers. His argument is that the Chinese state and market

are actively mediated through decentralised networks and, through local level negotiations, potential problems are turned into win–win solutions. These practices are embedded in local cultures, so that know-who and knowhow are key resources in the individual and collective agency, which negotiates outcomes and agreements. Chan's case study reveals an under-researched dimension of Chinese education and shows the limitations of prevailing Western assumptions about China. Rather than a crude top-down assertion of power, governing in China involves sophisticated cultural understandings and relationship work to steer change.

Chapter 13 offers another window into the embedded practices of education in the Asia Pacific, this time in Vietnam. Thi Nhai Nguyen examines the cultural politics that constitute Vietnamese identity. Nguyen establishes a platform for this chapter by drawing attention to the similarities between Renan in the 1880s and Bhabhab in the 1990s, who both challenge naturalistic assumptions about nations and national identities. Both affirm 'human will' in forming nations, emphasising that nations are narrated, socially and symbolically, into existence as individual and collective identities confront an epoch's traditions to renegotiate politics and culture, remake the nation anew and to become 'a people' (p. 3). Nguyen tracks these cultural politics historically, revisiting the history of the Vietnamese state. This history reveals the layering of cultural understandings in Vietnamese identities. Vietnamese nationalism developed through the struggle to protect national boundaries from external groups – Chinese, French, Japanese and American, but it also appropriated cultural resources from Confucianism, and Western ideologies of modernisation and Marxism–Leninism. These currents have been narrated into a story line about loyalty to family and country, universal commitments to humanness, and recognition of self-sustainability as well as the collective. This historical narrative is intimately connected to local, national and international politics that have, and will continue to, shift the terrain and practices of Vietnamese identity. Nguyen concludes by drawing attention to the challenge of globalisation for contemporary Vietnamese citizens and the provocative question: which way for the future?

These chapters alert us, as researchers, to those Asia Pacific worlds that lie beyond the everyday experience of most people in the academy. Speaking in lexicons that are inflected in unfamiliar ways, the chapters open up questions for investigation, and also gently press us to recognise the practical effects of histories tensioned by the geopolitics of knowledge and power. These chapters point towards diversity and changes but also suggest some of the challenges that will remake education into the future.

11

The New Governance in Chinese Public Education Reform: A Case of a Railway Enterprise-Run School

PHILIP WING KEUNG CHAN

SUMMARY This chapter explores the issue of ownership transformation of enterprise-run schools from state-owned enterprises (SOEs) to the Ministry of Education in China. Since the 1950s, SOEs have made a great contribution to the education in China. Enterprise-run schools and government schools are governed by different administrative bodies and regulations. Therefore, the objectives of running these schools are different. Under the establishment of the Modern Enterprise System to rectify the reduction in profit in SOEs, the State Commission for Restructuring the Economy proposed to separate schools from enterprises. The railway-enterprise-run school in the Shenzhen Municipality, Southern China was selected as a case for examining how the top-down policy is implemented from central government to ministry level, to province level, to municipal city level and finally to the district level. In the meantime, the network-kind of negotiation and bargaining in the district level has influenced the education policy of the central government at the top. This chapter explores the new governance in education reform by drawing from the policy network theory in Western literature and applying it to the railway-enterprise-run school. The ownership transformation offers a great challenge as well as changes for the education setting in China.

12.1 Introduction

State-owned enterprises (SOEs) have played an important role in the economic development in China by creating a great contribution in employment (Rawski 1999; Salem 1988; Takahara 1997; Wong 1999), social welfare (Jin 1996; Perkins 1994) and tax revenue (Smyth 1998). State-owned enterprises, the foundation of China's industrial base, are still dominating some strategy and key areas of heavy industry, such as iron and steel, coal, metallurgy, chemicals, energy production, and petroleum exploration (Steinfeld 1998). SOEs are granted franchises to run the transportation and communication industries, such as civil transport, railway transport, post and telecommunications. In addition, SOEs owned about 80 per cent of China's basic industrial raw materials and produced a wide range of intermediate products (Wong and Kheng 1997).

Under the Chinese Open-Door Policy, announced in 1978 by Deng Xiaoping, the profit of SOEs was reduced dramatically when they encountered enormous

competition from private companies in the domestic market and multinational corporations in international markets. Reform of SOEs has seen an intense debate in the fields of politics, economics and management. SOEs are criticised for bearing a lot of social burden by running different kinds of social services, such as education, medical service, public security, housing and pensions. These services are regarded as non-productive and a drain on production funds (Broadman 1995; Chen 1998; Gao and Gan 1999; Jin 1996; Pascual 1996; Shi 1998). It was therefore suggested that SOEs should detach schools and focus on their core business.

Chinese SOEs used to function as socioeconomic entities rather than as production units. The objective function of many large SOEs was not limited to maximisation of profits. Their operations include the provision of social and welfare services, normally regarded as a 'public good'. Indeed, many large SOEs exist much like 'mini-welfare states'. Not surprisingly, they operate under the state banks' assistance, with the government always ready to subsidise their nominal losses (Chan 2000).

This chapter argues by illustrating 15-year data that SOEs ran comprehensive and fruitful schools in the past decades. It was a complementary effort in the provision of education in China when the central government lacked sufficient funding in education in the early years. It was compulsory under Chinese hierarchical administration and governance for enterprise-run schools to transfer to the Ministry of Education under the establishment of the Modern Enterprise System. However, this study selected a railway-enterprise-run school in the Shenzhen Municipality, the gateway city to Southern China, as a case to examine how the network-kind of negotiation and bargaining in the district level. This study examines the way these network negotiations influenced central policy in parallel with traditional top-down policy implementation, which travelled from central government to ministry level, to province level, to municipal city level and finally reached to the district level.

The structure of this chapter is as follows: Section 12.2 reviews the policy network theory as a theoretical framework. Section 12.3 discusses the methodology and Section 12.4 outlines the landscape of enterprise-run schools from kindergartens to higher education institutions in China. Section 12.5 explores the detailed transformation process of enterprise-run school from the Ministry of Railway to the Ministry of Education. It includes the law and regulation settings during top-down operation and how it is affected by the local network actors in decision making. Finally, Section 12.6 summarises the key points of the argument, offering some recommendations and concluding remarks.

12.2 Policy network theory – a theoretical framework

Policy network theory has become an important paradigm for the study of policy-making process in the fields of public administration and political science in the West since the 1970s. It offers a theoretical framework through which policy-making process is viewed. Defined broadly, policy network theory provides a lens through which to examine the interactions between groups or networks involved in policy making and their influence on the policy process.

Networks have been applied in a number of policy arenas, including economic development, health care, criminal justice, human services, information systems, rural development, environmental protection, biotechnology, transportation and education. The activities of governance are purposeful efforts to guide, steer, control or manage, in which public and private actors do not act separately but in conjunction, operating as a network (Agranoff and McGuire 2008).

There are two main schools in Western literature on policy networks: the Anglo-Saxon school (Dowding 1995; Heclo 1978; Marsh and Smith 2000; Rhodes 1990, 1997) and the German–Dutch school (Bogason and Zølner 2007; Kickert et al. 1997; Koppenjan et al. 2009; Scharpf 1978; Sørensen and Torfing 2007). The Anglo-Saxon school focuses on a stronger micro- or meso-perspectives, with emphasis on the interaction between individual organisations, while the German–Dutch school focuses more on meso- and macro-levels, and is more orientated towards the level of local, provincial, national and transnational (European Union) policy areas and industries.

The concept of governance is one of the more intriguing theoretical discussions in policy network theory. There is a substantial body of work concerning the way governance has affected the contribution of central government policy to the policy process (Kersbergen and Waarden 2004; Kjær 2004; Kooiman 2003; Pierre 2000; Pierre and Peters 2005). Possibly the most prominent and influential account of the governance concept is offered by Rod Rhodes. His influential writings, especially *Understanding Governance: Policy Networks, Governance and Accountability* (1997), have employed governance to explore the institutions, actors and processes of change within the core executive in Britain. His 'Anglo-governance' model has emerged as a prevalent and authoritative account of how new methods of governing have emerged in society. Rhodes's power dependence model postulates that organisations, groups or actors depend on each other for resources, and therefore enter exchange relationships. It is an explanatory motor as to why actors deploy resources for other actors' resources in the network to achieve their goals.

The scholars in the German–Dutch school extend this notion to the network mode of coordination, which was named 'governance network'. Klijn and Skelcher (2007, 587) describe governance network as 'public policy-making and implementation through a web of relationships between government, business and civil society actors'. They added that these network actors are based on interdependencies, but not necessarily on equity. The governance network is a new form of governance that reflects a changed relationship between state and society (Kenis and Schneider 1991). Blockson and van Buren (1999, 64) stress that 'societal issues can be best addressed through multi-section collaboration'.

Modern states often rely on the cooperation of stakeholders to mobilise fragmented resources in order to promote public policies and to gain favourable outcomes that result in collective effort. The policy network provides a stable and continuous relationship between interactive stakeholders.

Kenis and Schneider (1991, 41) describe a policy network according to its actors, linkages and boundary:

> A policy network is described by its actors, their linkages and by its boundary. It includes a relatively stable set of mainly public and private corporate actors. The linkages between the actors serve as communication channels and for the exchange of information, expertise, trust and other policy resources. The boundary of a given policy network is not primarily determined by formal institutions but results from a process of mutual recognition dependent on functional relevance and structural embeddedness.

Governance networks are not entirely new phenomena. They have a long track record and have different names such as 'corporatism', 'heterarchy', 'partnerships' and 'negotiated economy' (Nielsen and Pedersen 1988; Sørensen and Torfing 2005). The idea of 'networks' was introduced by Hugh Heclo (1972, 106) 'not to reify collectivities into individual deciders but to understand the networks of interaction by which policies result'.

As with the three major types of social orders addressed by Powell (1991), governance network theorists offer the network as a new, potential contribution to efficient governance and significant alternative to both markets and hierarchy (Bogason and Zølner 2007; Considine and Lewis 2003; Rhodes 1997; Sørensen and Torfing 2007). However, what is new is not only the increasing use of governance networks, but also that the central decision makers to an increasing

extent view governance networks as an efficient and legitimate mechanism of governance (Sørensen and Torfing 2005). The idea of a sovereign state that governs society top-down through laws, rules and detailed regulations has lost its grip and is being replaced by new ideas about decentralised governance based on interdependence, negotiation and trust.

The empirical studies of Koppenjan and Klijn (2004, 91) show governance networks have a significant influence not only on the political decision-making process but also on the production of efficient policy outcomes. Network management in governance networks manages the actors' goals, perceptions and strategies within a policy arena. It is aimed at improving the interaction and collaboration between actors. Strategies include facilitating interaction, brokerage and conflict management. The participating actors can identify policy problems and new opportunities at an early stage and produce flexible responses that allow for adjustments to the complexity and variety of concrete conditions (Koppenjan and Klijn 2004).

Network governance is new to be applied in educational public policy. Ball's (2008) *New Philanthropy, New Networks and New Governance in Education* represents 'a first foray into the issues and problems of a grounded analysis of network governance in education' (Ball 2009a, 688). Unlike Rhodes's (1994) 'hollowed-out state', the centralisation of the state in power still dominates, but other actors still can show their influence on the government policies. Ball (2009b, 101) states that the heterarchical modalities of governance is 'a new modality of state power, agency and social action and indeed a new form of state'.

Since the late 1990s, the idea of public–private partnerships (PPPs) and social partnerships in education could sharpen a nation's educational policy and resource setting. The empirical work of Seddon et al. (2005) in the Australian context states that by allowing the participation of the societal and private actors, which are community groups, education and training providers, and industry members, in the education policies, the shared goals can be achieved .

In China, many academics have examined various Chinese public policies by applying the policy network theory, such as reforming of taxation in the rural area (Tang 2004), Chinese politics in the provincial legislatures (Xia 2008), housing and estate policy (Zhang and Lou 2007; Zhu 2008) and public health insurance reform (Zheng et al. 2010). Ren (2005) claims that policy network theory has great potential for Chinese governance, since the development of civil society and interest groups will be strengthened after various cases of both government failure and market failure in China.

12.3 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach and the data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted in the Shenzhen Municipality, Southern China. Official documents were also used. In order to examine the detailed ownership transformation process of enterprise-run schools from the state-owned enterprise to the Ministry of Education and local education bureau, the author has selected one railway-enterprise-run school at Shenzhen. The reasons for choosing an enterprise-run school in the Ministry of Railways and in Shenzhen are that the Ministry of Railways has a comprehensive education system in China and Shenzhen is close to the author's home town – Hong Kong.

The fieldwork lasted 25 days in August 2010. Visits were paid to senior officials at Education Bureau and the Education Department of the Ministry of Railways, the school principal and the teachers (current and retired) in their offices or private locations to obtain basic information on school transformation. Government and other relevant documents were collected at interview locations and from government websites. For ethical reasons, fictitious names are used here.

12.4 The landscape of provision of education by state-owned enterprises

State-owned enterprises have contributed a huge resource in provision of education by establishing large quantities and diversified enterprise-run schools from childcare centres to higher education institutes throughout China. This section will address the issues on quantities and diversity of enterprise-run school, distributive location and funding.

12.4.1 Quantity and diversity of enterprise-run school

SOEs run a wide range of schools in China, including preschool education institutions, primary schools, secondary schools, vocational schools, adult learning schools and higher education institutions. In 1994, 21,323 enterprise-run schools were operated by Chinese SOEs, including 11,157 primary schools, 6442 secondary schools (4949 junior secondary and 1493 senior secondary), 2631 vocational schools, 779 adult schools and 314 higher education institutions (CEFSY 1994).

Basic Education is the most important part in the school system of SOEs. It consists of six-year primary education and three-year junior secondary

education. It is equivalent to the 'nine-year free basic education' in China. In 1994, more than three-quarters of enterprise-run schools were primary schools and junior secondary schools that provided education to the children of the employees in SOEs. The workforce in SOEs can be stabilised without worrying about education for their children.

Vocational education is an essential part of SOE education. It provides an alternative path for students after graduating from primary education. This path consists of junior secondary vocational schools, senior secondary vocational schools and vocational higher education institutions. In addition, senior secondary normal schools and teachers' colleges can provide a way to enter the workforce for teaching in enterprise-run schools. The Xi'an Railway Vocational and Technical College, the Transportation Vocational and Technical College in Guangxi province and Harbin Railway Branch Teachers College are the examples of vocational colleges under the railway education system.

Adult education advances the qualifications of staff in SOEs. In other words, it improves the quality of the workforce. Adult education includes adult primary school, adult junior secondary school and adult higher education institutions. The Shanghai Railway Bureau Secondary School for Adults, Liuzhou Railway Engineering School for Adults, Harbin Railway Branch Harbin Railway Business Service School for Adults and Xi'an University of Railway Transport Workers are examples of higher education institutes in the railway education system.

Higher education is a significant component of SOE education. SOEs built and ran a lot of good universities in different provinces and municipalities. Examples of this include the Ministry of Railways, Beijing Jiaotong University (previously Beijing Railway Institute) and Southwest Jiaotong University (previously Tangshan Railway Institute). The Ministry of Communications administered Shanghai Jiaotong University and Xi'an Jiaotong University. Most of these universities have been transferred to the Ministry of Education or provincial education departments.

Under the Modern Enterprises System proposed by the central government in 1993, the number of enterprise-run schools has been reduced gradually from 21,313 in 1994 to 17,339 in 2000, and then to 4793 in 2007 (CEFSY 1994, 2000, 2007). Most of them were transferred to the Ministry of Education, and some of them were merged, cancelled, sold or converted to private institutes under a shareholding system involving principals and teachers. Not surprisingly, the numbers of schools in the Basic Education section have been reduced more than others because the Chinese government regards it as a government duty

to provide nine years of free basic education to citizens under the Chinese compulsory education law. The government ran a pilot study by transferring 729 enterprise-run schools, including 23,700 teachers from China National Petroleum Corporation, China Petrochemical Corporation and Dong Feng Motor Corporation to the Ministry of Education in 2004. With a successful result in the pilot study, the Chinese government removed another batch of schools from 74 corporations in 2005. These corporations were from various industries, such as nuclear, aerospace, shipping building, steel, metallurgy and mining, chemical, power, transportation, business investment, fisheries and forestry.

12.4.2 Distribution of enterprise-run schools

Enterprise-run schools are established by SOEs in each province, autonomous region and municipality in China. However, they are distributed unevenly. Most schools are located in the northern part of China (Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning) and central part of China (Sichuan, Hunan and Henan). The municipalities (such as Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai) and the coastal provinces (such as Zhejiang, Fujian and Guangdong) have relatively smaller numbers of enterprise-run schools. They share the same characteristics: more heavy industries, more state-owned enterprises and more enterprise-run schools. As mentioned earlier, in Chinese policy, heavy industries (e.g. steel, mining and shipbuilding) are monopolised by the state and run by the state-owned enterprises. The data between 1994 and 1998 show that Heilongjiang had an average of 2509 enterprise-run schools, the highest number among the provinces. In contrast, Beijing had the lowest number, with only 135 enterprise-run schools. For more details about the distribution of enterprise-run schools, see Figure 12.1.

12.4.3 Funding of enterprise-run schools

State-owned enterprises have contributed substantial funding to education. In 2008, the total funding for enterprise-run schools waAs RMB¥144.1 billion (CEFSY 1994, 2008). The total expenditure on education by SOEs in 1994 was nearly 6 per cent of national expense on education and in 1996 central SOEs accounted for more than 20 per cent of the central government funding on education6 (CEFSY 1994, 1996). These levels demonstrate a significant contribution to government expense on education.

Funding gradually increased from RMB¥ 8.91 billion in 1994 to RMB¥ 13.9 billion in 2002 and then sharply decreased 36.7 per cent to RMB¥ 8.8 billion

Figure 12.1 Distribution of enterprise-run schools in China from 1994 to 1998 (by provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities)

Source: China Educational Finance Statistical Yearbooks 1994–1998.

in 2003, the first year for implementation of the policy of 'Separation of major and auxiliary industries and reformation of auxiliary industries (主輔分離、輔業改制)' under the Modern Enterprise System for state-owned enterprises. It is important to mention that the enterprise-run schools faced a great challenge in lacking sufficient funding when SOEs reduced funding by 36.7 per cent compared to previous year, because there was an 11.5 per cent decrease in number of schools over the same period. Although the budget was adjusted to RMB¥9.8 billion in 2004, the funding gradually declined from RMB¥ 9.2 billion in 2005 to RMB¥5.2 billion in 2008 (CEFSY 1994, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2008).

From a province's prospective, if the province has more heavy industries, there are more state-owned enterprises and therefore more funding available in enterprise-run schools. The SOEs in the top three provinces (Heilongjiang, Xinjiang and Shandong) spent an average of more than RMB¥10 billion each in education between 1994 and 2008, while the SOEs in Ningxia, Qinghai, Fujian and Tibet spent less than RMB¥1 billion during the same period. For details of spending in each province, see Table 12.1.

Provinces, Autonomous Regions and Municipalities		1994	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total	Average	Rank
黑龙江	Heilongjiang	949	1,226	1,387	1,407	1,491	1,792	1,726	1,600	1,354	1,816	1,759	1,318	1,231	1,413	20,468	1,462	1
新疆	Xinjiang	659	810	943	1,049	1,149	1,157	1,178	1,433	731	773	639	566	601	355	12,042	860	2
山东	Shandong	539	616	704	805	896	780	998	1,062	835	929	924	379	896	528	10,891	778	3
山西	Shanxi	344	325	377	401	403	429	468	541	432	522	642	806	727	541	6,958	497	4
辽宁	Liaoning	564	687	793	796	727	732	525	504	272	352	356	236	137	142	6,824	487	5
吉林	Jilin	344	439	515	500	532	516	611	546	438	469	454	413	248	208	6,234	445	6
湖北	Hubei	363	451	536	183	800	607	551	890	449	315	420	332	214	45	6,156	440	7
四川	Sichuan	442	679	666	482	501	492	498	520	351	283	282	285	131	140	5,753	411	8
河北	Hebei	322	393	468	462	519	603	632	567	478	595	335	140	121	108	5,743	410	9
内蒙古	Inner Mongolia	347	427	478	436	499	501	433	493	388	433	364	356	388	195	5,739	410	10
河南	Henan	473	554	570	564	529	390	445	485	330	284	282	195	18	69	5,190	371	11
湖南	Hunan	425	588	508	515	427	471	496	372	223	227	221	243	94	10	4,819	344	12
甘肃	Gansu	240	300	339	373	312	345	337	446	413	426	357	235	367	114	4,605	329	13
广东	Guangdong	288	344	370	398	633	491	599	558	199	214	178	119	97	35	4,524	323	14
陕西	Shaanxi	238	264	311	334	346	406	487	525	246	256	259	288	224	168	4,351	311	15
江苏	Jiangsu	305	381	523	483	385	456	427	324	211	189	157	56	95	58	4,047	289	16
上海	Shanghai	378	291	342	356	374	359	344	284	45	60	140	495	101	109	3,678	263	17
海南	Hainan	206	142	145	163	188	188	211	241	173	199	275	273	433	447	3,285	235	18

Table 12.1 Total expenditure on enterprise-run schools funded by SOEs from 1994 to 2008 (by provinces)

Source: China Educational Finance Statistical Yearbooks 1994, 1996–2008

Provinces, Autonomous Regions and Municipalities		1994	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total	Average	Rank
浙 江	Zhejiang	99	193	200	466	344	563	539	391	113	120	85	51	66	14	3,244	232	19
云 南	Yunnan	391	187	200	239	211	226	237	285	155	147	131	198	154	32	2,794	200	20
安 徽	Anhui	142	217	218	180	197	222	276	279	191	172	152	190	124	141	2,701	193	21
天 津	Tianjin	99	215	169	238	219	276	214	274	125	311	227	76	74	85	2,600	186	22
贵 州	Guizhou	161	116	140	201	184	212	230	218	154	189	190	232	161	121	2,509	179	23
广 西	Guangxi	185	219	235	271	265	246	252	258	141	146	58	49	34	28	2,386	170	24
北 京	Beijing	88	99	87	99	294	312	397	326	41	31	24	17	21	32	1,870	134	25
重 庆	Chongqing				208	193	183	175	139	69	109	103	98	110	23	1,409	128	26
江 西	Jiangxi	113	125	150	133	95	112	107	228	136	132	65	33	16	16	1,460	104	27
宁 夏	Ningxia	93	100	85	95	78	91	81	88	67	55	70	23	7	5	936	67	28
青 海	Qinghai	49	54	52	46	46	45	58	48	30	23	23	16	15	17	521	37	29
福 建	Fujian	67	48	48	59	39	31	49	24	21	24	0.2	0.0	0.0	4	414	30	30
西 藏	Tibet														0.2	0.2	0.2	31
	Total	8,914	10,491	11,560	11,940	12,875	13,233	13,582	13,949	8,810	9,801	9,172	7,718	6,903	5,203	144,149		

Table 12.1 (continued) Total expenditure on enterprise-run schools funded by SOEs from 1994 to 2008 (by provinces)

Source: China Educational Finance Statistical Yearbooks 1994, 1996–2008

12.5 The transformation of ownership in a railway-enterprise-run school at Shenzhen

After reviewing the landscape of provision of education by state-owned enterprises between 1994 and 2008, I now analyse how a top-down policy was applied in a single school when it was removed from the Ministry of Railways to the Ministry of Education in 2004, and what problems have been associated with the change of ownership. The railways are one of the biggest industries in China and provide a comprehensive education to the children of employees from preschool to higher education.

12.5.1 Background

The Guangshen Railway Company – Shenzhen Railway Secondary School was founded in July 1985. The objective of establishing this school was to solve the difficulties of school admission for children of railway staff, a kind of corporate welfare. Under the market economy, the Guangshen Railway Company was separated from the railway, but associated services such as schools, medical institutes and police force combined to establish a new company called Shenzhen Railway Industrial Development Corporation. In 1996, the Guangshen Railway Company Limited was registered and established in the Shenzhen Municipality, in accordance with company law, and then issued shares listed on the stock exchanges in Hong Kong and New York. The school was renamed Shenzhen Railway Industrial Development Corporation Shenzhen Railway Secondary School. Under the requirement of the Modern Enterprise System, the railway corporation transferred the school to the Lo Wu district, Shenzhen Municipality on 20 July 2004 and it was renamed Shenzhen Railway Secondary School. Before being separated from the railway, the school had 14 classes, 590 students and 78 teachers (including 26 retired teachers) and in September 2010, the school had 13 classes, 720 students and 61 teachers (including 40 retired teachers).

12.5.2 Process of transformation

The ownership transfer of enterprise-run schools from the Ministry of Railways to the Ministry of Education involved four levels of government (the central government, Guangdong provincial government, Shenzhen Municipality government and Lu Wu district government) and three levels of administrative corporations in railway industry (Ministry of Railways, Guangzhou Railway Group Company and Guangshen Railway Industrial Development Corporation).

In 1995, the State Commission for Restructuring the Economy (central government) proposed that enterprise-run schools should be separated from SOEs.

The Ministry of Railways responded to this request in by conducting industry-wide research about the transformation of institutional issues on 1368 railway schools in 1997 and then issuing advice on 'furthering internal separation of enterprises education in railways enterprises' (關於推進鐵路企業教育部門內部分立的意見) in 1999. The focus was on 'lump-sum funding and self-management'. The core theme was lump-sum funding. This caused a finance problem in the enterprise-run schools before they were moved to the Ministry of Education. In 2000, another document advised on 'acceleration of separating of main business and associated business in transportation industry' (關於加快推進運輸業主附分離和運輸企業內部分立工作的意見). The main focus was on distinguishing enterprises' social functions (schools and medical institutes) from business functions.

The Guangzhou Railway Group Company responded the two above instructions from the Ministry of Railways by issuing one guideline and one suggestion report in 2001 and 2002. In the first guideline, 'Project of schools separation of Guangzhou Railway Group Company' (廣州鐵路集團公司教育分工方案), it required that six urban vocational schools and 77 urban secondary and primary schools be handed over to local governments. Then the company submitted a suggestion report on 'The transfer of railway primary and secondary schools to local governments in Guangdong Province' (關於廣東省境內鐵路中小學移交地方政府管理的請示) to plan for handing over 23 secondary and primary schools.

The Guangshen Railway Industrial Development Corporation received an order from the Guangzhou Railway Group Company and then submitted a suggestion report, 'The transfer of the Shenzhen railway secondary and primary schools to local governments' (關於深圳鐵路中小學移交地方政府管理的請示) to the Shenzhen Municipal Government in 2001.

The Shenzhen Municipal Education Bureau received a request from the Shenzhen Municipal Government to advise on 'the transfer of the Shenzhen railway secondary and primary schools to local governments'(關於深圳鐵路中小學移交地方政府管理的意見). It proposed that the education bureau receive the railway secondary schools and primary schools under the administration of Lo Wu District Education Bureau in 2001.

The Lo Wu district government and Lo Wu District Education Bureau replied to the municipal education bureau in 'Methods of receiving the railway schools in Lo Wu district' (關於羅湖接管鐵路中小學辦法的覆函) in 2001. It indicated that a condition of the transfer was that it would receive only the current

teachers, but not the retired teachers. The retired teachers were required to stay in the railway enterprises on low retirement benefits. This raised an argument regarding identity for the retired teachers. These teachers fought strongly for their welfare, as discussed later.

The Guangshen Railway Industrial Development Corporation rejected the proposal and submitted another report: 'The implementation solution of transfer the Shenzhen Railways secondary and primary schools to local government governments' (關於深圳鐵路中小學移交地方政府管理的實施意見的報告) to request a total solution for schools by transferring staff (including retired teachers and properties to the local governments at one time in 2001. However, this was obstructed and could not be solved in an efficient way.

In 2002, the State Economic Commission and another six ministries and commissions (Central Bank, China Banking Regulatory Commission, Ministry of Land Resources, National Development and Reform Commission, National Bureau of Statistics, State Administration of Taxation) jointly put forward a proposal: 'The progress in advancing the state-owned enterprises being separate from the views of social functions' (關於進一步進行國有企業分離辦社會職能工作的意見). It proposed that the schools and hospitals needed to be detached from the enterprise.

At the same time, the Guangshen Railway Industrial Development Corporation continued to negotiate with the local district government and submitted another report: 'Project of the implementation solution of transfer the Shenzhen Railways secondary and primary schools to local government' (關於深圳鐵路中小學移交地方政府管理的實施意見) to the Shenzhen Municipal Education Bureau.

The Lo Wu District Education Bureau submitted two documents on 'Instructions for receiving railway schools' (關於接管鐵路中小學的請示) and 'Instructions for receiving and management of railway schools in Lo Wu district' (關於深圳鐵路中小學移交我區管理實施方案的請示) to the Lo Wu district government in November 2003. In the second document was the first to mention that the Lo Wu Education Bureau would receive the retired teachers.

In 2004, the breakthrough point was when the central government distributed Article No. 9 of the State Council Working Office: 'Notification of the state council on the proper settlement of the state-owned enterprises from the treatment of retired teachers in primary and secondary school' (國務院辦公廳關於妥善解決國有企業辦中小學退休教師待遇問題的通知) indicating that the retired teachers would be transferred to the local education bureaus at the same time after 1 January 2004.

In 2004, following an instruction of the central government, the Guangdong provincial government issued the 'The issuance on arrangement of schools and medical institutions under railway enterprises to local governments in Guangdong Province' (關於印發廣東省境內鐵路企業所辦教育、 醫療機構移交地方政府管理的意見). This clearly instructed how local government should perform tasks and manage budgets during the transformation.

In 2004, following the instruction of the Guangdong provincial government, the Shenzhen Municipal Government issued a confirmation report: 'The arrangement of transferring schools and hospitals' (關於深圳鐵路中小學和鐵路醫院移交工作有關問題的報告). The core concern was to confirm the date of agreement date and date of handover.

On 30 July 2004, with approval from the Shenzhen Municipal Government, the Lo Wu district government and Lo Wu District Education Bureau signed an agreement with the Guangshen Railway Industrial Development Corporation to accept the Shenzhen railway secondary schools and primary schools. After a three-year negotiation process, the ownership of the school was transferred from the Guangshen Railway Industrial Development Corporation under the Ministry of Railways to the Lo Wu Education Bureau, Shenzhen Municipal Government

12.5.3 Actors' participation to achieve the best result in governance

The main players involved in education reform are the State-Owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission for the State Council (SASAC), the local education bureau, the Railway Education Department, and the principal and current and retired teachers of railway-enterprise-run school. Table 12.2 gives an overview of the main actors, with their primary goals, perceptions of the issues at hand, and the strategies employed to achieve them. There were three problems: disqualified teachers, excess teachers and retired teachers.

12.5.3.1 Problem of disqualified teachers

The local education bureau had required all teachers to have teacher status on application forms when they applied many years ago, although some of them got their teaching qualifications afterwards. The principal solved this problem skilfully.

> I first clarified this issue with the district local education bureau and the manpower bureau by saying all these teachers got their proper qualification

Key actor	Goal	Perception	Strategy
State-Owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission for the State Council (SASAC)	Advance the establishment of Modern Enterprise System in SOEs and push forward the reform and restructuring of SOEs.	The enterprise-run school should be detached from the Ministry of Railways to the Ministry of Education under the notion of the Modern Enterprise System.	Coordinating the issue of enterprise-run school between the Ministry of Railways and the Ministry of Education.
Local education bureau	Follow the command from the Ministry of Education and accept the school with the minimum expense in the transition period and running cost afterwards.	Teachers not accepted without proper qualification; excess teachers and retired teachers. However, a large amount of money will be requested as a kind of compensation to receive the retired teachers from the Ministry of Railways.	Only accept teachers when they start their teaching with qualification. Do not accept excess teachers and retired teachers.
Railway Education Department	The school must be returned to local education bureau before 30 July 2004.	No teachers (current and retired) will be left in the Railway Education Department.	Negotiation with local education bureau to accept all teachers. They prepare to give some money as compensation at last.
School principal	The school must be returned to the local education bureau with all teachers (current and retired) at the same time.	Balance the interests of current teachers and retired teachers. Solve the problem for the teachers who applied for the teaching post without a qualification. Work at maximum effort for the retired teachers.	(1) Work with senior official at the Railway Education Department to bargain and negotiate with the local education bureau for the retired teachers. (2) Use top-down approach to solve the current teachers without relevant qualification in the past.
Teacher (current)	The school needs to be returned to local education bureau as soon as possible to enjoy relatively high salary and benefits.	The issue of retired teachers is the obstacle. School should deal with these two matters separately.	Discuss with the principal returning the school to the local education bureau first and then dealing with the problem of retired teachers.
Teacher (retired)	They return to the local education bureau together with the current teachers.	If the school returns to the local education bureau with the current teachers first, they will be left behind.	(1) Talk to the principal to make sure they will be accepted at the same time to the local education bureau. (2) State their arguments based on the National Teacher Law to the local education bureau. (3) Ask councillors to address their issues in the municipal council. (4) Arouse attention of the media.

Table 12.2 Main actors and their goals, perceptions and strategies

> during teaching, but they didn't accept. I understood the top-down policy process in the China; I went to the Guangdong Province manpower department to explain this matter and then got a letter with the official stamp from them to identity the teachers with proper qualification, and then I bring this letter to the Shenzhen Municipal manpower department, they accepted it and wrote me another letter, and then I brought these two letters to the local education bureau and the district manpower bureau. They accepted it without saying anything.
>
> (Interview with the principal)

The first action taken by the principal was to explain the problem to the relevant government bureaus, hoping it could be solved directly. However, it was not solved properly, as the one of the goals of the local education bureau was to 'accept the school with the minimum expense in the transition period and running cost afterwards'. Therefore, fewer SOE school teachers returned to government schools, and less funding was required from the bureau. The principal understood the Chinese hierarchal and top-down administrative structure in which lower-level governments must obey and follow instructions and decisions from higher-level governments without hesitation and questions.

12.5.3.2 Problem of excess teachers

There is a difference in teacher/student ratios between railway-enterprise-run schools and government schools. The railway-enterprise-run schools have a higher teacher/student ratio. Therefore, the local education bureau did not receive 7–8 excess teachers. The vice director of the Railway Education Department told me the solution to this problem.

> We used another condition to exchange and fulfil their requirement; we gave them the houses or apartments which are currently used for teachers' accommodation; they accepted this.
>
> (Interview with the vice director of the Railway Education Department)

The Railway Education Department offered houses and apartments to the local education bureau in exchange for the acceptance of excess teachers. This is a clear example of how resources can be exchanged to achieve mutual benefit for both parties.

12.5.3.3 Problem of retired teachers

The problem of retired teachers was the most difficult issue to solve during the transfer period, as it did not have a precedent to follow. Different actors had different views on this matter.

> We know it is profitable in the railway enterprise. It is a public listed company, so we requested RMB¥20 million [in fact RMB¥2 million written in contract] in returns to accept their retired teachers.
>
> (Interview with the deputy director of the local Education Bureau)

> We had paid a lot of money in this matter [retired teachers] … In fact, we have prepared to pay for [them] because we understand if they [retired teachers] will not be transferred to the local education bureau, they will come to our office every day and it is too costly in administration to keep them.
>
> (Interview with the vice director of the Railway Education Department)

Similar to the solution to the previous problem, the local Education Bureau and the Railway Education Department found ways to negotiate with each other through the method of resource exchange.

> Between 2001 and 2003, the retired teachers state their views in the negotiation process with the bureaus through the principal … and they wrote a lot of letters to claim their rights under the Teacher Education Law to the local education bureau and relevant departments, talked to the media, ask councillors to put their agendas to the Shenzhen Municipal Council, report to the higher level government [provincial government and central government[through the petition system. I believed that the central government had a new document [dated 1 January 2004] related to their issue because of their effort in bargaining.
>
> (Interview of deputy principal)

> They were also fighting for their own cause, using methods such as contacting the media. They selected 2–3 people as the main contacts, and once the matter related to the transfer, they all responded and worked together. They also get in touch with the retired teachers in other cities

> to exchange information and bargain together. Everyone knows that there has significantly different retirement benefit between enterprise-run school and the government school. The retired teachers can triple their pension to RMB¥6600 per month if they are under the local education bureau.
>
> (Interview of senior teacher)

The retired teachers claimed and fought for their rights and benefits under the Chinese Teacher Law both formally and informally. The formal way was to communicate with the local education bureau by writing letters or through the principal. The informal way was to seek help from the media and councillors. They also formed networks to connect with retired teachers in different cities to exchange information and gathered together to achieve more bargaining power.

The final result of this network-kind of negotiation in the case of a railway-enterprise-run school was favoured and accepted by all actors. All actors are better off, with the local education bureau the only one disadvantaged actor in this matter, even though it was compensated by RMB¥2 million. This matches with the claim of Torfing et al. (2009) that 'the network actors must be prepared to respond positively to constructive proposals, to make concessions, or at least to compensate the losers.' (p. 291).

12.6 Summary and conclusion

State-owned enterprises have run a wide range and fruitful schools in China in past decades. They shared a huge responsibility for the provision of education for the central government. Under the Modern Enterprise System, schools have been requested to detach from SOEs and then be transferred to the Ministry of Education. The problems of disqualified teachers, excess teachers and retired teachers have been examined.

Governance of public policy in the Chinese administrative system has entered a new phase, from the central hierarchy top-down approach to the approach of central steering with local diversities. The central government had a core policy objective, and the local governments can achieve it with their own means with local characteristics.

This chapter provides an example of how the actors within a policy arena can interact with each other by exchanging their own resources to produce better outcomes, and where all the actors are better off. Losers will be compensated. The local education bureau in this case, as a disadvantaged actor, was compensated

by a substantial sum of money and properties offered by the Railway Education Department related to excess teachers and retired teachers.

We have seen that policy network theory can be used in Chinese public policies, such as reform in taxation, provincial politics legislatures, housing and real estate, and public health insurance reform. Policy networks are new forms of political governance that reflect a changed relationship between the state and society. Their emergence is a result of the dominance of organised actors in policy making, the fragmentation of the state, and the blurring of boundaries between the public and the private (Rhodes 1997).

Policy network theory in the Western policy sciences is generally useful and fruitful for understanding the policy process in China. However, some ideas, like Rhodes's 'hollow-out state' may not be applicable in China, as the role of the Chinese Communist Party is still dominant in policy making. It is still highly resourced and has a range of powers with which to retain influence over public sector agencies. More research is needed to further develop the policy network theory in order to suit Chinese political and social environments.

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12

A Historical–Political Approach to Constructing Contemporary Vietnamese Identity

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SUMMARY Current literature on contemporary Vietnamese identity tends to be confined to explanations using either the essentialist (Tran 2000; Tran 2003) or non-essentialist (Ngo 2005) approaches. These approaches seem to insufficiently explain the complexity of Vietnamese identity formation and the hidden powerful forces (historically, politically, culturally, linguistically and economically) that may form and transform the nation and its national identity. In its discussion of modern Vietnamese identity, this chapter is based on the historical–political approach and uses narration as a tool to decipher Vietnamese history, but in close resonance with the present – the modern time, to reveal the foundation of this connectivity. It answers two fundamental questions: (1) In what way does narration contribute to understanding the nation and its national identity (i.e. contemporary Vietnamese identity)? and (2) To what extent is Vietnamese identity the product of older traditions and the modern nation-state? In doing so, the chapter enriches the understanding of Vietnamese identity and provides another approach to identity interpretation.

13.1 Introduction

The chapter starts with discussing the concept of nation and national identity. It also looks at the loci of narration in understanding a nation and its national identity. It then pinpoints why and to what extent contemporary Vietnamese identity is the product of the older traditions and the post-1945 nation-state.

13.2 Nation, national identity and narration

To decode the internally reciprocal relationship between the praxis of nation and narration, this chapter draws on the famous classical work of Renan (1882), which discusses the nature of a nation or people, and the current work of Bhabha (1990) on the interconnectedness between nation and narration in which he assertively indicates the wrestling of political and cultural power in forming the nation. In a similar vein, Marginson (2010) debates the concept of nation imagination and its identity by narrating the history of ancient Rome and Japan. Other scholars' work has also been influential in seeking the relationship between traditions and narration based on which elements of

creative hybridity of the national identity are detected through the historical lens (Rizvi 2005). Based on these scholars' works, my aim is to demonstrate that narration, among other tools, could be an effective approach to decipher the nation and its identity.

Debating the nature of a nation, Renan, in a lecture delivered at the Sorbonne in 1882, denied the naturalistic determination of national boundaries (e.g. language, geography, race, religion, or anything else). He critiqued the ethnographic approach to nation defining. He assertively spoke of human wills as the predetermined constituent of the present nation (Thom 1990) and the tradition's epoch in forming the nation. Renan made a connectivity of the nation's past with its present will. He later specified that:

> The nation, like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of endeavours, sacrifice, and devotion. Of all cults, that of the ancestors is the most legitimate, for the ancestors have made us what we are. A heroic past, great men, glory … this is the social capital upon which one bases a national idea. To have common glories in the past and to have a common will in the present; to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more – these are essential conditions for being a people. (Renan 1882, cited in Thom 1990, 9)

Renan, in this spirit, emphasises that the human will has been central to nation formation. Narration has been transcendent in creating a unified image of the nation via its legacy of memories of the past, and the politics of pastness is forged towards present will. Narration therefore subscribes to comprehensive readings of traditions in forming national identity, which gives the nation a strong sense of 'Who they are' in relation to Other nations (Hall 1992, 1996). Traditions recursively enact new narratives, constituted sometimes by the history of the traditions that people recognise and sometimes creatively invent in the light of changing circumstances via resources to engage with new cultural circumstances and practices (Rizvi 2005). As a result, narrative becomes seen as the point of the creative crisscrossing of dynamic traditions and the new).

Narration itself is an act of imagination. By narrating the past, narration partially creates the unitary community or the collective imagination of national identity and engages political attempts in creating such an unified image of the nation – national identity (Marginson 2010b). Although narration sinks into the mire of collective imagination to create a unified national image, it, according to Bhabha (1990), involves the laborious telling of the doubling of the nation

identity as an ambivalent site of hybridity where the cultural and political authorities are negotiated. He provocatively wrote that:

> The address to nation as narration stresses the insistence of political power and cultural authority in what Derrida describes as the 'irreducible excess of the syntactic over the semantic'. What emerges as an effect of such 'incomplete signification' is a turning of boundaries and limits into the in-between spaces through which the meanings of cultural and political authority are negotiated. (Bhabha 1990, 4)

Precisely, human will and tradition presuppose the formation of the nation. In its attempt to understand the nation identity, the powerful 'dissemiNation' or narration (Bhabha 1990) is enacted to allow for greater possibilities of exploring the void of 'in-betweenness' of the nation, sublating the increativity of nation mimicry in contact with other cultures, speculating the collective/nation imagination and transcending the political power involvement in creating a unified 'nation-people'. Following is the narration of Vietnamese national identity, seen as the product of older traditions and modern nation-state, say post-1945. Put differently, it is the narration from the historical–political perspective which might become self-evident for the contour of national identity interpretation.

13.2.1 Vietnamese identity as the product of older traditions

Tradition is understood as the collection of ideologies, customs, and habits in the thought-pattern, lifestyle and behaviours of a certain community. It is gradually formed via that community's history, preserved and transcended from generation to generation (Pham et al. 1996). Traditions create a nation's identity. Although it would be difficult to define Vietnamese singular identity, among typical Vietnamese characteristics are nationalism and Confucianism.

13.2.1.1 Nationalism

Vietnam's history of being colonised (Phan et al. 1993) has sustained and nurtured national self-determination in association with nationalism to affirm its existence in parallel with the Other and therefore defending against the barbarian invaders.

Historically, nationalism becomes paramount in case of nation-state's independence risk. It remained mute during the formation of the primitive Vietnamese state, the legends of Hung kings – as founded in the Neolithic Age. It was followed by the rudiment of Au Lac state, seen as the direct result

of the dissolution of primitive communist society in the third century BC. Nationalism prodigiously duplicated soon after the first Chinese invasion in 208 BC, when Trieu Da, a Chinese turncoat, invaded Au Lac. Trieu Da built up the capital near the present Canton city, claimed himself as emperor of Nam Viet (Karnow 1983; SarDesai 1992). Trieu Da's invasion marked the beginning of Chinese empire expansion across Asia. Despite 1000 years of Chinese domination, commenced by Trieu Da's conquering two centuries before Christ and ended with Tang failure in 939, hitherto China's endless political attempt to assimilate Vietnamese people, the nation's self-determination stayed powerful to defend its independence. It awoke the whole nation's consciousness of their status and set the fire for Vietnam's incessant rebellions. The earliest Vietnamese insurrection must be attributed to a titled lady, Trung Trac, in company with her sister Trung Nhi and another woman Phung Thi Chinh. They expelled the Chinese in AD 40 and became queens of the independent state. In subsequent centuries, Chinese domination had always been challenged by Vietnamese confrontation. In 939, Vietnamese under Ngo Quyen commander defeated the Tang dynasty. Four centuries later, the Sino-Vietnamese tension again resulted in Vietnamese triumph, honouring the Vietnamese commander Tran Hung Dao, who expelled 300,000 Mongol troops in Red River valley in 1287 (Chesneaux 1966).

The glory of nationalism was again celebrated with victory over the French after a nearly 100-year colonisation (1858–1954). The French invasion of Vietnam started in 1858 in Danang and completed its conquering period in 1883. Nearly 30 years of French invasion was confronted with severe Vietnamese resistance. Truong Cong Dinh rebelled against Tu Duc, the Vietnamese king who ceded to France: 'We are determined to disobey your orders as long as you speak of peace and surrender' (Karnow 1983, 119). Following were rebellions of Nguyen Huu Huan, Ham Nghi, Ton That Thuyet, Dinh Cong Trang, De Tham, Phan Dinh Phung and many others (Phan et al. 1993). However, the seemingly influential resistance movement must be attributed to Phan Boi Chau and Phan Chau Trinh, who organised Viet Nam Duy Tan Hoi (Association for the Modernisation of Vietnam) in early 20th century (Phan et al. 1993). These movements had drawn special attention to Ho Chi Minh, who later successfully led the Vietnam Communist Party to defeat the French in 1954 and American imperialism (1954–1975).

If nationalism honours Vietnamese essence (*quoc tuy*), the national identity has been implicitly politicised by the elites who deployed nationalism as the nation's effective weapon against barbarian Others. Vietnamese elites soon declared their independence and the nation's self-determination to fight for it.

The first declaration of independence (1077), written by Vietnamese general Ly Thuong Kiet, came far prior to that of the American (1776) or the French (1791) declarations of human rights. Nationalism was echoed in the independence declaration written by Nguyen Trai in 1427 to gain independence, depicted in the work titled 'Bình Ngô đại cáo'. The most recent – the Proclamation of Independence – was read at Ba Dinh Square, Hanoi, Vietnam in 1945 to declare its independence from France and Japan. This marked the birth of Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

In summary, nationalism came laden with the strong will of the Vietnamese to protect their national boundary against the alien offences of China, French, Japan and America. Vietnamese glorious past is apparently at the expense of its nationalism, which is overwhelmingly recited in the Vietnamese nation's narration. However, Vietnamese self-determination, or its strong agency, hardly implies the closure and aggressiveness towards the Other's culture assimilation. Although the nation on the one hand tirelessly fights for its independence and freedom, it constantly opens to the Other's cultural quintessence and augments its cultural sources. Like many Asian countries, Vietnam's history has been incarnated by the shadow of Confucianism on society practices and ideology.

13.2.1.1 Confucianism

In a situation similar to that in to Japan, which emphasised Confucianism in its national values during the Edo in the 15th century (see Marginson 2010), Vietnamese people are highly perceptive to Confucianism values laden with multiple levels. Joseph Burttinger made an eloquent statement of the self-determination of the Vietnamese to maintain their culture through hybridising Confucian ideologies:

> The more they [the Vietnamese] absorbed the skills, customs and ideas of the Chinese, the smaller grew the likelihood of their ever becoming part of the Chinese people. In fact, it was during the centuries of intensive efforts to turn them into Chinese that the Vietnamese came into their own as a separate people, with political and cultural aspects of their own. (SarDesai 1992, 17)

The influence of Confucianism across Vietnam is evident. The way Vietnamese people hybridise Confucianism denies the superficial assumption that Vietnam is no less than the mimicry of Chinese Confucianism. As I have argued earlier, the Vietnamese agency had been strong in defending for their independence and their equal status with China. Vietnamese elites had awakened the national self-

determination and sharpened nationalism as a weapon against the barbarian invaders. Therefore, Vietnamese people were determined to resist Chinese invasion, but also appraised the quintessence of Chinese culture, Confucianism, to absorb its ideology, on which they formed their state stability and their nation's ideology. Borrowing and adaptation were popular but made to get along with its traditions. These factors sculptured the nation's identity (Nguyen 1997). Dang Duc Sieu, in a famous book, *Nho Giao Xua va Nay* (Confucianism: Past and Present), points out that Vietnamese Confucianism has been restructured on the basis of Confucian universal values to fit into Vietnamese conditions (cited in Nguyen Tai Thu 1997, 45). Although Confucianism underwent ups and downs (became dumped in Tran dynasty but victorious in Le, Trinh and Nguyen dynasties in the 16th and 17th centuries, and marginalised during the modernisation in early twentieth century), it was hybridised into the ideological system of Vietnamese emperors. Having expelled the Tang domination in 939, the Vietnamese monarchy found it vital to maintain the nation's stability and perceived well that Confucianism perfectly fitted for that purpose. They adopted the core ideology of Confucianism to build up their own Confucian-oriented model society. Smith (1973) observes:

> Clearly, Confucianism itself, as a principle of government, caused to appeal to the Vietnamese about the same time as it declined in China, although one might well apply to Vietnam some of the thoughts on Chinese intellectual continuity developed … But what has been said in the present paper about the fluctuating fortunes of the Confucian scholars as a political group may well reflect *something deeper than the intellectual content of Confucian philosophy*. Confucianism is but one example of the human tendencies to desire order in society and to seek to discipline the individual according to principles whose first appeal is to the intellect rather than the heart. (p. 25, emphasis added)

The intellectual content of Confucian philosophy was deepened in Vietnamese moral teachings (Marr 1981; Nguyen 1997). Politically, Confucianism occupied such a potent status in setting up a moral guide for Vietnamese people (Marr 1981). It was seen as deeply seated in the people's mind and behaviour, and became the point of reference to judge a person's morality. Ngo Duc Ke, the anti-French literatus, added a dramatic comment:

> In our country of Vietnam, for several thousand years, we have studied Chinese characters and followed Confucianism. Chinese literature is

> the national literature: although the rivers and the mountains change, dynasties change several tens of times, dangerous rebellions have been many, this current of orthodox learning still has not declined. The benevolence (*nhan tam*) of the people, the customs, the morality, politics all derive from it. Government and lineage, in a similar manner, find stability in it. (McHale 2004, 73)

Ngo Duc Ke's comment appears rather simplistic, since he Confucianised Vietnam's past. However, one positive aspect is that Confucianism exists and influences Vietnamese society. For example, by framing the Vietnamese identity, we can still detect Confucian traces, but in the apparatus of asymmetrical assimilations. Confucianism is no longer credited to Chinese. As SarDesai (1992) notes, it is Confucianism that indirectly contributes to nationalism and strengthens Vietnam as the nation-state since its independence in 939. It lays the corner stone for the formation of Vietnamese values systems, including benevolence, customs, morality, government, etc. Take people's social life as an example. People had to control their multiplicity of roles (e.g. for a man these roles include being a father, a husband, a subordinate to the king, and the supervisor, *quan tu*, if he came from Confucian education), which should strictly adhere to the moral guide. According to Marr (1981), the heart of this moral guide is adopted from the Confucian doctrine in the five relationships (*ngu luan*): ruler–subject, father–son, husband–wife, elder brother–younger brother and friend–friend. Vietnamese role therefore strictly adheres to vertical hierarchy. The ruler–subject and father–son relationships become superlative. Marr indicates an interesting point that a person as a subject is supposed to show loyalty (*trung*) to the ruler. As well, he is expected to maintain the filial piety (*hieu*) to his father. Yet a king, a father or an elder brother are required to govern by example, by 'cultivating and projecting the inner quality of virtue (*duc*), not by promulgating an outer system of laws and institutions (*phap*)' (p. 58). Among these five key relationships, family lies in the centre. As a result, family values may hold special meanings not only for individuals but for the stability of the society and the whole nation. Family behaviours were strictly disciplined; between husband and wife, father–son and elder brother–younger brother. Confucian teachings seem to shape Vietnamese within-family manners.

Besides, education involves the whole society's treasure of knowledge, the essentiality of moral education (*duc duc*), intellectual education (*tri duc*) and personal attributes of 'virtue' (*duc*) and 'talent' (*tai*). The teacher–pupil relations were classified as authority submission, which was not different from

the main content of the five traditional relations. Confucianism was promoted in which the teacher role was decisive to the pupil's knowledge and ethics. The teacher acted as the source of all knowledge, the knowledge provider, the most knowledgeable person as well as the moral guide. A student is supposed to be respectful to the teacher. Numerous Confucian teachings have been doctrinised, for example, as following:

> *Muon sang thi bac cau kieu.*
> (You must build a bridge to get across the river.
> *Muon con hay chu phai yeu lay thay.*
> (You must respect the teacher to have an educated child.)

Moreover, in the middle of this structure's ethical cement, Vietnamese people were imbued with a set of fundamental virtues; 'benevolence' (*nhan*), 'righteousness' (*nghia*), 'ritual' (*le*), 'knowledge' (*tri*), and 'sincerity' (*tin*) (Nguyen Tai Thu, 1997). For Vietnamese, 'benevolence' or the humanness became paramount, yet remained fairly abstract and often limited to the king, as described by Marr. It became discernible as the formation and proof of the superior man, '*quan tu*'. Benevolence served as the source of self-cultivation and self-improvement (*tu than*) but limited in the noble and the superior. However, during the Resistance War against the French (1945–1954), benevolence was rooted again to train the Vietnamese Party cadres and regarded as the 'highest revolutionary virtue' but added the new interpretation of Confucian values. Nguyen Khac Vien penned:

> The virtue of humaneness consists of loving deeply and wholeheartedly assisting one's comrades and compatriots. That is why the cadre who displays this virtue wages a resolute struggle against all those who harm the party and the people. That is why he will not hesitate to be the first to endure hardship and the last to enjoy happiness. That is why he will not covet wealth and honour, nor fear hardship and suffering, not to be able to fight those in power. Those who want nothing are afraid of nothing and will always succeed in doing the right thing. (Marr 1981, 100)

The history of Vietnam has seen the hybridisation of Confucianism into Vietnamese traditions. Hitherto Confucianism's vicissitudes, certain canons of Confucianism, had been circulated by the political dogma and examples so successfully that it would be indispensible (Marr 1981). It had already been absorbed in the system of Vietnamese traditions so deeply that it was gradually

turned into Vietnamese traditions. In this aspect, the Vietnamese monarch succeeded in making it traditions, e.g. the ethic norms, the polity and so on. Just as Roman elites were brilliant in making hybrid Rome of Roman and Hellenic or the Japanese hybridisation of Shinto and Buddhism (Marginson 2010), the Vietnamese monarch had succeeded in Confucianisation of Vietnamese traditions.

Confucian had cultivated successfully on the moral field to shape the national essence and political landscape. Nevertheless, it simultaneously reveals defects that became incompatible with such a giant historical change. Although Vietnamese Confucianism transformed itself into a new form, Neo-Confucianism, it was unsuccessful in remaking the Vietnamese identity and its political aims in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Being attacked by Western industrialisation and ideology together with the betrayal of the Vietnamese monarch, Vietnamese Confucianism was thrown into crisis. For Vietnamese Confucianism stressed the hierarchy rather than democracy, and more doctrinisation instead of providing a rational explanation of why a specific action was acceptable (Marr 1981). It lost its power over the modern idealists from the 1920s onwards.

Marxism has been introduced into the country by a generation of revolutionists in the challenge of remaking the nation's 'second-self' (Marginson 2010): their self-determination, imagination and creativity to incorporate the Western theories. Marxism is translated into and embedded with existing traditions, which creates a blend of new and old traditions. Although it took around 30 years to achieve this restructure, the scope and scales of change have been so immense that they locate Vietnam on the world map.

13.2.2 Vietnamese identity as the product of modern nation-state: Pre-Marxism, Marxism–Leninism and Ho Chi Minh ideology

The early 20th century witnessed openness and engagement of Vietnamese elites towards outsiders, including the West and Japan. Revolutionary ideology has been merged into Vietnamese traditions during the uprising of the 'modernisation movement'. The idea of 'modernisation' was for the first time incorporated into the existing ideology, resulting in the foundation of the Association for the Modernisation of Vietnam in 1905 (Vu Duc Bang 1973). This is regarded as the first modern political party, led by Phan Boi Chau (1867–1940), Phan Chau Trinh (1872–1926) and Luong Van Can (1854–1927). Inspired by Western modernisation and the splendid harvest of Japanese Westernisation, these elites were determined to modernise Vietnam, and as a result, they could liberate the country.

An unprecedented break between traditions and modernity was created. Education became massive and free for people attending Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc School. Science, hygiene, geography, political history and economy, civics and especially the native language were taught at the school. *Quoc ngu* was introduced to the populace as the replacement of the Chinese characters used for nearly 2000 years. The birth of Vietnamese print in *quoc ngu* – *Gia Dinh* newspaper in 1865, *Thong Loai Khoa Trinh* magazine in 1888, *Nu Gioi Chung* in 1918, *Tuan bao Thanh Nien* founded by Nguyen Ai Quoc (Ho Chi Minh) in 1925 and many others – appeared to be powerful, with massive impacts on people (see Vu Duc Bang 1973). Western values were no longer loathed, but emerged into the system of traditions. Democracy, mass education as ignored in the Confucianism, women's equal status as denied in Confucian's teachings of three obediences and four characters, were extracted from Western values. Cosmopolitanism became recognised as Vietnam's readiness to be open to the world. Talented Vietnamese youth were sent to Germany, Japan, France, and China to study under the Dong Kinh School's fund. Although modernisation experienced a comparatively short life (1905–1907), its impact was tremendous on the strong Vietnamese reflexivity, on their traditional Confucian values and the openness to the Other. It also unlocked rational choices for their liberation from colonial domination. The success and failure of the Modernisation Movement eventually induced the 'second-self' transformation of the Vietnamese people in light of Marxism–Leninism.

Marxism–Leninism is originally credited to Ho Chi Minh, who successfully introduced it into Vietnam and founded Vietnam Communist Party in 1932. It has been recognised as the state ideology since 1945. Marxism–Leninism did not discard the centuries-old Confucianism. Rather, it was well integrated into Vietnamese traditions. Ho Chi Minh stated, '… as far as we are concerned, we Annamites, let us perfect ourselves intellectually through the reading of Confucius, and revolutionarily through the works of Lenin.' (Brocheux 2007, 38)

Marxism–Leninism in Vietnam in line with Ho Chi Minh ideology enforced conformity to social and cultural values more efficiently (Marr 1981). They remained consistent with Vietnamese essences; besides, they stressed people's patriotism and piety to the nation as the most important Vietnamese ethics in the Resistance War (1946–1954) and the American War, which ended in 1975. People's conduct was ascribed to social classes: peasant class, working class and intellectual. Class equality was necessarily balanced. Intellectual and communist cadres' conduct was strictly regulated in the light of Confucian

values; they included a set of cardinal virtues: 'benevolence' (*nhan*), 'righteousness' (*nghia*), 'ritual' (*le*), 'knowledge' (*tri*), 'sincerity' (*tin*), 'loyalty' to the country, 'piety' to the people (see Dinh and Nguyen 1998; Pham et al. 1996). The content was much the same as the traditional Vietnamese Confucian teachings, but with the hierarchy reversed. Confucianism emphasised loyalty and piety towards the king and the superior, while Marxism–Leninism and Ho Chi Minh ideology treasured the people and considered them as the base of the nation's power. Collectivist spirit was still enhanced, but in harmony with individual, especially material self-interest via economic production activities; the forms of cooperative (*hop tac xa*) and contract (*khoan*) were popular in the countryside, where agriculture still dominated the economy. Marr (1981) observed that:

> Vietnamese Marxists–Leninists set as one of their most important tasks the 'awakening' of a great number of people to their own material self-interests … The party characterisations of the 'authentic' interests of various classes and strata changed often, leading one to conclude that applying dialectical materialism in practice was fully complicated as defining the way in traditional ideology. (Marr 1981, 131)

The Vietnamese individual was on the one hand closely attached to the family, and on the other hand supposed to manage their multiple links to interest groups, classes, 'peoplehood' (*dan toc*), national citizenship, and the exploited majority of humanity in general (Marr 1981). Besides, a person was assigned with the new citizenship duties in order to promote their love for the nation. Marr provides an exceptional example. He points out that, 'At the time of August 1945 Revolution, "Fatherland Altars" (*Ban Tho To Quoc*) were set up in many quarters of Hanoi. While the form was obviously borrowed from traditional ancestral ceremonies, the content aimed at rousing further patriotic enthusiasm, at impressing individuals with the "sacred nature" of new citizenship duties, and at welcoming exhorted everyone to be "loyal" (*trung*) to the Fatherland and "pious" (*hieu*) towards the people – a conscious relating to Confucian moral prescriptions and new political identifications' (p. 133).

The model of Vietnamese character was ambitiously reconfigured at the Communist Party's Fourth National Congress, held in December 1976. The building of a model of the new life and the moulding of the new Vietnamese people (who are submissive to the collective mastery principle with a great keenness for labour, and who are socialist, patriotic and dedicated to proletarian internationalism) were the aims. This new culture of the new Vietnamese was

intended by the party as 'socialist in content and national in character', seen as a 'crystallisation' and 'sublime expression' of what was best in the 4000-year tradition of the Vietnamese (Pelly 2002, 122). Ambitious though it might sound, the new model of the Vietnamese appeared to be politically gainful, but turned out to be economically disadvantageous. The collective spirit was well applied in economic structure and activities that overemphasised the mastery of collectivism; e.g. the cooperative (*hop tac xa*) became the centre of agricultural production and administration to allocate production and profits. Paradoxically, the central purpose of individual self-interest in the 1945 August Revolution became dissolved in the collective-based economy and politics since 1975 onwards. Individual agency would be a strange concept; individualism suffered a severe boycott. Aspects of self were largely ignored. The political attempt to create a homogenous character – the new Vietnamese – bore a fruitful result, yet at the same time was hostile to the country's economic development, since the collective-based economic system itself blocked dynamic growth for a prolonged period (1975–1986).

The quest for economic growth became critical. In 1986, the Open-Door Policy (*Doi Moi*) reinforced the party's recognition of individual self-interest as an important constituent among the economic motives. Traditions continued to speak to modernity. Modern values were accompanied in the country's process of industrialisation and modernisation. Most noticeably, two significant studies of Vietnamese traditions on the national scale in 1993 and 1994 indicated that: (a) individual self-interest, individual values, and family interest prevailed over collectivist values; (b) national interests were more immediate than the international; (c) economic interest was more preferred than spiritual; (d) temporary values seemed to win over permanent ones; and (e) modern values tended to overwhelm the traditional (Pham et al. 1996, 140). These studies concluded with a list of Vietnamese values that are essential to train future Vietnamese citizens in the modern time, including the traditions of benevolence, solidarity, and interdependence; the tradition of study passion, teacher respect, talent nurturing and treasuring the nation's culture; professional values such as knowledge, skills and benevolence; love and well-behaved family; individual health and environment and cultural protection; the lifestyle principle such as *can*, *kiem*, *liem*, *chinh*, *ky luat* and *phap luat* (hardworking, economical, honest, impartial, disciplined and law-obedient); and gender equality (Pham et al. 1996, 141–142). More than this, Vietnamese scholars agreed that the core of the ethics and values hierarchy was based on their humane traditions, national pride and national essence.

13.3 Conclusion

This chapter attempts to paint a picture of Vietnamese identity by situating it in the historical–political paradigm. By examining the past – older Vietnamese traditions as made of nationalism and perfectly hybridised with Confucianism, Marxism–Leninism and Ho Chi Minh ideology, the chapter unveils the complexity of the Vietnamese identity. As discussed, aspects of homogeneity still seem to dominate Vietnamese identity, since aspects of individual self appear as an exchange for the political attempt to create a unified national identity (nationalism, Confucianism, Marxism–Leninism and Ho Chi Minh ideology). This has been self-evident over Vietnam's 1000-year history. Nonetheless, it is more likely to become fragmented under the expansion of globalisation. Vietnamese values are changing, which concerns contemporary Vietnamese scholars. Globalisation in particular currently mobilises not only people, technology, knowledge and the like, but also various cultures, in the context of intensifying cultural movements. More new values clash with a nation's existing value system. In this case, without acknowledging human agency as the core, tradition preservation as well as innovation and creative cultural hybridity may well be impossible to achieve.

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Part Five: Equity, Identity and Social Justice

Introduction
Provocative Acts of Research

JANE KENWAY

Equity, identity and social justice are highly contested concepts. Each has provoked a cacophony of meanings and also a related range of political practices in diverse locations and institutions, on various scales and in relation to different social, cultural, political and environmental groupings.

To put these concepts together in one title is an interestingly provocative act. It invites one to consider their relationship to each other. Further, to sequence them in the manner in which they have been sequenced, leads one to wonder about the intentions and effects of such sequencing. What priorities and relationships are implied here?

With regard to the issues associated with equity, identity and social justice, it is the responsibility of educators to understand several things. First we must understand how these translate into and are expressed in specifically educational circumstances; for instance educational systems and structures (Hongzhi Zhang), 'dominant monolingual mindsets' (Cunzhen Yang) and mainstream and other media (Kellie Sanders). Second we need to try to comprehend how education itself contributes to wider worlds of injustice, how, for instance, it systemically contributes to wounding the identities of individuals and groups; how certain groups of girls can be actively disappeared from mainstream texts about girlhood (Sanders). And thirdly, we need to consider the potential of education to change itself and the wider worlds, from which it emerges and that it helps to produce.

But who are 'we'? As Richard Sennett is reputed to have said, "we" is a 'dangerous pronoun'. It is implicated in all sorts of hierarchical, exclusionary and homogenising practices that contribute to injustice in and beyond education. Further, what constitutes the 'we' of education and educational research in current circumstances of rapid and intense social, cultural, political and environmental change on diverse scales around the world?

As in all other fields, education invites and incites a diversity of meanings and politics in relation to the concepts equity, identity and social justice. Further, these concepts have led to many different educational practices. Zhang's chapter points to the links between the meanings of these concepts in place and history. He is concerned about how the nation of China has mobilised various meanings and practices over time as Chinese politics have changed and

as China has entered the global economy. In contrast, Yang's chapter points to the conceptual links made between language, culture and identity and to the problems that minority language groups face in countries where they are subjected to widespread pressures to linguistically assimilate.

Clearly no educationalist of any merit seeks to understand these concepts and their practical effects in isolation from the wider worlds where inequities exit, where identities are ascribed, formed and mobilised, and where injustices occur. Zhang's chapter alerts us to the importance of sub-national geography and 'urban–rural disparities', a matter of huge significance in China. But he also shows how inequities in China's education system arise from the intersections of the 'political system, economic development, financial and tax policies, historical and cultural origins, etc'.

As, over time, different societies are forced to acknowledge previously unacknowledged equity and justice issues, so too are educationists required to attend to these. Heteronormativity is one such issue, which is taken up by Kellie Sanders in relation to popular 'educational' representations of the power relationships between girls. She shows how understandings of a so-called social justice issue associated with girls can be dominated by the perspectives of white, middle-class, able-bodied heterosexuals, to the exclusion of issues associated with their 'others'. As she argues, this is a refusal to acknowledge that girls are 'a dynamic population group with heterogeneous needs and desires'.

We can readily infer from Kellie's paper that contemporary education and educating involve a proliferation of non-traditional sites, practices, professionals and politics. In order to accommodate such change, the remit of educational research has had to expand. Yes, we must continue to understand education broadly to include institutions such as preschools, schools and higher education, vocational and adult education. As Zhang's chapter makes clear, this is where, in educational terms, government power resides and thus where governmental understandings of equity are on display rhetorically if not always practically.

But we also need to acknowledge that other cultural and institutional formations are involved in educating. Two examples are evident here. One is the culture industry (film, media, best-selling books). This industry involves popular pedagogies as illustrated in the chapter by Sanders. Power in this instance is largely in commercial hands. Equity, identity and justice are only important to the extent that they can be commodified. A second example is the 'community language' and culture schools that many minority 'ethnic' and religious groups have developed for themselves in order to maintain their languages and cultures. One such school, a Chinese language school in Australia, is the focus of Yang's chapter.

Obvious and less obvious issues emerge here for educational researchers. We need to research how long-recognised inequities, wounded identities and social injustices are expressed in both these older and newer modalities of education. And we need to explore the fact that as the world of education becomes more complex; so too do equity issues.

Three examples of these matters are evident in the assembled chapters. The ways in which women's and girls' relationships are filtered through the sexual economy of the male gaze is the example that Sanders explores as she carefully critiques not only the 'mean girl' discourse but also those amelioration discourses associated with it. Zhang's and Yang's chapters together implicitly illustrate the multi-scalar aspects of these issues. Chinese language students are part of a minority group in Australia, but with China now a major global economic power, a matter carefully explained and elaborated in Zhang, their minoritarian status is more ambiguous. As Yang implies, their knowledge of Chinese language and culture provides them with a powerful form of transnational capital in globalised labour markets.

Clearly then, we also need to undertake research on the manner in which education is implicated, first in recently recognised equity, identity and justice issues, and secondly in newly existing issues that have arisen as a result of rapid changes in society, culture, the economy and the environment.

Helping people to better understand these conceptual and related matters is one crucially important purpose of educational research. As Zhang argues 'It is important for researches and policy makers to clarify the difference between equity and equality. To select a concept often means selecting a way of thinking and a value.'

Another very practical purpose of educational research is to assess if, why and how those activities that are designed to productively address equity, identity and social justice issues achieve their desired, as well as desirable, results. As Sanders' chapter illustrates with regard to 'mean girls', such attempts may deal quite well with one aspect of an issue, girl–girl bullying, but may also be informed by discriminatory ideas that restrict their analytical purchase and practical potential in relation to minoritarian groups of girls. Instead of reading girls' friendships through the economy of heterosexual desire, Sanders suggests that the notion of 'homosociality' provides a richer way of conceptualising and practising such friendships. More broadly, Zhang shows how the huge expansion of higher education in China, which is intended to help China 'modernise' in relation to other global powers has led to equity problems associated with such things as the maldistribution of 'quality' in universities.

These three chapters illustrate that the role of educational research in this context is crucial in many ways and illustrate that education's conventional conceptual repertoires cannot be taken for granted. Such concepts have to be put under the pressure of serious and sustained enquiry that is alert to complexity and is open to the possibility, even necessity, of conceptual clarification and innovation. Such research is an important provocative act.

13

Educational Equity Issues in the Discursive Context of China

HONGZHI ZHANG

SUMMARY Educational equity is a complex issue that goes beyond the field of education. It is also a controversial issue, which is subject to different political, economic and cultural factors. Educational equity has a variety of performances in different national contexts and in different developmental stages of the same national context. This chapter examines the issue of educational equity in the context of China. It begins with a conceptualisation of educational equity in general. Then educational inequity problems are addressed with regard to the Chinese education system. After that, the chapter focuses on equity issues in Chinese higher education, which include regional, urban–rural, social class, ethnic and gender inequities.

14.1 Introduction

The task of this chapter is to interpret educational equity issues in the discursive context of China. I trace the historical development of Chinese educational equity research, because the research of Chinese educational equity has its own characteristics. By doing so, I seek to conceptualise the educational equity from the global and national perspectives. This chapter also synthesises an important connection between educational inequity and Chinese education system. In doing this, I attempt to demonstrate that it is a fundamental responsibility for China's government to provide an equitable education system in order to comprehensively improve equity in education. In the last section of the chapter, I focus specific attentions on Chinese higher education with reference to the problems of educational equity. In order to do this, I try to delineate an overarching picture about Chinese higher educational equity.

14.2 Conceptualisation of educational equity

14.2.1 Tracing the historical trajectory of Chinese educational equity research

The thinking on educational equality has a long history in China. Confucius, a great educator and thinker in ancient China who lived in the 6th and 5th centuries BC, indicated the ideas of educational equality, for example, 'teaching everyone without prejudice' (有教无类) and 'teaching students according to

their aptitudes' (因材施教). These equity ideas in Chinese traditional education are still valuable, and useful in discussion of educational equity today. Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, there have been a variety of interpretations and explorations on educational equality at different stages. The understanding of educational equality has undergone different stages, from regarding Marxist discourse on equality as the dominant value in Mao's era to the Anglo-American discourse since the reform and opening-up (after Mao's era).

Before the reform and opening-up policy, Marxist discourse on equality was the theoretical basis for understanding and interpreting equity issues in the development of Chinese education. Marxist discourse on equality includes two aspects. First, any social equality is the expression of certain economic relations. From a Marxist perspective, the most decisive factors of social inequality are the economic relations and the division of labour. Second, any social equality has a class nature. That is, equality always belongs to particular classes. In a class society, social equality is a certain class's equality and its opposite class's inequality. For example, equality usually belongs to feudal lords in feudal society, the bourgeois in capitalist society and the proletariat in socialist society.

With the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Marxist discourse has played a dominant role in the revolution and construction of Chinese society. Marxist philosophy also has been the theoretical foundation of social science research in China. The research about Chinese educational equity is no exception. Mao Zedong shares the same theoretical terrain with Marx and Engels discourses, and creatively put Marxist discourses on equality into the practice of Chinese educational equality. According to Mao, ensuring the educational rights of children of working people was the main task of education. At that time, rural, grassroots-oriented education was the main focus of education policy. In order to provide more opportunities for the workers and peasants to access education, Mao asked to break the constraints of formal education, and to use a variety of channels and a variety of ways develop education. More clearly expressed, Mao's ideals of educational equality extended to the 'Cultural Revolution'.

The Cultural Revolution sought to focus on the political function and class nature of education, and under this policy, the development of education sacrificed the quality of education and deprived the non-working classes (非劳动阶级) of a right to education. In the context of the Cultural Revolution (from 1966 to 1976), taking the class struggles as the key link (阶级斗争为纲) became the dominant discourse of educational equality. By limiting the

educational rights of non-working people, Chinese education only achieved 'equality within classes (阶级内平等)' (Yang 2006, 1) in Mao's era (1949–1978). With the emergence of the privileged class of cadres, even educational equality within classes was damaged. According to Yang, through emphasising family background and political faith, the cadres class's children actually had more opportunities to access education.

After the Cultural Revolution, bringing order out of chaos (拨乱反正) was one of the most important political missions for the whole nation. In 1978, the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee (十一届三中全会) re-established the ideological, political and organisational lines of Marxism. The main task of China shifted from taking class struggle as the key link, to the construction of a modern socialist state. Since then, the prelude of reform and opening-up was officially launched. Accordingly, restoring the order of standardised, systematic and academic education was the primary task of Chinese education. Meanwhile, Chinese educational equality began to change from educational equality within the worker and peasant classes to equality of educational opportunity for all citizens.

In the new historical context (after Mao's era), China's education began to translate and compile Anglo-American pedagogy and educational theories. In this process, Western academic discourses were introduced and adapted to the context of China, which greatly broadened the academic view of Chinese scholars. Under the impact of Western academic discourse, Chinese educational equity research began to break through the limitation of Marxist discourse on equality, which showed a tendency towards plurality of values. As a research topic, the first literature of Chinese educational equality research appeared in the 1990s and then developed rapidly. However, due to excessive dependence on the Western academic discourses, educational equity research adapted to the local historical and cultural backgrounds is hard to find in the context of China.

14.2.2 Rethinking the characteristics of Chinese educational equity research

Looking back on decades of the educational equality research in China, it has the following characteristics:

First, Marxist discourse on equality still plays an important role in the research of Chinese educational equity. Marxist discourse has a certain political, cultural and organisational basis and a kind of social identity in the context of China. Due to the impact of the political ideology, Marxist theory became the only scientific theoretical foundation of social science research in

a specific historical period of time. Under the impact of the Anglo-American discourses, Marxist discourse of equality has been gradually marginalised in Chinese educational equity research.

Second, the core concepts are not clearly defined in Chinese educational equality research. Based on different theoretical origins, there was a controversy regarding the concepts of 'equality of educational opportunity' and 'educational equity' in Chinese education policy. Faced with this argument, Tan (1994, 14) points out that 'equality of educational opportunity is educational equity'. Therefore, it is common to see that some Chinese scholars alternatively use the two concepts to express the same meaning in the early papers. In recent years, the concept of equality of educational opportunity has been considered to be one of the basic parts of educational equity. According to Yang (2000a), educational equity includes equality of educational right and equality of educational opportunity.

Third, the theoretical foundations have mostly been introduced from Western countries, and Chinese educational equity research has confronted the dominant role of Western academic discourses. The introduction of Western academic discourses broadened the horizons of Chinese scholars. However, due to excessive reliance on Western academic discourses, most of the research on educational equity has stagnated in the stage of introduction and interpretation of Western academic theories. Innovations of educational equity research are still in short supply. It is usually necessary and even desirable to learn and borrow from international academic discourses. However, it also needs to be acknowledged that those that are locally produced or adapted usually have more explanatory power in specific contexts. More attention should be paid to the localisation of Western academic discourse. Based on local historical and cultural backgrounds, Chinese educational equity research should actively construct its own academic discourse and academic system.

14.2.3 Conceptualising the notion of educational equity

The notion of equity often involves different national contexts that are connected with specific historical and cultural origins. Even in the same national context, the notion of equity can be differently understood and interpreted in different historical periods. 'For equity, it may be that while we cannot define what it is, we know when we are far from it' (Levin 2003, 5). Equity is the quality of being fair and reasonable in a way that gives equal treatment to everyone, which is not the same as equality. Equality is the same status, rights, and responsibilities for all the members of a society, groups or family. According to the Socrates project supported by European Commission Directorate General of Education

and Culture, 'Anyone who talks about equity rather than equality is generally suspected of having abandoned a safe territory and a clear concept for a minefield and a fuzzy concept' (GERESE 2003, 13).

According to the ideal of egalitarianism, the same treatment should be provided for all the people. Due to the difference between individuals, the same treatment does not necessarily have an equitable result. For example, to achieve equity, disabled people and people with low socioeconomic background usually need special treatment. And people with specific talents also need extra treatments. Therefore, 'There is general agreement that the aim of public policy cannot and should not be equality in the sense that everyone is the same or achieves the same outcomes – a state that appears to be both impossible and undesirable' (Levin 2003, 5). And 'it is true that equity is a more difficult concept than equality, and that it allows, in its principle, inequalities' (GERESE 2003, 13). The key issue is what degree of inequality is acceptable? This is the central question for researchers, policy makers and practitioners to confront.

Based on different national contexts, educational equity can have various interpretations. Educational equity 'is currently a focus of attention and a subject of discussion for policy makers, researchers and practitioners' (Herrera 2006, 14), which is becoming a social or political issue in many countries. 'Pursuing equity in education means minimising educational disparities that are associated with underlying social disadvantage or marginalization' (USQ 2009, 3). Between 2003 and 2006, 10 OECD countries prepared an analytical report by targeting equity issues. In this project there is an agreement to define educational equity as the following:

> Educational equity refers to an educational and learning environment in which individuals can consider options and make choices throughout their lives based on their abilities and talents, not on the basis of stereotypes, biased expectations or discrimination. The achievement of educational equity enables females and males of all races and ethnic backgrounds to develop skills needed to be productive, empowered citizens. It opens economic and social opportunities regardless of gender, ethnicity, race or social status.
>
> (Opheim 2004, p. 8)

This is a descriptive definition of educational equity, which includes equity in educational opportunity and outcome. According to the argument of Opheim (2004, 8), 'Equity in education is thus not only a question of opportunities

provided by the education system, but it also concerns the actual results of the various educational choices and performances of different groups of pupils and students through the education system'. Therefore, the definition of equity adopted by this 10-country study in Europe defines an equitable education system as one that can equally allocate opportunities of education to the members of society, and guarantee that individuals gain equal opportunities for success in the educational process.

In the context of China, there are many kinds of understandings of educational equity. Educational equity can be understood as follows: 'Education opportunity and education resources are freely available and equally shared. It includes starting point equity, process equity, and outcome equity of education' (Long and Wang 2003, 19). To Chu and Yang (2003), educational equity can also be understood as: 'the value judgment of the distributional process and consequence of educational resources by the principle of equality' (p. 10). They not only pay attention to outcome equity of education, but also emphasis process equity of education. By referring to the content of educational equity, Yang argues that 'educational equity is the extension and embodiment of the social equity value in the field of education which includes: the equal right to education and the equal opportunity to education' (Yang 2000b, 5). Yang's understanding of educational equity has shaped the directions and parameters of educational equity research in China.

In addition, Xin and Huang (2009) also differentiate the meaning of educational equity into three categories: the starting point equity of education, the process equity of education, and the outcomes equity of education. They further indicate that 'the starting point equity of education includes equal right of education and equal opportunity to education' (2009, 24). Equal right to education means all citizens have equal rights to access to education. It is the extension of a citizen's equal political rights in the field of education. The Constitution of the People's Republic of China explains the equal right to education in Article 46, as: 'Citizens of the People's Republic of China have the duty as well as the right to access education.' The Education Law of the People's Republic of China reaffirms and interprets the term in Article 9, that is, 'Citizens of the People's Republic of China shall have the right and duty to be educated. Citizens shall enjoy equal opportunity of education regardless of their nationality, race, sex, occupation, property or religious belief.' It can be seen from the articles of laws that the citizens' equal right to education has legal protection in China. Chinese citizens' legal and constitutional rights to equal access to education are thus not discussed in this chapter.

Equal right to education is not a big concern in China. However, equal opportunity to education is discussed in regard to Chinese education system and higher education. Equal opportunity to education means citizens should not be limited by economic level, family background, educational grades or gender. People with lower economic and social background or cultural diversities should be actively supported by the educational system as far as possible, and every member of the society should have equal opportunities or resources of education.

14.3 Chinese education system and educational inequity

Educational inequity is inextricably linked to the education system. The profile of educational equity in the Chinese education system is discussed by exploring a specific indicator of enrolment rate in different levels of education. China conducts a unified education system, which includes preschool education, compulsory education (primary education and junior secondary education), senior secondary education, and higher education.

14.3.1 Equity issues in preschool education

Preschool education is one year of non-compulsory education in China. Children between age 3 and 6 enter preschool education. The development of Chinese preschool education still lags behind economic, social and educational development. In 2007, the national gross enrolment rate of preschool education was only 44.6 per cent, which was far lower than developed countries, lagging behind the world average, the equivalent level of economic development around countries and regions. Moreover, there is a significant gap in preschool education between urban and rural areas. According to the research of Pang (2010), in 2007 the gross enrolment rate was 55.6 per cent in urban areas, but only 35.6 per cent in rural areas. Preschool education has become a 'shortcoming' in the Chinese education system. To ensure the starting point equity of education, China's government needs to promote the development and universal of preschool education in China.

14.3.2 Equity issues in compulsory education – primary education

The promulgation of the Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China in 1986 stipulated that government at various levels carried out the nine-year compulsory education program. School-age children and adolescents have a right and obligation to participate in and complete compulsory education.

The compulsory education in China includes two stages: primary education, which lasts either five or six years and starts at age six (can be postponed to seven in areas of inadequate conditions); and junior secondary education, which lasts either three or four years. The compulsory education is mostly run by local governments, and in some cases by enterprises and individuals. In 2008, the enrolment rate of school-age children in primary education reached 99.54 per cent. The enrolment rate of boys and girls was 99.50 per cent and 99.58 per cent respectively; the enrolment rate in junior secondary education was 98.5 per cent (National Education Development Statistical Bulletin in 2008). The People's Republic of China Compulsory Education Law, amended on 29 June 2006, stipulates that compulsory education does not charge tuition fees and incidental expenses.

However, the disparity between different schools still exists. In the early period of the People's Republic of China, educational resources were scarce. In order to provide professional and technical personnel for the economic development, the government selected schools with good social reputations and gave priorities in allocating educational resources and recruiting the best students. In the 1990s, the 'key' school system in compulsory education was abolished. Because of the historical factor it has been difficult to eliminate the influence of the key school system on educational equity in the short term. The resources, teacher qualification and teaching quality are usually different between key schools and general schools. This fact causes the phenomenon of 'school choice', which is regarded as a prominent issue of educational inequity. To resolve these problems, the government has put forward a target to promote the balanced development of compulsory education between urban and rural areas, and different regions.

14.3.3 Equity issues in compulsory education – junior secondary education

According to the results of secondary school entrance exam, most students from junior secondary schools enter senior secondary education (including common senior secondary schools, adult senior secondary schools and secondary vocational schools). According to Zhang (2009), in 2007 the gross enrolment rate of senior secondary education in China was 66 per cent. Senior secondary education in urban areas was almost universal. The gross enrolment rate of senior secondary education in rural areas was only about 50 per cent. Senior secondary education usually lasts three years in China, and is conducted by local governments and various business authorities. Most senior secondary schools divide students between arts and science in the second year. Besides Chinese, mathematics and foreign languages (mostly English), arts students also

study politics, history and geography; science students study physics, biology and chemistry. According to the results of the National College Entrance Examination, only parts of the students successfully enrol different types of higher education institutions. The criticisms of senior secondary education are as follows: first, school choice, which mainly derives from the disparity of key schools and general schools, affects educational equity; second, the educational disparity between urban and rural areas at this stage will be further solidified in higher education; and third, 'utilitarian goal' of education is not conducive to the overall development of students.

14.3.4 Equity issues in higher education

Higher education is the fastest growing part of the Chinese education system, and includes general higher education and adult higher education. General higher education can be divided into three stages: junior college (2–3 years), undergraduate education (4 years) and postgraduate education (2–3 years masters degree and 3–4 years PhD degree). For a long time, the scale of Chinese higher education was a serious shortage. The total number of students was 643 million in all types of institutions of higher education in 1998; the enrolment rate of higher education was only 9.8 per cent when the government decided to expand the scale of higher education, and carried out the 'enrolment expansion, policy in 1999. According to the statistics of the National Education Development Statistical Bulletin in 2008, there were 2663 general and adult higher educational institutions in 2008. The total number of students in all types of higher education reached 2907 million and the enrolment rate was 23.3 per cent. The scale of Chinese higher education was rapidly expanded in a short time, which triggered new issues, for example, the high liabilities of higher education institutions, students with financial difficulties and education quality issues.

14.3.5 Establishing an equal education system

To sum up, the enrolment rate is one of the indicators to evaluate the realisation of equal opportunity to education. Analysis of the enrolment rate in different levels of Chinese education shows that the problems of educational inequity are prevalent in all levels of education, which become bottlenecks for the development of Chinese education. The improvement of educational inequity has become an urgent need for Chinese educational reform and development. Some problems of educational inequity have historical and geographical reasons. Some issues of educational inequity are related to economic, political and cultural factors. Other aspects of educational inequity are caused by the design of Chinese education system, which plays an important role in ensuring the

equal distribution of educational resources in different social groups. Therefore, in order to promote equal opportunity to education, it is the basic responsibility for Chinese government to provide an equal education system.

14.4 Equity issues in Chinese higher education

In the past, equity issues in Chinese higher education have included the following: regional disparity, urban–rural disparity, social class disparity, ethnic disparity and gender disparity (Yang, 2000b). However, with the development of Chinese higher education, gender disparity and ethnic disparity are no longer considered issues. At present, the main problems are regional disparity, urban–rural disparity, and social class disparity.

14.4.1 Regional equity

The regional disparity in Chinese higher education has a specific geographical and historical background. Different geographical conditions and historical factors mean that the economic and social development between eastern, middle and western regions of China has been uneven. For example, per capita GDP in the eastern region was 31,554 Yuan in 2007. In contrast, the per capita GDP respectively reached to 14,604 and 13,212 Yuan in the middle and western region, which was much lower than the national total (see Table 14.1). This uneven development has led to regional disparity in higher education. The number of college students per 100,000 population is used to evaluate regional disparity in higher educational equity. For example, the number of college students per 100,000 population in the eastern region was 2722 persons in 2006, much higher than the middle region (1837 persons) and western region (1268 persons) (China Statistical Yearbook 2007). Regional disparity is a big problem in the development of Chinese higher education, and usually causes other educational inequity. Therefore, to resolve regional inequity in higher education is the primary task for Chinese policy makers. It is also one of the prerequisites to resolve other educational inequity issues.

14.4.2 Urban–rural equity

With the rapid progress of urbanisation in China, more people live in towns or built-up areas. However, most of the population still lives in rural areas, which account for 53.4 per cent of national population (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2009) (see Table 14.2). China's urbanisation rate is relatively slow, and the level of urbanisation is still low. More importantly, the personal income of rural residents is still much lower than urban residents (see Table 14.3). The

Items	Land area (Million km2)	Population (Million)	GDP (Billion yuan)	Per capita GDP
National total	9.60	1,321.29	249.53	18,934
Eastern region	1.062	517.74	163.37	31,554
Middle region	1.67	440.57	64.25	14,604
Western region	6.87	362.98	42.40	13,212

Table 14.1 Development indicators by region, 2007

Source: China Statistical Yearbook 2008, retrieved 1 July 2009, from http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj.ndsj/2008/html/BOLO6e.htm.

Index	Million	%
Total population	1,334.74	100.0
Urban	621.86	46.6
Rural	712.88	53.4
Male	686.52	51.4
Female	648.22	48.6
0–14	246.63	18.5
15–64	975.02	73.0
65 and over	113.09	8.5

Table 14.2 Population number and composition, 2009

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China, retrieved 1 July 2010, from http://www.stats.gov.cn.

personal income gap between urban and rural areas continues to increase. For example, the personal income gap of 7238 Yuan in 2005 increased to 12,022 Yuan in 2009. The urban–rural disparity not only reflects in the income gap, but also is evident in other ways, such as education, medical services, the ability of consumption, employment and investment of public finance. How to gradually decrease the urban–rural disparity is another big challenge for central and local governments to confront.

The current situation of urban–rural disparity, which is reflected in higher educational inequity, can be discussed by comparing the enrolment numbers and rates between urban and rural areas. Take the year 2005 for example; there was 57.01 per cent of population in the rural areas of China. However, the enrolment rate of rural students was 62.92 per cent, lower than the enrolment rate of urban students, which was 68.37 per cent (Qiao, 2008, 93).

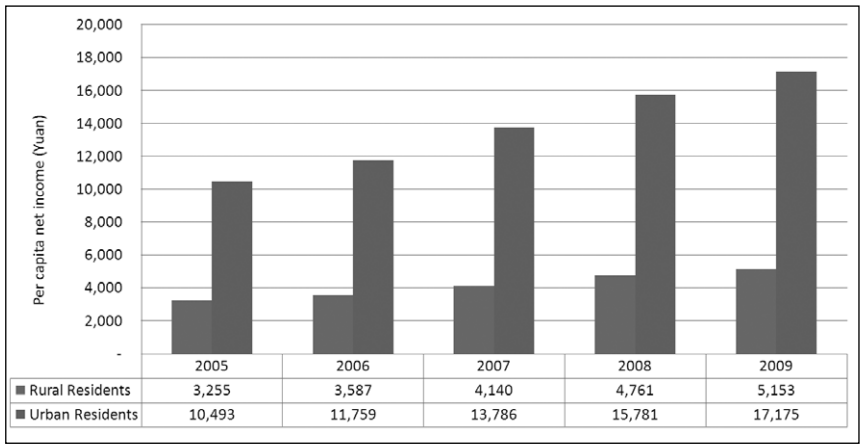

Figure 14.1 Annual per capita net income of residents, 2005–2009

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China, retrieved 1 July 1 2010, from http://www.stats.gov.cn.

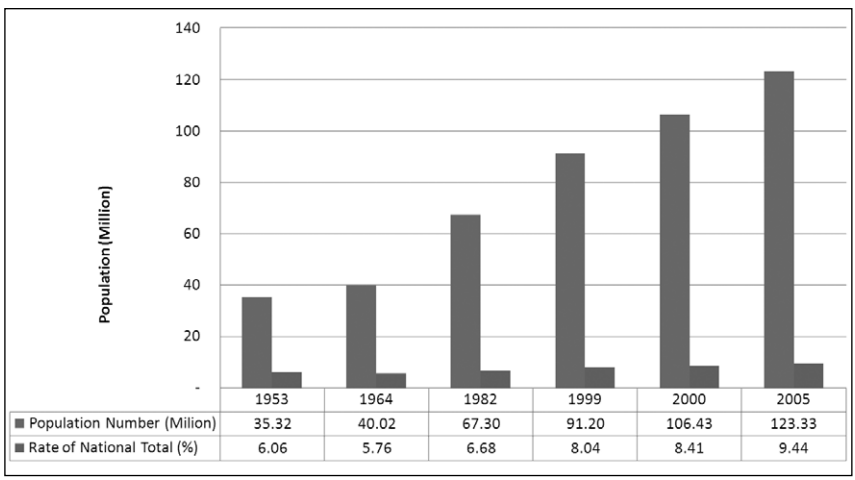

Figure 14.2 Population number of ethnic minorities in China, 1953–2005

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China

14.4.3 Social class equity

With development and changes of Chinese social class structure, equity issues have become more and more complicated. The problem of social class disparity in higher education has become a significant issue since the enrolment expansion in

1999. The proportion of students from disadvantaged social classes enrolling in higher education has significantly declined. Most students from disadvantaged social classes are concentrated in lower-level institutions with lower quality of teaching and academic outcome, and these students cannot enrol in sought-after disciplines. This is despite the fact that students from disadvantaged groups in general have higher academic scores in the college entrance examination (*gao kao*) than those from upper social groups (Yang 2006). Students from lower social classes have fewer opportunities to obtain access to high-quality educational resources.

14.4.4 Ethnic minority equity

According to the fifth national census, the total population of ethnic minorities has been gradually increasing. The number of the ethnic minorities population was 35.32 million people in 1953, accounting for 6.06 per cent of the total population. In 2005 the number of the ethnic minorities population reached 123.33 million (National 1 per cent Population Sample Survey Bulletin in 2005, National Bureau of Statistics of China, on 16 March 2006), accounting for 9.44 per cent of the total population (see Figure 14.2). Although the government carries out a stringent population policy (one-child policy); however, it does not affect the population development of the ethnic minorities. Because the ethnic minorities implement flexible policy of population, the 'one-child policy' does not apply to the ethnic minorities in China.

What does this mean for Chinese higher education? Due to the disparity of historical, geographical and economic situations, the development of higher education of ethnic minorities has been weak. For example, the total number of ethnic minority students in higher education institutions was 9,532,000 in 2005, accounting for 6.1 per cent of the total number (Tan and Xie 2009, 31). The percentage of ethnic minority population was 9.44 per cent in 2005. The proportion of ethnic minority students in higher education is still low. Another problem is unbalanced development among ethnic minorities.

14.4.5 Gender equity

The gender inequity in Chinese higher education has gradually improved in recent years. For example, in 1997, the number of female undergraduate students in regular institutions of higher education was 1.18 million, only 37.32 per cent of the total number (see Table 14.3). After 1999, as the implementation of 'expanding enrolment' policy, the number of female undergraduate students had increased to 8.35 million in 2006, or 48.72 per cent of the total number of

Year	Female students (Million)	%	Female population (Million)	%
2006	8.35	48.72	637.20	48.48
2005	7.35	47.08	633.81	48.47
2004	6.09	45.65	630.12	48.48
2003	4.74	44.52	626.71	48.5
2002	3.97	43.95	623.38	48.53
2001	3.02	42.04	619.55	48.54
2000	2.27	40.98	613.06	48.37
1999	1.62	39.66	610.94	48.57
1998	1.31	38.31	608.21	48.75
1997	1.18	37.32	604.95	48.93

Table 14.3 Female undergraduate students in regular institutions of higher education

Source: China Statistical Yearbook 2007, Retrieved 8 March 2009, from http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2007/html/U2125e.htm; Statistical Data of Education, Retrieved 10 March 2009, from http://www.moe.gov.cn

undergraduate students. Given the total number of female population is less than the male population in China, the gender inequity is not a big issue any more in the development of Chinese higher education.

14.5 Conclusion

This chapter traces the historical trajectory of Chinese educational equity, which has different characteristics in different historical periods of time (Mao's era and after Mao's era). It also examines the concept of education equity in global and national contexts, concluding that those that are locally produced or adapted usually have more explanatory power in specific contexts. Through interpreting the enrolment rate in different levels of education, it shows that sometimes the problems of educational equity are caused by the unequal education system. It has been a fundamental responsibility for modern government to provide an equitable education system. In order to give an intuitive image of Chinese educational equity, in the final section of this chapter, I have also discussed different aspects of educational equity in Chinese higher education with reference to relevant quantitative data. Overall, this data shows that the Chinese higher education sector still has many challenges in creating an equitable system.

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14

Mean Girls, Queen Bees and the Absence of Others

KELLIE SANDERS

SUMMARY Through an analysis of Rosalind Wiseman's popular text *Queen Bees and Wannabes*, this chapter explores the way that adolescent girls' friendships are positioned through a lens of the 'mean girl'. It questions the heteronormative discourse through which girls' friendships tend to be framed, and suggests that this discourse subscribes to what Rubin (2006) describes as the 'traffic in women'. Questioning how this discourse renders absent girls' friendships as passionate sites of intimate friendship, same-sex desire, the positives of girls' relationships or passionate love for girl friends, this chapter suggests female homosociality as a potential alternative to the limitation of the heteronormative lens.

15.1 Introduction

> Where same-sex female desire and lesbian existence (or the possibility of lesbian existence) is ignored, this is an absence that matters.
>
> (Griffin 2000, 228)

Female friendship tends to be positioned through academic literature as homogenously asexual, while sexual interactions or desire between girls and women are positioned within a frame of 'lesbianism'. In this chapter I explore how female friendship discourse is positioned dichotomously in relation to same-sex desire and the identity categorisation of 'lesbian'. Furthermore, I ask what happens when we do not presume same-sex interactions to be either exclusively sexual or asexual.

The opening quote by Griffin draws attention to the absence of desire within female same-sex interactions and I draw on this to explore Rosalind Wiseman's popular text *Queen Bees and Wannabes*. I investigate what happens when we render absent same-sex desire among girls and suggest how homosociality might offer a theoretical mechanism through which to explore girls' same-sex bonds without foregrounding the presence or absence of desire.

15.2 Background

The phrase 'mean girls' comes from the 2004 Hollywood film, *Mean Girls*, based upon Rosalind Wiseman's (2002) first edition of *Queen Bees and Wannabes*, and is described by Marnina Gonick (2004) as a 'phenomenon of the 2000s' (p. 396). Both the text and the film enter into what Wiseman describes as adolescent 'Girl World', 'the exotic territory of girlhood' (Gonick 2004, 396) and both the reader and viewer are privy to the competition, animosity, anxiety and intimacy of adolescent girls' (dramatised) interactions. Indeed, the film portrays adolescence as a tumultuous site in which girls vie for male attention and friendship from female peers. The malice between girls in the film exposes female peers not as friends or someone to trust, but as rivals girls must persistently defend themselves against.

The strength of the 'mean girl' discourse in the Australian context can be seen reflected on the SBS weekly debate program *Insight* (SBS 2009), which featured a show in August 2009 entitled 'The trouble with girls' and asking specifically 'Why are some girls mean to each other, especially when they're friends?' The program demonstrates the influence that the 'mean girl' phenomenon has had on the parents of adolescent girls, adolescent girls and women who have experienced bullying, psychologists, school counsellors, teachers, and the media. The impact of the 'mean girl' discourse in the Australian climate brings to the fore the presence of aggression and non-physical bullying between girls, as well as contributing to the normative discourse of girls as heterosexually desiring and desired subjects.

Girls' passionate relationships have long been recognised. For example, referring to Lillian Faderman's earlier work, Jeffreys (1989) describes the way in which middle-class women of the 18th and 19th centuries shared passionate friendships with other women. To us in contemporary times, these 'passionate declarations of eternal devotion and descriptions of highly sensual interaction are startling because we have been trained to see such behaviour as indicative of lesbianism and not part of the everyday lifestyle of the majority of married middle-class women' (Jeffreys 1989, 20). Griffin (2000), reviewing research on adolescent and young women's friendships, contends that much academic work has little to say about sexual and erotic dimensions of women's relationships and says little about the role of these relationships within the construction of young women's sexualities. The significance of these theorists' work is that regardless of whether or not passionate bonds between girls and women contain a sexual element, they may nonetheless reflect a deep bond

between girls and women, a positive and passionate bond that the 'mean girl' discourse tends to obfuscate.

While I do not deny that 'female friendship groups are ripe sites where compulsory heterosexual romantic norms are vigorously negotiated' (Korobov and Thorne 2009, 51), I do take issue with the way that girls' relationships are persistently valued as sites of female commodification for male consumerism. Gayle Rubin (1993) writes that 'sexuality is political … organized into systems of power, which reward and encourage some individuals and activities, while punishing and suppressing others' (p. 34) and, in her paper 'The traffic in women: Notes on the "political economy" of sex', Rubin (2006) unravels the relationships of power through which women become the prey of men, a notion described as 'traffic in women'. While this does not position women as passive victims of male desire or strip women of agency, it does demonstrate how women and girls are positioned hierarchically if they choose to live within this frame, aspiring to gratify male desire through conforming to notions of feminine beauty, 'the cult of thinness' (Hesse-Biber 2007) and using female companionship as a vehicle to seeking desire from the male gaze.

Reinforcing cultural ideals of femininity as that which opposes but attracts masculinity, Wiseman's (2002, 2009) texts reproduce heteronormativity and homophobia. Martin and Kayzak (2009) explore heteronormativity through the analysis of children's films and suggest that heterosexuality is constructed in two ways: firstly, hetero-romantic love is portrayed as powerful, magical and transformative, and secondly, 'through depictions of interactions between gendered bodies in which the sexiness of the feminine characters is subjected to the gaze of masculine characters' (Martin and Kayzak 2009, 332). Wiseman (2009) writes that 'boys and Boy World are inextricably tied to all the drama in Girl World' (p. 267) and I suggest that this is through the notion of 'men trafficking in women' (Rubin 2006), where girls seek desire and acceptance from boys, which in turn is utilised as a form of capital through which girls gain social power among one another.

While male 'traffic in women' is, I suggest, a dominant discourse within mainstream culture, a discourse that infiltrates girls' consumption of goods and services, their bonds with one another and, ultimately, their transaction of self, I suggest that it is essential that we draw attention to the range of female same-sex interactions that may exist. For example, while Frith (2004) argues that 'girls' friendships have often been romanticized as a haven of warmth and support, intimate self-disclosure and trust' (p. 357),

Ludwig (2007) suggests that negative interactions between girls have 'been dismissed for years by many as normal rites of passage ("girls being girls" type behaviour)' (p. 32).

What I contend is that if we continue to narrow in on only some same-sex interactions, such as 'mean girls' and the heterosexual traffic in girls and women or girls/women as 'lesbian', then we narrow the potential for girls relationships to be anything else. Gonick (2004) asserts that 'Once these meanings ["mean girl"] enter our "common sense" lexicon their pervasiveness results in a narrowing of vision and imagination for the multitude of ways in which girls' self-expressions might be read and engaged' (Gonick 2004, 397). When we restrict our research to 'mean girls' or a heteronormative view, then we narrow in on that which directly corresponds to our research, simultaneously dismissing girls' interactions as anything else; passionate sites of intimate friendship, same-sex desire, the positives of girls' relationships, or passionate love for girl friends.

This chapter explores how Rosalind Wiseman's (2009) 'updated and revised' text *Queen Bees and Wannabes* has been taken on so emphatically. I then explore how Wiseman's text is situated within a heteronormative paradigm, reproducing narrow feminine archetypes while subjugating others, and further analyse how this frame of seeing leads to a focus on power dynamics among adolescent girls that in turn produces the 'meanness' that Wiseman aspires to help girls 'overcome'. Finally, I build on girls' friendship discourse by suggesting homosociality as an alternative theoretical frame for perceiving girls' same-sex relationships.

15.3 Exploring and critiquing Wiseman's text

Wiseman's appearance on *Insight* as 'an expert in the field' of adolescent girls' 'friendships' demonstrates her position as a voice of authority on the issue of 'mean girls' in Australia; her text has attracted such attention and power that it has been revised and re-released across international boundaries, and Wiseman herself is positioned as an expert in the field of adolescent girls' same-sex relationships. On the *Insight* program Wiseman (SBS 2009) describes the different 'roles' she asserts that girls have in a social group: queen bee, banker and messenger. Following Wiseman's statements, the host turns to a man in the audience: 'In my own circumstances, I've seen that kind of behaviour. So I mean you know, she's [Wiseman] really kind of hitting the nail on the head' (SBS 2009, *Insight* transcript).

Following this episode, the *Insight* website offered a 'live chat' forum immediately after the show aired, encouraging viewers to enter into dialogue with the expert guests from that particular show. Additionally, the website uses a section entitled 'Your Say', which allows viewers to post comments in response to the episode. Following 'The trouble with girls' episode, 322 comments were posted. A review of these forums suggests that Wiseman's (2009) oeuvre on the 'mean girl' discourse reflects a growing perception of female adolescent cruelty. Diana, for example, writes:

> 'I work in after school care in a primary school and we have seen so much trouble between the girls. There seems to be an incredible amount of bitchiness in such a young age. It can be incredibly bad and most of the parents have no idea their daughters have such meanness in them' (2009-11-10 20:44:14).

Attesting to the increasing concern of the 'mean girl' discourse in Australia, this episode of *Insight* and its community feedback further instantiates Wiseman's (2009) emphasis on girls' same-sex relational aggression.

Having made a valuable contribution to girls' studies through her work spanning a range of feminist concerns including girl studies, visual culture, identity, feminist cultural studies, feminist pedagogies, feminist post-structural theory, feminist qualitative research and gender and schooling (MSVU 2009), Gonick (2004) asserts that 'Best-selling books galvanizing public attention in girls are in both cases often written for, and targeted at, parents, or more precisely mothers, rather than girls themselves' (p. 396). Listing a number of best-selling texts that address girls' relationships with one another, Gonick (2004) explains that these publications consider 'the trials and tribulations of relationships between girls – their friendships, fights and foes' (p. 395). What I question, however, is how these texts are catapulted to the status of 'best-selling' and what influence this kind of popular cultural text has for discourse around adolescent girls and their relationships.

Wiseman's text, *Queen Bees and Wannabes*, is an easy read. It is accessible to the general public and 'readable' in the sense that each chapter is further segmented into small sections; the text contains boxes of text highlighted to describe potential dangers in interacting with your daughter, and contains a host of italicised quotes from parents and adolescent girls contributing anecdotal descriptions and thoughts to further sustain the reader's interest. Wiseman's text is particularly palatable in that it does not challenge the

status quo, that is white, middle-class, heterosexual conservatism, but rather affirms those to whom Wiseman directs her text, women like herself; white, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied parents. A glance at Wiseman's website depicts those to whom she directs her oeuvre. Colourful photographs of Wiseman with make-up on, hair neatly in place, smiling and wearing a necklace, create a visual image of this audience. Indeed, Wiseman positions girls' friendships as 'almost cult-like organizations that separate children from their families and their parents influence' (Gonick 2004, 396), thereby instilling deep concern in the reader and bolstering the significance of Wiseman's text.

Essentially Wiseman's (2009) revised and updated edition of *Queen Bees and Wannabes* is a self-help guide for parents, specifically targeted at female parents helping their daughters survive the 'toughest pressures of adolescent life – test-driving her new body … navigating changing friendships, surviving crushes, trying to keep up at school' (Wiseman 2009, 2). Contending that 'Most people believe a girl's task is to get through it, grow up, and put those experiences behind her' (p. 3), Wiseman suggests that the experiences girls have during adolescence have 'deep and far-reaching implications beyond her teen years' (p. 3). Dramatising female adolescence, Wiseman creates the niche market for her own text.

The thrust of Wiseman's (2009) text is not to understand adolescent girls, but is rather concerned with how parents can 'manage' adolescent girls' lives and behaviour. Describing this cultural group as vulnerable Gonick (2004) questions the link between the explosion of interest in popular, professional and academic literature on the 'mean girl' and a growing cultural anxiety around girls and girlhood in general. For example, the topics that Wiseman (2009) addresses can be found in her 12 chapters: technology and the media; cliques and popularity; communication with your daughter and adolescent 'girl world'; image and appearance; teasing, gossip and bullying; power dynamics between girls; 'boy world' and its interaction with 'girl world'; interactions with boys and self-esteem; and substance use. This text, while aspiring to include all major concerns a parent may have about their adolescent daughters, fails to address the social and cultural influences that may fuel conflict and competition between adolescent girls. I suggest that Wiseman's text, while encompassing a range of issues that some adolescents may face, is not a comprehensive or inclusive guide to parenting adolescent girls.

That Wiseman's text is palatable to parents is an aspect of its popularity. Indeed, the text is an affirmation to parents against 'the other', as can

be seen in Table 15.1, where those characteristics within the 'Act like a woman' box are held in high esteem while those outside of this box do not receive such value. Wiseman's chapters read as issues that white, middle-class, heterosexual, married parents may have in relation to their white, able-bodied, heterosexual teen daughters. For example, in the chapter on technology Wiseman discusses 'safe' and 'responsible' use of the Internet, mobile phones and social networking sites, suggesting ways that parents can manage their adolescent daughters' use of these kinds of technology. She does not, however, address how parents may grapple with the financial inability to offer their daughter these means of communication should they desire them. Assuming that all readers have the financial resources to offer their daughters these forms of technology, Wiseman also presumes that those reading the text prioritise the necessity to own these forms of technology. If we are to follow Wiseman's oeuvre, then it becomes clear that, as Gonick (2004) suggests, this cultural group is increasingly susceptible to be positioned as victim to 'the mean girl crisis' rather than a dynamic population group with heterogeneous needs and desires.

Wiseman speaks to mothers whose experiences are like her own, and the significance of what she frames her chapters, and indeed entire text, around is as relevant as that which is absent. For example, Wiseman obfuscates concerns around racial and ethnic diversity, same-sex desire, same-sex intimate friendship, positives of girls' relationships and girls' passionate love for girl friends. Theoretically, Wiseman's conceptualisations of power hierarchies among adolescent girls extend as far as heteronormativity where behaviour, appearance and self-identity are invested in presenting an image of heterosexual femininity – the audience to whom Wiseman directs her book. In doing so, Wiseman renders absent those who do not share these ideals.

In her conceptualisation of power hierarchies, Wiseman (2009) constructs what she calls an 'act like a woman' box (see Table 15.1), developed through asking students to describe 'what a girl or woman who has high social status is like' (p. 100), followed by asking the students to describe a girl or woman who does not have high social status. This is then conceptualised through the metaphor of a life raft where those who are on board are those who fit within the 'act like a woman' box, and those who are not in are floating in the water around the life boat (Wiseman 2009). Within the lifeboat, Wiseman suggests, girls will 'tolerate almost anything to stay in – and there's always the threat of being cast out' (p. 101). Further every girl, whether they are in or out of the life boat, must deal with this phenomenon as 'her society's pecking order

is based on this metaphor' (Wiseman 2009, 101). Albeit indirectly, Wiseman reinforces same-sex desire and a range of other traits as something that girls ought not to aspire to, embody or find pleasure in, thus reinforcing a normative social order riding on and determined by heteronormativity.

Theoretically, Wiseman's text does not develop further than this narrow frame and nor does it extend to explore, investigate or discuss how those who do not fit the 'act like a woman' box engage in the social hierarchies of adolescent girls. Indeed, by drawing on the theoretical construct of 'inside' and 'outside' the life boat, Wiseman effectively narrows her field of study to those who aspire to heteronormative femininity, those like herself, while simultaneously obfuscating those who do not fit into the life raft, framing them as 'the other' to which Wiseman's text is concerned.

While Wiseman (2009) persistently engages with girls' desire for boys, she does little to acknowledge girls' desire of other girls. Wiseman's first edition of *Queen Bees and Wannabes* (2002) features a section entitled 'Discussing sexual orientation' and suggests that 'Any basic discussion on sex should include homosexuality … There are gay people in your life … How should you respond if your daughter is gay or you suspect she is?' (p. 221). This six to seven page discussion essentially limits the conversation to 'coming out', bullying and homophobia, thus reinscribing the fact that if one's daughter is attracted to the same sex it is likely to be the parent's worst nightmare. The 'revised and updated' edition of the text, however, does not include this section.

The first mention of sexual desire that is not assumed to be heterosexual desire in the updated edition (2009) of *Queen Bees* comes when Wiseman lists the characteristics of the 'act like a woman' box (see Table 15.1). On the outer of this box are listed undesirable feminine traits, including 'gay/dyke/lez' (p. 100), and on the inside the feminine ideals that girls are expected to aspire to. The trait 'heterosexual' does not appear in the 'act like a woman' box presumably because an underlying assumption of 'act like a woman' is the desire for the opposite sex. In searching the term 'sexual orientation' in the index, we are led to a paragraph on 'lez/dyke' (p. 204) which suggests that this archetype is 'based more on her gender-neutral or more masculine appearance than her sexual orientation' (p. 204). Second, we are led to a sentence beginning, 'Regardless of her sexual orientation, your daughter will likely have strong friendships with boys' (p. 292), and third, to a paragraph describing an incident in which a girl kisses another girl at a party which is described as 'more about turning boys on than their sexual attraction to each

other' (p. 370). Thus 'lesbian' and female same-sex desire become trafficked and determined by male desire.

In seeking 'lesbian' in the index of the second edition we are similarly directed to the same three paragraphs in the book. Why the sections on female same-sex desire and lesbian subjectivity have been removed from the supposedly 'updated and revised' edition of *Queen Bees and Wannabes* is a question that is unanswerable. We could speculate that the text is more marketable to a heterosexual niche market having removed the 'suggestion of' or the endorsement of same-sex desire. We could further speculate that Wiseman's insights into same-sex desire were flawed or incomplete, or that her knowledge of the topic could not do justice to the complexity of the issue. Regardless of the reason for the absence of lesbian subjectivity and same-sex desire, it must be asked, what does this say about Wiseman's approach to same-sex desire and sexuality? Yes, she accepts that girls may be attracted to other girls and says, 'No matter who your daughter is attracted to, your job is to accept that and love her unconditionally' (Wiseman 2009, 370). Where, though, does that leave Wiseman's theorising of same-sex desire?

While Wiseman does not actively promote homophobia, she can nevertheless be seen to privilege heterosexuality by writing her entire text around girls desiring boys and the social hierarchies that develop around this heterosexual milieu. Indeed, Wiseman conforms to the pervasion of heteronormativity, where social life is structured so that heterosexuality is always 'assumed, expected, ordinary, and privileged. Its pervasiveness makes it difficult for people to imagine other ways of life' (Martin and Kazyak 2009, 316).

Wiseman's conceptions of the 'act like a woman' box serves to homogenise girls into idealising a single, heteronormative way of being, where heteronormativity can be seen as not only defining 'a normative sexual practice but also a normal way of life' (Jackson 2006, 107). Thus heteronormativity can be seen as producing a normative, indeed idealised, way in which girls and boys are expected to perform as males and females, gender performances that serve to compliment and maintain the dominance of heterosexuality. Indeed, 'idealised qualities to which girls are held hostage is not just their own private fantasy. These are the myths and desires underpinning a historically embedded Western cultural imaginary of idealised femininity' (Ringrose and Renold 2009, 85). Wiseman's text reflects this mainstream, heteronormative notion that girls ought to desire boys, aspire to a narrow archetype of feminine self presentation and subjectivity, and that girls relationships with one another are insignificant in relation to romance relationships with boys.

Wiseman's failure to adequately address the issues of those who may not aspire to these expectations, that those who fall outside of the 'act like a woman' box may confront – non-heterosexuality, disability, racial and ethnic diversity, and economic disadvantage – suggests that those for whom she is writing the text, those whose issues she is addressing, are those who do fit the 'act like a woman' box, those who fit the characteristics of: 'pretty, popular, thin but right curves, good hair, athletic but not bulky … money …' (p. 100). Wiseman, I suggest, works within her own categorisation of 'adolescent girl', homogenising this population group by age. Although Wiseman further categorises the archetypes of girls within the classification of 'adolescent girl', her text is not tailored to these archetypes but rather focuses on 'adolescent girls' as those who fit within, or at least aspire to fit within, the 'act like a woman' box, the Western 'cultural imaginary of idealised femininity' (Ringrose and Renold 2009, 585).

15.4 How does Wiseman's text gain such widespread credibility?

Wiseman gains credibility for her text by drawing on her own anecdotal experiences as an adolescent girl, through highlighting her interactions with adolescent girls as evidence and collaboration in the text, and using an authoritative voice. For example, page 14 of the text begins with the subtitle 'So why listen to me?' and Wiseman tells us how she got into her line of work with a story of her own struggles through her adolescent years. The anecdote draws the reader in and, I suggest, tries to give Wiseman credibility by recognising that she is an expert since she has been through these situations. By going full circle and now trying to educate adolescents on what she herself experienced, Wiseman positions herself as the wise, all knowing expert on the issues that adolescents girls will, according to Wiseman, inevitably experience.

Wiseman (2009) further tells us that she has shown 'multiple drafts of every chapter to girls of different ages, races, cultures, communities and socioeconomic levels', (p. 18) constructing herself as aligned with adolescent girls with a range of backgrounds and therefore, since she has collaborated with adolescent girls to write the text, positions the text as a credible source of information on adolescent girls: 'Everything in this book comes from what people have told me over the years, from my teaching experiences, and from girls' comments as they have read drafts of this book' (p. 20). Wiseman's

interpretation of the events, comments and advice, however, are not grounded in any reliable form of data or methodology, rather we are informed of what is, essentially, Wiseman's own subjective experiences and interpretations of events.

Your daughter, according to Wiseman (2009), needs help as she is 'too close to it all to realize the good and bad influence of her friends' (p. 4) and Wiseman is just the person to help; 'My job is to give you my best suggestions for what kind of guidance to give her and how that information should be presented so she listens and your relationship with her is strengthened through the process' (p. 4). It would seem, then, that Rosalind Wiseman is an expert on all mothers and their daughters, their needs, relationships and desires, or is she rather an expert on mothers and daughters like herself? Grounded in phrases like 'What I think …' (p. 4), Wiseman (2009) espouses to teach us how to teach our daughters to be 'a decent, ethical person' (p. 4) and emphasises: 'Let me reassure you that I can help you even if you often feel helpless or at war with your daughter' (p. 5). Wiseman's assertive tone serves as reassurance to the reader that you are not alone, that we are all the same through her homogenisation of femininity, girls and women.

Constructing 'Girl World' as an island within the particular social, cultural and historical milieu, Wiseman positions her readers, the parents of adolescent girls, as on the outside. In projecting parents as outside of this 'world', parents read as though they 'need' Wiseman's advice, since they are lying outside of this world that Wiseman knows all about, that 'world' that Wiseman has created through her own text. Wiseman's work, I suggest, is an exploration of how parents can manage power dynamics among adolescent girls. While Wiseman herself advocates for the management of heterosexual adolescent girls' behaviour, I suggest this approach acts like a bandaid and neglects to explore how and why power dynamics among adolescent girls manifest.

15.5 Hetero sex and power dynamics

Wiseman's text aspires to tell parents how to deal with 'mean girl' behaviour between adolescent girls. Following Ringrose and Renold (2009), I suggest that bullying and meanness, while everyday terms that might help to explain behaviour, 'largely ignores sociocultural dimensions of power and identity' (p. 574). This section delves further into the complexity of 'mean girls' behaviour, exploring how power dynamics manifest between girls,

and the heteronormative discourse within which girls grapple for power and recognition.

Eschewing difference by idealising a narrow perception of feminine archetypes, Wiseman's (2009) text demonstrates the ways that girls, even unwittingly, compete with one another to be the object of (male) desire; 'boys are perceived to be the judges who award the girl who comes closest to their ideal with the ultimate prize: their attention' (pp. 176–177). Through her metaphor of the heteronormative 'life raft' Wiseman (2009) contends that girls with a high social status are those who embody particular 'feminine' traits and succeed in gaining attention from the male gaze. This contention is supported by contemporary academic scholarship. For example Korobov and Thorne (2009, 51) assert that 'compulsory heterosexual romantic norms' position women as objects of the male gaze and as commodities within the heterosexual market place. Similarly, Currie et al. (2007) on their work on girls' relational aggression suggest that, for girls, 'having attention from boys is a source of power' (p. 29).

That girls are objects of male desire is a long-held perception demonstrated by Gayle Rubin (2006) in her influential paper 'The traffic in women: Notes on the "political economy" of sex', and Eve Sedgwick (1985), who structures her theory of homosociality around men's traffic in women. What is less obvious is the pervasive ways in which male traffic in females continues to manifest into the 21st century. Wiseman's assumption that all girls aspire to male approval is converted into capital between girls and, through the assumption that girls desire male attention, girls are then subjected to the social hierarchies that form between girls. These power hierarchies then obliterate the potential for girls' same-sex interactions to be used as caring confidants in their subjugation to males. Indeed as Korobov and Thorne (2009) suggest 'orienting to compulsory heterosexual romance usually confers status and popularity with like-minded young women, which in turn can promote social status symmetry and a feeling of being in-sync with each other's experiences' (p. 51).

While Wiseman's text is concerned with the ways in which girls compete for attention from males with other girls, it overlooks the myriad relationships that girls may form with one another (e.g. girls' same-sex desire, same-sex intimate friendship, the positives of girls' relationships and girls' passionate love for girl friends). While Wiseman's text is concerned with girls' same-sex relationships only so far as they dictate girls' relations to boys, I suggest that girls' same-sex interactions can be powerful in and of their own rite.

Focusing her text on girls' negative behaviour with one another, Wiseman negates the knowledge and even the theoretical scope to explore girls' same-sex relationships as positive, passionate or otherwise significant. Indeed, girls' intimacy with other girls is harder to talk about in a social and political climate that prioritises heterosexual romance relationships over same-sex bonds.

15.6 Homosociality: an alternative discourse

Griffin (2000) suggests that while one body of research tends to study young and presumed heterosexual women, another body of research studies young women and lesbian, bisexual or queer. As a result, same-sex desiring adolescent girls are rendered absent in girls' friendship discourse. While no text like Wiseman's can be comprehensive enough to include all of the myriad concerns that may affect adolescents (e.g. race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexuality or socioeconomic status), parenting texts are indicative of a particular discourse and, I suggest, attention must be paid to some of the absences that such mainstream popular texts galvanise, such as the centrality of whiteness or the pervasion of heterosexuality.

While this chapter has demonstrated the limited ways in which girls' same-sex relations and interactions tend to be viewed via popular texts, it has yet to suggest an alternative vision. What I propose as a useful concept to expand girls' same-sex bonds and interactions is a modified version of Sedgwick's (1985) homosociality. Homosociality, as conceptualised by Sedgwick, is a means to conceptualise men's same-sex interactions and traffic in women. What I suggest is that female homosociality may be used to explore bonds between women. Denoting neither the presence of a sexual element, nor its absence, homosociality may have the scope to encapsulate a wider range of bonds and interactions between women without highlighting the presence, or the absence, of males.

Homosociality can be used to conceptualise 'the feelings bonding and dividing people of the same gender' (Edwards 2009, 33) and can be drawn upon to describe both the positive and negative interactions that may occur between members of the same sex. Indeed, the basic premise of homosociality, same-sex sociality, can be seen to underpin any interaction or relationship between two or more members of the same sex, family, friends, peers, lovers, acquaintances or opponents in conflict.

While homosociality does not have the scope to encompass such concerns as race, ethnicity or disability, it does challenge the pervasion of heteronormativity. Within the context of adolescent girls, homosociality might just offer the

potential to explore girls' relationships as more than just a passage to hetero-romantic love or hierarchy, but also those passionate friendships in their own right, the potential erotic dimension of girls' bonds, and equally the negative distaste that girls may inevitably feel for other girls.

15.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how the popular rhetoric around Rosalind Wiseman's text, *Queen Bees and Wannabes*, and the subsequent film based on the text, *Mean Girls*, serves to produce a powerful discourse through which adolescent girls are homogenised as white, heterosexual, able-bodied and middle-class. Further I contend that this rhetoric positions girls as aspiring to approval and acceptance from the male gaze, a notion Rubin (2006) terms 'male traffic in women'. I suggest that through these heteronormative frames adolescent girls' same-sex bonds and relationships tend to be devalued because these frames occlude passionate and positive sites of intimate friendship, same-sex desire, and passionate love for girl friends. I use female homosociality to suggest an alternative frame that may encompass a more inclusive range of female same-sex bonds and interactions while acknowledging that it remains to be explored how race, ethnicity, class and disability may fit within the homosocial frame.

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15

Students' Educational Experiences in a Weekend Chinese School in Victoria, Australia

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SUMMARY In this chapter, I present some initial findings from my ethnographic PhD research on students' educational and cultural experiences at a community language school in Melbourne, Australia. I draw on the interviews with 16 students, aged ranging from 13 to 17, in the senior year levels (Year 10 to Year 12) in the school. Based on the semi-structured interviews with these students, this chapter categorises and analyses the reasons why they attend Huawen School to learn Chinese language. Initial findings suggest that these students at Huawen School are learning Chinese first of all to fulfil their parents' expectations, or at least in the initial years. However, now at the senior year levels, many of them are learning Chinese for the benefits in the communication with their family members and Chinese people, their educational pathways and future career. In their teens, many students also begin to realise that the Chinese language is a very important marker of their ethnic identity in Australia.

16.1 Introduction

About 37,000 students attend community languages schools in Victoria, Australia in order to learn their ethnic languages and culture, and among the students, approximately one-third learn Chinese (ESAV 2010). However, there is a lack of research on community languages schools in Australia, and more so in relation to students' experiences in such schools in Australia. This chapter is based on my doctoral research that focuses on students' and teachers' educational and cultural experiences at Huawen School (pseudonym), a Chinese language school in Melbourne, Australia. My research draws on the fields of sociology of education, Bourdieu's notions of capital and Australian–Chinese studies. This ethnographic case study employs document analysis, participant observations and in-depth interviews with the school principal, teachers and students (born in Australia or China). In this chapter, I examine students' cultural and educational reasons for attending Huawen School. I am also interested in the ways in which this group of young Australian–Chinese students understands the importance and benefits of learning Chinese language and culture in this community language school.

16.2 Community languages schools in Australia

Community languages schools are also called complementary schools, supplementary schools or weekend schools. The most commonly used names for such schools in Europe and the UK are complementary or supplementary schools (Archer et al. 2009; Creese 2009; Francis et al. 2010; Hall et al. 2002; Li 2006; Mau et al. 2009; Strand 2007). In the US and Canada, researchers tend to use the terms supplementary schools (Mirza and Reay 2000; Zhou and Kim 2006; Zhou and Li 2003), ethnic schools (Asanova 2005; Nelson-Brown 2005), heritage language schools (Lo 2009; Maloof et al. 2006) or weekend schools (Chinen and Tucker 2005; Doerr and Lee 2009; Liu 2006), as they usually run during weekends. In Australia, such schools are officially called 'community languages schools' (Clyne and Fernandez 2008; Hornberger 2005) or ethnic schools (ESAV 2010). However, other Australian-based researchers also use 'supplementary schools' (Suzuki 2005) or 'after-hour schools' (Tsolidis and Kostogriz 2008) in their studies. Some researchers prefer 'complementary schools' to 'supplementary schools' because they 'evoke a non-hierarchical relationship' (Mau et al. 2009, 17) or highlight the positive complementary functions and contributions (Martin et al. 2006) to mainstream schooling.

Regardless of the different names being used in different countries, research (Mau et al. 2009; Wu 2003) has shown some basic common characteristics of such schools. They are non-mainstream institutions and are complementary or supplementary to the mainstream education system. They are not open during normal school hours but usually during the weekends or after hours. Many such schools do not have their own premises but usually rent or borrow mainstream schools' facilities or community religious centres. Teaching and learning of community and ethnic minority languages, culture and sometimes religions are usually the focus of these schools' curriculums and activities. Research (Li 2006) shows that these ethnic schools play a very important part in ethnic language and cultural learning practices, multilingual and multicultural experiences, and ethnic and cultural identity formation of the participants.

Community languages schools in Australia receive funding through the Australian Government's School Languages Program, which distributes funding to state and territory education jurisdictions. Some state and territory departments of education provide additional funding. Parents supplement the running of schools by paying fees and conducting fundraising events to

meet the additional costs of conducting classes (CLA 2011). In Victoria, the Ethnic Schools Association of Victoria (ESAV) at the local level works in cooperation with Community Languages Australia (CLA) at the national level to maintain the national coordination of community languages schools and to develop national quality control frameworks. According to the 2010 statistics (ESAV 2010) in Victoria, over 182 community languages schools provided ethnic language educational and cultural maintenance programs to nearly 37,000 students with a range of 42 languages and with more than 1300 teachers involved in the programs. 12,000 students, who accounted for nearly one-third of all the students in ethnic schools in Victoria, learned Chinese language and culture in 29 Chinese language schools.

Government funding helps students access community language learning in these schools. However, due to the dominant monolingual mindset in Australia, ethnic languages tend to be regarded as less important than other curriculum areas (Clyne and Fernandez 2008). There has been a continual decline in the number of primary and secondary schools offering languages other than English (LOTE) (DEECD 2009). Enrolment in LOTE dropped from 94.9 per cent in 2001 to 77.4 per cent in 2007 in primary schools and government secondary schools, from 95.4 per cent in 2001 to 85.3 per cent in 2007. This decline of ethnic language program offerings in the mainstream schools in part has resulted in parents from ethnic minority groups sending their children to the community languages schools in Australia.

16.3 Huawen School

Huawen School started in early 1990s with Mandarin and simplified Chinese characters being taught on weekends during school terms in a rented classroom of a government school. It began with one teacher and six students of different ages. Now the school has developed into one of the largest Chinese schools in Melbourne, with more than 1000 students. Studies in some European countries on ethnic complementary schools indicate that in the UK and Norway mainstream schooling neglects or denies cultural and linguistic diversity to such an extent that 'ethnic minority groups resist by providing their children with opportunities, outside of the mainstream sector, to learn their own language, culture and traditions'(Hall et al. 2002, 400). Supplementary schools are 'a way of reclaiming the specificity of cultural and social identity that was missing from mainstream schooling' (Hall et al. 2002, 400). In America, supplementary schools act as an alternative to bilingual education, which is

no longer provided in public schools (Liu 2006) and an important mechanism of selective acculturation (Zhou and Kim 2006). The principal of Huawen School thought highly of the support from Australian and state governments in providing funding and teacher training programs for community languages schools, as this was crucial for the survival and development of the school, especially in the early years.

Huawen School provides Prep to Year 12 Chinese classes. Apart from receiving government funding, the school also charges each student A$80–140 per term depending on their year level. Students have three 45-minute Chinese classes on Saturdays or Sundays during school terms. Apart from a very small number of students from other ethnic groups, nearly all the students are from a Chinese family background. Many students' parents are originally from China. Some of the students' parents are migrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, Vietnam or Singapore. Languages spoken at home include English, Mandarin, Cantonese and other Chinese dialects. There are also an increasing number of students who were born in Australia, especially those at lower year levels.

Various textbooks have been used at Huawen. Teaching materials currently at the preschool and VCE (Victorian Certificate of Education) Chinese levels (Year 11 and Year 12) are designed by the school's teachers. For other year levels, the textbooks used are published in China and designed by Chinese language authorities specifically for overseas Chinese learners. Apart from these teaching materials, the school has also prepared a workbook, *Weekly Readings on Chinese Culture* for students to taste some Chinese classic literature and Chinese traditional values. Various activities, such as Chinese literature reciting contest, debate in Chinese have been organised to arouse interests of the students to learn Chinese.

Almost all teachers in the school originally came from China, including the principal. Chinese taught at Huawen is Mandarin (Pu Tong Hua) Chinese and simplified Chinese characters. As Huawen is a weekend school, there are no full-time teachers. Some teachers teaching Year 11 and Year 12 are qualified full-time or part-time teachers at mainstream schools as well. Most Chinese teachers at the school are not qualified in Australia, although many of them were qualified teachers with years of teaching experience in China. Working in community languages schools is seen as a starting point for new migrant teachers in Australia because without proficiency in English and an Australian teacher's qualification, they are not able to continue their career in mainstream schools. A number of teachers at Huawen School are parents whose children are learning Chinese at the school.

16.4 Students attending Huawen School

In this chapter, I present and analyse reasons why students attend Huawen School and learn Chinese in Australia. I draw on interviews with 16 students aged between 13 and 17 years old. They are at Year 10 (10 students), Year 11 (five students) and Year 12 (one student). Six of the students were born in Australia. Ten students were born in China and came to Australia with their parents by the age of 16. Seven students had at least one year Chinese primary schooling before migration. Ten students learn Chinese at ethnic language schools, such as Huawen, because Chinese is not offered as a LOTE subject at their mainstream schools. Some students moved to Huawen because they heard the school was good at VCE Chinese. Many students plan to take the Year 12 VCE Chinese exam when they are actually in Year 11 or Year 10 at mainstream schools, as the exam results are valid for university entry for two years. Therefore, at mainstream schools, they are actually in Year 8 (one student), Year 9 (nine students) or Year 10 (six students), that is, one or two year levels lower than at Huawen School.

Most of the students who were born in Australia (such as Becky, Andrew, Boris, Yajie and Helen) or who came to Australia at very young age (such as Karl and Katty) started learning Chinese from the beginning year levels of Prep, Year 1 or Year 2. Those who came to Australia recently or had had some formal schooling in China usually started to attend Chinese schools from the senior year levels of Year 10 (Haoshan and Monty) or Year 11 (Ling, Shaoyun and Chris). In between, Daniel, Annie, Sam and Winnie started to attend Chinese school from Year 4 to Year 7.

16.4.1 Fulfilling parents' expectations

Studies in the US, UK and Canada (Archer and Francis 2007; Fuligni 1997; Li 2004, 2006; Louie 2004; Guo 2006; Zhang et al. 1998) indicate that Chinese parents tend to place great value on education, have high educational aspirations and expectations, and are willing to invest and sacrifice much for their children's education. Diasporic Chinese believe Western countries, such as the US, UK, Canada and Australia, provide their children with quality education and are less competitive and stressful compared to the education systems in Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China (Ma 2003). Two main reasons for diasporic Chinese migrating to 'Western' countries are 'family and personal ties' and 'better education for their children' (Wu 2003). Diasporic Chinese parents, regardless of class and education backgrounds, share some

similar values, including hard work, strict monitoring of children, belief in the importance of the prestige of university, and high career aspirations. They also tend to rely on Chinese schools as a complement to the mainstream schooling to ensure their children maintain Chinese language and culture while living in Western countries (Archer and Francis 2006; Louie 2004).

For most students in this research, the decision to attend Chinese school was 'definitely' made by their parents. Many students simply say 'parents made me' when they started learning Chinese. For example, Yajie comments, 'When I started I was really young so I didn't really know. I just knew it was something I had to do. I never really liked it or not liked it.' All the students indicate that their parents have always been encouraging and supporting them to learn Chinese and to attend Chinese schools.

Parents also play an important role in recent immigrant students attending Chinese schools. Haoshan's mother asked him to attend Huawhen School when she learned from friends that Chinese was one of the LOTE subjects in the VCE that provided students bonus marks in their VCE overall scores, which would assist them in their university entry. Haoshan says that if it were not for VCE purposes and the insistence of his parents, he would not continue learning Chinese at the weekend school as he is facing pressure to improve his English for his mainstream schooling and living in Australia as a new immigrant. This is the same for Chris, who enrolled Huawen soon after coming to Australia one year ago at the suggestion of his parents. For Haoshan and Chris, who have had seven and nine years of formal schooling in China, their parents believe it is beneficial to take Chinese for VCE, as they have an advantage in this language.

Apart from attending Chinese weekend schools, many students also have other tutoring lessons, in subjects such as English, maths, music, sports or dancing. Daniel regards attending Huawen School as a way to 'escape' music lessons. He says, 'If I don't go Chinese school, my dad just asks me to play the piano, which I don't really want to do in the mornings.' Karl feels that doing Year 10 Chinese may please his father, who has very high educational expectations for him and has difficulties living in Australia as an immigrant without English proficiency. He says, 'I guess he'll be like, wow, you're only in Year 9 and you're studying VCE preparations and that's pretty good. It may give him a sense of hope … it brings a smile to his face … That's nice to see.' For many Chinese parents, their children's success and wellbeing in the host country is their main purpose for migration as well as hope for life.

16.4.2 Learning Chinese for instrumental benefits

In Chinese families, filial piety is an outstanding characteristic. Parents have the authority in the family and children are expected to respect and obey their parents. For example, Winnie followed her parents' suggestion and went to the Chinese school although she 'really hated Chinese school at the beginning'. Haoshan listens to his parents although he doesn't think it is necessary for him to go to Chinese school in Australia as he has finished Year 8 in China. Parents played a decisive role in their children's attending Chinese schools when the children were young. They value education and, as immigrants, they also try to plan their children's educational pathways strategically and take the most advantage from the educational system. Actually none of the students really dislike the Chinese schools now at their senior year levels as they begin to understand their parents' primary intention. In fact, most of them also see the benefits of learning Chinese in one way or another in relation to national and global imperatives.

16.4.2.1 Educational benefits

Most of the students in this study express very clearly that the purpose of learning Chinese is related to the VCE. Yajie elaborates, 'When you do VCE Chinese, your score gets lifted up much higher than normal … I am better at Chinese than other languages, because I do French and Japanese … That's why I picked Chinese.'

The majority of the students in the research are aiming to attend prestigious universities. They understand the importance of tertiary education in their lives and how learning Chinese may help them achieve this goal. Winnie explains:

> When I went to high school and I started to realise that I need to buckle down and do a lot of work because it's approaching your VCE and that's deciding the rest of your life. So I started realising that Chinese is actually really important because then I understood how much further you get if you know two languages. For work and for university as well. Then I realised I need to study Chinese.

What Winnie says in the following to some extent summarises the students' perceptions on attending Huawen or Chinese schools and reasons why parents insist they should attend.

> If Chinese was not a VCE subject, I think I'd probably not do it during my VCE. But I probably will keep on after university, when I have a little more free time. But if I didn't have to, I don't think my parents would force me because they know it's important that I have to get everything else good, like maths and science and English and stuff.

For most students, attending Huawen School is in part to fulfil their parents' educational expectations. Also important are the students' educational and career motivations for studying Chinese. These include high achievements in the VCE; high scores to enter into prestigious universities; access to popular university majors leading to well-paid and stable employment opportunities, such as medical science, law, engineering, architecture and journalism, which are mentioned by most students. The majority of the students believe they do better in Chinese and that Chinese is more useful for them in their lives compared with other LOTE that they learn at mainstream schools, such as French, German, Italian or Japanese. For example, Andrew is learning Italian in this mainstream school but wants to take Chinese as his VCE LOTE subject. He explains this is 'probably because I don't really know when I could use Italian … so it would be less useful I guess'. Helen and Katty give the same reason. However, Katty is going to do German for the VCE because she thinks her German is much better than her Chinese and it may get her a higher score.

16.4.2.2 Chinese as an important cultural and communication tool

Fluency in English is regarded as necessary for full participation in Australian society. The lack of English language skills of migrants from Asia has always been a substantial concern (McNamara and Coughlan 1997). Further, due to the lack of English, although the Chinese in Australia are a relatively well-educated community, a large proportion of Chinese workers hold low occupational status (Hon and Coughlan 1997). In Australia, where minority immigrant groups are subjected to the linguistic assimilation pressures of school, media, peers and society as a whole, ethnic language loss has been confirmed as inevitable in many families by both census data analysis and research (Smolicz et al. 2001). Yet students in this study clearly understand that maintaining Chinese proficiency is very important for communication among family members and in the broader societal context.

Boris says, 'My grandparents are here and they don't really understand English so it's like I have to speak Chinese to them.' Similarly, Sam articulates

the significance of learning Chinese as 'a way for me to communicate with my parents and grandparents. They don't understand much English, especially my grandparents. So it just provides the language link between us.'

According to the 2006 Australian Census, 669,890 Australian residents (or 3.4 per cent of the resident population) identified themselves as having Chinese ancestry. This group is one of the top five source countries of immigration since 1991 (ABS 2006). Cantonese and Mandarin are both among the top five languages spoken at home in Melbourne and in Australia. Most students in the research want to learn Chinese in order to help those Chinese who cannot speak good English. Boris and Becky have career aspirations to be a translator or interpreter. Becky explains, 'Because there are a lot of Chinese people in Australia now and they can't speak English and it's good to be a translator sometimes.' Boris believes that 'if you translate, you always have a feeling you've done something good for other people'. Those who travel frequently between China and Australia and have relatives in China or family business in China feel the need to learn Chinese so they are able to communicate with people in China as well.

Monty attended Huawen in Year 10 in order to get extra help in addition to her Chinese learning at mainstream school. Due to students' background, Chinese taught in ethnic schools is usually more difficult and advanced than in mainstream schools. She is also happy to make more Chinese friends at Huawen as she feels she has been 'whitewashed' in the mainstream schools. She describes her experience of a trip to China in 2007:

> I went back and I just felt this great urge to be able to read the signs or write out my name, fill out a Chinese form and stuff because people would be like "Oh, you're Chinese but you can't read or write", yeah, kind of sad.

Travelling between the two countries frequently, Becky also understands the importance very well. She says:

> Because we are Chinese, so we go back to China. When you go back to China you would actually understand what people are talking about instead of not knowing anything. You can actually understand what they say and what all the signs or something say and you won't get lost.

Learning and maintaining Chinese language skills for communication with Chinese people in China and in Australia is seen as an important cultural

and communication tool for most of the students in this study. Now living in Australia, Chris keeps his communication and friendship with his previous classmates in China. He also introduces his experience in Australia to them through his internet blog, and his friends often leave him their comments there. Online communication is important for Boris, Anni and Ling to keep in touch with friends and relatives. Sam, Becky and Shaoyun travel between China and Australia at least once every year. Transnational flows of capital, advanced transportation, technology and mass communications have provided opportunities for diasporic migrants to maintain ties and identities with their original countries (Brah 1996; Cornell and Hartmann 2007; Purkayastha 2005; Shi 2005). Sam's understanding illustrates this point:

> I am learning Chinese … not just getting high score because I'm also thinking of going back to China for work when I'm old enough. I just think that because, going back there I have a lot of friends from primary school there. My parents have a lot of friends there. So they often want to go back and my dad usually works in China, so I can live with him if I go to work in China as well. And I think it's also because the salary you receive is higher than Australia. My dad works there because he's got a company there. So he has to often go back to China and work. My mother doesn't really mind because her job doesn't require that much of language skills. But they think I should go work if I had the opportunity to.

16.4.2.3 Global position of China

Students in the study understand the importance of being bilingual and proficient in English and Chinese given the growing economic and cultural relations between Australia and China. Annie believes learning Chinese is a good choice especially for Australians 'because Australia is really connected to China in a lot of different ways.' Ling explains 'because there are a lot of companies in Australia now having relations with Chinese corporations, then people need to know both English and Chinese to cooperate with others'. Helen and Andrew emphasise the importance of learning Chinese for future job opportunities both in Australia and in China. Helen notices, 'Because of the economy and business, everyone is heading for China and they are all learning Chinese. Even foreigners want to learn Chinese.' Andrew provides another aspect of the benefits of learning Chinese. He explains, 'because I speak two languages and China is now the country of making things, producing things. If you can speak

in Chinese you can talk to people in China and you can make trades.' Chris highlights the positioning of China in the global sphere that 'Chinese is more and more important in the world because China now is becoming a powerful country in the world and more and more people want to learn Chinese. So if I have good Chinese I can teach them and tell them about China so they will know more about China.'

Like Sam, Shaoyun lives in Australia with his mother and goes back to China to reunite with his father every year. He explains this is because 'he [his father] will lose the job he has in China which gives quite reasonable pay. Since basically all the degrees he has in China don't count here, he probably can only find harsh labour jobs'. His father went back to China after a year living in Australia and failing to find a professional job. For his future, Shaoyun is actually quite open to where he is going to work and live. He says, 'I am not too sure on that but my mum is definitely going back to China. Actually, staying here or going back doesn't matter that much to me. China is appealing and I have to admit it.' Shaoyun is now fluent both in English and Chinese and he is familiar with both Australian (Western) and Chinese cultures. He feels the freedom of being bilingual and bicultural. Chris says, 'The whole world is becoming a global village. People can take frequent visits to each other. You are a part of me and I am a part of you.'

Such bilingual and bicultural experiences and capabilities, compared with their parents' generation, have provided this group of students with more mobility between the nation-states and different cultures in the current globalised world.

16.5 Learning Chinese as a marker of ethnic identity

Research indicates that there is a significant relationship between language, culture and identity (Martin et al. 2006; Tsolidis and Kostogriz 2008; Wu 2006). Most students in this study feel that learning Chinese is linked to their ethnic identity. They learn Chinese because 'I look Chinese'; 'I am Chinese'; 'My background is Chinese' or 'I was born in China'. They would feel 'weird', 'disrespectful' and 'embarrassed' if they didn't know Chinese. Andrew said, 'I learn Chinese because I am a Chinese person, so it should be right that I learn Chinese.' Yajie explains, 'Because I've got a Chinese face and it feels kind of disrespectful if I'm Chinese and I don't know my own language.' Winnie says, 'I know I don't like learning Chinese but I have to. I know I have to

because I am Chinese and it will be really embarrassing if I couldn't speak Chinese.' Many students take it for granted that they are Chinese and should learn Chinese, for example, Monty said, 'I am a Chinese so why shouldn't I [learn Chinese]?'

For many students in this research, looking Chinese is emphasised by their parents and it is a permanent racial marker of being Chinese and a very important reason for them to learn Chinese. Studies on Australian–Chinese people have found that, although Chinese have tried hard to be included in Australian society, because of their appearance, even third- and fourth-generation Chinese Australians find 'their identities are permanently incarcerated in China (and Asia) while their claims to Australianness are constantly challenged and invalidated', which 'is obstructing their unconditional acceptance as "real" Australians within mainstream society' (Tan 2006, 78). Ang (1993, 36) suggests that the 'construction of "East" and "West" as mutually exclusive seriously complicates the sense of identity of Chinese people throughout the world'. Living in a 'Western' country (such as Australia) with physical appearances of the 'East' (such as Chinese) has complicated the identity of this group of Chinese-background immigrant students. Although most of the students consider themselves as Australians, and Australia as their home because they were born in Australia, or they know more about Australia than China, or they are poor in Chinese language, or they are at least 'Chinese–Australian' (as Annie described herself) instead of 'Australian–Chinese', they are always convinced that they are basically Chinese.

Sending children to Chinese schools to gain extra language, cultural and educational support may be a strategy for Chinese immigrant parents in Australia to help their children in educational attainment and cultural maintenance. This may also come from the experiences of first-generation parents' understanding of being Chinese in Australia. Such understanding has actually greatly influenced young people's perceptions of learning Chinese and being Chinese in Australia. In this research, parents play an important role in maintaining their children's understandings of the importance of language and ethnic identity. Karl says:

> My dad told me this. He said, 'If you're an Asian person and you go back to China, they are going to look at your face. They know you are Chinese. But if you can't speak Chinese, you'll be very embarrassed in China. So I thought this is a nation where you come from. This is your language.

> This is who you are supposed to be and if you don't know it, then it's embarrassing.'

Becky has been encouraged by her parents to learn Chinese. This is not only necessary for her to go back to China, but useful in Australia. She told me, 'My parents say, "You have a Chinese face and you should learn Chinese. If you don't know Chinese, it'll be a bit weird" .' In fact, the students are reminded of their Chinese identity not only by their parents but also by other people.

Boris explains, 'It might be your own opinion to think if you're Chinese or Australian. But other people might just consider you, looking at your skin colour.'

Similarly, Becky points out, 'You still got the Chinese face. You can tell that some people are really Westernised and aren't Chinese or Asian at all. But other people, they just have that feeling that you are Asian.'

For the recent immigrant students in Australia, they focus more on the educational benefits of learning Chinese and are more interested in how to take this linguistic advantage in the Australian education system in order to make up for their disadvantaged positions in other VCE subjects.

16.6 Conclusion

This chapter provides some insights into the educational and cultural motivations that underpin Australian–Chinese students' experiences at Huawen School, one of community languages schools in Australia. The research suggests that, although it is mainly their parents' decision for the students to attend Chinese schools, most students enrolled in the senior year levels at Huawen have come to realise the importance of learning Chinese language and culture for the benefits and being regarded as Chinese. These students focus on learning the Chinese language and culture as an advantage in ways that ensure 'success' within their educational pathways, the wider Australian society and the globalised world. Community languages schools play an important role in ensuring communication between those born in Australia and their parents or relatives who know little English. This research suggests students' ethnic identities are linked to their experiences in Australia and China. To many students, regardless of their birth place, learning Chinese language and culture is also seen as an important identity marker of being Chinese in Australia.

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