Teaching Chinese As a Foreign Language: A Foreigner's Perspective

Frederick J. Poole
Utah State University

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TEACHING CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: A FOREIGNER’S PERSPECTIVE

by

Frederick J Poole

A portfolio submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

Approved:

Dr. Joshua J. Thoms  
Major Professor

Dr. Karin DeJonge-Kannan  
Committee Member

Dr. Li Guo  
Committee Member

Dr. Bradford J. Hall  
Department Head

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY  
Logan, Utah  
2015
ABSTRACT

Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language: A Foreigner’s Perspective

by

Frederick J Poole: Master of Second Language Teaching
Utah State University, 2015

Major Professor: Dr. Joshua J. Thoms
Department: Languages, Philosophy, and Communication Studies

This portfolio reflects the author’s beliefs on effective methods for teaching Chinese as a second language. The first section includes the author’s teaching philosophy, which focuses on communicative language teaching, developing literacy, integrating culture into instruction, and employing technology to facilitate learning. Following the teaching philosophy are three artifacts that were written throughout the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program. First, the language artifact presents a study conducted by the author regarding three different approaches to teaching beginners of Chinese. Second, the literacy artifact is a proposal for a study that examines the effect of reading Chinese via an e-dictionary on incidental vocabulary learning and retention. Third, the cultural artifact is a literature review and lesson plan regarding Chinese compliment responses. Finally, the annotated bibliography provides a record of the authors’ learning in the MSLT program.

(160 pages)
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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................ iii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .................................................................................... iv

INTRODUCTION .............................................................................................. 1

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY ............................................................................. 2

   Apprenticeship of Observation ................................................................. 3
   Professional Environment ....................................................................... 7
   Teaching Philosophy Statement ............................................................. 8
   Professional Development through Teaching Observations .................. 30
   Self-Assessment of Teaching ................................................................. 37

LANGUAGE ARTIFACT ............................................................................... 42

   Introduction .............................................................................................. 43
   Three Approaches to Beginning Chinese Instruction and their Effects on Oral Development ................................................................. 44

LITERACY ARTIFACT ............................................................................. 68

   Introduction .............................................................................................. 69
   The Effects of E-dictionaries on Incidental Vocabulary Learning when Reading Chinese ................................................................. 70

CULTURE ARTIFACT ............................................................................. 85

   Introduction .............................................................................................. 86
   Whose Pragmatics Are We Talking About?: A Lesson Plan on Compliment Responses ................................................................. 87

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES ............................................................. 105

   Introduction .............................................................................................. 106
   Communicative Language Teaching ..................................................... 107
   Developing Literacy ............................................................................... 114
   Teaching Culture ..................................................................................... 122
   Technology .............................................................................................. 129

LOOKING FORWARD ................................................................................ 134

REFERENCES ............................................................................................. 135
APPENDICES........................................................................................................147
Appendix A – Handout #1 for my lesson plan on compliment responses……..148
Appendix B – Handout #2 for my lesson plan on compliment responses……..149
Appendix C – Handout #3 for my lesson plan on compliment responses……..150
Appendix D – Handout #4 for my lesson plan on compliment responses……..151
Appendix E – Handout #5 for my lesson plan on compliment responses……..152
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Rubric for Oral Assessment</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Group Averages of Oral Assessment</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Group Averages of Character Recognition Scores</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Main Categories of Compliment Responses</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

This portfolio is the accumulation of the work that I completed over the last two years in the MSLT program. The teaching philosophy section is the core of the portfolio and it includes my own language learning experiences, where I see myself in the future, my teaching philosophy as well as teaching observations of myself and my classmates.

My teaching philosophy focuses on four pedagogical aspects that I consider pivotal to teaching Chinese as a second language. First, the communicative language teaching approach, through which students take an active role in their learning as they complete tasks that reflect real-life communication. The second area of focus is on developing literacy. In this section, I first point out the difficulties of learning to read in Chinese and then I demonstrate the methods I employ to help my learners overcome these difficulties. In the third aspect, I illustrate the facets of Chinese culture that are particularly important for second language learners, and then I provide several examples of how I teach those facets. Finally, in the last section I examine the role of technology in the classroom and how I use it to achieve my pedagogical goals.
TEACHING PHILOSOPHY
APPRENTICESHIP OF OBSERVATION

My fascination with language began at a later stage in life than it does for most linguists. The first time that I was introduced to a foreign language wasn’t until my senior year of high school. I was given the opportunity to take college-level courses at a local junior college. My advisor suggested I take a Spanish class, as it would prove useful in my collegiate career. However, growing up in a rural community, I saw little need for languages other than English. Even though I was not interested in Spanish, I was still a good student and, thus, heeded my advisor’s suggestion. My first language course was a disappointment: the teacher taught straight from the book and mainly in English. Although I passed the class with ease, I still felt that I had wasted an entire semester. I could produce numerous vocabulary words, but when I encountered a native speaker of Spanish I could say nothing.

The following year, I enrolled in the University of Colorado, where to my dismay found out that I was required to have at least three semesters of a foreign language. A key turning point in my linguistic life came after my third semester of Spanish when I began to feel comfortable in the classroom and to enjoy the experience of communicating in a second language. I decided to declare Spanish as my major, thus opening the door to more advanced courses.

In the fall semester of my senior year, I went to Chile. It was there that I had my first immersion experience and upon returning I was a proficient speaker of a second language. Finally understanding the language, and being able to converse freely in my Spanish courses, I fell in love with the language. I enjoyed most of my language teachers at the advanced levels, because the classes consisted of conversations about literature,
whereas my lower-level classes were a series of incessant drills. I believe that quality language teachers are especially needed in the lower-level classes, as it is these classes that are most difficult to teach. Finding a way to reach students, to help them understand what is being said, and to make the content interesting at a beginner level is no easy feat and teachers who are able to do this are quite exceptional.

Upon graduating from the university, I was awarded a teaching position in southern Spain. I taught there for a year, but never really developed a sense of who I was as a teacher. To be honest, I was there mainly to develop my language skills; teaching was just a means to an end. It wasn’t until I went to China that I really began to enjoy teaching and language acquisition as a field of study.

While in China, my experience with language acquisition was two-sided, as a teacher and as a student. I was back in the classroom, this time studying Chinese. My Chinese professors really loved their job, but their teaching methodology was outdated. Classes generally began with ‘repeat after me’ for new words, then individual reading of the dialogue, followed by a classroom reading, then a performance of the dialogues. There was no opportunity for self-expression, no opportunity for discussion, just simple ‘repeat after me’ exercises and answering teachers’ questions. Many of my classmates dropped out while others just stopped attending class. I was just stubborn enough to go every day, partly because the school refused to refund my tuition if I dropped out, and partly because I enjoyed the company of my classmates.

It was due to these Chinese classes that I began to improve my own teaching methods; I did not want my students to feel the same as my classmates. At the time, there was not much support at our language school, but there were a few teachers who took
pride in their work. One in particular was Jesse Walker. I remember going by his class one day and hearing a loud screaming female voice. I ran to the door, looked in, and saw Jesse lying on the floor, he was acting out the word ‘to die’. He was a bit dramatic and a bit silly, but I couldn’t stop watching him, and I realized that neither could his students. I stayed at the door and watched the rest of his class. He presented all of his new words through total physical response (TPR), had his students practicing in groups, and had engaging games and activities to review everything he did.

The following year Jesse and I were inseparable. We studied Chinese together, worked together, and spent our free time together. Jesse was the perfect mix between a mentor and a friend. When living in China for an extended period of time, it’s important to have both. Our time spent together was dominated by discussions on language teaching. The more we talked about our ideas for games and presentation methods, the more I became enthralled with language pedagogy. I began to read about second language acquisition theory and after every book or article I read, we would discuss it in great detail. The conversations helped me develop my ideas and beliefs about teaching.

After all these years of watching teachers, for me, the measure of a good teacher depends on two qualities, passion and belief in the students. I believe that passionate teachers will find a way to help their students learn. If a lesson fails or if a student is not learning, a passionate teacher will do whatever it takes to help the student improve. The second characteristic is a strong belief in the students. If a teacher believes that his or her students will do great things, then it is possible that they will do great things. However, the moment that a teacher thinks that a language is too hard, or that students can only perform at a certain level, then that is exactly what the student will do. Teachers hold a
very delicate role in society. Students at all levels look to their teacher as the source of knowledge, or as the expert in the field. Even in a student-centered classroom, the teacher has influence over his or her students’ beliefs and thoughts on a topic. By placing faith in students’ abilities, teachers effectively arm students with the power of confidence.

Most of my experience in learning languages has been from what I would call the ‘what not to do’ teaching methods. While one can learn a lot from these types of classes, it is still important to get examples on the other side of the spectrum. I came to Utah State University (USU) to study in the MSLT program with this goal in mind. I wanted to be around other people who were as passionate about teaching as I was. I wanted to learn from what others were doing while sharing my own experiences at the same time. Finally, I wanted to be a part of the next generation of language researchers and contribute to the development of the second language acquisition (SLA) field. So far, my experience at USU has been very rewarding. I have had the opportunity to learn from many intelligent professors, but most of my learning has come from my fellow language teaching colleagues. Even teachers with little experience have some wonderful ideas for the classroom. I know my learning experience has just begun, but then again, as a teacher one never stops learning.
PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT

With my ability to speak multiple languages and my diverse teaching background, my options after completing the MSLT program are quite plentiful. I have experience teaching Chinese at the university level, Spanish at the high-school level, and English at all levels. I have, however, narrowed my selections down to three possibilities. I can see myself either teaching Chinese in a high school, going on to pursue a PhD in SLA, or moving abroad to teach English as a foreign language (EFL). Regardless of where I teach, I prefer to teach beginners as I find teaching true beginners to be both challenging and rewarding. Therefore, this teaching philosophy will focus on the methods that I believe will help my students surpass the novice level in their target language in the most efficient manner. Obviously, there is a difference between teaching Chinese, Spanish and English. However, I believe that the principles that I have learned in the MSLT program are applicable across all languages.
TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

Learning a language is complex. The reality for most language teachers is that there is a limited amount of class time to teach an infinite amount of material. Every year when I sit down to plan my semester, I feel that I am leaving something out. I want to teach pop culture, character morphology, radicals, stroke orders, slang, idioms, and so much more, but it’s just not feasible. Hadley (2001) says, “there has been an abundance of creative new approaches, materials, teaching ideas, and technological innovations in recent years, and no lack of stimulating, scholarly debate about how best to use them” (p. 1). In order to decide how and what to teach, language teachers must consider their students’ goals, the reality of achieving those goals, and the most efficient method of accomplishing them. Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, and Mandel (2001) point out that “a principal goal of language teaching for several decades has been, and continues to be, speaking proficiency” (p. 2). Although speaking proficiency may be the foremost goal of language learners, achieving this goal requires the development of the learner’s sociocultural competence, stylistic competence, actional competence, and communication strategies (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). In addition to cultivating these competencies and skills, language teachers must also consider students’ interest and cognitive ability. This teaching philosophy will illustrate the strategies, methods, and theories that I employ to achieve these goals in the Chinese classroom. I will focus on four parts that I believe effectively contribute to the acquisition of Chinese: communicative language teaching, integrating culture into instruction, developing literacy skills, and using technology into the classroom.
Communicative Language Teaching

The communicative approach is based on the principle that learning a language occurs through meaningful interactions via the target language and, thus, emphasis is placed on accuracy of meaning, rather than accuracy of pronunciation or grammar (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001). Lessons are designed with the intent of teaching students only what they need to know in order to accomplish a specific goal. The objective that students must accomplish is a communicative goal, which reflects a task that could occur in an everyday situation, such as ordering at a restaurant or discussing housing preferences with a real-estate agent. In both of these cases, lessons are designed so that students are provided with the necessary tools (vocabulary, grammar, culture points, etc.) to carry out the task. This allows students to learn language and concepts from the target language that can be used when they leave the classroom.

Teacher and Student Roles

Learning a second language requires “using the language to interpret and express real-life messages” (Lee & VanPatten, 2003, p. 6). To provide students with sufficient opportunities to engage in communication, I must become the “architect” (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001, p. 8) of the class. As the architect, I design activities and exercises that allow students to participate with their classmates in meaningful exchanges via the target language. The students then become the workers who perform the tasks. “The responsibility of the students is to participate fully in the activities” (Ballman, et al., 2001, p. 8). In this method, students are no longer passive recipients of instruction; rather they are active participants, who are responsible for their learning.
Only when the teacher is removed from the center of the classroom can students receive sufficient opportunities for meaningful communication.

**Role of Input**

Although the communicative approach places a strong emphasis on communication, and thus, speaking (output), there is still a prominent role for input in instruction. Simply stated, without input, acquisition cannot occur. Lee and VanPatten (2003) highlight two key components of ‘good’ input delivered in the classroom: it must be comprehensible and it must contain a message for the learner to attend.

First, I am able to provide comprehensible input by speaking slowly and clearly while making use of body language to facilitate understanding. Also, input is more comprehensible if I remain within my students’ linguistic abilities. After all “most children get some kind of simplified input when learning their first language” (VanPatten & Williams, 2007, p. 27). In addition to modifying my speech, I also make use of flashcards and PowerPoint slides to assist understanding. Making input comprehensible is not only necessary for acquisition to occur, but it also helps maintain student interest in the class. It goes without saying that students who do not understand the lesson will be less likely to pay attention.

Although it is important, comprehensible input is not enough; input must also hold a message for the learner to attend as well as a means of making the form or structure of the message more accessible to the learner. This is to say that if students understand that I am expressing an opinion about nutrition, but they don’t notice the form that is used to deliver this message, then language development stalls. The input that the learner actually attends to and processes in working memory is called intake (Lee &
VanPatten, 2003). To maximize intake, I provide my students with input exercises that require them to not only understand a message but to also notice the form. For example, when teaching a unit on the house, I first present my students with a picture of a house. I then use pictures to describe the number of rooms, the size of rooms, and the types of rooms in the house. While my students listen to the message, they follow and record what is said on a worksheet. If they are not aware of both the message and the form, they will not be able to complete the tasks on the worksheet. Also, my students know that after the listening exercise, they will participate in a discussion in which they must use the information they just recorded. The discussion includes comprehension questions as well as questions at a higher cognitive level, such as expansion and inference questions. The discussion, which can be done as either a class activity or a small group activity, pushes students to process the input they just received. This is just one example of what I do as a teacher to keep my students focused on form.

This activity displays two other key components regarding the delivery of input in the classroom. First, input is not classroom instruction (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). Often, teachers believe that simply speaking in the target language is enough, but as I have illustrated, input is much more complex. Secondly, input should resemble real-life conversation as much as possible. When describing my house to my students, I describe it in the context of a story. In an everyday situation, learners will rarely have a conversation, in which a person begins by saying, ‘Ok, I am going to talk about houses and how I feel about them.’ Instead, one may say, ‘I really hate my house. The kitchen is too small, and I only have two bedrooms.’ This is a statement that I use as an introduction to a unit on houses. By expressing my hate for my current house, I am setting the stage
for a description of the house, but in a communicative manner. These details may seem trivial, but I believe they prepare students for authentic conversations.

**Task-Based Activities**

At the heart of the communicative approach are task-based activities. Task-based activities are defined by three key principles: they are learner-centered, they focus on meaningful exchange of information, and they consist of a series of steps that culminate in the completion of a communicative goal (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001). Task-based activities prepare students for real-life communication because they are driven by communicative goals and not by grammar concepts. Students will never be asked to produce a grammar structure on the streets of China, but they may be asked by a curious local to describe their home in America.

Learner-centered indicates that activities are designed so that students must rely on student-to-student interaction to complete a task (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001). This is in contrast to traditional speaking activities, for which students could either invent answers at random or find them via structural patterns. Information-gap activities are prime examples of student-to-student activities. They “provide learners with different but complementary pieces of information that must be combined to successfully accomplish the goal of the activity” (Ballman et al., p. 74). Student-to-student interactions are a fundamental component of the communicative classroom because they often lead to negotiation of meaning, for which “learners may ask for repetition and clarifications, or they may use some other device to signal that comprehension is problematic” (Lee & VanPatten, 2003, p. 31). Negotiating meaning not only helps the learner turn input into intake, but also helps the learner develop
communication strategies that will prove useful throughout the student’s language learning experience.

Meaningful exchange of information requires that there is a purpose to the exchange. The purpose of an exchange usually comes in the form of a follow-up activity. For example, if students collect information regarding their classmates’ homes, then they should have a final activity that can only be completed by using the information collected. In some language classes, students are given pair work in the form of surveys. While surveys are a treasured tool in the communicative classroom, they quickly lose their value if students are not required to do something with the information that they have collected. When the teacher makes the exchange of information meaningful, students are motivated to complete the task.

Finally, task-based activities result in the completion of a communicative goal. At the beginning of each unit, I inform my students of the goal that they will be able to complete at the end of the week. The activities that I design will aid in the completion of that goal. It is through these activities that vocabulary, culture, and grammar are taught, but they are taught only if they serve the function of completing the communicative goal. “Essential grammar explanation helps the student carry out the communicative function, and ‘too much information’ only burdens the student by distracting him or her from the communicative goal” (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001, p. 39). This principle can also be applied to vocabulary and culture. Successful completion of a communicative goal allows the students to experience success.

The communicative approach provides my students with the best opportunities to develop their language skills through communication, which is defined as, "the
expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning in a given context” (Lee & VanPatten, 2003, p. 55). Through the communicative approach, students are not only set up for success, but they also learn language and skills that can be applied to real-life situations.

Occasionally when teaching a lesson in the communicative approach, culture can be forgotten. The assumption often made is that if students are communicating in the target language, they will pick up the cultural references incidentally. However, in my experiences, students often navigate the communicative activities using cultural concepts from their L1. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers actively seek opportunities to not only introduce culture into the classroom, but to also illustrate the role and importance of culture in communication.

**Integrating Culture into Instruction**

Few would deny the importance of culture in learning a language. Durocher Jr. (2007) says, “an awareness and understanding of subjective culture is vital to language learning because language cannot be separated from thought and thought is based on assumptions, values and beliefs” (p. 145). Therefore, the focus is not on whether we should teach culture, but on what culture we should teach and when we should teach it.

One of my goals as a Chinese language teacher is that when students leave my classroom they not only have an understanding of the Chinese culture, but they are also able to view the world from a different culture’s perspective. Bennett (1986) argued that developing cultural sensitivity requires that learners move from an ethnocentric to an ethnorelative view of the world. According to Bennett, ethnocentrism refers to students whose beliefs about another culture are “grounded in the individual’s own cultural values
and assumptions” (p. 147). Bennett states that when a person denies the reality of cultural difference, they are at the most ethnocentric point, as their “own world view is unchallenged as central to all reality” (p. 182). On the other hand, students in the ethnorelative stage “understand and accept that they perceive the world through culturally conditioned cognitive categories that are relative with respect to reality and with respect to those of other cultures” (Durocher Jr., 2007, p. 147). Bennett claims that a person who is at the highest point of ethnorelativism is a person who “can construe differences as processes, who can adapt to those differences, and who can additionally construe him or herself in various cultural ways” (Bennett, p. 186). In my classroom, my objective is to help my students move towards an ethnorelative stage. Durocher Jr. points out that language instruction is not enough to develop cultural understanding, rather the teacher must make a conscious effort to teach culture. In the following sections, I will identify key concepts in Chinese culture, and then I will present the strategies that I use to propel my students towards an ethnorelative perspective of Chinese culture.

**Chinese Culture**

While many of my students may never go abroad, a goal of my classroom is to educate students on the intricacies of Chinese culture and society. This knowledge will not only facilitate their assimilation into Chinese society (if they choose to go to China), but it will also prove useful when interacting with native speakers of Chinese here in the United States. Before I illustrate the methods that I utilize to teach culture, I must first demonstrate the key components of Chinese culture that are difficult for Americans to grasp. Gao (2007) conducted a survey on 20 Americans living as expatriates in China. The survey was aimed at discovering the obstacles that Americans faced when moving to
China. Gao highlighted three types of obstacles expatriates face: cognitive, motivational, and structural.

Cognitive obstacles are caused by unrealistic expectations that the Americans had of China and their low language proficiency levels. “Some expatriates imagined a communist China with an iron-fist government that keeps its citizens political prisoners…others imagined an artistic China with every Chinese person possessing poetry writing skills…” (Gao, p. 40). Due to my extended stay in China as an expatriate, I am able to provide my students with a more realistic view of the lifestyle that they should expect when living in China. For example, I have taught a lesson on renting an apartment, in which students use authentic websites to search for apartments in major Chinese cities. After the activity, many of my students expressed surprise at the quality of housing in China. Many of them had envisioned a China where people were living in ghettos.

Motivational obstacles concern the extent to which expatriates are willing to adapt to Chinese culture. In my experience, Americans living in China can easily fall into a foreigner circle. This means that they eat at foreign (non-Chinese) restaurants, spend time with foreign friends, and avoid assimilation into Chinese society. To avoid this trap, I cultivate an appreciation for Chinese culture and society in my classroom. Through role playing activities, students learn the intricate rituals and cultural conventions involved in everyday life. By learning these rituals and conventions, students not only become more interested in the culture, but they also gain a desire to put what they have learned into practice.

Finally, structural obstacles include “social role conflicts with the collective nature of society of China” (Gao, 2007, p. 35). By demonstrating a thorough knowledge...
of Chinese culture, students are more likely to be accepted as an in-group member, which is paramount in integrating oneself into a collectivist society (Durocher Jr., 2007). My goal in teaching culture is for my students to be aware of and to understand these obstacles, and then to provide them with the tools and knowledge to overcome them.

Being culturally aware can also prevent linguistic misunderstandings. Often Chinese words are directly translated into an English counterpart, “when key words are oversimplified, not only linguistic misunderstandings but also cultural misunderstandings can result” (Myers, 2000, p. 7). A good example of this occurred in my second year of living in China. One of my colleagues had learned the word 讨厌 (taoyan4), which directly translates into ‘hate’. When she heard a fellow female Chinese colleague use this word in reference to a male teacher, she believed that the male teacher had done something inappropriate to the female teacher. Chaos ensued. Unfortunately for my friend, she did not know that 讨厌 is often used in a flirtatious tone, whereas 恨 (hen4) is closer to the ‘hate’ that is used in English. Misunderstandings of this nature occur not only on the lexical level, but also on the pragmatic level. In Chinese, there is the concept of mianzi which is often translated into English as ‘saving face’ or ‘showing respect’. Students who don’t understand the cultural value of ‘giving’ or ‘preserving’ mianzi may struggle with simple every day interactions. For example, if a person is offered a part-time position that they are not interested in, they may respond with, 我考虑考虑 which means, ‘I will think it over’, but in this context both parties understand that the offer is being declined. If a person did not understand this concept and simply responded by saying, ‘I’m sorry, this job is not for me,’ they may cause offense. Even though this
response is seen as polite in American culture, it would still be seen as inappropriate in Chinese culture as it is too direct.

**What culture should be taught?**

As culture is a broad and multi-faceted topic, it can be difficult to discern which aspects to teach. Xing (2006) illuminates the complexity of deciding what culture to teach when she says,

> Any traditions, attitudes, rituals, beliefs, behaviors that are unique to the Chinese society and people and crucial to learning and understanding the Chinese language, the people and their behaviors may be considered as part of the Chinese culture content to be taught and learned by non-native students of the Chinese language (p. 242).

Xing proposes a model for selecting which culture to teach. This model categorizes aspects of cultural knowledge based on their function in linguistic development and cognitive density. Xing suggests that beginners should be taught culture that is concrete in nature and facilitates vocabulary acquisition. Intermediate learners should be introduced to a mix of concrete and abstract cultural concepts and focus more on the function of lexicon in the message. Finally, advanced learners should focus almost purely on abstract concepts and study the function of structures as they are presented in different genres.

**Methods of teaching culture**

Teachers can make use of many techniques and materials for integrating culture into the classroom, such as movies, music, personal stories, and much more. In my Chinese courses, I introduce culture through storytelling, the key word method, and
language partners. These methods are not comprehensive, but they are, in my opinion, the most effective.

The first method is the story-based approach. The story-based approach allows me to assist my students through an authentic text that they would not be able to read on their own. Through pictures and dramatic representations, the story-based approach “provides a flow of mental images that help learners assign meaning and functions to forms they hear” (Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p. 222). China, like many other countries, has a rich history of folk tales and mythology. Folk tales are ideal for storytelling, because they were written to teach children moral lessons, and thus, they are less demanding linguistically than other authentic texts. Furthermore, they provide insight into Chinese belief and thought. Moreover, story-telling is adaptable to the linguistic level of the learners. I am able to follow the culture selection model proposed by Xing (2006) by adjusting the vocabulary and syntax that I focus on, (i.e., content words, syntax markers) and also by adjusting the types of questions that I pose following the story (i.e., comprehension questions, inference questions, expansion questions).

Secondly, I also implement the ‘key word’ method. In this method, the teacher highlights and expands on words that are culturally loaded or words that have “cultural salience and semantic distinctiveness” (Myers, 2000, p. 5). Many words in Chinese carry strong cultural significance, as I demonstrated with the word 讨厌 (hate). During instruction, I draw attention to these words, with a brief English definition, and then provide examples of their different uses in real-life situations, often in the form of personal experiences. Myers (2000) emphasizes the importance of expanding on such
culturally dense words, because textbooks typically rely on direct translations, and thus, the teacher is the only source for expansion of these words. Understanding the functions of these words can also provide the learner with a window into Chinese culture and society.

Finally, to truly understand another culture it is imperative that students have the opportunity to interact with members of the target culture (Magnan, 2008). Liaw and Johnson (2001) claim that “in order for students to appreciate and understand new cultures, it is crucial for them to identify and voice their present thoughts and feelings about that culture and about their own culture” (p. 249). In the classroom setting, this type of opportunity is not always available due to time constraints and students’ reluctance to discuss certain issues in front of the class. Liaw and Johnson (2001) conducted a research project on English and Taiwanese students communicating regularly via email as a classroom project. They found that “students started with general information and then moved on to personal events then moved from historical facts to current development in the societies” (Liaw & Johnson, p. 247). These are the topics that help students build their understanding of the target culture.

To provide students with an opportunity to interact with the target culture, I pair them up with a language partner from China. Language partners can be found by collaborating with language schools in China or by working with the Asian society on most American campuses. The language partners meet face-to-face once a week and take turns speaking in each other’s native language. In addition to meeting face-to-face, partners also have the option of exchanging contact information so that they can communicate with each other through a mobile chat application. For a tandem language
learning program to be successful, it is important that the teacher coaches participants on
the needs of their partners and how to provide support for those needs. Chun (2011)
conducted a research project on the development of intercultural communicative
competence through online exchanges. Chun found that satisfaction of the language
exchange program depended largely on students’ perceptions of their partner’s interest
level. Also, interest level of both partners was dependent on the content of the
conversation. If the conversation consisted of “brief questions and answers about
mundane topics” (p. 416), the exchange was viewed as difficult and awkward. When
coaching the participants of the language exchange program, I emphasize the importance
of taking a genuine interest in their language partner. I also provide the participants with
a list of topics that may be of interest to their partners as well as methods for helping their
partner improve their language skills. These are steps that I take to help promote positive
interactions between the language partners.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, my goal is to push my students
towards an ethnorelative perspective of Chinese culture. Through ample opportunities to
perceive and interact with Chinese culture, they are able to develop an understanding of
Chinese culture. This understanding is merely the beginning stage, because learners must
eventually be able to speak and act through the lens of Chinese culture. The story-based
approach that I implement provides an historical background for much of the culture that
my students learn. Then, through the key word method, my students learn practical
applications of how to interact in Chinese society. Often my students are given role-
playing scenarios to use these words, and to mimic members of Chinese society. By
working with Chinese language partners, my students are able to put what they have
learned into practice. This practice will help my students move towards ethnorelativism. These are the techniques that I use to integrate culture into the classroom, however once students leave the classroom a large source of their linguistic and cultural learning will come through reading. Therefore in the next section I will discuss how I prepare my students to become successful readers.

**Developing Literacy Skills**

Due to the difficulty of the Chinese orthography and the importance of reading as a lifelong learning tool, I place a heavy emphasis on the development of literacy in the Chinese classroom. According to Mikulecky, (2008) “effective reading is essential for success in acquiring a second language. After all, reading is the basis of instruction in all aspects of language learning” (p. 1). I would argue that reading is even more imperative to the acquisition of Chinese, due to the large number of homophones that are only distinguishable by the characters. For example the sound /xiang/ could represent 想 (want), 相 (looks), 箱 (box), 像 (elephant), 向 (direction), and many more. Students who do not learn characters will struggle with separating the many different meanings of /xiang/.

**Understanding Chinese**

There are three main types of Chinese characters: compound characters, ideograms, and pictograms. Compound characters make up 90% of the most common characters in the Chinese script and are characterized by having both a phonetic radical and semantic radical (Wang et al., 1986). For instance, the character 想 (xiang3/ to want) has the phonetic radical 相 (xiang) and the semantic radical 心 (heart/mind). The
phonetic radical provides the reader with a clue to the pronunciation, but this clue is not always reliable. The semantic radical is generally found on the left side, but it can also be found on the bottom, top, and on occasion in the middle of the character. The radical provides a hint to the meaning of the character. Ideograms are characters that represent an idea, such as 上 (up) and 下 (down). Pictograms are characters that resemble an image, such as 店 (shop) and 火 (fire). Ideograms and pictograms make up the remaining 10% of the most common Chinese characters (Wang et al., 1986). Although the Chinese writing system is complicated, Shu and Anderson (1999) assure learners that it “does have clear and useful logic” (p. 4). Understanding this logic is the first step in becoming a proficient reader of Chinese.

What does a good Chinese reader do?

To discuss how I help my students become proficient readers of Chinese, I must first define the concept of a good reader. Shen and Jiang (2013) conducted a study on the strong indicators of reading proficiency in Chinese. Although “the major finding in this study suggests that oral reading fluency is an important indicator for reading comprehension in Chinese” (Shen & Jiang, p. 16), word segmentation and knowledge of radicals also play significant roles in reading Chinese (Feldman & Siok, 1999; Shen & Jiang, 2013). Once students master these skills, the focus turns to understanding lexical and structural functions in authentic texts.

Learners who can read characters fluently use less cognitive resources for recognizing the characters and, thus, are able to lend more attention to the meaning of the text (Shen & Jiang, 2013). To improve reading fluency, Shen and Jiang suggest “repeated
reading for increased character naming speed” (p. 18). However, according to Shrum and Glisan (2010), repetition must be novel in order to be effective. This is to say that simply asking learners to read the same text several times does not suffice as an effective method to increase character-naming speed. Therefore, the best way for students to automatize character recognition is to read the same characters in multiple contexts.

Word segmentation is another key skill that learners can develop through reading. In Chinese, generally, two characters combine to make a word. One character, three character, and four character words do appear, however, with less frequency. There is no separation between words in Chinese. Therefore, it can be difficult for readers to identify which characters combine to make a word. For example, the phrase 很难看 can be read as 很 (very)/ 难看 (ugly), which is very ugly, or 很 (very)/ 难 (difficult)/ 看 (see), which is difficult to see. Learners are able to differentiate between these two meanings only through context. This is important because teachers may assume that character-naming exercises constitute reading practice, but learners (even at the novice level) must be given opportunities to read extended texts at their linguistic levels.

Finally, knowledge of radicals and their functions also facilitates reading comprehension. As I mentioned above, radicals often provide a clue to the sound or meaning of the character. Learners who understand the meaning of the radicals and who have multiple opportunities to see the function of the radicals in characters will have a better chance of recognizing an unknown character or to retain a newly learned character. To help my learners develop these skills, I use both adapted and authentic texts. In the following section I will discuss the benefits of both texts.
Adapted Texts vs. Authentic Texts

Adapted texts are characterized by the restriction of vocabulary, grammatical structures, and length of the text to match the linguistic level of the learners (Nation & Ming-Tzu, 1999). Authentic texts are defined by Galloway (1998) as “those written and oral communications produced by members of a language group for members of the same language and culture group” (as cited in Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p. 133). I believe that the function of adapted texts is to bring learners to a linguistic level at which they can read authentic texts efficiently. A recent study comparing the linguistic value of adapted and authentic texts found that adapted texts used cognitive mechanisms that “mimic the language found in caretaker talk and teacher talk and help the language learner acquire a language in a relatively structured way” (Crossley, Louwerse, McCarthy, & McNamara, 2007, p. 16). The structure (repetitions) and nature (caretaker talk) of adapted texts make them ideal for developing literacy skills of novice learners. The study also found that authentic texts contained more complex syntax due to “significantly more causal connectives and negative temporal connectives” (Crossley, Louwerse, McCarthy, & McNamara, p. 25) than adapted texts. As I mentioned above, once learners reach the advanced level and no longer struggle with word recognition and character segmentation, developing their syntax and lexicon range is the next obvious step. Authentic texts are thus ideal for helping advanced learners achieve this goal.

Learning to read in Chinese is no easy task, however by illuminating the components of characters and providing learners with a high level of character repetition through adapted texts, the difficulties of Chinese can be lessened. In addition, teachers who incorporate technology into their classroom will also help ease the burden of
reading in Chinese. In the next section, I will demonstrate how technology can facilitate the acquisition of Chinese.

**Using Technology in the Language Classroom**

Developing communicative competence, cultural understanding, and literacy skills in the same course is challenging, however some of these challenges can be alleviated by making use of technology. In the last 20 years, technology has come to pervade every aspect of modern life; the education field has been no different. With so many advances in technology, Bourgerie (2003) asserts that “the burden then is to identify the technology that enhances the specific goals of each teacher and learner” (p. 18). Technology is often used to facilitate the completion of a task that if done manually would be too difficult or inefficient. However, as Blake (2013) points out, technology itself is not a methodology, but a tool that is only as effective as the pedagogy employed by the teacher. In terms of Chinese instruction, I make use of technology to develop reading skills, to integrate culture into the classroom, and to increase student participation.

**How does technology facilitate Chinese learning?**

As I mentioned in the first section, I take a communicative approach, which means that I provide my learners with opportunities to engage in meaningful exchanges in the target language (Ballman, Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001; Lee & VanPatten, 2003). My students are given handouts to guide them through in-class activities. These handouts can take the form of a survey, an interview activity, or an information-gap activity. To carry out these activities, learners must be able to recognize the script on the handout, however this is difficult to do in Chinese, especially for beginners (Everson, 1998). In
fact, some researchers have even suggested delaying character instruction so that learners can first focus on oral proficiency (Xu & Jen, 2004; Ye, 2014). In order to develop both character recognition and oral skills, I post character lists each week on Quizlet and Memrise. These programs can be downloaded as apps on any smart device, making the word lists available to learners at all times. These tools help learners become familiar with characters before they come to class, which then allows for more time to be spent on oral activities.

When Chinese reading passages are presented online, students can make use of a multitude of online resources (e.g., Dim Sum, Clavic, Youdao) that expedite character recognition. Hong (1997) found that “with multimedia computers, students spent less than half the time that would be needed with the paper-pen-dictionary method to finish reading and answering the accompanying questions” (p. 338). With Dim Sum, an e-dictionary, learners can copy and paste a text into a browser, which then allows them to look up any character’s pronunciation or meaning by simply hovering the mouse over the character. In a study that examined the impact of e-dictionaries on Chinese literacy skills, Wang (2009) found that when reading with an e-dictionary, comprehension scores and reading speeds were significantly enhanced. Tools such as Youdao provides readers with authentic sentences for vocabulary words. When learners make use of this tool, they are able to see the multiple functions of vocabulary words. Youdao also provides learners with a function that is similar to Dim Sum, but there is no need to copy and paste the text into a browser. Through multimedia tools, readers are able to read texts that are above their linguistic level in less time, providing them with the opportunity to be exposed to a greater number of texts.
Technology also allows learners to connect via email with members of the target language community. Once my students have developed a basic foundation in Chinese, I introduce *We Chat*, which is a popular social networking tool in mainland China. *We Chat* has become so prominent across China that people today often exchange *We Chat* account information instead of phone numbers. Through *We Chat*, my students are able to be ‘key-pals’ with local Chinese people. This provides my students with an opportunity to not only practice their language skills but also to discover and connect with the Chinese culture. Also, through computer-mediated collaborative learning, such as discussion boards or collaborative reading forums, shy students who don’t normally participate in class are given an opportunity to express their ideas and opinions in a safe environment (Warschauer, 1997). Discussions through online forums give teachers an opportunity to learn more about their students’ linguistic abilities as well as their personal beliefs and opinions.

Finally, the success of integrating technology into the classroom is largely dependent on the training students receive. For example, many first-time users of Quizlet are unaware that they can manipulate the frequency of vocabulary repetition based on the difficulty level of the word, or that *We Chat* has an in-app dictionary. One of the major benefits of technology is that it empowers our students to take control of their learning; however, without proper training, learners will not be able to take full advantage of these tools.

**Conclusion**

As a language teacher I have accepted that there is no one way to teach a language and that every student will bring his or her own unique strengths and weaknesses to the
classroom. However, these principles that I have outlined work as overarching values that I strive to uphold in the classroom. Through the communicative approach, my students are not only motivated by learning language that can be applied to real-world situations, but they are also set up for success by only receiving instruction that is necessary to complete the task at hand. To prepare my students for a lifetime of learning, I emphasize the development of literacy skills from the first week of class. I use adapted texts in the first semester to introduce my students to reading in Chinese, and then as their linguistic level increases, authentic texts are added to curriculum. Integrating culture into my classroom will prepare my students for interactions that they may have with members of the Chinese community. This cultural awareness will also facilitate their linguistic development, as language is bound to culture. Finally, with the help of technology I am able to make instruction more efficient and enjoyable.
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TEACHING OBSERVATION

A good friend of mine once told me that the best teachers are the best thieves. He went on to explain that almost all of his lesson plans, activities, and classroom ideas came through observation of other teachers. This is not to say that teachers are incapable of original ideas, but rather that good ideas are usually adaptations of other ideas. To continue learning as a teacher, I must not only continue to develop my theoretical understanding of language teaching, but I must also progress in my ability to carry out practical activities in the classroom. The best way to promote growth of classroom practice is through observation.

During my studies in the MSLT program at USU, I have observed several language classes, in several different languages. Each language presents unique challenges to the students, and thus each teacher employs different strategies to overcome these challenges. While observing my colleagues’ classes, there were three classes that stood out and really made me think critically about my own language teaching: a first-year Japanese class, a first-year Arabic class, and a first-year Spanish class.

I did not choose these classes at random. I targeted first-year classes because I am particularly interested in teaching beginners and because I believe that teaching beginners is more challenging than teaching more advanced students. As a result of this challenge, teachers are pushed to be more creative in their lesson planning. I chose to observe a Japanese class because Japanese has challenges similar to those of Chinese. I was curious to see how the teacher would approach teaching three different scripts in the classroom, while also focusing on development of communicative skills. I was interested in Arabic for the same reason. I wanted to see how the teacher would promote learning of both oral
and written skills in the same classroom. Finally, I observed a Spanish class, because I felt that without the introduction of a completely foreign script, the teacher should be able to produce communicative lessons more effectively. While not all of these expectations and predictions came to fruition, I gained other valuable insights.

The first class that I observed was a first-year, first-semester Japanese course. Japanese uses three forms of writing: Kanji, which is very similar to Chinese characters; Hiragana, which is a syllabary made of character-like symbols; and Katakana, which is a secondary syllabary used to spell proper names, foreign words, and scientific terminology. Since Japanese has three scripts, it presents a problem similar to Chinese, in that one cannot hope for incidental acquisition of the writing system, it must be taught explicitly. Teachers of Japanese and Chinese often struggle with integrating instruction on the written language into the communicative classroom. I observed a second year, second semester Chinese course where the professor spent almost the entire lesson reviewing the text. She did this because she felt that without reviewing the text multiple times, the students would not retain the characters in the lesson. The burden of the characters limited the teacher’s ability to focus on other language skills.

On the day that I attended the Japanese class, the goal of the lesson was for the students to be able to describe their daily routines. The teacher began the class by reviewing Hiragana. She reviewed the symbols by pointing to a symbol, reading it aloud, and eliciting student pronunciation of the symbol. Students were also expected to write the symbols as they spoke. Following the repeat-after-me activity, the students were given a small quiz. This was very similar to the second-year Chinese class that I observed. After the quiz, the teacher proceeded to introduce new vocabulary, highlighting
the Hiragana symbols in each of the new words. This took much class time. For the final five minutes of the class, students were given a handout with the new vocabulary words, and were asked to tell their partner at what time each day they carried out each of the actions. The class ended after this activity.

The teacher of this class remained in the target language for the entire period and students were able to complete all tasks given by the teacher, and seemed to understand what was expected of them. Although I enjoyed the class immensely, it had very few communicative aspects and very few opportunities for student production. Later in the year, I returned to this teacher’s class, and she did add more communicative activities, but the bulk of the lesson was still focused on grammar and literacy development. This class influenced how I viewed character instruction and its place in the classroom.

Undoubtedly, students need longer time to acquire the Chinese script than a Latin-based alphabet, such as Spanish. However, the question I had is, what is expected of these learners in terms of orthographic knowledge? In the Japanese class, most of the time was consumed by writing practice. This made me think that if students were not required to write the symbols but were simply asked to recognize them, then maybe more time could have been allotted to communicative activities. During my first-year, first semester classes, I do not require my students to practice writing in the classroom. Instead, characters are taught through a series of recognition tasks. Each recognition task takes about three to five minutes and usually provides a segue into the next activity. In my classes, writing for first semester students is reserved as a homework activity, and is generally reduced to copying characters, rather than reproducing them from memory. In my first-year, second semester class, students have more writing practice as homework.
and I start giving them dictation quizzes on a limited number of characters. If students are required to write too many characters from memory, their study time outside of the classroom will be dominated by writing activities.

The second class that I observed was a first-year, second semester Arabic class. The Arabic script is different from Latin-based alphabets, but it is not as complicated as the Japanese script. There were two main goals for the lesson: describe the weather and the appropriate clothing for each type of weather. The class began with a set of pictures for each of the four seasons. The teacher made a simple sentence for each picture, and then asked the students to repeat the target word (summer, winter, etc.). The students were then given a handout, on which they had to write the name of each season next to a picture. Then the teacher went back to the PowerPoint presentation to describe the weather that occurs in each of the seasons. Following the input session, the students were given another worksheet to label the pictures with the weather vocabulary. For the final activity, the students were divided into pairs and given an information-gap activity. One student was given a weather report for the week, and the other student was given a chart of the week with clothing vocabulary at the bottom (clothing vocabulary had been taught in the previous lesson). The student with the clothing chart had to ask their partner for advice on what clothing should be worn each day of the week. After the chart was filled out, the class ended.

This lesson was a perfect example of what communicative language teaching should look like, with the exception of the length of the initial listening tasks. The teacher implemented task-based activities to provide students with the necessary tools to carry out the communicative task. The communicative task was representative of a real-world
task that learners might actually face. The one thing I noticed and that made me think critically about my own class, was the student participation during the initial listening exercise. The teacher spent roughly 15 to 20 minutes providing students with input for the new vocabulary. The students, while attentive, began to grow tired and disengaged after about ten minutes. This is a problem that I run into as well. Sometimes when teaching a new topic, there are so many words or structures that need to be taught so that the learner can carry out a task. When introducing so many new words, students can become frustrated at the amount of vocabulary, and they can also become bored, due to the extended time without interaction. I see two ways of fixing this problem. First, instead of a fill-in-the blank worksheet after each mini-task, a pair work speaking activity could be used. By simply giving students 5 minutes to work with their ‘buddy’, they will have more energy for the following listening tasks. The second way to deal with this problem is by giving the students tasks to carry out during the listening activity. For example, the teacher could have told the students that they were going to hear a weather report for the upcoming week. Then the teacher could have given the students a handout that required them to record the weather for each day of the week. It is important that when students record the weather for each day, they only need to circle the word, or make a check. By not requiring production, students are able to lend more attention to the listening task. Students who are engaged in the activity are more likely to retain the input that is delivered.

The last class that I observed was a Spanish lesson for first-year, first-semester students. This was the second Spanish class that I observed during my time in the MSLT program. I really enjoyed the first class because the teacher was able to keep the students
in the target language for the entire class. The students were engaged in discussion and were continuously experimenting with the language. It was exactly the type of class that I wanted for my Chinese class. The second Spanish class that I observed began with the teacher asking when the students’ birthdays were. The teacher then invited the students to come to the front of the class to play a game. They were asked to form a line, and to order themselves based on their birthday, which required them to communicate with one another (January birthdays first, December birthdays last, etc.). Following this activity, the teacher reviewed the months of the year and then gave students a handout to complete in groups. On the handout, learners were asked to find the dates of important events in both American and Spanish-speaking countries’ cultures. The students were allowed to use their cellphones to search for answers, but had to answer in Spanish. After they found the answers, they reported back to the teacher, and then the class was over.

The class was enjoyable, and the students walked away feeling like they performed well in the class. I believe the teacher could have implemented a few more activities that would have let the students participate in open-ended discussion, but overall it was a successful lesson. What I liked most about the class was the pace. In my classes, I do not like to have one wasted moment. This can be a good thing, but it can also be stressful for the students. I have always believed in pushing my students to do more, and to take advantage of every second in the class. However, I have recently found that by doing this, I may be setting them up for a breakdown. Sometimes my students leave class feeling like they will never get ahead, however the students leaving the Spanish class looked confident and satisfied with their production in class. Students of any subject need to know that they can have success and they need to know what success feels like.
After watching the Spanish class, I slowed my class down and lowered the vocabulary introduction rate. Since then, I have found that my students have been more confident in class and have had better results on exams and quizzes.

After teaching for seven years, I no longer observe classes with the purpose of learning new activities. I now focus on the dynamic relationship between the teacher, the students, and the activity. There are many small details that contribute to the success or failure of an activity. By observing this relationship, I am able to make adjustments in my class that allow for more successful lessons.
SELF-ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING

In the fall of 2014, I recorded a first-year Chinese lesson that I taught with the intent of analyzing the effectiveness of the lesson. In the lessons before the recorded class, the students had learned vocabulary related to the ‘house’. In the recorded lesson, they learned prepositions with the goal of being able to describe the location of furniture in a room. The communicative objective of this lesson was for students to be able to describe their dream home to their partner. In this paper, I will outline my reflections as well as the reflections of my advisor regarding the recorded lesson and then in the conclusion I will suggest a few areas where the lesson could have been improved.

To begin, I will first highlight the areas of the lesson that I believe were particularly positive for both the students and myself. First, the classroom environment was conducive to learning. For students to perform at a high level, it is important to keep the classroom a stress-free environment. After watching myself teach, I noticed that I had achieved this goal, my students were very comfortable and appeared to enjoy the lesson. I believe that I was able to do this by delivering very clear instructions for each of the activities and also by providing support for the students during the activities. My students were quite comfortable asking questions about the activity and language in general.

The second aspect of the lesson that I was pleased with, was my students’ interest level. Throughout the entire 50-minute lesson, my students were engaged in both the class discussions as well as the partner activities. My advisor also noticed this when she mentioned that all of my students were paying close attention during the input session. I was able to keep their interest/engagement by providing them with meaningful content and questions. When reviewing the furniture of the house, I first asked them about the
quantity of furniture in each room, but to retain their attention I began asking about their opinions of the furniture. When I asked for their opinions, my students seemed more willing to participate in the discussion. Another way I kept their attention was by constantly keeping my less attentive students on task. In this class, I have a few students who like to get off topic. When they get off topic, they tend to bring other students with them. I try to consciously monitor these students and keep them focused by reminding them of the time or by asking them a direct question about the task.

There were also pedagogical aspects of my lesson that contributed to a positive learning experience. First, I remained in the target language for nearly the entire lesson. Although I did use English expressions for some situations, these English expressions were usually embedded in a Chinese sentence. In addition to remaining in the target language, I also delivered the target language at a close to authentic rate. Sometimes teachers may be tempted to slow down their rate of speech to help student comprehension, however this can create a crutch for learners and eventually hurt them when they begin speaking with native speakers. Secondly, when teaching the grammatical points/structures of the prepositions, I used vocabulary that the students were already familiar with. When the learners are not focused on new vocabulary, they are able to lend more attention to the grammatical aspects of the language. Finally, when learning new characters, I tried to point out the radicals, both phonetic and semantic. In addition, to pointing out the radicals, I provided the students with clues on how to relate the radicals to the character meaning and/or pronunciation.

Finally, there were certain parts of my teaching that I didn’t realize were creating a positive learning environment that my advisor pointed out. Firstly, it was pointed out
that I was able to move between use the PowerPoint, white board, and body gestures smoothly while teaching the prepositions. This allowed my students to hear and see the new grammatical structures in three different modes. Also, during one of my input activities, I described the location of objects in my bedroom. My students had to follow along by drawing what I described. My advisor mentioned that because I described crazy locations (i.e., TV under the bed) my students were required to pay attention, and at the same time they seemed to enjoy the ‘craziness’ of the activity.

Although I felt the overall lesson was a success, there were a few areas that were in need of improvement. The first area that I noticed was my language use. When I discussed the positive aspects of the language, I mentioned that I spoke at a near authentic rate of speech. I believe that this is important for students. However, after watching the video, I realized that there were certain parts of the lesson that I should have slowed down. For example, during an input activity in which my students had to place furniture in a room based on what I told them about the room, I could have begun the activity speaking a little slower. In the lesson, I began speaking very quickly from the start of the activity. While some of my students were able to follow along, there were a few who were confused. I was constantly trying to assist them in the activity, which took away from the flow of the lesson. I think if I had explained the activity a little better, and then spoken a little slower to begin the activity, it would have been easier for all of the students to follow along.

Another area of this lesson that my language use could have been improved was when I was teaching the prepositions. Prepositions in Chinese are a combination of a
direction character, 下 (under) or 上 (up), and 边, which literally translates as ‘side’. So, 上边 (shang4 bian) is ‘on’ but it literally means the ‘up side’. You can also make a preposition by combining a direction character with 面 (mian), which literally means ‘face’. So, 上面 would be literally translated as ‘up face’, but it is used the same as 上边.

Now in the lesson, I noticed that I often used 面 instead of 边. In most prepositions 边 and 面 can be used interchangeably, which is what I was doing. However, since I did not explain this to my students I was probably confusing them on the pronunciation. I need to either explain that both are used or simply be more careful about which form I use.

Other than my language use, I also noticed a few problems with my activity design. First, my final activity was designed to allow my students to practice the prepositions. I wanted them to draw their partners’ dream house and to use the prepositions they learned to describe where the objects were located in the house. The problem occurred when I was describing the activity in the class, I forgot to mention the importance of using the prepositions in the activity. Some of the students were using the prepositions without my instruction, but many of the students just pointed to a location on the paper and said the vocabulary word, completely bypassing the use of the grammar concept we had learned in class.

The length of a few of the activities was also problematic. Many activities that I design tend to take longer than planned because my students want to complete the activities using Chinese characters. When they try to write Chinese characters on the handout, the amount of time that they spend on an activity doubles. This is a difficult problem to solve because I am happy that they are comfortable with writing characters on
their own, but I’m also frustrated that they are not focusing more on the speaking activity. One possible option is to provide the students with the characters on the handout so that they do not have to reproduce the characters from memory.

Another area that could be improved is my communicative goal. My advisor made me realize that although describing one’s dream house may be a communicative goal, it does not require negotiation of meaning to reach an agreement, or to come to a conclusion. In future lessons, I could change my communicative goal to selecting the best apartment out of three options. This is a communicative goal that could happen in real-life, when two people are discussing where they want to live. This goal would require that the learners offer their opinion on a house and then come to a conclusion to decide which house they are going to choose.

In the sections above, I have already mentioned some of the areas that I could improve. In this final paragraph, I will point out two more areas where I could make my lesson better. First, I need to include a section of the class where I check for accuracy of my student’s language production. Currently, I provide my learners with a lot of speaking practice, but we don’t spend enough time working on corrective feedback or working towards more accurate output. Another area for improvement is to continue to slow down the pace of instruction. Many times I feel that I have to cover a set amount of material during each class and if I feel that I am running out of time I tend to speed the rate of instruction. Subsequently, my students feel rushed during activities and lost when I present new material too fast.
LANGUAGE ARTIFACT

Three Approaches to Beginning Chinese Instruction and their Effects on Oral Development
This paper was written for an independent study course with Dr. Ko-Yin Sung, in which I designed and conducted a study regarding three teaching approaches for novice learners of Chinese. I originally wrote this paper for my coursework, but afterwards when submitting for publication, I received some feedback and changes from Dr. Sung.

When I first decided that I wanted to do this study, I had been reading articles that were arguing for the delay of Chinese character instruction. The authors believed that character instruction was hindering the learners’ oral development, and thus, they believed that learners should focus on Pinyin first and then learn characters. I understood the arguments of these authors, but I felt that eliminating character instruction completely was not the answer. Instead, I proposed that if learners were not forced to produce the characters they were learning, and were simply asked to recognize the characters, then oral skills could be developed at similar rates to learners who only studied Pinyin. This study was an attempt to confirm my beliefs about character instruction for beginners.
Abstract

Developing Chinese character knowledge is labor intensive and time consuming, and thus, there is often an imbalance between character instruction and training in other language skills due to how much instructional time is occupied by learning characters. A few teaching approaches are frequently used in the classroom to address this problem. This pilot study intended to compare the effects of these approaches in an experimental setting on learners' oral and character recognition performances. This study involved nine first-year learners of Chinese at a university in the United States. Data collection of this study included the results of character quizzes and oral assessment. The participants and their teachers were also given a survey regarding their perceptions towards each of the instructional approaches. The findings illustrated that some of the instructional approaches helped develop the participants' oral skills more rapidly than the rest, while some approaches were more effective in aiding the development of character recognition.

Keywords: character recognition; character writing; Chinese language beginners; Pinyin; university level

Introduction

Learning any language as a beginner could be challenging because, unlike intermediate or advanced learners, who have developed a foundation in the target language, beginners have only their native language and script to rely on as a reference. For learners whose native language is English, learning Chinese as a beginner can be especially difficult because the Chinese script does not use an alphabet (Everson, 1998). To learn Chinese characters, learners must become aware of the characters’ visual shapes, learn stroke orders, and develop an understanding of the radicals’ functions and positions within a
character (Everson, 2009; Feldman & Siok, 1999; Hayes, 1988; Perfetti, Ying, & Tan, 2005). Since developing character knowledge is often labor intensive and time consuming, much instructional time is occupied by learning characters that results in an imbalance between character instruction and training in other language skills. A few teaching approaches are frequently used in the classroom to address this problem. This pilot study intended to compare the effects of these approaches in an experimental setting on learners' oral and character recognition performances.

The smallest unit of a character is the stroke. A character’s complexity is measured by the number of strokes that it contains. For example, the character, 字 (zi4, character), has six strokes, whereas the character, 警 (jing3, warn), has 19 strokes. Each character also has a specific stroke order, and character learning may be facilitated through writing characters with the proper stroke order (Guan, Liu, Chan, Ye, & Perfetti, 2011; Yu, Gong, Qiu, & Zhou, 2011). However, reproducing the proper stroke order is very difficult, especially with characters containing more strokes. As a result, learners are often seen writing characters with random sequences (Tsai, Kuo, Horng, & Chen, 2012).

After strokes, the next largest structure of a character is the radical. Nearly 90% of the most common characters are phonetic compounds, which contain two radicals: a phonetic radical, which provides clues on the pronunciation, and a semantic radical, which gives hints on the meaning (Wang et al., 1986). Supposedly, learners who understand the function of these radicals learn characters more effectively (Hayes, 1988; Shen & Ke, 2007). However, though radicals provide clues, they are not always transparent (Feldman & Siok, 1999). For example, the silk radical 纟 found on the left
side of the character 给 (gei3, give) occupies the position usually reserved for the semantic radical, but it has no apparent relation to the meaning of 给, which means ‘to give’. Phonetic radicals are even more unreliable, as they provide an exact cue of the phonetic properties of the character only 26% of the time (Fan, Gao, & Ao, 1984). For example, 打 (da3, hit), 订 (ding4, reserve) and 厅 (ting1, hall) all share the same phonetic radical, yet they are pronounced differently. Therefore, using the knowledge of radicals to facilitate character learning is limited and so learners often feel frustrated when learning the components of characters.

To address the challenges of learning characters, some researchers have suggested delaying character introduction in beginner classes and focusing on the teaching of Pinyin, the Romanized transliteration of the characters pronunciation (Everson, 2009; Ye, 2013). On the other hand, a different group of researchers advocate character writing practice as an effective way to learn Chinese in a beginner class (Tan, Spinks, Eden, Perfetti, & Siok 2005; Tso, Au, & Hsiao, 2012), while another group of researchers proposes focusing on character recognition rather than production to reduce the burden of character learning (Allen, 2008; Xu & Jen, 2004). The literature review section discusses studies related to the three teaching approaches suggested by the researchers.

**Literature review**

**Focus on Pinyin [FoP]**

Pinyin is the Romanized transliteration of spoken Chinese. Although there are exceptions, most of the letters in the Pinyin alphabet have similar sounds to their counterparts in the English alphabet. These similarities make it reasonable to assume that
learners who use Pinyin would have an easier time developing oral proficiency than those who study only characters. A study conducted by Everson (1988) compared reading speed and comprehension between learners reading Pinyin and characters. He found that first-year learners performed better on reading tasks when the text was presented in Pinyin rather than in characters. The results of this study suggest that the learners were able to acquire and recall vocabulary more effectively when the script was familiar to them. Another study conducted by Packard (1990) also showed the effectiveness of replacing the learning of characters with Pinyin in aiding Chinese learning. Packard compared two learning groups: one that received immediate character instruction, and another that received what he called “lagged” (p. 1) character instruction. During the lagged character instruction, Packard used Pinyin to teach Chinese phonetics and vocabulary. The study results showed that the ‘lagged’ group was more fluent in spoken Chinese and better at discriminating sounds. Due to the positive learning results of using Pinyin instead of characters in the aforementioned studies, and that Chinese native speakers often rely on their oral understanding of the language to develop reading skills (Dew, 1994), researchers, such as Packard suggest that learners of the Chinese language should focus on oral communication before they learn characters.

Focus on writing [FoW]

Due to the complexity of characters, many teachers place an emphasis on character writing in the classroom (Tse, Marton, Ki, & Loh, 2006). Allen (2008) found that even in a language program that claimed to focus more on oral skills and less on character writing skills, learners reported spending an average of 32% of their class time writing characters. Also, a significant amount of research has demonstrated the positive
effects of writing practice on Chinese learning (Guan, Liu, Chan, Ye, & Perfetti, 2011; Tan, Spinks, Eden, Perfetti, & Siok, 2005). A study found that by requiring learners to write characters instead of simply recognizing characters, learners performed better on reading tasks (Guan et al., 2011). Guan and colleagues suggested that this was a result of motor memory facilitating recollection of characters. They argue that “once motor memory has been learned and stabilized, it can last for very long periods of time” (Guan et al., 2011, p. 50). Although research showed positive results for the FoW approach on reading and writing performances, there is no study specifically on the effect of the FoW Approach on developing oral skills.

**Focus on recognition [FoR]**

Since Chinese writing practice occupies a large portion of study time, some researchers suggest that instructors should focus on recognition of characters rather than production (Allen, 2008; Xu & Jen, 2004; Ye, 2011). In this way, characters can still be taught, but the time constraints that writing characters pose can be reduced. A few studies investigated the FoR approach. For example, a study conducted by Harrington and Jiang (2013), who asked learners to focus on character form through a recall task at the beginning of each lesson, found that by stimulating the retrieval of a character’s form, learners were forced to lend attention to the character, and subsequently, their performance on character recognition tasks increased. In a different study, Xu and Jen (2004) developed a word-processing program that required learners to manually select the correct characters. This is in contrast to typical character input programs that automatically select the most common characters related to the Pinyin combinations selected. The authors argued that by being required to select the correct characters,
learners develop character recognition skills. In addition, by not requiring the learners to write, there is more time in the classroom for the development of oral skills. Their study results showed that learners who used the processor were able to produce characters on the computer with an average accuracy rate of 94.5% in contrast to an average accuracy rate of 60.7% for learners who produced the characters with a pen. In terms of recognizing characters, learners in the word processing group accurately recognized an average of 62.3% of the characters compared to only 48.7% in the handwritten group. The authors concluded that since learning to write Chinese characters is so difficult, learners are exposed to less vocabulary that ultimately slows their language development.

Advocates of the FoR Approach (e.g., Allen, 2008), claim that the value of being able to write characters from memory does not reflect the cost of developing the skill. Learners should concentrate on character recognition so that they have sufficient time to develop reading and oral skills in Chinese.

The literature showed that different studies found results that supported one of the aforementioned three beginning Chinese teaching approaches. However, there is not a single study that compares all three approaches using the same teaching materials and learning objectives. This study attempted to fill this gap in the current literature.

**Teacher and student perceptions**

Although there is research supporting each of the approaches to beginning Chinese instruction, in order to offer satisfactory instruction, teacher and student perceptions must also be taken into account. Ye (2013) conducted a survey of 914 Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) students' and 192 CFL teachers' beliefs of the kind of instruction Chinese beginners should receive. Ye found that 66% of students and 71%
of teachers believed in the FoW approach in which characters are taught immediately. Ye explained that the result could be due to the fact that the majority of the students in the study only received and knew about the FoW approach. Once Ye introduced other approaches to the students, many of their views changed. The students thought the FoP approach could be beneficial as they would gain more confidence through speaking, which then would carry over when learning to read and write.

Wang and Leland (2011) carried out a survey on student perceptions regarding useful activities for developing Chinese language skills. They found that all thirteen of the participants in the survey believed that writing directly affected their ability to recall characters. These results seem to suggest that the learners preferred the FoW approach over the others.

While many studies investigated the effectiveness of different beginning Chinese teaching approaches, studies that look into teacher and learner perceptions of these approaches such as the two studies mentioned above are few and far between. However, teacher and learner perceptions toward teaching approaches are deemed important. If teachers and learners do not appreciate the kinds of teaching approaches used, maximum learning cannot occur. This study intended to contribute information to this missing portion in the research field.

**Research questions**

Research has shown that instruction with FoP, FoW, or FoR can be beneficial to beginners of Chinese. However, there is no study like the current study, which compares all three approaches in a controlled classroom environment. The first purpose of this study was to compare the effects of the three instructional approaches for beginners of
Chinese on their language development. The second purpose of this study was to learn the perceptions that teachers and learners have of these approaches. The two research questions posted are: (1) What are the effects of the FoP, FoW, and FoR Approaches on Chinese beginners' development of oral and character recognition skills?; and (2) What are teacher and student perceptions on FoP, FoW, and FoR instruction? For question one, the effects of the approaches on all language skills, except character production, were included. Investigation of character production was omitted due to the characteristics of the FoP and FoR Approaches, which do not require the learning of character writing.

**Methods**

This study compared character recognition and oral fluency development under three instructional conditions: instruction with FoP, FoW, and FoR. Nine participants were divided evenly among the three instructional groups, and each group was given four, 30-minute sessions. All three instructional groups contained the same vocabulary, grammar, and communicative goals for each lesson. They differed only in the presentation of the characters. A detailed description of each method is provided in the Instructional Methods section. At the end of the first three sessions, the learners were given a character recognition quiz, and at the end of the fourth session they were given a comprehensive character recognition quiz, an oral assessment, and a perception survey.

**Learner participants**

Nine participants of Chinese from a university in the southwestern United States volunteered for this study. These participants had no previous experience learning Chinese, and thus were considered to be beginners of Chinese. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 26. All of the participants spoke English as their first language and all but
two of them claimed to have experience learning a second language. Their second languages consisted of Spanish and Italian.

**Teacher participants**

The instructors in this study were student teachers in a fourth-year Chinese teaching course called ‘Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language’. Two of them had studied Chinese for five years or longer, and the third teacher was a returned missionary who had served and lived in Taiwan for two years. Each teacher adopted one of the instructional methods. All three of the teachers had received a teaching plan and training in their instructional condition prior to teaching. The lesson plan for all three instructional conditions were structurally the same, the only difference was in the method of presenting and teaching the Pinyin, character recognition, and character writing.

**Instructional Methods**

In this study, the participants were exposed to 50 words over four sessions. The first session included 20 words, and the following three sessions contained 10 words each. The first session had 20 words because the first ten numbers were taught with vocabulary for introductions. While teaching 20 words in first session undoubtedly contributed to a higher learning load, it was deemed necessary because it allowed for the use of communicative tasks in later sessions. Furthermore, because the vocabulary in each session was reviewed by subsequent lessons, the vocabulary in the first session received more review time. In the second session, participants learned how to talk about their family. In the third session, they learned physical descriptions that they used to describe their family members. In the final session, they learned personality and emotions, which they also used to describe their family members. All four sessions were
designed so that they incorporated vocabulary from the previous lessons. For each lesson, the instructors first gave an input session, which occupied between 10 and 15 minutes of the class, to introduce new vocabulary. Following the input session, the participants were assigned a vocabulary and grammar task to complete with a partner, orally. Finally, all three groups (FoP, FoW, and FoR) received the same vocabulary and content in their four sessions, however length of time that was spent on vocabulary and content was varied. Details on the time allotted for each activity will be explained in the following sections.

**The FoP group**

For the FoP group, characters were presented on both the PowerPoint presentation and on the learner handout. However, in both the PowerPoint and on the handout, Pinyin was placed above every character. This group of learners was expected to learn the phonetic rules of Pinyin via the input session. The teacher in this group focused on developing Pinyin skills, and thus would correct tonal and pronunciation errors. When introducing new words, the teacher made an effort to point out letters in Pinyin that did not follow the phonetic rules of English. For example, ‘c’ in Pinyin is pronounced the same as the ‘ts’ in ‘cats’. Also, during some pair work activities, participants were asked to label a picture or to write a vocabulary word using Pinyin. It is also important to mention that because characters were not taught in this group, approximately 10 minutes extra per session was allotted for the speaking activities. Finally, some English was used during instruction, but the teacher of this group strived to remain in the target language.

**The FoW group**
In the FoW group, the instructor’s main goal was for participants to learn how to write characters. The instructor began the class with the input session, but instead of doing pair work directly after the input session, the participants were taught stroke orders and radicals. When teaching characters, the teacher first reviewed the rules regarding stroke order, and then wrote each character stroke by stroke. The participants were asked to follow the teacher as she wrote. Upon completion of learning the stroke orders, the learners were asked to write each character two times. Next, the teacher explained the function of the radicals in the compound characters. When teaching stroke orders and radicals, the teacher used English to ensure that the information was understood. Finally, when asked to write a word during an activity, the participants were encouraged to write characters. Students in this group were given pair activities after completing the writing exercises. However, due to time constraints, these activities were limited to the last five minutes of the session.

The FoR group

In the FoR group, the teacher attempted to promote development of both oral skills and character recognition but the participants were not pushed to produce characters. Lessons began with the same input activity as the lessons using the FoW and FoP approaches. After the input activity, participants were given a simple matching worksheet, where participants had to match the character to the Pinyin or the character to the English translation. Participants were asked to complete these matching activities as quickly as possible and were allowed to ask for help from the teacher and/or their classmates. When helping a classmate with recognizing a character, participants were encouraged to use English to explain how they remembered the character. By describing
the features of the characters that helped them remember the character, the learners were lending more attention to the form of the character. Upon completion of the character recognition task, learners participated in the pair work activities. The pair work activities were guided by handouts that contained only characters. The participants did not receive instruction regarding stroke order, but the teacher did draw attention to radicals during the recognition exercises. The teacher in this group pointed out radicals only when learners were struggling to remember a character. This is different from the FoW group that was taught every radical. Finally, since the teacher did not need to explicitly explain the radicals and functions of the radicals, he was able to remain in the target language for the majority of the lesson.

**Data collection**

After each session, the participants were given a character recognition quiz that tested all of the characters learned during the session. Following the completion of the fourth session, participants were given a comprehensive character recognition quiz and oral assessment. Participants were also given a follow-up survey regarding their perceptions about the instructional method to which they had been exposed. The surveys were distributed via email after participants had completed the learning tasks. A survey and group interview was given to the teacher participants after all data had been collected. The survey and the group interview asked the teachers about their opinions of the approach they were assigned to teach and what they thought about their students' learning.

**Assessment**

For each of the character recognition quizzes, words were written in character
form and the participants were asked to write the corresponding English word. All characters taught in the sessions appeared on the quizzes. In all recognition quizzes, one character was worth one point. The first character recognition quiz had a total possible score of 20 points and the second and third character recognition quiz had a total possible score of 10 points. The comprehensive character recognition quiz had a total possible score of 50 points.

The oral assessment used five constructs to measure the participant’s oral proficiency levels: fluency, word choice, grammar, pronunciation, and comprehension. The participants were asked 12 questions (eight in Chinese, and four in English). The questions were based on the material that the participants had studied in the previous four sessions. Excluding comprehension, there was a total possible score of 36 points (3 x 12 questions) for each construct. For comprehension, there was a total possible score of 24 points (3 x 8 questions). This is because four of the 12 questions were asked in English. The last four questions of the oral assessment were designed as open-ended questions to let the participants say as much as they could. Since the vocabulary needed to form these questions had not been taught, the questions were asked in English. Table 1 provides a detailed description of how the researchers scored each construct. For the comprehension construct, participants were asked to first translate the questions and then answer the question in Chinese. This was done to ensure that the participants understood the questions.
Table 1: Rubric for Oral Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Fluency</th>
<th>Word Choice</th>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3 or more pauses in an answer</td>
<td>Repeats same vocabulary in each answer and no use of adverb</td>
<td>3 or more grammar mistakes</td>
<td>3 or more words are not comprehensible</td>
<td>Translation is incorrect or participant indicates that the question was not understood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 to 2 pauses in an answer</td>
<td>Occasionally repeats vocabulary, only uses one adverb</td>
<td>1 to 2 grammar mistakes</td>
<td>1 to 2 words are not comprehensible</td>
<td>Translation is partially correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>No pauses in an answer</td>
<td>Uses novel words and or adverbs</td>
<td>No grammar mistakes</td>
<td>All words are clear and comprehensible</td>
<td>Translation is correct</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data analysis methods

The average scores of the oral assessment and the character recognition quizzes of each group were calculated and are presented in the Results section for discussion. The survey and the interview data were coded by themes that emerged from the data.

Results

Assessment results

The average scores of the oral assessment showed that both the FoP and the FoR groups performed better than the FoW group after four sessions of instruction (See Table 2).
Table 2: Group Averages of Oral Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Fluency</th>
<th>Word Choice</th>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FoP</td>
<td>32.33 (89.8%)</td>
<td>33.66 (93.5%)</td>
<td>32 (88.8%)</td>
<td>35 (97.2%)</td>
<td>24 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FoW</td>
<td>20 (55.5%)</td>
<td>20 (55.5%)</td>
<td>21.33 (59.3%)</td>
<td>22.66 (62.9%)</td>
<td>20.33 (84.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FoR</td>
<td>32.33 (89.8%)</td>
<td>31.33 (87%)</td>
<td>33.33 (92.6%)</td>
<td>35 (97.2%)</td>
<td>21.33 (88.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This could be explained by the different lengths of time spent on practicing oral skills in the three groups. The FoW group emphasized the practice of writing characters, hence the training for oral skills was cut short, which resulted in the lower oral performance. The FoP and the FoR groups received similar scores. However, the FoP group did slightly better on the word choice construct while the FoR group did slightly better on the grammar construct. The reason the FoP group performed slightly better on word choice than the FoR group could be attributed to the type of instruction the group received. Unlike the FoR group, in which the learners spent time on both recognizing characters and oral practice, the FoP approach allowed learners to only focus on speaking, which included the training of word choice. It is possible that while the FoP group focused on oral communication, the learning of grammatical rules was less emphasized, which explains the slightly lower performance on grammar compared to the FoR group.

For the character recognition assessments, the FoW and the FoR groups performed much better on all character recognition quizzes than the FoP group, except for quiz 1.
Table 3: Group Averages of Character Recognition Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Quiz 1</th>
<th>Quiz 2</th>
<th>Quiz 3</th>
<th>Final Comp. Quiz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FoP</td>
<td>11 (55%)</td>
<td>1.66 (16.6%)</td>
<td>1.33 (13.3%)</td>
<td>9 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FoW</td>
<td>8.33 (41.7%)</td>
<td>6 (60%)</td>
<td>6 (60%)</td>
<td>30.66 (61.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FoR</td>
<td>12 (60%)</td>
<td>8.33 (83.3%)</td>
<td>6.33 (63.3%)</td>
<td>24 (48%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results could imply that, in general, the FoW and the FoR approaches were more effective in training novice learners the character recognition skill. The FoP group's outstanding performance on quiz 1 could be explained by the content of the quiz. The first quiz contained numbers, whose characters consist of fewer strokes and are significantly easier to recognize than other characters. When comparing only the FoW and the FoR groups, the FoR group performed better than the FoW group on the first three quizzes; however, the difference on the scores between the two groups diminished from quiz 1 to quiz 3. In the fourth quiz, the final comprehensive quiz, the FoW group outperformed the FoR group. This result may signify that the FoR approach had a short-term effect on helping learners to remember characters while the FoW approach had a long-term effect. This result supports Guan et al.'s (2011) claim that writing (motor memory) facilitates recollection of characters and that it can last for a long time.

Survey and interview results

The learner participants

The survey and the interview results showed that the learners in the FoP group said that the pace of the class was adequate and expressed their excitement at learning to speak. One participant said, “I thought the lessons were very effective since I found
myself picking up more than I thought I would.” This idea was shared by all of the participants in the FoP group. The learners also particularly enjoyed the speaking activities. They claimed that through the speaking activities, they were able to remember vocabulary more effectively. They expressed surprise at their rate of acquiring the oral components of the language. One participant said, “The lessons were easier than I was expecting.” Although most of the comments were supportive of only learning Pinyin, one of the learners expressed a desire to focus more on the characters.

The participants in the FoW section said that the pace was too quick. One of the learners said, “I think that the pace of the class was a bit too fast, because even though we had a bit of time to review the vocabulary, and practice using it, there was simply not enough of this practice time to make the vocabulary stick.” While none of the participants in the FoW group directly commented on the length of time it took to write characters, they did complain about the lack of time spent on speaking and listening. One of the learners said that learning Chinese is hard and more focus on pronunciation and tones would have been helpful. Finally, one of the participants in the FoW group questioned the usefulness of learning to write characters; she said, “The slide shows with the pictures, Pinyin and characters were very useful—learning how to draw the characters, however, seemed less relevant for our purposes.”

In the FoR group, the participants also said that the pace was “just right.” This group also commented on their excitement at working with characters, even though they were not required to write them. Overall the participants in the FoR group were satisfied with the instruction. The participants did not comment on the lack of focus on character writing instruction, and thus it was assumed that this was not a major issue for them.
According to the results, it seems that when the time spent in training different language skills was out of balance, the learners were not totally satisfied with the instruction. For example, even though the participants in the FoP group spoke highly about the instruction received and the amount of learning that occurred, one of them expressed the desire for learning characters. On the other hand, the FoW group, who did not spend much time developing vocabulary and oral skills, questioned the usefulness of spending time learning mostly character knowledge. The FoR group, who received both oral training and character recognition practice, seemed to feel more satisfied with the instruction and had no complaints.

**The teacher participants**

The teachers of each instructional group were given a survey regarding their feelings toward their assigned teaching approach, and after the survey they participated in a group discussion about the effectiveness of their approach. There were two common themes that appeared in both the discussion and in the survey: speaking activities are motivating and character instruction is time consuming.

The teacher in the FoP group said that her students really enjoyed learning Chinese, particularly because “they learned fast.” This teacher associated much of the success that her students experienced in the class to their opportunity to talk during lessons. She said that because learners had time to practice speaking and making mistakes, they seemed to make progress. Although this instructor was happy about the progress of her students, she said that there was a need to integrate characters into the classroom. She expressed that if she would have emphasized characters more when teaching, by simply pointing them out and drawing attention to them, then the learners
may have been more interested in studying characters. This teacher also pointed out that the participants “did not even acknowledge the existence of the characters” on the PowerPoint. She said that it wasn’t until they took the first character recognition quiz that they realized that characters were a key component to learning Chinese. This teacher seems to desire a more balanced teaching approach between oral and literacy skills.

The teacher in the FoW group first commented on her students’ desire to learn characters. She said, “My students thought characters were fun at first, but after the second session, [the characters] started to become boring.” This teacher also noted that even though they spent a significant amount of time learning the proper stroke orders, learners still preferred using their own method of writing characters. She added that learners were only able to use proper stroke order on very basic characters. This finding confirms the statement made by Tsai, Kuo, Horng, and Chen (2012) that reproducing the proper stroke order is very difficult, especially with complex characters and that learners are often seen writing characters with random sequences even though they spend a lot of time practicing writing. The teacher also expressed her frustration multiple times about the length of time spent on writing and concluded that she believed speaking was important and that by not speaking and not communicating, her students were frustrated with the language.

The teacher in the FoR group said that his students were more motivated as a result of the speaking activities. He also said that the character recognition activities were particularly helpful because they helped learners connect characters to words. This teacher also found that learning the characters was motivational. He commented on how his students were excited about learning “real” Chinese. Another point that this teacher
made is that when he was delivering the initial input session, his students did not pay attention to the characters. He had to make a conscious effort to draw attention to them; however, after engaging in the recognition exercises they became more interested in the characters. This finding implies that learners who are from a non-logographical language background need to make special effort to link spoken language to characters, and that teachers need to actively search for moments during instruction to help them make this connection. Finally, this teacher concluded by saying that he believed there was a place for character writing instruction during class, but that it should be limited to less than 25% of class time.

**Discussion**

In this pilot study, we have attempted to compare three approaches for teaching Chinese beginners. To answer the first research question regarding the effects of the three teaching approaches on learners' oral and character recognition performances, this study found that the extensive instruction on character writing in the FoW group weakened the learners' oral development. Although the FoW group performed at a much lower level on the oral assessment, this does not mean that writing does not have a place in the classroom. It simply implies that the amount of time that writing occupies needs to be closely monitored and limited. An alternative is to reduce the writing time in class and leave it for homework. The other two groups, the FoP and the FoR groups received comparative average scores on the oral assessment, which means that both approaches could be equally effective on learners' oral development. The slight differences in the scores in the word choice and grammar constructs could be attributed to the different emphases on the oral and grammar instruction between the two groups. Since writing
does not take place in the FoR and the FoP approaches, these two approaches have time that can be easily adjusted to keep a balance among the five oral constructs to maximize learners' oral performance. With respect to the effectiveness of the three approaches on the character recognition quizzes, the results were aligned with other research (Allen, 2008; Guan et al., 2011; Xu & Jen, 2004; Ye, 2011) that the FoR and the FoW Approaches were both effective methods to teach character recognition. This may be because in a FoR Approach learners can be exposed to characters at a higher frequency, since they are not asked to produce the characters (Allen, 2008). The FoW Approach may provide an efficient method for teaching characters, since learners are forced to engage in a deeper level of processing of the characters, as they are asked to write characters and recognize radicals (Guan et al., 2011). This study also found a difference between the FoR and the FoW groups. The FoR approach seemed to have a stronger but shorter effect on the learners' character recognition skills. On the other hand, the FoW approach seemed to be steadier and longer effect on the learners' character recognition learning. This finding confirms the theory that motor memory facilitates recollection of characters and that once characters are learned through motor memory, the learning lasts for a long period of time (Guan et al., 2011). The results found in this study imply that in order to train a beginning Chinese learner who will be well balanced in both oral and literacy skills, adequate time for oral practice and character writing cannot be omitted. As this study showed, focusing on communication without learning characters resulted in higher oral development, but poorer reading skills. In contrast, heavy emphasis on writing without much oral practice resulted in higher literacy skills, but weak oral skills. Only an
approach that delivers a balanced teaching of oral and literacy skills would yield an optimum result of learning and a longer positive effect on the development of all skills.

To answer the second research question about the perceptions that the teachers and students had of the three instructional approaches, the approach which received the highest number of positive comments was the FoR Approach. All three learner participants in the FoR groups were satisfied with the instruction. The FoR group spent time on interactive oral practice, whose learning results were probably more immediate and obvious, which made the participants feel accomplished and satisfied. On the other hand, the participants in the FoW group wished for more oral practice. It seems that the lack of oral practice in the FoW approach made the participants less satisfied with the instruction, which showed the level of importance oral communication skills are in the learners' mind. In the FoP group, one participant expressed her interest in learning characters. The one participant who was not satisfied with the lack of character learning could be explained by her learning needs and beliefs. In sum, the FoR approach, which was more balanced between oral and literacy practice than the other two approaches, was the most satisfactory method in the learners' opinions. With respect to the teachers' perceptions, while the teachers acknowledged the positive attitudes of the students in the FoR group, none of the teachers indicated that writing instruction should be omitted. Instead, they believed in having tightly controlled writing instruction during class time and assigning writing practice for homework.

**Conclusion**

This study set out to determine the best teaching practices for a beginner level Chinese course by comparing three approaches: FoP, FoW, and FoR. This study has
shown that the FoR approach helped learners achieve oral skills similarly to those achieved by the FoP group. On the other hand, the FoW approach is deemed the most efficient method of teaching characters. However, this study has shown that while the FoW group outperformed the FoR group on the character recognition test, their gains do not outweigh the benefits of developing both oral and literacy skills seen in the FoR group. These findings challenge the necessity of the FoP and FoW instruction often seen in first-semester Chinese classes. While completely removing pinyin and character writing instruction from the first-semester classes is not recommended, more research is needed to develop a better model of integration of these skills into the classroom.

**Limitations and Future Research**

There were limitations to this pilot study. First, the number of participants in this study was limited. A larger group of participants would have helped make the results more reliable. Another limitation was the short length of instruction. It might be possible that the level of the effects of the three teaching approaches could change over a longer period of time. For example, this study found that the effect of the FoR approach was strong and positive on the learners' character recognition performances at first; however, this effect decreased over time.

Although the current pilot study has set up a replicable research design to compare the three commonly seen beginning Chinese instructional approaches, future research is needed to include more participants and conduct experiments which last for at least a semester or longer in order to yield more reliable results. In addition, the amount of content that was presented in each of the sessions was controlled. Future studies can look into different FoP, FoR, and FoW designs, such as including different numbers of
vocabulary items and different lengths of exposure to content. For example, a future
study can allow learners to progress as fast as the approach allows. In this study all three
groups were exposed to only 50 words. If learners in the FoP or FoR group were exposed
to 100 words in the same amount of time, it may be possible that the differences in oral
and written assessments would be greater than the current study. Finally, other research is
needed to explore new approaches and their effects on learning Chinese for beginners.
LITERACY ARTIFACT

The Effects of E-dictionaries on Incidental Vocabulary Learning when Reading Chinese
INTRODUCTION

This artifact was not written for any specific course, but simply because I was interested in conducting a research project with e-dictionaries. The e-dictionary that is used in this study is called *Dim Sum* and it allows students to copy and paste a text into a browser and then simply hover over the words with the mouse to retrieve the Pinyin and meaning. When I was studying Chinese I made use of a similar program called *Wen Lin*, but after reading a few articles via this e-dictionary, I returned to reading hard copies. I felt that when reading with an e-dictionary, I was not processing the characters enough to remember them in the long term. During my time in the MSLT program, I came across several articles and books that advocated the use of these e-dictionaries for second language learners of Chinese because they helped learners increase reading speeds and comprehension scores. However, these studies did not examine the effect of these tools on the amount of vocabulary incidentally learned and retained. In my third semester of the MSLT program, I conducted a pilot study to determine this effect. After completing the pilot study, I adjusted the study design and wrote this artifact which serves as a proposal for a future study.
Abstract

To become proficient readers of Chinese, learners must identify characters quickly and accurately. Learners who are able to recognize Chinese characters rapidly and with little effort are able to focus on the message of the text rather than the meaning of individual characters. For learners who have little or no experience with Chinese characters, the complex orthography can be challenging. To ease this burden, e-dictionaries such as Dim Sum and NJstar have been highly touted as solutions to reading for second language learners of Chinese (Shen & Tsai, 2010; Xie & Tao, 2009). Research shows that when learners use these tools, reading speeds and comprehension scores improve. While research results do show the benefits of these tools, no research has compared the long-term retention of vocabulary learned via such tools. When using e-dictionaries, some students may simply glance at a character without lending much attention to the character form. For such learners, reading print-based texts may be more efficient for vocabulary learning, since learners must lend attention to form in order to look up an unknown character. This paper will propose a study to compare long-term vocabulary retention of incidentally learned words when reading with an e-dictionary and when reading in a print-based format.

Introduction

This study aims to determine the effectiveness of using e-dictionaries to build and retain incidentally learned vocabulary for second language learners of Chinese. Although other studies have observed the effect of e-dictionaries on reading speeds and reading comprehension (Hong, 1997; Wang, 2009, 2012), they have not observed the long-term retention rates of vocabulary words that were learned incidentally when reading with an
e-dictionary. Furthermore, in the studies that observed vocabulary growth, no pre-test was given. Therefore, it is unclear whether vocabulary development actually occurred (Wang, 2009, 2012).

For this study, the terms e-gloss and e-dictionary are used interchangeably, because the e-dictionary used in this study functions as an e-glossing tool. The e-dictionary that will be used is called Dim Sum. Wenlin and NJstar are also commonly used e-dictionaries that are mentioned in other studies that observe the effect of e-dictionaries on the Chinese reading process. These three programs have unique built-in features, but the main function of all three is to allow readers to copy and paste a text into a browser, which then allows the reader to simply hover over any Chinese character to retrieve the definition and the Pinyin, the phonetic transliteration, of the character.

Researchers have suggested that e-dictionaries may be useful in helping learners overcome the obstacle of learning to read Chinese characters, because they help speed up the process of looking up unknown words (Shen & Tsai, 2010; Xie & Tao, 2009). In addition to increasing reading speed, anxiety from reading in Chinese (Zhao, Guo, & Dynia, 2013) may also be reduced by reading with an e-dictionary. Finally, several studies have indicated that e-dictionaries improve learners’ reading comprehension scores and reading speeds (Hong, 1997; Wang, 2009, 2012; Wang & Upton, 2012).

Much of the research has been dedicated to the benefits of e-dictionaries, but before e-dictionaries are promoted as a cure-all for reading in Chinese, a few issues must be addressed. First, when learners use an e-dictionary to read a text they are not required to guess vocabulary from context. Secondly, learners generally do not need to know how to segment the characters in the text, as the software does this automatically. Finally, one
of the major benefits of second language reading is that it allows learners to develop vocabulary incidentally. However, if a learner is using an e-dictionary to read a text in Chinese, it is possible that the learner may lend less attention to unknown vocabulary words. When reading in a traditional format, to look up an unknown word a learner must be able hold the character in short-term memory long enough to match it with a dictionary entry, which requires some processing of the character. However, this is not a requirement of looking up an unknown word in an e-dictionary, such as Dim Sum.

According to Craik and Tulving (1975), the depth of processing is directly related to the retention of vocabulary. From their findings it can be hypothesized that vocabulary looked up in a traditional format would be more likely to be retained than those looked up when reading a text in an e-dictionary. This paper will concentrate on this final issue of whether or not e-dictionaries have a negative impact on the retention of incidentally learned vocabulary.

**Literature Review**

The following literature review will first look at that the reading process of second language learners when reading Chinese characters and how it differs from other languages. In this section, I will outline what it means to be a proficient reader of Chinese and subsequently what skills need to be fostered to help second language learners become proficient readers in Chinese. In the following section, I will argue that incidental vocabulary learning is the main reason for second language learners to engage in extensive reading. In this section I will review past studies that have demonstrated the value of extensive reading, and studies that have observed the best practices for increasing incidental learning that occurs during extensive reading. In the last two
sections, the current research on the effect of e-dictionaries and e-dictionaries for Chinese learners will be reviewed. It is here that I will demonstrate a gap in the current literature in regards to vocabulary learning that occurs when second language learners use an e-dictionary to read Chinese texts.

**Reading in Chinese**

For learners who have little to no experience with logographic writing systems, learning to read Chinese characters can be both intimidating and challenging. One of the aspects of Chinese characters that make it so difficult is the lack of a reliable link between the visual form of the character and the pronunciation. Almost 90% of the most commonly used Chinese characters are compound characters (Wang et al., 1986), which means that they contain a phonetic and semantic radical. These radicals are often utilized by native speakers to help remember and guess vocabulary meaning and pronunciation (Feldman & Siok, 1999; Hayes, 1988). However, these radicals are not reliable cues, and in fact, only 26% of phonetic radicals provide exact phonetic representations of the actual character (Fan, Gao, & Ao, 1984). Understanding the function of these radicals will help learners recognize and retain characters more efficiently (Hayes, 1988; Xu & Padilla, 2013). Another aspect of reading Chinese that can be problematic is segmenting characters to form words. A majority of the Chinese words are formed by the combination of two or three characters, however unlike many other languages there is not a space between written words. If learners segment the words incorrectly they will have trouble with the overall meaning of a statement. Knowing the correct way to segment characters is dependent on the context of the reading. Recognizing characters and then
parsing the characters to form words represent bottom-up processing struggles that learners experience when reading Chinese.

Learners’ struggles with bottom-up processing skills can also affect top-down processing skills. Everson (1994) argues that because learners spend so much time decoding Chinese characters, they are unable to focus on other aspects of the text, such as, meaning and grammatical forms. Not surprisingly, Sheng and Jiang (2013) found that learners who were able to recognize and segment characters accurately and quickly were more proficient readers of Chinese. Emphasizing the importance of reading speed, they conclude that, “oral reading fluency is an important factor for reading comprehension in Chinese” (p. 17). Shen and Jiang also argue that once learners are able to read fluently, they are able to lend more attention to understanding the text, and subsequently the learners’ comprehension scores increase. Finally, in a study investigating the strategies employed by American learners of Chinese, Lee-Thompson (2008) found that learners overwhelmingly preferred bottom-up strategies to top-down strategies, with 5,189 occurrences of bottom-up strategies compared to 707 occurrences of top-down strategies. Lee-Thompson cite this disparity in strategy use when commenting on the problems that learners have with reading the text. Again, learners of Chinese tend to struggle with basic decoding skills and thus are unable to attend to other aspects of the text.

The research regarding reading in Chinese provides strong support for the use of an e-dictionary like Dim Sum. Since Dim Sum allows readers to look up words instantaneously, they are able to spend less time and effort on decoding skills and more time on understanding the text. Also, because Dim Sum automatically segments words, it is possible that this function could aid learners in developing segmenting skills. These are
two important skills that may be facilitated by reading with an e-dictionary but, simply understanding the text is not the only goal for reading in a foreign language. In the following, section I will explore what some would argue as the main benefit of reading in a foreign language: incidental vocabulary learning.

**Incidental Vocabulary Learning through Extensive Reading**

Research in the previous section indicated that for many second language learners to become successful readers of Chinese, they would need to improve their vocabulary size and speed of accurately recognizing characters. While some researchers may find intentional vocabulary learning methods to be more effective, many researchers argue that vocabulary learned incidentally through reading may be more efficient than traditional methods (Huckin & Coady, 1999; Krashen, 2004). Huckin and Coady define incidental learning as a secondary learning that is “a by-product, not the target, of the main cognitive activity” (p. 182). They also argue that this type of learning is more efficient because learners are able to develop reading skills and build vocabulary size at the same time. Finally, Huckin and Coady argue that learning vocabulary through reading is more advantageous than vocabulary lists because the vocabulary is contextualized.

Research on vocabulary gains through extensive reading has indicated that learners can also experience significant gains in the development of partial word knowledge as well as lexical access speed (Grabe & Stroller, 2002; Horst, 2005; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006). Pigada and Schmitt found that after an extensive reading treatment 65.4% of the targeted vocabulary demonstrated some degree of learning. Horst’s study on vocabulary learning in extensive reading indicates that new knowledge was gained on more than half of the unknown words in the reading material. Finally, Horst, Cobb, and
Meara (1998) found that learners were able to recall one of every five new words that they had learned incidentally.

These studies clearly show that incidental learning does occur in extensive reading, however, as Huckin and Coady (1999) point out, “extensive reading for meaning does not lead automatically to the acquisition of vocabulary” (p. 183). Many factors could contribute to the acquisition of an incidentally learned word. The context that the incidentally word appears in, for example, can greatly increase or decrease the likelihood that a word gets noticed. Nation and Coady (1988) point out that the context of a passage could allow a reader to completely bypass any processing of a word, because the content is understandable without knowing the definition. On the other hand, Liu and Nation (1985) found that learners who understand 96% of the text are better at guessing unknown words than learners who understand only 90% of the text. Huckin and Coady also suggested that the nature of the learner’s attention and task demands could also play a role in the acquisition of incidentally learned vocabulary words.

This research clearly shows that incidental vocabulary learning is a major benefit of reading in a second language. If incidental vocabulary learning is a main goal of reading in a second language, then determining the effectiveness of an e-dictionary as a tool to support reading in Chinese must take factors that lead to incidental vocabulary learning into consideration. Reading speeds and comprehension scores are not the only valid aspects of reading that need to be improved. In the following section, I will review the studies that have investigated the effects of e-dictionaries and e-glosses on incidental vocabulary learning.
Previous studies on e-glosses/e-dictionaries and incidental vocabulary learning

Glosses have been shown to be beneficial because they draw the learners’ attention to the target vocabulary, decrease the burden of looking up new words, reduce the mistakes related to false inferences, and do not interrupt the flow of reading (Azari, 2012; Hong, 2010). In regards to incidental learning, many of the researchers attempted to determine which type of gloss led to better retention of the target vocabulary (Gettys, Imhof, & Kautz, 2001; Nagata, 1999; Xu, 2010; Yoshi, 2006).

When comparing an L1 and L2 gloss, Yoshi (2006) found that both lead to increased incidental vocabulary learning, but neither is significantly more effective than the other. Xu (2010) concludes that a gloss with both L1 and L2 definitions is most effective in terms of increasing word knowledge. Her study also found that better comprehension of a text leads to a higher rate of incidentally learned vocabulary. This is an important finding for the e-dictionaries used in this study, which have been shown to increase learner comprehension scores.

Other studies indicate that when gloss leads to deeper lexical processing, incidental learning rates increase (Gettys, Imhof, & Kautz, 2001; Nagata, 1999). Nagata compared two gloss formats: one that provided the definition of a word and one that provided a multiple choice selection with immediate feedback. The authors found that the multiple choice gloss led to higher rates of incidental learning. They suggested that this was due to the depth of processing that was required by the learners. Gettys, Imhof, and Kautz compared a gloss that gave participants a definition that fit within the context of the story and a gloss that gave participants a dictionary form of the word. The participants who received a dictionary form gloss experienced higher levels of incidental vocabulary
learning. The authors claimed that this was also due to the level of processing that was required by the learners. They argued that, because the gloss that provided a modified definition of the word did not require an inference by the learner, less attention was paid to the target word. These two studies point out the importance of the learner’s attention on the incidentally learned vocabulary.

Most of the studies above have shown how incidental learning can be enhanced by using glosses when reading. However, it is important to note that the glosses in these studies tend to only gloss certain words deemed important in the reading, whereas the e-dictionaries in this study provide a definition for all of the characters in the text. By providing a dictionary definition for all of the words in the text, it is possible that learners will pay less attention to incidentally learned vocabulary. However, because Chinese e-dictionaries do not provide context-specific definitions for the vocabulary words, and because these e-dictionaries can make errors in segmenting vocabulary words, it is possible that a higher degree of processing is occurring than presumed. In the final section of this literature review, I will present the studies that have observed the effect of e-dictionaries on reading in Chinese.

**Previous studies on e-glosses/e-dictionaries for Chinese**

The few studies that have examined the use of e-dictionaries for second language learners of Chinese have focused on comprehension scores and reading speeds, although two of the studies appeared to have measured vocabulary building (Hong, 1997; Wang, 2009, 2012; Wang & Upton, 2012).

One study compared the effects of multimedia software on reading comprehension and speed for second language learners. Hong (1997) found that when
learners read with the assistance of the online gloss provided in the software they scored an average of 38% higher on the comprehension tests. She also noted that learners were able to read the texts in less than half the time when using the online glosses.

In a study using a similar e-dictionary to the one that will be used in this study, Wang (2012) attempted to measure the vocabulary learning and comprehension scores of intermediate and advanced learners. She asked participants to read a text two times. After reading the text twice, participants were asked to write a recall in English. The researcher also took note of the amount of lookups for each word while participants read the text. Wang concluded from the recall test that intermediate learners benefited more from the e-dictionary than the advanced students. In terms of vocabulary building, she claimed that intermediate learners retained “many words” because they looked up 40 words more than four times each in the first reading, but only 6 words more than four times each in the second reading. In another study using an e-dictionary, Wang and Upton (2012) found that learners who used an e-dictionary consistently scored higher on comprehension scores and finished reading faster than those who read in a traditional format. Wang and Upton concluded the article by pointing out two problems with the e-dictionaries. First, they indicated that when the e-dictionary did not segment the words properly the learners were unable to notice the error. Secondly, they found that learners often used only one of the many possible definitions offered by the program, which hindered their understanding of the text.

Here it is noteworthy that the only study observing vocabulary learning was Wang (2012). However, this study did not administer a pre- or post-vocabulary test. So, it is unclear if the words being looked up were being looked up to confirm a hunch, to check
the pronunciation, or to check the definition. Also, Wang analyzed only words that were looked up more than four times. This means that if on the second reading the participant looked up the word only two or three times then it was considered that some vocabulary knowledge was learned. Finally, this study did not compare the learning that occurred via e-dictionary with vocabulary learned when reading in a traditional format. Wang and Upton compared these two formats, but did not look at vocabulary learning. Again previous research on the use of e-dictionaries to read Chinese have focused almost exclusively on reading comprehension scores, with few studies observing the effect on the long-term retention rates of incidentally learned vocabulary. This study will attempt to fill this gap in the literature.

**Research Questions**

1. What is the effect of reading a Chinese text with an e-dictionary on the long-term retention of incidentally learned vocabulary?

2. What is the effect of reading a Chinese text with an e-dictionary on the development of partial knowledge of vocabulary words?

**Study Proposal**

Participants in the study will be given 10 readings at their linguistic level. The readings will be taken from *The Chinese Reading World*, which is an online graded reading system, designed to allow learners to read extensively at their linguistic level (Shen & Tsai, 2010). The participants will be required to read one text a day, Monday through Friday, for two consecutive weeks. The participants will alternate each day between reading with *Dim Sum* and reading in a traditional format. When reading in a traditional format, learners will be allowed to use their smartphones as a dictionary.
Learners will also be encouraged to use their smartphone dictionaries when reading on *Dim Sum*, as some of the segmenting that automatically occurs in *Dim Sum* can be incorrect. Using a dictionary to look up words and check hunches has been shown to result in better vocabulary retention (Luppescu & Day, 1993). Before and after each reading, the participants will be given a pre- and post-vocabulary recognition test. This will establish which vocabulary words were incidentally learned and the additional knowledge of vocabulary words that the participants gained. Words that are correctly labeled with Pinyin and English on the post-vocabulary recognition test, but not on the pre-vocabulary recognition test, will be considered as incidentally learned. If a learner is able to label the Pinyin, but not the English, or the English and not the Pinyin on the pre-vocabulary recognition test, but then is able to completely label the word with both Pinyin and English on the post vocabulary recognition test, this will be considered as gaining additional vocabulary knowledge for said word. In addition, to the pre- and post-vocabulary recognition test, participants will also be given a reading comprehension test. While the aim of this study is not to compare reading comprehension scores, as this has already been done several times, the researcher believe that it is important to ensure that the learners understood what they have read. Also, since participants are informed that they will be administered a comprehension test, then it is assumed that the primary goal of the reading will be for comprehension and not for vocabulary. Once all ten readings are completed, a delayed word recognition test will be administered using the incidentally learned words of each participant. The delayed test will be administered two weeks after the completion of the final reading. To determine the effect of reading with an e-dictionary on the retention of incidentally learned vocabulary and additional vocabulary
knowledge, we will compare the retention rates of the words that were learned incidentally in both formats using a paired t-test.

The researcher of this study decided to use a pre- and post-vocabulary recognition test to investigate Wang’s (2012) claims of vocabulary learning when reading Chinese with an e-dictionary. Wang attempted to determine the amount of vocabulary learning that occurred in her study by observing the amount of words looked up when reading a text twice. If a participant looked up a word in the first text, but not in the second text it was decided that the word had been learned. However, she later admitted that some of the words being looked up may have been looked up simply to confirm a hunch. Therefore, it is possible that several of the words looked up in the first reading were words that the participant already knew. Lomicka (1998) also noted that due to the complex orthography of Chinese, learners often used a dictionary to simply confirm their beliefs about a word or character. Also, because Chinese characters do not offer a direct cue to the pronunciation or meaning, it is also probable that participants looked up words to confirm only the pronunciation and not the meaning, or vice versa. If this were the case, then additional learning of the vocabulary word would have occurred. Finally, Horst (2005) also advocates for word knowledge measures to include words that actually appear in the readings that are in the treatment. In the pre- and post-vocabulary recognition test, all words that appear in the reading will appear on the test, with the exception of the vocabulary words that appeared in the first-year Chinese textbooks. These words will not be included for two reasons. First, students in this study have been exposed to these words for at least 2 years, and the researchers have contacted the professors of these students to confirm that all of the students should know these words. Secondly, if these
words were added into the pre- and post-vocabulary recognition test, the tests would be too long and would likely lead to tester fatigue.

Participants in this study will be first-, second-, and third-year students enrolled in a spring semester Chinese course at Utah State University. Participation in the study will be included as a requirement in their course syllabus. Readings will be adjusted to match the linguistic levels of each of the participants.

**Conclusion and Further Studies**

In this study proposal, I have first demonstrated that due to the difficulty of learning the Chinese orthography, many second language learners of Chinese struggle in developing literacy skills. To become proficient readers, they must work on building their vocabulary size and their character recognition speed and accuracy. I then presented a literature review on incidental vocabulary learning that occurs in extensive reading and argued that through extensive reading second language learners of Chinese can enhance the literacy skills needed to become proficient readers. In the following section, I reviewed literature on how e-dictionaries and e-glosses enhance incidental vocabulary learning. Finally, in the last section of the literature review, I present the research regarding Chinese and the use of e-dictionaries. This research has primarily focused on the enhancement of reading speed and comprehension.

The study that I have proposed will fill the literature gap in regards to vocabulary learning that occurs when using an e-dictionary to read Chinese. If the study concludes that there is no significant difference between the long-term retention rates of vocabulary learned via e-dictionary with those learned via traditional format, then it would imply that e-dictionaries should become a part of every Chinese as a second language program.
However, if this data shows that a traditional format provides better conditions for retaining incidentally vocabulary words, then educators must re-think how and when these tools are used. Finally, further research will be needed in regards to e-dictionaries and how they impact other reading skills for Chinese learners.
CULTURE ARTIFACT

Whose Pragmatics Are We Talking About? A Lesson Plan on Compliment Responses
INTRODUCTION

In this artifact, I explore the literature surrounding compliment responses in Chinese. This paper was written in Dr. Karin de Jonge-Kannan’s Linguistics 6900 course. I originally started researching compliment responses because I was taught that one should always negate a compliment in Chinese, but I found that many of my Chinese friends often accepted compliments. I was convinced that it was a generational thing. I figured anyone who grew up before China opened its doors to the world would embody traditional Chinese values, and anyone who was born after the opening would have more westernized values. However, once I began researching the topic I found that it was more complex than I had previously thought. Much of the research I found presented contradicting findings. This artifact was my attempt to synthesize the current literature on compliment responses and propose a new model for Chinese compliment responses. In my conclusion, I then use my new model to demonstrate what a lesson plan to teach second language learners of Chinese the proper way to respond to a compliment would look like.
Abstract
This article reviews the literature surrounding compliment responses by native speakers of Chinese. Through the literature review the author argues that compliment responses cannot be predicted by isolating factors such as: language, generation, region, or social distance. Instead compliment responses should be viewed through Spencer-Oatey’s (2005) rapport management model. In this way, the social context, the compliment giver’s face, and the desired self-image of the compliment receiver must all be taken into account when examining compliment response tendencies of native Chinese speakers. Finally, this article concludes with a lesson plan that applies Spencer-Oatey’s rapport management model to an advanced Chinese class on compliment responses.

Keywords: Chinese, compliment response, rapport management

Introduction
“你的中文真好!” (Your Chinese is really good!)
“哪里哪里” (Where? Where?)
Most second language learners of Chinese have probably learned this conversational routine at some point during their studies. In this short dialogue, “Where? Where?” is used to politely reject a compliment. Second language learners of Chinese are often taught that modesty is a treasured value in Chinese society and that rejection or avoidance are the only proper responses to a compliment. Evidence for this can be seen in most first-year Chinese textbooks or by simply doing an internet search for ‘Chinese compliment responses’. However, as the following literature review will show, compliment responses by native speakers of Chinese (NSC) are not governed by one rule.
In his description of politeness in modern China, Gu (1990) points out that modesty is in fact a key component of the concept of politeness in China and that this aspect of politeness has an effect on linguistic expressions in Chinese. However, many researchers have suggested that this concept of politeness, as defined by Gu, may have undergone some changes for recent generations due to western influence (Cai, 2012; Chen & Yang, 2010; Lee, 2009). In addition to generational changes, researchers have also suggested that region, gender, and social status play a role in the type of response strategies employed by NSC (Cai, 2012; Spencer-Oatey & Ng, 2002; Wang & Tsai, 2003).

In an attempt to integrate the many factors that contribute to compliment responses by NSC into one model, I will argue that the findings of the studies in this literature view can be understood as rapport management techniques. According to Spencer-Oatey (2005), rapport management refers to “management (or mismanagement) of relations between people” (p. 96). She explains that rapport management judgments are based on three components: behavioral expectations, face sensitivities, and interactional wants. According to Spencer-Oatey, behavioral expectations refer to what people believe is socially appropriate behavior (verbal and non-verbal). Expanding on Brown and Levinson’s (1987) notion that face is primarily a “self-image,” Spencer-Oaty claims there are two types of face: respectability face and identity face. She refers to respectability face as the “prestige, honor, or ‘good name’ that a person or social group holds and claims within a (broader) community” (p. 102), whereas identity face is related to the social values that one associates with oneself. Finally, Spencer-Oatey also points out that one’s ‘wants’ can also influence rapport management. I will use this model of
rapport management by Spencer-Oatey to explain the diverse range of compliment responses in recent studies with NSC.

Before we look at the research, it is important to define what is meant by a compliment and a compliment response. For this paper, I will use the definition for compliments proposed by Holmes (1986). Holmes says, “A compliment is a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some ‘good’ (possession, characteristic, skill, etc.) that is positively valued by the speaker and hearer” (p. 485). Compliment responses are defined in this paper as any linguistic or physical behavior by the compliment receiver that occurs as a reaction to a compliment. There are several types of compliment responses, but a majority of them can be classified as either accepting, rejecting/evading, or no response.

Table 4: Main Categories of Compliment Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accepting</td>
<td>谢谢 - Thanks!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejecting/Evading</td>
<td>哪里哪里 - Where? Where?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*used to reject a compliment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opting out</td>
<td>*receiver of compliment does not respond.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Currently, second language learners are taught several rejection/avoidance strategies for responding to compliments in Chinese. However, as I will demonstrate in this paper, choosing the appropriate response to a compliment in Chinese is much more complex than simply rejecting the compliment. Following the literature review, I will propose a new model for compliment responses by using Spencer-Oatey’s (2005) rapport management model. Finally, based on this new model, I will present a lesson plan to teach second language learners of Chinese how to properly respond to a compliment.
Literature Review

Research on compliment responses by NSC has experienced a surge in the last few years, in large part due to a study by Chen (1993) that found that college students in northern China used rejection strategies 95% of the time when responding to compliments. Many researchers found this study to be unrepresentative of actual practices, and as a result, studies on the effects of culture, generation, gender, geographic region, and even social distance on the types of compliment responses started to appear. In the following section, I will summarize the research in each of these areas to demonstrate the diverse set of factors that contribute to how and when NSC respond to compliments.

Cross-language research

In the first section, I will examine the research that compares compliment response strategies across languages. In particular, all of the following studies compare native speakers of Mandarin Chinese with either American English or Australian English. It is also important to mention that the participant population for all of the studies in this section were almost exclusively college students. Additionally, three of the four studies employed a discourse completion task (DCT) questionnaire to collect their data, while the fourth study observed responses via naturalistic role playing. These are issues that I will address in further detail in the conclusion.

In the first study, Chen (1993) gave 100 university students (50 from Xi’an, China and 50 from Missouri, USA) a DCT questionnaire that prompted a compliment response from the participants in four different situations. It’s worth noting that in each of the scenarios the only type of relationship observed was between students who were familiar
with each other. Chen found that American speakers tended to use a wider range of strategies when responding to compliments, and that American speakers used acceptance strategies (39.28%) more than any other strategy. As for the NCS, 95% of the responses employed rejection strategies.

Chen’s (1993) study seems to suggest that NSC overwhelmingly prefer to reject compliments. However, nearly 20 years later, Tang and Zhang’s (2009) study, which compared compliment response strategies by native speakers of Australian English and NSC, found different results. Again this study used a DCT questionnaire to see how the participants would respond to compliments in four different situations. The researchers found that both groups preferred acceptance strategies over evasion and rejection strategies, but the native Australian speakers reported a higher percentage of acceptance responses than NSC (~80% to 50% respectively). When the researchers examined the differences between compliment responses they found that although NSC were similar to the native speakers of Australian English, the NCS “were less comfortable taking compliments about their possessions and character than they were on appearance and ability” (p. 335). This study was interesting because it seemed to contrast Chen’s (1993) study that reported a very small percentage of acceptances. However, the results of this study may be skewed since the NSC in this study were residing in Australia at the time. It is likely that many of the participants were influenced by Australian culture.

In the next two studies, the researchers compared Chinese English learners with native-English Speakers. Yuan (1996) used a DCT questionnaire to compare the compliment response strategies of Chinese ESL speakers, Chinese EFL speakers, and native English speakers from the USA. In her study, she found that Chinese ESL speakers
who had been studying in the U.S. for over six months produced responses that more closely resembled the responses of the native-English speakers than the Chinese EFL speakers. Cheng (2011) was also interested in comparing the compliment response strategies of native-English speakers with those of Chinese ESL speakers and Chinese EFL speakers. However, instead of using a DCT, her participants were asked to participate in a naturalistic role-play, in which they were complimented. Cheng found that both Chinese ESL speakers and Chinese EFL speakers showed compliment responses similar to those of the native-English speakers. The Chinese English learners’ compliment response tendencies differed from the native-English speakers only when responding to compliments about personality. It is important to note that the Chinese participants reported that they had been previously taught the culturally acceptable way to accept compliments in English. However, they stated that they were unsure of how to produce the language necessary for a proper compliment response. When comparing the Chinese EFL and Chinese ESL speakers, Cheng noted that the only difference was in the variety of responses utilized. She stated that “most of them typically knew that they should show appreciation to be polite when receiving a compliment” (p. 2211), but most of them were not able to produce the responses because of linguistic constraints. Both of these studies clearly show that Chinese students living in an English-speaking environment tend to pick up L2 pragmatic norms in terms of compliment responses. Judging from the responses given in Cheng’s study, it would also seem that many students learned these pragmatic norms while they were studying in China, which may help to explain why Tang and Zhang (2009) found such high use of acceptance strategies among the Chinese participants.
In this section, there were four studies that compared compliment responses across languages, three of which found that NSC employ acceptance strategies at slightly lower rates than their English speaking counterparts. In contrast, Chen (1993) found that NSC employed acceptance strategies only 1% of the time compared to the American speakers who used acceptance strategies 39.28% of the time. First, it is important to note that several studies have suggested that DCT questionnaires are not always accurate when determining how people will react in real-life situations (Golato, 2003; He, 2012). This may be because DCT questionnaires do not account for face sensitivities or the “wants” of the participants. Simply put, being complimented on paper by a “friend” and being complimented in real-life by someone you admire, dislike, or have a crush on will undoubtedly elicit different responses. Secondly, according to Spencer-Oatey (2005), our rapport management judgment is dependent on our perception of what is socially acceptable. In three of the studies, the participants were in English speaking countries, thus it makes sense that more acceptance strategies were employed, since in these countries, acceptance of a compliment is perceived as more socially appropriate. Furthermore, by producing compliment responses that were more similar to the local culture, these participants may have been making claims to their respectability face and identity face. This may be the case if the participants perceived themselves as having successfully integrated into the Australian or American culture. In Chen’s study, the behavior expectation principle could also be used to suggest that the Chinese participants were responding based on what was deemed socially acceptable by either their professors, or possibly their peers at that time. In the same respect, it could be argued that
these participants were also making claims to their *respectability face*, by showing that they understood the proper responses for a person in the Chinese community.

**Cross-generational research**

In this section, I will highlight researchers who argue that the past twenty years have seen a shift in the conceptualization of politeness, and that this shift has influenced how compliment responses are realized. The two articles in this section examine how the younger generation (post-one child policy) and the older generation (pre-one child policy) differ when employing compliment response strategies. The first study involves college students for participants whereas the second study has college students and middle-aged to elderly participants.

In the first study, Chen and Yang (2010) conduct a follow-up study to the Chen (1993) study, returning to the original university and using the same DCT questionnaire to determine if results would be different almost 20 years later. Chen and Yang found that 62% of the responses employed accepting strategies in comparison to their previous study in which only 1.05% of the responses used accepting strategies. Also, 28% of the responses used deflecting/avoiding strategies compared to only 3% in the previous study. Finally, only 9% of the responses used a rejecting strategy compared to 95% of the responses in the first study. The authors claim that this is a result of China opening up to the world and thus receiving more western influence.

Chen and Yang (2010) found that college students 20 years ago employed different strategies than college students today. Another study attempted to determine if the older generation still maintained the same compliment strategies that Chen found in 1993. He (2012) conducted an ethnographic study with 119 participants attending 16
different dinners, 61 of which belonged to the older generation and 58 of which belonged to the younger generation. He found that the older generation accepted a compliment only 48% of the time, compared to the younger generation, accepting a compliment 66% of the time. As for rejection of compliments, the older generation rejected a compliment 42% of the time whereas the younger generation rejected a compliment only 20% of the time. Although the acceptance rates of this article are still higher than Chen’s (1993) findings, we can still see that there is a clear difference in the way older and younger generations respond to compliments.

These two studies indicate a shift towards a less constricted view of politeness compared to what Gu (1990) had described. However, if we view the compliment responses that occurred in these studies as rapport management tactics, we could argue that both participant groups in He (2012) indicated higher rates of acceptance strategies due to their familiarity with each other. The participants in the study were all friends and of the same peer group. In China and in most places around the world, having dinner with one’s peers is quite different from having dinner with someone who is not considered an equal (higher or lower status). Yet, because the older generation used lower rates of acceptance strategies this may suggest that they still perceive traditional values as more socially appropriate than the younger generation. We can use the same argument for the participants in Chen and Yang’s (2009) study. They used more acceptance strategies than their 1993 counterparts. This may be because their views on what is behaviorally acceptable have changed due to the one child policy and western influence (Chen & Yang, 2009; He 2012). Also, it should be noted that on the DCT only friends and peers gave compliments, and there was no indication of the environment of the compliment.
This is similar to He’s study in that there was only one type of relationship and scenario tested.

**Cross-regional research**

In this section, I will discuss research that compares different geographic regions that regard Chinese as an L1. In both studies a DCT questionnaire was utilized, but in the second study, the DCT data was compared with naturalistic data.

As the basis for their research, Spencer-Oatey and Ng (2002) compared the perceptions of compliment responses by Hong Kong and mainland Chinese residents. Participants were given a DCT questionnaire in which someone was complimented and then three possible types of response were given: acceptance, rejection, or avoidance. The participants then marked how acceptable or unacceptable they believed each response was. The results show that both groups felt that acceptance of a compliment was appropriate but at times could sound conceited. They also found that excessive rejection of a compliment could also be interpreted as conceit.

By comparison, Yuan (2002) used a DCT questionnaire, naturalistic notebook recordings, and interviews to observe the compliment and compliment response behavior of people in Kunming, China. Among the 175 participants, nearly half of them took the DCT orally, while the others filled in questionnaires with a pen and paper. Unfortunately, the types of responses from the oral and written DCT were not compared. Yuan utilizes the oral DCT to provide examples of the findings in the combined (oral and written) DCT results. She found that on the DCT questionnaire, 43% of all responses used an explanation strategy, which Yuan considers as a form of acceptance. This was the most common type of response. However, in the naturalistic data, this number was reduced to
only 15% of all responses. It’s noteworthy that in the DCT data accepting strategies were the most common, however in the naturalistic data, rejecting strategies were reported as the most common, occurring 33.98% of the time.

In both of these studies, according to the DCT results, acceptance strategies are again the preferred strategy. In Spencer-Oatey and Ng (2002), it is interesting to point out that they included compliments to and from members of different social hierarchies. This is to say that they were not simply observing friends complimenting friends. However, when they analyzed the data they only compared overall use of acceptance strategies between the two regions. In the Kunming study we see again how the DCT is not reliable when measuring speech acts that depend on perception of socially acceptable behavior or face sensitivities.

Other research

Lee (2009) observed the compliments that people gave, the givers/receivers of the compliments and finally the kind of responses elicited by the compliments. The ethnographic study took place in Singapore during the Chinese New Year. The data consisted of 157 complimenters: 90 married females with children (F), 44 single females without children (f), 14 married males with children (M), and 9 single males without children (m), and 166 compliment receivers (76F, 54f, 20M, 16m). Lee argues that in Chinese society, Married people, especially women, are more sensitive to societal norms than those who are unmarried. Therefore, married females with children are the members of society who best uphold societal expectations. Lee found that a majority of the responses fell into the non-acceptance category. From the 290 responses recorded, 53% were non-acceptance, 24.2% were deflect and evade, and 22.8% were acceptance. The
author concludes that women with children were the main givers/receivers of compliments and that the main compliment response was non-acceptance. However the author admits that not accepting a compliment has been conventionalized and does not necessarily reflect the receivers’ true feelings. Instead it is merely a sign of respect for the older generation, or to strangers. It was also suggested that there were more non-acceptance responses due to the formality of the event. Both of the suggestions offered by Lee are supported by Spencer-Oatey’s (2005) concept of behavior expectation. The expectation of the attendees at a cultural Chinese event was to behave in a manner that was congruent was traditional Chinese values.

In another ethnographic study, Wang and Tsai (2003) compared compliments and compliment responses between genders. In this ethnographic study, data was recorded by students observing their classmates throughout the day. The corpus being analyzed contained 454 examples collected from college students. The breakdown of the pairs were: 47.3% female to female; 26.9% female to male; 13.7% male to female; and 12.1% male to male. Analysis of the data shows that both male and female chose a non-acceptance strategy 62% of the time. The authors found no significant difference between genders when accepting or rejecting a compliment. However, they did note that male participants tended to directly reject a compliment while female participants preferred to ask a follow-up question regarding the compliment.

Finally, Cai (2012) conducted a study that gave a DCT questionnaire to 123 students at Dalian University. Cai was particularly interested in observing the relationship between social distance, gender and compliment responses. She found that overall participants used acceptance strategies 72.3% of the time. In terms of gender differences,
the only significant difference was that females used explicit acceptance strategies more than male participants (38.5% to 31.9% respectively). With respect to social distance, if the compliment giver has relatively high social status as compared to the compliment receiver, an explicit acceptance strategy was preferred, however if the social status of both compliment giver and receiver was similar, or if the two interlocutors were familiar, a deflection or rejection strategy was preferred. Cai’s study indicates that social status also influences compliment responses. These findings could possibly be explained by Spencer-Oatey’s (2005) behavior expectation or face sensitivity principle. If a person of a lower social status rejects or avoids a compliment made by one of a higher social status, it may be seen as an attack on the compliment giver’s identity face. This is because the compliment receiver would indirectly be challenging the compliment giver’s ability to evaluate the aspect being complimented. It is also important to keep in mind that this study was conducted with a DCT questionnaire and thus may not be reliable.

In this literature review, studies that have used ethnographic techniques to measure compliment responses by Chinese speakers tended to show higher rates of rejection and avoidance strategies (Lee, 2009; Wang & Tsai, 2003; Yuan, 2002), with the exception of He (2012) who found comparatively higher acceptance strategies for both older and younger generations of Chinese speakers. On the other hand, when studies employ a DCT questionnaire, there tends to be higher rates of acceptance strategies (Cai, 2012; Chen & Yang, 2010; Spencer-Oatey & Ng, 2002; Tang & Zhang, 2009; Yuan, 2002), with the exception of the Chen (1993) study, which found the highest rates of rejection strategies. In the following section, I will attempt to make sense of these studies.
by applying Spencer-Oatey’s *rapport management* model to Chinese compliment response.

**Spencer-Oatey’s Rapport Management and Chinese Compliment Responses**

According to Gu’s (1990) politeness principle, the self-denigration maxim is a major factor in what is regarded as polite in China. This maxim states that one should denigrate one’s self, and elevate others. This principle, however, becomes difficult to achieve when responding to compliments. If one denigrates oneself and declines or rejects a compliment, one is essentially saying the compliment giver was wrong to give the compliment, or they misjudged the attribute being complimented. At the same time, if the receiver of the compliment accepts the compliment, and in doing so validates the compliment giver’s intelligence, the compliment receiver is no longer self-denigrating. This makes it clear that compliment responses cannot be viewed as simply acts of self-denigration or elevation of other. Furthermore, the research above shows that compliment responses are also not dependent solely on one’s gender, location, social status, or even generation.

I propose a new model of NSC compliment responses that views compliment responses as speech acts that compliment receivers employ depending on what is behaviorally expected for the given social context, the compliment receiver’s knowledge of the compliment giver’s face sensitivities, and finally the wants or desires that the compliment receiver wishes to achieve. Furthermore, compliment receivers will employ either more ‘traditional’ compliment strategies (rejection, avoidance, and opting out) or more “modern” compliment strategies (implicit and explicit acceptance) to satisfy the three aforementioned factors. Throughout this paper, I have shown how this model can be
applied to explain results found in the current literature surrounding NSC compliment responses. In the following section, I will demonstrate the implications that this model has for the classroom.

**Practical Implications: Lesson Plan**

As the literature review demonstrated above responding to a compliment in Chinese is complicated. Learners cannot be taught a series of compliment responses and then be expected to utilize them in the appropriate context. For learners to successfully respond to compliments in Chinese they must know the implications of using traditional and modern responses in a variety of contexts. This lesson plan attempts to address these difficulties that learners face when learning to respond to compliments in Chinese.

**Lesson plan overview**

In this lesson, advance learners of Chinese will be able to employ compliment responses that represent both traditional and modern Chinese values. When responding to compliments, the learners will take into consideration the social context, the compliment giver’s face, and their own conversational goals. To achieve this goal the teacher will first present a set of typical compliment responses that represent both traditional and modern approaches to compliment responses. Secondly, learners will categorize these responses as either representative of traditional Chinese values or modern Chinese values. Then, the learners will discuss how the social context, the compliment giver’s face, and their own goals influence the type of compliment response that is delivered. Finally, the learners will put what they have learned into practice by responding to imagined scenarios. Learners will also be asked to explain their rationale in choosing compliment responses for each scenario.
Material

In this activity the learners will receive five handouts, one for each activity in the lesson plan. These handouts can be found in the appendix.

Activity 1: Define different ways of responding to a compliment

First, it is important that learners understand the variety of responses that are available to them. The list used in this activity is a compilation of the compliment responses found in the previously reviewed studies. However, before providing students with a list of possible compliment responses, I will ask them to work in pairs and create a list of compliment responses that they have encountered (5 minutes). After students have made their own list, I will show them a list of compliment responses that are common in China. On the handout, students will be asked if they have heard the responses before, and if so, the location, the situation, and the participant involved in the interaction (5 minutes). This activity will get the learners ready for activity two.

Activity 2: Traditional to Modern Compliment Responses

In this section, learners will watch a short cartoon that aims at teaching Chinese children the value of modesty. Following the video (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVtayGcX1i4 – 5 minutes) the teacher will have a discussion on modesty and will explain that while modesty is still an important value in China, it is not as important in present day China as it was 10 or 20 years ago. Then the learners will be put into pairs to discuss which compliment responses they believe represent more traditional values (modesty) and which responses represent a more modern response (5 minutes).

Activity 3: Spencer-Oatey’s Rapport Management Model
In this activity, I will present the rapport management model that was used in this paper. I will demonstrate that when deciding to use a more traditional compliment response or a more modern compliment response, one must take into account the social context, the compliment givers’ face sensitivities, and the self-image that they wish to portray to others. I will use examples to demonstrate how these three factors contribute to the appropriate compliment response. Learners will then make predictions about the type of compliment responses that are expected based on the person and the context (10 minutes).

Activity 4: Predicting outcomes of compliment responses

In this activity, the learners will be given several situations that involve compliment responses, to which they will be asked to predict the outcome of the compliment response provided. The location, circumstances, social status, and compliment type will all vary (10 minutes). The key to this activity is that the learners are able to verbalize how they predicted each response, and how it relates to Spencer-Oatey’s (2005) rapport management model.

Activity 5: Provide a compliment response and explain

In the final activity, learners will be asked to produce a response based on different scenarios (10 minutes). The scenarios will vary in terms of social status and gender of the compliment giver, social distance between the compliment giver and receiver, and location. This activity will allow the learners to include their ‘wants’ into their reason for choosing a compliment response.

Homework
The learners will take note of their own compliment responses when speaking in their native language for one day. At the end of the day they will need to write a one page reflection in Chinese comparing their use of compliment responses in their native language with that of Chinese compliment responses.

**Conclusion**

In this paper, I have demonstrated that compliment responses depend on multiple factors that include: social context, the compliment giver’s face, and the ‘wants’ of the compliment receiver. These findings suggest that Chinese teachers at the advance level can no longer provide learners with a list of compliments and expect the students to use them properly. Learners need to be aware of and take into account the factors just mentioned. Finally, I provided a lesson plan to teach learners about the complexity of responding to a compliment in Chinese.

**Further Research**

Further research is needed to determine how individuals vary in their compliment response across formality of situations. Furthermore, it is important that future research continue with ethnographic methods of research because it is only in ethnographic studies that the social context, the compliment givers’ face, and the ‘wants’ of the compliment receiver can be taken into account. Finally, it is also important that the researcher understand why the compliment receiver chose their responses. This can be done by utilizing a follow-up interview and asking the participants to recall why they chose the strategies that they utilized during the study.
Introduction

The following annotated bibliography is composed of articles that I found particularly useful in developing my understanding of the four pillars of my teaching philosophy: communicative language teaching, developing literacy, teaching culture, and using technology in the language classroom. For each of the articles I first provide a brief summary of the main points and then I discuss how the article changed or influenced my understanding of teaching a second language.
COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

Modern approaches to second language acquisition are based on a set of principles that teachers use to govern their curriculum and teaching strategies. The communicative approach is based on research from Stephen Krashen in 1970’s to Bill Van Patten in the 1990’s. To truly grasp the concepts inherent in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), I must be familiar with previous research. The following section will include the books and articles that have shaped my understanding of CLT.

My first exposure to CLT came while reading *Making Communicative Language Teaching Happen*. Lee and VanPatten (2003) provide an overview of what CLT is and what it is not. The authors begin by introducing traditional ideas on language pedagogy and then meticulously disprove the preconceived notions on which traditional language instruction is based. They do this by providing readers with five ‘givens’ on second language acquisition and then by demonstrating how traditional instruction fails to address these ‘givens’.

The first notion that stuck with me was that many teachers assume students learn through explanations. This is a common misconception largely due to the lecture-based classes in other subject areas. According to CLT principles, learners acquire language through *using* language. While lecturing may be appropriate for math and science, it does not provide the students with the opportunity to engage in meaningful exchanges via the target language and, thus, is not suitable for teaching language. Language instructors should move away from teacher-centered lessons and towards student-centered classes.

Lee and VanPatten (2003) also place a large emphasis on the role of input in the language classroom. In contrast to Krashen (1985), who claims that comprehensible input
is the only necessary requirement of language acquisition, Lee and VanPatten state that input “must contain some message to which the learner is supposed to attend” (p. 27). In other words, the input must be meaningful to the learner. This is another key principle of CLT. Lee and VanPatten emphasize that the input for language learners must be “modified” to make input more salient. The teacher can do this by speaking slowly, using body language, and making use of images.

Furthermore, Lee and VanPatten (2003) stress the importance of providing learners with opportunities for meaningful exchanges in the classroom. In traditional instruction, although the teacher may provide speaking activities, many of these speaking activities are mechanical in nature, which means, students can find a pattern and then answer the questions without understanding what they are saying. Lee and VanPatten recommend using information-gap activities and interview exchange activities. These activities require learners to pay attention to both form and meaning to carry out the task.

This book changed the way I planned my lessons. My classes have always been student-centered, but I usually included time for presenting vocabulary and grammar explanations. I was thinking of better ways to explain certain grammar concepts. However, after reading Lee and Vanpatten (2003), I began looking at my language instruction from a different perspective. I focused on how I could present input and how I could manipulate the input to make the target language more accessible to my learners. I also changed the type of speaking activities I prepared. In the past, I believed that all speaking activities were equal, but now I see how meaningful activities, which hold students responsible for understanding the content, are more effective.
While reading *Making Communicative Language Teaching Happen*, I was also reading *The Communicative Classroom* (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001). Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, and Mandell follow much of the same line of argument as Lee and VanPatten (2003), but instead of positing CLT as a means of satisfying the SLA “givens,” Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro and Mandell argue that the students' main goal in studying a language is communication, and CLT provides the best environment to achieve that goal. Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro and Mandell first define communication as “the exchange, interpretation, and expression of meaning” (p. 6). Traditional methods do not provide students with the tools necessary to be able to carry out the complicated task of communicating in a foreign language. This is because traditional methods often rely on grammar drills and/or meaningless fill-in-the-gap speaking exercises, neither of which require the learner to know what is being said.

Next, Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, and Mandell (2001) provide the reader with a detailed description of the role grammar plays in the communicative classroom. The key difference between traditional approaches and the communicative approach is that grammar is at the service of the communicative goal in the CLT classroom. That is to say that grammar is not studied just to be studied. Rather, grammar is used as a tool for carrying out a communicative goal. Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, and Mandell also make a distinction between “essential, extra, and non-essential” (p. 37) grammar instruction. Often in the traditional approach too much grammar is taught, or grammar that is not useful for the current activity. This grammar only burdens the learner and will eventually be forgotten because it is not used.
Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, and Mandell (2001) also place emphasis on lesson planning in the communicative classroom. Traditional classes are designed based on grammatical structures, however in the CLT the syllabi are organized by communicative goals and thus the lessons are designed by a series of activities that ‘build’ on each other and eventually end with the student achieving the communicative goal. These activities are task-based activities.

My understanding of the communicative approach was enhanced by Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro and Mandell (2001) because of the in-depth description of task-based activities and how they facilitate the learner’s quest to achieve a communicative goal. It also helped me organize my ideas. I have never had a lack of ideas regarding classroom activities, but I have sometimes struggled with integrating these ideas into one theme. By first selecting a communicative goal and then working backwards, defining what my students need to carry out the goal, my lesson planning became more efficient. I also benefited from Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, and Mandell’s view on the role of grammar in the classroom. For language teachers there is a tendency to “flex” one’s linguistic muscles and show off grammar knowledge, which often leads to too much grammar and burdens the students’ limited capacity processors.

The Teacher’s Handbook by Shrum and Glisan (2010) proved to be a good bridge between the first two books. Shrum and Glisan (2010) provide an overview of second language teaching pedagogy. The book addresses various topics, including input, standards, storytelling, technology in the classroom, and helping students with diverse needs. Two parts in particular influenced my understanding of CLT.
Firstly, Shrum and Glisan take the idea of communicative competence and define it as discourse competence. They then give an in-depth description of what is included in discourse competence. Discourse competence is composed of four competences: socio-cultural competence, linguistic competence, actional competence, and strategic competence. This is an important section because it becomes painfully obvious that traditional instruction is not able to account for many of these skills that are necessary for proficient language use. Providing instruction that addresses all four of these competences separates communicative teaching from other pedagogies.

In Shrum and Glisan (2010), the section on storytelling also had a profound impact on my understanding of the communicative approach. I have always wrestled with how much input should be provided in class, and more importantly what type of input should be provided. Shrum and Glisan (2010) support the use of folktales and authentic stories through the PACE model for classroom input. These stories offer learners an opportunity to receive both culture and input in context. This method also allows for grammar to be learned both inductively and deductively through a focus on form that occurs in the PACE model.

The articles in the next section helped me better understand specific aspects of the communicative approach. The first article was Input processing in second language acquisition by VanPatten (2002). This article gives a detailed account of how we process input and why some parts of language seem to get processed more easily than other parts. VanPatten (2002) explains that some portions of language have more “communicative value” than others, due to redundancy and syntactic position. Also, language learners
tend to “process for meaning before form” and, thus learners will attend to form only if the acquisition of meaning does not overwhelm their limited capacity processors.

At first glance this article appears to undermine the communicative approach because it advocates for a ‘focus on form’. However, the article is actually suggesting that teachers manipulate their input so that meaning is more salient, thus freeing students’ cognitive resources for processing of form. This also allows for the deduction of grammar and form through context, thus reducing the need for explicit grammar instructions. This article made it clear to me that grammar still has a role in CLT.

The concept of negotiation of meaning is often mentioned in CLT. Many activities designed for the communicative classroom foster negotiation of meaning among the students. When I first read about negotiation of meaning, it seemed logical that students discussing the meaning of a sentence or word would be beneficial, but I didn’t know why. After reading Long (1996), I found that negotiation of meaning actually makes the input more accessible to the learner. By hearing an utterance a second or third time, the listener is able to shift from focusing on meaning to focusing on form. Long also claims that sometimes it is better that comprehension fails. This is because sometimes meaning is understood but the form is not and thus new language is not acquired. However, when comprehension fails, the student is forced to ask for clarification or repetition thus allowing for acquisition of the form. Understanding this concept is key in understanding CLT, which promotes the use of group work and pair work. Student-to-student activities often result in negotiation of meaning. Information-gap activities and interview activities are two prime examples of pair and group activities utilized in CLT.
Finally, in the CLT there is a strong emphasis on output. This emphasis can be attributed to a study conducted by Swain (1985). Swain carried out a research project on a French immersion program. She found that although these students were able to comprehend French at a native-like level, they were still lacking a native-like level in production. She concluded that simply receiving input was not enough for acquiring all aspects of a language. She proposed that output is necessary because “using the language, as opposed to simply comprehending the language, may force the learner to move from semantic processing to syntactic processing” (p. 249). In addition, being forced to produce the language allows learners to gaps in their linguistic knowledge. This article also helped me understand why CLT demands a student-centered classroom. Student-centered classrooms provide learners with more opportunities to speak and thus develop their implicit language system.

In summary, these are the books and articles that shaped my understanding of communicative language teaching. This is not a complete list, but these are the sources that most influenced my understanding of the communicative approach.
DEVELOPING LITERACY

“Can you read French?” This question is not generally heard. Instead, one might encounter the question “Can you speak French?” When discussing language skills, people tend to focus on oral skills. However, few teachers would deny the importance of reading in language development. After all, much of the input beginners receive will come through written text (textbook, text on the whiteboard, etc.). While Chinese learners also tend to focus on oral skills, they may actually be asked about their reading skills just as often as their oral skills. This is due to the logographic nature of the Chinese writing system, which appears so foreign to learners whose native language is written with a Latin-based alphabet. Developing literacy plays a central role in my teaching philosophy because it is a difficult skill to acquire and yet a necessary one to ensure success in the Chinese classroom.

To understand the complexity of developing literacy in Chinese, one must first understand the Chinese writing system. Then, since the writing system of Chinese is so different from the Latin-based alphabetic writing systems, one must also understand the skills required to read proficiently in Chinese. Finally, it is important to recognize which reading materials and teaching styles best facilitate the development of the skills specific to reading in Chinese.

Most articles concerning Chinese reading skills, offer a brief introduction of the unique features that make up the Chinese writing system. Feldman and Siok (1999) provide readers with an in-depth analysis of the components of the Chinese writing system. Their analysis of the writing system is undoubtedly comprehensive due to the research question presented in their paper, which suggests that semantic radicals play a
major role in character recall. These findings are in contrast to previous studies which tended to focus on the phonological radicals as the dominant radical for recall.

Almost 90% of the most common characters in Chinese are phonetic compounds (Feldman & Siok, 1999). Phonetic compounds are characters that are comprised of both semantic radicals (which give clues to the meaning) and phonetic radicals (which provide clues to the sound). Typically, research in Chinese literacy has focused on the effect of phonological radicals on character recall. This is most likely due to the relationship between oral fluency and reading fluency found in languages. This study made two important conclusions. First, “semantic transparency of the radical plays a salient role in target identification” (Feldman & Siok, p. 33). Semantic transparency refers to how well the semantic radical relates to the character meaning. For example, the characters 给 and 结 both have the silk radical on the left. The first character 给, means ‘give’, which has little relation to silk. On the other hand, the character 结 means ‘knot’, for which one can easily imagine a strand of silk being tied into a knot, and thus the semantic radical is more transparent. In addition to radical transparency, Feldman and Siok found that the location of the radical also influenced recognition. Most semantic radicals appear on the left, though some can appear on the top, bottom, right, or even in the center of the character. Take for example the following characters with the heart radical, 心: 性 (left), 想 (bottom), and 闷 (center). Participants in the study were able to recognize characters with radicals in their proper location (semantic on the left, phonetic on the right) more often than when radicals were in other locations.
This article made me realize how important it is to add radical instruction into my curriculum. It is not enough to hope that students will inductively learn the concepts of radicals, they must be taught explicitly. The first step in developing literacy skills is helping students recognize the most basic units of reading and of characters. Through this article, I came to understand that if students understand the composition of a character and the roles that the radicals play in the character, they will be more successful in recognizing characters. Therefore it is important that students in class are engaged in activities that require them to notice radicals and their functions within the character.

The second article that influenced my view of reading in Chinese was Shen and Jiang (2013). In this article the authors explore two reading skills that are specific to reading in Chinese and how they affect reading comprehension of Chinese texts. As mentioned above, recognizing radicals is the most fundamental skill in learning to read. After radical recognition, two additional skills are important. First, students need to be able to recognize characters quickly and accurately so that they can string together a series of characters to make sense of a passage. Shen and Jiang used a one-minute reading test to measure Chinese learners’ character recognition speed and accuracy. The second necessary skill is character segmentation. In Chinese, there are no breaks between words, so students must be able to recognize which characters combine to make words. For example, the phrase 非常难吃, could mean difficult to eat (很 + 难 + 吃) or disliking the flavor of a food (很 + 难 + 吃) depending on the segmentation of the characters. To measure segmentation, students were given a 2-minute word segmentation test. Shen and Jiang found that both speed and accuracy of character recognition and character
segmentation ability contributed to higher levels of reading comprehension but that character recognition speed and accuracy was the most important factor (p. 16). This article concludes by giving the reader some suggestions for increasing reading speed.

This article made me appreciate the importance of constant exposure to characters in extended texts. If learners are exposed to a character in a vocabulary list, their character naming speed and accuracy does not improve. Students must see characters in varying contexts multiple times to be able to develop the skill of segmentation and they must be able to recognize a character out of a string characters quickly and accurately. This article inspired me to use adapted readers in the classroom because adapted readers provide learners with a high level of vocabulary repetition in the context of a story.

Before discussing the use of adapted texts in the classroom, it is necessary to look at the article Everson (2009) titled, “Literacy development in Chinese as a foreign language.” This article gives a brief overview of the research of Chinese literacy development in the last twenty years. While the article provided a sound theoretical background on developing literacy skills for Chinese learners, what stood out for me was the claim that teachers should delay teaching characters to support literacy development (p. 104). Everson makes this claim based on two assumptions: speaking ability facilitates reading and characters hinder oral development. He uses previous research to support the idea that those who are able to communicate orally will have developed an understanding of the language and this understanding will provide the reader with an intuitive advantage. For example if the reader recognizes the character 经 but not the character 常, they will probably be able to deduct 常 due to its connection with 经 (together they
Everson suggests that learners should first learn pinyin for an extended period so as to quickly develop their oral skills. After they are able to communicate orally, then characters should be taught. He claims learning characters first will only slow the oral development (p. 100). His views find resonance in current beliefs on Chinese teaching methodology, which are trending towards delayed-character introduction approach.

While I do not support a delayed-character style of instruction, I do see the importance of developing speaking skills to assist reading. For this reason, I have adjusted my classes to practice literacy skills as a review to lessons that are focused on oral development. In this way students can rely on their oral skills to make sense of the readings.

After understanding the unique aspects of reading in Chinese, the next important step for a teacher is to select the proper reading material. Crossley, McCarthy, Louwerse, and McNamara (2007) conducted an in-depth analysis of the linguistic differences between authentic and adapted texts. They began the article by reviewing the ongoing debate between supporters of both authentic and adapted texts. Then, from a corpus of text appearing in ESL textbooks they analyzed seven linguistic aspects: causal cohesion, connectives, logical operators, conference, density of major parts of speech, polysemy and hypernymy, and syntactic complexity. Their findings showed that while authentic texts are linguistically more complex (more causal connectives, negative temporal connectives, etc.), simplified texts still provide enough linguistic variety as not to be ambiguous, which was a fear of many researchers (p. 25-26). In fact, the authors claim that the “use of more frequent, familiar words in simplified texts should allow them
to be processed more quickly than words in authentic texts, suggesting that simplified texts may be more advantageous for beginning L2 readers” (p. 26). This article showed that although a text is not authentic, it can still be linguistically valuable to beginner learners. Although the research was not done on Chinese texts it still influenced the way that I select adapted texts. Previously, I would select a text based solely on the word count, but now with this analysis, I am able to pick adapted texts that more closely resemble authentic texts but still provide the high-word repetition advantage of adapted texts. Following this article, I began to read more about adapted texts. I found that Paul Nation has done substantial research on adapted texts (graded readers). In Nation and Ming-Tzu (1999), the authors attempt to measure the effectiveness of graded readers, and to provide guidelines for selecting graded readers that are most suitable for language learners. Before reading this article, I was intrigued by the use of graded readers, because they seemed to be a good way of providing my students with high volume input of language learned in the classroom. Nation and Ming-Tzu (1999) found that graded readers “provide opportunities for vocabulary growth” and they allow “learners to develop fluency with words they already know” (p. 375). They also point out that graded readers should gradually approach a linguistic level equal to authentic texts. Finally, they also mention that graded readers should not be used to teach new words, but should be used simply to review words already learned (p. 364).

In my first semester of teaching Chinese, I received mixed results with my graded readers. This was partly because I was trying to teach words through the graded readers and partly because the stories did not reflect the target culture or an authentic text. Nation and Ming-Tzu (1999) helped me visualize a common ground between authentic and
adapted texts. In the following semester, I made adapted texts from authentic texts. I did this by taking blogs that discussed topics that we studied in class and I changed the vocabulary to resemble that of the language we learned in class. In this way there were still elements of the authentic language in text, but students were reading these authentic sections in the context of vocabulary that they had learned in class. This proved to be a much better option than using pure authentic texts as students were able to get through text without constantly stopping to check their dictionary.

Another reason that I decided to use a hybrid authentic text is because of the cultural implications imbedded in the authentic text. Kirkpatrick (1996) analyzed two sets of authentic texts and argued that authentic texts are loaded with culture. He provided an example of the multiple functions of 因为 (because) in Chinese. He argued that in simplified texts this word will generally be used the same as its English counterpart and will not be used in a way representative of its use in authentic texts (p. 23). Kirkpatrick argued that authentic texts are still not suitable for younger learners due to the complexity of the writing system. Kirkpatrick’s article reinforced my belief that adapted texts are best for beginner learners of Chinese, but it reminded me of the importance of authentic texts.

To conclude this annotated bibliography, I will briefly look at Perfetti, Liu, and Tan (2005). I only briefly look at this article because it provides little in terms of practical application to reading in Chinese. Instead, Perfetti et al. provide a theoretical framework of reading in Chinese. Perfetti et al. propose a reading model that outlines how phonological and visual characteristics both lead to recognition of the character. Their model is based on a threshold concept where once a phonological cue or a visual
cue has been encountered enough times, it will reach the threshold and thus push the learner towards character meaning. This model serves as a key source for most research done on Chinese literacy development. This model proved valuable in helping me understand why it was important to present characters in several different ways. According to the model, some students are able to recognize characters better when the sound component is provided with the character, and other students are able to identify characters easier when the orthographic features are pointed out. After reading this article I made sure that I presented characters in a variety of methods so as to accommodate my students.

In summary, learning to read Chinese can be intimidating, however if learners understand the basic rules that govern characters and strategies for reading they will have a better chance of experiencing success. Also, it is important to adjust the reading material and tasks so that reading skills specific to Chinese are developed. Finally, reading Chinese is not a skill that is cultivated overnight, therefore enticing and encouraging students to read outside of the classroom is also imperative.
TEACHING CULTURE

It would be foolish to deny the role of culture in teaching a language, and yet, when confronted with the task of integrating culture into instruction, many teachers struggle. They struggle because “culture” is such a big concept. It can include historical events, current fashion trends, diet preferences, and so much more. Teaching culture also presents difficulty when language teachers take into account the principles that govern second language acquisition. For example, a language teacher in a first-year class is unable to hold a discussion on the effects of Confucianism on modern China in the target language because students are simply not at that linguistic level. To incorporate culture instruction into a language course, the teacher must first understand the students’ needs and linguistic levels. Then, the teacher must select the proper material and the medium of instruction that is most appropriate for the students. Finally, activities and assignments need to be designed that reflect the aforementioned steps. In this annotated bibliography, I will summarize the articles that helped guide my understanding of integrating culture into the novice level Chinese language class.

As I alluded to earlier, leaving culture out of the language curriculum would be seen as sacrilegious in the SLA world, simply because language and culture are inseparable. Although most would agree with this idea, culture is not taught just to facilitate language acquisition, culture is also taught so that learners can develop intercultural skills that will allow them to successfully interact with members of the target culture. Bennett (1986) developed a model for teaching learners to become more culturally sensitive. In his model, as learners become more culturally sensitive they move from ethnocentric stages (denial, defense, and minimization) to ethnorelative stages
(acceptance, adaptation, and integration). According to Bennett, a learner is at their most ethnocentric point when their “own world view is unchallenged as central to all reality” (p. 182). For learners to achieve the ultimate value of learning a language it is imperative that they arrive at the ethnorelative stage of cultural sensitivity. At this stage, learners “can construe [cultural] differences as a process…adapt to those differences… [and] construe him or herself in various cultural ways” (p. 186). This is to say that learners are able to see, interpret, and act in the world through different cultural perspectives. Bennett concludes this article with a list of characteristics that learners at each stage show and provides strategies to help learners cope with advancing to the next level of cultural competence.

This article was particularly useful to me for two reasons. First, after reading the article it became painfully obvious that simply eating Chinese food and listening to Chinese music would not be enough to educate learners on the complexities of Chinese culture and how to interact with members of Chinese society. Learners need explicit instruction on cultural differences and more importantly on the concepts behind the cultural differences. When teachers provide learners with cultural concepts, students are able to analyze cultural differences and then eventually put the concepts they have learned into practice. Cultural concepts can be learned by providing examples of a cultural phenomenon and then asking students to deduce the concepts. Another effective strategy is to first give students a definition of the concept and ask them to look for examples in society that follow the concept. Secondly, the in-depth description that Bennett (1986) provided of the stages and the strategies that he offers at the end of the article helped me visualize what a lesson plan in culture sensitivity might look like.
The next article that proved valuable in developing my understanding of teaching culture is Durocher (2007). Durocher conducted a study measuring the effects of implementing activities based on Bennett’s teaching cultural sensitivity model. Durocher introduced five intercultural activities to a first-year French class. Since this was a beginner class, the cultural activities were conducted in the mother tongue. Durocher reported that after the intercultural activities, all of the students progressed on the cultural sensitivity scale. He measured this by using the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI).

This article provided me with some practical ideas for introducing activities that can be applied to a first-year course. I also appreciated a concluding thought by Durocher, which was, “Studying a foreign language does not, in and of itself, cure ethnocentrism and make students ethnorelative” (p. 155). This is a key point for me, because students take language classes with the hopes of communicating and interacting with members of the target culture. To interact and communicate successfully with a member from another culture it is imperative that learners are able to accept that others perceive the world differently from how they perceive the world. This is a skill that the teacher must consciously address.

Not only do students need training in intercultural skills, but they also need to gain knowledge about the target culture. Gao (2007) conducted a study on expatriates living in mainland China. She found that these expatriates had to overcome three main obstacles to integrate into Chinese society: cognitive obstacles, motivational obstacles, and structural obstacles. Gao defines cognitive obstacles as the lack of proficiency in Chinese and the unreal expectation of Chinese society. She defines motivational obstacles
as the lack of adapting to Chinese customs and habits. Finally, she explains that structural obstacles are those that are “created by China’s ingroup and outgroup differentiation and the expatriate’s role definition” (p. 32). This point was alluding to the idea that because Chinese society values collectivism rather than individualism, those who are unaware of societal norms are generally relegated to the ‘outgroup’. If a student of Chinese is put into the “outgroup,” their chances of interacting with a Chinese person in a meaningful way becomes smaller.

After reading this article I began thinking of ways in which I could help my students overcome these obstacles. I designed activities in which they could see images and videos of Chinese life as it is today. I wanted my students to move away from the images that portray China as a haven for Kung Fu artists and poor farmers. In one of the activities, students used actual housing websites and chose houses that they would like to rent. Through this activity my students were able to see what housing conditions were actually like in China. Also, in class, I have cultural moments where I will explain culturally important concepts that will allow my students to enter into China’s ‘ingroup’. For example, when receiving a compliment it can be a real turn-off for Chinese people when Americans simply say ‘Thank you’. I explain to my students that modesty is an important virtue for many Chinese people and by acknowledging that they understand this concept, it is more likely that they will be accepted into Chinese social groups. Finally, because of this article I also began to introduce Chinese folktales to my class. When students have an understanding of the folktales they are able to develop a concept of the morals and virtues that are taught to Chinese children. These morals and virtues are often still reflected in the values that many Chinese people have today.
The first three articles in this paper helped develop my understanding of the importance of teaching culture in the classroom. **Xing (2006)** provides a model of how to select materials for learners at the beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels of Chinese. Xing argues that teachers who design Chinese lessons for beginners should focus on concrete concepts such as Chinese zodiac, Chinese family, and character formation. Then, as the learners develop greater proficiency, the teacher can slowly start adding more abstract cultural concepts.

This chapter was particularly useful because it provided a list of concrete and abstract Chinese cultural concepts that could be taught at each level. After reading this chapter I was able to look at my own curriculum and easily find areas that I could add cultural concepts. Xing (2006) also recommends using the key word method, which was proposed by **Myers (2000)** for beginner learners.

Myers (2000) points out that many students “believe that the categories of their first language and culture are universal” (p. 2). This means that many students believe that concepts in their own language have exact representations in the target language. However, anyone who has become proficient in a second language knows that although a word in the L1 may be translated as an equal representation in the L2 it does not always hold the same value in both languages. For example, in Chinese one could say, “wo3 bu4 ai4 chi1 pi1sa1” which literally translates as I don’t love eating pizza. In English one might think that pizza is not this person’s favorite food. However, in Chinese this person is clearly stating that they don’t like pizza at all. Myers points out that it is important that the teacher expands on these culturally dense words because often textbooks simply give direct translations.
After reading this article I began highlighting words that were culturally dense in each of my lessons. Then at the end of each lesson I started taking five minutes to describe how these words differed from their English counterparts. My students really enjoyed these explanations, some commented on how learning these differences helped them understand how Chinese people think. Also, by learning these different connotations of vocabulary words, my students will be better equipped when interacting with native speakers of Chinese.

The final article that played an important role in how I teach culture was Liaw and Johnson (2001). In this study the researchers conducted a qualitative analysis of email conversations that took place between tandem language partners. Native speakers of English in the United States were paired with native speakers of Chinese from Taiwan and were asked to maintain contact via email for a semester. The learners were allowed to choose their own topics and all conversations were conducted in English. This study was valuable to me because it showed which topics were discussed naturally and how learners progressed through the topics to learn more about each other’s culture. Although it did not provide information on conducting a tandem language program it did provide a model for developing language prompts for future projects. The researchers found that students “started with general information and then moved on to personal events, then moved from historical facts to the current developments in the societies” (p. 247). The results also indicated that interacting with members of the target culture was essential to cultural differences. This study was particularly useful when I designed an online tandem language learning program for my students in my first year Chinese course.
Adding culture to the language curriculum can undoubtedly be overwhelming. However, by adhering to the principles outlined in this paper, I am able to sift through the infinite options that a teacher has when teaching culture.
As a previous second language learner, I understand the importance of receiving a sufficient amount of comprehensible input as well as having the opportunity to use the language that I have learned. Unfortunately, five hours a week in the classroom is not enough for most students to become proficient in a language. To provide my students with an environment conducive to learning a language, I implement a diverse set of technological tools in and outside of the classroom. These tools facilitate in vocabulary building, literacy skills, and development of intercultural skills. This annotated bibliography will review the literature that influenced my view of technology and its place in the language learning process.

The first chapter in Blake (2013) demonstrates how language programs are failing across America. He claims that most of them are failing because they do not provide their students with enough comprehensible input and an environment where students can learn through interaction. He argues that technology is able to help language programs provide the necessary conditions for language acquisition to occur. For me, the most interesting part of this chapter is when Blake highlights four myths about technology and then explains why they are merely myths. He first dispels the myth that technology is monolithic by breaking it down into three major areas: webpages, web apps, and network-based communication. He says, “There is not one technology best suited for language study, but rather there exists an array of technological tools” (p. 9). Teachers who understand this are able to look at tools objectively and implement tools that reflect their learning goals. This is in contrast to teachers who look at all technology as one and the same. These teachers are likely to add a YouTube video or a music clip to
their lesson just for the sake of using technology in the classroom. The second myth that Blake tackles is that technology is a methodology. Blake makes it very clear that technology should only be used when it serves a pedagogical purpose. Technology is a tool that should be used to help teachers accomplish their teaching goals. Finally, Blake concludes by disclaiming the myths that technology will replace teachers and that learning technology today will be good enough for tomorrow. These two myths I have placed together simply because teachers who do not keep up with technology will most likely be replaced by those who do. So, in one sense technology could be responsible for a teacher losing a job, but only if the teacher neglects the value of technology.

The next article that I will look at conducted a review of all the research involving Web 2.0 tools and language learning dating back to 2005. This article helped me understand what other teachers were currently doing in the language teaching field. **Wang and Vasquez (2012)** were interested in determining the types of tools that were being used, the theoretical backgrounds that the studies were based in, the language skills that were being targeted, and the advantages and disadvantages of the Web 2.0 tools. They found that blogs and wikis were by far the most researched tools and that these tools were viewed from a sociocultural or interactionist perspective. In terms of types of skills being fostered, researchers tended to focus on the development of intercultural skills, peer feedback, and literacy skills. However, a majority of these studies were qualitative and thus focused on the learners’ perceptions of the tools. The authors called for more empirical data, so that the effect of these tools on learning can be better understood. Finally, the authors found that the most common benefits of these tools were the comfortable learning environments and the motivation that students seemed to gain
when working with these tools. As far as drawbacks, there were complaints regarding some participant’s reluctance to participate in what the researchers felt to be a collaborative project.

I particularly enjoyed these two texts because they changed how I look at technology as a whole. There is an excess of technological tools on the web, the trouble for teachers is sifting through the many options that are available and choosing the one that best fits their lesson plan. After planning my lessons, I look through each of my activities and see if there is a tool that would make the activity more efficient. One of the areas that I have found that technology is especially useful is in the development of literacy skills.

In a chapter discussing the various benefits of CALL on facilitating L2 reading Chun (2011b) examines research surrounding various reading tools. Chun states that one of the areas that research has focused on is developing vocabulary automaticity of high frequency words. This is seen as a key skill in reading because when learners are able to recognize words quickly it frees up their cognitive capacity for other higher-level processing skills such as making inferences and guessing words from context. In my class, I have taken advantage of tools such as Quizlet and Memrise, both of which provide a systematic way for my students to learn vocabulary.

Chun (2011b) also discusses the use of e-dictionaries and e-glosses. She reports that, overall, studies have shown that reading comprehension and incidental learning are improved when students use e-dictionaries. However, these improvements were typically only for intermediate and advanced students. She suggests that since beginners lack
grammatical knowledge, just providing them with vocabulary is not enough to help them understand the text.

Wang (2012) also looked at e-dictionaries, but she focused on their effect on reading Chinese. Wang gave 20 students studying Chinese a text to read using an e-dictionary, she was interested in observing the types of words looked up, the amount of vocabulary words learned, and the effect of an e-dictionary on overall comprehension of the text. Before reading the texts the participants were given a proficiency test that was used to divide the participant into two groups: intermediate and advanced. The participants were asked to read the text via an e-dictionary twice. The words that they looked up each time were monitored, and then following the reading they were asked why they looked up each of the words.

In this article Wang (2012) found that the intermediate students experienced a major improvement from reading the text the first time to the second time, whereas the advanced group did not. She suggests that this may have been because the words that the advanced group looked up were often Chinese idioms, which could not be found in the e-dictionary, or they were function words, which are hard to understand with only the English translation provided by the e-dictionary. Wang also found that the comprehension scores of the participants were not as high as other studies that implemented an e-dictionary. She claimed that the disparities of comprehension scores could be due to the learners’ lack of understanding of the structure of Chinese writing.

Many of studies have shown that e-dictionaries can improve reading comprehension and since they improve reading comprehension they are often promoted as a valuable aid for developing the literacy skills of learners of Chinese. However, this
article demonstrates that simply giving a student an e-dictionary is not enough for literacy development. Although a learner may recognize a character or a word, if the learner does not understand the grammatical function of the word, then comprehension will suffer. This idea is also echoed in Chun (2011b) when she suggests that beginners should not use e-dictionaries. E-dictionaries can be very powerful tools, but students must first development an understanding of characters and grammatical concepts before they start extensive reading via this such a tool.

I use technology in my class not only for literacy development, but to also give my students a chance to interact with native speakers of Chinese. This interaction is motivational for the learners and it helps build intercultural competence. To build a successful tandem language learning program the following article proved useful.

**Chun (2011a)** paired 23 American learners of German with 23 German learners of English for an online exchange over a 10-week period. The exchange began with a word association questionnaire and then an asynchronous email discussion about the differences observed between the German and American word association answers. Then towards the end of the 10-week period the students took part in a synchronous chat session. During the synchronous session either language was accepted and students were allowed to speak about a topic of their choice. Chun analyzed the discourse in both the synchronous chat and asynchronous and then compared these results with the students’ perceptions of the chats. She found that many of the American students who were unsatisfied with the chats had felt that their German partners were not interested in the conversation. The American students believed that their German partners were not interested because they did not ask many questions. Conversely, the Germans were
dissatisfied with the chats because they believed the Americans were asking “brief questions” about “mundane topics” (p. 416).

This article was especially important to me because it made me realize the importance of cultural training before starting a tandem language-learning program. In my first year as a Chinese teacher nearly everyone in my class signed up for a tandem language partner, however after only two weeks most of the partners had disbanded. Both my students and their Chinese partners were upset at what they felt like had been an unfair arrangement. This year to improve the language partner program I first organized an orientation. At the orientation I provided suggestions about how the partners could work together, background information about both cultures, and training on how to best help support their language partner with linguistic needs. In addition to this orientation, I also provided weekly language prompts that reflected what my students had learned in class. These prompts proved to be good conversation starters. As a result, both my students and the Chinese partners have expressed their satisfaction with the language partner program.

In this annotated bibliography I demonstrated how my understanding of technology and its role in the class has been influenced by the texts. The possibilities that future developments in technology bring are very exciting, however as a language teacher I must always keep my pedagogical goals in mind when choosing when and how to implement these tools.
LOOKING FORWARD

During my two years in the MSLT program, I have been fortunate to have taken part in several research projects. Although this meant more work, I found that reading articles for a study that you are conducting is much more rewarding than reading articles for a class. I can honestly say that working with my professors on these projects was exciting, challenging and extremely rewarding. In the future, I would like to pursue a doctorate degree in applied linguistics or second language acquisition. However, first I am looking to complete a degree in Instructional Technology and take what I have learned in regards to teaching Chinese as a second language to a digital environment. Although the Chinese language popularity is growing rapidly across the U.S., it is still considered a smaller language by many universities. I believe bringing courses online will help these smaller Chinese programs develop.

If my plans regarding Chinese do not come to fruition, I will most likely return to China and open an EFL school with friends and family. A dream of mine has always been to have my own language school and to put my ideas into practice. However, regardless of where I end up, I am sure that I will continue my research in second language acquisition.
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APPENDICES
Handout 1

Possible Compliment Responses

With a partner make a list of compliment responses that you have heard in Chinese.

你听□□什么称□□□答？

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>称□□的□答</th>
<th>你是否听过？</th>
<th>在哪儿？什么情况？谁说的？</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>没有啊</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>真的吗？</td>
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<tr>
<td>还行吧</td>
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<tr>
<td>（笑笑）</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我很努力</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我不聪明</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>你比我好很多</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Handout 2

Place the compliment responses from Handout 1 into the following categories:

Traditional □□的, Neutral 中性的, or Modern □代的. Discuss your answers with a partner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>□□的</th>
<th>中性的</th>
<th>□代的</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>
Handout 3

Imagine one of the following people give you a compliment. What type of response would you provide? Give an example of a response. Then explain your rationale. Discuss your answers with a partner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>人</th>
<th>□□的、中性的、□代的</th>
<th>例子</th>
<th>□什么？</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>校口</td>
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<tr>
<td>朋友</td>
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<tr>
<td>老板</td>
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<tr>
<td>陌生人</td>
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<tr>
<td>爸爸</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

How do the following social contexts affect the type of compliment you give.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>人</th>
<th>□□的、中性的、□代的</th>
<th>例子</th>
<th>□什么？</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>工作</td>
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<td>家</td>
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<td>比□中</td>
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<td>□店</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

Handout 4

Read the following situations, then with your partner predict the outcome of the compliment response. How will the compliment giver perceive the compliment receiver?

第一种情况

王盾是赵梅的老板。星期二在会议中王盾在大家面前说赵梅今年卖产品卖得最多。她说别的同事应该像她一样努力工作，还说她特别聪明。赵梅脸红得回答“没有，没有”

第二种情况

张明和海叶是很好的朋友，有一天晚上张明一直夸海叶的衣服就说她穿什么衣服都好看，还说她最能买好看的衣服。海叶回答，“那当然啦，我本来就会买衣服”

第三种情况

海淘是陈老师的老婆。海淘去看她老公上课，她觉得她的丈夫上得很好。下课以后就对他说，“你上课上得可真好！我要从你学很多事情”陈老师，笑了。
Appendix E

Handout 5

In the following situations a variety of people will give you a compliment. Based on the person, place, and your personal goals please provide a compliment response. Then with your partner discuss why you chose the response.

1. 你在家的时候你的妈妈说你的衣服很好看。

2. 你是一个老师，你在学校的时候你的学生说你头发很好看。

3. 你是一个律师，你在法庭的时候有个陌生人说你很帅（漂亮）。

4. 你的好朋友听你说中文的时候，很吃惊，然后说你特别聪明。

5. 你的老师说你是他的班最努力的学生。