Abstract

This project developed a handbook for teachers to assist in the instruction of Chinese as a foreign language. The handbook provides teachers with practical lessons for teaching Chinese to adult beginning language learners. The handbook is based on autoethnographic analyses of my own experiences or stories related to foreign language learning and teaching the Chinese language. Lessons topics were developed based on these stories. The handbook put forwards 6 lesson plans corresponding to 6 specific topics. The handbook is supported by 2 theories: the audio-lingual and communicative foreign language teaching approaches. Based on these 2 teaching approaches, the main idea embedded in the handbook is that teaching spoken language before teaching Chinese writing and grammar rules can help adult novices to learn Chinese more effectively and apply the language in practical situations. Thus, the lesson plans in the handbook are designed to develop the speaking skills of adult learners for communicative purposes. Unlike many current Chinese teaching materials in which spoken and written Chinese are taught together, this handbook creates an innovative teaching method that emphasizes spoken-Chinese language learning for beginner learners. The lesson plans, as examples, are expected to inspire more Chinese teachers to explore and promote innovative teaching lessons and methods.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

In this chapter, I have contextualized the problem of learning Chinese as a foreign language teaching in a globalized world. I also provide clarification and rationale for the handbook presented here, based on my foreign language learning and Chinese teaching experience, as well as related theories. Additionally, I articulate the purpose, scope, and limitation of this project. At the end of the chapter, I provide an outline of the remaining chapters.

Background of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language

Globalization involves economic, cultural, and educational cooperation at a global level (Xu, 2012) and influences foreign language learning (Kassteen, 2014). The popularity of foreign languages is strongly impacted by economic strength. As a result, English has been a lingua franca over the past years (Hamid & Nguyen, 2016; Liu & Bianco, 2007; O’Neill & Chapman, 2015). However, in this century, the rapid development of China’s economy—or what Duff et al (2013) have referred to as China rising—has also influenced interest in the learning of the Chinese language. Specifically, China has attracted economic cooperation from other countries and stimulated individuals’ interest in learning the Chinese language (Duff et al., 2013; Poupard, 2012). Thus, the need to learn Chinese as a foreign language has increased in the world (Confucius Institute Headquarters, 2014; Duff et al., 2013). Realizing the necessity of learning foreign languages, some English-speaking countries, such as the U.K. and the U.S., have encouraged people to learn the Chinese language in order to achieve economic cooperation with China. Currently, Chinese is one of the 10 most important foreign languages (Kassteen, 2014; Tinsley & Board, 2014).
In addition to economic factors, the Chinese language has become globally more popular because of its wide use. Mandarin Chinese is an official language in China, Taiwan, and Singapore and is used by the United Nations and the International Criminal Court (Tinsley & Board, 2014). Across the world, the number of Chinese speakers represents one-third of the global population (Noack, 2015) and the number of Chinese speakers has continued to grow in recent years (Duff et al., 2013). In Canada and the U.S., Chinese is the third most widely spoken language (Statistics Canada, 2010; United States Census Bureau, 2000). Since there is such a large number of Chinese speakers and learners around the world, it is believed that Mandarin Chinese could become the world’s most predominant language (Duff et al., 2013).

The Chinese government has implemented measures to support Chinese language and culture education outside of China as a strategy to develop “soft power” (Duff et al., 2013). Specifically, China has established Chinese learning organizations called Confucius Institutes overseas in order to offer people the opportunity to learn Chinese across the globe (Confucius Institute Headquarters, 2014). In 2017, there were 516 Confucius Institutes and 1,076 Confucius classrooms in 142 countries and regions (Xinhua, 2017). What is more, China has set up an international Chinese test system known as the Chinese Proficiency Test (HSK) for international learners. Since its inception, 728 test sites have been set up in 91 countries and more than 600,000 Chinese language learners have completed this test (International Association of Language Centres [IALC], 2016).

Hence, the fast-growing popularity of learning Chinese as a foreign language requires an effective Chinese language pedagogy, which demands useful materials for
teachers. Developing a handbook as part of this project is intended to, in part, to assist foreign language teachers providing Chinese as a foreign language instruction to adult English speaking students.

**Statement and Rationale of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language**

For many English speakers, Chinese is difficult to learn due to its use of tones and characters (Liu & Bianco, 2007). Thus, many educators struggle with finding a balance of teaching spoken and written Chinese (Kubler, 2018; Zhang, 2014). I have also faced this challenge in my teaching practice. When I taught adult beginners the Chinese language, I found most current textbooks were too difficult for novices as both spoken and written language were taught simultaneously (Kubler, 2018). I also realized that Chinese characters, grammar rules, and pronunciations were especially challenging for beginners. Specifically, students tended to focus on imitating the writing of characters instead of focusing on their pronunciation. However, when writing the characters, they were distracted by attempting the pronunciations, so they could not write characters correctly either. Thus, I believe that teaching Chinese phonetics and characters together is not effective and leads to difficulty in learning.

This perspective also comes from my foreign language learning experience. I have been learning English for more than 10 years. During this period, I felt it was ineffective to learn English by memorizing grammar rules. Instead, I found that learning English through imitating dialogues in movies improved my English communicative skills dramatically. Similarly, I focused on developing written skills when I began to learn Russian. However, those skills failed to help me engage in real communication. Traveling to Russia where I had multiple opportunities to communicate with native
speakers, however, cultivated my sense of the language that had a positive influence on my written Russian skills. From my English and Russian learning experiences, I found that learning from spoken language was more effective than from written language. I used to learn foreign languages through grammar rules and focused on linguistic competency, but grammar rules only impeded my language fluency in daily conversation; when I focused on my spoken language skills rapidly improved, my written skills improved. By using language in natural communication, I developed a good sense of language, which helped me to remember grammar rules unconsciously without the need of rote memorization.

According to my personal language learning and teaching experiences, I believe that it is more effective to teach Chinese as a foreign language to adults by focusing on speaking and listening competency prior to teaching reading and writing skills. The statement is supported by the audio-lingual language teaching approach, which argues that spoken skills should be developed earlier than written skills through dialogues (Cook, 2001; Gurunathan & Geethanjali, 2016). Hence, dialogues are widely used in the handbook presented in this project to develop students’ speaking skills. The communicative language teaching approach also stresses developing communicative skills rather than grammatical competency (Cook, 2001). The handbook presented here focuses on developing students’ Chinese listening and speaking skills for the communicative purposes based mainly on these two theories.

Due to the lack of Chinese language teaching materials (Duff et al., 2013; Xu, 2012), the development of the handbook is a relevant and necessary project. The handbook is designed to be distinguished from most current textbooks in which spoken
and written Chinese skills are taught together (Kubler, 2018). Instead, it provides teachers with an innovative way to teach Chinese through training speaking skills to adult learners in the beginning stage of their learning. The instructional approaches provided in the handbook can inspire and encourage teachers to promote their teaching practice in order to help adult beginners learn the Chinese language more effectively. The handbook is also developed to meet the need of those who are looking for materials to develop Chinese speaking and listening skills for communication purposes.

**Purpose of the Project**

This project was conducted to develop a handbook that provides practical instructional approaches in lesson designs for teachers who teach adult beginner Chinese-as-a-foreign-language students. Basing on language teaching theories and my personal language learning experiences and teaching narratives, the handbook promotes a variation to the traditional teaching approach found in current Chinese textbooks by emphasizing the importance of teaching speaking and listening skills earlier than reading and writing skills. The helpful teaching approaches provided in the handbook are expected to give teachers innovative insights that inspire them to improve their teaching practice to adult Chinese novices.

**Scope and Limitation of the Project**

To meet the need of Chinese as a foreign language education globally, the handbook provides teachers specific instructional approaches for lecture designs. Topics in each lecture design are closely associated with daily life in order to achieve a communicative purpose and develop Chinese speaking skills for adult learners. In the handbook, there are many useful charts and figures teachers can apply directly in the
classroom. The handbook also provides a rationale for each lesson as well as information about what and how to teach lesson content. It is hoped that by using the handbook, teachers can improve students’ effectiveness of learning Chinese as a foreign language.

However, due to time restrictions associated with this project, it is impossible to include all possible teaching situations in the handbook. The figures, charts, and lesson plans included are limited as well. Thus, teachers are encouraged to adjust the samples within the handbook to meet the unique needs of their teaching practices and learners. Moreover, the handbook is further limited by its focus on developing Chinese speaking and listening skills. The handbook does not demonstrate how to connect the learning of verbal skills with written skills. Hence, the handbook is intended to be used with learners who are in the very early stages of learning the Chinese language.

**Outline of the Remainder of the Document**

Chapter 2 provides a literature review. Foreign language learning is generally overviewed from the perspective of globalization. In this context, the necessity of learning Chinese as a foreign language is reviewed. Then, second language teaching theories are reviewed, including some typical language teaching approaches. Based on second language teaching theories, the challenge of teaching Chinese as a foreign language is introduced.

Chapter 3 introduces the research design. This chapter includes autoethnography as the research method and elaborates on the process of data evaluation used in developing the handbook.

Chapter 4 consists of stories, which are regarded as data to create the handbook. Specifically, a series of stories related to my personal language learning and teaching
experience are elaborated in this chapter. Connections between the stories and the handbook are also provided.

Chapter 5 contains the handbook that is intended for use by teachers to teach Chinese as a foreign language to adult beginners. The handbook is made up of an introduction and six lessons. Step-by-step instructions for lesson delivery are provided for each lesson.

Chapter 6 discusses the handbook in context of its theoretical basis and structure as well as limitations. The chapter includes an analysis of implications including instructional recommendations for teachers and suggestions for ongoing qualitative and quantitative research to evaluate the effectiveness and use of the handbook. The chapter concludes with a final discussion related to the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language to beginning adult language learners.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

There are four parts in this literature review. In the first part, I examine the influence of globalization on foreign language (i.e., second language and/or subsequent language) learning. In the second part, I give an overview of the importance associated with learning Chinese as foreign language for individuals worldwide. In the third part, I provide a theoretical overview of research in the field of second language teaching and learning. The chapter concludes with a review of previous research about Chinese leaners’ motivation and challenges associated with Chinese language instruction.

Influence of Globalization on Subsequent Language Learning

We are living in a global era (Göksel, 2004). The world is connected and communication among peoples of different nationalities is frequent. This phenomenon is known as globalization, which is not only an economic term; it also applies to culture, educational cooperation, and human migration (Xu, 2012). Globalization has an influence on foreign language learning with many students desiring to be proficient in a foreign language. Today, there are two million students who travel to learn another language and this is expected to increase to 2.5 million by 2020 (Kassteen, 2014). Economic factors play an important role in the popularity of foreign languages. In the past decade, English, as a global language, has been recognized as a global basic skill, more so than as a foreign language (Liu & Bianco, 2007). Hamid and Nguyen (2016) and O’Neill and Chapman (2015) argue that English has become the lingua franca in Asia over the past years, which has driven many Asian countries, such as Malaysia, Japan, India, Bangladesh, and Singapore, to introduce English-in-education policies to meet the needs of globalization and enhance global competitiveness. Unlike in many Asian countries,
English-speaking countries do not have mandatory foreign language policies (Tinsley & Board, 2014).

With the economic growth of non-English-speaking nations, some English-speaking countries, such as the United Kingdom and the United States, have realized the urgency of learning foreign languages. The United States began to adjust its policy of foreign language instruction to meet the needs of globalization as follows:

The global economy is shifting away from the English-speaking world. Since 1975, the English-speaking share of global GDP has fallen significantly and will continue to fall. The Chinese economy will surpass the U.S. economy in size soon after 2030. Latin America (Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking) and South Asia (Hindi- and Urdu-speaking) are growing strongly as well. Exports have accounted for half of post-recession U.S. economic growth, and future U.S. growth will increasingly depend on selling U.S. goods and services to foreign consumers who do not necessarily speak English. (Wiley, Moore, & Fee, 2012, para. 2)

To achieve economic cooperation with other countries in the world, the U.S. encouraged people to learn foreign languages. Tinsley and Board (2014) encouraged the U.K. to pay attention to foreign language education and identified economic (i.e., cultural, educational), diplomatic, and balancing factors that impact on the needs of foreign language learning. They also indicated that the top 10 most important languages for the U.K.’s future are Spanish, Arabic, French, Mandarin Chinese, German, Portuguese, Italian, Russian, Turkish, and Japanese (ranging from high to low, respectively). However, three-quarters of the U.K. population cannot communicate in any of these languages. In contrast, many European people speak more languages. As an example,
Petersson and Norén (2017) report that modern day Sweden is a multilingual society, with 25% of students or their parents being foreign born. As a result, many of these students or their parents do not speak Swedish as their first language.

According to the findings of the European Commission, almost half of Europeans have found employment due to knowing a foreign language (Kassteen, 2014). As a result, Europeans attach importance to foreign language learning, recognizing English, German, French, Spanish, and Chinese as especially useful languages (Kassteen, 2014). Liu and Bianco (2007) state that in Australia, the mainstreaming of Asian language studies is a powerful strategy for meeting national interests. These examples indicate the promising potential and increased interest in foreign language learning that have resulted under the influence of globalization.

Many researchers have studied processes associated with learning a language other than English (LOTE). For instance, Ushioda and Dornyei (2017) conclude that understanding the motivation to learning a LOTE is important. Many studies indicate that LOTE leaning meets the needs of globalization. Thompson (2017) analyzed the motivation of university-level students who learned LOTE in the United States, stressing that the relationship between countries motivates students to learn Spanish. McEown, Sawaki, and Harada’s (2017) case study of students in a Japanese university found that motivation for learning LOTE is impacted by social and contextual factors, including support from teachers and parents and the sociopolitical status of English in the educational system. Dörnyei and Al-Hoorie (2017) identified two characteristics of LOTE learners’ motivation: (a) LOTEs generally live in the community using the second language and their positive attitude to the community can motivate them to learn their
languages unconsciously; and (b) Personal reasons also have an impact on the motivation of LOTEs such as self-interest and immigration. Since learning LOTE has become popular, greater numbers of foreign language learners across the world have expressed an interest in learning Mandarin (Kassteen, 2014).

**Necessity and Possibility of Learning Mandarin Chinese as a Foreign Language**

The Chinese language is expected to become a popular choice for foreign language learning in many countries (Kassteen, 2014; Tinsley & Board, 2014). Several factors make the Chinese language a popular choice as a foreign language, including the rapid political and economic development of China, support from the Chinese government, and the positive influence of technology and the Internet.

**Development of China**

China has an enormous influence on world affairs in the 21st century, with many individuals across the world expressing increased interest in this historic country (Poupard, 2012). China’s economy has grown incredibly fast in recent years. In 2010, it was the largest exporter of goods globally and the second largest economy after the United States (Kassteen, 2014). This information shows that China is expected to represent a relatively large portion of the world’s economy in the future. This prospect is also expected to create more cooperation and economic communication among nations. For example, Tinsley and Board (2014) identified Chinese as the most important language for the U.K. in the export market and for other cultural purposes. These economic demands demonstrate the importance and significance of learning Chinese as a foreign language.

**Status of Chinese Language**

Mandarin Chinese, the language with official status in China, Taiwan, and
Singapore, is an official language of the United Nations and the International Criminal Court (Tinsley & Board, 2014). There are 7.2 billion people in the world, 1.39 billion of whom are Chinese (all dialects) speakers (Noack, 2015) and 1.197 million being Chinese native speakers (Tinsley & Board, 2014). Aside from the large number of Chinese native speakers, the number of Chinese learners is also growing dramatically as a result of Chinese economic development and growth of Chinese educational resources established in many countries, making Chinese a global language (Duff et al., 2013). As a result, it is possible that Chinese could become the most predominant language in the world.

**Support from the Chinese Government for Chinese Language and Culture**

Although the Chinese language has the most speakers, English remains the language most often studied as a subsequent language (IALC, 2016). Thus, the Chinese Government implemented a series of measures to spread Chinese language and culture in the world. First, the Chinese Government established Chinese learning organizations called Confucius Institutes to create opportunities for foreigners to learn Chinese (Confucius Institute Headquarters, 2014). According to Xinhua (2017), 516 Confucius Institutes and 1,076 Confucius Classrooms have been established in 142 countries and regions. Second, while the IELTS is well known as an international English test system, there is also such an authoritative language test for Chinese called the Chinese Proficiency Test (HSK). The IALC (2016) indicates that there are 728 test sites in 91 countries, with more than 600,000 Chinese language learners completing this test. Third, the Chinese Government is keen to promote cultural communication and cooperation with other countries. As an example, 2010 was named the “Year of Chinese Language” (Kassteene, 2014).
The Positive Influence of Technology and the Internet

Access to technology and the Internet have also made it convenient for Chinese language learners to take Chinese courses online. Kassteen (2014) explains that enrolment in online courses is growing faster than enrolment on physical campuses, with many schools now offering extended online programs. According to the IALC (2016), Chinese language users are the second most frequent users of the Internet, just behind English language users. As Chinese has become a dominant language on the Internet, there is increased need to learn the Chinese language. This need is apparent through the widespread offerings of online Chinese courses. However, research about online Chinese learning is hard to find (Zhang, 2014). Thus, there is room for further development of Chinese online courses. Exploring Chinese teaching via technology will be an ongoing mission for educators in the future.

Overall, both internal and external conditions make it both possible and necessary for foreign language learners to learn Chinese. The review above also outlined the importance and the significance of learning and teaching the Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language. Thus, to teach Chinese effectively and professionally, Chinese language teachers need to know the theories and relevant research related to second language teaching.

Review of Second Language Teaching

Acquisition of a second language is a useful skill, with many scholars devoted to the research and efficiency of the second language learning and teaching. This part of the literature review outlines well-known theories in this field, different language teaching approaches, and motivation for learning a second language.
Theories of Second Language Acquisition

Halliday (1975) stated that learning a first language is “learning how to mean,” while second language learners already know meaning. Krashen (1982) asserted that language acquisition is distinct from language learning. He explained in the acquisition-learning hypothesis that adults develop second language skills in two processes: subconscious and conscious. In subconscious processes, acquiring additional language imitates the way children acquire first language through natural communication. In conscious processes, adults consciously learn the formal instruction and grammar rules to acquire the second language. Chomsky (1986, 1995) also stated that language knowledge is learned from both a nature and nurture (also called postnatal acquisition) perspective, in that children are born with a natural tendency to learn language that is further enhanced as they develop into adults. Chomsky (1965) believed that innate language acquisition devices, which allow children to acquire the first language without direct instruction, can be used to scaffold adult second language acquisition. Based on these theories, it can be argued that imitating the natural language acquisition progress (i.e., the acquisition of verbal language prior to written language) may be helpful when teaching adults to learn a foreign language.

Cook (2001) proposed that audiolingualism consists of four language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) used across receptive (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing). Cook also claimed that receptive skills should come before productive skills. These four skills are the key to second language learning, with researchers subsequently exploring the importance of the order of learning these skills (Cook, 2001). Krashen (1982) asserted that people acquire language through
communication input by comprehending messages they hear. Accordingly, he suggested that second language learning should begin by listening rather than speaking. He observed that in many classes students are encouraged to speak from the beginning, and suggested that this was not a good teaching practice. Postovsky (1974) also found that students learned Russian better through listening approaches than those who learned in a conventional way that focused on learning grammar rules. Additionally, audiolingualists believe that spoken skills should be learned before written skills (Cook, 2001). Therefore, the acquisition of a second language may be more effective if learners start by listening rather than speaking.

Researchers also have found that the frequency of language use has an impact on the effectiveness of second language learning (Arnon & Snider, 2010; Diependaele, Lemhöfer, & Brysbaert, 2013; Kartal & Sarigul, 2017; Rott, 1991). For instance, Diependaele et al., (2013) found that the L2 learners who have lower language proficiency are affected more significantly by the frequency of words used. Rott (1991) stated that students’ acquisition of lexical mechanics is improved to the extent that they are exposed to vocabulary (six times or more). Arnon and Snider (2010) demonstrated that adult learners’ response to high frequency phrases is faster than low frequency phrases. Thus, Kartal and Sarigul (2017) suggested that language teachers include instruction in the use of high frequency phrases.

Determining how to learn second language has also been a controversial topic in the history of second language learning and teaching. Cook (2001) explains that there are six common assumptions stemming from the last quarter of the 19th century with respect to teaching second languages:
• Spoken language is a better way than written language for students to learn a second language.
• Language teachers and students should use the second language in the classroom instead of the first language.
• Teachers should instruct students to practice grammar through conversation exercises rather than by explaining it explicitly.
• Teachers should teach language in whole sentences or utterances rather than splitting language into fragments.
• Students should study target language through dialogues and texts and use language in context.
• Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are basic language learning skills.

These assumptions indicate different language teaching strategies. The following section discusses the specific second/foreign language teaching approaches that have been developed over the last century.

Second/Foreign Language Teaching Approaches

The changes in language teaching approaches reflect the diversity of language learning goals and theories (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Since the 19th century, there have been four classic foreign language teaching approaches: grammar translation, audio-lingual, communicative, and direct (Tan, 2016). With the development of technology and society, many innovative methods have been developed. The next section of the literature review provides an overview of the different instructional approaches in the history of second language learning.

The grammar translation method (GTM). The GTM, also known as the
academic style, is based on the assumption that learners’ conscious understanding of grammar and their awareness of links between L1 and L2 are crucial and acquired through traditional grammar and translation. This approach does not teach learners to use language directly but rather to create linguistic competence (Cook, 2001). This method proposed that utilizing sample sentences rather than text simplifies language learning. However, GTM developed into a pedantic system as it emphasized grammar rule accuracy and lacked practical use of target language in real situations (Tan, 2016).

**The audio-lingual approach (ALA).** The ALA emphasized teaching the spoken language through dialogues and drills. According to ALA, second language learning is most effective when it occurs through spoken language rather than written language because students learn better by hearing than seeing. According to this mode, students should spend a few weeks or a year on spoken language training before starting learning writing skills (Cook, 2001). Tan (2016) outlines several principles and practices associated with the ALA approach:

- Comparison of varying structural systems provide instructional focus.
- Learning language can be regarded as a process of habit development.
- Pronunciation and intensive oral repetition of basic sentence patterns is important.
- Grammar rules should be taught through examples and drills rather than through rote memorization.
- New vocabulary should be introduced only when there is a requirement for practical use.
- Lexical items should be selected depending on simplicity and familiarity.

**The communicative approach (CA).** The CA aims at having students interact
with other individuals who use the second language within and outside the classroom. CA stresses developing communicative competence rather than linguistic competence and the use of language rather than grammatical knowledge (Cook, 2001). This approach assumes that meaningful communication is a good way for students to learn language (Richards, 2006). The principles of communicative language teaching method are as follows (Brown, 2001):

- The aim of language teaching is to develop communicative competence.
- Fluency is considered more important than accuracy when using language.
- Drills and class activities should focus on utilizing the language in real communications.
- Students should be provided with autonomy to learn in their own way.
- Teachers should assume the role of facilitators rather than authorities of knowledge.

While CA aims at having students learn to communicate fluently, teachers’ training, assessment, and grammar are still concerns existing in this approach (Richards & Rogers, 2001).

**The direct method.** The direct method was developed by Sauveur in America and made popular by Berlitz (Zimmerman, 1997, as cited by Tan, 2016, p. 85). The direct method focuses on the use of interactions to acquire natural language skills without having to translate the word directly. Translation is not considered an approach for learning language. Cook (2001) stated that acquiring a word is more than linking a form with a translated meaning of the word in the first language. Rather, language learning is related to spoken and written forms and the way words are used in grammatical structures and combinations. However, Richards and Rodgers (1986) argued that comprehension is
not enough in the direct method. Brown (1973) also had the same argument and found that providing learners with a brief translation could help them comprehend the meaning of certain words in real situations.

The direct method relies on the use of visual aids to help L2 learners to learn vocabulary through concrete objects first, and then abstract words related to the picture (Gurunathan & Geethanjali, 2016). Ponniah (2010) asserted that this method requires error correction to address incorrect grammar usage at the early stages of learning a foreign language but such corrections can result in learners’ experiencing anxiety. Gurunathan and Geethanjali (2016) believed that good second language teachers should serve as motivators and facilitators rather than as fault finders. Good students, in turn, are receptive and interactive, as well as enthusiastic, about using different learning resources. Unlike the classic second language teaching methods reviewed above, the innovative second language teaching methods developed in more recent decades tend to teach additional language as a whole and utilize technologies as part of instruction. A brief review of innovative methods suggested by researchers is provided next.

**Background knowledge activation method.** Zashchitina and Moysyak (2017) stated that the background knowledge activation method advocates that second language learners connect new information about a target language to knowledge that they process by activating background knowledge. Activities that engage learners’ background information include discussing stories, providing background knowledge, and explaining lexical items. Zashchitina and Moysyak also mention that second language learners who lack background knowledge may find it difficult to understand a culturally spoken and written text because they may fail to comprehend the key concepts embedding in
background knowledge. Ausubel (1968) claimed that learning needs to be based on the learners’ existing knowledge. Thus, Zashchitina and Moysyak (2017) suggested second language learners can remember new information easier if teachers build up students’ background knowledge and different cultural schemes.

**Multimedia method.** Teachers can use multimedia to help learners learn. Multimedia aids can be visual or auditory (Geethanjali, Vembu, & Raguraman, 2016). Halwani (2017) found that the use of visual aids and multimedia helped students to engage and interact in the classroom, which had positive impact on the second language acquisition. Khan (2015) claimed that movies can be good teaching tools, as they provide visual contexts that can assist students to understand the language. Kabooha (2016) conducted research about using movies in an ESL classroom. The results showed that using movies helped students actively engage in lessons and improved their vocabulary usage in communications. Additionally, Hsiao, Lan, Kao, and Li’s (2017) study of how Chinese learners learn vocabulary in a virtual world suggested that using language in the virtual world helped students to acquire vocabulary more efficiently.

**Other innovative methods.** Geethanjali et al. (2016) suggested that foreign language teaching should include the use of games and humour. The use of e-games involves the use of communication technologies to access remote teaching via the Internet and developing e-learning and computer-assisted instruction. Technology and the Internet have facilitated the development of massive open online learning programs that increase second language learning opportunities and reduce access barriers worldwide (Colas, Sloep, & Garreta-Domingo, 2016). Perifanou (2016) found that the number of massive open online language courses have increased since 2014; 29 of 67 massive open online courses offered online language courses during 2015 and most of them provide
courses in languages other than English, such as Spanish and Chinese.

Modern technologies have enhanced the quality and variety of second language teaching methods (Geethanjali et al., 2016). However, learners’ motivation also influences the efficacy of second language learning. Thus, language learning motivation is an important topic in the field of linguistic research.

**Motivation of Second Language Learning**

Generally, motivation is divided into *integrative motivation* and *interaction motivation*. Integrative motivation occurs in language learning when learners have a desire to become part of the native speakers’ culture and language knowledge base (Engin, 2009). Cook (2001) provided the following statement as a description of integrative motivation: “I would like to live in the country where the target language is spoken” (p. 116). Instrumental motivation includes pragmatic goals, such as obtaining high scores and finding employment. Cook (2001) provided the following statement as an example of instrumental motivation: “for my future career” (p. 116). Many researchers found that people tend to learn languages better when they demonstrate integrative motivation than instrumental motivation. In his research with 44 students in two English preparatory classes, Engin (2009) confirmed integrative motivation is more effective than instrumental motivation for second language learners. Engin suggested that teachers should be aware of the importance of these two motivational orientations so that they can help learners with language learning achievement. Based on this knowledge, it is important for teachers to create a learning environment that provides students with the opportunity to interact with the language culture. For example, the teacher might invite Chinese native speakers into the classroom to encourage students to engage in Chinese cultural activities (e.g., cooking, dancing, and celebrating festivals).
Several other factors impact motivation and eventually affect second language learning. First, socio-economic status influences the motivation. Khansir, Jafarizadegan, and Karampoor’s (2016) found that socio-economic status has a positive relation with motivation in English as a second language classes, because learners from higher socio-economic classes can access more supports and resources and have more ambitious goals than learners from lower socio-economic classes. They also mentioned that learners’ educational purposes and the desire of communicating with foreign people motivates second language learners. Moreover, Krashen (1982) also asserted that affective factors such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety influence second language acquisition. Zhao (2015) also found students’ affect impacted on their second language learning ability, motivation, and attitude. Zhao provided three suggestions for second language teachers, including: taking humanistic measures to create positive learning experiences for students so that they can be stimulated emotionally; building learner-centered classes in order to balance the relationship between teachers and learners; and using encouragement to motivate students. Global competence is another factor that influences foreign language learners’ motivation. Semaan and Yamazaki (2015) found that university students believe that global competence and second language motivation are positively related. Overall, students’ motivation of learning second language is affected by both social and economic factors.

**Chinese Second Language Learners**

China is the oldest living country with a profound culture; however, the difficulty of Chinese language and cultural differences sometimes cause barriers to intercultural understanding (Poupard, 2012). Fortunately, the world has started to understand Chinese culture by learning the Chinese language. Due to China’s increasing global economic
presence, many people have engaged in learning Chinese (Duff et al., 2013). Some countries, such as the U.K. and the U.S., consider China as an important economical market, creating global interest in Chinese as a foreign language learning (Kassteen, 2014; Tinsley & Board, 2014). For example, Chinese language programs in Australia request students to learn several hundred characters by the end of high school (Liu & Bianco, 2007). Additionally, the number of Chinese who work and study abroad has also increased in recent years. Accordingly, Liu and Bianco (2007) categorized Chinese learners into three groups:

- Second language learners: students who study Chinese without any relevant Chinese knowledge.
- Background speakers: students who speak a dialect of Chinese, such as Cantonese and Shanghaiese, who are living abroad.
- International students: students who speak modern standard Chinese fluently and are native speakers.

According to Sun (2011), background speakers and international students may motivate second language learners as friendships with Chinese native speakers may motivate Chinese learners to study Chinese language. There are also several other factors that can influence learners’ motivation to acquire the Chinese language.

**Motivation of Chinese Learners**

Kubler (2018) stated that Chinese learners are diverse with respect to their motivation, age, ethnicity and prior Chinese language knowledge. Many researchers are especially interested in studying the motivation of second language learners. Richards (2017) found that students’ backgrounds influenced their attitudes and motivation of learning Chinese. He suggested that Chinese language teachers should be aware of
students’ cultural characteristics in order to improve their language competence. Dörnyei (2009) identified three key elements that create the second language motivational self-system:

- **Internal desire**: the ideal L2-self is the L2 user’s self-image for the future and can motivate him to learn internally.
- **Social pressure**: the ought-to L2-self is the standard that learners believe they ought to meet based on the expectations of others. The ought-to L2-self motivates learners externally.
- **Actual experience**: L2 learners’ learning experience are related to their learning environment including teachers, friends, and the curriculum, and influences their learning success.

The internal desire motivates learners to learn foreign language for personal purposes and interests (e.g., communicating with others, understanding foreign culture). Social experiences also push learners to learn foreign language, such as when they need to find employment and pass language exams. Additionally, learners may be motivated to learn a foreign language in order to develop and maintain friendships.

The three motivational self-systems described by Dörnyei (2009) can be used to explain the result Sun (2011) found when researching the motivations of Chinese second learners in Canada. Sun found that there are six motivations for Chinese learners in Canada, including: cultural interest, communication, friendship, travel, job opportunities, and heritage language advantages. He argued that motivational reasons possessed by these Chinese learners in Canada were more than integrative motivation, which is associated with the ideal L2-self, and instructional motivation, which can be explained by
the ought-to L2 self. Specifically, Sun (2011) emphasized that L2 learning motivation comes from learners’ actual experiences. For example, learners’ Chinese friends stimulated their interest in learning Chinese, as mentioned by Dörnyei (2009) in the third element of the motivational self-system. In addition, Wen (1997) indicated that an interest in understanding Chinese cultural heritage can initially motivate Asian and Asian-American learners to learn the Chinese language. Furthermore, Chinese learning motivations can change from the integrative to instrumental motivation, depending on the different needs of postgraduate students in different years (Sun, 2011). For example, while first-year students may experience integrative motivation for learning Chinese, they may be differently motivated by their friendship with Chinese native speakers and the desire of travel in Chinese-speaking countries in their subsequent years of study. Students’ motivation may further change into instrumental motivation when seeking employment post graduation.

Generally, Chinese learners are all motivated by a combination of internal (desire and interesting of knowing Chinese etc.) and external (job opportunities, relationships etc.) factors. Furthermore, motivation can change with learners’ needs. Aside from considering issues relating to students’ motivation, challenges in learning and teaching Chinese are also worthwhile of discussion.

**Challenges of Chinese Learning and Teaching**

Chinese is extremely difficult for European language speakers because of the reliance on tones and its orthographic system of characters (Liu & Bianco, 2007). In Chinese, the written language is hard to acquire without years of practice, and the spoken language consists of a diversity of dialects (Poupard, 2012). In addition, Chinese spoken
and written styles have greater differences in word utilization and grammar rules than do most other languages (Kubler, 2018). In English, learners who acquire 26 letters can construct a large number of words, while in Chinese, mastering words requires thousands of characters (Liu & Bianco, 2007). Therefore, the main challenges for learners relate to the phonological and orthographical properties of the language. How to balance the teaching of oral and written Chinese is a topic discussed by many scholars (Kubler, 2018; Zhang, 2014).

**Tones and Pronunciation**

Many researchers showed that tone is a substantial challenge for Chinese language learners whose native language is not tone-based. There are four tones in Chinese language.

Ladd (1996) explained that non-tone language learners make reference to prosodic system of their native language to grasp foreign tones, while tone language learners make reference to the tone system of their first language. Chen (2013) mentioned that a learner’s non-tone mother tongue has a negative filtering effect on the intake and assimilation of tones. Chen (2013) proposed an innovative teaching method as part of her research with 40 learners of Chinese as a second language from 12 countries using gestures as tone markers. This teaching method was designed to help learners effectively learn tone with the help of kinesthetic memory. However, she found that learning tone by gestures is only useful for monosyllabic and disyllabic words and is insufficient to learn long phrases and fast speech.

Chinese learners learn tones by comparing to the intonation or tones of native languages. Researchers have also made comparisons between Mandarin and languages
that have similarities to Chinese. For instance, Cai and Lee (2015) compared the differences between consonants and vowels in Mandarin and Thai by using contrastive analysis. Cai and Lee (2015) found that the difference in diphthongs between Mandarin and Thai is more obvious than monophthongs, such as [iA], [uA], [ie], [uo], and [iou]. In addition, while not all differences between Mandarin and Thai influence learning, Thai pronunciation has a negative influence on learning Mandarin (Cai & Lee, 2015). Poupard (2012) compared vowels and consonants between English and Chinese language and found that English and Chinese have many similarities in the pronunciation. However, learners cannot learn authentic pronunciation by comparing tones across languages (Cai & Lee, 2015). Thus, the Chinese tone can be a challenge for learners who speak either a tone language or a non-tone language.

**Spoken and Written Chinese Language**

Pronunciation and tones, as a part of spoken Chinese, is considered relatively easier to learn than written Chinese. Thus, Chinese learners sometimes think that speaking and listening are more important than reading and writing (Sun, 2011). Characters are even a major challenge for those who are background speakers with exposure to a Chinese dialect or learn Chinese as a second language (Liu & Bianco, 2007). Due to the difficulty associated with learning characters, there is great debate among curriculum designers. Some experts believe that the curriculum should focus on training speaking skills as acquisition of spoken Chinese language is a challenge for many learners. However, others argued that written Chinese should not be ignored when learning spoken Chinese.

Some Mandarin researchers insist on treating spoken Chinese and written Chinese
as a whole. Sun (2011) disagreed, indicating that many Chinese teachers focus on Chinese characters in the introductory class because they believe that this instruction should occur before instruction in spoken skills. Sun suggested that written language and spoken language should not be ignored in Chinese teaching, and that instruction should begin with oral skills followed by writing skills. Written Chinese language is closely associated with the Chinese pronunciation system and grammar rules, as well as culture background knowledge, so it is impossible to study the written series in isolation from spoken competence (Kubler, 2018).

In a critique of current Chinese language learning teaching pedagogy, Chen (2013) argued that a Chinese second language classroom should be textbook-oriented. This is problematic as textbooks lack pronunciation exercises that include vocabulary understanding, and therefore do not assist speakers realize the importance of tones. Thus, Chen (2013) suggested that cooperative learning can be used to promote tone learning. Orton (2013) also argued that new Chinese pedagogy begin with listening as listening may benefit learners’ spoken language by providing them with familiarity with the Chinese sound system. Kubler (2018) indicated that most Chinese second language textbooks include oral and written drills within the same materials. Theoretically, learners can learn relevant grammar rules and literacy skills by engaging in dialogues and practicing oral skills at the same time. However, native English speakers find it easier and faster to learn spoken Chinese words than written ones. Additionally, technological programs like Pinyin, a system of Romanized spelling, can help beginners learn Chinese pronunciation (Poupard, 2012). However, Pinyin cannot take the place of characters. For example, the Chinese words “报道” (report) and “报到” (register) have the same Pinyin
It is difficult to distinguish Chinese words with the same pronunciation through *Pinyin* due to the limited sounds in Chinese (Poupard, 2012). Therefore, learners have to learn characters and written Chinese for the purpose of comprehending the differences among words. The higher level of Chinese learning, the more difficult the written language (Sun, 2011). Sun (2011) found a positive correlation between the difficulty of learning Chinese as a second language and the learners’ level of proficiency of written Chinese language. For these reasons, some researchers believe that spoken Chinese and written Chinese should not be learned separately.

Based on foreign language teaching approaches, and the challenges in teaching Chinese, I believe that the most efficient way of teaching adult beginners Chinese as a foreign language is by starting with speaking and listening training, rather than writing and reading skill development. Consistent with audio-lingualism (Cook, 2001), learning to speak a foreign language a year earlier than learning written language will improve the efficiency of language learning, which is regarded as a habit-developing process (Tan, 2016). In addition, due to the characteristic of Chinese language, many English learners consider writing Chinese more difficult to learn than spoken Mandarin (Kubler, 2018).

I also propose that during the spoken language training, learning grammatical rules should be avoided and this proposition by the communicative approach. Foreign language learning is aimed at developing communicative competency, rather than linguistic proficiency (Brown, 2001; Cook, 2001). Many countries, such as the U.S. and U.K., have increasingly encouraged people to learn Chinese in order to strengthen economic cooperation with China, which is regarded as a promising market in the future (Kassteen, 2014; Tinsley & Board, 2014). This phenomenon requires teaching Chinese
with communicative purpose. Moreover, as Sun (2011) found in her research, many Chinese learners in Canada were learning Chinese for communicative purposes such as building relationships, finding jobs, and integrating into Chinese communities. Thus, in order to help students use Chinese in real communication, the content of lecture designs should focus on commonly used words and phrases related to the topics that learners will use in practice (Brown, 2001).

Therefore, I believe that combining the audio-lingual and communicative approaches can be the most effective way to teach Chinese as a second language. In this way, learners can develop spoken skills that can allow them to achieve communication goals in the short term. Additionally, this strategy can provide learners with a good beginning, which help them prepare for learning written skills in the long term.

**Chapter Summary**

In this literature review, I provided an overview of second language learning theories and trends associated with foreign language teaching and learning due to globalization. I also explored research related to effective Chinese foreign language teaching. Between 2005-2015, many researchers explored different techniques for designing curriculum and materials. However, a large number of Chinese journals lacked empirical research (Ma, Gon, Gao & Xiang, 2017). Thus, the handbook of Chinese second language teaching presented in chapter 5 will provide pragmatically and empirical supported language instruction approaches for Chinese language teachers based on the theories and research findings reviewed in this chapter.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this project was to create a handbook that provides an innovative approach to teach the Chinese language developed through an autoethnographic lens. The handbook provides specific and systematized instruction in the teaching of common Chinese language forms including speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The handbook is intended for use by Chinese foreign language teachers. In this chapter, I will introduce the theoretical methodologies behind the conception of the handbook and the research used in its development. The data collection and analysis used in developing the handbook will follow, along with ethical considerations. The final part of this chapter concludes with limitations of the methodology and handbook.

Theoretical Framework and Research Lens

A constructivist worldview was utilized as a way to examine the knowledge gathered to complete this handbook.

Constructivism as a paradigm or worldview posits that learning is an active, constructive process. The learner is an information constructor. People actively construct or create their subjective representations of objective reality. New information is linked to prior knowledge; thus mental representations are subjective. (Learning Theories, 2017, para. 1)

The purpose of an interpretive approach is not to seek an objective truth but rather to interpret a subjective understanding (Andrews, 2012; Kroeze, 2011; Roth & Mehta, 2002). In the constructionist view, there are numerous truths (Braun & Clarke, 2013, as cited in Egeli, 2017, p. 6). As these theories relate to this research topic, there is no absolute right or wrong way in which foreign language learning takes place. Thus, I
employed a qualitative research method to gather the research that forms the basis of this handbook, specifically using autoethnography.

**Methodology**

Qualitative research collects personal narratives, experiences, and opinions as data to interpret phenomena (Méndez, 2013). A narrative research design, such as a qualitative procedure, focuses on telling stories, writing experience narratives, and discussing the meaning of the experience for the individual (Clark & Creswell, 2015). According to Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2011), “Personal narratives considered as one of the forms of approaches to autoethnography are stories about authors who view themselves as the phenomenon and write evocative narratives specifically focused on their academic, research and personal lives” (para. 24). The purpose of personal narratives is to provide individuals with a sense of self in a cultural context, allowing them to reflect meaningfully on their experience (Ellis et al., 2011).

Autoethnography is an intriguing and promising qualitative method that allows researchers to describe and systematically analyze their personal experience to understand social and cultural phenomenon (Ellis et al., 2011; Méndez, 2013; Wall, 2008). According to Ellis et al. (2011), autoethnography is comprised of characteristics of both autobiography and ethnography. In writing an autobiography, the author illustrates “epiphanies,” or self-claimed phenomena through experience. Ethnographers often observe common beliefs and shared experience in a cultural context by investigating people. The word “autoethnography” is thus formed by combining *auto* (the self) with *ethno* (the sociocultural connection; Reed-Danahay, 1997). Ellis et al. (2011) asserted that “when researchers do autoethnography, they retrospectively and selectively write
about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity” (para. 8). Autoethnography focuses on the “inside emotional experience” that builds affective bonds between researchers and readers (Ellis & Bochner, 2003, p. 230). Ellis and Bochner (1996) clarified the role researchers play in the bonds: “On the whole, autoethnographers do not want you to sit back as spectators; they want readers to feel and care and desire” (p. 24).

Autoethnographers must not only use their methodological tools and research literature to analyze experience, but they also must consider that others may experience similar epiphanies. As a result, they must use personal experience to illustrate facets of cultural experience, and, in so doing, make characteristics of a culture familiar for insiders and outsiders. (Ellis et al., 2011, para. 9)

Méndez (2013) believes that autoethnography helps individuals reflect on their experience through a generation of evocative narratives. As part of the development of the handbook presented here, I included nine personal narratives that reflect my foreign language learning and teaching experiences to share my insights and inspirations with readers similarly interested in the processes of foreign language learning and teaching.

Data Collection

Ellis et al. (2011) suggested that storytelling can be a way to collect data through autoethnography research. For some, telling stories in the third person can cause a sense of distance between readers and the events shared by autoethnographers (Méndez, 2013). To decrease this distance and provide readers with a chance to feel the writer’s experience, writers may tell a story in the first person. As Ellis et al. (2011) explained:

Most often through the use of conversation, showing allows writers to make
events engaging and emotionally rich. “Telling” is a writing strategy that works with “showing in that it provides readers some distance from the events described so that they might think about the events in a more abstract way. Adding some “telling” to a story that “shows” is an efficient way to convey information needed to appreciate what is going and a way to communicate information that does not necessitate the immediacy of dialogue and sensuous engagement. (para. 11)

Thus, autoethnographers create an opportunity to build a bond between writers and readers through storytelling. However, stories do not always readily resonate with readers (Berry & Patti, 2015). Thus, autoethnographic stories should be selected based on other criteria as well, such as critical reflexivity and social meaning (Berry & Patti, 2015; Cooper, Grenier, & Macaulay, 2017).

These criteria were considered in the selection process of stories used in the development of this handbook. As Hokkanen (2017, p. 26) stated, reflexivity, or the process of thinking through the implications of the researcher’s person, is crucial in qualitative research designs. This handbook is based on retrospective reflection of my personal experiences over the past 10 years. Specifically, the handbook is based on my memorable experiences with respect to language learning and teaching. Some of these recollections have positively influenced my language learning and teaching, others have been less positive but equally as insightful. These recollections have helped form my perspective about effective ways of learning and teaching foreign languages. Therefore, I have chosen typical stories as illustrations of personal experiences which have formed my teaching and learning perspective. Additionally, the stories selected have social meaning, which can inspire readers to recall their own experiences and encourage reflection among those who are struggling with similar challenges (Berry & Patti, 2015).
As a student, I learned the English and Russian languages by beginning with grammar rules. However, learning grammar rules accurately and developing written skills at this stage hindered my ability to engage in authentic conversations in a foreign language. Fortunately, my English and Russian improved after I began to focus on oral language practice. In high school, I began to learn English by imitating dialogue in movies. When I studied Russian as an undergraduate, I had many opportunities to practice with native speakers through my travels. Learning foreign languages by emphasizing oral speaking has helped me succeed in advancing my competency in foreign language communications. Based on this success, I choose to utilize stories from these foreign language experiences, which have inspired me and improved my language skills.

Moreover, the handbook represents my reflections of my Chinese teaching experience in Russian, especially with respect to the teaching methods that were used during the class. For example, I found that the learning process was easier for beginning learners when spoken Chinese was taught first. I also related cultural knowledge in my teaching practice, and this also appeared to help students. Equally importantly, students gave positive feedback on these specific instructional methods. As a result, these stories are critical in providing qualitative data that can inform successful teaching approaches. Subsequently, readers can connect these successes with their own practice.

According to Wall (2008), many autoethnographers following the ethnographical traditions prefer to depend on “hard” evidence as data, such as records, diaries, emails, and memos about themselves rather than on their memories. Ducan (2004) and Muncey (2005) suggested it is important to use multiple sources as “hard” evidence (e.g.,
photographs, archival documents, etc.) for the purpose of supporting “soft” impressions—that is, personal opinion (as cited in Wall, 2008, p. 45). Thus, in order to make the data more convincing or valid, I added pictures and photos I took in my Chinese class as a part of the data to support the stories I shared.

**Data Analysis**

My personal stories and associated artifacts were gathered as data. I used a reciprocating process to analyze the stories (Cooper et al., 2017). That is, the data were analyzed based on my reflections and sentiments about the experiences (Holt, 2003). To verify stories, autoethnographers can apply theories related to the social contexts (Cooper et al., 2017). Thus, I connected insights with theories related to adult foreign language teaching. By using related theories and rationales as analytic tools, I created and derived meaning from my experiences that were directly applied to the teaching approaches included in this handbook (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). As such, the handbook presented here represents the sharing of my experiences with Chinese learners and educators.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations in autoethnography research are easily ignored as this methodology is beyond the traditional research ethics approval processes in most academic settings (Wall, 2008). However, Ellis et al. (2011) proposed that “relational concerns” should be considered throughout the autoethnographic research and writing processes. This is because autoethnographers cannot be isolated from others in their research. As Wall (2008) explains,

there is a need to be concerned about the ethics of representing those who are unable to represent themselves in writing or who are unable to provide consent as
to how they are represented by others, including researchers who engage in autoethnography. (p. 49)

Thus, I wrote stories from my perspective and expressed my own feelings and reflections about foreign language learning and teaching so that I could avoid the risk of miswriting others’ experiences and opinions.

Since autoethnography is highly personal, the reliability in autoethnography results from readers’ assessment of the researcher as a primary and reliable source who demonstrates continuity and factual experiences (Cooper et al., 2017, p. 46). Ellis et al. (2011) and Méndez (2013) suggested that autoethnographers need to be honest and ethical about events and the individuals involved in their stories. Thus, I wrote actual stories and related to individuals honestly. At the same time, in order to balance the feelings, safety, and privacy of those involved in my stories, I used written pseudonyms and avoided personalized details.

**Limitations**

Consistent with autoethnography methodology on the self, I have written my own stories emotionally and therapeutically. The autoethnographic research approach, which is a personal experience, has been critiqued as insufficient with scholarly analysis and theorization (Ellis et al., 2011). Although I used “hard” evidence by adding pictures and photos to support the stories, trustworthiness is not easy to apply to autoethnography (Holt, 2003).

Another limitation is that the meaning of my narratives could be limited by self-knowledge (Wilson & Dunn, 2004). The handbook was developed based on my analysis of my personal narratives. Thus, it is possible that some readers will have different
opinions about the significance of these stories or may be unable to connect emotionally to them. The instructional guidelines provided in the handbook, which are extracted from my own language teaching and learning experiences, may not inspire every reader who is a Chinese as a foreign language teacher. Therefore, the handbook can only be used to address limited problems in this field of instruction. For these reasons, the handbook provided here is best considered as one of many possible resources for Chinese foreign language educators.

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I introduced the research methodology and explained the reasons for and feasibility of using autoethnography as the basis for the development of a handbook. The research data was collected from my personal learning and teaching experiences, which are presented in chapter 4. The relationship between data analysis and the development of the handbook has been articulated. In addition, I have discussed ethical considerations and limitations of the research approach of the handbook. The following chapter contains my personal narratives as well as a critical analysis of these experiences. This analysis, in addition to a critical review of the literature, has been used to provide a framework for the handbook as presented in chapter 5.
CHAPTER FOUR: NARRATIVE STORIES AND THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE STORIES AND THE HANDBOOK

“You live a new life for every language you speak. If you know only one language, you live only once.” – Czech proverb.

In this chapter, I share nine stories that occurred in my journey of learning foreign languages and teaching the Chinese language to foreign language learners. The first series of stories are about my foreign language learning experiences, which include my English and Russian learning experiences. In the second series of stories, I share some of the important narratives related to my Chinese language teaching experiences.

I have learned several languages over the course of my studies. Each of these languages changed me on the inside and offered me a new view of the world. Here, I will share my personal experiences about learning English and Russian in order to bring insights into the development of the foreign language teaching manual included here.

My English Learning Journey

I have been learning English for more than 10 years. During this period, my English teachers in primary school and English movies influenced my learning style a lot.

Story 1: The Start of my English Learning Journey

Like many other Chinese students, I have been learning English as my first foreign language for a long time. I started learning English earlier than most of my peers, who usually began to learn English as a mandatory subject in middle school. My mother believed it would be helpful to develop my sense of language, so she sent me to a bilingual kindergarten so that I could learn Chinese and English at the same time.

Regardless of starting to learn English in my early childhood, I could barely remember
what and how I learned English until I went to a bilingual class in primary school. The different instructions provided to me by my two English teachers left me with deep impressions. One of them taught us in a traditional way by explaining grammar rules, while the other used some very creative methods to teach us English.

Miss X was a young teacher who had just graduated from university, and she taught with a strong passion for theoretical language knowledge. In every lesson, she wrote grammar rules all over the blackboard in order to help us understand nouns, verbs, and grammar rules in the sentences. I clearly remember that I found these grammar lessons to be very boring and I had no interest in learning English. All the grammar rules written in various colours on the blackboard meant nothing to me. They just made me feel lost and dizzy. At an age when I was still learning my mother tongue, I simply could not understand abstract English grammar.

Fortunately, Miss X left after teaching us for a few years and a new teacher, Miss Y, replaced her. She was a very open-minded and creative teacher. She never emphasized the grammar we needed to use when we spoke English. Instead she designed many interesting activities, such as performing plays in English and singing English songs, in order to encourage us to learn English. Learning through playing games and activities was a more attractive way for me to learn a language than completing grammar lessons based on rote memorization. When I did not know how to express a word or a sentence in English, I asked her. This style of teaching was so effective that I had a strong memory for what I learned about the English language. Even now I can still remember that the first word she taught us when we prepared for our plays was the word “international.”
and not in the script. When this happened, I had to make up words spontaneously. She never interrupted to tell me that I had made a mistake. This helped me to speak English bravely, unlike some of my Chinese friends who were good at writing and reading but could not speak English confidently.

**Story 2: Leaning English by Watching Movies**

Almost everyone has a book or a movie that has changed their lives. A movie that meant a lot to me was *Twilight*. While many people have suggested that the movie was ridiculous, I cannot deny that it is my favourite movie. I have probably watched it more than 50 times. I can clearly remember every scene and every word. From my point of view, the movie is much more than just a love story between humans, vampires, and werewolves. This was the key that opened the door to the English-speaking world for me. I cannot imagine what my language learning journey would have been like if I had not been inspired by this movie. When I watched the movie, I unconsciously repeated every sentence the actors spoke, imitating their intonation, and sometimes even the expressions on their faces. Moreover, I was so addicted to this movie that I even transcribed the script in a notebook so that I could keep reading the lines while I was on the bus. At that time, I did not know that all of these efforts were improving my English. I just wanted to recall the romantic scenes and admired the author’s imagination about the supernatural. Surprisingly, it turned out that I was improving my English listening and speaking skills, and starting to unconsciously learn grammar rules.

After watching this movie, the desire to learn English and find out more about Western culture increased substantially. Drawing on my interest in *Twilight*, I was able to find other vampire-themed dramas, such as *The Vampire Diaries* and *Interview with the
Vampire. I watched them and reviewed the dialogue using the same method. Gradually, my interest in vampire-themed movies widened to include all kinds of Hollywood movies and dramas. The characters in the movies and the compelling plots in the dramas made me laugh and moved me to tears. I was so familiar with these movies that when I used a word, I always recalled the corresponding scene in the movie—I could almost hear the speakers’ voices and even see their expressions. These practices helped me speak English more naturally and also gave me more confidence when communicating in English with others.

The vampire theme opened the door to the English-speaking world for me. The English language then served as a gate to the wide world of international languages. After watching English movies, I had access to knowing western culture and become interested in other languages in the western world. I started watching movies in other European languages, I found the Russian sounds very beautiful. Since I had been learning English for 10 years and I desired to learn a new language that people rarely speak in China, I decided to choose Russian as my major in my undergraduate university.

**My Russian Learning Experience**

I have learned Russian as my second foreign language for 5 years. I not only figured out my own way to overcome difficulties at the beginning of learning but also, I improved my oral language and deepened the understanding of cultural concepts by communicating with native speakers, as I studied in Russia.

**Story 3: Overcoming Difficulties in Learning Russian**

Before I went to the university, I heard that the Russian language has extremely difficult and strict grammar rules. For example, in Russian there are six declensions and
six conjugations. The declension means that as the case, number, and gender, the nouns, pronouns, or adjectives should inflect into corresponding forms ("Declension," 2018). The conjugations are the inflection of verbs and represent changing of person, number, and tense ("Conjugation," 2018). As a fresh English-language learner high school graduate, I did not understand the different declensions and conjugations as they do not exist in either English or Chinese. At that time, I believed that I was capable of learning how to speak Russian. Thus, I stepped into the university classroom with full confidence. However, after the first term of studies, I was quite skeptical about the decision I had made.

I did not know which of my previous languages I could compare to learning Russian, since this new language system was so different from both Chinese and English. I used to learn English by comparing English to my native language. Even if Chinese and English are from different language families, there are still many similarities between them. In Russian however, even a very simple sentence is expressed in ways that are quite different from both Chinese and English languages. For example, in Chinese “I have an apple” is “我有一个苹果.” The character 有 can be directly translated as “have,” to express that someone possesses something. The same sentence in Russian is “У меня одно яблоко.” The meaning of the word “have” corresponds to “у меня,” which directly translates to “in my place.” In this example, I found that Chinese and English tend to stress the possession of items by using the verb “have,” while in Russian the sentence “I have something” is expressed as “something is here in my place.” That is, the Russian language uses “here in my place” instead of “I have” to stress the existence of items.

To avoid making mistakes in unavoidable sentences, as the example shown above, I simply rote-memorized some basic sentences that I often needed to use including
explaining who I was, where I came from, what I liked and disliked about fruits, colours, and animals, et cetera. I then translated and memorized common sentences about related topics. Indeed, this process did not require me to spend time thinking about grammar rules while speaking and assisted me to communicate with others more fluently. Instead of focusing on organizing sentences based on grammar rules, I was able to pay closer attention to the thoughts I wanted to share with others. In this way, the experience of learning the Russian language completely changed how I learned a foreign language.

**Story 4: Different Language Environments in Saratov and St. Catharines**

My successful achievement in learning the Russian language can be attributed to the way I learned Russian. At the end of my second year of undergraduate studies, I received a state-funded scholarship to study in Russia as an exchange student. I was required to fill out applications for six different universities. The state would later decide which Russian university I would attend. At that time, all my impressions about Russia were based on comments from others. Influenced by all the positive comments about Moscow and Saint Petersburg, I decided that I wanted to study there and I completed five applications for schools in these two famous cities. However, I did not know where to apply for my sixth choice. I believed that one of the first five universities would accept me. So, I chose the last university randomly. I browsed the Internet and found a school called Saratov State University. Then I simply used this university for my sixth application form, without doing any research about the school. I did not even know where it was located. Ironically, I was only accepted at Saratov State University. Unexpectedly, my casual choice for the last university changed my life, opening a door to a colourful language world.
Saratov is in Southern Russia. It is a conservative city which only recently has been open to foreigners. There were barely any Chinese tourists in Saratov, and very little information about this city was available on Chinese websites. I had asked all of the teachers I knew who had been to Russia about the information about this city and the university. Unfortunately, only one person knew about this city and told me that Saratov was a nice city and the university was in the centre of the city. This single positive comment gave me the strength to travel to Russia. To get to my destination, I had two flight connections in St. Petersburg and Volgograd and transferred by train from Volgograd to Saratov. The travel was extremely difficult for me because I spoke very poor Russian. I even had trouble buying a train ticket to Saratov after I arrived in Volgograd. This was a frustrating, because I believed that I should have been able to communicate fluently in Russian. After all, I had received very good grades in my Russian language courses. However, because of the curriculum imbalance when it came to developing speaking, listening, and reading and writing skills, I had not had enough opportunities to practice my oral skills. Instead, I had primarily focused on grammar rules and reading and writing skills development. There were no natural language environments to practice authentic communication with others. In oral classes, teachers instructed us to rote-memorize speaking materials and recite compositions that we wrote instead of practicing communication in Russian. The skills we developed in oral classes were writing skills rather than speaking skills.

My lack of practice speaking Russian was quickly addressed when I arrived in Saratov. As there were only a few Chinese people living there, the small Chinese population pushed me to improve my spoken Russian. I had to communicate with others
in Russian everywhere. I was very grateful that I had so many good friends who patiently listened to me and corrected my language usage. Consequently, when I came back to China, I found that I could speak Russian better than my classmates who had studied in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. I could not have improved my Russian to such an extent without the experience of living in Saratov.

When I returned to China from Russia, I continued to communicate daily with my Russian friends. As a result, when I arrived at St. Catharines in Canada from China to complete my Master’s degree I found myself automatically speaking in Russian. For example, I immediately said “привет (Hello)” when I saw a friend approaching in the grocery store. I did not realize that I had spoken to her in Russian until a few seconds after I had walked away. I experienced many similarly awkward situations. I believe that this was because I had become used to speaking Russian as part of my daily life when studying in Russia. When I came to Canada, however, there were fewer opportunities to speak English regularly as there is a large Chinese population. Living in a Chinese context encouraged me to revert to the habit of speaking Chinese, causing me to lose confidence in my ability to speak English. Therefore, I am afraid that my English oral skills are not improved as expected after spending a whole year in Canada.

**Story 5: The Meaning of Animals in Different Cultural Context**

Regular daily oral practice improved my spoken Russian. I often had the opportunity to practice my oral speaking. I especially enjoyed talking with the dormitory supervisor Mrs. L, a kind old lady who treated all the students as if they were her grandchildren. It was very relaxing to chat with her, eating traditional desserts and drinking a cup of hot black tea. Sometimes we talked about family and life, and
sometimes she taught me interesting Russian traditions and beliefs. Through conversations with Mrs. L, I learned about Russia, which helped me to avoid cultural misunderstandings and integrate into the community.

For instance, she taught me that the bear was considered as a lucky animal. When she was young, she saw a bear in her dream. She believed that this was a very good sign for future romance. As she had expected, she later met and married a wonderful husband. However, her friend dreamed about a pig, then ended up unhappily married to a horrible man. Hearing this story, I was surprised by the different attitudes towards animals in different countries. In Chinese culture, bears represent clumsy people, while in Russia the animal has completely the opposite meaning. Because of the good image of bears in Russian culture, I often talked about bears in order to build relationships with others.

I also recognized different cultural insight about animals between Chinese and English cultures. When I talked about Chinese culture with my friends across the world, I always tried to distinguish the Chinese dragon and the western dragon. I thought these two kinds of dragons are totally different in their spirits and appearance. The dragon is regarded as an auspicious sign in China, while in western cultural insight it represents a violent and evil animal. The Chinese dragon has a long body like snake which is unlike the western one. Therefore, I thought it is very important to distinguish these two animals in Chinese and English culture so that cultural misunderstandings do not occur.

Interestingly, pigs are regarded as a stupid animal with unpleasant images for people in both Russian and English cultures. I found that when people refer to the sign “pig” in the Chinese Zodiac, both in Russia and Canada speakers use another word for the animal; for example, Кабан (boar)” instead of “Свинья (pig).” In Chinese culture, it
is not offensive to say that one’s zodiac sign is a “pig” and the pig is considered to be the happiest and kindest animal among the 12 zodiac signs.

**My Chinese Teaching Experience**

I taught Chinese to foreign learners for 3 months in Russia. The time for being a Chinese teacher was not very long. However, I had a chance to teach students of various age groups in different organizations. From the teaching practice, I created some useful teaching methods that helped students to learn Chinese more effectively.

**Story 6: Teaching Chinese Phonetic**

Shortly after I arrived in Saratov, one of my best friends, A, from Africa recommended me to the director of the most famous international education centre to teach Chinese. Because of the small Chinese population, the demand for Chinese native teachers exceeded the supply. I obtained this position successfully. Within only a few days of the advertisement about the hiring of a new Chinese teacher on the language centre’s website, many students signed up to take my class. Those who signed up ranged in age, and most of them had never tried to learn Chinese before. It was a big challenge for me because I taught each of them one-on-one, which consumed most of my energy and attention. However, I gained a lot of valuable experience. For example, through teaching four Chinese tones in one-on-one classes, I found that every student had their own problems in learning tones. According to ChinaPod (2018), the Chinese language has four tones: the first tone requires the speaker to keep his voice even; the second tone requires the speaker’s voice to raise dramatically; the third tone consists of two parts (falling down and then raising up); and for the fourth tone, the speaker needs to make the voice drop down sharply from the high point. Some students found it difficult to say the
second tone, others the third or first tone. Most of the students had no difficulties with the
fourth tone. One of the students who impressed me most was a girl who could not
pronounce the second tone properly. I thought of a good idea to help her pronounce it
correctly. I reminded her to speak the second tone like the intonation for asking questions
in Russian. She understood this immediately and soon the second tone became her
favourite tone.

When I compare all the different classes I taught in Saratov, my favourite class
was the one I taught at Saratov State University. All my students came to class because of
their desire to learn Chinese. Some of them were teachers in the university and most of
them were undergraduate and postgraduate students. They participated positively in the
class activities, and followed my instructions. Sometimes the questions they asked me
inspired me to improve my teaching methods and enriched the class content. In addition,
the university classes were very diverse. My students were not only from Russia but also
from Turkey, Iraq, and Armenia. As a result of their diverse native languages, they all
had different accents and difficulties with Chinese pronunciation. For example, I found
that Iraqi and Russian students were confused about how to pronounce the Chinese
pronunciation \( t_i \) and \( j_i \). Basing on my knowledge of Arabic and Russian, I guessed that
this could be because the Russian pronunciation \( t_i \) sounded almost the same as another
Chinese pronunciation \( j_i \), which sounds similar to \( jee \) in the word “jeep.” Thus, they
always pronounced \( t_i \) as \( j_i \). Conversely, in Arabic, there is no similar pronunciation to the
Chinese \( j_i \). I found it was hard for Iraqi students to distinguish between \( t_i \) and \( j_i \). They
spoke the \( j_i \) as if it were \( t_i \). I helped them correct their Chinese pronunciation, comparing
with their mother tongue language so that they were able to understand easier. I was very
glad to work with them. Their passion for Chinese knowledge, their talent, and their unique accents helped me think deeper in order to solve the teaching problems I encountered in the class.

In 2018, I went to Saratov again and had a chance to teach an English-speaking student one-on-one. She had been learning Chinese characters for several months but did not have access to learning Chinese phonetics. Thus, I taught her Chinese *Pinyin*—an official phonetic system for Romanized Mandarin Chinese (Poupard, 2012). Since she knew English very well, I suddenly came up with an idea that teaching her initials and finals in *Pinyin* by corresponding to English consonant and vowels. There are 23 initials and 33 finals in *Pinyin* (Poupard, 2012), so I taught her from the easier ones. When I taught her initials, I found many of them sounds like English consonants, such as *b, p, d, t, g, k, n, m, l, h, f, w, r, y, s, c, z, sh,* and *ch*. By comparing with English consonants, she learned these initials in a second. However, there are still some initials (such as *x, q, j,* and *zh*) that do not exist in English pronunciations. I taught her these difficult initials by carefully describing how to control tongue, teeth, and air when pronouncing them. After learning initials, we come to the hard part—learning finals.

I used to teach students finals by leading them to read out loud all 33 finals one-by-one in the big *Pinyin* table in the textbook, but I did not bring any textbook with me this time so I could not teach her finals as I did before. Every coin has two sides. Because of this unexpected situation, I could not rely on the textbook and had to create my own method of teaching finals. I found that finals seem a lot, actually, the finals mainly consist of six basic vowels: *a, o, e, i, u, ü*. Interestingly, except for *ü*, I found English equivalents for the rest of them. For example, *a – far; o – what; e – her; i – yet; u – too.*
After she learned i and u, I combined these two finals together to make the sound of ü.

When she learned these six basic finals, I wrote down the rest of finals: ai, an, ang, ao, ei, en, eng, er, in, ing, iong, ia, ian, iang, iao, ie, iu, ou, ong, ua, uai, uan, uang, ui, uo, ün, and üe. Surprisingly, she was able to spell all of them correctly. Unlike my old method—reading every final on the Pinyin table one-by-one, which usually took us much time and students still could not spell Pinyin correctly in the practice—learning Chinese phonetics by using the new method I came up with spontaneously in that class turned out to be more effective.

**Story 7: Teaching Chinese Without Characters**

One of the teaching problems I faced was challenges with the textbook I had planned to use in the class. When I arrived in Saratov, I had planned to use a Chinese textbook that was used in the Confucius Institute. However, after going through this thick textbook, I found that it had too much writing and reading practice and too many grammar rules in every unit, which was too difficult for the beginners. What is more, I only had 2 months for teaching Chinese in Saratov. It was impossible for new learners to master so many grammar rules and written Chinese skills within 2 months. Unlike other languages, Chinese does not have alphabets but instead has thousands of characters. The meaning of each characters is distinct from its syllable. For easier pronunciation, China developed an official phonetic system for Romanized Mandarin Chinese called Pinyin (Poupard, 2012). Therefore, I selected the main themes in the textbook, and taught all the words and sentences by using Pinyin rather than characters in the class. I especially avoided writing characters, because learning characters was very time-consuming. In the past, when I had taught my Russian friends how to learn Chinese, I found that once I
wrote characters, they were eager to try to write them down, but their stroke orders were often incorrect. It took a long for them to learn how to write characters correctly and focusing on characters distracted them from learning pronunciation. Although it was not easy for them to learn characters, they learned Chinese pronunciation faster than the characters. Therefore, I decided not to teach my students to learn Chinese characters, but taught them using Pinyin instead. Below I have included two examples showing how I teach Chinese in this way. Figure 1 comes from a class where we were naming the parts of the human body. Figure 2 comes from a class where I taught students to address family members in China.

On the blackboard, I wrote down all the nouns describing body parts in Pinyin rather than in characters. The students quickly wrote down the Pinyin, since most of the alphabets in Pinyin were similar to the English alphabet the students were familiar with. I led them to read these words one-by-one in order to help them remember the pronunciation. Then I randomly pointed to different words, asking them to name the body part in Chinese. Surprisingly, they were able to respond quickly with the correct Chinese name.

On the blackboard, I drew a big tree to explain the relationship among family members and how to address them. As we know, appellations of Chinese members are more complicated than either in English and in Russian. For example, when a man called another man “brother,” we have no clue which one of them is the big brother. However, in Chinese there are specific appellations representing “big brother (哥哥 gēge)” and “little brother (弟弟 dìdi)”. In order to show the complicated appellations clearly to students, I began from the word “I” in the centre of the blackboard in order to teach students how to address family members related to themselves.
Figure 1. Naming parts of the human body.
Figure 2. Addressing family members and their relationship.
From the centre “I”, I introduced the relatives that are closest to the individual: parents, siblings, children and spouse. Moreover, I extended the tree bigger including parents’ family members in order to teach how to address them: grandparents, aunts, and uncles. In the last layer, I taught students how to address family members in aunts and uncles’ family, such as cousins and mates of cousins. Following me to draw down this big family tree from the centre to the surrounding layers, students understood the relationship among family members and they could find the correct appellation on this relationship tree immediately.

**Story 8: Teaching Chinese Numbers in My First Class**

As mentioned, my Chinese teaching experience began with a one-on-one class in the language learning centre in Saratov. As a new teacher who did not have any teaching experience, I should have been nervous but in fact, I was quite confident to be a teacher for the first time in my life. After the first class, I felt a strong passion for teaching language. It was easy for me to attract the students’ attention by creating a humorous and relaxing classroom atmosphere. I thought that the success I had in my first class was because I had chosen the right topic. Those who came to my classes had very little prior knowledge of Chinese language. Most of them were anxious about learning tones and characters. Thus, I decided not to scare them off by starting with the characters.

Instead, I chose numbers as the theme in my first class because I thought that, unlike Russian numbers, Chinese numbers would be easy to master. I got this idea from my own personal experience. Russian numbers were so confusing that I spent half of a semester trying to learn them, and even after 3 years of practice, I still often make mistakes. The Russian numbers were too long for me to remember and pronounce. For a
native Chinese speaker, it was very challenging to remember the Russian numbers because every Chinese number from 1 to 10 only has one syllable. To prove the inconvenience of saying numbers with so many syllables, I played a game with a Russian friend O when I was studying in Saratov. The game was simple: we tried to see who could count fastest from 1 to 10 in their native language. The result was that when I finished counting to 10, she had only counted to 6. The results revealed that Russian numbers are too long to speak fast.

Focusing on Chinese numbers was an important way for me to convince my students that the Chinese language is not as frightening and difficult to learn as many people seem to think. I hoped to build their confidence to encourage them to not to be afraid of learning Chinese. They could learn all the Chinese numbers in a single class if they were able to master the simple patterns. The picture shown in Figure 3 was used when I taught larger numbers, after teaching them the numbers from 1 to 10.

I used mathematical formulas to explain Chinese number patterns. For example, I wrote down the formula “11=10+1” on the whiteboard, and told students that in order to pronounce “11” in Chinese, all they needed to do was ignore the symbol “+” and just read the numbers in Chinese behind the equal sign out loud, one by one. The numbers behind the equal sign were 10 and 1. Since they had already learned how to say the number “10” and “1” in Chinese, they read the number “10” and “1” in Chinese pronunciation respectively, as shì and yì. Then I told them that by combining the two pronunciations, shì and yì, they arrived at the pronunciation of the number “11”—“shìyì.” In a similar way, the number “20” could be shown in the formula “20=2*10”. Students read the number “2” and “10” (èr and shì) in Chinese under my instruction.
Figure 3. Teaching Chinese numbers.
After reading these two numbers out loud, they instantly knew that the combination of these two pronunciations, er and shi, is the correct Chinese pronunciation of the number “20,” which was ershi. Once the students knew the numbers from 1 to 10, by using these patterns, they were soon able to say much larger numbers in Chinese.

**Story 9: Teaching Chinese Culture by Cooking Chinese Noodles**

Learning numbers was usually the first theme I used in order to introduce students to the Chinese language. In every class, I also taught them some Chinese tradition or culture. I designed my classes to introduce Chinese culture because when I travelled abroad I discovered that the outside world has many cultural misunderstandings about China. Too often I had to answer ridiculous questions, such as “Is it true that Chinese people eat cockroaches?” “Is Sushi a famous Chinese food?” “Are China, Korea, and Japan completely the same countries?” and “Can you play Kung fu?” This past February, I participated in the celebration of nations at Brock University, representing China. I dressed in a Chinese traditional Hanfu costume. Many people asked me if I was wearing a Japanese Kimono. While these questions sometimes offended me, they helped me to recognize many cultural misconceptions about China. In order to address such cultural misunderstandings, I include elements of Chinese culture in each class. One class I designed with the purpose of introducing Chinese culture was particularly significant. In this class, we discussed cultural misunderstandings of other cultures.

To clarify that Chinese food is delicious and is made from normal ingredients (not cockroaches), I made an instructional video to teach my adult students how to cook a famous Chinese noodle Biang Biang (see Figure 4).
Figure 4. Cooking Chinese noodle Biang Biang.
While I cooked the noodles in the video, I also introduced the recipe to the audience. This video immediately stimulated their interest in Chinese food. Some of my students asked me to send them this video so they could make the noodles at home.

Based on my experience, the most effective way to learn the name of a particular food was to eat it! Before I came to Russia, I learned the word окрошка (a special Russian soup) in the text book, but I could not memorize this word because it was too abstract for me to remember. I could not picture what it was because in China we do not eat this soup. Then I went to Russia: taking one sip of the real Russian окрошка soup meant that I would never forget the word again! Therefore, I believed that if my students were interested in cooking the noodles at home, and ate the noodles they made, they would never forget the name of this noodle Biang Biang and the related culture we talked about in the class. Learning Chinese food helped students understand Chinese culture better. A famous Chinese saying observes that “to the people, foodstuff is all-important.” I explained many cultural issues to my students by introducing them to Chinese food, such as the Chinese food tradition in festivals and the interesting cultural phenomenon related to food. After I showed them the video about how to make Biang Biang noodles, I taught them how to write the very complicated Biang character (see Figure 5).

I separated this character into several parts in order to show them the simple characters that constitute this complicated character. Then I taught them how to write each simple character stroke by stroke. Consequently, they not only learned the complicated character, but also learned several simple characters. From the happy looks on their faces after the series on cultural knowledge, I could see that they really enjoyed the cultural elements in this class. At that moment, I was proud that I had contributed to a better understanding of Chinese culture.
Figure 5. The complicated Biang character.
Connections Between the Stories and the Handbook

In the previous section, I shared nine stories about my experiences learning foreign languages and teaching Chinese. In this section, I analyze these stories in order to clarify the connections between the stories and the development of the handbook for teaching Chinese to adult novice learners.

To acquire a foreign language, learners need to speak, listen, read, and write (Zhang, 2014). In first two stories, I shared how I learned English in primary and high schools, which indicated that practicing speaking and listening skills helped me to learn English more so than practicing reading and writing skills.

As mentioned in story 1, Miss X taught me English by explaining grammar rules. The way of her teaching is typically the academic style also known as the grammar-translation method. However, the disadvantage of this style is that students learn language isolated from using it in a real context (Cook, 2001; Gurunathan & Geethanjali, 2016). Learning grammar rules did not help me a lot. Instead, Miss Y’s teaching style which can be considered as the audio-lingual approach improved my English. As the most natural way of learning language, the audio-lingual approach stresses the importance of using language practically by developing spoken language skills earlier than written skills (Cook, 2011; Gurunathan & Geethanjali, 2016). Miss Y, as a facilitator, encouraged us to perform plays in English. This class activity created a good chance for us to practice English in the dialogues. I learned vocabulary and grammar in the activity.

Stories 2, 3, and 7 also indicated that learning and teaching initial foreign language through developing spoken skills was more effective than focusing on written skills. In story 2, I improved my sense of language and spoken English effectively by
watching English movies. Gurunathan and Geethanjali (2016) indicate that imitation, repetition, and memorization of dialogues are crucial ways to learn a language in the audio-lingual approach. By watching English movies, I memorized pronunciation, vocabulary, and sentence patterns, and also practiced grammar by repeating and mimicking dialogues (Gurunathan & Geethanjali, 2016; Tan, 2016). By watching movies, I practiced listening which Samawiyah and Saifuddin (2016) consider to be the base of other foreign language skills, such as speaking, reading, and writing. In story 3, I shared an effective tip that helped me to improve spoken Russian in daily communication. When I found that using translation and grammar rules did not help me to speak Russian fluently, I decided to memorize the commonly used topics, sentences, and vocabulary and repeatedly practice these items in daily communication. This tip is associated with the principle of the audio-lingual approach, which indicates that repeating basic sentence patterns orally is important (Tan, 2016). In story 7, I found that it was difficult for adult beginners to acquire writing skills and spoken skills at the same time, so I specifically avoided teaching students to write Chinese characters. Instead, I used Chinese Pinyin to assist students to master pronunciation. According to the audio-lingual approach, students learn a language by listening before seeing how to write the language, so teaching a foreign language should start from pronunciation rather than written language (Cook, 2001).

I believe that the audio-lingual approach is effective for teaching and learning foreign languages. Thus, lessons in the handbook stress developing oral skills communicatively (Mart, 2013). The handbook encourages teachers to assume the role of facilitators, creating supportive learning environment and opportunities for students to
practice the Chinese language (Richards, 2006). Based on these four stories, the handbook can encourage teachers to drill students through repetition, substitution, transformation, and translation as suggested by Krashen (1982). Since this approach insists teaching language through practicing speaking and listening skills first (Cook, 2001), the handbook emphasizes the development of learners’ spoken skills rather than their written skills. In order to achieve this goal, the handbook guides Chinese teachers to use Pinyin when initially teaching students spoken Chinese skills. Additionally, unlike the grammar-translation method, explaining and memorizing grammar rules are avoided in the handbook (Tan, 2016).

In stories 3 and 4, I indicated the important role of authentic communication in foreign language learning. Before I had the chance to communicate with native speakers, I had focused on studying grammar rules. However, my focus on grammar rules had a negative influence on my language fluency. Consistent with the communicative approach, I realized that developing communicative competency is initially more important than developing linguistic competency and grammar knowledge (Cook, 2001). In order to communicate with native speakers fluently, I memorized commonly used statements and sentences and practiced oral skills as much as possible when I was in Russia. Story 4 represents a contrary experience and describes how I failed to improve in my spoken English language skills due to the lack of opportunities to communicate with native speakers while in Canada. Insights gained from these stories is associated with the communicative teaching approach. The communicative teaching approach regards communication as a good way for students to learn a subsequent language (Richards, 2006). Therefore, the content of lesson designs in the handbook are practical and
communicative-oriented. They are designed so that beginning language learners may use language directly in daily conversation (Brown, 2011; Cook, 2001).

Stories 5 and 9 indicate the importance of including cultural aspects in learning and teaching a language. In story 5, I provided examples of the different understandings of animals across different cultures. From my experience, I realized that it is not sufficient to only develop spoken skills. Culture constantly underlies communication (Danison, 2013), so knowing cultural patterns is also imperative in teaching and learning a foreign language. In story 9, I taught Chinese cultural knowledge related to Chinese food in my class. This lesson maintained students’ interest in language learning. From these two stories, I concluded that reference to some cultural information is imperative for teaching Chinese as understanding of culture can affect students’ willingness to communicate (Liu, 2017). When students have some knowledge of culture, they may be more willing to communicate in Chinese. Danison (2013) believed that creating language environments where culture is embedded and encouraging students to engage in interaction with native speakers can promote culture learning process. Thus, the handbook outlines some instructional sessions and activities that integrate Chinese cultural knowledge within the lesson.

Stories 6 and 8 demonstrated the benefits of comparing English with Chinese when teaching Chinese numbers and pronunciation. In story 6, I shared examples about how I corrected students’ mistakes related to pronunciation and tones by comparing the Chinese language with their first language. In story 9, I shared how I used mathematic formulas to help learners acquire patterns of reading Chinese numbers quickly. When teaching adults Chinese numbers and pronunciation, I specially connected Chinese
knowledge with learners’ prior language knowledge. Consequently, my students efficiently acquired the foundational skills of pronouncing Chinese and patterns of saying Chinese numbers. This method worked well as adult learners typically have rich life experiences. Relating to existing experiences makes learning easier and provides a good basis for learning activities (Knowles, 1978; Toister, 2014). Hence, the handbook encourages teachers to compare adult learners’ first language with the Chinese language.

To summarize, the insights gained through my language learning and teaching experiences (documented in the presented stories) provide several rationales supporting the development of the handbook. The insights gained from these stories are also consistent with the audio-lingual and communicative approaches that support the development of adult learners’ spoken communication skills before written skills. Second, the introduction of culture should not be ignored in teaching the Chinese language (Danison, 2013). Finally, since adult learning is experience-based (Knowles, 1978; Toister, 2014), comparison of adult learners’ previous language knowledge with Chinese can help adults learn spoken Chinese language more effectively.

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I shared nine stories about my experiences learning foreign languages and teaching Chinese. I shared my experiences learning foreign languages including English and Russian. I also discussed some effective methods that I used to improve my speaking and listening skills. I narrated my experience teaching Chinese in Saratov and shared some effective instructional approaches. Based on my experiences outlined in narratives 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7, I argue that the handbook should focus on teaching Chinese for communication purposes by developing learners’ speaking and listening
skills. By analyzing the remaining stories, I claimed the importance of introducing cultural insight and connecting Chinese with learners’ other language experiences. Thus, all of the stories presented here provide a rationale for the instructional approaches used in the handbook or inspire the specific instructional lessons contained within the handbook.
CHAPTER FIVE: THE HANDBOOK

This chapter contains the handbook *Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language to Adult Novices: Teachers’ Handbook*. Following the growing tendency of learning Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) influenced by globalization, this handbook is developed to provide CFL teachers with practical instructional approaches to teaching adult CFL beginners who are English speakers. The handbook has two parts. The first part provides a rationale for the necessity of the handbook. The second part, the main part, puts forward six lesson designs related to topics including: Chinese phonetics, self-introduction, family members, numbers, the Chinese zodiac, and Chinese food. The lesson designs in this part are based on the audio-lingual and communicative theoretical approaches to foreign language learning as well as my personal experiences as a language learner and instructor. In order to assist instructors to help improve students’ spoken Chinese language for communicative purpose, I have provided detailed instructions and materials including instructional charts and figures. These lessons contained in the handbook are intended for adult learners who are at the beginning stage of language learning. The lessons reflect the belief that adults should be taught listening and speaking skills first rather than reading and writing skills. Hence, the handbook does not include instructional approaches to teaching written Chinese language. The lesson designs include information about “what,” “why,” and “how” to teach with specific explanations. Instructors are encouraged to create variations of their own lessons in order to meet their learners’ unique needs. In this way, this handbook is expected to encourage CFL teachers to break away from the traditional teaching style and inspire them to explore more effective CFL teaching approaches for adult novices in the teaching practice.
Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language to English

Speaking Adult Novice Language Learners:

Teachers’ Handbook

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Faculty of Education
Brock University

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Section 1: Introduction

Overview of Chinese as a Foreign Language

China has an enormous influence on world affairs in the 21st century, with many individuals all over the world expressing increased interest in China and its culture (Poupard, 2012). China’s economic clout has rapidly grown in recent years, which is regarded as the reflection of China rising (Duff et al., 2013). As the result of economic development, China has attracted economic cooperation and communication from other countries, which has promoted increased interest in studying the Chinese language for the economic and cultural purposes (Confucius Institute Headquarters, 2014; Duff et al., 2013; Kassteen, 2014; Tinsley & Board, 2014).

The Chinese language has become popular not only because of the economic enticement of China, but because of the prevalence of language itself. Mandarin Chinese is a widely spoken language. Noack (2015) estimated that there are 1.39 billion Chinese (all dialects) speakers which represents about one-third of the 7.2 billion people in the world. Of these numbers, 1.19 million are Chinese native speakers (Tinsley & Board, 2014). In fact, Chinese is the third most widely spoken language in both Canada and the U.S. (Statistics Canada, 2010; United States Census Bureau, 2000). The large population of Chinese speakers, and the increasing number of Chinese learners across the world will continue to promote interest in Chinese language learning in subsequent years (Duff et al., 2013).

Although the Chinese language has the most speakers, English remains the language most often studied as a foreign language (International Association of Language Centres, 2016). As previously state, in order to spread Chinese language and culture, the Chinese government implemented a series of measures, such as establishing the
Confucius Institutes around many countries. “Confucius Institution” is a Chinese learning organization aimed at providing individuals with access to learn Chinese outside China (Confucius Institute Headquarters, 2014). According to Xinhua (2017), 516 Confucius Institutes and 1,076 Confucius Classrooms have been established in 142 countries and regions. Moreover, China has developed the Chinese Proficiency Test (also known as the HSK system), for international learners. According to the report of International Association of Language Centres (2016), there are 728 test sites in 91 countries, with more than 600,000 Chinese language learners completing this test. This shows that learning Chinese is a growing tendency in recent years, thus, this handbook contributes to exploring an effective teaching approach to teaching Chinese as a foreign language.

**Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language to Adults**

The handbook presented here is based on two language teaching approaches: audio-lingual and communicative approaches.

**The Audio-Lingual Approach**

This approach stresses the importance of teaching a second language through spoken language, rather than written language, since students learn language through auditory modality before seeing (Cook, 2001). The approach suggested here is that spoken and written language teaching should be separated. The former should be taught before the latter in order to improve the learning proficiency (Cook, 2001). There are two important principles of the audio-lingual approach (Tan, 2016): pronunciation and repeating basic sentence patterns in oral language; and teaching words and phrases that have practical use. To help adult learners memorize pronunciation, repeating basic sentence and commonly used phrases, visual, auditory and kinetics modalities can be
used in teaching Chinese as a foreign language to adults (Toister, 2014). For example, in the lesson design of teaching Chinese tones, the Handbook guides teachers to teach Mandarin tones by providing verbal explanations and encouraging students to practice pronouncing by gesturing the tones in time. In this way, the principles and propositions of the audio-lingual approaches are embedded in this handbook.

The Communicative Approach

This approach has an emphasis on using language in communicative practice and believes that foreign language teaching should not focus on grammatical knowledge (Cook, 2001). According to Brown (2001), the aim of teaching a foreign language is having students learn to communicate. Thus, this approach indicated that the content for teaching Chinese as a foreign language should be related to communicative purposes. For example, the lesson topics in the handbook are all commonly used in the daily communication. Teaching learners phrases and sentences that can be utilized in real communication helps them to improve their spoken skills. Thus, the activities and dialogues included in the handbook allow learners to learn Chinese naturally. Following the communicative approach can meet most adult learners’ basic learning needs for acquiring Chinese as a foreign language for communication purposes (Sun, 2011).

The Need for the Handbook

In recent years, the amount of proficient Chinese speakers and Chinese learners has increased internationally (Duff et al, 2013). However, the learning and teaching of Chinese is challenging. The main challenges for learners relate to spoken and written Chinese. Chinese is extremely difficult for European language speakers because of the reliance on tones and its orthographic system of characters (Liu & Bianco, 2007).
Chinese is a tone-based language which includes four tones and a neutral tone (Cao, 2018; Duff et al., 2013). Unlike the alphabetic language, “Chinese is a logographic and morphosyllabic system in which the basic graphic unit is a Chinese character” (Kit-ling, 2017, p. 176). In this system, a syllable can represent many different characters. Chinese spoken and written styles have greater differences in word utilization and grammar rules than most other languages (Kubler, 2018). Thus, how to balance spoken and written Chinese is a topic that needs to be take into the consideration when designing language instruction for adults.

Kubler (2018) indicated that most Chinese second language textbooks include oral and written drills in the same materials. For example, the widely used Chinese as a foreign language textbook New Practical Chinese Reader consists of parts with respect to speaking and listening drills, writing characters, and Chinese grammar rules. However, combining spoken and written Chinese in teaching can be difficult for beginners as the written language is hard to acquire without years of practice (Poupard, 2012). Moreover, learners are required to learn vast commonly used characters. For instance, Chen (1999) concluded that reading a Chinese newspaper requires acquiring 3000 characters. Compared with written Chinese, native English speakers find it easier and faster to learn spoken Chinese (Kubler, 2018). For these reasons, Sun (2011) suggested that teaching Chinese should begin with developing speaking and listening skills, while teaching written Chinese language should come later.

Duff et al. (2013) also notes that that mastering language help people hunt for jobs. Sun (2011) found in the study that many Canadian Chinese learners studied the language in order to find a job and integrate into Chinese communities. In addition, with
the economic development of China, many countries, such as U.K. and U.S., have regarded China as a potential market connected with promising economic interests (Kassteen, 2014; Tinsley & Board, 2014). To gain economic interests in the Chinese market, economic organizations and businesses would have a need for employees with spoken Chinese competency.

Thus, this handbook is developed for Chinese as a foreign language teachers, to help them to teach adult novice learners to speak Chinese effectively. The handbook provides six lessons with respect to nine common topics associated with daily communication. The lessons included in this handbook are based on two foreign language teaching approaches: audio-lingual and communicative. Additionally, the lesson designs offer many instructional approaches in order to provide Chinese teachers with specific and practical methods in addressing difficulties associated with oral language teaching. The handbook is different from some current Chinese teaching materials, which teaches Chinese oral knowledge, characters and grammar rules together. Since the handbook is aimed at teaching Chinese beginners, the handbook mainly contains spoken Chinese teaching instructions and some Chinese cultural knowledge intended to support daily communications. As such, character writing drills and grammar rules are not included in the handbook. This handbook also inspires Chinese teachers to support students’ spoken communicative skills without explanation of grammar rules.
Section 2: Instructional Designs

This handbook includes six instructional lessons intended to be used by language instructors teaching beginning adult learners the Chinese language. Lesson topics include: Chinese phonetics, self-introduction, family members, numbers, the Chinese zodiac, and Chinese food. These lessons provide language teachers with guidance about how to teach common phrases, sentences and cultural concepts based on the audio-lingual and communicative foreign language teaching approaches (Cook, 2001).
Lecture 1: Chinese Phonetics

Main Idea

This lecture intends to teach adult learners Chinese phonetics as the premise for learning the words and phrases in additional lectures with in the handbook including parts of the body, self-introduction, family members, numbers, animals, and Chinese food. The lesson includes two parts related to Chinese pronunciations and involves the study of Pinyin. Pinyin is regarded as a system of Romanized spelling and includes five Chinese tones (Poupard, 2012).

Goals

This lecture is designed to achieve two goals: 1) adult learners are expected to master Chinese Pinyin and five tones; 2) adult learners are expected to master the spelling and reading aloud of Chinese words using Pinyin.

Lecture Plan

• Introduction of Pinyin

• Introduction of initial sounds and final sounds in Chinese Pinyin

  ← Explain spelling rules

  ← Combinations of initial and finals sound

• Introduction of tones

  ← Practicing tones

  ← Review tone placing rules
**Introduction of Pinyin**

**What to Teach?**

Teachers are encouraged to first teach Chinese *Pinyin* including initials (consonants) and finals (vowels) rather than start with instruction in writing characters. In this way learners will find that learning Chinese is not that as difficult as they may believe.

The Chinese script does not have alphabet. Instead it has thousands of characters. Each character corresponds to a syllable and a meaning. In order to facilitate pronunciation, China developed an official phonetic system (*Pinyin*) for Romanized Mandarin Chinese (Poupard, 2012). Each Mandarin syllable written in *Pinyin* consists of three parts: the initial, the final and a tone.

**Why Teach Pinyin?**

Instructors are encouraged to teach *Pinyin* so that their students can master standard Mandarin Chinese phonetics. The ability to master *Pinyin* will prepare learners to learn additional lectures presented in this handbook, since all the Chinese phrases and vocabularies are presented using *Pinyin*.

**How to Teach?**

In order to learn *Pinyin*, teachers need to guide students to learn the phonetics of initials and finals, spelling rules, combination of initials and finals, and tones. Many alphabets in *Pinyin* are similar to letters in the English alphabet, making it relatively easy for English speakers to remember and master. However, the sounds associated with the *Pinyin* alphabet are different from the sounds associated with English letters (Cao, 2018; Poupard, 2012). Thus, teachers may need to correct learners’ pronunciation of *Pinyin*, highlighting differences with English letters rather than having students depend on the familiar sounds of the English alphabet.
Introduction Initials and Finals in Chinese Pinyin

Chinese words have one-syllable sounds which are composed of an initial and a final (Poupard, 2012). Initials can be regarded as consonants. Finals are vowels showing after the initial (Kraemer, 2007).

Initials

There are 23 initials in Pinyin (Poupard, 2012). Some of them can be difficult for learners to distinguish due to the similarity of sound. Thus, the similar initials will be taught in pairs so that students can be made aware of the slight differences between them (see Charts 1, 2, and 3). Each initial will be corresponded to an English equivalent to help learners understand pronunciation. Teachers may provide students contained in Charts 1 to 3. After writing down the initials shown in charts, teachers need to read out loud, as an example, so that students can imitate their pronunciation. After imitating an initial for the first time, teachers should explain the tips of pronouncing the initial by comparing English pronunciations. Students will understand how to pronounce initials after explanation, then teachers can lead them to repeat several times.

The following chart shows three pairs of initials distinguished by aspirated or unaspirated sound, which are similar to the corresponding letters in English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not aspirated. The pronunciation of initial b sounds a little lighter than the letter “b” in the word “beat”, which is similar to “p” in the word “speed”.</td>
<td>Strongly aspirated. The initial p and the letter “p” in the word “pet” are the same.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unaspirated t. The initial t is like “t” in “steam”, which sounds not as strong as “d” in “dad”.</td>
<td>Strongly aspirated. The sound of t is the same as “t” in “team”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>G</th>
<th>k</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unaspirated k. It sounds like “s” in “skim” rather than “g” in “gate”.</td>
<td>Strongly aspirated. It sounds similar to “k” in “keep”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chart 1: The Comparison of Unaspirated and Aspirated Initials in Pairs.*
In the following chart, initials where the fricative airstream moves from the teeth to the tongue tip and becomes stronger from left to right.

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>x</strong></td>
<td><strong>q</strong></td>
<td><strong>j</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspirated.</td>
<td>Aspirated j.</td>
<td>Unaspirated x.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no sound similar to x in English. The sound of x is between “s” in “size” and “sh” in “she”.</td>
<td>There is no sound similar to x in English. The sound is like the English letter “G” with more air coming out.</td>
<td>The sound is similar to the pronunciation of the English letter “G”. The tongue is supposed to be near the teeth and lips should not upwarp while making the sound.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>s</strong></th>
<th><strong>c</strong></th>
<th><strong>z</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The sound of s is the same as “s” in English, like “s” in “snake”.</td>
<td>It sounds like “ts” in “hats” while it is pronounced longer than “ts”.</td>
<td>The sound is like “ds” in “sounds”, but it is pronounced longer than “ds”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>sh</strong></th>
<th><strong>ch</strong></th>
<th><strong>zh</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The sound is “sh” in “ship”.</td>
<td>The sound is “ch” in “cheap”</td>
<td>The sound is the combination of initial z and sh.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chart 2: Similar Initials with the Different Extend Airstream.**

The following chart shows initials which sound almost the same in English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>f</strong></th>
<th><strong>find</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>h</strong></td>
<td><strong>hit</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>m</strong></td>
<td><strong>meat</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>n</strong></td>
<td><strong>nine</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>l</strong></td>
<td><strong>let</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>y</strong></td>
<td><strong>yard</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>w</strong></td>
<td><strong>window</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>r</strong></td>
<td>The sound is similar to “r” in “run”, while the tongue and lips do not need to upward as hard as pronouncing “r” in “run”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chart 3: Initials Corresponded to English Equivalents.**

**Finals**

There are 33 finals in Pinyin (Poupard, 2012). In many Chinese teaching materials, the 33 finals are introduced one-by-one. Many learners find it difficult to remember finals when they are introduced one at a time. Analysis of the 33 finals, indicates that they
consist of six basic finals \((a, o, e, i, u, ü)\) and three initials \((n, g, r)\). In order to help students to learn the finals effectively, teachers can teach the six basic finals as a unit first and then instruct learners to spell the rest of finals \((ai, an, ang, ao, ei, en, eng, er, in, ing, iong, ia, ian, iang, iao, ie, iu, ou, ong, ua, uai, uan, uang, ui, uo, ün and üe)\). Teachers can teach finals by using the same method when they were teaching initials noted above. Firstly, students need to imitate the teacher’s pronunciation. Then the teacher will introduce the details of pronouncing finals verbally by comparing to English pronunciations. Finally, students should repeat each final several times under the teachers’ supervision. Teachers can use Charts 4, 5, and 6 when teaching finals.

This chart demonstrates the sounds of six basic finals associated with similar sounds in English equivalent words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a</th>
<th>far</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>wow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>hurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>too</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ü</td>
<td>i + u, it sounds similar to “ou” in “you”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chart 4: Six Basic Finals Corresponded to English Equivalents.*

The following chart shows the rest of the finals combined with six basic finals \((a, o, e, i, u, ü)\) and three initials \((n, g, r)\). All these finals are divided into six groups, according to the first finals letter \((a, o, e, i, u, ü)\).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a</th>
<th>ai</th>
<th>an</th>
<th>ang</th>
<th>ao</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>ei</td>
<td>en</td>
<td>eng</td>
<td>er</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>in</td>
<td>ing</td>
<td>iong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ia</td>
<td>ian</td>
<td>iang</td>
<td>iao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>ou</td>
<td></td>
<td>ong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>ua</td>
<td>uai</td>
<td>uan</td>
<td>uang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ui</td>
<td></td>
<td>uo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ü</td>
<td>ün</td>
<td></td>
<td>üe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chart 5: Rest Finals Based on Six Basic Finals Above.*
**Spelling Rules**

There are two rules that need to be stressed. The first rule involves combining initials and finals in syllables. Among the 400 Chinese spoken syllables (without tones), most of Chinese syllables are constituted by an initial and a final. However, some syllables, so-called “initial syllables”, are constituted only by one final per se (Kraemer, 2007). However, initials beginning with u, ü, i need to have other finals (w, y) ahead and change some part of initials, as shown in Chart 6 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Rules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>add ṛ ahead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uo</td>
<td>wu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uai</td>
<td>wo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uang</td>
<td>wai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ü</td>
<td>add y ahead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>üe</td>
<td>yu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>üan</td>
<td>yue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ün</td>
<td>yuan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>add y ahead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ie</td>
<td>yu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iao</td>
<td>ye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iang</td>
<td>yao</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chart 6: The Rules of Writing Null Initial Syllables.*

The second spelling rule that beginners should know involves recognizing when the dots on ü should be omitted. Only when ü combines with j, q, x, and y should the two dots on its top be omitted. For example, qü should be written as qu (Liu, 2015). If there is no j, q, x, y the dots on ü should remain, as in the example, lü.

**Combinations of Initials and Finals**

Most Chinese teaching materials introduce Pinyin through tables listing all the possible combinations of initials and finals in Pinyin. There are about 400 possible combinations, which can be difficult and daunting for students to memorize. It is also
meaningless to memorize all the possible combinations for beginners because *Pinyin*, as a spelling tool, demonstrates pronunciations directly, as long as the learners have mastered how to spell *Pinyin*. Thus, there is no need to encourage learners to read all the possible combination one by one. Instead, teachers can provide students with some Mandarin words written in *Pinyin* without tones, so that they can practice the spelling combinations of initials and finals. For example, *ni hao, ming zì, jie jie, zuiba, gou, zhu, yi, and er.*
Introduction of Tones

What Are Tones?

Unlike English, Chinese is a tonal language (Cao, 2018). According to the definition by Kraemer (2007), “the tone is the pitch pattern associated with each syllable in Mandarin.” There are four main tones and one neutral tone in Mandarin.

Why Teach Tones?

Teaching tones correctly is crucial because every syllable is associated with a specific tone which distinguishes the meaning of the syllable. For example, the word shāng hài (伤害, hurt) is distinguished from shàng hǎi (上海, the city Shanghai) by the different tones. Thus, mispronunciation of tones may cause misunderstandings in communication (Cao, 2018; Kraemer, 2007).

How to Teach Tones?

In order to help learners to pronounce tones correctly, teachers can describe tones verbally. At the same time, they can draw down vertical moving lines to make the tones visual as shown in Chart 7. Then teachers can direct learners to draw lines in the air with a hand while pronouncing tones. Thus, learners can learn tones by listening to a verbal description of the sounds, observing lines visually, and gesturing kinesthetically. Combining visual, auditory and kinesthetic modalities in teaching can improve the learning effectiveness (Toister, 2014).

The five Chinese tones showed by vertical moving lines as presented in Chart 7. Explanation of tones, pronunciation tips and examples written in Pinyin are also provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tones</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First tone</td>
<td>(This tone is even and high, learner should be aware of avoiding the tone falling down in the end.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second tone</td>
<td>(It sounds like the interrogative intonation in English.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For example, what?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

mā
Third tone (It sounds like, in English, speaking hesitantly with the intonation falling down first and suddenly understanding with the intonation going up rapidly.)
For example, umm... aha!
mǎ

Forth tone (It sounds like the English intonation used in assertive sentences.)
For example, yes!
mà

Neutral tone (It sounds like whispering, which is slight and quick.)
For example, shh...
ma

Chart 7: Mandarin Tones.

Practicing Tones

Teachers can use selected words, such as nǐhǎo, míngzì, jiējie, zuǐba, gòu, zhū, yì, er, written in Pinyin without tones in order to help learners practice combinations of initials and finals. Teachers should also review previously learned words in to add appropriate tones such as nǐhǎo, míngzì, jiējie, zuǐba, gǒu, gōu, gòu, zhū, zhū, zhǔ, zhù, yī, yí, yì, ér, èr, and èr.

Tones Marks Placing Rules

According to the Effective Learning Language website (2017), tones marks are placed on the top of vowels (a, o, e, i, u, ü) rather than initials such as mā, yé, yī, wǒ, lǜ, bù. However, if there is more than one vowel in a syllable, the tone marks should always be placed on a. If the vowels do not include a, then the tone marks should be placed over the e or o, as in examples lǎo, yuè, gǒu. There is an exception it is that if a syllable with “iu” or “ui” where the tone marks should always be on the last vowel, as an example, liú and huí. Here is jingle summarizing the tone marks placing rules in order to help beginners to remember these rules.

\[
a\text{ is the best,}\\
\text{o e can be a choice,}\\
\text{ui, and iu, we choose the next}
\]
Lecture 2: Self-Introduction

Main Idea

The objective of this lesson includes having students introduce basic information about themselves and learn seven Chinese personal pronouns.

Goals

There are two goals teachers need to help students achieve: 1) performing basic dialogues by using sentences that introduce themselves; 2) changing personal pronouns to inquire about others’ names and nationalities.

Lecture Plan

• Basic sentences used in self-introduction
• Chinese personal pronouns
• Practice: Making dialogues
What to Teach?

This lesson is planned to teach individuals how to introduce themselves in Chinese, including informing stating their name and nationality. Specifically, the lesson contents basic sentences commonly used in self-introductions, Chinese personal pronouns, and dialogue practice.

Why Teach?

In the beginning of a conversation, learners will always have to introduce their name and nationality to others. Teaching self-introduction sample sentences to students help them to communicate effectively. Personal pronouns are considered as the most basic part in any language (Qiu, 2013), so teaching learners personal pronouns is necessary preparation for future learning including the study of Chinese possessive pronouns in the next lesson.

How to Teach?

In order to help learners understand sentences, teachers should write down translations for each sentence. It is also necessary to use charts and formulas to make Chinese patterns more visual to learners. Throughout the lesson, examples should be frequently to order to indicate enough possible choices and deepen their understanding. At the end of the lesson, the teacher can guide learners in engage in dialogue, and encourage learners to introduce themselves in Chinese as part of this discourse.
**Basic Sentences Used in Self-introduction**

In this part, teachers will need to introduce some sentences commonly used in self-introduction. Firstly, teachers should write down these sentences on the board in *Pinyin* so that students are able to spell the sentences and read them aloud when practicing. Under every word written in *Pinyin*, teachers should write down the corresponding English word and the sentence translation. Teachers will then lead students to read these sentences out loud individually and correct their pronunciation. The specific sentences and instructions are shown below in Chart 8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>那里</th>
<th>好</th>
<th>Hello!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>good</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>你</th>
<th>叫</th>
<th>什么</th>
<th>名字？</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>call</td>
<td>what</td>
<td>name</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>我</th>
<th>叫</th>
<th>...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>me</td>
<td>call</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>你</th>
<th>是</th>
<th>哪</th>
<th>国</th>
<th>人？</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>which</td>
<td>country</td>
<td>people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>我</th>
<th>是</th>
<th>中华人。</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>am</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chart 8: Basic Sentences in Self-Introduction and Translations.**

Among new words in these sentences, teachers should note the word *zhōngguórén* (Chinese) as an example of how to say other nationalities in Chinese. Unlike in English, different nationalities have different forms in writing and speaking. For example, Germany – German, Canada – Canadian, France – French, Singapore – Singaporean. In Chinese, speaking nationalities is simple. Students do not need to remember a lot of specific forms for each nationality. Instead, they need to remember a pattern which constitute words indicating nationality in Chinese. The teacher can use the formula below. The learners should change the bold word into the name of their country and plus *rén* after the country name.
nation+ rén (people) = nationality.

For example:

China + rén = Chinese
zhōngguó + rén = zhōngguórén
Canada + rén = Canadian
jiānádà+ rén = jiānádà rén
America + rén = American
měiguó+ rén = měiguó rén

In this way, learners will know how to state their nationality immediately, as long as they know the name of their country. In order to help students use this formula to say their nationalities, teachers should provide lists of relevant country names such as:

America ---- měiguó
Australia ---- àodàliyà
Britain ---- yīngguó
China ---- zhōngguó
Canada ---- jiānádà
France ---- fāguó
Germany ---- déguó
Italia ---- yīdài
Russia ---- èluósī
Spain ---- xībānyá
Chinese Personal Pronouns

In this section, teachers will present learners with all the personal pronouns in Chinese which are the most basic words they will use in the communications (Qiu, 2013). In order to help learners remember personal pronouns effectively, teachers can use Chart 9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First person</td>
<td>I; me</td>
<td>wǒ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second person</td>
<td>(informal) you</td>
<td>nǐ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(formal) you</td>
<td>nín</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third person</td>
<td>he, she, it;</td>
<td>tā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>him, her, it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 9: Chinese Personal Pronouns.

From Chart 9, we can see that Chinese personal pronouns are very simple. The third person, despite the gender of pronouns, has only one version – tā. Once learners have learnt the single personal pronouns (wǒ, nǐ, tā), they can immediately speak out the plural ones (wǒmen, nínmen, tāmen). For example, by adding suffix *men* after wǒ, nǐ, tā (Qiu, 2013). Thus, teachers should teach students the single pronouns first, then instruct them to learn plural ones. In addition, teachers need to emphasize that Chinese personal pronouns in second person is different from English ones. In English, the formal and informal single second person are both called “you”. However, in Chinese, the formal single second person is nín and the informal –nǐ.
After teaching the necessary knowledge in the previous two parts, it is time for teachers to guide learners turn knowledge into practice through engaging in dialogue. To make their dialogue, students are required to use basic sentences commonly used in self-introduction and different personal pronouns. Teachers may provide learners with an example such as:

- nǐ hǎo!
- nǐ jiào shénme míngzi?
- wǒ jiào Tom.
- nǐ shì nǎ guó rén?
- wǒ shì zhōngguórén.

Teachers can then change the bold personal pronouns into other pronouns. For example:

- nín jiào shénme míngzi?
- wǒ jiào Tom.
- tā shì nǎ guó rén?
- tā shì jiānádà rén.
- nǐmen shì nǎ guó rén?
- wǒmen shì měiguó rén.

In order to encourage students do engage in the dialogue, teachers can encourage students to speak to each other in small groups and guide groups to have conversation with other groups. In this way, students can use every personal pronoun and get to know more nationalities. Especially, repeating basic sentences in their conversation can reinforce learners’ memorization of the knowledge that they have learned in this lesson.
Lecture 3: Family Members

Main Idea

This lesson is designed to teach learners how to address family members in Chinese and use these words into conversations.

Goals

After teaching this lesson, students are expected to achieve three goals: 1) having a clear understanding of kinship within the Chinese family; 2) memorizing appellations of family members in Chinese; and 3) enabling students to use these appellations to introduce their own families.

Lecture Plan

- Teaching appellations of family members.
- Introducing possessive pronouns in Chinese.
- Role play: Applying kinship appellations in dialogues.
What to Teach?

In this lecture, teachers are expected to teach students common family member appellations in Chinese. Common family members include close relatives like parents, children, siblings and a spouse, as well as relatives on the children’s or parents’ side. After teaching these words, teachers are encouraged to introduce Chinese possessive pronouns as preparation for the dialogue practice. In the process of practicing dialogues, students should be directed to use words they have learned in this lesson in order to introduce their family members in role play.

Why Teach?

In Chinese culture addressing everyone by their correct kinship term is considered as an important sign in showing politeness and respect (Wang, 2016). Teaching beginners kinship appellations helps them to understand the cultural importance of family in China, and remember how to address family members properly in Chinese. In this way learners can also distinguish others’ kinship in the conversation and give introductions to their own family members correctly.

How to Teach?

It is difficult to describe complicated Chinese kinship verbally, so teachers are suggested to write appellations on a family tree diagram in order to demonstrate each relative visually. When teachers are presenting possessive pronouns in Chinese, they can connect personal pronouns taught in the last lecture. For the purpose of reinforcing learners’ memorization of appellations and possessive pronouns, teachers may encourage students to participate in role playing games where they practice new words in conversations.
Teaching Appellations of Family Members

Kinship words in Chinese are more complicated than in English. (Huang & Jia, 2000). In English, people usually track generations and gender to address family members, while in Chinese appellations are not only depended on generation and gender, but maternal versus paternal lineage, relative age, and affinal versus blood relations (Wang, 2016). To help teachers clarify kinship terms in Chinese, teachers can use the picture tree shown in Figure 1 to demonstrate kinship. Figure 1 indicates a complicated family relationship system which may confuse students if draw at once. To avoid confusing students, teachers are suggested to divide the whole picture into four coloured parts (red, green, blue and orange) representing different categories. Teachers can then discuss each part separately to students until the whole picture is presented.
Firstly, teachers should teach the red part which is related to “parents” (parents and grandparents). Teachers can start from the genderless “I” in the centre. The appellations in Chinese should be written in Pinyin, followed with the English explanation and translation below. After teachers lead students to read bàba (father) and...
māma (mother), teachers have to identify “father” as husband and “mother” as wife in Chinese in order to prepare for the introduction of spouses of other relatives in later parts.

Appellations of grandparents would be introduced after parents in Chinese. It is important to note that the appellations of maternal grandparents are different, generally, in Northern and Southern China. In the north of China, maternal parents are called lāolao, and lāoye. While in the Southern China, they are called wàipó, and wàigōng.

Teachers can then introduce the second part (green sections), which is related to “siblings”. Teachers would then introduce siblings of “I” and of parents. The spouses of siblings are supposed to be introduced together. Teachers could begin from the lower green part which includes brothers and sisters, to the higher green part, which shows parents’ siblings (aunts and uncles). It is worthy to emphasize that in Chinese “brother” and “sister” are distinguished as two pairs of words, which combines age with gender (Huang & Jia, 2000). This process requires students to remember accurately how to address younger and elder siblings as errors may be regarded as disrespect. Additionally, in the higher green part, teachers would especially stress the appellations of paternal uncles which are unlike maternal uncles and are differentiated by age. Those who are the father’s elder brothers should be called as bóbo, while father’s younger brothers – shūshu.

Teachers should then review the third section (blue section) that reviews younger generations including children, grandchildren, and children of siblings. Teachers are encouraged to start from “daughter”, “son” and their spouses, then extend to grandchildren, nephews and nieces. It is necessary to stress that appellations of grandchildren, nephews and nieces on female blood lines (sister and daughter) are different from on the side of male relatives (brother and son). For example, in English
both sister’s and brother’s sons are called “nephew” and their daughter – “niece.”

However, in Chinese both “nephew” and “niece” has two different terms for each sibling: a sister’s son is called wàishēng; a brother’s son – zhízi, sister’s daughter is wàishēngnǚ; brother’s daughter – zhínǚ. Similarly, grandchildren on the daughter’s side are called wàisūn (grandson) and wàisūnnǚ (granddaughter). On the son’s side, grandson is sūnzi and granddaughter is sūnnǚ. By analyzing the examples above, teachers could highlight related Chinese cultural knowledge that explains why family members on female blood lines are called wài, such as wàipó (mother’s mother), wàishēng (sister’s son), wàisūn (daughter’s son). This is because wài means “outside” in Chinese. “Due to the long tradition of discrimination against women, wives are looked upon as outsiders to the family and daughters’ future outsiders” (Huang & Jia, 2000, p. 6).

Teachers can then introduce the last section (orange section) that relates to “cousin”. Unlike in English, “cousin” does not clearly point out the semantic meaning of gender, in Chinese “cousin” has eight different terms depended on relative age within the same generation, consanguineal, and affinal relations (Huang & Jia, 2000). Matrilineal cousins are also addressed as biǎo, male matrilineal cousins are biǎogē (older one) and biǎodi (younger one); female matrilineal cousin – biǎojiě (older one) and biǎomèi (younger one). In consanguineal relations, cousins on the paternal aunt’s and uncle’s blood lines are supposed to be called tàng. Relatively, patrilineal cousins are tànggē, tàngdì, tàngjiě, tàngmèi as indicated in Figure 1.

After introducing these four coloured sections, the whole picture of Chinese kinship terms should be replicated on the board. Teachers are encouraged to lead students to read all the kinship terms as presented in the teaching order, in order to reinforce
memorization. Next, teachers can present students with information about possessive pronouns in Chinese in order to link the kinship terms with communication in the end of the lesson.
Introducing Possessive Pronouns in Chinese

Before introducing possessive pronouns to students, teachers are encouraged to lead students to review personal pronouns in Chart 9 (lesson 2), as adding the suffix *de* in the end of each personal pronoun results in possessive pronouns in Chinese. Thus, teachers could teach students possessive pronouns by referring to Figure 2, which shows how to make changes on personal in order to demonstrate the possessive pronoun visually.

![Figure 2: Chinese Possessive Pronouns.](image)

Figure 2 shows the process of adding suffix *de* to personal pronouns visually. Based on the personal pronouns students have learned in the last lesson, learners may find it easy to memorize all the possessive pronouns in a short time. With the help of the figure, teachers could lead students to read each possessive pronoun several times, gesturing the direction shown by arrows in the picture above. In this way, students can have both verbal and visual representations of the possessive pronouns in Chinese.
Role play: Applying Kinship Appellations in Dialogues

After teaching the previous two parts about specific theoretical knowledge, teachers could facilitate an activity to help students use kinship terms and possessive pronouns in practice. A role play activity is suggested. According to Jarvis (2010), role play encourages students to actively participate in the natural learning environment, and gaming is regarded as a useful cognitive element for initial learning experience. In the game, the class could assume the role of a family, with each student choosing a specific family member to play. Students are then required to find other “family members” in the class in order to form a complete family. Once the family is formed, students should know each other’s identification in the family.

First, teachers could pick one student randomly and ask the other students who he or she is. As every student will be playing a different role, their relationship with the selected family member teachers will be different, requiring that students answers also be different. Here are several possible sentences teachers could guide students to use in the game:

(“be” verb – shì, “who” – shéi)

• tā shì shéi? (Who is he/she?)
  → tā shì wǒde ... (He/ She is my…)
  → tā shì wǒmende... (He/ She is our…)

Second, each of the students are encouraged to introduce other students as a family member to teachers. They may also pick up a classmate or several classmates who may be playing the same role and introduce the relation as a family member to the other students in the class. They may use the following sentences.

→ tā shì wǒde ... (He/ She is my…)
Lastly, teachers could also encourage students to introduce themselves to other family members and clarify relations with others in the family so they could make use of possessive pronouns and personal pronouns as much as possible. In order to make conversations, students may want to choose to use the following sentences:

- **nǐ shì shéi? (Who are you?)**
  - **wǒ shì nǐde... (I am your...)**
  - **wǒ shì nǐmende... (I am your...)**
- **nǐmen shì shéi? (Who are you guys?)**
  - **wǒmen shì nǐde... (We are your...)**
  - **wǒmen shì nǐmende... (We are your...)**
- **tāmen shì shéi? (Who are they?)**
  - **tāmen shì wǒmende... (They are our...)**
  - **tāmen shì nǐde... (They are your...)**
  - **tāmen shì nǐmende... (They are your...)**
- **wǒ shì shéi? (Who am I?)**
  - **nǐ shì wǒde... (Informal you are my...)**
  - **nǐ shì wǒmende... (Informal you are our...)**
  - **nín shì wǒde... (Formal you are my...)**
  - **nín shì wǒmende... (Formal you are our...)**
- **wǒmen shì shéi? (Who are we?)**
  - **nǐmen shì wǒde... (You guys are my...)**
  - **nǐmen shì wǒmende... (You guys are our...)**
During the role play game, teachers are not expected to introduce grammar rules. Instead, teachers should only write down those possible sentences and allow students to choose what they need to use from the options by directly reading them to read the statements out loud in the conversation. In the process, learners have to use possessive and personal pronouns and kinship appellations repeatedly so they are able to memorize the words and have a deep understanding of how to address family members in Chinese through the various roles they have played in this lesson.
Lesson 4: Numbers

Main Idea

The main objective of this lesson is to provide students with information about Chinese numbers, typical gestures used to represent numbers in China, and the use of numbers in dates.

Goals

There are three goals that teachers are expected to help students to achieve: 1) enabling students to speak cardinal and ordinal numbers in Chinese language; 2) acquiring the skill of gesturing numbers in a Chinese way; 3) mastering how to indicate an accurate date in Chinese.

Lesson Plan

• Teaching basic Chinese numbers (0-10) and the corresponding gestures.

• Clarifying patterns by which larger Chinese cardinal numbers and ordinal numbers are formed.

• Introducing the day, week, mouth and year when expressing a date in Chinese.
What to Teach?

This lesson is designed to support beginning language learners speak Chinese numbers, gesture numbers with one hand, and use Chinese numbers to express dates. Teachers are encouraged to teach learners basic numbers (0-10) first in preparation for introducing patterns of forming larger numbers later in this lesson. As part of this process, it is useful for students to learn to gesture numbers in the Chinese way as a part of cultural knowledge. After students master how to speak any Chinese numbers, teachers could teach them the way to form ordinal numbers based on cardinal numbers. In the last part of the lesson, to make the connection of numbers with daily conversation, teachers would teach students how to express dates, which requires students to know words related to week, month and year.

Why Teach?

Numbers are integral part in daily communication. Thus, it is important to provide beginners with knowledge about Chinese numbers, which can build a good foundation for their further Chinese learning and communication. Chinese number gestures are commonly used in China. Thus, it is useful for learners to understand the meaning of these gestures and be able to integrate them in conversation with native speakers. Furthermore, teaching how to express dates is a way for students to use numbers in communication. As part of expressing dates, students’ memorization of numbers can be reinforced.

How to Teach?

To help learners learn all the Chinese numbers pronunciation effectively, teachers are encouraged to start by teaching small numbers (0-10), which are the basic units to
form larger numbers in Chinese. After the acquisition of numbers, students could be taught to learn patterns to speak larger numbers. Teaching numbers should focus on pronunciation rather than writing numbers. Thus, teachers should use verbal and visual approaches to help students acquire pronunciations. In the last part of the lesson, after teaching students how to express weeks, months and years in Chinese, teachers can facilitate students to practice articulating dates in Chinese within groups.
Basic Chinese Numbers (0-10)

Every number from zero to ten only has one syllable in Chinese, which may facilitate students’ ease at learning their pronunciations. Teachers are encouraged to focus on teaching learners how to pronounce numbers from zero to one in Chinese rather than how to write them in Chinese characters. Thus, teachers could write in Arabic numerals (0-10) on the board and write their Chinese pronunciations in Pinyin on each of the top as Chart 10 shows below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>líng</td>
<td>yī</td>
<td>èr</td>
<td>sān</td>
<td>sì</td>
<td>wǔ</td>
<td>liù</td>
<td>qī</td>
<td>bā</td>
<td>jiǔ</td>
<td>shí</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 10: Chinese Pronunciations of Number 0-10.

Teachers are encouraged to read every number as an example for students to imitate and practice pronunciation. Teachers should pause between every two numbers in order to correct students’ pronunciation carefully. Since these numbers are the foundation for forming larger numbers in Chinese, eliminating tone errors in order to make accurate pronunciations is very crucial in this stage for students. When students are pronouncing the numbers, teachers could also guide students to gesture tones as mentioned in Lesson 1 so that students can remember pronunciations kinesthetically. After correcting pronunciations, teachers may group these numbers (e.g., 0, 1-2-3-4-5, 6-7-8-9-10), and guide students to read numbers in every group of numbers together. Finally, teachers could encourage students to read all these numbers together (0-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10) with increasing speed.
Chinese Number Gestures

In many countries, people gesture numbers from one to ten with two hands. However, in China people prefer to use a series of specific gestures to express these ten numbers with one hand (Lee, 2017). Due to language barriers caused by various dialects in Chinese, these hand gestures were created in ancient China. Moreover, these gestures are used for the purpose of dealing with prices secretly in public among businessmen. Nowadays, the original purpose of these gestures has faded away, but the Chinese still commonly use them as an important cultural symbol in daily conversations (Kim, 2016). Once learners have learned these gestures, they will find it easy to express any numbers by combining these gestures in the conversation. In order to help students learn these gestures, teachers demonstrate each gesture in front of students at the same time as pronouncing it. Students should mimic teachers’ gestures and pronunciations of number. The gesture of each number from 1-10 are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Chinese Number Gestures 1-10.
Patterns of Forming Bigger Numbers and Ordinal Numbers

Forming Larger Numbers

Basic numbers from zero to ten has been taught in the previous part. Now teachers can proceed to teach students how to speak larger numbers in Chinese through several patterns. The bigger numbers are divided into three groups: 11-19, 20-99, and 100-100,000,000. I provide charts expressing the pattern to form numbers and explain the details of teaching for teachers.

**Group 1: 11-19.** In the Chinese language, numbers eleven to nineteen consist of ten and one of the single number (1-9). The pattern of forming eleven to nineteen in Chinese is indicated in Chart 11. With the help of this chart, combining ten with other numbers is clearly shown to the learners. Teachers only need to instruct students to read shí (ten) in the red section first on the very left of the chart in combination with a number from the blue section across the top. The pronunciation of combining these two numbers is the pronunciation of the corresponding number in the white section. For example, shí (10) + yī (1) = shíyī (11).

<p>| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>shí</td>
<td>shíyī</td>
<td>shier</td>
<td>shisān</td>
<td>shisi</td>
<td>shiwǔ</td>
<td>shiliù</td>
<td>shiqǐ</td>
<td>shibā</td>
<td>shijuù</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chart 11: Guide of Pronouncing Numbers 11-19.*

**Group 2: 20-99.** Before teaching numbers among 20-99, it is recommended that teachers instruct students to learn patterns of 10 such as for 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, and 90. The pronunciation of these numbers is made up of the pronunciation of a number in 2-9 and the numbers 10. This pattern is visually indicated in Chart 12. Teachers can lead
students in reading a number in the green section first then add shí (10) in the red section in order to show learners how these eight numbers are spoken in Chinese.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>èr 2</td>
<td>èrshí 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sān 3</td>
<td>sānshí 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sì 4</td>
<td>sìshí 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wǔ 5</td>
<td>wǔshí 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liù 6</td>
<td>liùshí 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qī 7</td>
<td>qīshí 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bā 8</td>
<td>bāshí 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jiǔ 9</td>
<td>jiǔshí 90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 12: Guide of Pronouncing Numbers 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, and 90.

As mentioned by Knowles (1978), adults’ prior knowledge and experience is a resource in learning. Thus, it may be effective for teachers to connect the pattern of forming larger numbers in Chinese with the English formulas that learners have already acquired. After teaching the numbers in Chart 12, the rest of the numbers from 20-99 use the same pattern which is followed in English such as 22 = twenty-two, 34 = thirty-four. Similarly, in Chinese, 22 = èrshí(20) èr(2), 34 = sānshí(30) sì(4) and so on. Students only need to say 20/30/40/50/60/70/80/90 first and then add a single digit at the end in order to form the pronunciation of the subsequent numbers.

Group 3: 100-100,000,000. The teaching approach for this group is similar to the approach we used in the last group. First, teachers should introduce a counting unit for
large numbers in the Chinese language. Specifically, teachers need to make a stress on
the way of counting large numbers beyond 9999 in Chinese is different from English. In
Chinese, people do not say the number 10,000 as ten thousand. Instead, there is a special
unit for 10,000 which is called wàn. Due to the difference in counting units, English
speaking adult learners, who have already been familiar with the way to express large
numbers in English, may find it difficult to speak these numbers in Chinese. Thus,
teachers could directly tell students the correct pronunciations of counting units for large
numbers via Chart 13 and encourage students to memorize them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese Counting Units</th>
<th>Chinese Pronunciations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>bǎi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>qiān</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10000</td>
<td>wàn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>shíwàn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>bǎiwàn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000,000</td>
<td>qiānwàn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,0000,000</td>
<td>yì</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chart 13: Pronunciation of Counting Units of Large Numbers in Chinese.*

Basing on Chart 13, teachers can encourage students to find the pattern of counting large
numbers in Chinese by themselves.

After teaching the large number units, teachers can use Chart 14 to help students
practice pronouncing numbers based on these units in order to get them prepared to speak
more complicated numbers like 203,900 later. There is no need for teachers to write out
all the possible numbers in this chart. Instead, teachers can record some numbers in the
chart and leaving some blank spaces for students to complete. Chart 14 puts forward
some large numbers for students to practice.
Chart 14: Practice of Basic Large Numbers.

The coloured spaces in Chart 14 are exceptions in counting Chinese numbers. In the red spaces, some pronunciations have changed. For example, the pronunciation of the number 1 is yī as learned previously. However, the pronunciation of the number 1 has been changed into yì or yí. Teachers do not have to explain the reason for changing pronunciations grammatically for the beginners. Instead, students can consider the changes in pronunciation as a language habit of Chinese people. Thus, teachers ought to stress this change in pronunciation to help students pronounce numbers naturally.

Furthermore, teachers are also required to explain another important exception in the blue spaces. As taught before, the number 2 is pronounced as èr, whereas, the number 2 also is sometimes called liǎng in Chinese, as shown in the blue spaces. This exception can also be explained as a language habit since there are also many exceptions in English.

Teachers could instruct students to learn these exceptions again and again in order to reinforce the memorization.

While teaching students to say complicated large numbers, teachers are suggested to show people some typical examples that explain the large number counting pattern in
Chinese. In order to make it clear to students, teachers may split a large number and direct students to read every part loudly, as shown below in the following examples:

- **476 sìbǎi qīshí liù**
  400 sìbǎi
  70 qīshí
  6 liù

- **2309 liǎngqiān sānbǎi líng jiǔ**
  2000 liǎngqiān
  300 sānbǎi
  0 líng
  9 jiǔ

- **5,1001 wǔwàn yìqiān líng yī**
  5,0000 wǔwàn
  1000 yìqiān
  00 líng
  1 yī

- **67,3518 liùshí qīwàn sānqiān wǔbǎi yīshí bā**
  60 liùshí
  70000 qīwàn
  3000 sānqiān
  500 wǔbǎi
  10 yīshí
  8 bā
Ordinal Numbers

The pattern to form ordinal numbers is very simple in Chinese. In English, the first three ordinal numbers (first, second, and third) are different from the rest of the numbers that only require the addition of the suffix -th. However, Chinese ordinal numbers are easier to remember because there are no exceptions such as first, second, and third. By adding dì in the front of any of the cardinal numbers that students have learned in previous lessons, they can form ordinal numbers. Teachers can explain this concept using several examples, such as first = dì + 1 = dìyī; fourth = dì + 4 = dìsì; hundredth = dì + 100 = dìyìbǎi and so on.
Expressing Dates in Chinese

In this section, teachers will instruct students to use the numbers that they learned in the previous sections in practical applications of expressing dates. In the beginning, teachers can introduce some simple words such as today (jīntiān), yesterday (zuótiān), and tomorrow (míngtiān) and lead students to read these phrases several times. Teachers should also mention that the day in a month is expressed by adding hào/rì at the end of the number of the day. It is similar to English where the suffix -th is added to express a day in a month. After introducing this rule, teachers are encouraged to provide students with some examples to practice.

The expression of days in a week and months in Chinese is much simpler than in English. In the Chinese language, there is no special word for each of the days in the week or for each month. The day of week is expressed as the Chinese word “week” with a subsequent number representing the corresponding day in a week. Similarly, months are expressed also in this way in Chinese. Thus, it is recommended that teachers introduce the Chinese words “week” and “month” in order to inspire students to combine these words with numbers in order to express days in a week and the month. Teachers can use Chart 15 guide to students in how to combine numbers with the words “week” and “month”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>4th</th>
<th>5th</th>
<th>6th</th>
<th>7th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>zhōu</td>
<td>yī</td>
<td>èr</td>
<td>sān</td>
<td>sì</td>
<td>wǔ</td>
<td>liù</td>
<td>qī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhōu</td>
<td>yī</td>
<td>èr</td>
<td>sān</td>
<td>sì</td>
<td>wǔ</td>
<td>liù</td>
<td>qī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhōu</td>
<td>yī</td>
<td>èr</td>
<td>sān</td>
<td>sì</td>
<td>wǔ</td>
<td>liù</td>
<td>qī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhōu</td>
<td>yī</td>
<td>èr</td>
<td>sān</td>
<td>sì</td>
<td>wǔ</td>
<td>liù</td>
<td>qī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhōu</td>
<td>yī</td>
<td>èr</td>
<td>sān</td>
<td>sì</td>
<td>wǔ</td>
<td>liù</td>
<td>qī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhōu</td>
<td>yī</td>
<td>èr</td>
<td>sān</td>
<td>sì</td>
<td>wǔ</td>
<td>liù</td>
<td>qī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhōu</td>
<td>yī</td>
<td>èr</td>
<td>sān</td>
<td>sì</td>
<td>wǔ</td>
<td>liù</td>
<td>qī</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>4th</th>
<th>5th</th>
<th>6th</th>
<th>7th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yuè</td>
<td>yī</td>
<td>èr</td>
<td>sān</td>
<td>sì</td>
<td>wǔ</td>
<td>liù</td>
<td>qī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yuè</td>
<td>yī</td>
<td>èr</td>
<td>sān</td>
<td>sì</td>
<td>wǔ</td>
<td>liù</td>
<td>qī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yuè</td>
<td>yī</td>
<td>èr</td>
<td>sān</td>
<td>sì</td>
<td>wǔ</td>
<td>liù</td>
<td>qī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yuè</td>
<td>yī</td>
<td>èr</td>
<td>sān</td>
<td>sì</td>
<td>wǔ</td>
<td>liù</td>
<td>qī</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 15: Expressing Days in a Week and Months in Chinese.
Based on the chart, teachers should remind students to notice the special expression of “Sunday”, which is an exception to the pattern. Additionally, students also get confused about the three expressions zhōu/xīngqī/lǐbài for the word “week” in Chinese, so it is also necessary for teachers to indicate that there is no difference in using any one of these terms.

In addition to teaching words for week and month, teachers also need to introduce how to express a year (nián) in Chinese. Expressing a year in Chinese is different but simpler than in English. Chinese people read the number of a year by every single digit rather than every two digits in English. Teachers should demonstrate the way Chinese people express years with some examples. For instance, 2018 generally is read as èr(2) lìng(0) yī(1) bā(8) in order to help students distinguish the different way of expressing it. It can be beneficial if teachers provide students with other years to practice reading loudly.

After teaching basic units (week, month, and year) for expressing dates, teachers are encouraged to provide model sentences used in talking about dates in daily conversations. Students should be encouraged to use these sentences to practice date expression and numbers in the dialogues they will conduct with classmates. Teachers should encourage students to use the following sentences as much as possible in the conversation. Some example sentences are provided below.

- jīntiān/ zuòtián/ míngtiān shì jǐhào/rì? (What date is today/ yesterday/tomorrow?)

  → jīntiān/ zuòtián/ míngtiān shì XXXXnián XXyuè XXhào/rì. (Today is XXXXyear XXmonth XXday.)
• jīntiān/ zuótiān/ míngtiān shì zhōu/xīngqī/lìbài jī? (What day is today/yesterday/tomorrow?)

➔ jīntiān/ zuótiān/ míngtiān shì zhōu/xīngqī/lìbài X. (Today/yesterday/ tomorrow is X.)
Lesson 5: The Chinese Zodiac

Main Idea

This lesson is designed for teaching the Chinese zodiac as an important cultural sign and a tool for calculating age.

Goals

There are two goals in this lecture: 1) Students will remember the order of the Chinese zodiac and know some stories related to it; 2) Students will be able to discuss their zodiac signs when talking about age as part of daily conversation.

Lesson Plan

- Transmitting the order of the Chinese zodiac.
- Introducing cultural insights about the Chinese zodiac.
- Using Chinese zodiac signs to talk about age in dialogue.
What to Teach?

In this lesson, teachers are expected to teach the Chinese zodiac. As part of this lesson, teachers will not only tell students about the Chinese zodiac, but also would share legends and traditions about the zodiac in order to help students develop a deep understanding of the meaning of zodiac signs in China. Teachers are encouraged to help students form connection between zodiac signs and age in conversation.

Why Teach?

In modern China, the Chinese zodiac is widely used in daily life. Acquiring the knowledge about these zodiac signs may help learners to understand Chinese culture and engage in conversation with native speakers. The Chinese zodiac represents the year when a person was born. Teaching students the Chinese zodiac can allows them to express their age to others in the conversation. Telling one’s age can be connected with the knowledge of numbers taught in the previous lesson. Hence, students can review Chinese numbers and link the knowledge they have learned previously with the new knowledge about zodiac signs in the lesson here.

How to Teach?

Teachers are encouraged to focus on finding a way to assist students effectively memorize the order of the Chinese zodiac signs. To achieve this goal, teachers can use pictures to demonstrate the signs and guide students in the pronunciation of the animal signs at the same time. After students have remembered what the animal signs are, teachers are suggested to link some legends and traditions about these signs in order to provide some cultural insight. In the end, teachers can create an activity for students to connect zodiac signs with practical communication. Thus, teachers may encourage students to use their own zodiac signs in the dialogue when they talk about their age.
The Order of the Chinese Zodiac

The Chinese zodiac (shēngxiǎo) consists of 12 different animal signs (rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog and pig) which change during a 12-year cycle. The Chinese zodiac is popular in China as well as many other Asian countries, such as Vietnam, Korea, and Japan. (Grech, 2015). Based on a brief introduction about the Chinese zodiac, teachers are encouraged to continue showing students the 12 animal signs pictures. Figure 4 shows the order of the Chinese zodiac.

Figure 4: Animal Order in the Chinese Zodiac.

Figure 4 indicates that teachers could draw these animals in sequence or using pictures to represent these animals rather than just writing down the animals’ names in English. Showing the images of animals directly to students may help them to memorize
the order. In addition, these images could leave students an accurate impression of the animals’ images to avoid cultural misunderstandings. For example, the image long is usually translated as “dragon” in English. The image of a “dragon” in western culture and in Chinese culture is completely different. If teachers only write down the word “dragon” without showing its image, English-speaking learners may naturally associate a western dragon with the Chinese dragon, which may make them think this zodiac sign is evil. In Chinese culture the dragon is considered as an auspicious sign. Thus, it is important for teachers to use images of the Chinese zodiac in order to avoid the cultural misunderstandings when students are learning the animal signs in zodiac.

According to Figure 4, it is recommended that teachers write the name of each animal in Chinese Pinyin. There is no need to write Chinese characters because they may distract students from learning pronunciation. Teachers are encouraged to write the name of each animal in Pinyin following the correct order (rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog and pig) one-by-one. While writing each animal’s name, teachers would read out loud the pronunciation for students to imitate. After finishing writing all the animals’ names under the images, teachers could lead students to read each pronunciation several times and correct their pronunciation carefully.

Moreover, teachers need to focus on helping students to memorize the order of the animals in the Chinese zodiac. In Chinese, the name of each animal only has one syllable as shown in Figure 4. Students may find it easy to memorize these syllables if teachers instruct them to read the names of these animals in Chinese with rhythm. There are three different examples of rhythm. First, teachers should divide the 12 animals into 6 groups (shǔ, niú/ hǔ, tù/ long, shē/ mǎ, yang/ hóu, jī/ gǒu, zhū), then lead students in reading
pairs of animals at a time, making a little pause between every two groups. Second, teachers would enlarge the number of animals in a group, dividing the 12 animals into 3 groups (shǔ, niú, hǔ, tù/long, shé, mǎ, yang/hóu, jī, gǒu, zhū). Similarly, they need to pause for a few seconds between the groups. Finally, teachers could link all these three group together and read them aloud slowly, beginning with the first animal and ending with the last one without pause (e.g., shǔ, niú, hǔ, tù, long, shé, mǎ, yang, hóu, jī, gǒu, zhū). Teachers would then encourage students to follow their example and read all of these animals out loud by themselves several times. In this process, the order of these animals will be embedded in students’ minds unconsciously like a jingle. Thus, teachers are suggested to consider using this method to help students memorize the Chinese zodiac in their teaching practice.
Cultural Insight About the Chinese Zodiac

During the teaching of the order of the Chinese zodiac, some students may be curious about how the order of animals was decided in the first place and what these animals mean in Chinese culture. Hence, to help students understand the Chinese zodiac more deeply, teachers are suggested to introduce some legends related to the zodiac signs.

First of all, teachers are encouraged to introduce the legend about the origin of the animal signs. According to Zhang (2008), in ancient China, the Yellow Emperor wanted to choose 12 animals to be palace guards. He decided that the first arriving animals would be registers as guards with honour. Students may be curious about why the cat was not included. Teachers could also mention that the rat is considered as a cunning animal. The rat and cat used to be good friends. However, the rat was worried that the cat would take its place as a guard so at registration day the rat deliberately did not wake up the lazy cat. On its way to the emperor, the rat met the ox and asked to carry him to the destination. They were the first to arrive and, the rat suddenly jumped from the ox’s back to make itself the very first in line. The ox was taken advantage of by the rat, and as the result the rat and the cat became enemies (Zhang, 2008). Based on this legend, the Chinese people regard the rat as cunning and the ox as hardworking and honest. Teachers are suggested to link every animal with a legend as shown above so that students develop a deep understanding about the characteristic that the animals represent in Chinese culture. Since Chinese people believe that one’s animal sign indicates his/her personality (Poupard, 2012), knowing the characteristic of animal images provide students with access to understanding people’s potential personality as well as Chinese culture insight.
Teachers are also encouraged to introduce some related Chinese traditions about the zodiac. For example, teachers could introduce běnmìngnián (本命年) which is “the year of one’s birth animal” (Poupard, 2012, p. 172). This year is considered as an unlucky year by Chinese people. Telling these interesting stories is a way for teachers to stimulate students’ interest in Chinese culture.
Talking About the Chinese Zodiac in Dialogue

Students should be able to find their own animal sign in the zodiac according to their birth year with the help of their teachers. In this part of the lesson, teachers will connect animal signs with a person’s age. In China, people ask others about their animal signs in daily conversation as it is impolite to ask about their age directly, which is similar to etiquette in many other countries. When people are talking about their age, the number is unavoidable. Thus, before practicing speaking about animal signs in conversation, teachers are encouraged to guide students to review the pronunciations of numbers in Chinese, which were taught in the last lesson. Since this handbook proposes avoid explaining grammar rules for learners in this beginning stage, teachers are suggested to directly provide students with example sentences which can be used in discuss age in communication. The possible sentences teachers may choose to use are shown below.

→ nǐ shǔ shénme? (What is your animal sign?)
• wǒ shǔ …(an animal sign) (My animal sign is …)

→ nǐ jīnnián … (years of age) suì le, duìma? (You are … years old this year, aren’t you?)
• duì, wǒ jīnnián…(year of age) suì le. (Yes, I am … years old this year.)
• búduì, wǒ jīnnián…(year of age) suì le. (No, I am … years old this year.)

Teachers may ask students the questions above one-by-one in order to make sure that learners are not making mistakes when speaking whole sentences. After correcting their pronunciation, teachers could divide students into several groups and encourage them to practice these dialogues with each other.
Lesson 6: Chinese Food

Main Idea

The last lesson in the handbook is designed for teaching learners about Chinese food through a famous Chinese dish, Biangbiang noodles. This lesson is also intended to provide students with the opportunity to use the knowledge from previous lessons in real communications.

Goals

In this lesson, students are expected to achieve two goals: 1) practicing Chinese listening and speaking skills through a noodle cooking activity; 2) engaging in interactions with native speakers.

Lesson Plan

• Introducing Chinese food

• Introducing a specific Chinese dish – Biangbiang noodles.

• Interacting with native speakers during the Biangbiang noodle cooking activity.
What to Teach?

This lesson is more practical than other lesson designs in the handbook. Teachers are encouraged to discuss Chinese food generally, then narrow down to a specific Chinese food (Biangbiang noodles are used as an example here). In this lesson, teachers will facilitate a cooking activity for learners to learn how to cook a specific Chinese dish as well as share transmit concepts and phrases about Chinese food.

Why Teach?

According to Knowles (1978), one of the characteristics of andragogy is a readiness to learn. The relevancy between knowledge and practice is crucial. Chinese food can be a very attractive and practical topic that adult learners could directly apply into their daily life. Engin (2009) suggested that foreign language teachers should have an awareness of the positive influence from integrative and interactive motivations can have on students’ language achievement. Following this suggestion, this cooking activity has been designed in order to create an environment where learners can practice Chinese spoken skills by interacting with native speakers and feel Chinese culture in an authentic manner.

How to Teach?

This lesson mainly consists of two parts: a theoretical and a practical section. In the theoretical section, teachers are encouraged to present students with related knowledge and pronunciations about Chinese food. In the practical section, teachers encourage students to participate in the noodle cooking activity. It is best if teachers can invite several Chinese native speakers who can cook the noodles and communicate with learners directly during the cooking process. The goal for teachers is to create a natural conversational environment for students that is as natural as possible. Hence, students can apply the knowledge they have learned in the previous lessons through their interactions with native speakers.
General Introduction to Chinese Food

Teachers should begin the lesson with a class discussion about the types of Chinese food that learners have experienced in order to improve their engagement in the lesson and connect the topic to their personal life. After the discussion, teachers are encouraged to introduce the characteristics of the Chinese food and the eight great regional cuisines of China, which are regarded as a representation of Chinese cuisine. To make these eight regional cuisines clear to learners, teachers may point out the regions and provinces in which these cuisines are located on a map of China. While introducing Chinese food, teachers may need to teach students some necessary words related to the food. For example, wèidào (flavour): suān (sour), tiān (sweet), kǔ (bitter), là (spicy), and xián (salty); the name of common food: miàntiáo (noodle), mǐfàn (rice), hǎixiān (seafood), tāng (soup). Teachers could also teach students some Chinese sayings or proverbs about food, such as mínyǐ shì wéitiān (to the people, foodstuff is all-important). In addition, teachers are encouraged to write down some sentences students may use when talking about food as preparation for the following activity. The sentences are as following:

- zhè shì shéme? (What is this?)
- zhè shì… (This is…)
- wǒ xǐ huān chī… (I like to eat…)
- wǒ bù xǐhuān chī (I don’t like to eat…)
- wǒ yào… (I want…)
- wǒ bù yào… (I don’t want…)

Teachers need to encourage students to read all the words, phrases and sentences taught in this section together and correct their pronunciation.
The Introduction of a Special Food

---- Taking Biangbiang Noodles as an Example

After introducing Chinese food generally, teachers should select one specific Chinese food, which is easy for students to cook for the lesson. Biangbiang noodles are provided here as an example. In teaching practice, teachers can change the food depending on the learners’ preferences, locations or ingredient availability. Teachers are expected to introduce how to cook the specific food via a video. The recipe ought to be read in Chinese step-by-step, along with the person cooking in the video. To help students understand the recipe, teachers could also provide students with handouts where the recipe is written in both Chinese Pinyin and English. Here is the example of teaching cooking Biangbiang noodles in Chinese. First of all, teachers are encouraged to play a video showing the cooking process with an aside explaining the details and tips for every step. With the help of the video, adult learners may almost understand how to make noodles based on their prior cooking experience and knowledge. In order to help learners understand, and remember the recipe for the purpose of cooking in the next part, teachers can provide students with Chart 16 as a handout.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Chinese Pinyin</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>jiāng miànfěn, yìxiē shuǐ, shǎoxū yán hūnhé hǎo.</td>
<td>Mix well the flour, some cold water, and a little bit salt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>jiāng hūnhéháo de miànfén róuchéng guǎnghuáde miàntuán.</td>
<td>Gather the mixed flour into a smooth dough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>xìngmiàn 30 fēngzhōng.</td>
<td>Let the dough rest for 30 minutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>jiāng miàntuán fēnchéng xiǎokuài, mèikuài dàgài zhòng 45 kè.</td>
<td>Divide the dough into several small pieces. Each piece is about 45 grams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>zài miàntuán biāomiàn shuāshàng yóu</td>
<td>Brush some oil on the surface of these pieces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>jiāng miàntuán yòng bāoxiānmó gāizhù ránhòu xìngmiàn yì xiāoshí.</td>
<td>Cover them with a plastic wrapper and let the dough rest for an hour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>qù yikuài miàntuán, yòng gǎnmíanzhàng gānchénghé zhēngfǎngxíng.</td>
<td>Grab a piece of the dough and flatten it into a rectangular shape with a rolling pin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>láchē zhège chángfǎngxíng de tóngshí, jīdǎ ánbian.</td>
<td>Pull and stretch the rectangular piece, using the kneading board.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>tóngyáng chūlǐ qíyú miàntuán.</td>
<td>Repeat with the rest of the pieces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>jiāng chēháode miàn fāngrù kāishuǐzhǒng zhū jīfēnzhǒng, ránhòu chēngrù dàwǎn.</td>
<td>Put the stretched noodles into the boiling water and boil them for a few minutes before gathering the boiled noodles into a big bowl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>jiāng yìxiē cōng jiāng, suàn mò hé lájiāomiàn sǎzài miàndè dǐngbù</td>
<td>Scatter some crushed garlic, ginger, green onion, and red paper on the top of the noodles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>dàorù shǎoxū cù hé jiàngyóu.</td>
<td>Pour some Chinese vinegar and soybean sauce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>zuìhòu, zài miàndè dǐngbù jiāoshàng rèyóu.</td>
<td>Pour some heated oil on the top of the noodles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chart 16: Biangbiang Noodles Recipe.**

The recipe shown in Chart 16 should be completed in a classroom where there are cooking utensils. Class time should be enough to rest the dough and complete the cooking process. Teachers who teach in a traditional classroom that does not have access to these preconditions can try to simplify the recipe above by omitting time-consuming steps. For example, teachers can provide students with rested dough. Due to the inconvenience of using stoves in the classroom, teachers can provide students with
the part of the recipe that guides them in how to stretch noodles. The recipe that also be adopted to be more manageable in a traditional classroom as shown in Chart 17.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Chinese Pinyin</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>qǔ yikuài miàntuán, yòng gānmiànzhàng gānchéng zhèngfāngxìng.</td>
<td>Grab a piece of the dough and flatten it into a rectangular shape with a rolling pin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>lāchē zhège chángfāngxìng de tóngshí, jīdà ànbǎn.</td>
<td>Pull and stretch the rectangular piece, using the kneading board.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>tóngyàng chǔlǐ qìyú miàntuán.</td>
<td>Repeat with the rest of the pieces.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chart 17: Biangbiang Noodles Recipe for the Traditional Classroom.*

Teachers do not need to explain grammar rules in every sentence. Instead, teachers are suggested to provide students with enough time to read the recipe in a group and discussion the sentences. Teachers should be patient to help them solve the problems they have met in comprehension of the recipe.
Cooking Activity

This is the last but very the most important part in the lesson, because learners will have a chance to practice spoken Chinese and apply all their learning achievements of the previous class in the conversation with native speakers. In this part, teachers need to encourage students to engage in the cooking activity. All the ingredients and cooking utensils should be offered to the students in advance so that they can make the noodles following the video and recipe in class.

In order to create a natural language environment during the cooking exercise, teachers are expected to invite several Chinese native speakers to the class, as language partners for the adult learners. These visitors are suggested to participate in the whole cooking process with the learners. During the cooking exercise, they will be allowed to communicate about topics taught in previous lessons, such as their name, age, family members, the zodiac or food interests. Teachers should encourage learners not to be afraid of communicating with native speakers in Chinese. If necessary, learners are allowed to use gestures, postures or other aids that can help them interact with Chinese native speakers while cooking the noodles. Teachers can also encourage visitors to read the recipe in Chinese, as learners are cooking the noodles. It may help students develop their Chinese listening skills. Overall, this activity is designed as a final activity that combines students’ learning achievement throughout the previous lessons, helps them practices listening and speaking skills as part of real interactions, and prepares them for the further Chinese learning.
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CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

There are three parts included in this chapter. The first part critically analyzes and discusses the handbook that was presented in chapter 5. In the second part, I analyze implications of the handbook both for CFL (Chinese as a second language) adult learners and teachers. The last part indicates suggestions for future research and the limitations that are associated with the handbook.

Discussion

This project was prepared with the goal of developing a handbook for teaching Chinese as a foreign language to adult language novices, which was designed to be used by teachers to teach adult subsequent language novice learners who are English speakers. The handbook includes six lessons (Chinese phonetics, self-introduction, family members, numbers, Chinese zodiac, and Chinese food). In each lesson, the handbook has provided specific instructional approaches illustrating what, why, and how to teach each topic to beginner adult Chinese language learners. The lessons include 16 original charts and four figures. These charts and figures were designed to assist teachers to understand the lesson steps. Examples for practicing spoken language skills are also provided in the lessons. All the information and teaching methods suggested to teachers in the handbook are based on the audio-lingual and communicative approaches.

According to the audio-lingual approach, developing speaking and listening skills is more effective than reading and writing skills in foreign language learning (Cook, 2001). Thus, the handbook focuses on directing teachers to teach spoken Chinese language rather than written Chinese. In order to provide teachers with an effective way to teach adult learners spoken Chinese, the handbook encourages teachers to teach the
Chinese words, phrases, and sentences in Pinyin instead of Chinese characters. The first lecture in the handbook is designed for teaching Chinese phonetics through Pinyin. This lecture forms the foundation for all subsequent learning, with the following lessons taught in Pinyin. This system helps students learn to spell and pronounce Chinese quickly and use words and phrases directly as part of the dialogues that are included in the handbook. Consistent with audio-lingual approaches, pattern sentences are provided for dialogue activities in order to help students avoid struggling with grammar rules (Tan, 2016). Audio-lingual approaches indicate that grammar rules should be taught through examples instead of rote memorization. In addition, the audio-lingual approach holds that learners should be aware of repeated pronunciation and pattern sentences. Thus teachers are encouraged to guide students to imitate and repeat the pronunciations after teaching every new words or sentence in the handbook. The lesson designs provide many useful ways to engage in such repetition, including teacher-led read aloud, small group discussions, and communicating with Chinese native speakers.

Another main theory supported in the handbook is the communicative approach. This approach advocates communicative purposes for learning a foreign language (Brown, 2001). The handbook followed this insight provides lecture designs, which are involved in daily communication topics. Except for the first lecture, which is designed for teaching Chinese phonetics as a foundation for the rest of lectures, the next five lessons require students to engage in discussions related to self-introductions, family members, numbers, the Chinese zodiac, and Chinese food. These topics are unavoidable in many natural conversations. The handbook also includes commonly used words and sentences in order to prompt teachers to instruct students to use the knowledge directly as part of
communication practice. Moreover, the handbook specially avoids explaining grammar rules in the sentences theoretically, since communicative competency is believed to be more crucial than understanding grammar (Cook, 2001). Thus, the handbook contains many pattern sentences that students can use in the conversation.

The handbook also suggests that teachers direct students to change words in the pattern sentences to form new sentences. Developing communicative competency is thus embedded in the handbook. This is especially true in the last lesson, which involves preparing and discussing Chinese food as well as integrating and practicing previous knowledge as part of authentic communications with native speakers. Hence, the lecture design suggests that teachers invite Chinese native speakers to join the class activity and encourage learners to communicate with them in a natural language environment (Brown, 2001). Similarly, in lecture 3 (family members), teachers are encouraged to engage with students through practice dialogues using a role-playing activity so that they can be involved in the natural communicative situation.

Overall, the handbook developed in this project is aimed at teaching adult CFL beginners to learn spoken Chinese language for the communicative purpose. The information and resources provided in the handbook have positive implications for both language teachers and learners.

**Implications**

Duff et al. (2013) indicate that developing high-quality instructional materials is considered as a priority in Chinese language international education. This handbook represents such teaching material and meets the need of developing Chinese international education. The handbook provides teachers with an additional resource when teaching the
Chinese language to adult novice learners. In most current CFL textbooks, such as *New Practical Chinese Reader* (Liu, 2015) and the HSK standard course (Jiang, 2014), oral and written Chinese language, including grammar rules, are taught at the same time (Kubler, 2018). From my teaching experience, teaching these skills together when working with adult novices causes difficulty in acquiring both spoken and written skills. Thus, the handbook presented here has explored an innovative way of teaching the Chinese language to adult beginners, which involves separating the development of speaking and listening skills from reading and writing skills in order to promote communication skills.

This innovative teaching perspective presented throughout the handbook is expected to help teachers who have been attempting to improve upon the current teaching approaches presented in current textbooks when teaching adult beginner Chinese language learners. Hopefully, the handbook can motivate teachers to adjust their teaching approaches, breaking the barrier between traditional teaching styles and the newer focus on acquisition of spoken Chinese language in real conversations. With the guidance of the handbook, teachers could focus more on correcting learners’ pronunciations and developing communicative competency in order to build up a firm language foundation for their further learning, helping them to form a sense of the Chinese language.

Since Kubler (2018) claimed that it is easier and more efficient for English speakers to learn spoken Chinese than written Chinese, the handbook focuses on developing learners’ speaking and listening competencies in the context of engaging in conversation. Duff et al. (2013) state that many language textbooks introduce too many new lexical items within their chapters and critique that these new items are not reused
frequently in the latter content, which negatively influencing learners’ practice. To address this problem, the content in the handbook is interconnected. New expressions are frequently recycled in the following lessons. The handbook guides teachers to learn new knowledge step-by-step and review the previous knowledge in later lessons. The content in the later lessons has been gradually enlarged based on the previous lecture. For instance, in the last lesson on Chinese food, learners are guided to review and use the knowledge they have learned in the previous lectures and engage in communication with Chinese native speakers. Therefore, this handbook illustrates to Chinese adult novices various way to learn and reinforce common communication skills.

I will also benefit from the information contained in the handbook as an instructor and researcher. I will use the findings in my future language teaching practice and I will further expand my research. I have already applied some of the instructional approaches presented in the handbook in my CFL classes before and have received positive feedback from adult learners about these approaches. However, developing the handbook has also enriched my understanding of some new instructional approaches. For example, I understood the importance of facilitating group activity for students to practice oral Chinese and how to connect the audio-lingual and communicative approaches theory with teaching practice.

Over time, it would be beneficial to measure the effectiveness of the handbook in context of teaching practice. I intend to use the handbook as a teaching resource in my future classes of Chinese as a foreign language. To measure the effectiveness of the lessons presented in the handbook, I would like to compare the learning experiences of adult beginning Chinese learners from my CFL class with those from other CFL classes.
where teachers use textbooks that train speaking, listening, reaching, and writing skills together. The data can be collected through a test in which all the participants will be assessed the Chinese spoken competency for communication purposes. Data from the two groups will be compared in order to determine whether the handbook is an effective tool for teaching adult novices to learn Chinese.

Moreover, I can also explore students’ enjoyment of the instructional activities as well as gain teachers’ feedback about the effectiveness of the handbook through qualitative interviews. I will design some questions oriented to explore students’ enjoyment and teachers’ comments about using handbook in CFL classes. This research can also be conducted through class observation. I can observe students’ performance and instant feedback in the CFL class where teachers use the handbook for several months. From observation, I can assess and evaluate the handbook with respect to students’ learning and engagement as well as teachers’ practices. Such qualitative research can promote the ongoing development of the handbook based on teachers’ and students’ successes, needs, and overall experiences.

Ultimately it is hoped that over time, the content in the handbook will be expanded, including instruction in developing adult learners written skills to complement their learning of Chinese spoken skills. Hopefully, the handbook will be evaluated and improved in order to be a powerful teaching tool for Chinese language instructors working with adult beginner language learners.

**Limitations**

There are four limitations in this research. The handbook was developed based on the autoethnographic method using my own language and teaching stories. Qualitative
research is easily influenced by the researcher’s personal biases and idiosyncrasies (Anderson, 2010). Autoethnography is criticized in that it places a great emphasis on the self (Méndez, 2013). I have tried to take an objective position as much as possible, however, it was difficult for me to maintain objectivity when sharing my own stories. Additionally, it would be beneficial to incorporate the experiences of other teachers into the handbook, in order to be more representative of other teaching perspectives. Thus, in a future study, I could include more stories about others instructors’ teaching experiences so that the handbook extends beyond my personal experiences.

Second, only a limited number of my learning and instructional experiences were used to develop the handbook. Specifically, I limited the handbook to reflect nine typical stories that represented my language learning and teaching experiences. These nine stories do not include all the challenges and problems that I have encountered as a learner and instructor. These nine narratives, in turn, form the basis for the six lessons contained in the handbook. These six lessons may be insufficient to assist in the teaching of other topics with the exception of the six topics included in the lecture designs.

Third, the handbook does not provide instruction related to connecting learners’ developing spoken skills with written skills. As Cook (2001) stated, speaking and listening skills should be taught earlier than reading and writing skills for at least one year in order to improve learning proficiency. The handbook is intended to promote learners’ speaking skills. As a result, it contains limited discussion about how to connect speaking and listening skills with reading and writing skills. This is a limitation for instructors who wish to teach written Chinese to adult learners who have learned basic spoken skills.
Finally, the handbook does not acknowledge the diversity among adult Chinese language learners with respect to their prior experiences and learning needs. The teaching approaches designed in the handbook may not be suitable for all learners and may not resolve all issues that arise during instruction. Hence, the handbook encourages teachers to critically evaluate and adjust their instructional approaches based on their student needs and classroom context.

**Conclusion**

Chinese is becoming a language of global interest in response to China’s growing economy and internationalization efforts. Promoting Chinese language and culture education is a strategy that China has used to develop “soft power” (Duff et al., 2013). Furthermore, innovative teaching materials are needed to support Chinese language instruction (Duff et al., 2013; Xu, 2012). Kubler (2018) claimed that many Chinese teaching materials teach spoken, written skills, and grammar rules together. This method may be ineffective to teach beginners language according to the audio-lingual approach (Cook, 2001).

To enrich Chinese teaching materials and support current teaching approaches, the handbook developed here provides instructors with six lessons reflecting common themes used in daily communication with adult beginner language learners. The handbook is developed around the analysis of my language learning and teaching stories. Supported by theoretical rationales (i.e., audio-lingual and communicative teaching approaches), the handbook is based on the belief that the instruction of adult language learner novices should focus on teaching speaking and listening skills rather than writing and reading skills. The handbook has provided many practical instructional ideas that
teachers can use directly in their teaching practice. The figures and charts included in this handbook also provide useful tools that Chinese language educators can apply in their instruction. The handbook provides teachers an innovative perspective to teach adult beginner Chinese as a foreign language learners. I believe that the handbook can also inspire teachers to focus their instruction on assisting adults learn Chinese for communication purpose. Regardless, there are still many areas of elaboration in the handbook which will require ongoing study. Exploring effective approaches for teaching adult beginners Chinese as a foreign language will be an ongoing mission for educators now and into the future.
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